

ERIK SIMPSON

“A Good One Though Rather for the Foreign Market”: Mercenary Writing and Scott’s *Quentin Durward*

The Mercenary Context: Machiavelli, Ferguson, Smith

IN *THE PRINCE* (1513), NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI SETS OUT PRINCIPLES THAT I have ever since grounded opposition to the employment of mercenary and auxiliary troops.¹ “Mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous,” he writes:

Any man who founds his state on mercenaries can never be safe or secure, because they are disunited, ambitious, undisciplined, and untrustworthy—bold fellows among their friends, but cowardly in the face of the enemy; they have no fear of God, nor loyalty to men. They will protect you from ruin only as long as nobody assaults you; in peace you are at their mercy, and in war at the mercy of your enemies. The reason is that they have no other passions or incentives to hold the field, except their desire for a bit of money, and that is not enough to make them die for you.²

1. Machiavelli’s Italian has no one-word name for the English noun mercenary. Machiavelli uses a variety of adjectival forms, such as *soldati mercenarii* (meaning “mercenary soldiers”) in the title of the twelfth chapter. *OED* notes that “the main sense divisions in English [of *mercenary*], including pejorative application of the adjective, are found already in classical Latin. The earliest use in English refers to the ‘hireling’ (Vulgate *mercenarius*) of John 10:12.” The specifically military applications of *mercenary* in English develop in the sixteenth century but after Machiavelli wrote in 1513, according to *OED*. More general usage indicating “[a] person who works merely for money or other material reward; a hireling” date back at least to Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (“mercenary, *n.* and *a.*,” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989, *OED Online*, Oxford UP [hereafter cited as *OED*]) <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00306106>>.

2. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Adams, second ed. (New York: Norton, 1992) 34.

SiR, 48 (Winter 2009)

For Machiavelli, the soldiers' willingness to market their military allegiance implies a more general lack of loyalty to their fellows, to their commanders, and to God. This characterization can seem to imply a simple argument that mercenaries reveal their immorality by selling their souls—selling, that is, the right to have sincere, autonomous allegiances to institutions. In Machiavelli's eyes, however, the problem with mercenaries is that they sell their souls incompletely: their stubbornly independent souls always threaten to reveal themselves in cowardice or rebellion. Machiavelli repeatedly contrasts mercenaries and auxiliaries with the prince's "own armies," defined as his "own subjects, citizens, or dependents" (40). In this context, what appears to be a failing of selfhood, the mercenaries' willingness to bargain away their loyalties, reveals itself as a problematic self-possession. By coming into being as an economic self, as a party to a contract that replaces the tie between state and subject, the mercenary renders impossible the ideally sacrificial volunteerism by which the prince makes soldiers his "own."

This is the paradoxical logic of mercenary action: as an economic agent autonomously signing away autonomy, the mercenary embodies at once the liberating and constricting potential of contractual societies. Later societies increasingly based on economic contractualism would therefore continue to pay special attention to the figure of the mercenary. In late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British culture, that figure stood at the intersection of two trajectories: the development and refinement of Enlightenment political economy on the one hand, and on the other a series of wars that raised new questions about the proper roles of militias, auxiliaries, and mercenaries in the British military. The broad, pejorative sense of *mercenary*—the noun or adjective related to the pursuit of gain at the expense of ethics—came into play as writers sought to define the proper boundaries of material pursuit in economies founded upon aggregated self-interest. The narrow meaning of *mercenary*—"a soldier paid to serve in a foreign army or other military organization" (*OED*)—gained prominence as commercial societies sought to reconcile their emphasis on individual pursuit of self-interest with the martial values of hierarchical discipline, national affiliation, and self-sacrifice.

This tension between economic and military systems of organization gave rise to a split within Scottish Enlightenment thought about standing armies, which represented a martial manifestation of the division of labor.³

3. For more on this subject in the Scottish Enlightenment, aside from sources I note elsewhere, see Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1990), especially chapter six; Donald Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics: An Essay in Historiographic Revision* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978); Lawrence Delbert Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: U of

Advocates of militia-based domestic defense took a Machiavellian position against full-time professional soldiers as potential instruments of treason and tyranny. On the other hand, as Richard B. Sher has shown,

Standing armies were associated with modernity not only because they were literally the products of the modern European nation-state but also because they appeared to embody modern principles of efficiency and economic rationality. Above all, they embodied the principle of division of labor and its corollary, specialization of function, which made for a more efficient army while at the same time threatening to disqualify untrained civilians for effective military service.⁴

Thus, in *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith “painted a dismal picture of militias as vastly inferior to standing armies in all periods and places” (Sher, “Adam Ferguson” 245), whereas Adam Ferguson, typically more concerned than was Smith with the drawbacks of modern economics, devoted himself philosophically and politically to a British militia and—after the militia act of 1757 deliberately excluded Scots—to Scottish participation in that militia.⁵

The pro-militia writings of Ferguson and Alexander Carlyle are suffused with anti-mercenary rhetoric that resists standing armies by equating native and foreign professional forces. Ferguson posits in *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* that national defense suffers from a specialized military force “whether these be foreigners or natives,” and a pamphlet thought to be Carlyle’s argues that “it is surely better to be a little less rich and commer-

North Carolina P, 1982); and Kathryn Sutherland, “Fictional Economies: Adam Smith, Walter Scott, and the Nineteenth-Century Novel,” *ELH* 54 (1987): 97–127.

4. Sher, “Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and the Problem of National Defense,” *The Journal of Modern History* 61 (1989): 240–68 (243).

