Ivanhoe

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Ivanhoe is a novel by Sir Walter Scott. It was written in 1819, and is set in 12th-century England, an example of historical fiction. *Ivanhoe* is sometimes given credit for helping to increase popular interest in the Middle Ages in 19th century Europe and America (see Romanticism). John Henry Newman claimed that Scott "had first turned men's minds in the direction of the middle ages," while Carlyle and Ruskin made similar claims to Scott's overwhelming influence over the revival, based primarily on the publication of this novel.[1]

Contents

Ivanhoe

Scenes from the *Illustrated London News* of Arthur Sullivan's operatic adaptation.

Author	Sir Walter Scott
Country	United Kingdom
Language	English
Series	Waverley Novels
Genre(s)	Historical novel
Publisher	A. Constable
Publication date	1820
Preceded by	*Rob Roy*
Followed by	*Kenilworth*

Plot introduction

Ivanhoe is the story of one of the remaining Saxon noble families at a time when the English nobility was overwhelmingly Norman. It follows the Saxon protagonist, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, who is out of favour with his father for his allegiance to the Norman king Richard I of England. The story is set in 1194, after the failure of the Third Crusade, when many of the Crusaders were still returning to Europe. King Richard, who had been captured by the Duke of Saxony, on his way back, was still supposed to be in the arms of his captors. The legendary Robin Hood, initially under the name of Locksley, is also a character in the story, as are his "merry men", including Friar Tuck and less so, Alan-a-Dale. (Little John is merely mentioned.) The character that Scott gave to Robin Hood in *Ivanhoe* helped shape the modern notion of this figure as a cheery noble outlaw.

Other major characters include Ivanhoe's intractable Saxon father, Cedric, a descendant of the Saxon King Harold Godwinson; various Knights Templar and churchmen; the loyal serfs Gurth the swineherd and the jester Wamba, whose observations punctuate much of the action; and the Jewish moneylender, Isaac of York, equally passionate of money and his daughter, Rebecca. The book was written and published during a period of

increasing struggle for emancipation of the Jews in England, and there are frequent references to injustice against them.

Plot summary

Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe is disinherited by his father Cedric of Rotherwood, for supporting the Norman King Richard and for falling in love with the Lady Rowena, Cedric's ward and a descendant of the Saxon Kings of England. Cedric had planned to marry her to the powerful Lord Aethelstane, pretender to the Saxon Crown of England, thus cementing a Saxon political alliance between two rivals for the same claim. Ivanhoe accompanies King Richard I to the Crusades, where he is stated to have played a notable role in the Siege of Acre.

The book opens with a scene of Norman knights and prelates seeking the hospitality of Cedric the Saxon, of Rotherwood. They are guided there by a palmer, fresh returned from the Holy Land. The same night, seeking refuge from the inclement weather and bandits, the Jew Isaac of York arrives at Rotherwood. Following the night's meal, characterised in keeping with the times by a heated exchange of words between the Saxon hosts and their Norman guests, the palmer observes one of the Normans, the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert issue orders to his Saracen soldiers to follow Isaac of York after he leaves Rotherwood in the morning and relieve him of his possessions a safe distance from the castle.

The palmer then warns the Jewish money lender of his peril and assists his escape from Rotherwood, at the crack of dawn. The swineherd Gurth refuses to open the gates until the palmer whispers a few words in his ear, which turns Gurth as helpful as he was recalcitrant earlier. This is but one of the many mysterious incidents that occur throughout the tale.

Isaac of York offers to repay his debt to the palmer by offering him a suit of armour and a destrier, to participate in the tournament of Ashby where he was bound. His offer is made on the surmise that the palmer was in reality a knight, having observed his knight's chain and spurs (a fact that he mentions to the palmer). Though the palmer is taken by surprise, he acquiesces to the offer, after the admonition that both armour and horse would be forfeit if he lost in combat.

The story then moves to the scene of the famed tournament of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, which was presided over by Prince John Lackland of England. Other characters in attendance are Cedric, Athelstane, the Lady Rowena, Isaac of York, his daughter Rebecca, Robin of Locksley and his men, Prince John's advisor Waldemar Fitzurse and numerous Norman knights.

In the first day of the tournament, a bout of individual jousting, a mysterious masked knight identifying himself only as "Desdichado", supposedly Spanish for the "Disinherited One" (though actually meaning "Unfortunate"), makes his appearance and manages to defeat some of the best Norman lances, including the Templar Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, Maurice de Bracy, a leader of a group of "Free Companions" (mercenary knights), and the baron Reginald Front-de-Boeuf. The masked knight declines to reveal himself despite Prince John's request, but is nevertheless declared the champion of the day and, as his due, is permitted to choose the Queen of the Tournament, which honour he bestows upon the Lady Rowena.

On the second day, which is a melée, Desdichado, as champion of the first day, is chosen to be leader of one party. Most of the leading knights of the realm, however, flock to the opposite standard under which Desdichado's vanquished opponents of the previous day fight. Desdichado's side is soon hard pressed and he himself unfairly beset by multiple foes simultaneously, when a knight who had till then taken no part in the battle, thus earning the sobriquet Le Noir Faineant or the Black Sluggard, rides to the Desdichado's rescue. The rescuing knight, having evened the odds by his action, then slips away. Though the Desdichado was instrumental in wringing victory, Prince John being displeased with his behaviour of the previous day, wishes to bestow his

accolades on the Black Knight who had ridden to the rescue. Since the latter is nowhere to be found, he is forced to declare the Desdichado the champion. At this point, being forced to unmask himself to receive his coronet, the Desdichado is revealed to be Wilfred of Ivanhoe himself, returned from the Crusades. This causes much consternation to Prince John and his coterie who now fear the imminent return of King Richard.

Because he is severely wounded in the competition and Cedric refuses to have anything to do with him, he is taken into the care of Rebecca, the beautiful daughter of Isaac of York, a skilled healer. She convinces her father to take him with them to York, where he may be best treated. There follows a splendid account of a feat of archery by Locksley, or Robin Hood at the conclusion of the tournament.

In the meanwhile, Maurice de Bracy finds himself infatuated with the Lady Rowena and, with his companions-in-arms, plans to abduct her. In the forests between Ashby and York, the Lady Rowena, her guardian Cedric and the Saxon thane Aethelstane encounter Isaac of York, Rebecca and the wounded Ivanhoe, who were abandoned by their servants for fear of bandits. The Lady Rowena, in response to the supplication of Isaac and Rebecca, urges Cedric to take them under his protection till York. Cedric acquiesces to it, being unaware that the wounded man is Ivanhoe. En route, they are captured by Maurice de Bracy and his companions and taken to Torquilstone, the castle of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf. The swineherd and serf, Gurth, who had run away from Rotherwood to serve Ivanhoe as squire at the tournament, and who was recaptured by Cedric when Ivanhoe was identified, manages to escape.

