

## CHAPTER 4

## Scottish Country Society.

While it is possible, in a narrow sense, to regard the content of this chapter entitled 'Scottish Country Society', and the following one, 'Country Talk' as no more than a seeming recording of social history, their subject matter is so inextricably linked to the use and development of terms designed to fit specific social and legal needs of a civilized community, that it is of great significance to the study of language.

In support of this view, it is noted that the change of attitude in the field of linguistics over the past twenty years is now critical of the formerly purist approach of that discipline, stressing the difficulty, and indeed the absurdity, of divorcing language from its social context, and advocating a 'sociolinguistic perspective that naturally and inevitably considers mankind'. 1

This shift in emphasis is supported in Hymes by such statements as:-

- \* The general problem then, is to identify the means of speech and ways of speaking of communities; .... - to characterize communities in terms of their repertoires of these; and through ethnography, comparative ethnology, historical, and evolutionary considerations, become able to explain something of the origin, development, maintenance, obsolescence, and loss of ways of speaking and types of speech community - of the face speech wears for human and social structure. 2
- \* .... a practical linguistics .... would have to go beyond means of speech and types of speech community to a concern with persons and social structure. 3
- \* The goals of social relevance and social realism can indeed be fully accomplished only from the standpoint of the new conception, for much of what must be taken into account, much of what is there, organized and used, in actual speech, can only be seen, let alone understood, when one starts from function and looks for the structure that serves it. 4

1. D. Hymes, Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach, London, 1977, p.209.
2. *ibid.*, p.203.
3. *ibid.*, p.204.
4. *ibid.*, p.197.

It is argued, therefore, that it is of legitimate and relevant importance to take a little time to consider the social context of the language that Scott used, as well as its content. This serves the dual purpose of demonstrating both the authenticity and correct usage of his vocabulary, as well as providing evidence of his sophisticated presentation of the changing mores of the society in which it was still flourishing.

Scott has depicted many facets of Scottish country life - the life he lived and loved. In Waverley the hubs of activity are Tully-Veolan in the south, the House of Glennaquoich and its environs in the north, and the ancient Palace of Holyrood. In The Antiquary action is centred around the township of Fairport, the Castle of Knockwinnock, Glenallan House and the House of Monkbarns. In The Pirate, the inhabitants of Burgh-Westra, Jarlshof and Lerwick on Shetland, and of Kirkwall on Orkney, play out their parts in a far-northern microcosm.<sup>5</sup> Scott drew on his vast fund of knowledge and his copious notes to portray as faithfully as he could the stratification and interaction of society in these diverse locations, and to create dialogue suitable to each situation.

At no time have social classes in Scotland been as rigidly divided as in England and Europe. Humble folk there were, but not a down-trodden peasant class. The old clan system existing in the west and north of Scotland and in the Inner and Outer Hebrides ensured an interdependent and closely-knit society. Writing of the Clan Donald, I.F.Grant remarked,

So late as the eighteenth century, a bitterly Whig visitor to the Highlands wrote, 'The poorest and most despicable Creature of the name of MacDonald looks upon himself as a gentleman of far Superior Quality than a man in England of £1,000 a year.' 6

The reason for this strong sense of pride is explained in the excerpt which Grant included from the then Lyon King at Arms, Sir Thomas Innes of Learney,

Between the Peerage, the Houses of Chiefs and Chieftains, the Baronage, the Gentlemen or lesser Lairds and Tacksman, it has been calculated that at the time of Union

5. "This is a little world of ours, this Zetland ... but it is our own little world." The Pirate, p.248.

6. I.F.Grant, Highland Folk Ways, London, 1961, p.27.

there were (in a population of about a million) over ten thousand houses, each as proud and nobly descended as any of the Continental *noblesses*. Allowing for the expansion of even the near circle of these houses, and lines of chieftains, it follows that about one in each twenty-four people were actually members of a titled or chiefly house, and that about one-half of the Scottish nation consciously regarded themselves as members of the aristocracy. Such a proportion is unknown in any other nation, and the moral and social effect upon the Scottish nation has been incalculable. 7

A comprehension of this situation is of tantamount importance in understanding the Scots in general, and proud, ambitious characters like Fergus Mac-Ivor in particular. A modern and sophisticated young man in some ways, Fergus deliberately chooses to cling to the traditions and trappings of the past. He has an historical counterpart in the person of Alasdair Ranaldson MacDonell of Glengarry, a colourful, controversial character, of whom Scott wrote in his Diary,

He seems to have lived a century too late, and to exist, in a state of complete law and order, like a Glengarry of old, whose will was law to his sept. Warm-hearted, generous, friendly, he is beloved by those who know him, and his efforts are unceasing to show kindness to those of his clan who are disposed fully to admit his pretensions. To dispute them, is to incur his resentment, which has sometimes broken out in acts of violence which have brought him into collision with the law. 8

Scott remarked that Glengarry was a 'treasure' to him because he was 'full of information as to the history of his own clan, and the manners and customs of Highlanders in general'. As well as providing a model for Fergus, he also supplied the details for his retinue and way of life in the early chapters of Waverley.

The man closest to Fergus is his foster-brother, Evan Dhu Maccombich, and this makes Evan a *duinhé-wassel*, which is, as Scott explained, a 'sort of gentleman' (W 140), distinguishable by the single short plume in his bonnet. Evan uses a series of Gaelic terms

7. Sir Thomas Innes, Tartans of the Clans and Families of Scotland, quoted by Grant, op.cit., pp.11-12.

8. Lockhart, op.cit., p.606.

to describe Fergus's personal attendants, or 'tail', to Edward,

"There is his *hunchman*, or right-hand man; then his *bard* or poet; then his *bladier*, or orator, to make harangues to the great folk whom he visits; then his *gilly* - more, or armour-bearer, to carry his sword and target and his gun; then his *gilly-casfliuch*, who carries him on his back through the sikes and brooks; then his *gilly-comstrian*, to lead his horse by the bridle in steep and difficult paths; then his *gilly-trush-harnish*, to carry his knapsack; and the piper and the piper's man; and it may be a dozen young lads besides, that have no business, but are just boys of the belt, to follow the laird and do his Honour's bidding."

(W 144)

Although this is the kind of following insisted upon by Glengarry, and suitable therefore for Fergus, it should not be considered as absolutely typical. Scott has used Fergus to exemplify an extreme case of Highland pride; Waverley is ultimately forced to confess him a 'superb specimen of pride and self-opinion and passion', and to declare,

"A petty chief of three or four hundred men! his pride might suffice for the Cham of Tartary, the Grand Seignior, the Great Mogul!" (W 507)

Usually, however, the solidarity of relationships within the clan combined with a feeling of pride in the family to produce in the individual, living in a harsh and rigorous environment, an appreciation of real values, a consideration of others, and a dignity of mind and spirit. Feuds between clans were numerous, but generally a fierce loyalty existed within. Scott reflected some of this in The Antiquary in Hector's readiness to defend all M'Intyres,

"There are some writers very honest fellows," said Hector; "I should like to hear any one say that my cousin, Donald M'Intyre, Strathtudlem's seventh son (the other six are in the army), is not as honest a fellow-" (A 567)

Hector's degree of family pride, while not as overweening as that of Fergus, may be gauged by his replies to his sister and his uncle when they are obliged to remonstrate with him over his interest in Miss Isabella Vardour.

"Miss Wardour," [said Hector to Miss M'Intyre] "in the state of her father's affairs cannot pretend to much fortune; and as to family, I trust that of M'Intyre is not inferior."

"But, Hector," continued his sister, "Sir Arthur always considers us as members of the Monkbarns family."

"Sir Arthur may consider us what he pleases," answered the Highlander scornfully; "but any one with common-sense will consider that the wife takes rank from the husband, and that my father's pedigree of fifteen unblemished descents must have ennobled my mother if her veins had been filled with printer's ink." (A 245-246)

"Well, sir!" echoed his uncle. "Deuce take the fellow! he answers as if it were the most reasonable thing in the world that he, a captain in the army, and nothing at all besides, should marry the daughter of a baronet."

"I presume to think, sir," answered the young Highlander, "there would be no degradation on Miss Wardour's part in point of family." (A 573)

As Scott has demonstrated in the affairs of Fergus Mac-Ivor, by the eighteenth century the clan system was disintegrating. With chiefs, lairds and tacksmen all involved in the slide downwards, the clan could no longer afford to support all of its members. This gave rise to large numbers of 'broken men', landless and clanless, from whose ranks sprang the *caterans*, *thiggers* and *sorners*, *gangrel bodies* and *hallenshaker loons*, spilling across the clan line and down into the Lowlands.

Scott's characters represent the gamut of the Scottish social spectrum, ranging from royalty, in the person of Prince Charles in Waverley, down to the *hallenshaker loon* and *gangrel body*, as old Edie calls himself in The Antiquary. In these three novels alone, he has included more than sixty different callings or forms of employment, giving the correct Scots term for each.<sup>5</sup> He has also seized the opportunity to use a variety of speech registers to suit the holders of these positions, and to incorporate a wide range of occupational terms in their conversation. Charles Edward, educated abroad, does not contribute to spoken Scots, as King James was able to do in The Fortunes of Nigel, and he is consistently addressed as 'Your Royal Highness', and referred to as 'the Prince' or 'the Chevalier'.

9. See Appendix I under Persons.

Fergus Mac-Ivor of Glennaquoich, or, as his clansmen call him, Vich Ian Vohr, has had a similar education, and cultivates a sophisticated manner. But from hereon down, Scott uses Scots titles and terms to instruct his readers in those stations and subtle differences in country society that had existed from ancient times.