5. Ferguson provides an approach to applying the principles of competition to military recruitment in an anonymous 1756 pamphlet. There Ferguson worries that gentlemen are no longer taking military posts because

Our Commerce hath . . . affected our Manners. It has increased our Wealth, and Wealth has become in a great measure the Mark of Distinction and Honour. . . . Even our Gentry have learned to estimate Possessions in the same Manner, and we may well be ashamed to own, how few are found in our Army, to whom the Pay is no Temptation. (*Reflections Previous to the Establishment of a Militia* [London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1756] 8–9)

Ferguson proposes accommodating the people’s competitive impulse with a system of prize competitions that would lure poachers into the army and rank officers by merit. In this pamphlet we see Ferguson, though steadfast in his desire to maintain a citizen soldiery, attempting to put the economist’s tools of competition and incentive to work in populating the army. This is Ferguson’s effort to stand under the banner of competition and progress without allowing what he thought to be a detrimental professionalization of the army.

cial" than to risk, like the Roman empire, "becom[ing] so luxurious or effeminate, as to leave the use of arms to strangers and mercenaries" (qtd. in Sher, "Adam Ferguson" 247).⁶ In his later university lectures, Ferguson uses "Professional Soldier" and "Mercenary Soldier" as synonyms.⁷ That is, Ferguson and Carlyle attack standing armies by extending the application of commonly held anti-mercenary sentiments to every kind of professional soldiering.

To argue for the loyalty of Scottish fighters in the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellions, Ferguson and Carlyle had to contend with the uncomfortable connection between two facts: a well-known tradition of Scottish men serving as mercenaries in Continental armies and the new development of an internationalist economics in Scotland. The delicate mixing of internationalist economics and nationalist politics at such a moment may help explain Smith's seemingly incongruous support of the Scottish militia movement, Smith and Ferguson's mutual use of *mercenary* in its pejorative sense, and Ferguson and Carlyle's anxiously heated demonization of mercenary warfare.⁸ Ferguson and Carlyle's remarks are part of a broader movement that John Robertson has documented: after the Jacobite rebel-

6. The first quotation in this sentence comes from Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767; New Brunswick: Transaction, 1995) 227.

7. For example, take the following passage from Ferguson's lectures:

The Husbandman, the Labourer, and the Country Gentleman may in the use of arms and discipline be inferior to the Professional Soldier. But there is no reason why he should be inferior to what a Citizen may be made. He has the advantage of Affection and Principle over the Mercenary Soldier. (qtd. in Sher "Adam Ferguson" 256)

As Sher explains, Ferguson did accept the necessity of standing armies in polished nations, but he sought to limit their responsibilities to matters that involved "specific problems that had little or nothing to do with 'national defense' in the traditional sense of that term as the defense of the homeland itself" ("Adam Ferguson" 255).

8. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), for example, Smith writes that "a mercenary exchange of good offices" can take a people only so far, but "[s]ociety . . . cannot subsist among those who are at all times ready to hurt and injure one another" (ed., D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith* [rpt. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1994] 86). Similarly, in his *Essay* (1767), Ferguson uses *mercenary* to indicate the economic shortcomings of earlier societies. In one of many examples, he writes,

The trader, in rude ages, is short-sighted, fraudulent, and mercenary; but in the progress and advanced state of his art, his views are enlarged, his maxims are established: he becomes punctual, liberal, faithful, and enterprising; and in the period of general corruption, he alone has every virtue, except the force to defend his acquisitions. (112)

Though Smith and Ferguson were at odds about the proper roles of standing armies and militias, *mercenary* is a moral as well as military term for both writers: Smith equates mercenary feeling to "read[iness] to hurt and injure," and Ferguson opposes it to "faith[]" and even to "enterpris[e]." Both writers carefully separate "mercenary" activity from the transactions of modern Scotland and Britain.

lion of 1745, Edinburgh's Moderate literati began to rekindle Scottish military pride within a Unionist context.⁹ Establishing Scottish opposition to "foreign mercenaries" enabled Enlightenment Scots not only to describe the boundaries of proper commercialism by contrast, but also to reinforce Scotland's membership as part of the domestic arena to which the mercenaries were "foreign."

These issues, from Scotland's role in the British military to the role of economic incentives in military life, would persist into the time of the Napoleonic Wars. The application of the issues altered, however, as the wars following the French Revolution changed the role of mercenaries in Europe. Although Britain subsidized the troops of its allies, the scale of the Napoleonic Wars limited the availability of troops for hire from other European powers.¹⁰ The need for domestic soldiers was enormous: the British army grew sixfold from 40,000 men in 1789 to roughly a quarter of a million in 1814; the Royal Navy grew even faster; and, by 1804, volunteer units came to comprise almost half a million men.¹¹ The economics of professional soldiering became a matter of growing concern as the British government increased financial incentives for volunteering: the payment or non-payment of soldiers and veterans through bonuses, salaries, and prizes became a frequent subject of public discourse. At the same time, writers reminded the populace that selfless service should be reward enough for fighting. The ideology of disinterested volunteer fighting thus existed alongside explicit discussions of recruiting soldiers with money. The resulting tension between the two necessitated discussion of the nature of mercenary activity.

In this context, Walter Scott emerged as a self-styled modern minstrel. The success of his books added another layer of paradox to the relationship between national writing and fighting: writing about the importance of chivalric self-sacrifice over economic interest became a good way for writ-

9. Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1985). The effort to unify British national defense came accompanied by a newly intense concern with preventing the flow of mercenaries into or out of the British service. Making bedfellows of Unionist economics and martial nostalgia created a newly vocal rejection of mercenary warfare. The Select Society of Edinburgh in 1755 examined the question of "whether it is consistent with sound politics to allow British subjects to serve as mercenaries in the foreign service?"; as Robertson points out, the question implies the logical converse of "English Patriot fixation with foreign mercenaries in the British service" (85).

10. Britain did employ some foreign and émigré troops, including Frenchmen who opposed their nation's Revolution as well as German, Swiss, and Dutch units. For an accounting of such forces, see René Chartrand, *Émigré & Foreign Troops in British Service: 1793-1802* (Elms Court: Osprey, 1999) and Chartrand, *Émigré & Foreign Troops in British Service (2): 1803-15* (Elms Court: Osprey, 2000).

11. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992) 287.

ers to make money. With a cultivated awareness of the philosophical underpinnings of the mercenary debate and of his own precarious place in the world of commerce, Scott frequently drew comparisons between the soldier's and the writer's professions that echo the issues raised in the militia debates. Scott's imaginative works, of course, allow him the freedoms and ironies of fiction. Using the power of romance to mystify the relationship between fighting and payment, Scott creates a world in which sympathetic soldiers, while retaining the selflessness and national loyalty that Ferguson wanted British fighters to preserve, can be subject to Smithian economic incentives.

Scott's Mercenaries and *Quentin Durward*

Scott's career led him repeatedly to consider the broad and narrow senses of mercenary action as he wrote about mercenary writing, mercenary fighting, and connections between the two categories. Despite his participation in the book trade and public comments about the sales of his books, Scott opposed writing primarily for profit. He articulated this position by differentiating properly commercial writing, in which acting on honorable motives could incidentally produce wealth, from mercenary writing. Scott was sensitive to allegations that he allowed financial gain to become his primary incentive to authorship: as Jane Millgate has shown, "what almost certainly gave Scott greatest pain at the time of *Marmion's* publication [in 1808], continued to disturb him twenty years later, and was sedulously omitted from Lockhart's quotations from the *Marmion* reviews, was the accusation that *Marmion* had been written primarily for money."¹² In the following year, the 21-year-old Byron would upbraid Scott for writing "for

12. Millgate, "For Lucre or for Fame: Lockhart's Versions of the Reception of *Marmion*," *RES* 44 (1993): 188–203 (196). In *Lord Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), Jerome Christensen makes the relevant point that the critical reaction to *Marmion* was also what prompted Scott to help create the *Quarterly Review* as a rival to the *Edinburgh Review* in a way that "dramatized the capacity of a commercial society to reproduce the battlefield at the level of culture." Christensen writes, "Scott's letters to Canning, to Murray, to George Ellis, and to William Gifford are peppered with military metaphors; he persuaded his collaborators to imagine that they were embarked upon a campaign of mimic warfare" (147). I would add that Scott's long essay "On the Present State of Periodical Criticism" (*Sir Walter Scott's Edinburgh Annual Register*, ed. Kenneth Curry [Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1977] 132–70) also speaks of the rivalry between the *Quarterly Review* and the *Edinburgh Review* and is similarly suffused with military metaphors, but Scott's public, anonymous voice in the *Register* strives to convey an independent and "moderate" position: "we rejoice in an opportunity of hearing both sides of a political question ably stated and supported" (166). Scott's essay in the *Register* argues that the founding of the *Edinburgh Review* occasioned a shift in periodical criticism away from the "mercenary drudgery" of puffing a bookseller's titles to a new kind of subservience created by entanglements in party loyalty, though those "may not be as potent a bribe to a generous mind as the direct

hire" in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809): "And thou, too, Scott! resign to minstrels rude / The wilder Slogan of a Border feud: / Let others spin their meagre lines for hire; / Enough for Genius, if itself inspire!"¹³ Writing to Byron in July 1812, Scott defends himself from what he calls "mercenary" motives: Scott expresses to Byron "a wish to clear my personal character from any tinge of mercenary or sordid feeling in the eyes of a contemporary of genius."¹⁴ Throughout his imaginative works and prose commentaries, Scott would later employ this metaphor of "mercenary" feeling to characterize mercenary soldiers and frequently to link those portrayals to analogous models of paid authorship.

Though probably reinforced by his own experience helping form the Edinburgh Volunteer Light Dragoons in 1797 and becoming "intoxicated with his new military status," Scott's use of military metaphors for authorship reflects a trend of his time.¹⁵ This language, which gained additional prominence during Scott's authorial career, built upon age-old analogies between pens and swords as well as upon eighteenth-century debates about mercenaries in Britain. In the early nineteenth century, the imperative to examine the commerce of writing and soldiering was reinforced both by the difficulty of recruiting soldiers for Britain's war with France and by the spectacular new bestseller status of Scott and Byron. As those two writers came to terms with the publicity attendant on their commercial success, each sought to occupy a moral high ground in the new terrain of literary economics. Byron criticized a "descent to trade" that, according to Marlon Ross, "is part of a profound transformation that is not fully comprehended by Byron, but which he nervously senses from a disturbing signal: a marked change in the distribution of literary works among different kinds of readers."¹⁶ Scott, too, sometimes expressed discomfort with what Ross calls a "new conception of readers as a market" ("Scott's" 269).

In *Quentin Durward* (1823), Scott links that new conception to a parallel development, one that Georg Lukács addresses in *The Historical Novel*: the shift, during and after the French Revolution, from mercenary to mass ar-

and sordid temptation of ambition or self-interest" (164). This example is consistent with Scott's general tendency to think of "mercenary" motives as economic rather than political, but the essay's comparison of economic and political departures from neutral disinterest offers a view of another side of Scott's thinking about authorial independence.

13. Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980-92) 1.257.

14. Scott, *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson, 12 vols. (London: Constable, 1932-37) 3: 138.

15. John Sutherland, *The Life of Walter Scott* (1995; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) 66.

16. Ross, "Scott's Chivalric Pose: The Function of Metrical Romance in the Romantic Period," *Genre* 19 (Fall 1986): 267-98 (269).

mies and the “qualitative difference” between them that is “precisely a question of their relations with the mass of the population.”¹⁷ For an anti-Revolutionary observer such as Scott, these national mass armies could represent the dangerous spread of French mob mentality to the military, but at the same time, if properly directed, such armies could connect military service with mass patriotic sentiment in a way that advocates of national militias had long supported, especially in Scotland.

In other writings earlier and later than *Quentin Durward*, Scott continued the Enlightenment tradition of reconciling national service and economic gain by differentiating mercenary action from virtuous service that happens to result in personal profit. Scott especially approves of compensation in land rather than cash. In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), he writes that the

Scotts of Eskdale, a stalwart band,
Came trooping down the Todshaw-hill;
By the sword they won their land,
And by the sword they hold it still.