The Black Knight, having taken refuge for the night in the hut of a local friar, the Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst, volunteers his assistance on learning about the predicament of the captives from Robin of Locksley who comes to rouse the friar for an attempt to free them. They then besiege the Castle of Torquilstone with Robin Hood's own men, including the friar, and the Saxon yeomen they manage to raise, who are angered by the oppression of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf and his neighbour, Philip de Malvoisin.


LE NOIR FAINEANT IN THE HERMIT'S CELL

Out of the recesses of a dark closet, into which this aperture gave admittance, the hermit brought a large pasty, baked in a pewter platter of unusual dimensions.—PAGE 171.

Le Noir Faineant in the Hermit's Cell by J. Cooper, Sr. From an 1886 edition of Walter Scott's works

At Torquilstone, Maurice de Bracy presses his suit with the Lady Rowena, while his love goes unrequited. In the meantime, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who had accompanied de Bracy on the raid, takes Rebecca for his captive, and tries to force his attentions on her, which are rebuffed. Front-de-Boeuf, in the meantime, tries to wring a hefty ransom, by torture, from Isaac of York. Isaac refuses to pay a farthing unless his daughter is freed from her Templar captor.

When the besiegers deliver a note to yield up the captives, their Norman captors retort with a message for a priest to administer the Final Sacrament to the captives. It is then that Wamba slips in, disguised as a priest, and takes the place of Cedric, who thus escapes, bringing important information on the strength of the garrison and its layout.

Then follows an account of the storming of the castle. Front-de-Boeuf is killed while de Bracy surrenders to the Black Knight, who identifies himself as Richard of England. Showing mercy, the Black Knight releases de Bracy. Brian de Bois-Guilbert escapes with Rebecca and Isaac is released from his underground dungeon by the Clerk of Copmanhurst. The Lady Rowena is saved by Cedric, while the crippled Ivanhoe is plucked from the flames of the castle by the Black Knight. In the fighting, Aethelstane is grievously wounded while attempting to rescue Rebecca, whom he mistakes for Rowena.

Subsequently, in the woodlands, Robin Hood plays host to the Black Knight. Word is also conveyed by De Bracy to Prince John of the King's return and the fall of Torquilstone.

In the meantime, Bois-Guilbert rushes with his captive to the nearest Templar Preceptory, which is under his friend Albert de Malvoisin, expecting to be able to flee the country. However, Lucas de Beaumanoir, the Grand-Master of the Templars is unexpectedly present there. He takes umbrage at de Bois-Guilbert's sinful passion, which is in violation of his Templar vows and decides to subject Rebecca to a trial for witchcraft, for having cast a spell on so devoted a Templar brother as Bois-Guilbert. She is found guilty through a flawed trial and pleads for a trial by combat. Bois-Guilbert, who had hoped to fight as her champion incognito, is devastated by the Grand-Master's ordering him to fight against her champion. Rebecca then writes to her father to procure a champion for her.

Meanwhile Cedric organises Aethelstane's funeral at Kyningestun, in the midst of which the Black Knight, arrives with a companion. Cedric, who had not been present at Robin Hood's carousal, is ill-disposed towards the Black Knight on learning his true identity. But King Richard calms Cedric and reconciles him with his son, convincing him to agree to the marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena. Shortly after, Aethelstane emerges – not dead, but having been laid in his coffin alive by avaricious monks, desirous of the funeral money. Over Cedric's renewed protests, Aethelstane pledges his homage to the Norman King Richard and urges Cedric to marry the Lady Rowena to Ivanhoe. Cedric yields, not unwillingly.

Soon after this reconciliation, Ivanhoe receives a message from Isaac of York beseeching him to fight on Rebecca's behalf. Upon arriving at the scene of the witch-burning Ivanhoe forces Bois-Guilbert from his saddle, but does not kill him – the Templar dies "a victim to the violence of his own contending passions," which is pronounced by the Grand Master as the judgment of God and proof of Rebecca's innocence. King Richard, who had quit the funeral feast soon after Ivanhoe's departure, then arrives at the Templar Preceptory, banishes the Templars from the Preceptory and declares that the Malvoisins' lives are forfeit for having aided in the plots against him.

Fearing further persecution, Rebecca and her father leave England for Granada, prior to which she comes to bid Rowena a fond farewell. Ivanhoe and Rowena marry and live a long and happy life together, though the final paragraphs of the book note that Ivanhoe's long service was cut short when King Richard met a premature death in battle.

Characters

- *Wilfred of Ivanhoe* – a knight and son of Cedric the Saxon
- *Rebecca* – a Jewish healer, daughter of Isaac of York
- *Rowena* – a noble Saxon Lady
- *Prince John* – brother of King Richard
- *The Black Knight* or *Knight of the Fetterlock* – King Richard the Lionhearted, incognito
- *Locksley* – i.e., Robin Hood, an English yeoman
- *The Hermit or Clerk of Copmanhurst* — i.e., Friar Tuck
- *Brian de Bois-Guilbert* – a Templar Knight
- *Isaac of York* – the father of Rebecca; a Jewish merchant and money-lender
- *Prior Aymer* – Prior of Jorvaulx
- *Reginald Front-de-Boeuf* – a local baron who was given Ivanhoe's estate by Prince John
- *Cedric the Saxon* – Ivanhoe's father
- *Lucas de Beaumanoir* – fictional Grand Master of the Knights Templars
- *Conrade de Montfichet* – Templar
- *Maurice De Bracy* – Captain of the Free Companions

- *Waldemar Fitzurse* – Prince John's loyal minion
- *Aethelstane* – last of the Saxon royal line
- *Albert de Malvoisin* – Preceptor of Templestowe
- *Philip de Malvoisin* – local baron (brother of Albert)
- *Gurth* – Cedric's loyal Swineherd
- *Wamba* – Cedric's loyal Jester

Unofficial sequels

- In 1850, novelist William Makepeace Thackeray wrote a spoof sequel to *Ivanhoe* called *Rebecca and Rowena*.
- Edward Eager's book *Knight's Castle* (1956) magically transports four children into the story of Ivanhoe.
- Christopher Vogler wrote a sequel called *Ravenskull* (2006), published by Seven Seas Publishing.
- Pierre Efratas wrote a sequel called *Le Destin d'Ivanhoe* (2003), published by Editions Charles Corlet.
- Simon Hawke uses the story as the basis for *The Ivanhoe Gambit* the first novel in his time travel adventure series TimeWars.
- The 1839 Eglinton Tournament held by the 13th Earl of Eglinton at Eglinton Castle in Ayrshire was inspired and modelled on Ivanhoe.

