CHAPTER 4

Women and their Prototypes in Oral Narrative.

The women in these novels form a large group and play roles of varying importance, ranging from homely, housekeeping figures like old Janet in Waverley, Maggie Mucklebackit in the Antiquary and Swertha in The Pirate, to impressive, forbidding figures like Norna and Lady Glenallan and Elspeth Mucklebackit.

The housekeeping women, Griselda Oldbuck, Baby Yellowley, Maggie Mucklebackit, old Janet, and in the north, Swertha, Tronda Dronsdaughter, and Euphane Fea, are resourceful, capable women, looking after their own family establishments or those of their masters with skill and fortitude. Only in the case of the wily Swertha is there any attempt at duplicity. They conform generally to the established model of the 'mistress' or the *gudewife*, so much a part of Scots culture and oral tradition. Their resourcefulness and indominability is inherited from the proud, strong women of northern legend, who managed homes, families and farms while their husbands were away on harrying/hunting/fishing expeditions. Later, in song and ballad, these characteristics[1] were passed on to the brave Scottish women whose husbands were away fighting, or, as is perpetuated in the case of Maggie Mucklebackit, at the *haaf* fishing.

Scott displayed the inherent strength of these women in a variety of ways. Griselda in The Antiquary, more gently born than all the others, runs her brother's household at Monkbarns with expertise and aplomb. 'As Mr Blattergowl had justly said, it was impossible to surprise Miss Griselda when her larder was empty' (A 459). Her name, Griselda means patience, and she shows a great deal of that quality in dealing with Oldbuck, with Hector, with Juno, Hector's dog, and with the unexpected arrival of a Lord. She shows spirit in her *flyting* with Maggie Mucklebackit over the price of fish, and in upbraiding Oldbuck over his poor bargain (A 177).

1. A more recent echo of these characteristics is seen in the person of Kate, in Boldrewood's Robbery Under Arms.

In The Pirate, Baby's strength of character is shown in her fearful singleminded thriftiness. The only way in which she and Triptolemus can live in some degree of decency is to economize, and economize she does. Her spirit is uncrushed by her hardships, and it rises superbly against Norna, her pretended powers, and the alleged powers of the Devil, in a most forceful speech,

> "I trust the Prince of the power of the air has not yet such-like power over those that are made in God's image, that a good house should fall about our heads, because a randy quean' (here she darted a fierce glance at the Pythoness)'should boast us with her glamour, as if we were sae mony dogs to crouch at her bidding!" (P 84)

Scott has presented Maggie Mucklebackit, the fish-wife in The Antiquary, with a great deal of sympathy. Her hard life is best described as seen through the eyes of young Jenny Rintherout,

> "As sune as the keel o' the coble touches the sand, deil a bit mair will the lazy fisher loons work, but the wives maun kilt their coats, and wade into surf to tak the fish ashore. ... And the wife, she maun get the scull on her back, and awa wi' the fish to the next borrows-town, and scauld and ban wi' ilka wife that will scauld and ban wi' her till it's sauld, - and that's the gait fisher-wives live, puir slaving bodies!" (A 351)

Maggie,of course, is quick to defend the gynocratic ways of the fisher-folk,[2] but there is no denying that her life was arduous, and reminiscent of the toil in fishing societies in Shetland and Scandinavia.

Old Janet, in Waverley, is a model of the typical old Scots retainer. Passionately attached to the Bradwardine family, she has almost outlived her usefulness. Her gratitude to the Baron knows no bounds, as she tells Edward, 'But, to be sure, how can we do eneugh for his Honour, when we and ours have lived on his ground this twa hundred years?' (W 575). But this frail old person, in true fairytale manner [**N 285.3**], is able to give outstanding help to Rose, Edward, and most importantly, the Baron.