Just below royalty and the chiefs were the earls, represented in The Antiquary by Lord Glenallan. When Miss Griselda (A 457), and Edie Ochiltree (A 363) refer to him as a *yerl* they are using a Scottish form that had been in use from about 1400, when it was spelled *yerle*. When Elspeth Mucklebackit sings of an earlier 'Glenallan's Earl' at the Battle of Harlaw, ending with the lines,

Then ne'er let the gentle Norman blude  
Grow cauld for Highland kerne. (A 521)

Scott is reminding those who knew, and advising those who did not, of the bestowal of earldoms upon Anglo-Normans introduced into Scotland by David I (1124-1153), Malcolm IV (1153-1165), and William 'The Lion' (1165-1214). As some sort of concession, the actual title was reserved for a long time for the genuine Celtic earls, such as the Earl of Fife, the Earl of Buchan, and oldest of all Scottish Earldoms, the Earl of Mar. But naturally, the distribution of Scottish soil to incomers rankled, for, as far as most chiefs were concerned, the title was of no consequence - it was the land that mattered. This was the precise reason that Donald, Lord of the Isles, engaged in the Battle of Harlaw on 24th July, 1411. It was the substance of the Earldom of Ross that he was claiming, for he considered it was his by right of his marriage to Mary Leslie.<sup>10</sup> In Waverley, Fergus admits that he only wants to acquire the rights of his earl's patent to avoid assuming the name of Bradwardine if he were to marry Rose. These are his words to Edward on the subject,

"I value this bauble of a coronet as little as you can,  
or any philosopher on earth; for I hold that the chief of  
such a clan as the Blidh nan Ivor is superior in rank to  
any earl in Scotland." (W 478)

10. A. MacGregor, Feuds of the Clans, Stirling, 1907, pp.13-19.

Next in eminence were the barons, whose title came into existence with the Norman Conquest. When the feudal system was introduced by the kings of Scotland in the twelfth century, the king assumed rights to all the land, granting it to certain persons in return for money or military service. Particularly in the time of Robert I (1306-1329), a barony could be held *in liberam baroniam*, that is, as a 'free barony'. In Waverley, an early Baron of Bradwardine had gained his title and held his lands by feudal tenure during an interval prior to this, for Scott's comment is that 'the lands of Bradwardine, Tully-Veolan and others, had been erected into a free barony by a charter from David the First' (W 77). The Baron proffers the additional explanation,

"The holding of the barony of Bradwardine is of a nature alike honourable and peculiar, being blanch (which Craig opines ought to be Latinated *blancum*, or rather *francum*, a free holding) ". (W 437)

W. Croft Dickinson demonstrates the term to be "*blenche ferme*" or (*alba firma*) tenure', with the further comment,

Usually lands were granted by the king in blenche-ferme as a reward for some singular service rendered to him; though later in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, some of the very strange services to be rendered under blenche-ferme tenures suggest grants made in a very jovial mood. 7

The holding of the lands of Bradwardine was anciently and currently dependent only on the act of removing the royal footwear after battle, which is no more ridiculous than some of the services listed by Dickinson, which include 'rendering a rose in the season of roses', and providing breeches for the winner of a race.<sup>8</sup> Scott writes of the Baron imprisoning 'two poachers in the dungeon of the old tower of Tully-Veolan', and setting 'an old woman in the *jougs*' (W 78), and it is quite correct that the holder of a 'free barony' was empowered to preside over his own court, and his jurisdiction extended to 'life and limb'.<sup>9</sup>

11. W. Croft Dickinson, A New History of Scotland, Vol.I., London, 1961, pp.88-89.

12. loc. cit.

13. *ibid.*, pp.90-91.

The title of baron is found in Scots literature from the time of Barbour (1375) and was spelled variously as *baron*, *baroun* or *barown*. It was used to designate the holder of a freehold estate even if he were a commoner, and this is the reason that Scott refers to the Baron as Mr. Bradwardine (W 77, 92, 93, 640). On one occasion he is mentioned as 'the Laird of Bradwardine' (W 178), but his usual designation and mode of address is 'Baron', a practice which Tulloch very correctly interprets as follows,

Scott's use of the term *baron* rather than the usual *laird*, is deliberate. He wants us to see Bradwardine as, like Mowbray's ancestor, 'a grave Scottish baron, of "auld lang syne"' (SRW 3), an interesting and imposing relic of the feudal past, even if occasionally a little ridiculous.<sup>14</sup>

Scott's skilful portrayal of the Baron ensured that his pedantry and pomposity were overruled by his sterling qualities. 'Of a very ancient family' (W 46), and with impeccable antecedents himself, he is magnanimous in his attitude towards the Laird of Killancureit, Mr. Bullsegg, whose 'good blood' came but recently into his veins, and through the female side,

"And God forbid, Captain Waverley, that we of irreproachable lineage should exult over him, when it may be in the eighth, ninth, or tenth generation his progeny may rank, in a manner, with the old gentry of the country. Rank and ancestry, sir, should be the last words in the mouths of us of unblemished race." (W 81)

Sir Arthur Wardour in The Antiquary is described as a 'baronet of ancient descent and of a large but embarrassed fortune' (A 54). Of this title, L.G. Pine, editor of Burke's Peerage, has this to say,

A history of the title takes it back to 1328, but whatever the facts about earlier centuries, it was not until the seventeenth century that it became hereditary. James I instituted the Order in 1611 to finance the settlement of Ulster. <sup>15</sup>

14. Tulloch, op.cit., p.240.

15. L.G. Pine, The Story of the Peerage, Edinburgh and London, 1956, p.180.



When, in November 1818, the title of baronet was offered to Scott himself by the then Regent, later George IV, his considered conclusion was, 'I think there would be more vanity in declining than accepting what is offered to me by the express wish of the Sovereign as a mark of favour and distinction.' <sup>16</sup>

Edie Ochiltree reveals that the Wardours were of Norman stock, and were 'a proud dour set o' men, but unco brave' (A 328). Sir Arthur lacks the vigour and resilience of his forebears, and his bravery certainly can not be qualified as 'unco'. He is not unbiassed, as the Baron of Bradwardine is, when it comes to matters of rank and birth. In his relationship with Oldbuck, particularly when they differ over business or politics,

It would sometimes occur to the baronet that the descendant of a German printer, whose sires had "sought the base fellowship of paltry burghers," forgot himself, and took an unlicensed freedom of debate, considering the rank and ancient descent of his antagonist. (A 58)

Indeed, on the evening of the dinner-party, Sir Arthur positively flings his rank and ancestry in Oldbuck's face,

"It's enough, sir," said Sir Arthur, starting up fiercely, and pushing back his chair; "I shall hereafter take care how I honour with my company one who shows himself so ungrateful for my condescension." (A 77)

It is frequently the case that a person with a stain upon his escutcheon views a similar blot upon another family with intolerance and even abhorrence, and so Sir Arthur confesses to a 'horror and antipathy to defiled blood and illegitimacy' (A 160). As Oldbuck shrewdly discerns it is the 'bend of bastardy' upon the Wardour family shield that precludes the acceptance of Lovel as a suitor for Isabella. In unveiling the Baronet's weaknesses, Scott has presented him as the recipient of a hereditary title which he has no capabilities of earning for himself.

16. H. Pearson, Walter Scott, His Life and Personality, London, 1954, p.180.

Jonathan Oldbuck, although of German extraction, is correctly called 'the Laird of Monkbarns' (A 15). The term *laird*, meaning a landowner, is found in O.Sc. from 1424, while the earlier form of *lavird*, from O.E. *hlāfweard*, *hlāford*, head of a house (lit. 'loaf-warden'), appears in 1257. If the landowner were not of noble blood, he was linked to the name of his estate. So Scott writes of Oldbuck as 'the Laird of Monkbarns', and the Baron speaks of 'the young Laird of Balmawhapple, a Falconer by surname' (W 80), and of Mr. Bullsegg as 'the Laird of Killancureit' (W 80). It is the custom to refer to each of these gentlemen by the name of his estate, that is as Monkbarns, Balmawhapple, and Killancureit.

Magnus Troil, who holds his land in Shetland under the old Norse law of udal right,<sup>17</sup> and who claims descent from a Norwegian earl fleeing his country to settle at Jarlshof<sup>18</sup> in the time of Harald Harfagr (c.AD 890), stands at the pinnacle of Shetland society, and Scott generally refers to him in The Pirate as 'the Udaller', but also as 'the Laird' (P 9).

Some *lairds* were also *heritors*. When Scott writes of 'the Monkbarns heritors' (A 112), and of 'low country gentlemen and heritors', he is using a term current in Scotland from 1483, when it was spelled *heritar*. It was used to indicate those landowners who were obliged to contribute to the maintenance of the Parish Church. An excerpt from the Session Book at Glasserton in 1702 makes it clear that the *heritors* there were responsible for 'settling a schoolmaster and sellary' for the Parish School as well, and in 1725, the *Heritors* around Melrose were scheduled to meet on 6th July 'in order to stent themselves for maintenance of the poor'<sup>19</sup>

When Oldbuck talks of 'auld Johnnie Howie, a bonnet-laird hard by' (A 40), Scott is using a term (as he explains in his footnote), which describes 'a petty proprietor, wearing the dress, along with the habits, of a yeoman'. According to the definition of Jamieson (1825), a *bonnet-laird* is 'a yeoman, one who farms his own property',<sup>20</sup> although, strictly speaking, his property, consisting of some forty to sixty acres, was not owned by him, but rented at a nominal rate, in some cases for nineteen years, in others for

17. A.Fenton, The Northern Isles, Edinburgh, 1978, pp. 22-23.

18. *ibid.*, p.24. Settlement at Jarlshof dates to the ninth century.

19. SND, HERITOR.

20. *ibid.*, BONNET-LAIRD.

ninety-nine. The name seems to have resulted from the type of head-covering worn by this rank of farmer, although the fact that the rent paid to the landowner was called *bonage* (a corruption of *bondage*), is noted.<sup>21</sup>

The inhabitants of the small township of Jarlshof regard Basil Mertoun, their new *tacksman*, with some alarm. The reader of The Pirate is told that, according to the feudal customs of the day, 'a part of the tenants' hard-won and precarious profits was diverted for the use of their powerful neighbour and superior, the tacksman as he was called' (P 13). This is certainly corroborated by the observations of Dr. John Walker, who wrote,

The Subsetting of Lands is one great Obstacle to the Improvement of the Highlands. A Relick of the old feudal System which it were well was abolished, and that every Person who holds Land, should rent it of the Proprietor. The Profit of the Landlord, the Advantage of the Publick, the Progress of Improvement and the Liberty and Happiness of the People demand this. All the subtenants, which are the Body of the People in the Highlands are Tenants at the will of the Tacksman, and are therefore his Slaves. It may be frequently observed, that the most oppressed Man in the South of Scotland is the Tenant of a Tenant, and it is not to be supposed that it is less so in the North.<sup>22</sup>

By the seventeenth century the chief often gave a son or relative (known as a *cadet*), a *tack* or lease. This could be by *feu*, requiring annual payment of *feu-duty*, or by *wadset*, an old Scottish form of mortgage, but more usually it was a lifetime lease. As the chief tenant, the *tacksman* sublet a good deal of his land, and used his subtenants and *cottars* to work his farm in exchange.<sup>23</sup> The term *tak* for a lease is found in O.Sc. in 1392, and that of *taksman* from 1492.