(iv.x)¹⁸

The Scotts of Eskdale have gained their land directly by fighting, but the process could also be less direct. Marlborough, for instance, had been rewarded for his military prowess with Blenheim Palace, and Scott would build Abbotsford with profits from national writing.¹⁹ By contrast, mercenaries appear in the *Lay* as German “hackbut-men” employed by Henry VIII to accompany the English, having “sold their blood for foreign pay” (iv.vi). That the pay is foreign is crucial to Scott’s formulation of mercenary action; payment becomes problematic only when it interferes with familial or national loyalty. The mercenaries have “sold their blood,” but the Scotts of Eskdale have enriched theirs.

In *Ivanhoe*, Scott introduces Condottieri as “mercenaries belonging to no particular nation”; they are caricatures of faithlessness.²⁰ Later, in the 1830

17. Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983) 23.

18. Here and throughout, I cite *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* by canto and stanza from the Wordsworth Poetry Library edition of Scott’s poetical works (Ware, 1995).

19. Scott knew Marlborough’s example well: in *Waverley* (ed. Andrew Hook [London: Penguin, 1985]), he mentions Marlborough’s Blenheim as a sign of “the gratitude of his country” (160). *Waverley* also includes the fact that the Baron of Bradwardine “made some campaigns in foreign service” (87), foreshadowing the sympathetic exploration of such service by Scots in *Quentin Durward*.

20. Scott, *Ivanhoe*, ed. Graham Tulloch, Penguin edition based on the Edinburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels (hereafter EEWN) (London: Penguin, 2000) 73. *Ivanhoe* also contains Scott’s suggestive coinage of “Free Lances,” meaning mercenaries, though the present-

Magnum introduction to *A Legend of Montrose* (1819), Scott describes Scottish soldiers entering into mercenary employment:

The contempt of commerce entertained by young men having some pretence to gentility, the poverty of the country of Scotland, the national disposition to wandering and to adventure, all conduced to lead the Scots abroad into the military service of countries which were at war with each other. They were distinguished on the Continent by their bravery; but in adopting the trade of mercenary soldiers, they necessarily injured their national character.²¹

Scott here reinforces his critical distinction between commercial and mercenary action. "Contempt of commerce" and Scotland's "poverty" both contribute to the mercenary careers of "men having some pretence to gentility"; for Scott, a descent to mercenary service results from the lack, not the excess, of proper commercial ambition and opportunity.²² This logic allows Scott to contain the mercenaries of Scotland's past within a framework of economic Unionism. Since the commercial benefits of the union have obviated "the poverty of the country of Scotland," Scott reasons, military loyalty will have followed the northward path of commercial opportunity. Scott acknowledges the participation, and the bravery, of Scots in the ancient profession of arms while implying that the economic benefits of the Union would reunite that bravery with military loyalty to Britain.

In *Quentin Durward*, Scott does not contradict his other statements on mercenaries, but he does complicate them. Here images of writing and fighting create a category of commercial writing that exists between the unrestrained self-interest of the mercenary and the selflessness of volunteerism. This category arises by analogy to the hero's experience. Scott uses the novel to explore the play between obligation and autonomy in the situa-

day connection to what we call freelance writing did not develop in Scott's lifetime. According to *OED*, the term retained a negative connotation and applied to politicians and other professionals in the nineteenth century, taking on its contemporary, morally neutral sense of "a person working for himself and not for an employer" only in the twentieth century ("free lance, *n.*, *adj.*, and *adv.*," *OED* <<http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50089673>>).

21. Scott, Introduction, *A Legend of Montrose*, vol. 30, Harper's Thistle Edition of the Waverley Novels, 48 vols. (New York: Harper's, 1901) 9–31 (14).

22. Dugald Dalgetty, the main mercenary of *A Legend of the Wars of Montrose*, provides an instructive contrast to Quentin Durward. Like Durward, Dalgetty has a certain kind of admirable faith to the oaths he takes as a mercenary, but he is conceited and socially inept, and he straightforwardly chooses his political causes according to his financial interests. Though sometimes comically sympathetic, Dalgetty embodies the immorality of the mercenary life in ways that Durward does not. On mercenaries in this novel, see P. D. Garside, "'A Legend of Montrose' and the History of War," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 4 (1974): 159–71 and chapter five of Andrew Lincoln, *Walter Scott and Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007).

tion of the Scottish mercenary abroad. By removing direct links between remuneration and writing or fighting, Scott recuperates the idea of the volunteer and adds a twist of Smithian political economy. His good soldiers display their priorities by an attachment to traditional national culture through minstrelsy, the mechanism that for Scott creates an admirable convergence of national writing and fighting.

The Providential forces of Scott's fictional world enable this moral recuperation of the paid soldier by distancing the cause of fighting from the effect of wealth. In *Quentin Durward*, Scott sets himself the challenge of portraying a hero who retains the affect of a volunteer even as he enters a company of mercenaries and ultimately becomes rich. The novel's romance plot mystifies the relationship between the mercenary contract and Durward's eventual reward in a way that allows Durward to maintain the moral standing of the volunteer while negotiating a world of cynical contractualism and Smithian self-interest. Scott thus generates a model of commercial action in which agents can seek and acquire money while avoiding the modes of direct payment that would traditionally constitute mercenary action.