2. The custom of husband and children taking the mother's name still survives in some areas of Orkney and Shetland.

Of the three Shetland servants in The Pirate, Swertha, housekeeper for Basil Mertoun at Jarlshof, Tronda Dronsdaughter, servant for the Yellowleys at Harfra, and Euphane Fea, housekeeper for Magnus Troil at Burgh-Westra, Swertha is the most clearly drawn. A shrewd, tough old lady, she nevertheless warms to the young Mordaunt, 'fish of her heart', and is genuinely worried when he is missing. Her cunning in inducing his father to look for him is indicative of her native ingenuity. Tronda Dronsdaughter, although much dominated by Mistress Baby, asserts herself to utter warnings about the danger of taking Norna lightly. Euphane Fea is called upon to perform one of the age-old duties of women in myth, legend and ballad, that of 'administering a composing draught, distilled from simples and wild flowers' (P 310) to quell Brenda's hysterics. She is described as 'an old sibyl' (P 324), and lightly sketched as she is, she evokes a well-defined memory of the 'wise-woman', an important figure in all North-European oral narrative. All three are typical servants of their place and time. The certain air of grimness which hovers about them is consistent with the memory of the fortitude and resilience of their prototypes in such traditional stories as 'The End of the Mukle Maisters'.[3]

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Of the three girls whom Scott has chosen as brides in the novels, two, Rose Bradwardine in Waverley, and Brenda Troil in The Pirate, fulfil the expectations the reader has of a princess in a fairytale. Rose is 'a very pretty girl of the Scotch cast of beauty - that is, with a profusion of hair of paley gold, and a skin like the snow of her own mountains in whiteness' (W 76). Brenda, of the same colouring and complexion, is, like Rose, a cheerful, practical girl. Both display considerable ingenuity and courage in helping their lovers in dangerous situations. Isabella Wardour, in The Antiquary, is not described in appearance, and the reader has only a shadowy impression of her through the comments of Oldbuck and Edie Ochiltree. She shows courage on the night of the storm, she shows

3. Jessie M.E. Saxby, Shetland traditional Lore, Edinburgh, 1932, pp.90-93.

kindness and compassion for old Edie, and fortitude in her father's troubles, but she is much more passive than either Rose or Brenda. It seems that the reason for this lies in the period portrayed in The Antiquary. The answer to Scott's different treatment of the heroine may well lie in a conversation between Oldbuck and his nephew, Hector,

> "Why, Hector, I was afraid of a scene. Your sister told me you were desperately in love with Miss Wardour."
> "Sir," answered the young man, "you would not have me desperately in love with a woman that does not care about me?" (A 575)

In the modern times of The Antiquary, it appears that romance has given way to commonsense, and therefore a fairytale princess is no longer necessary, - indeed she would be out of place.

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In the two dark girls, Flora Mac-Ivor in Waverley, and Minna Troil in The Pirate, Scott has introduced two illustrations of the traditional theme of the woman who is averse to marriage [**T 311.**] If Cleveland had been a different person, Minna would have been able to marry him, but if he had been a different person, she would not have wanted to do so. Certainly after meeting him, she is averse to marriage with anyone else. Despite differences in upbringing and education, the girls are very similar in outlook. Flora, with a Continental education is dedicated to the Stuart cause, 'from her infancy' she 'had but one wish', - their restoration to the throne. For this, 'she was prepared to do all, to suffer all, to sacrifice all' (W 192). Minna, living in Shetland, and ignorant of the world by Flora's standards, has deluded herself with romantic ideas of Shetland's independence, and even hopes that her father 'will soon be able to rise in resistance'(P 349). They are both beautiful girls, tall, dark-eyed, and clear-complexioned; neither Edward nor Cleveland lost any time in falling in love with them, and both of the young men protest against their rejection.

Prototypes for Flora and Minna may be found in the warrior-women of the past, popular in Norse and Byzantine oral narrative of the twelfth century, in Brynhild of the Völsunga, in the Celtic war goddess Mórrigán, the warrior-maid, Áife of the Ulster Cycle, who 'held most dear her two horses, her chariot, and her charioteer', in Saxo's Hermuthruda and Alvida, in Olof of Hrólfs Saga Kraka, and in the Celtic Maeve. These women-warrior types were parodied in later Danish oral narrative and ballad, earning names like Stunt-Brynhild, and Mighty Maid. There is nothing of the burlesque about Flora and Minna,- romantic but dignified young women, they may be seen as a softening and refining of the earlier traditional models.