Allusions to real history and geography

The location of the novel is centred upon South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire in England. Castles mentioned within the story include Ashby de la Zouch where the opening tournament is held (now a ruin in the care of English Heritage), York (though the mention of Clifford's Tower, likewise an English Heritage property, and still standing, is anachronistic, it not having been called that until later after various rebuilds) and 'Coningsburgh', which is based upon Conisbrough Castle near Doncaster (also English Heritage and a popular tourist attraction). Reference is made within the story, too, to York Minster, where the climactic wedding takes place, and to the Bishop of Sheffield, although the Diocese of Sheffield was not founded until 1914. These references within the story contribute to the notion that Robin Hood lived or travelled in and around this area.

The ancient town of Conisbrough has become so dedicated to the story of *Ivanhoe* that many of the streets, schools and public buildings are named after either characters from the book or the 12th-century castle.

Influence on Robin Hood legend

The modern vision of Robin Hood as a cheerful, patriotic rebel owes much to *Ivanhoe*. "Locksley" becomes Robin's title in this novel and hereafter, although it is first mentioned as Robin's birthplace in 1600 and used as an epithet in one ballad. Robin Hood from Locksley becomes Robin of Locksley, alias Robin Hood. The Saxon-Norman conflict first mooted as an influence on the legend by Joseph Ritson is made a major theme by Scott, and remains so in many subsequent retellings. Scott actually shuns the convention of depicting Robin as a dispossessed nobleman, but *Ivanhoe* has contributed to this strand of the legend, too, because subsequent Robin Hoods (e.g. in the 1922 Douglas Fairbanks film, and 1991's *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*) take on Wilfrid of Ivanhoe's own characteristics – they are returning Crusaders, have quarrelled with their fathers, and so forth. Also, the modern practice of depicting Robin as a contemporary of Richard I first appears in this novel; before that, he was generally placed two centuries later.

Robin's familiar feat of splitting his competitor's arrow in an archery contest appears for the first time in *Ivanhoe*.

Historical accuracy

The general political events depicted in the novel are relatively accurate; it tells of the period just after King Richard's imprisonment in Austria following the Crusade, and of his return to England. Yet the story is also heavily fictionalized. Scott himself acknowledged that he had taken liberties with history in his "Dedicatory Epistle" to Ivanhoe. Modern readers are cautioned to understand that Scott's aim was to create a compelling novel set in a historical period, not to provide a book of history.

During the period in which Ivanhoe is set, the nobility would have talked a mixture of Medieval English and Medieval French[2]. The novel was written in contemporary English for a mass audience, in the same way that mainstream Hollywood movies depicting the Second World War commonly depict German characters talking in English.

There has been criticism, "... as unsupported by the evidence of contemporary records, of the enmity of Saxon and Norman, represented as persisting in the days of Richard I, which forms the basis of the story."[3]. Historian Michael Wood delivers a firm rebuttal of this view, quoting 13th-century writer Robert Manning as saying "... the English have been held in subjection ever since the Conquest"[4].

This criticism also misses the obvious parallels between the story's background (England conquered by the Normans in 1066, when they killed Saxon King Harold at Hastings, about 130 years previously) and the situation in Scott's Scotland (Scotland's union with England in 1707, about the same length of time before Scott's writing, and the resurgence in his time of Scottish nationalism evidenced by the cult of Robert Burns, the famous poet who deliberately chose to work in Scots vernacular though he was an educated man and spoke modern English eloquently).[5] Indeed, some experts suggest that Scott deliberately used Ivanhoe to illustrate his combination of Scottish patriotism and pro-British Unionism[6][7].

One inaccuracy in *Ivanhoe* created a new name in the English language: Cedric. The original Saxon name is *Cerdic* but Sir Walter mis-spelled it, the lasting effects of which are an example of metathesis. Satirist H. H. Munro commented, "It is not a name but a misspelling."

In 1194 England it would have been unlikely for Rebecca to face the threat of being burned at the stake on charges of witchcraft. It is thought that it was shortly afterwards, from the 1250s, that the Church began to undertake the finding and punishment of witches, and death did not become the usual penalty until the 15th century. Even then, the form of execution used for witches in England (unlike Scotland and Continental Europe) was hanging, burning being reserved for those also convicted of high or petty treason. However, the method of Rebecca's execution is presented as proposed by Lucas Beaumanoir, Grand Master of the Knights Templars – a Frenchman and a fanatic, determined to root out "corruption" from the Templars. It is quite plausible that Beaumanoir, like many nobles of the time, would have considered himself above the law and entitled to execute a witch in his power in any way that he chose. Witch hunts were enough of a cultural problem in Europe that even as early as AD785, the church made the burning of witches a crime itself punishable by death.

The novel's references to the Moorish king Boabdil are anachronistic, since he lived about 300 years after Richard. In the same way, even the title of Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court contains a glaring anachronism.

In summary, "For a [Scottish] writer whose early novels [all set in Scotland] were prized for their historical accuracy, Scott was remarkably loose with the facts when he wrote Ivanhoe... But it is crucial to remember that Ivanhoe, unlike the Waverly books, is entirely a romance. It is meant to please, not to instruct, and is more an act of imagination than one of research. Despite this fancifulness, however, Ivanhoe does make some prescient historical points. The novel is occasionally quite critical of King Richard, who seems to love adventure more

than he loves the well-being of his subjects. This criticism did not match the typical idealized, romantic view of Richard the Lion-Hearted that was popular when Scott wrote the book, and yet it accurately echoes the way King Richard is often judged by historians today."[8]

Rebecca Gratz as inspiration for the character Rebecca

It has been conjectured that the character of Rebecca in the book was inspired by Rebecca Gratz, a preeminent American educator and philanthropist who was the first Jewish female college student in the United States. Scott's attention had been drawn to Gratz's character by Washington Irving, who was a close friend of the Gratz family. The claim has been disputed, but it has also been well sustained in an article entitled "The Original of Rebecca in Ivanhoe", which appeared in *The Century Magazine*, 1882, pp. 679–682.

Gratz was considered among the most beautiful and educated women in her community. She never married, and is alleged to have refused a marriage proposal from a Gentile on account of her faith – a well-known incident at the time, which may have inspired the relationship depicted in the book between Rebecca and Ivanhoe.

Film, TV or theatrical adaptations

The novel has been the basis for several movies:

- *Ivanhoe* (1913): Directed by Herbert Brenon. With King Baggot, Leah Baird, and Brenon. Filmed on location in England and at Chepstow Castle in Wales
- *Ivanhoe* (1952): Directed by Richard Thorpe and starred Robert Taylor as Ivanhoe, Elizabeth Taylor as Rebecca, Joan Fontaine as Rowena, George Sanders as Bois-Guilbert, Finlay Currie as Cedric, and Sebastian Cabot. The film has a notable jousting scene as well as a well choreographed castle siege sequence. The visual spectacle is given more attention than the dialogue and underlying story, though the main points of the plot are covered. The film was nominated for three Oscars:
  - Best Picture – Pandro S. Berman
  - Best Cinematography, Color – Freddie Young
  - Best Music Score – Miklós Rózsa

There is also a Soviet movie *The Ballad of the Valiant Knight Ivanhoe* (Баллада о доблестном рыцаре Айвенго, 1983), directed by Sergey Tarasov, with songs of Vladimir Vysotsky, starring Peteris Gaudins as Ivanhoe.