Scott's description of Fergus Mac-Ivor's dining table, as well as affording a glimpse of Highland hospitality, indicates the ranking of a *tacksman* at a feast, a social occasion when the high and low of a Scottish community mingle together,

21. SND, BONNET-LAIRD.

22. M.McKay, (ed.), The Rev. Dr. John Walker's Report on the Hebrides of 1764 and 1771, Edinburgh, 1980, p.160.

23. Grant, op.cit., pp.43-44, pp.122-124, pp.294-295.

See also W.Scott, Manners & Customs of the Highlanders, Glasgow, 1893, p.33.

At the head of the table was the chief himself, with Edward and two or three Highland visitors of neighbouring clans, the elders of his own tribe, "wadsetters" and "tacksmen", as they were called, who occupied portions of his estate as mortgagers or lessees, sat next in rank; beneath them, their sons and nephews and foster-brethren; then the officers of the chief's household, according to their order; and, lowest of all, the tenants who actually cultivated the ground. Even beyond this long perspective, Edward might see upon the green ... a multitude of Highlanders of a yet inferior description, who, nevertheless, were considered as guests, and had their share both of the countenance of the entertainer and of the cheer of the day. (W 183-184)

The most comprehensive and well-researched study of a *tacksman* is to be found in Grant's account of William Mackintosh of Balnespick, who held a *tack* for 'Three nineteen years' from the Chief of Mackintosh of the Davoch of Dunachton and Kincaig on the Upper Spey. Balnespick appears to have been well-liked, although it is clear that many *tacksmen* were not. However, as Grant points out, 'some kind of organiser was almost indispensable under the old system of complicated and very minute joint holdings', and she elaborates,

The advantages of dealing with one man, instead of with forty or fifty, is obvious, and in an uncertain climate, like that of the Highlands, there must have been a distinct inducement to encourage a man who was in a position to accumulate a little reserve fund, and therefore to pay his rent in bad years as well as good. In those days of slow and infrequent communication it would have been extremely difficult for the factor of a large estate to collect the enormous number of very small rents and to be responsible for the even more minute payments towards cess, stipend, and salary of the inferior tenants. It would have been even more impossible for the factor to organise the armies of small joint cultivators, so that 'good neighbourhood' was kept and the fields were properly tilled. As long as the old system of tillage continued, it is easy to see that it was well worth the landlord's while to give the tacksman an advantageous lease, and that his presence was a useful part of the organisation of a big Highland estate. 24

24. I.F.Grant, Every-Day Life on an Old Highland Farm 1769-1782, London, 1924, pp.136-137.

Grant's comments pertain to the Highlands, but they are relevant to the organization of a large estate anywhere in Scotland. It will be remembered that once the few inhabitants of Jarlshof realized that they had nothing to fear from Basil Mertoun, they at once 'laid their heads together to make the most of him by petty tricks of overcharge and extortion' (P 14). The best *tacksmen* were firm, fair men, who dealt honestly with the tenants, and frequently helped them over bad times, but they expected honesty and fair dealing in return. A good *tacksman* could hold a place together, and a weak one could not.

Described by the Baron of Bradwardine as his 'baron-bailie and doer' (W 82), Duncan Macwheble is an officer of some regard in the household of Tully-Veolan and as such is invited to attend the banquet with Waverley and the Lairds of Balmawhapple and Killancureit. However, Macwheble has his own method of showing that he knows his place,

Either out of more respect, or in order to preserve that proper declination of person which showed a sense that he was in the presence of his patron, he sat upon the edge of his chair, placed at three feet distance from the table, and achieved a communication with his plate by projecting his person towards it in a line which obliques from the bottom of his spine, so that the person who sat opposite him could only see the foretop of his riding periwig. (W 83)

Macwheble combines the offices of *factor* and *baron-bailie* in his administration of the estate. That is to say, as *factor* or *doer* he manages the property and the finances, and as *baron-bailie* he is empowered to exercise the Baron's jurisdiction, both in civil and criminal matters, in the Courts of Barony. He regards his dual positions very seriously indeed, takes upon himself the responsibility of paying protection money to Fergus Mac-Ivor secretly, and considers himself eminently qualified to give advice on all legal matters, such as the removal of the royal *caligae* after battle (W 440), and the arrangements for Rose's marriage (W 592-594).

*Doer*, which appears to be an older term than *factor*, dates from 1465 in O.Sc., when it appeared as *doar*.<sup>25</sup> The first quote for

25. SND, DOER.

*factor* is found in 1706. Among the duties of the *factor* were both the letting of lands and the collecting of rents, which invested him with considerable authority. A quote from Carlyle indicates the power which the *factor* of the day wielded over the family of the young Robert Burns,

The Steward, or Factor as the Scotch call him, used to send letters and threatenings, Burns says, "which threw us all into tears." Dmf. 1841 Carlyle Heroes 305. 31

while a quote of 1753 reveals the extent of the legal authority of the *factor*,

The fishers suffer still more by arbitrary and capricious laws which the stewards or factors of gentlemen's estates assume a power of prescribing on all occasions. Records Conv. Burghs (1915) 409. 32

Triptolemus Yellowley, referred to directly by Magnus Troil as *factor* (P 262, 263, 265), and indirectly as *chamberlain* (P 9), has to perform a somewhat different function in Shetland to his counterpart in the south. From the time of the annexation of the two islands by the Scottish Crown in 1472,<sup>33</sup> Orkney and Shetland were administered by a Scottish overlord or Lord Chamberlain. It is to this person that Triptolemus is accountable - an absent Scottish earl, who has a self-interest in bringing about an improvement in the agricultural methods and productivity of the islands while they fall under his administration. While the term *factor* dates back to 1706, *chamberlain*, 'the factor or steward of a nobleman', appears to be much older, found in O.Sc. as *chamberlane*, *-land*, and meaning 'the chamberlain of Scotland' in 1389, and 'a chamberlain or steward' in 1552.<sup>34</sup>

Scott has based the well-meaning attempts of Triptolemus to improve the farming methods of the islanders on historical truth, for their implements, particularly the one-stilted plough upon which he pours so much scorn (P 217), were primitive.<sup>35</sup> There is truth

31. SND, FACTOR.

32. loc.cit.

33. Dickinson, op.cit., p 42.

34. SND, CHAMBERLAIN.

35. Fenton, op.cit., pp.290-316.

too, expressed by Scott, in Magnus Troil's condemnation of the schemes Triptolemus has for drainage to reclaim land for cultivation (P 214-215). It has been proved that it was not a viable proposition to put more land under cultivation than the people were already doing, and even in present times it has been only possible to increase, not cultivation, but grazing, by re-seeding some areas of moorland. <sup>26</sup>No doubt the most zealous *factor*, finding it almost impossible to effect improvements in such unfavourable conditions, would have reacted as Triptolemus does by 'laying aside his high pretensions' (P 655), and modifying his behaviour to suit the circumstances.

Bailie Macwheeble comments that Inch-Grabbit's *doer* is 'no fit to be a birlieman let be a bailie' (W 392). *Birlieman* is an interesting term, of O.N. origin, and appearing in documented form in 1626 in West Yorkshire in the Holmesfield Court Rolls - 'Byrleymen ellected by the bealyffe and jury for this present yeare 1626 are, &c.'. <sup>27</sup> A similar entry in the Burgh Records of Peebles for the year 1711 indicates that the *birliemen* there were appointed annually in a similar fashion. <sup>28</sup> *Birlie* is considered to be a derivative of O.N. *by'jarlog* 'law of a *by* or township and also district over which the *by*-laws held good'. <sup>29</sup>

On estates in the Eastern and Central Highlands and in the Lowlands it was usual for the *laird* or *tacksman*, and the tenants to elect the *birlieman*, whose duties are described by Grant,

He was jointly chosen ... to arbitrate on all questions regarding the assessment for improvements, the amount of a 'stent' to be performed as a labour due, the value of unthreshed corn, etc. and to dispute his decision was considered to be disgraceful in the highest degree. <sup>30</sup>

One of the employees of Sir Arthur Wardour on the estate of Knockwinnock is Ringan Akwood, the *poinder*. This is the term used by Ringan when he is identifying himself to Dousterswivel (A 345), and it is also used by Idie Ochiltree (A 331). Scott uses Edie to provide an advance explanation of the word when he is telling

26. Fenton, *op.cit.*, pp.8-9.

29. *loc.cit.*

27. *EDD*, BIRLIEMAN.

30. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*,

28. *SND*, BIRLIEMAN.

London, 1961, p.127.

Lovel of his youth,

"Saunders Aikwood that was forester in thae days, the father o' Ringan that now is, was gaun daundering about the wood at e'en to see after the laird's game." (A 271)

*Poinder* derives from the verb *poind*, to 'seize and sell the goods of a debtor', or to impound, or to 'distrain upon a person'.<sup>36</sup> Later *poind* came to mean 'to round up and confine (stray animals or the like) as surety for compensation for damage committed by them', and the man engaged in this activity came to be known as the *poinder*, *pinner*, *poin(d)ler* or *pin(n)ler*. In the course of time fields were enclosed, precluding the trespassing of animals, and his function changed - the *poinder* became a forester, one of his duties being the care of the woods and hedges. Scott has taken the opportunity to include a term, which despite some modification of meaning, survived from 1249 until at least 1808 in documented form,<sup>37</sup> and doubtless much longer orally.