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The most impressive women in the novelsare the three matriarchal figures - Lady Glenallan and Elspeth Mucklebackit in The Antiquary, and Norna of the Fitful-head in The Pirate. While it is true that Lady Glenallan is only encountered in her coffin, her reputation is so fearsome that her influence permeates the novel. Chiefly through old Elspeth, Scott builds up a frightful portrait of wickedness. She tells of her mistress's avarice-'I sink to a miserable stipendiary dowager' (A 432); of her overweening pride - 'I who brought lands and vassals, and high blood and ancient fame, to my husband'(A 432); of her jealousy and hatred of Eveline Neville - 'And this girl - I detest her!' (A 432); and finally, of the lie designed to ruin her son's life -'But they might be brought to think themselves sae nigh as no Christian law will permit their wedlock' (A 434). Dreadful as this picture is, it scarcely prepares the reader for her chilling question to Elspeth, 'Elspeth Cheyne, did ye ever pull a new-budded flower?' (A 440), or the sight of the golden bodkin, or the words, 'nothing but gold must shed the blood of Glenallan' (A 440).

Obsessive ties of Gothic feudalism bind Elspeth to her mistress, but Lady Glenallan's hold over her is so great that it suggests magic powers. She is completely under her spell - 'I hated what my mistress hated' (A 432), and 'I wad not hae spared the blood of my body, or the guilt of my soul, to serve the house of Glenallan' (A 437).

Elspeth is herself a complex and forbidding character, - brought up beyond her station, her control over her own son is unfailing (A 421-26). She is awesome in her old age, half-suspected of being a witch, speaking like a 'prent-book' in the untidy cottage, and believing herself beyond redemption, - 'Na, na, nae priest! nae priest! (A 442). In death as in life, she follows her mistress,

> "Teresa - Teresa - my lady calls us! Bring a candle; the grand staircase is as mirk as a Yule midnight. - We are coming, my lady!' With these words she sunk back on the settle, and from thence sidelong to the floor (A 527).

Norna of the Fitful-head, as a compensation for the sorrows of her youth, has deluded herself into believing that she has supernatural powers. But to maintain this delusion - for herself as well as for the restof Shetland - her life is devoted to keeping up the pretence. She is a maternal figure, attached by blood and affection to the family at Burgh-Westra, and maintaining a tutelary interest in Minna and Brenda. Grieving for her lost child, she mistakenly fixes her motherly instincts on Mordaunt. Norna is not evil, and so her pretensions can be enjoyed by the reader. Scott has modelled her on the prophetesses of Northern legend, and dressed her in the clothes of the *völva* in the Vinland Saga.

While Lady Glenallan and Elspeth seem the very embodiments of Gothic horror, and Norna has an immediate ancestor in Northern narrative, their real origin lies farther back in time. Filtering down through the ages come oral accounts of the earth-mother, of powerful female goddesses, of Brigantia and Morrigan in Celtic legend with their great sexual and maternal attributes, and of the Gaelic *Cailleach Bheur*, who possessed the dual characteristics of Norn and Hag. The Norn, youthful and beautiful, was favourable to mankind, The Hag was old, ugly, and hostile.

Looking at the concept of the Norn and the Hag from a different angle, Dorson[4] puts it into another context by suggesting that the capacity for good and evil lies within, and that each person has

4. R.M. Dorson, Peasant Customs and Savage Myths, London, 1968, p.568.

the capacity for using his or her power for good or evil,

> There was but one step, but a simple act of will between the Norn and the Hag, even before Christianity came in ... if the will were bad, if the soothsayer passed into the false prophetess, the leech into the poisoner, and the priestess into the witch, they were as potent and terrible for ill as they once had been for good.

Scott has had Lady Glenallan and Elspeth choose the way of the Hag, while poor deluded Norna (hence her name) follows the path of the Norn. Other dark shadows from the oral narrative of the North and Scotland cling to Lady Glenallan, - there are nuances of the cruel, grim Guðrun of Atlakviða, who kills her young sons as revenge upon her husband, and of the Scottish Nicneven, and of the *Gyrecarline* or Mother of Witches.