The novel also investigates the influence of markets on books and writers. As Scott prepared *Quentin Durward* for the Magnum Edition of his novels in 1830, he wrote to Robert Cadell, his publisher, "I thought it one of the worst of the sett but upon going over it I think it a good one though rather for the foreign market" (*Letters* 11: 339).²³ Scott here invites an analogy between his book and its hero. Quentin Durward is a soldier of fortune, compelled by economic and political circumstances to leave his native Scotland for the Continent. Durward eventually becomes a mercenary,

23. Scott's comment seems to be based on *Quentin Durward's* not selling well in England though it "enjoyed a surprising success in the country where it was set" (J. Sutherland 264). Though it is difficult to discover the details beneath Scott's and then Lockhart's presentation of *Quentin Durward's* sales, William St. Clair in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) does provide some context for their disappointment in the domestic sales. St. Clair cites a note from the Constable archives suggesting a first edition of "at least 8,180" copies (639), roughly in line with the runs of 10,000 for *The Monastery* (1820), *The Abbott* (1820), *Kenilworth* (1821), *The Pirate* (1822), and *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822). St. Clair does not supply a print run for *Pevevil of the Peak* (1822). Among these six novels preceding it, only *The Abbott* joins *Quentin Durward* in lacking an immediate second or third edition. On the whole, St. Clair's evidence suggests at least some basis for Scott's and Lockhart's remarks (638–39). William B. Todd and Ann Bowden's bibliographical work on Scott in *Sir Walter Scott: A Bibliographical History 1796–1832* (New Castle: Oak Knoll, 1998) quotes as a headnote Lockhart's comment on "the sensation which this novel, on its first appearance, created in Paris" (581). Todd and Bowden conclude that "[t]hrough eventually quite successful, the book at first, coming only four months after *Pevevil*, was regarded by Constable as 'too quick for the pocket' and thus the subject of some anxious correspondence" (582).

"a Scotch archer in the French king's guard, *tempore* Louis XI" (*Letters* 7: 281). When Scott calls the novel "a good one though rather for the foreign market," then, he connects Quentin Durward and *Quentin Durward*; both must seek their fortunes in the markets that will support them. In both cases, the pay will come from foreign purses, but that payment will be mitigated by emotional connections to the Scottish homeland.

Scott emphasizes the role of that patriotic nostalgia by choosing France, "*tempore* Louis XI" as the novel's setting, which places the novel's action in a time-frame specifically relevant to Machiavelli's anti-mercenary argument. Machiavelli wrote of what was to him the recent history of France, especially the reign of Louis XI (1461–83):

When Charles VII, father of King Louis XI, had freed France from the English by his own energy [*virtù*] and good luck, he realized how necessary it was to have his own armies, and established laws in his kingdom for training cavalry and infantry. But afterwards his son, King Louis, gave up the infantry and began to hire Swiss. . . . Thus the French armies have become mixed, part mercenary and part native troops. Taken all in all, these troops are much better than mere auxiliaries or mere mercenaries, but they are much inferior to armies of one's own people. (39–40)

Scott's novel supports Machiavelli's argument about the French military strategy of the time, but it also uses the setting to explore the kinds of autonomy that become available to Durward after he joins a mercenary company. Durward's heroism stems from his differences from the other members of the company, differences Scott signifies primarily by connecting Durward to minstrelsy.²⁴

In his military service and his private life, Durward's affection for

24. Like the good soldier, the good minstrel could achieve economic success as long as he did not seek it primarily, and the rise of the minstrel as a figure for authorship coincided with the intensifying of the militia debates in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In both cases, Scottish and Border writers were central figures. Thus we see (the Englishman) Thomas Percy's gentlemanly Border minstrels, James Beattie's dismissal of singing for "lucre" in *The Minstrel* (London: Dilly, 1771) 1.xii, Hugh Blair's assertion that Ossian avoids the modern sin of "covetousness" ("Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian," *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, ed. Howard Gaskill [Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1996] 343–400 [352]), and Robert Burns's assurance that "no mercenary bard" writes "The Cotter's Saturday Night" (*Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* [Penguin: London, 1999] 83–90 [83]). As the figure of the bard and then the minstrel became widely used metaphors for authorship in the late eighteenth century, a phenomenon documented in my work on minstrelsy, writers began routinely to deflect the negative associations of minstrelsy with dependence on patrons or clans by working routine denials of mercenary motives into the self-representation of the modern minstrel (*Literary Minstrelsy, 1770–1830: Minstrels and Improvisers in British, Irish, and American Literature* [Houndmills: Palgrave, 2008]).

minstrelsy—for the songs and sentiments of his Scottish ancestors—offers him a kind of moral insulation against the most damaging elements of the world he encounters, even after he has left the company of minstrels. Hence the importance of Durward's literacy: his uncle La Balafre remarks, "To write . . . and read! I cannot believe it—never Durward could write his name that I ever heard of."²⁵ Living in one of Scott's characteristic worlds in transition from chivalric to mercantile values, Durward reproduces through literary records of minstrelsy the nobler feelings his ancestors could cultivate without the benefit of reading. To pass the time performing a mercenary assignment, Durward is still able to sing "some of the ancient rude ballads which the old family harper had taught him" (122) to pass the time performing a mercenary assignment, but that harper is old, and performative minstrelsy seems to be passing away.²⁶ Through his devotion to Scottish song and other pledges of loyalty to his native country, Durward exhibits a cultural nationalism that counters the effects of his employment: because that employment does not require idealistic devotion to Scotland, Durward's connection to his homeland takes on the affect of volunteerism. At this level, *Quentin Durward* is a surprisingly Rousseauvian tale about the virtues of unforced affiliation.²⁷

Durward appreciates minstrelsy, then, but like many of Scott's other protagonists, he does not write or perform songs for audiences. Durward's relationship to minstrelsy is marked by his distance from two extremes: on one side, his uncle's skeptical rejection of minstrelsy (he dismisses "Robert Bruce or William Wallace in our own true histories" as "all moonshine in the water" [65]), and on the other, the idealized past of a minstrel-filled Scotland whose deterioration has forced Durward into the Continental market. This instance is part of a larger pattern. Scott repeatedly creates situations that juxtapose Durward's economic gain with his refusal of another, unambiguously immoral economic choice. Durward marries Isabelle Countess of Croye, whose wealth in land attracts him, but he turns down the more liquid wealth, "chiefly in gold and jewels" (226), of Countess Hameline, Isabelle's more available companion. Durward also serves as a reluctant mercenary; this choice is mitigated by his fellowship with other Scots and his disdain of service to the ruthless William de la Marck, "who

25. Scott, *Quentin Durward*, ed. J. H. Alexander and G. A. M. Wood, EEWN (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2001) 64.