There have also been many television adaptations of the novel, including:

- 1958: A television series based on the character of Ivanhoe starred Roger Moore as Ivanhoe.
- 1970: A TV miniseries starring Eric Flynn as Ivanhoe.
- 1982: *Ivanhoe*, a television movie starring Anthony Andrews as Ivanhoe, Michael Hordern as his father, Cedric, Sam Neill as Sir Brian, Olivia Hussey as Rebecca, James Mason as Isaac, Lysette Anthony as Rowena, Julian Glover as King Richard, and David Robb as Robin Hood. In this version, Sir Brian is a hero. Though he could easily have won the fight against the wounded and weakened Ivanhoe, Brian lowers his sword and allows himself to be slaughtered, thus saving the life of his beloved Rebecca.
- 1986: *Ivanhoe*, a 1986 animated telemovie produced by Burbank Films in Australia.
- 1995: Young Ivanhoe, a 1995 television series directed by Ralph L. Thomas and starring Kristen Holden-Ried as Ivanhoe, Stacy Keach, Margot Kidder, Nick Mancuso, Rachel Blanchard, and Matthew Daniels.
- 1997: *Ivanhoe the King's Knight* a televised cartoon series produced by CINAR and France Animation. General retelling of classic tale.

- 1997: *Ivanhoe*, a 6-part, 5-hour TV series, a co-production of A&E and the BBC. It stars Steven Waddington as Ivanhoe, Ciarán Hinds as Bois-Guilbert, Susan Lynch as Rebecca, Ralph Brown as Prince John and Victoria Smurfit as Rowena.
- 2000: A Channel 5 adaptation entitled *Darkest Knight* attempted to adapt Ivanhoe for an ongoing series. Ben Pullen played Ivanhoe and Charlotte Comer played Rebecca.

An operatic adaptation by Sir Arthur Sullivan (see *Ivanhoe*) ran for over 150 consecutive performances in 1891. Other operas based on the novel have been composed by Gioachino Rossini (Ivanhoé), Thomas Sari (*Ivanhoé*), Bartolomeo Pisani (*Rebecca*), A. Castagnier (*Rébecca*), Otto Nicolai (*Il Templario*) and Heinrich Marschner (*Der Templer und die Jüdin*). Rossini's opera is a *pasticcio* (an opera in which the music for a new text is chosen from pre-existent music by one or more composers). Scott attended a performance of it and recorded in his journal, "It was an opera, and, of course, the story sadly mangled and the dialogue, in part nonsense."[9]

12

PLOT-CONSTRUCTION IN *IVANHOE*

What is Plot ?

Plot is the organization of incidents in a novel or play. In the *Poetics,* Aristotle says that a good plot has a beginning, a middle and an end held together in a causal sequence. He says further that a good plot should be so constructed that no incident in it can be displaced or omitted without destroying the unity of the whole. The presence of a single hero, he continues, is not sufficient to give unity. A plot which consists of a series of disconnected incidents, even though it may centre on a single protagonist, he calls 'episodic' and ranks as inferior. Many writers, however, deliberately choose the episodic plot for the freedom and scope it gives. Whatever its structural arrangement, a plot usually contains conflict which provides basis for the action. Characters are thus impelled to move from incident to incident – in the unified plot, the action reaches a climax, whereas in the episodic plot it merely comes to a stop. In the former the development of a conflict provides the audience with suspense until all difficulties are resolved, but in the latter the poor hero may wander from house to house in search of shelter and sustenance and become heir to a fortune quite abruptly. In every case, however, the plot is the most important part of a novel or play, because it embodies the controlling intention or central theme of the work.

Scott's Plot-Work

According to Walter Allen, "Scott, in fact, was a great writer of fiction who was never a good novelist. He was doing something profoundly new in fiction, but he was hamstrung all the time as a novelist by using old methods. He took over the old complex plot of the eighteenth-century novelists, with its young hero on whom the thread of action is hung and its romantic love-interest. ... Scott's plot-work is poor, so that, reading him, disappointment after the first half of the book is almost inevitable, the first halves of *The Antiquary, Rob Roy, Old Mortality, Guy Mannering,* the first three-quarters even of *The Heart of Midlothian*, are superb – and then how mechanically their author solves the riddles he has perfunctorily set himself. Scott knew this himself. In his introduction to *The Fortunes of Nigel* he quotes Dryden's remark : 'In short, sir, you are of opinion with Bayes – "What the devil does the

plot signify, except to bring in fine things ?" But it brought in things that were not so fine, things Scott knew nothing about and cared less. It made him set at the centre of his fictions the romantic hero and the romantic heroine. It is the fate of the romantic hero to be colourless, and perhaps Scott's are no more so than Nicholas Nickleby; the one hero who does emerge as a living character is Ravenswood, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and, as has been often pointed out, he lives as the dispossessed nobleman, not the romantic lover. Scott fails whenever he attempts to deal with romantic or sexual love. We see him, rightly enough, as a great romantic writer, indeed, with Byron, the central figure in the European romantic movement. But he was not romantic in Byron's way; passion was alien to him; he writes as a hard-headed, commonsense professional man, whose values are those of a settled society traditionally ordained" (Walter Allen, *The English Novel*, Penguin Books, 1958, pp. 121-22). But Scott was a historical novelist and his primary aim was not to delineate sexual passion but to show how fanatical opposition to historic change leads to civil war and retards national progress. As Pat Rogers put it, "The origin of Scott's view of history was in the Scottish Enlightenment, which pioneered the development of societies, yet at the same time in the presentation of it in his novels there is much that is Romantic. As we have seen in Jane Austen the Romantic tends to be at odds with the realism of a realistic novel. One way that the two can come together in a novel is when a romantic character seeks to impose his mental ideas on the real world. That is what happens in *Waverley*. Young Edward Waverley dreams of love, honour and loyalty. He becomes a soldier in the Hanoverian army, although the traditional loyalty of his family is Jacobite. When he visits a Highland clan preparing to take up arms in support of the Stewart line, Waverley, in a rush of loyal emotion, joins them. The consequence is that he takes part in an ugly civil war, and in the end has to wake up to the irresponsibility of his actions. The plot of *Waverley* has a pattern similar to the early Jane Austen novels – it submits romantic ideas to the test of hard experience and finds them wanting. That, however, is not all. Many readers of Jane Austen have found in her work, despite the fact that her heroines come to terms with an unromantic world, a considerable hostility to a society that demands such conformity to its values. In Scott that undertow is much stronger. It may be that Edward Waverley has to grow out of his idle dreams, but the conflict between Hanoverian and Jacobite is larger than can be reflected in the education of one man. At the end of the novel the reader's attention is on the stature of the losers – the heroic chieftain Fergus MacIvor, and the eccentric idealist, the Baron of Bradwardine. The contrast between two conflicting sides, especially when one of them may be regarded as more progressive than the other, is common in Scott's novels. He writes about Saxon and Norman, Roundhead and Cavalier, Covenanter and Episcopalian. A Scott novel may ostensably end happily, but the prevailing tone is often, none the less, elegiac, because of what is lost in revolution or the march of progress. Idealism may not succeed in the world, but Scott will not allow that it does

not exist. Scott is at odds with the anti-heroic mood that is usually associated with realism. He is a romantic novelist because he will not abandon idealism, however unpromising the circumstances for its fulfilment." (Pat Rogers, 'The Novel', *An Outline of English Literature*, Oxford, 1998, pp. 297-8).