It is not usual, in ballad, to find a mother with the cruel nature or the powerful stature of Lady Glenallan. Ballads, as Muir says, 'shrink from ascribing cruelty to mothers and substitute stepmothers'. There is an exception, however, in The Wife of Usher's Well. In it, a matriarchal figure with the strength of purpose of Lady Glenallan exercises a similar degree of authority over her family by calling her three sons back from the dead. Muir describes it thus,

> In her case family authority is still related to the powers that run the universe, and reaches up to the gods, or the fates, as it also derives from them. She challenges not rebellious children but Death itself. 5

There is another cruel mother in Willie's Lady, who tries to prevent the birth of a baby to her son's wife by witchcraft, but is thwarted by help from the household goblin, and in the chilling ballad Fine Flowers in the Valley, also known as The Cruel Mother,[6] a mother kills her own child. Human nature revolts at the idea of such behaviour in a mother, and in ballad as in folktale, cruelty like that of Lady Glenallan is usually vested in the step-mother.

In looking at the reasons for the presence of these formidable women in the novels, it is easy to see Norna as an appropriate figure in The Pirate. In geographic proximity to her counterparts in oral Northern narrative, she is also a relevant cultural image symbolizing the dichotomy of a society not long Christianized.

5. Muir, op.cit., p.153.
6. James Reed, The Border Ballads, London, 1973, pp.186-187.

Lady Glenallan and Elspeth are more artfully selected. The sheer incongruity of the presence of figures of such arcane dimensions in the peaceful town of Fairport is arresting. But Scott knew, none better, that beneath the comfortable commonplace surface of most Fairports are hidden secrets of the past, and the stuff of which legends are made.

In The Antiquary, due to the presence of the many Scots speakers, such as Griselda, Edie Ochiltree, Elspeth, the Mucklebackits and Caxon, Scott achieved his aim of working language and lore in close association. Of particular note is the disclosing of Lady Glenallan's secret through the long oral narratives of Elspeth in which the compulsive influence of family lore is exposed. In The Antiquary too, perhaps more successfully than in any other novel, Scott has united lore, language and structure. Whatever he was writing, he usually found an opportunity to reconcile past with present in some way. In this novel this forms a major part of the structure. By bringing the secrets of yesterday into the light of today, the truth is found which sets Lord Glenallan free. He is then able to step from the dark horror of the past into the bright happiness of the present with his new-found son, and, instead of longing for death, to look forward to the future.

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In choosing women to weave into these three novels, Scott has selected a number of set-types from the traditional oral narrative of the north. It may be seen that the women fall into four categories, and that he has developed, refined and reshaped them to suit the character of his tales.

(1) The 'Gudewife'- personified in each of the novels, and illustrative of **Motif J.10. Wisdom Acquired from Experience**, in the form of resourcefulness and indomitability.

(2) The Bride - Rose Bradwardine in Waverley, Isabella Wardour in The Antiquary, and Brenda Troil in The Pirate each marry a husband of whom their father approves **Motif T.131.1.2.**

(3) The Warrior-Maid - Scott has used a softening of this type [**F 565.1.**], and linked it with **Motif T 311 Woman Averse to Marriage,** in his portrayal of Flora Mac-Ivor and Minna Troil.

(4) The Authoritative Matriarch - in the persons of Lady Glenallan, Elspeth and Norna of the Fitful-head, but most of all in Lady Glenallan, to whom accrue the following motifs:-

S 12 Cruel Mother
S 300 Desire to Abandon or Murder Child
S 12.3 Orders (Grand)child's Death
T 252 Overbearing Wife
W 151 Greed
W 157 Dishonesty
W 181 Jealousy
W 155 Violence of Temper

The women whom Scott has chosen serve his purposes well. In the motifs which they represent, and in the themes in which they are enclosed, their actions and their words preserve memories of the heroic past of Scotland. Scott created a precedent in his novels by setting believable figures with unique characteristics from Scots folklore against a backdrop of romance and history.

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CHAPTER 5

Scott's Use of the Embellishing Motif.

While a competent author like Scott can weave and embed smaller folklore motifs into his tale with consummate ease, the larger units or embellishing motifs,with which he enriches his novels,are so very distinctive and obvious that they require a lot of careful stitching and darning to make them sit properly. In these three novels Scott has approached the difficulty with varying methods, but always with a sense of purpose. Sometimes the motif is in the form of a legend, sometimes a folk-belief, sometimes a poem or a song on a person's lips. Scott included nothing in his writing 'by accident', although, in his self-deprecatory manner, he may have said that he did; anything in his novels was put there for a purpose.

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In the beginning of Waverley much use is made of legend and its influence on young Edward's already romantic nature, in which the reader may detect a reflection of Scott's own youthful experience. The novel is designed to lead Edward into adopting a positive view of romanticism similar to that which Scott came to hold himself.