26. This mental departure from the mercenary's duties accords well with the fact that, as Ross has noted, Scott valued romance's "tendency to distract . . . as the primary virtue of the form" ("Scott's" 272).

27. This Rousseauvian autonomy is central to Jay Fliegelman's account of transatlantic political rhetoric in the later eighteenth century in *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982).

slays priests and pilgrims as if they were so many lance-knechts and men-at-arms" (48). Such service, Durward says, "would be a blot on my father's scutcheon for ever" (48).²⁸ All of these triangulations allow Durward, even as an active mercenary, to maintain the volunteer's sense of freely choosing his service.

Scott's original introduction to the novel creates a further, suggestively inexact analogy by connecting Durward's ambivalently mercenary position to Scott's position as a writer. In that introduction, Scott, as the "Author of *Waverley*," describes his own circumstances in the economic downturn following the Napoleonic wars:

I am neither so unpopular nor so low in fortune, as not to have my share in the distresses which at present afflict the monied and landed interest of these realms. Your authors who live upon a mutton chop may rejoice that it has fallen to three-pence per pound, and, if they have children, gratulate themselves that the peck-loaf may be had for sixpence. But we who belong to the tribe which are ruined by peace and plenty—we who have lands and beeves, and sell what these poor gleaners must buy—we are driven to despair by the very events which would make all Grub-street illuminate all its attics, if Grub-street could spare candle-ends for the purpose. I therefore put in my proud claim to share in the distresses which only affect the wealthy; and write myself down, with Dogberry, "a rich fellow enough," but still "One who hath had losses." (*Quentin Durward* 4)

This description has no merit as economic history; the postwar economy hardly treated poorer Britons so well.²⁹ Scott's words do function, however, to position the author as a certain kind of writer for money.

Like Durward, the author here occupies a carefully surveyed middle ground between two extremes. The author is like but not quite part of "the monied and landed interest of these realms," yet not poor enough to think first of the price of his dinner. Using Grub Street as a synecdoche for the poor shifts the general economic point to a more specific comparison: that between the author and writers who compose their works primarily to meet their immediate financial needs. Thus, the author becomes a literary Durward, part of but not subject to the marketplace of his station and time,

28. For more on landed and liquid wealth in the *Waverley* novels, see Lawrence Poston, III, who treats that contrast as part of the larger one between "the old order of honor and the new order of credit" in "The Commercial Motif of the *Waverley* Novels," *ELH* 42 (1975): 62–87 (64).

29. In their notes to the novel, editors J. H. Alexander and G. A. M. Wood point out the "severe distresses for the lower classes" at this time (509). Cf. Byron's commentary on the same period in *Don Juan* VII, stanza 45.

an economic being but not a mercenary writer. The connection between author and hero becomes clearest when the author places himself in “the tribe which are ruined by peace and plenty.” As we have seen, the ruin of mercenaries ‘by peace and plenty’ was one of the leading reasons—and Machiavelli’s central reason—to oppose substituting mercenaries for citizen soldiers, whose incentive is to create peace and return to non-military employment. (Scott reinforces this military point at the beginning of the novel proper, where he reports the infestation of France with foreign mercenaries, “the refuse of all other countries,” who in times of unemployment “made war on their own account” and used “every species of rapine” [24].) In a stroke, the introduction thus connects the hero’s position to the author’s, but it does so with a gentle irony that invites the reader to see a distance between the literal mercenary life of Quentin Durward and the modern, British commercial lives of Scott and his novel.

This suggestion of the author’s susceptibility to economic forces and his ability to profit from war fades as the introduction turns to a romance of post-Waterloo solidarity, a story that balances the analogy between author and hero with an emphasis on the self-consciously British author’s ability to form a kind of alliance that is unavailable to his title character. Sensing defensiveness about religion in a Catholic friend whom he visits in France, the author hastens to state his allegiance to fellow Christians across denominational lines. He declares that he has “every possible respect for the religious rules of every Christian community, sensible that we address[] the same Deity, on the same grand principle of Salvation, though with different forms” (13). Such solidarity here guards against a hostility to established institutions that has affected the library of Scott’s host, whose texts “had been completely dispersed, in consequence of an ill-judged attempt of the present Marquis, in 1790, to defend his Chateau against a revolutionary mob” (20). The author and his host begin the minstrel-like process of gathering a textual tradition—recovering and consolidating the library—thus creating an informal anti-Jacobin alliance against the “revolutionary mob.”

Although the introduction presents a story specific to the conditions of the author’s time, the novel proper maintains the opposition between, on the one hand, Christian nobles, loyal to old texts and national stability, and, on the other, men who have lost their religious, national, and class bearings. Standing against this solidarity of religious characters with chivalric hearts is the novel’s mercenary Hayraddin: “[m]y proper name,” he says, “is Hayraddin Maugrabin, that is, Hayraddin the African Moor” (179). A few oddities of his characterization suggest that Hayraddin is not just a stock Moor. For example, despite Hayraddin’s important role in the novel before he dies, and though he bequeaths a substantial sum of money to Durward, neither Durward nor anyone else reflects at the novel’s end on

Hayraddin or the transfer of his mercenary profits to Durward. Hayraddin is also educated and irreligious (not a Muslim [178]), though the plot requires neither.³⁰

In Hayraddin, then, we see a character given some of the conventional accoutrements of cultural Moorishness but also a combination of education, irreligion, and radical ideas of personal liberty. These attributes allow Hayraddin to stand in for French Revolutionaries and Godwinian free-thinkers, as in his statement to Durward that “no chains can bind” his thoughts,

while yours, even when your limbs are free, remain fettered by your laws and your superstitions, your dreams of local attachment, and your fantastic visions of civil policy. Such as I are free in spirit when our limbs are chained—You are imprisoned in mind, even when your bodies are most at freedom. (179)