The Plot of Ivanhoe : Its Aim and Background

Ivanhoe has been plotted to envisage the coalescence of Anglo-Saxon and Norman into English identity in the interest of national progress during the reign of King Richard I, Coeur de Lion, who ruled over England from 1189 to 1199 but spent most of his time in crusading against the Sarecens in Palestine for the recovery of the Holy Land. In his absence his profligate and ambitious brother, Prince John, acted as regent and mismanaged the affairs of the country with the support of some powerful and dissolute Norman nobles who fortified their castles, reduced all around them to a state of vassalage and headed such forces as might enable them to play an effective role in national convulsions. Prince John and his Norman cronies made life difficult for the Saxon population. As the omniscient narrator points out, "A circumstance which greatly tended to enhance the tyranny of the nobility and the sufferings of the inferior classes, arose from the consequences of the conquest by Duke William of Normandy. Four generations had not sufficed to blend the hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, or to unite, by common language and mutual interests, two hostile races, one of which still felt the elation of triumph, while the other groaned under all the consequences of defeat. The power had been completely placed in the hands of the Norman nobility by the event of the battle of Hastings, and it had been used, as our histories assure us, with no moderate hand. The whole race of Saxon princes and nobles had been extirpated or disinherited, with few or no exceptions; nor were the numbers great who possessed land in the country of their fathers, even as proprietors of the second, or of yet inferior classes. The royal policy had long been to weaken, by every means, legal or illegal, the strength of a part of the population which was justly considered as nourishing the most inveterate antipathy to their victor. All the monarchs of the Norman race had shown the most marked predilection for their Norman subjects; the laws of the chase, and many others equally unknown to the milder and more free spirit of the Saxon constitution, had been fixed upon the necks of the subjugated inhabitants, to add weight, as it were, to the feudal chains with which they were loaded. At court, and in the castles of the great nobles, where the pomp and state of a court was emulated, Norman-French was the only language employed; in courts of law, the pleadings and judgments were delivered in the same tongue. In short, French was the language of honour, of chivalry, and even of justice, while the far more manly and expressive Anglo-Saxon was abandoned to the use of rustics and hinds, who knew no other" (*Ivanhoe, op. cit.*, p. 4). This conflict between the Saxon underdogs and their Norman masters

dominates the plot from its beginning up to its end, but it is accompanied by a love-affair between two youngsters whose marriage helps to resolve it amicably.

Its Beginning

The plot of *Ivanhoe* begins with an exploration of the conflict between the disaffected Saxon natives and their Norman rulers. Cedric, the die-hard Saxon franklin of Rotherwood, lives under a *de facto* Norman ruler like King Richard I or Prince John and yet plans to restore the Saxon royal line to the throne of England after 125 years of the Norman Conquest over her. He wants Athelstane of Coningsburgh to contest the succession to the throne of the country with King Richard I, because he happens to be a descendant of her last Saxon king, Edward he Confessor. He also plans to marry his beautiful Saxon ward, Rowena, to Athelstane in order to consolidate the Saxon dynasty. He is so obsessed with the execution of his political and patriarchal plans that he does not care to consult the wishes of the two persons involved, because he sees himself as thereby rendering 'an important service to the Saxon cause'. He even disowns his son, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, because he fears that the burgeoning romantic attachment between his son and his ward, Rowena, will obstruct the execution of his plan to consolidate the Saxon royal line. Ivanhoe then joins King Richard I on the Third Crusade in Palestine and wins the king's affection by doing so. But king Richard I is captured and imprisoned on his return journey by Leopold V, the Duke of Austria. Consequently, his brother, Prince John, becomes ambitious to hold the Crown himself and asks the king of France to persuade the Duke of Austria to prolong his captivity. In the meantime Prince John strengthens his own faction in the country in order to dispute the succession, in case of Richard's death, with the legitimate heir, Arthur, the Duke of Brittany. Being a man of light, profligate and perfidious character, he enlists the support of like-minded Norman nobles and knights who are opposed to the heroic and righteous Richard. He and his dissolute supporters maintain an extravagant life-style by borrowing or extorting money from the Jews and let the people wade in poverty. Some of the disgruntled members of the public become outlaws of the forest and loot the rich while infectious diseases sweep off the poor to their early graves. But Prince John organizes a great tournament at Ashby de la Zouche in order to entertain his supporters and the people at large. However, a Disinherited Knight and a Black Knight jointly defeat all the knights of Prince John's faction, including the fierce Templar Bois-Guilbert and the cruel noble Front-de-Boeuf. Though the Disinherited Knight is wounded in the combat, he is declared the champion on account of the disappearance of the Black Knight from the lists at its end. When the Disinherited Knight gives up his disguise to receive the trophy from Rowena, the Queen of Beauty and of Love for the day, he turns out to be Cedric's banished son, Ivanhoe. Rowena is moved to see him wounded and congratulates him on his success in the

combat. Cedric is worried to find Rowena still sympathetic towards Ivanhoe, but he resolves to marry her to Athelstane by all means in his power. Prince John is crestfallen not only to see all the knights of his faction defeated by Ivanhoe but also to know from the King of France that his brother Richard has been released from prison in Austria. He asks his crafty adviser, Fitzurse, to persuade all of his supporters to gather at York to enthrone him before Richard's return to the English soil. But the die is cast against him.