The family stories which Edward hears at Waverley Honour, while heating his already fevered imagination with romantic accounts of the past, are also firmly linked to the present. The sad tale of Wilibert of Waverley, who returned from the Holy Land in time for his bride's wedding, who relinquished his claim with good grace and retired to the celibate life, is clearly reflected in the life of Edward's uncle, Sir Everard. The touching story of Miss Lucy St. Aubin, who 'lived and died a maid' for William Waverley, is echoed in the spinsterhood of his aunt, Miss Rachel, who evidently gave her heart to someone - was it the Baron (W 79)? - in her youth.

Scott has a good deal to say, in his Introduction to Waverley, about the commonality of passion over the ages, be it in love or in war,

> ...those passions common to men in all stages of society, and which have alike agitated the human heart whether it throbbed under the steel corselet of the fifteenth century, the brocaded coat of the eighteenth, or the blue frock and white dimity waistcoat of the present day. (W 5)

> The wrath of our ancestors, for example, was coloured *gules*; it broke forth in acts of open and sanguinary violence against the objects of its fury. Our malignant feelings, which must seek gratification through more indirect channels, and undermine the obstacles which they cannot openly bear down, may be rather said to be tinctured *sable*. But the deep-ruling impulse is the same in both cases; and the proud peer who can now only ruin his neighbour according to law, by protracted suits, is the genuine descendant of the baron who wrapped the castle of his competitor in flames, and knocked him on the head as he endeavoured to escape from the conflagration. (W 5)

His view is, that although the external trappings change, history, through human nature, repeats itself in real life and in the mirrors of real life, - myth, legend, ballad, folktale and family tale. Thus Edward himself, riding off to join his regiment, is a gentler version of Sir Hildebrand Waverley who had departed from Waverley Honour for the Civil War with, in the words of Sir Everard, a retinue of 'a larger body of horse than your whole regiment consists of' (W 45). As soon as Edward mounts his horse, he too, passes into the realm of future legend, and becomes an important figure in the family lore of Waverley Honour.

On arriving at Tully-Veolan in Scotland, Edward finds himself in an astonishing world in which legend comes alive, and past and present seem to fuse. He has not been long with the Bradwardine family before Scott chooses the pleasant interlude of coffee on Rose's balcony to juxtapose a song from the dim past with a story from the not so dim present, linking them with Rose's question, 'Must I tell my story as well as sing my song?' (W 114).

The song, an ancient fragment, Saint Swithin's Chair, is closely attached to the 'projecting peak of an impending crag' in the nearby timeless landscape, and involves a previous Baron of Bradwardine who is away at the wars with 'his liege, King Robert' around 1318. His Lady, wishing to know the fate of her husband, braves the terrors of Hallowmas Eve to sit in Saint Swithin's Chair and ask three questions of the Night-Hag. A fragment of Christian influence, the song recalls the pagan past, for Hallowmas Eve (1st November) is a survival of the great autumn festival of Samhuinn when all the gods of the world were worshipped, and it is traditionally believed in Scotland that on Hallowmas Eve spirits are freed, communication with the dead is possible, hobgoblins are afoot, and, led by the *Cailleach* or Night-Hag or Mother of Witches and her 'nymphes nine', all manner of evil things take to the air in the Hallowmas Rade, their steeds described by Burns in The Witches of Fife,

> Some horses were of the broon cane formit
> And some of the green bay tree,
> But mine was made of ane humble straw
> And a stout stallion was he.

Some witches borrowed real horses for the night,which were found in a sorry state the next day,- 'hag-ridden'- sweaty, half-winded, with knots in their manes which the witches had used for stirrups.

That is the **Song**, dismissed by the baron as a superstitious figment of the past. Rose then introduces the **Story**, by saying in a matter of fact way,

> "My father has a strange defiance of the marvellous, Captain Waverley, and once stood firm when a whole synod of Presbyterian divines were put to the rout by a sudden apparition of the foul fiend." (W 114)

An astonished Edward is now plunged into a no-less superstitious account of the Christian, 'enlightened' present, of how old Janet Gellatley was saved at a witchcraft trial[1] by the Baron and a supposed appearance of the Devil. Links are thus established with a future

1. The Witchcraft Act was repealed in Scotland and England in 1736.

event which will occur at the end of the novel, in which old Janet, chiefly on account of her witch-like appearance and reputation, is able to hide and save the Baron. No doubt in the future this will form a legend to be told to the children and grandchildren of Rose and Edward. Scott has used the witch, a familiar figure in Scottish lore, to connect the oral narrative of past, present and future in a very close-kit piece of construction.