The lowest-ranking person directly connected with the land in these three novels is the *cottar*. When Evan Dhu is introducing Edward to Highland philosophy, he says,

"He that steals a cow from a poor widow, or a stirk from a cottar, is a thief; he that lifts a drove from a Sassenach laird is a gentleman drover." (W 163)

This gives an indication of the poverty and lowliness of the *cottar*, who was usually a humble tenant living on an estate in a cottage with a little land around it, labouring for the proprietor, who in return worked his plot for him. This is the most common meaning of the word, although in Aberdeenshire, the ploughman on an estate was called the *cottar*, and had a dwelling assigned to him. There was little difference between the conditions of the Highland and Lowland *cottars*. Their hold on their land was tenuous, and in hard times they were the first to be displaced. The disruptions have taken their toll on the inhabitants of the *toun* of Tully-Veolan, who present

36. SND, POIND.

37. *ibid.*, p.195.



such a sorry display to Waverley's English eyes,

They stood and gazed at the handsome young officer and his attendant, but without any of those quick motions and eager looks that indicate the earnestness with which those who live in monotonous ease at home look out for amusement abroad. Yet the physiognomy of the people, when more closely examined, was far from exhibiting the indifference of stupidity; their features were rough, but remarkably intelligent, --grave, but the very reverse of stupid; and from among the young women an artist might have chosen more than one model whose features and form resembled those of Minerva. The children, also, whose skins were burned black, and whose hair was bleached white, by the influence of the sun, had a look and manner of life and interest. It seemed, upon the whole, as if poverty, and indolence, its too frequent companion, were combining to depress the natural genius and acquired information of a hardy, intelligent, and reflecting peasantry. (W 64)

Scott supplies a very truthful picture of the plight of the *cottar* and his family in a Border situation. Perhaps it needs to be emphasised that the 'indolence' was a result of the malnutrition caused by poverty. Farther north, the crumbling of the clan system had its own particular effect on the *cottars* there, as David Kerr Cameron relates,

And if there was discontent before the Rebellion, there was disaster after it, not to say complete disillusionment, for such bold chiefs had suddenly to leave the stage. Attainted, their territories came savagely under the rule of an alien landlordism, fierce renting and, at times, cynical development. The result was a kind of Highland stagnation. The Highland *cottar* though was shaken loose, to become a statistic in the study of population-drift. 38

This is the kind of disintegration that Scott mirrors in the collapse of the Mac-Ivor Clan. It will be remembered that Fergus petitions Waverley on behalf of the remnant which will return to Glennaquioch without him,

"You are rich, Waverley, and you are generous. When you hear of these poor Mac-Ivors being distressed about their miserable possessions by some harsh overseer or agent of government, remember that you have worn their tartan, and are an adopted son of their race." (W 619-620)

38. D.K.Cameron, The Ballad and the Plough, London, 1979, p.72.

When Scott himself became a landowner at Abbotsford, it was his earnest desire to be a good, responsible one. Nowhere is this better expressed than in his concerned plans for his own *cottars*, whom he described as his 'little hamlet of labourers' at Abbotstown. Writing in January 1818 to his friend and factor, William Laidlaw, Scott demonstrated a clear understanding of the underprivileged existence of many *cottars* by outlining the strategies he had in mind for improving the lot of those on his own estate,

I consider the best possible [footing] is, that they should pay for their cottages, and cow-grass, and potato ground, and be paid for their labour at the ordinary rate. I would give them some advantages to balance the following conditions, which, after all, are conditions in my favour: - 1st, That they shall keep their cottages and little gardens, and doors, tolerably neat; and 2nd, That the men shall on no account shoot, or the boys break timber or take birds' nests, or go among the planting. I do not know any other restrictions, and these are easy. I should think we might settle a few families very happily here, which is an object I have much at heart, for I have no notion of the proprietor who is only ambitious to be lord of the 'beast and the brute,' and chases the human face from his vicinity. 39

The O.Sc. term *cottar* or *cotter* is found from around 1400 according to D.O.S.T., and presumably derives from Eng. *cot*, a cottage or from Med.Lat. *cotarius*. 40

With no ties to any particular estate, yet accepted at all of them as part and parcel of country life, moved a continuous procession of itinerant artisans, of *chapmen* or *yaggers* like Bryce Snailsfoot, of fishwives like Maggie Mucklebackit, of *hallenshaker loons* and *gangrel bodies*, and the occasional *gaberlunzie*, as Edie Ochiltree, the Blue-Gown, was often called, 'who kept his ground within a particular place, and was the news-carrier, the minstrel, and sometimes the historian of the district' (A 48). Dotted about the countryside, in the rural towns and villages, countless petty shopkeepers and innkeepers pursued their trade. As examples of these, Scott includes Mrs. Mailsetter, the postmistress of

39. Lockhart, op.cit., p.362.

40. SND, COTTAR.

Fairport, and her companions in gossip, Mrs. Heukbane, wife of the butcher, and Mrs Shortcake, spouse of the baker, three common, unpleasant women, portrayed in all their malicious pettiness by an able writer with the penetrating eye of a lawyer, who exposes their small-mindedness by describing their trivial, but cruel chatter (A 179-188). Scott displays the same perspicacity in his brief presentation of the flattering, wheedling 'shop talk' of Lucky Macleary in her *charge-house* on the grounds of Tully-Veolan (W 88-89), and of the 'fat, gouty, pursy landlord' of the Hawes, aptly named Mackitchinson (A 12-13).

Of the three novels, The Antiquary, set close to Scott's own period, and in surroundings much like his, is probably the most authentic. However, he was not unacquainted with the Highlands and their folk, as he maintained,

I had been a good deal in the Highlands at a time when they were much less accessible, and much less visited, than they have been of late years, and was acquainted with many of the old warriors of 1745, who were, like most veterans, easily induced to fight their battles over again, for the benefit of a willing listener like myself. <sup>41</sup>

As a consequence he was able to produce, in Waverley, a totally believable account of the rebellion of the 'forty-five', and an accurate replica of the social structure and interaction of that period. The Pirate has often been condemned on the grounds of both artificiality and incredibility. Pearson's remark, 'Indiscriminate approbation of Scott's romances has harmed his reputation, and praise of his good stories is valueless unless we recognise *The Pirate* as a bad one',<sup>42</sup> is typical. Almost as damning is the criticism of James Reed, with his charge of 'filleted fiction',<sup>43</sup> but in his chapter on the novel he included this very important point,

*The Pirate* is flawed right across but it would be foolish for this reason to refuse to listen when Scott reflects on social history, human relationships, moral man in a changing landscape. It is here that the vitalising depth of Scott's theme lies. <sup>44</sup>

41. Ant., Editor's Introduction, p.xxv.

42. Pearson, op.cit., p.164.

43. James Reed, Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Locality, London, 1980, p.142.

44. *ibid.*, p.143.

While Scott made excellent use of the copious notes compiled on his visit to the Northern Isles with the Light-House Commissioners in 1814, it would be unwise to assume that this was his chief source of data for The Pirate. The intricacies of social situations and relationships within the tale, as well as an obvious understanding of northern culture and of the dichotomy of religious beliefs in a lately Christianized society suggest saga inspiration. A realization of this lifts an appreciation of The Pirate to the level it deserves as a well-executed reflection of the past life and manners of an insular society, whose attitudes are governed by a resistance to change, and a well-learned mistrust of in-comers.

A keen observer of persons in all walks of life, Scott, as Andrew Lang has emphasized 'cared not to write a story of a single class. "From the peer to the ploughman" all society mingles in each of his novels.'<sup>45</sup> This afforded Scott many opportunities, as Lang pointed out, to contrast high and low members of society, and enabled him to present a complete picture of the social life of the day with realism. In these three novels he has devised three valid sociological studies for his readers, peopling them with a wide variety of figures using language appropriate to their rank and to the particular social situation in which they are portrayed. Most importantly, into this language Scott has incorporated a broad range of historically and linguistically correct Scots terms in danger of disappearance. Many of these terms, unknown to his readers, would have remained so, had he not thoughtfully organized and skilfully arranged their context, demonstrating and preserving their importance and relevance to a vanishing period of Scottish history.

\* \* \* \*

45. The Antiquary, Editor's Introduction, p.xxv.

## CHAPTER 5

## Country Talk.

With the blood of the Borders in his veins, and the love of the Borders in his heart, it is not surprising to find so much of Scott's vocabulary centred around country life - the well-known landscapes, the well-used farming procedures, and, above all, the commonplace activities of the ordinary folk. Scott often asserted the desirability of describing life on a realistic and familiar level, and, when writing with some satisfaction of Richardson's Pamela, which had appeared in 1740, he declared,

Hitherto romances had been written, generally speaking, in the old French taste, containing the protracted amours of princes and princesses, told in language coldly extravagant, and metaphysically absurd. In these wearisome performances, there appeared not the most distant allusion to the ordinary tone of feeling, the slightest attempt to paint mankind as it exists in the ordinary walks of life - all was rant, and bombast, stilt and buskin. 1

Waverley afforded Scott the opportunity of many expositions on Scottish life, while Edward, an English visitor, was being introduced to the scenery, manners and customs of the regions north of the Border, at Tully-Weolan in the Lowlands, at Glennaquoich in the Highlands, and in the territory covered by Charles Edward's army. Initially, Scott makes the introductions to Edward (and the reader), explaining in incidental fashion, during the course of the transition from England to Scotland, such Scottish terms as *collies*, which formed a group of 'idle, useless curs, which followed, snarling, barking, howling, and snapping at the horses' heels' (W 59); *kale*, or colewort, gigantic plants of which were growing in the yards of the *cottars*, 'encircled with groves of nettles' (W 62); the *girnells* of Tully-Weolan, as the granaries were called (W 65); the *haugh*, or narrow meadow beside the brook (W 69). From the moment

1. Ioan Williams, ed., Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction, London, 1968, p.22 .

of meeting the major-dono of the establishment, Mr. Alexander Saunderson, Edward and reader are left to interpret for themselves such statements as,

His Honour was with the folk who were getting doon the dark hag; the twa gardener lads [an emphasis on the word "twa"] had been ordered to attend him; and he had been just amusing himself in the mean time with dressing Miss Rose's flower bed. (W 73)

"He canna get it wrought in abune twa days in the week at no rate whatever," (W 74)

He commanded him, ... to look for his Honour at the dark hag, and tell him there was a gentleman from the South had arrived at the Ha'. (W 73)

From hereon the Scots words fall thick and fast in the butler's lengthy speech to Waverley,

"He is an innocent, sir," said the butler; "there is one such in almost every town in the country, but ours is brought far ben. He used to work a day's turn weel eneugh; but he helped Miss Rose when she was flemit with the Laird of Killancureit's new English bull, and since that time we ca' him Davie Do-little, - indeed we might ca' him Davie Do-naething, for since he got that gay clothing, to please his Honour and my young mistress (great folk will have their fancies), he has done naething but dance up and down about the *toun*, without doing a single turn, unless trimming the laird's fishing-wand or busking his flies, or maybe catching a dish of trouts at an erra-time." (W 73-74)

Scott's comment on the two Scottish words which Waverley learned from this encounter, *toun* and *innocent*, has been noted,<sup>2</sup> but there is much more for the observant reader to ponder. The dark *hag*, twice referred to by Mr. Saunderson (W 73), is eventually explained by Scott, through Rose,

The first greetings past, Edward learned from her that the *dark hag*, which had somewhat puzzled him in the butler's account of his master's avocations, had nothing to do with either a black cat or a broomstick, but was simply a portion of oak copse which was to be felled that day. (W 76)

2. Chapter 3, p.31.

Scott makes use of the term again, late in the novel, during a spate of Scots speech from old Janet, in which she describes to Edward the manner in which the Baron has been forced to hide by telling him, 'He lies a' day, and wholes a' night, in the cove in the dern hag' (W 574), qualifying *hag* by the Scots *derm*, meaning dark, drear, or hidden, or desolate.