Scott thus connects Hayraddin’s mercenary profiteering to his politics; in Scott’s view, both represent misdirected attachments to freedom. Adopting Godwinian motifs favoring mental liberty and dismissing “dreams of local attachment,” Hayraddin is placed in the ideological debates of Scott’s lifetime rather than Durward’s.³¹

Hayraddin’s dismissal of local attachment allows Scott to return to the opposition between liquid and landed wealth that explains the seemingly dropped plot thread of Hayraddin’s bequest to Durward of a purse of gold pieces. In light of Hayraddin’s dismissal, the bequest rightly and with appropriately little fuss reclaims the produce of the mercenary’s radicalism and redirects it to a hereditary elite that Durward’s marriage restores to its rightful situation. Just as Painite political positions gained their force from abstract ideals that claimed universal rather than local application, Hayraddin’s work detaches his cash income from national service. The interaction between Hayraddin and Durward becomes a defense of Scott’s authorial position, a defense that locates Durward’s and Scott’s moral authority in their “local attachment” to personal and national homes. The incorporation of Hayraddin’s cash into Durward’s estate suggests a Cinderella fantasy

30. In correspondence with me, Evan Gottlieb has pointed out that Hayraddin’s atheism and some other aspects of his characterization align him more with literary presentations (including Scott’s) of gypsies than of Moors. In creating Hayraddin, Scott seems to be choosing characteristics of both literary types to suit his purposes.

31. Marlon Ross describes Burke and Wordsworth taking positions similar to Scott’s regarding “local attachment,” in contrast to Hazlitt, who writes, “[p]atriotism, in modern times, and in great states, is and must be the creature of reason and reflection, rather than the offspring of physical or local attachment” (“Romancing the Nation-State: The Poetics of Romantic Nationalism,” *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo [Durham: Duke UP, 1995]: 56–85 [64]).

of wealth sniffing out true nobility, settling itself on subjects who disavow financial desire. The fantasy celebrates the justice of uneven playing fields; it echoes the reassembly of the family library in Scott's introduction and anticipates the unequal combat by which Durward wins his bride at the novel's end. Scott imagines an economics that allows for some of the global flow of Smithian commerce but restricts the abstract freedoms of capitalism by valuing gentlemen's agreements, patriotic attachments, and the libraries of ancient families.³²

The Mercenary and the Volunteer

That Scott would create a character to argue against French Revolutionary values is hardly surprising; references to the value of the aristocracy and the danger of people rising beyond their place in society pervade *Quentin Durward* and Scott's other works. In its exploration of sympathetic mercenaries, *Quentin Durward* complicates those political positions. As we have seen, the moral balancing act of the novel requires Scott to imbue Quentin Durward with the attributes of the volunteer even as he takes on mercenary employment. If, as Stuart Curran has argued, Scott conceives romance as "the enchantment of the present by the past," this novel charges the past with the task of enchanting even the mercenary side of the present.³³

To enchant the idea of the mercenary is to create the volunteer, a soldier who agrees to serve a nation in return for the spiritual compensation of the nation's gratitude. The rhetoric of volunteer soldiering uses economic language—as in "debt of gratitude"—to erase the literal economics of volunteering: the payment of recruitment bonuses, salaries, pensions, and medical services that volunteer soldiers and veterans receive. The distinction between mercenary and volunteer in patriotic rhetoric relies on the figures' roles in the creation and discharge of debts. The ideal volunteer acts on higher motives than compensation and therefore earns the debt of his compatriots; the mercenary receives payment and then fights to pay off the debt thus created. The sentimentalized dichotomy between the mercenary and the volunteer appears, for one example, in Scott's 1831 introduction to *Quentin Durward*, where he asserts,

Instead of the high spirit which pressed every man forward in the defence of his country, Louis XI substituted the exertions of the ever

32. Scott's positioning of himself here resembles an earlier process described by Michael Gamer, who writes that at the beginning of his career as a writer of metrical romances, Scott aimed "to attract the voracious consumers of gothic romances of the previous decade [i.e., the 1790s], while at the same time raising the literary status of romance to that of poetry" ("Marketing a Masculine Romance: Scott, Antiquarianism, and the Gothic," *SiR* 32 [1993]: 523–49 [523]).

33. Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) 137.

ready mercenary soldier, and persuaded his subjects, among whom the mercantile class began to make a figure, that it was better to leave to mercenaries the risks and labours of war, and to supply the Crown with the means of paying them, than to peril themselves in defence of their own substance.³⁴

Here Scott contrasts the use of mercenaries with “the high spirit which pressed every man forward in the defence of his country”: in this formulation, volunteerism becomes universal, natural, and irresistibly powerful. Such pure volunteerism is sullied by Louis XI’s “substitut[ion]” of mercenary soldiers, and the metaphor of substitution emphasizes the association of Louis XI with a modern economic culture of cash exchange.

The simple dichotomy of that passage is belied in the novel itself, as in the motto of Chapter Seven, “The Enrolment”:

Justice of Peace,—Here, hand me down the Statute—read the articles—
Swear, kiss the book—subscribe, and be a hero;
Drawing a portion from the public stock
For deeds of valour to be done hereafter—
Sixpence per day, subsistence and arrears.

(83)

In his speech, attributed in the novel to “*The Recruiting Officer*,” we see the lines between volunteer and mercenary action blurred or even erased.³⁵ The “Justice of Peace” creates the humor of his speech by moving from volunteer to mercenary economics mid-sentence, pointing out the literal pay of “[s]ixpence per day, subsistence and arrears” for the “hero[ism]” and “valour” of the volunteer. And there is another layer to the joke: the novel’s editors, J. H. Alexander and G. A. M. Wood, point out that the quotation is not from George Farquhar’s *The Recruiting Officer* (1706). It rather seems to be one of the many fabricated quotations by which Scott

34. Scott, Introduction, *Quentin Durward*, vol. 31, Harper’s Thistle Edition of the Waverley Novels, 48 vols. (New York: Harper’s, 1901): 9–24 (13–14).