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In **Flora's Song** (W 206), Scott has reflected the way in which the bards of old stirred their audience with accounts of the heroes of the past. An epic song, sung in a romantic setting by the beautiful Flora, it could not fail to arouse some degree of interest in the Stuart cause in Edward, as well as interpreting for him, and the reader, the performance of Fergus's bard in the hall (W 187-188).

The song begins low and slow in the traditional manner, with the problems of the present,

> There is mist on the mountain, and night on the vale,
> But more dark is the sleep of the sons of the Gael.
> A stranger commanded, - it sunk on the land,
> It has frozen each heart, and benumbed every hand!

It reaches back from the present - the landing of Charles Edward in Scotland - through layers of historical and legendary material for an answer to the problem, which is found to be, without exception, in every layer, the use of 'dirk, claymore and targe'.Historical figures - the Lords of the Isles, Chiefs of the MacDonald and Cameron clans, the murdered MacDonalds of Glencoe, join the legendary Finn and Diarmud in inciting the present-day warriors to revenge.

The song, like that of the enchantresses of old, has an enspelling effect on Edward. Although he is on the point of returning to Tully-Veolan, and thence to his regiment, the hold of the 'fair enchantress' (W 204) is too strong, and her 'charms of melody and beauty' cause him to accept Fergus's invitation to 'remain a week or two' (W 212). So in illustrating and preserving a motif of Scotland's past, Scott is also using it as important pivot of the present in his narrative.

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The Highland motifs of the second-sight and the *Bodach Glas* do not sit quite so easily in the fabric of the novel. Scott, the Borderer, with his rationalism and his legal mind, did not possess Celtic acceptance of the supernatural, and he is not to be blamed for this. The difficulty lies in the fact that, while the Celt regards second-sight and warning spirits as natural as the air he breathes, Scott struggles with such ideas, and tries to explain them. On the whole, he deals with the supernatural best at one remove, as in Rose's song, or at arm's length, as when Donald Bean Lean speaks familiarly of *Donnacha am Amaigh* and his son, also second-sighted (W 155). The second example, where Colonel Gardiner's life is saved from Callum Beg's shot by *taishatr* (W 424), although rather incongruous, is fleeting, and therefore acceptable.

The appearance of the *Bodach Glas* to Fergus, and his account of it to Edward does lose effect from being, as Parsons has said 'introduced too perfunctorily'.[2] Unlike Rose's 'ancient fragment' and Flora's song, it is neither foreshadowed nor echoed in the structure of the novel. However, although it is not stitched in as well as it could have been, the spectre does reappear, rather obviously, at Carlisle. Edward's attempt to explain the phantom as 'the operation of an exhausted frame and depressed spirits working on the belief common to all Highlanders in such superstitions' (W 527), inevitably draws an unfavourable reaction from critics. It is, though , the response that an Englishmar could be expected to make in those circumstances, and does not really detract from the motif. It appears somewhat artificial because it was, for Scott, an elaborate and distinctively foreign motif with which he felt some uneasiness. At the end it must be seen and appreciated for what is is, a sincere attempt to introduce and preserve some Highland folk material in a Highland novel.

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2. Parsons, op.cit., p.76.

In The Antiquary there are three very distinctive larger motifs:-

(1) The Story of Rab Tull (A 112-116), told by Griselda to Lovel.

(2) The Story of Bertha (A 137-139) told by Oldbuck to Lovel.

(3) The Story of The Fortunes of Martin Waldeck, edited by Isabella, and read by Lovel at the picnic (A 223-237).

Of these, only Griselda's story is of a Scottish nature, but although the others are German, they are well-integrated into the plot. Having determined to add the German strand associated with the comic villain, Dousterswivel, Scott wove it in properly. Side by side in Oldbuck's *sanctum sanctorum*, a German-style cabinet and Scottish dirks and targes jostle with each other, and so it is with the Scots and German themes in the novel.