*Hag* is of O.N. origin, deriving from *haggva*, to hew, strike, cut down trees. Its use is widely distributed through Scotland, Ireland, Northumberland and the north east of England.<sup>3</sup> It seems to have appeared in O.Sc. as a verb in 1456, and in noun form, with the meaning with which Scott has associated it, 'a portion of trees marked for cutting', from 1641.<sup>4</sup> That Scott found it an amusing word is evident from Edward's reaction to it; that he found it a word of practical application in his own extensive plantations at Abbotsford may be assumed.

Davie Gellatley's curious comment, 'He canna get it wrought in abune twa days in the week at no rate whatever' (W 73), -'He can't get it worked over on more than two days in the week in any circumstances', is quite clear to the Scot, but tantalisingly elusive to others, although Scott has used 'wrought', the English form of *wrocht*, the past tense of *wirk*.<sup>5</sup> While using a country idiom of 'working the soil', or 'getting the garden worked over', Davie is making it clear to Edward, that, whatever the butler pretends, he spends two days a week in the garden.

Mr. Saunderson uses a number of Scotticisms in his description of the way in which Davie came to be 'far ben' at Tully-Veolan, and it may be observed, that in typical Scots fashion, he speaks his mind about his special treatment, saying, 'Great folk will have their fancies'. According to Jamieson (1808), 'It is said of one, who is admitted to great familiarity with another, who either is, or wishes to be thought his superior, *He is far ben*!'<sup>6</sup>

In introducing his readers to the vernacular, Scott has used the English form as well as the Scots *toun*. At the time in which it is

3. EDD, HAG.

4. SND, HAG.

5. SND, WIRK.

6. SND, BEN.

used in Waverley, the first half of the eighteenth century, *toun* was indicative of 'an area of arable land on an estate, with associated common grazing rights, occupied by a number of farmers as co-tenants living in clusters of houses and usually farmed in whole or in part on a *run-rig* system.'<sup>7</sup> This changed with the enclosure of estates, and the onset of the agricultural revolution, with *toun* eventually coming to mean the actual farmstead with its accompanying buildings and fields. In a most interesting chapter on 'The New Farmtouns', David Kerr Cameron provides an insight into this aspect of rural development.<sup>8</sup>

Mr. Saunderson refers to the main house of the *toun* as the 'mansion of Tully-Veolan' (W 74), and also as the *Ha'* (W 73). Both terms are appropriate, the latter appearing in a Scots quotation of 1721, from J.Kelly *Proverbs* 316:

The Hen Egg goes to the Haa,  
To bring the Goose Egg awa.

Spoken when poor People give small Gifts to be doubly repaid.<sup>9</sup>

The *ha*, or *ha-house* was the principal dwelling on a farm, and was often appended to the name of the farm or *toun*, as in *Gowkha* and *Laverockha*.<sup>10</sup>

As noted by Jamieson (1825), a fishing-rod was called a *fishing-wand* in the Northern Isles and the far north of Scotland, and in Angus, Fife and Dumfries. The phrase, 'A Fishing Wand with Huik and Line', was used in 1733 in *Orpheus Caledonius* II, 99.<sup>11</sup> *Busk* is a word of O.N. origin, deriving from *búask*, from *búa-sek*, meaning to prepare oneself. As a transitive verb, it is used specifically in Scotland to mean to dress hooks for fly-fishing,<sup>12</sup> as Davie did for the Baron.

The phrase, 'at an orra-time', means, in this context, occasionally, or at odd times, with the sense of not very frequently. *Orra*, a reduced form of *o(w)eraa*, used with the meaning

7. SND, TOUN.

8. Cameron, op.cit., pp.23-29.

9. SND, HA.

10. SND, HA.

11. SND, FISHING-WAND.

12. SND, BUSK.



of over and above, or extra, was a much used word around a *farmtoun*, where an extra horse for odd jobs was known as the *orra beast* or the *orra horse*. Casual or extra workers were known variously as the *orra lad*, *orra lassie* and *orra loon*,<sup>13</sup> but there was also the *orra man*, who was often a permanent worker at the *toun*, an able man who could turn his hand to anything and was much in demand.<sup>14</sup> Scott has not made use of *orra* in this sense, which may well belong to a later period, but he has included the phrase 'at an orra time' on at least two other occasions, (A xxi), (P 465).

When the butler tells of Rose being 'flemit with the Laird of Killancureit's new English bull', he is using the verb *fleme*, or *fleem*, which derives from O.E. *flēman*, to put to flight, which has been obsolete in English since the sixteenth century, and is deemed archaic. It is an interesting illustration of one of a number of O.E. words which have disappeared in England, but survived in Scotland.

In *Waverley*, his first novel, Scott was naturally intent on making the introduction to the Scots language as easy and pleasurable as possible. In the passage just examined it may be seen that he managed, in a relatively short time, to acquaint his readers with a number of Scots idioms and an authentic sample of vocabulary. He continued in this way in the succeeding chapters, including and often explaining, directly or by context, or through the Baron or Rose, such Scots terms as *jougs* (W 78), *martand neal-ark* (W 82), *baron-bailie and doer* (W 82), *wappen-brief* (W 85), *grace-cup* (W 87), *change-house* (W 87), *deoch an doruis* (W 87), *toy* (W 89), *rokelay* (W 89), *Tappit Hen* (W 89), *reamed* (W 89), *gimmers*, and *dinmonts*, and *stots*, and *runts*, and *kyloes* (W 89), *lee-land* (W 94), *ground* (W 103), *foul fiend* (W 114), *gaberlunziez* (W 119), *creagh* (W 128), *caterans* (W 129), *blackmail* (W 130), *sornars* (W 130), *gear* (W 131), *reivers* (W 131), to name but a few.

Exposure to Scots language on this scale could have been overwhelming if not controlled by a master hand; in fact the effect

13. *SND*, ORRA.

14. Cameron, op.cit., p. 44.

is transforming. As Andrew Lang has so happily put it,

When once we enter the village of Tully-Veolan, the Magician finds his wand. Each picture of place or person tells, - the old butler, the daft Davie Gellatley, the solemn and chivalrous Baron, the pretty natural girl, the various lairds, the factor Macwheeble, - all at once become living people, and the friends whom we can never lose. 15

In The Antiquary Scott used a similar magic to cast a different spell. With two successful tales of the past behind him, he moved to a contemporary setting, to relate in easy, anecdotal fashion, chronicles of life around Fairport, less concerned with plot than with the interactions of a country community. In his review of Guy Mannering, James Reed, with unerring acuity, summarizes Scott's treatment of the varied units of society in the following observation, which may, with equal propriety, be applied to The Antiquary,

Scott shows us, as if he were demonstrating the anatomy of a living organism, how a community lives, and how all the cells in that community must function in moral as well as material concord if it is to survive. 16

As they move about the countryside on their many and various affairs, Jonathan Oldbuck and Edie Ochiltree act as communicators and intercessors, linking the disparate cells of Fairport society together, and affording Scott opportunities for splendid passages of vernacular dialogue. Daiches pays tribute to the success of this dialogue by saying,

And as always in Scott, the novel lives by its dialogue, the magnificent pedantic monologues of Oldbuck, the racy Scots speech of Edie Ochiltree, the chattering of the gossips in the post office, the naive babbling of Caxon. .... And it is to be noticed that the dialogue is at its best when it is the speech of the humble people: Scott could make them live by simply opening their mouths. 17

15. Lang, op.cit., p.

16. Reed, op.cit., p.72.

17. D.Daiches, 'Scott's Achievement as a Novelist', Jeffares, op.cit., p.39.

By setting The Antiquary in a coastal area, Scott makes it possible to include a wealth of vocabulary connected with sea and shore. The storm scene in which Isabella and her father are rescued involves dialogue in direct contrast to the elevated talk of the preceding dinner-party, so the highly specialized conversation of Oldbuck and Sir Arthur gives way to the vivid exclamations and exhortations of Edie Ochiltree, and the blunt, peremptory commands of Saunders Mucklebackit. Several passages from Edie, full of local colour, leave the reader in no doubt as to the danger of the situation,

"Halket-head! The tide will be running on Halket-head, by this time, like the Fall of Fyers! It was a' I could do to get round it twenty minutes since; it was coming in three feet abreast. We will maybe get back by Bally-burgh Ness Point yet. The Lord help us, it's our only chance. We can but try." (A 87)

"Sae I lookit at the lift and the rin o' the tide, till I settled it that if I could get down time eneugh to gie you warning, we wad do weel yet. But I doubt, I doubt, I have been beguiled! for what mortal ee ever saw sic a race as the tide is rinning e'en now? See, yonder's the Ratton's Skerry, - he aye held his neb abune the water in my day, but he's aneath it now," (A 87)

"Mak haste, mak haste, my bonny leddy," continued the old man; "mak haste, and we may do yet! Take haud o' my arm, - an auld and frail arm it's now, but it's been in as sair stress as this is yet. Take haud o' my arm, my winsome leddy! D'ye see yon wee black speck amang the wallowing waves yonder? This morning it was as high as the mast o' a brig, - it's sma' eneugh now; but while I see as muckle black about it as the crown o' my hat, I winna believe but we'll get round the Bally-burgh Ness, for a' that's come and gane yet." (A 88)

Scott employs a number of devices in Edie's speech to convey the sense of urgency, - Edie's shortened phrases; his use of the proper names of features of the locality, suggesting expert knowledge; his repetitive references to the rising tide, 'The tide will be running on Halket-head, by this time, like the Fall of Fyers!', 'the lift and the rin o' the tide', 'what mortal ee ever saw sic a race as the tide is rinning e'en now?', and, most chilling of all, 'the wallowing waves yonder'.