Its Middle

The middle of the plot brings to a head not only the conflict between the Saxons and the Normans but also the struggle for power between King Richard and his brother, Prince John. De Bracy, the leader of the mercenaries in the payroll of Prince John, plans to marry Cedric's ward, Rowena, in a bold manner. So he and his companions disguise themselves as the outlaws of the forest, lie in ambush for Cedric, Rowena, Athelstane, the wounded Ivanhoe, the Jew Isaac and his daughter Rebecca on their way back to Rotherwood after the combat at Ashby, and carry them off to Front-de-Boeuf's Castle of Torquilstone as captives. But Cedric's swineherd, Gurth, and his jester, Wamba, escape into the forest of oaks and come back with a force of outlaws and Saxons led by Locksley alias Robin Hood and the Black Knight. After an exciting fight, the castle is besieged and all the captives are rescued, but the Templar Bois-Guilbert succeeds in carrying Isaac's daughter, Rebecca, off to the Preceptory of Templestowe in order to make her his mistress. Moreover, De Bracy is captured by the Black Knight and asked to leave the country, Front-de-Boeuf perishes in the flames of his own castle which is set on fire by his father's revengeful concubine, Ulrica, in the course of its siege, and Athelstane becomes unconscious after receiving a blow on his head during the fight. Cedric thanks Locksley and the Black Knight for coming to the rescue of his party, but he refuses to share the loot of the castle with them and goes away to prepare for the funeral of Athelstane. Prince John waits for his supporters at York, but De Bracy alone comes to inform him that Front-de-Boeuf is dead, Bois-Guilbert has fled and he himself is leaving the country for France on account of King Richard's arrival in it in the guise of the Black Knight. Prince John gets the shock of his life to hear the news of Richard's arrival in the country, but his adviser, Fitzurse, promises to arrest Richard. However, Richard foils Fitzurse's attempt to arrest him and orders him to leave the country. Lucas Beaumanoir, the Grand Master of the Templars, saves Rebecca from the dishonourable advances of Bois-Guilbert, but exposes her to the charge of practising witchcraft in the form of herbal medicine. She escapes death sentence by demanding trial by combat. As she happens to have cured the wounded Ivanhoe after the combat at Ashby, he appears as her champion, and in the encounter between him and Bois-Guilbert the latter falls dead. Rebecca is exonerated from the charge of witchcraft and goes home with her father. King Richard also

appears on the scene in his true form to order the execution of Albert de Malvoisin, the Preceptor of Templestowe, and the expulsion of Lucas Beaumanoir, the Grand Master of the Templars.

Its End

At the end King Richard takes charge of the affairs of the country, executes or banishes all the conspirators against him except Prince John, and promises to treat the Saxons justly. Athelstane recovers consciousness and refuses not only to contest Richard's succession to the throne but also to marry Rowena. Cedric is persuaded to give up his plan to restore the Saxon dynasty, alongwith his patriarchal design for Rowena so as to enable her to marry the man she loves. Consequently, Ivanhoe and Rowena are married in the presence of King Richard which marks a critical rapprochement between the Saxons and Normans. King Richard's attendance initiates an era in which 'the hitherto degraded Saxons' begin to attain 'a safer and more certain prospect of attaining their just rights, than they could reasonably hope from the precarious chance of a civil war'. But Rebecca suppresses her love for Ivanhoe and leaves the country with her father to serve the sick and the poor of the world at large. Ivanhoe continues to serve King Richard till he is killed in the war with France. 'With the life of a generous, but rash and romantic monarch, perish all the projects which his ambition and generosity had formed.'

Conclusion

The plot of *Ivanhoe* explores the conflicts between the Crown and the powerful nobles, between the conquered Saxons and their Norman conquerors, and between King Richard and his ambitious brother, Prince John. At the same time it brings into play the legendary Robin Hood and his band of outlaws, and creates a colourful replica of the age of chivalry and romance with all its elaborate rituals and costumes and its values of honour and glory. It is intended to bring about a reconciliation between the disaffected Saxons and their Norman rulers, but it does so by means of the marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena in the presence of the just and generous Norman King Richard. It is packed with existing tournaments, ambushes and sieges, but they are too neatly arranged to be convincing. The triumph of Ivanhoe over the fierce knights of Prince John's faction, King Richard's suppression of Prince John's conspiracy against him and Athelstane's resusciation at his funeral seem to be quite artificially contrived to gather the loose ends. The love-affair between Ivanhoe and Rowena is perfunctory and their marriage prompts the sensible and spirited Rebecca to leave the country for good. The premature end of king Richard's life in the war with France is ominous for 'merry' England.

Q. 2. "Like many other novels of Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* too ends in a union, which is not only a marital union but also a social and political one." Discuss.

Ans. In *Ivanhoe*, Scott explores the conflicts between the Crown and the powerful barons, between the conquered Saxons and their Norman conquerors, and between King Richard I and his scheming brother, Prince John, in the feudal society of medieval England. The exact date at which the action of the novel is set is 1193, when King Richard I stands imprisoned in Austria on his way back to England from the Third Crusade in Palestine and his brother, Prince John, is trying to capture power with the help of some dissolute Norman barons and military monks. This is just over 125 years after the conquest of Anglo-Saxon England by the Normans under William the Conqueror. But the omniscient narrator points out, "Four generations had not sufficed to blend the hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons, or to unite, by common language and mutual interests, two hostile races, one of which still felt the elation of triumph, while the other groaned under all the consequences of defeat. The power had been completely placed in the hands of the Norman nobility by the event of the battle of Hastings, and it had been used, as our histories assure us, with no moderate hand. The whole race of Saxon princes and nobles had been extirpated or disinherited, with few or no exceptions; nor were the numbers great who possessed land in the country of their fathers, even as proprietors of the second, or of yet inferior classes. The royal policy had long been to weaken, by every means, legal or illegal, the strength of a part of the population which was justly considered as nourishing the most inveterate antipathy to their victor. All the monarchs of the Norman race had shown the most marked predilection for their Norman subjects; the laws of the chase, and many others equally unknown to the milder and more free spirit of the Saxon constitution, had been fixed upon the necks of the subjugated inhabitants, to add weight, as it were, to the feudal chains with which they were loaded. At court and in the castles of the great nobles, where the pomp and state of court was emulated,

Norman-French was the only language employed; in courts of law, the pleadings and judgements were delivered in the same tongue. In short, French was the language of honour, of chivalry, and even of justice, while the far more manly and expressive Anglo-Saxon was abandoned to the use of rustics and hinds, who knew no other." (*Ivanhoe, op. cit.*, Chapter 1, p. 4).