35. For another case in which Scott describes a soldier’s mixed incentives to serve, see Captain Cuthbert Clutterbuck’s Introductory Epistle to *The Monastery*, in which Clutterbuck describes in detail his motivations for military service and then to seek “prize-money” in letters (Scott, *The Monastery*, ed. Penny Fielding, EEWN 23). The same themes resurface in the conversation between Clutterbuck and “The Author” in the Introductory Epistle to *The Fortunes of Nigel*, where the author defends writing as a professional economic activity as long as “mere motives of gain” are not “a principal motive for literary exertion” (vol. 25, Harper’s Thistle Edition of the Waverley Novels 21–47 [42]). The author likens himself to “a soldier who fights,” among other professions, and acquits himself of having a “mercenary disposition” (42, 43).

muddies his authorship with fake texts and pen names—*noms de guerre*, that is, or names of war.³⁶

Even in a novel where authorial attribution can be the stuff of jokes, however, Scott does seek to imagine a kind of competition that allows literary income to be “A Prize for Honour,” which is the title of *Quentin Durward*’s twelfth chapter. As the characters negotiate the disposal of the Countess of Croye’s hand, the Countess protests: “I am the daughter of Count Reinold. . . . Would you hold me out as a prize to the best sword-player?” (378). Here the specter of anti-aristocratic revolution rises in an altered form: we see the Countess’ status subjected to a contest of skill, albeit one limited to gentlemen of “unimpeached birth” (378). Scott counters this threat with an uncomfortable resolution: the contest proceeds, but privileged participants fix the game—the Countess gives Durward secret information about his opponent’s disguise—and then improvise new rules to change the undesirable outcome. (Durward honorably loses the prize when he guards a good woman, but Lord Crawford intervenes to secure him the Countess nonetheless.) Scott thus incorporates pseudo-economic competition into the novel’s culminating marriage, but he also contains that competition within a system of the nobility’s manipulation of the imagined marketplace for its own interests—and thereby, the novel argues, for the interests of their nations as well. The nearly mercenary marriage thus becomes a volunteer marriage, which, like Scott’s ideal soldiering, can accommodate self-enrichment within the bounds of noble action.

In that marriage, Scott rewards Durward with the love and riches of a fairy-tale ending in spite of his association with mercenary activity. Scott’s narrator even jokes with the reader about having provided a “moral of excellent tendency for the encouragement of all fair-haired, light-eyed, long-legged emigrants from my native country, who might be willing in stirring times to take up the profession of Cavaleros of Fortune” (400). The narrator then coyly refuses to describe Durward’s wedding, claiming that modern marriages preserve a privacy different from those of the past, whose “bridal minstrelsy continued, as in the ‘Ancient Mariner’ . . . till morning shone on them” (400). Thus minstrelsy returns as the presiding spirit of Durward’s wedding, and Scott’s allusion to Coleridge acts to emphasize the difference between *Quentin Durward* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which takes place outside of a wedding feast, out of range of the bridal minstrelsy that stands in for the social and economic transactions that Scott struggles to address in *Quentin Durward*. Scott asserts a kind of playful authorial independence through the convention of refusing his readers a wedding description, but the contrast with Coleridge clarifies the extent to

36. Scott uses the phrase, spelled “*nomme de guerre*,” incidentally on page 42 of the novel.

which Scott, unlike Coleridge, has already addressed the social transactions of his own marriage plot.

By fulfilling and frustrating his paying readership's generic expectations, Scott argues for his latter-day minstrelsy—producing literary texts based on inherited materials in the explicit interest of a family or nation—as something unlike ideally disinterested authorship but also unlike mercenary activity. Rather than following the conventional Romantic example of disdaining commercial interest per se, Scott employs the retrospective gaze of minstrelsy to particularly modern purposes; this is part of Scott's broader project in which, as Ross puts it, “[t]he minstrel becomes the historian because he is assumed to have been a historian in the past, a past that must itself be mythic since it is lost (literally as there are no documents to verify the myth) to history” (“Scott’s” 279). In *Quentin Durward*, the author as minstrel, as a preserver of something past, provides material that inoculates sympathetic readers to the mercenary side of commercial activity, creating a romance of commerce that allows writers and readers a moral participation in economic enterprise.³⁷ The attractions of this romance are clear for Scott, “that laureate of the businessman,” as Leslie Fiedler calls him.³⁸ Nevertheless, even in the plot of *Quentin Durward* itself, and especially in Scott's introduction, this paradoxical construction of the paid volunteer rests on unstable ground. In his efforts to justify economic ambition as well as in his anxieties about that ambition, Scott recalls the Scottish Enlightenment's ambivalent commercialism with a notion of a writer, or minstrel, struggling to engage cosmopolitan business without losing a sense of home.

Grinnell College

37. In the “Citing the Nation” chapter of her *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation, 1707–1830* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), Leith Davis details Scott's attention to “the possibilities [Thomas] Percy raises for translating the close communion between minstrel, aristocratic chief, and audience to the relationship between modern author, patron, and reader” (151).

38. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Criterion, 1960) 177.

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION



Title: "A Good One Though Rather for the Foreign Market": Mercenary Writing and Scott's Quentin Durward

Source: Stud Romanticism 48 no4 Wint 2009 p. 667-85

ISSN: 0039-3762

Publisher: Boston University, Graduate School
236 Bay State Rd., Boston, MA 02215

The magazine publisher is the copyright holder of this article and it is reproduced with permission. Further reproduction of this article in violation of the copyright is prohibited. To contact the publisher: <http://www.bu.edu/cas/graduate/>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.