The English passages, ponderous by current standards, but fairly typical of Scott's day, are in sharp contrast with Edie's pithy dialogue, as this example shows,

It was indeed a dreadful evening. The howling of the storm mingled with the shrieks of the sea-fowl, and sounded like the dirge of the three devoted beings who, pent between two of the most magnificent yet most dreadful objects of nature, - a raging tide and an insurmountable precipice, - toiled along their painful and dangerous path, often lashed by the spray of some giant billow, which threw itself higher on the beach than those that had preceded it. Each minute did their enemy gain ground perceptibly upon them. (A 89)

On the other hand, when Scott expresses, through Edie, lofty ideals and high-minded sentiments in Scots, the results are sheer poetry,

"I hae lived to be weary o' life; and here or yonder, - at the back o' a dyke, in a wreath o' snaw, or in the wame o' a wave, - what signifies how the auld gaberlunzie dies?"  
(A 90)

"Our riches will soon be equal, ...-they are sae already; for I hae nae land, and you would give your fair bounds and barony for a square yard of rock that would be dry for twal hours." (A 90)

When Edie begins to talk of the time when he was 'a bauld craigsman, ance in my life' (A 91), the reader is introduced to an aspect of Scottish and Island life with which he or she may be quite unfamiliar. It was common in past times for families living near the cliffs to supplement their diet with sea-fowl and their eggs, a custom which Scott also incorporated into The Pirate, as the practice was even more prevalent in Orkney and Shetland.<sup>18</sup> It necessitated great skill and nerve on the part of the 'craigsman', or fowler, just as Edie declares. The subject possesses its own vocabulary, such as the local names for the various sea-fowl, - the *kittiwake*, the *lungie* or guillemot (A 91), and the *Tammie Norie* or

18. Scott observed some of the dangerous sites on his visit to Shetland.

puffin (A 94), and *skart* or cormorant (A 97). To rob nests is to *harry* or *herry*, from the O.E. and O.Sc. verbs meaning to plunder or pillage. SND reports *herrier*, one who plunders birds' nests, still in use in Galloway in 1957, where it was used in the following rhyme, shouted by children at another guilty of robbing nests,

Herrier, herrier, wee bird's nest -  
Kill the gorlins, eat their flesh. 19

There are other terms and phrases associated with the activities of the *craigsman* that would require explanation if Scott had not placed them in the context in a way that made their meaning fairly clear. Among these are *speel*, from O.Sc. *speill*, to climb, in use from 1513, most probably deriving from Mid. Du. *spelen*.<sup>20</sup> When Edie exhorted Lovel to 'cast wa plies' around 'the muckle black stane', he was advising him to throw a double coil of rope over it. As far as can be ascertained, *ply* came into O.Sc. around 1375 from French *plier* or Latin *plicare*, and was then accepted into St.Eng.<sup>21</sup> When he urged him to 'weize yoursell a wee easel-ward' (A91), Edie wished Lovel to ease himself carefully a little to the east. The verb *wise* is spelled in a number of different ways, including *weize*, *weise*, and *wyze*, and has a variety of meanings. Indicating, in this situation, manoeuvring, or moving gradually in a certain direction, it is used by Scott in *Waverley* with the sense of 'weising a ball' (W 510), or directing a bullet. In the phrase 'tak tent and tak time' (A 91), there is a reminder of the Scots proverb, 'Tak tent o' time ere time be tint'. *Tak tent*, meaning 'take care', or 'pay attention', has been part of O.Sc. since 1375.

Once again, Edie's use of the local names for particular rocks - 'Crummie's horn', 'Cat's-lug', and 'the muckle braid flat blue stane' known as 'Bessy's Apron', indicate his knowledge of the area, entitling him to speak with the authority he assumes when dissuading Lovel from climbing the cliff. Scott creates another

19. SND., HARRY.

20. SND., SPEILL.

21. SND., PLY.

splendid passage of rhetoric for him,

"Are ye mad?" said the mendicant. "Francie o' Fowlsheugh, and he was the best craigsman that ever speel'd heugh (mair by token he brake his neck upon the Dunbuy of Slaines), wadna hae ventured upon the Halket-head craigs after sun-down. It's God's grace, and a great wonder besides, that ye are not in the middle o' that roaring sea wi' what ye hae done already. I didna think there was the man alive would hae come down the craigs as ye did; I question an I could hae done it mysell, at this hour and in this weather, in the youngest and yaldest of my strength. But to venture up again, - it's a mere and clear tempting o' Providence." (A 93)

In broadest Scots, Edie opens with an anecdote about a local hero, one Francie of Fowlsheugh (where else?); includes a racey idiom 'speel'd heugh'; an example of Scots logic - the best climbers break their necks; presents parallel notions - 'God's grace and a great wonder besides'; a vivid nature image - 'the middle o' that roaring sea'; personal opinion - 'I didna think ... I question'; alliterative phrases - 'youngest and yaldest', 'mere and clear', and closes emphatically with a proverbial expression.

High on the cliffs above, Saunders Mucklebackit takes command, issuing brief, precise orders in characteristic seaman's language,

"Mind the peak there," cried Mucklebackit, an old fisherman and smuggler, - mind the peak! Steenie, Steenie Wilks, bring up the tackle; I'se warrant we'll sune heave them on board, Monkbarns, wad ye but stand out o' the gate." (A 97)

Scott's enthusiasm and enjoyment in the speech of his characters never flags. With the unassuming Saunders established as the hero of the moment, he is given free rein, colouring his dialogue with similes from the behaviour of sea-birds and delivering reassuring - even familiar remarks to Oldbuck.

"I see them," said Oldbuck, "I see them, low down on that flat stone. Hilli-hilloa, hilli-ho-a!"

"I see them mysell weel enough," said Mucklebackit; "they are sitting down yonder like hoodie-craws in a mist. But d'ye think ye'll help them wi' skirling that gate like an auld skart before a flaw o' weather?" (A 97)

His reference to the *huidie/hoodie* crow or *Corvus cornix* is extremely apt, as it hunches itself in bad weather with the appearance of a small dejected person, while the *skurt*, or cormorant, is, as Saunders intimates, a good indicator of the weather, wheeling about and crying out before a squall, making a noise not unlike Oldbuck's 'Hilli-hilloa'.

On the day after the storm, Oldbuck and Lovel make their way along the sands to Knockwinnock House, encountering Maggie Mucklebackit who is mending a net by her doorway. Scott uses the meeting, not only to introduce the names of a number of Scots fish, but also to initiate his readers into the custom of bargaining or haggling,

"What are ye for the day, your honour?" she said, or rather screamed, to Oldbuck. "Caller haddocks and whittings; a bannock-fluke and a cock-padle." (A 142)

While the ubiquitous haddock and whiting require no explanation, the non-Scot might well be mystified by the idea of eating a *cock-padle* or a *bannock-fluke*. Both, however, are common names for fish; the lumpfish, *Cyclopterus Lumpus*, a cartilaginous kind of fish, is known as the *cock-pad(d)le* in Fife and other parts of Scotland, and according to a 'List of Fishes Found in the Frith of Forth', compiled by the Wernerian Society in 1811,<sup>22</sup> the turbot is often called the *bannock-fleuk* because of its round shape. Suggestions for the derivation of *fleuk/fluke*, a fish, are Mid. Eng. *floke*, O.E. *flōc*, a kind of plaice, and also Ger. *flach*, flat. The adjective *caller*, when applied to fish, implies that they are fresh and firm with no sign of flabbiness, and has been used in this sense from around 1400. It is evidently a variant of Mid.Eng. *calver*, *calvur*, *calwar*, meaning fresh, when applied to salmon, the *v* being dropped in the same manner as in Eng. *silver*, Sc. *siller*.<sup>23</sup>

The process of haggling possessed its own rules and vocabulary and speech forms. Maggie and Oldbuck each adhere to the customary expressions of emotions - the purchaser's indignation at the price, the vendor's defiant defence, purchaser's 'reasonable' offer, vendor's scornful rejection, purchaser's withdrawal, vendor's '[in a softened tone]' renegotiation etc., until a bargain is struck, with Maggie throwing in 'a half dozen c' partans' or edible crabs to make the sauce, and Oldbuck adding a dram of whisky to his price. His natural

22. SND, COCK-PAD(D)LE.

23. SND, CALLER.

kindliness and lack of practice make him, careful though he is, no match for Maggie, and his sister tells him later that he has 'gied the limmer a full half o' what she seekit', when 'ye suld never bid muckle mair than a quarter' (A 177).

Scott emphasises the hard and dangerous life of the fisher-folk in Maggie's reply to Oldbuck's question,

"Is your goodman off to sea this morning, after his exertions last night?"

"In troth is he, Monkarns; he was awa this morning by four o'clock, when the sea was working like barm wi' yestreen's wind, and our bit coble dancing in't like a cork." (A 143)

and the telling imagery that falls from Maggie's lips, depicting the frail little boat tossing like a cork on the foaming sea, is an omen of the tragedy later to occur in which Steenie is drowned.

Of course, life in the Fairport area is not confined to the sea, and old Edie gives a fascinating view of the pulsing activities of the surrounding countryside (in which he himself plays an important part) to Isabella Wardour, who suggests he settle down in 'a neat cottage and garden',

"And then what wad a' the country about do for want o' auld Edie Ochiltree, that brings news and country cracks frae ae farm-steading to anither, and gingerbread to the lasses, and helps the lads to mend their fiddles, and the gudewives to clout their pans, and plaits rush-swords and grenadier caps for the weans, and busks the laird's flees, and has skill o' cow-ills and horse-ills, and kens mair auld sangs and tales than a' the barony besides, and gars ilka body laugh wherever he comes? Troth, my leddy, I canna lay down my vocation; it would be a public loss." (A 149)

This is a charming passage presenting an idyllic picture of rural life - gingerbread for lasses, fiddles for lads, cook-pots for housewives, toys for *bairns*, fishing for the *laird*, good health for the farm animals, songs, tales, laughter, -everything in its proper place and all well with the world. Edie's language is so fluent and evocative, so full of soft sibilants, gentle terms, and pleasant imagery that the reader is almost aware of the warmth of the sun and the murmuring of bees. In this example Scott clearly demonstrates that Scots is not always a 'nippin and scartin language, but is capable of expressing tenderness and affection in a smooth, easy flow.