As David Blair has pointed out, "This clash of cultures is worked into the novel insistently from its first page, although it is, historically regarded, a falsification of the true situation by the end of the twelfth century. As Christopher Hill has shown in an influential essay, the 'Norman Yoke' theory had thrived on the idea of an ancient Saxon democracy extinguished by the Norman Conquest and slowly won back during the subsequent 700-plus years, until the defeat of a threatened second French invasion in the Napoleonic Wars. In fact, by the time at which the novel is set, much of the linguistic and racial coalescence to which Scott looks forward at the end of the novel had already occurred. Certainly the division between King and barons on the one side and feudal dependants on the other was no longer as simple and as racially entrenched as *Ivanhoe* suggests. When Magna Carta was forced on King John on 1215, this most celebrated enshrining of English rights was drafted by nobles who were of French extraction, as John Sutherland rightly insists. The attraction for Scott of this myth of 1190s, however, lay in his existing preoccupations with historical change and the trajectory of national 'progress'. In the Jacobites and High Tories of the 1688-1745 period Scott had studied a group whose often fanatical adherence to the Stuart cause combined heroic idealism with an arguably perverse and futile desire to reverse the course of history. The constitutional moments that had brought to the throne William and Mary in 1688 and George I in 1714—whatever the local arguments for and against their legitimacy, and whatever the individual merits of the beneficiaries and victims—were to be recognised as the workings of historical change. Progress depended, therefore, Scott wanted to suggest, on accommodating oneself to what could not be avoided or undone, and on working as one nation, despite underlying prejudices, deflecting the energies of civil violence into political debate. In the setting of the late twelfth century Scott saw the possibility of realising in the position of the disaffected Saxons, a pre-enactment of the dilemma of the disaffected Jacobites of more recent history." (David Blair, 'Introduction', *Ivanhoe, op. cit.*, pp. X-XI).

In *Ivanhoe* Scott encapsulates this in the character of Cedric the die-hard Saxon franklin of Rotherwood. Like the Jacobites, Cedric lives under one *de facto* monarch, the Norman Henry, Richard or John, but without conceding his right to the throne. In his neighbour Athelstane of Coningsburgh he recognises the legitimate claimant to the Saxon crown that was worn by his ancestor, Edward the Confessor. He also plans to marry his ward, Rowena, a descendant of King Alfred, to

Athelstane in order to consolidate the Saxon royal line. In this plan of Cedric, Scott captures some of the blind obsessiveness and patriarchal presumption that readers of his earlier novels may recognise from some of his Jacobite characters. The marriage of Rowena and Athelstane is a project to be pushed through irrespective of the wishes of the two persons most involved, because Cedric sees himself as thereby rendering 'an important service to the Saxon cause.' Jacobite-esque, too, is the way in which his memory is charged with stories of a heroic or betrayed Saxon past, as in his rehearsal of the perfidy of 'Tosti' and the last heroic Saxon moment of his defeat before the cataclysm at Hastings. Turning from these idealised images to the unheroic Athelstane, on whom his hopes depend, and who is only preoccupied with where his next meal is coming from, Cedric ruefully encounters the futility of trying to make present generations conform to the myths of a heroic past. Nevertheless, Cedric clings to the remnants of his project, because his very identity is constructed out of the hopes associated with it.

Cedric even disowns his own son, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, on account of the burgeoning romantic attachment between him and Rowena, which he considers detrimental to his plan for consolidating the Saxon dynasty. As a result, Ivanhoe joins King Richard on the Third Crusade in Palestine and there wins the king's affection. Thus Cedric's ideological devotion to the Saxon cause leads to a suppression or perversion of his natural feelings. When the gravely wounded Ivanhoe is suddenly disclosed to Cedric in the lists at Ashby, 'paternal affection' gains a temporary 'victory over pride and patriotism' before the latter resume their determining authority over his motives and actions. One measure of the distorting effect of fanatical attachment of the cause, then, is this overlaying of natural bonds and natural characteristics with an acquired, harsher and more driven character. This is observable not just in Cedric, but also in those around him. It is central to Scott's conception of Rowena that, nurtured in the hothouse of Cedric's deference to her as a descendant of King Alfred, and at the same time subject to his fierce projects of her destiny, she too has acquired a character which is not natural to her. Though she gives a spirited and contemptuous rebuff to De Bracy's attempt to woo her at Torquilstone, she is said to be naturally mild, gentle and timid but made wilful and domineering by the circumstances of her education. The agenda that underpins this conception of Rowena's two 'characters' runs deep in the novel. In its most extreme form it is reflected in Urfried or Ulrica, Torquilstone's resident arsonist madwoman in the attic. As she explains to Cedric in Chapter 27, the perversion of her natural female character has been forged too, in its way, by the brutalities of Norman usurpation and Saxon servitude. Her Saxon kin slaughtered, herself raped and kept as a concubine by the Norman conqueror, her experiences have turned her into a kind of Fury for whom violence and redress are a personal obsession as well as an expression of faction and racial memory. The

potential for violence spawning violence, for grievances perpetuating themselves bloodily from generation to generation, are here most intensely and melodramatically expressed by Scott. In Ulrica the brooding, obsessive nature of political, racial grievance is intensified to a madness which validates itself by an appeal to the pagan deities of Norse mythology rather than to any of the many Christian saints whom Scott has provided. Ulrica has all but regressed to being pre-Saxon and therefore pre-English : a strain of darker, more barbaric German Gothicism animates and defines her. At the end she sets her tormentor's castle on fire and perishes in its flames along with him.

When King Richard takes up the reins of office after suppressing his brother's rebellion, he summons Cedric to his court at York and asks him to get reconciled to his disinherited son, Wilfred, and to give his consent to his son's marriage to his ward, Rowena. Cedric obeys Richard's summons in spite of himself. The return of the heroic and generous King Richard shatters Cedric's hope of restoring the Saxon royal line to the throne of England and the mutual dissent of Rowena and Athelstane frustrates his attempt to unite the Saxons by means of their marriage. Consequently, Cedric gives up his political project to restore the Saxon dynasty in England, along with his patriarchal designs for Rowena, thus allowing her and his son to fulfil the prompting of their hearts and get married. So Ivanhoe and Rowena are married in the presence of King Richard and their marriage leads to the union of the Saxons and Normans into a single nation. As the omniscient narrator is at pains to emphasise, the marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena marks a critical rapproachment between the Saxons and Normans. King Richard's attendance initiates an era in which 'the hitherto degraded Saxons' begin to see 'a safer and more certain prospect of attaining their just rights, than they could reasonably hope from the precarious chance of a civil war.' We can see here the advocacy of the progressive social justice that runs through the Scottish novels. Furthermore : "These distinguished nuptials were celebrated by the attendance of the high-born Normans, as well as Saxons, joined with the universal jubilee of the lower orders, that marked the marriage of two individuals as a pledge of the future peace and harmony betwixt two races, which, since that period, have been so completely mingled, that the distinction has become wholly invisible. Cedric lived to see this union approximate towards its completion ; for as the two nations mixed in society and formed inter-marriages with each other, the Normans abated their scorn, and the Saxons were refined from their rusticity." (*Ivanhoe, op. cit.*, Chapter 44, pp. 401-402).