Scott uses Oldbuck's walk to visit Lovel at Mrs. Hadoway's house to bring the township of Fairport to life for his readers, and to indicate the relationship of its inhabitants to the Laird of Monkbarns. As soon as Oldbuck enters the town, it appears that he is held in high esteem and that his visit is an event of some moment. People are anxious to be affable, and his opinion is sought on the subject uppermost in their minds, - the rumoured French invasion. Interest in the welfare of his garden is exhibited by the local seedsman, whose civil remarks disclose that he is eager to oblige him with further custom, be it in legal plants or illegal liquor. In the eyes of the town council he is an important person by reason of his land, and from the remarks of the town-clerk it is apparent that the news is circulated quickly when he comes to Fairport,

He had no sooner entered the streets of Fairport, than it was "Good morrow, Mr. Oldbuck, - a sight o' you's gude for sair een. What d'ye think of the news in the 'Sun' the day? They say the great attempt will be made in a fortnight."

"I wish to the Lord it were made and over, that I might hear no more about it."

"Monkbarns, your honour," said the nursery and seedsman, "I hope the plants gied satisfaction? And if ye wanted ony flower-roots fresh frae Holland, or [this in a lower key] an anker or twa o' Cologne gin, ane o' our brigs cam in yestreen."

"Thank ye, thank ye, - no occasion at present, Mr. Crabtree," said the Antiquary, pushing resolutely onward.

"Mr. Oldbuck," said the town-clerk (a more important person, who came in front and ventured to stop the old gentleman), "the provost, understanding you were in town, begs on no account that you'll quit it without seeing him; he wants to speak to ye about bringing the water frae the Fairwell-spring through a part o' your lands." (A 195)

Scott seldom errs in assigning the correct speech register to his characters, and he does not do so here. The seedsman speaks broad Scots, the Fairport people are represented as trying to overcome their natural Scots in a genteel effort to speak English, and the town-clerk, a man of some local importance, has very nearly managed to do so. Through the varied examples of Scots dialogue, - the civil conversation of these Fairport worthies; the petty gossip of Mrs. Heukbane, Mrs. Mailsetter and Mrs. Shortcake in the Post Office; the pleasant chatter of Lovel's landady, Mrs. Hadoway; the kindly talk of old Caxon; the domestic Scots of Miss Griselda Oldbuck and her maid; the richly idiomatic speech of the Mucklebackits, and the homely loquacity of Edie Ochiltree Scott sets the scene, and establishes the mood of the countryside.

In The Pirate, a great deal of vernacular is devoted to farming talk, as the new *factor*, Triptolemus Yellowley, assesses Shetland through critical Scottish eyes, and finds it wanting, for as Scott explains, 'Rude as the arts of agriculture were in Scotland, they were far superior to those known and practised in the regions of Thule' (P 58). However, the initial chapters are devoted to establishing the identity of Triptolemus and his sister, Miss Barbara Yellowley, in order that the reader (and perhaps the writer too) may get to know them. Maurice Lindsay seems to agree with this view when he writes,

Scott is often so anxious to fully set the scene, that the opening chapters of his novels seem tedious to a reader in an age less leisurely than his own. It is almost as if his inspiration only warmed out of application as the characters shaped themselves from the tip of his pen. 24

So the 'horrid and unnatural union' between Miss Barbara Clinkscale, of the Scottish house of that name, and Jasper Yellowley, 'the hearty Yorkshire yeoman' is carefully explained, and all the circumstances leading to the birth and naming of Triptolemus fully documented. The vocabulary and imagery are rural Scots, and are permitted by the irrepressible mirth of the author to verge upon the ludicrous. When Jasper expresses the belief that his wife's pre-natal dream of giving birth to a plough, 'drawn by three yoke of Angus-shire oxen', was caused by the sight of his own great Scottish 'pleugh' with the six oxen 'which were the pride of his heart', it draws immediate response from two of Dame Yellowley's *cummers*. It is a measure of Scott's unerring ear and his total control of Scots that he achieves such a convincingly appropriate difference between the speeches of the two old ladies, the first a Presbyterian, the second an Episcopalean,

"Hear to him," said an old whigamore carline - "hear to him, wi' his owsen, that are as an idol to him, even as the calf of Bethel! Na, na - it's nae pleugh of the flesh that the bonny lad-bairn - for a lad it sall be - sall e'er striddle between the stilts o' - it's a pleugh of the spirit - and I trust mysell to see him wag the head o' him in a pu'pit; or what's better, on a hill-side."

"Now the deil's in your whiggery," said the old lady Glenprosing; "wad ye hae our cummer's bonny lad-bairn wag the head aff his shouther; like your godly Mess James Guthrie, that he hald such a claverin about? - Na, na, he sall walk a mair siccar path, and be a dainty curate - and say he should live to be a bishop, what the waur wad he be?" (P 46)

As is natural in two ladies of opposing persuasions, they indulge in some heavily idiosyncratic 'flyting', but on one point they are united, - both interpret the plough as a religious symbol, 'the pleugh of the spirit'- and are determined that the 'lad-bairn' shall be a man of the church. While the first zealously jerks out this determination in a spate of sharp, awkward phrases, aggressively expressed in catechizing Presbyterian cant, the second, while not neglecting to remind her companion of a notable Whiggish preacher who literally lost his head, adopts a much milder tone, presenting a picture of a clerical life of greater safety and comfort for the unborn babe in 'wooing' Scots.

Scott draws attention to the old term *cummer* by first referring to each lady as such, and then using it in the conversation. His footnote indicates that it is used here with the meaning 'gossip', which is, in fact, the most usual. An older meaning, now obsolete, was 'godmother', and it seems that may have been the original use of *cummer*.<sup>25</sup> The word *carline* is a more derogatory term, used to describe old crones, even witches. It will be observed that both speakers use the form *sall*, common in O.Sc and in North.Mid.Eng from the thirteenth century. *Sall* or *sal* is only used after personal pronouns, and in the 2nd and 3rd persons may express a simple future, an obligation, a necessity, or as here, determination on the part of the speaker.<sup>26</sup>

With his mother and her friends so set on a religious career for the unborn Triptolemus, there is a certain irony in the situation in which the reader first makes direct contact with him. In his capacity as *factor* for the Chamberlain of Shetland and Orkney, he is sitting in the old house at Harfra on a night of pouring rain and howling wind, worrying about the fate of his newly-sown grain,

"Now, good be gracious to us," said Triptolemus, as he sat thumbing his old school copy of Virgil, "here is a pure day for the bear seed!" (P 62)

The spelling of 'poor' as *pure* is not nearly as usual as *puir*; in fact SND notes only one example, - '*pure pride*', with the meaning of "ostentatious grandeur, without sufficient means of supporting it".<sup>27</sup> The *bear* which is such a worry to Triptolemus is a hardy but inferior kind of barley; ordinary *bailey* has two rows of plump, good quality

25. SND, CUMMER.

26. SND, SALL.

27. SND, PUIR.

grain on each head, whereas *bear* has four rows of small grain. Later Triptolemus explains the reasons that make it impossible to grow anything but the hardy *bear* in Shetland, in a scathing criticism of agricultural methods and implements which affords Scott an excellent opportunity of exposing his readers to a wealth of Scots farming vocabulary,

"Barley! - alack-a-day!" replied the more accurate agriculturalist, "who ever heard of barley in these parts? Bear, my dearest friend, bear is all they have, and wonderment it is to me that they ever see an awn of it. Ye scart the land with a bit thing ye ca' a pleugh - ye might as weel give it a ritt with the teeth of a redding-kame. O, to see the sock, and the heel, and the soul-clout of a real steady Scottish pleugh, with a chield like a Samson between the stilts, laying a weight on them would keep down a mountain; twa stately owsen, and as many broad-breasted horse in the traces, going through soil and till, and leaving a fur in the ground would carry off water like a causeyed syver!" (P 228-229)

Triptolemus's language is full of earthy idioms, but, as usual, Scott supplies enough explanatory context to make it intelligible to the average reader. Mystification could arise, however, when he announces that he is going 'to look at the bear-baird, which must be sair laid wi' this tempest' (P 84). *Baird*, which means the first shoots or sprouts of grain or crops, is a word of Scots origin which has been accepted into English. Found in Old Scots from an early time, may have derived from O.E. *bre(o)rd* and Mid.Eng. *brerd*, border or rim, the same as O.E. *breord*, *breard*, *brerd*, a point, first blade of grass, or perhaps from O.N. *broddr*, a spike.<sup>28</sup>

By the use of a wide variety of homely Scots words, by the nature of the conversation, and by Baby's very Scottish appearance in her white *toy*, or linen cap, with its 'dependent' flaps, Scott establishes the isolation of brother and sister in an alien environment. He takes pains to use interesting items of vernacular, and so the reader becomes acquainted with the quaint Scots term for household management, *housewifeskep*, which, in colloquial language may appear in many forms, including *hizzyskep*, *hooseskep*, *hussyskep*, *hussifskap* and *hussyfskap*. Various items of sustenance are mentioned, - plain, basic food, for this is not a rich household - *brose*, *crowdie*, *drammock*, *parritch* and

28. SND, BREARD, BRAIRD.

and oatmeal *sloekened* with water (P 63). When Baby talks of *meltith* she uses a form of C.Sc. *meltydit*, which dates back at least to 1493, and means a mealtime or a repast (P 63). A Scot would have no trouble with the idiomatic phrases used by brother and sister, but other readers might well marvel at the demands 'What's your foolish will?' and 'What for are you crying on me?' (P 62), as well as at such remarks as 'I could never awa' with raw oatmeal', 'my vivers must thole fire and water', 'the mair gowk you', 'haud your silly claverin' tongue' (P 63), 'a tappin' at the outer yett', 'ill fa' red tools', or 'as ae bit airn can look like anither' (P 64). This is the very unsophisticated speech of kitchen and farmstead, full of homely metaphors and imagery from the farm and the fields. It is down-to-earth, practical language, characterized, particularly in the case of the fiercely independent, resourceful Baby, by a degree of asperity and cynicism engendered by long years of uncertainty and deprivation in an agricultural environment.