Q. 3. "The issue of race marks *Ivanhoe* out from the novels that precede it." Discuss.

Ans. In *Ivanhoe* Scott portrays a multi-racial society, in which Saxons and Normans as well as Christians and Jews are not just

contentious ideological and linguistic groups but distinct races. He views the marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena 'as a pledge of the future peace and harmony betwixt two races', but it is not an inter-racial marriage. He makes Isaac the Jew of York and his angelic daughter, Rebecca, leave Christian England for Islamic Granada for fear of persecution. Consequently, he is charged with injecting consciousness of race and a sizeable dose of racism into the British mind. There are several dimensions to this in the novel. One is Scott's adherence to the polygenic theories of racial origin promulgated at the time by Robert Knox, who propounded the view that the 'lighter' races were superior to the 'darker'. While these theories were predictably embraced by the advocates of slavery and imperialism, the distinction was argued to pertain even to light-skinned races, so that fair-haired and fair-skinned racial groups were superior to darker peoples. Scott plays with this rather fallaciously as a means of distinguishing between Saxon and Norman in the novel. Cedric, Rowena and Ivanhoe are all reported as having fair hair and blue eyes, while Bois-Guilbert is said to be marked by 'features.....burnt almost to Negro blackness.' Exposure to the English climate has in contrast merely made Locksley's face 'brown as a hazel-nut'. But Scott does not pursue these racial types consistently. Other Normans in the novel are often given countenances in which fierce passions are disclosed, but Scott is rarely explicit about their colouring. More tellinglyly, Scott makes a point of appropriating King Richard to the Saxon racial type rather than to the Norman, to which of course he properly belongs as a descendant of William the Conqueror. When in the friar's hermitage he takes off the helmet which has maintained his anonymity throughout the tournament at Ashby, he reveals 'a head thick-curled with yellow hair, high features, blue eyes, remarkably bright and sparkling.' It helps of course to suggest that he is more heroic and generous than Prince John and can therefore effect a reconciliation between the Saxons and Normans. It may also indicate that the fair/dark racial typing is not being exhaustively pursued by Scott. It is, in any case, a racial distinction which, politicised in the novel by Saxons and Normans alike, is shown to be regressive, and one which subsequent English history, it is suggested, has happily eliminated. Although the marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena is a Saxon one, it foreshadows the coming together of 'Saxon' and 'Norman' into 'English', both linguistically and racially, thereby initiating England's 'modern' national identity.

The other dimension of the racial issue is the distinction between Christian and Jew, which has received serious scrutiny. In fact, the inclusion of Isaac the Jew of York and his daughter, Rebecca, in *Ivanhoe* has been interpreted in two different ways. According to Sutherland, the portrayal of Isaac was prompted by the public outrage at the way the Rothschilds had allegedly made a killing out of the Napoleonic Wars, as Isaac has out of the Crusades (John Sutherland, *The Life of Walter Scott*, Blackwell, 1995, pp. 230-1). But Michael Regussis sees it as a conscious

intervention in contemporary European controversies about national identity and the 'conversion' of the Jews (Michael Regussis, *Figures of Conversion : 'The Jewish Question' and 'English National Identity'*, Duke University Press, 1995, Chapter 3).

These two ways of reading the Jewish issue in the novel follow very different agendas and find different points of focus. In Sutherland's reading the focus for what he proposes as Scott's hostility to the Jews is Isaac. One of the things that may strike modern readers in this respect is how Scott, while routinely deploring in general terms the prejudice with which Jews are treated in the world of the novel, succeeds in the figure of Isaac in recreating with uncanny skill the racial stereotype through which such prejudice routinely perpetuates itself. Isaac easily slips into being the undignified, whining, wily, cringing, ingratiating, grasping stage-Jew of popular anti-Semitic myth. Scott's characterisation of him and the delineation of his speech and mannerisms are certainly open to the charge of complacency if not of racial antipathy. Isaac seems to be constructed uncritically out of bits of the Old Testament and *The Merchant of Venice*, without there being any great attempt on Scott's part to reimagine the figure of the medieval Jew. Shakespeare's Shylock, whatever his popular currency, may seem to modern eyes at best a very limiting template for the depiction of Jewry in *Ivanhoe*.

The argument pursued by Regussis, however, sees Scott as much more positively and subtly engaged in the Jewish issue and shifts the focus from Isaac to Rebecca. In her successive persecutions, first at the hands of Bois-Guilbert and then at the hands of Grand Master Lucas Beaumanoir, Regussis perceives a conscious allusion to the age-old cultural project of forcibly converting the Jews, a project which in the early years of the nineteenth century had been revived and given new energy in discussions of the forging of national identity in Europe. The model of national identity and national progress which underpins *Ivanhoe*, as has been seen when discussing the Saxon-Norman issue, is multi-racial and proposes that inter-racial tension is historically resolved by rapproachment and assimilation rather than by cultural eradication. So, in his depiction of the attempts to rape, seduce and eliminate Rebecca, Scott is seen in this reading to offer an anxious critique of historical and contemporary attempts to solve the Jewish problem in Europe by xenophobically driven attempts at enforced conversion or exclusion. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock's daughter, Jessica, marries a Christian and converts to Christianity. Here in *Ivanhoe*.Isaac's daughter does not ; and the final interview between Rowena and Rebecca, as Regussis argues, is placed in the novel after the Rowena-Ivanhoe nuptials in such a way as to signify that the problem of English national identity is not simply a resolved issue between Saxon and Norman, but also an unresolved issue of the position of English Jewry. Thus Rebecca represents 'the blot on the conscience of England in so far as she represents the religious and racial question that England cannot solve.'

This version of Scott's approach to the issue of race in general and to Jewishness in particular is nearer to truth than Sutherlands. It is personally sympathetic, tinged with national and racial guilt, and anxious about extremist nationalistic projects in post-Napoleonic Europe. Certainly, in identifying Rebecca as by far the most significant Jewish character in the novel, the general thrust of Regussis's analysis harmonises with the experience of generations of readers who have seen in her the real heroine of *Ivanhoe*. The contemporary reviewer in the *Edinburgh Monthly Review* declared that 'in the whole range of fictitious composition, we hold Rebecca unsurpassed' and that she was 'in moral as well as personal beauty a matchless creature.' In his Preface to the Magnum Opus edition of the novel Scott wrote that 'the character of the fair Jewess found so much favour in the eyes of some fair readers, that the writer was much censured, because, when arranging the fates of the characters....he had not assigned the hand of Wilfred to Rebecca, rather than the less interesting Rowena.' The Victorian critic, Julia Wedgewood, called her Scott's 'finest female creation' and, noting the contrast with Shakespeare's Jessica, as 'a voice to a race downtrodden for ages'. Indeed, it is part of her moral beauty that in Rebecca a deeply held sense of history and heritage, allied to a visionary sense of racial destiny, is sustained without rancour, impatience and overt hostility. Rebecca is much more adapted and reconciled to the conditions and constraints that the world of the novel provides than the dissolute and ambitious Christian males. As Bois-Guilbert can imagine doing but cannot, she can rise above the struggle for power and pleasure that dominates the confused medieval world of *Ivanhoe* and act both as its healer and as its prophet of peace and happiness.