The subsequent violent entry of Mordaunt Mertoun, 'dripping with water like a river god', followed by the arrival of Bryce Snailsfoot, the *jagger*, and Norna of Fitful-head, ruptures all preconceived and long-observed notions of privacy, and sweeps away life-time practices of Scots order and economy. All this so unsettles Baby, that, while she and Triptolemus had suffered deprivations truly terrible on 'one of the *dourest* and most intractable farms in the Mearns' (P 54), and had considered their remove to the far north providential, she is moved in her distress to exclaim,

"The Lord guide us - this is surely the last day - what kind of a country of *guisards* and *gyre-carlines* is this! - and you, ye fool *carle*, to quit the bonny Mearns land to come here, where there is naething but sturdy beggars and *gaberlunzies* within ane's house, and Heaven's anger on the outside on't!"  
(P 81)

Fear imbues Baby's naturally aggressive manner of speech with an additional stridency, manifested in an accumulation of harsh-sounding Scots phrases and terms, - 'The Lord guide us', 'Heaven's anger', '*guisards* and *gyre-carlines*', '*sturdy beggars* and *gaberlunzies*', and she hesitates not in disparaging her brother by addressing him as a fool *carle*. In her furious outburst Scott has contrived to enrich not only the vocabulary, but the thoughts of his readers. Through Baby's emphatic style and unique vocabulary he stresses the strangeness of the place in

which Fate has set them. The sense of alienation that both brother and sister are experiencing is further emphasized in the speech made to Magnus by Triptolemus following his unlucky boating adventure with Claud Halcro. It is a masterly passage demonstrating Scott's easy ability to saturate a piece of dialogue with chosen features of language and lore. He wastes no words, moulding apt alliterative phrases and distinctive folk motifs into a perfectly natural and credible spate of colloquial Scots, in which Triptolemus compares Shetland with Scotland and finds it sadly wanting,

"Bear with me, Maister Fowd, ... or Maister Udaller, or whatever else they may call you, and as you are strong be pitiful, and consider the luckless lot of any inexperienced person who lights upon this earthly paradise of yours. He asks for drink, they bring him sour whey - no disparagement to your brandy, Fowd, which is excellent - You ask for meat, and they bring you sour sillocks that Satan might choke upon - You call your labourers together, and bid them work; it proves Saint Magnus's day, or Saint Ronan's day, or some infernal saint or other's - or else, perhaps, they have come out of bed with the wrong foot foremost, or they have seen an owl, or a rabbit has crossed their path, or they have dreamed of a roasted horse - in short, nothing is to be done - Give them a spade, and they work as if it burned their fingers; but set them to dancing, and see when they will tire of funking and flinging!"

(P 463)

Shetland customs are subjected to close and critical scrutiny. To begin with, Triptolemus intimates that in Scotland everyone would know exactly what to call the chief landholder - he would be the *laird*, not an outlandish 'Fowd' or 'Udaller'. He goes on to imply that reason is not to be expected in a region where drink is 'sour whey' (a traditional Shetland beverage), and meat 'sour sillocks' (dried fish), nor is any improvement in agriculture likely while the Shetlanders prefer dancing to working. By his deliberate choice of their most ludicrous omens he ridicules their superstitions, and by his particular use of 'infernal' he belittles their saints.

In full flight, Triptolemus sweeps on to the finale of his speech (P 464), denouncing, in withering terms, the communal use of the Shetland 'plant-a-cruive' - any Scot, however poor, would have his 'ain kail-yard' - and deploring the famous open-handed hospitality of which Shetland is so proud as a serious invasion of privacy. For Norna, the Fowd's own sister, in her role as wise-woman of the island, he reserves special biting condemnation,

Then enters a witch, with an ellwand in her hand, and she raises the wind or lays it, whichever she likes, majors up and down my house as if she was mistress of it, and I am bounden to thank Heaven if she carries not the broadside of it away with her!" (P 464)

As, in Waverley, Scott uses Edward, the English visitor, to introduce his readers to Scotland, in this novel he is using Triptolemus, the Scottish *factor*, to familiarize them with Shetland. However, whereas in Waverley he moves naturally and effortlessly into Scots vernacular from Tully-Veolan onwards, in The Pirate Scott chooses not to tell his tale in the natural dialect of the Shetlanders, although, given his interest in and knowledge of language, there is little doubt that he could have reproduced it had he so desired. Livingstone gives a number of examples, two of which are here quoted, and may be seen to be quite intelligible to a Scot,

I'm aragedder in a swidder, bit nae doot I'll get warr afore I get better ... Bit I'm stravaigin' ... Whin I ance begin ta speak I niver ken whin ta haud my tongue. 29

Strengers vinder why we Shetland folk tak life seriously. Ah, dey dunno ken wir circumstances - dey dunno ken hoo wir sarcondins mould wir lives from da vary cradle! Da sheddo o' bygane oppressions still hings ower wis, an goes doon fare faider ta son, and even da maist o' wis ir bondmen! Wir conkind climate keeps wir herts fu' o' anxiety, baith as regards da fruts o' da ert' an' wir ooncertain toil ipo da deep. 30

It is very probable that Scott considered that this sort of speech would appear too contrived and cumbersome for English eyes and ears, and would not justify the effort required in its reproduction. The more familiar Scots vernacular, falling so naturally from the lips of Triptolemus and Baby, and (with minor variations) from those of the ordinary Shetlanders, better suits his purpose of establishing the two main themes of The Pirate, - the experiences of the Scottish 'improver', and the danger<sup>31</sup> of the rescued stranger, Clement Cleveland.

29. W.P.Livingstone, Shetland and the Shetlanders, London, 1947, p.76.

30. *ibid.*, p.77.

31. Danger is used here in old Scots sense, meaning 'power to harm'.

In addition, Scott wanted to emphasize the very real differences that existed between Scotland and Shetland. Many of the peculiarities mentioned by Triptolemus were noted by Scott on his northern cruise. Over a century later, Livingstone commented that plenty of them still persisted,

One is so constantly coming up against unfamiliar things in their outlook, habits, dialect, and allusions that one is forced to seek for their significance and can only find it in their historical development. 32

From early times, the island of Shetland - the Ultima Thule of the ancients - was a region of wonder and mystery. Brooding near the top of the world, overlooked by the Merry Dancers, it was believed to be a pagan place, a realm of Odin, an abode of drows, wizards, witches, spaewomen and sellers of winds.<sup>33</sup> Naturally, the Scots considered the inhabitants of such a land to be very different, and indeed, they found them to be so. The Shetlanders rejected any idea of relationship with the Scots, claiming the blood of their first oppressors, the Norse *jarls*; their language, increasingly Scottish from 1468, they heavily dialectized (as Livingstone demonstrates), asserting it to be of Norse origin.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, Scott has interpolated a variety of Norse terms and terms of Norse derivation into prose and dialogue, including *air* (P 303), *berserker* (P 18), *duergar/drow* (P 151), *fowd* (P 128), *gio* (P 303), *gue* (P 25), *guisard* (P 25), *haaf* (P 14), *haaf-fish* (P 151), *hagalef* (P 15), *hawkhen* (P 15), *Helgafels* (P 303), *helyer* (P 303), *Ioul* (P 26), *langspiel* (P 237), *lispund* (P 12), *merk* (F 10), *ranzelaar/ranzelman* (P 160), *reimkennar* (P 86), *riva* (P 110), *roost* (P 1), *scald* (P 324), *scat* (P 15), *scathold* (P 12, 191), *skudler* (P 25), *ure* (P 10), *Valkyriur* (P 150), *voe* (P 9, 11), *wattle* (P 15), and in so doing he has been successful in giving a northern flavour and ring of authenticity to the novel.

While they sought to make their language distinctively different, the lore of the Shetlanders was even more so, and their customs, as Triptolemus suggests, were strange beyond belief. But of

32. Livingstone, op. cit., p.6.

33. *Pir.*, Note III, Sale of Winds, p.662.

34. Livingstone, op. cit., p.71.



all their customs, it was their indifference to the victims of shipwreck that seems the most abhorrent. The fact that this custom was allied to their laws governing *flotsam* and *jetsam* seems to make it more distasteful. As has been noted, it is Bryce Snailsfoot, the *jagger*, one of Scott's least likeable characters, who is first to articulate and defend the local reluctance to save a drowning man, remonstrating with Mordaunt as he labours to rescue Cleveland,

"Are you mad?" said he; "you that have lived sae lang in Zetland, to risk the saving of a drowning man? Wot ye not, if you bring him to life again, he will be sure to do you some capital injury? - Come Master Mordaunt, bear a hand to what's more to the purpose. Help me to get ane or twa of these kists ashore, before any body else comes, and we shall share, like good Christians, what God sends us, and be thankful." (P 113)

By this skilfully designed speech Scott successfully arouses a sense of repugnance for the pedlar in the reader. Much of this is due to Snailsfoot's very matter-of-fact language in which he perfectly conveys his indignation to Mordaunt for attempting to help Cleveland, and his total disinterest in - and even a dislike for - the drowning man. The 'kists' are of far greater value in his eyes, and he bids Mordaunt 'bear a hand to what's more to the purpose'. In very ordinary words he expresses the most vile greed and profane principles.

Through other ordinary Shetland characters Scott shows that these awful sentiments are the product of a harsh and impoverished environment. Old Swertha, for one, seeks to justify what Mordaunt calls 'the wrecking system',

"Hout, Maister Mordaunt, a ship ashore is a sight to wile the minister out of his very pu'pit in the middle of his preaching, muckle mair a puir auld ignorant wife frae her rock and tow." (P 124)

and she continues to defend the custom, using logic that verges on blasphemy,

"Folk speak muckle black ill of Earl Patrick: but he was a freend to the shore, and made wise laws against ony body helping vessels that were like to gang on the breakers. - And the mariners, I have heard Bryce Jagger say, lose their right frae the time keel touches sand ....." (P 124)

In this instance Scott's masterly control of language enables him, in Swertha's brief prosaic speech, to elucidate the development of this inhuman behaviour, condoned, encouraged, legalized and regulated by the sinister 'freend to the shore', the notorious Earl Patrick, and accepted in this topsy-turvy realm, not only by the abject, servile section of the population, but, if Swertha is to be believed, by the very minister in his 'pu'pit'.

The Pirate has had, and still has, its critics; this is partly due to its very specialized setting and subject matter. But there is no doubt that the novel led to an appreciation of the historical and social development, every-day life and manners of the Shetlanders, chiefly through the conversations of very ordinary members of the community. John Buchan's comments appear to agree with this view,

The island life is described with gusto and humour, and in the harpest detail. The plot, or what stands for a plot, soon fades from the reader's memory, but certain scenes remain in vivid recollection - the storm when Cleveland is washed ashore and the islanders scramble for the wreckage; the feasting at Magnus Troil's home; the whale hunt; the visit of Magnus to Norna's dwelling; the trivialities of the Kirkwall burghers. In all of these it is the homely characters that dominate the scene, and it is by the delineation of such characters that the book must stand. 35

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