The Story of Rab Tull is important to Lovel. In it Griselda recounts how the ghost of their ancestor, the owner of the old cabinet, appeared to Rab Tull in the green room and directed him to the cabinet, revealing very important documents in it. Lovel sleeps in the haunted room and dreams of Aldobrand Oldenbuck who shows him some German words in a book. The Story of Bertha, which Oldbuck tells him the next day, supplies the meaning of those words, and Lovel is inspired to search for his true identity and not give up hopes of Isabella. The third story unites them briefly as he reads it for her. It is story full of German folklore, and parallels the search of Sir Arthur and Dousterswivel for treasure, foreshadowing the unhappy end in the words , 'Thus were the miseries attendant upon wealth, hastily attained and ill-employed, exemplified in the fortunes of Martin Waldeck' (A 237). It seems probable that Scott is making a comment on the difference between legend and life; the folklore motifs are preserved intact in the Harz mountain story, whereas in real life they become weakened. The Demon carries a tree for magic purposes, Dousterswivel carries a 'little slip of hazel-nuts' (A 222). The Demons perform a wild magic ritual with roaring fires in honour of Hermes and the Black Dragon and Dousterswivel potters about with little 'suffummigations'.

Oldbuck claims that the basis for Rab Tull's story may be found in Saint Augustine,[3] but in his notes (A 599-601) Scott explains that he had a parallel in the case of a gentleman of Bowland in the vale of Gala, who, seventy years earlier, had had the whereabouts of some important documents revealed to him by his dead father in a dream. Oldbuck attributes Rab's experience to a dream too, in which information subconsciously stored came to the surface when needed so badly. In the motif of the vitally important missing documents, there is a faint echo of the missing receipt in Wandering Willie's Tale, which Steenie had to retrieve from Hell.

Griselda relates the story in broad Scots in an entertaining manner, further highlighting the language difficulties which naturally occur. Aldobrand Oldenbuck, as may be expected, has no Scots or Erse, and Rab Tull does not understand German. They finally reach common ground in Latin, with which Griselda has some difficulty, and does not like being corrected over her pronunciation of *carta* as *carter* by her brother. She concludes the tale in characteristic Scots idiom,

> "Rab Tull keepit a highland heart, and banged out o' bed, and till some of his readiest claes; and he did follow the thing upstairs and downstairs to the place we ca' the high dow-cot (a sort of a little tower in the corner of the auld house,where there was a rickle o' usless boxes and trunks), and there the ghaist gae Rab a kick wi' the tae foot, and a kick wi' the tother, to that very auld east-country tabernacle of a cabinet that my brother has standing beside his library table, and then disappeared like a fuff o' tobacco, leaving Rab in a very pitiful condition." (A 115)

Scott has contrasted the Scots and German stories in language and subject matter, yet united them through the candlestick of Harz silver (A 117), through the scenes on the tapestry in the Green Room, and through the 'huge oaken cabinet, decorated at each corner with Dutch cherubs, having their little Dutch wings displayed, and great jolter-headed visages placed between them' (A 28). This German cabinet in a Scots household is a very important object; it holds the drawer from which Oldbuck will subsequently produce the bundle of papers tied with a 'black ribband' (A 466), that will unite Lord Glenallan and Lovel as father and son.

3. Parsons, op.cit., p.247.
Parsons feels that it is in Aubrey, Miscellanies upon Various Subjects, rather than Saint Augustine.

The Pirate holds many distinctively Northern motifs connected with the rich heritage of folklore in Shetland and Orkney. The most important of these is the belief, central to the theme of the novel, in the danger of the drowning man, an intense version of **Motif N 134 Persons Bring Bad Luck.** 'Danger' is used here in the Scottish sense of 'power to harm'. This motif, which forms the subject of oral narrative from the Hebrides to Scandinavia, inevitably results in harm being caused to the rescuer by the very person who could be expected to be the most grateful. The belief was very strong and very interesting, and evidently made an impression of some depth on Scott, who found it fascinating in a people so much exposed to the perils of the sea.

Allied to the ancient awe of the Celt for the sea, well-phrased in these lines,

> The waste of water seems to have always impressed the Celts with the sense of primeval ancientness; it was connected in their minds with vastness, darkness, and monstrous births - the very antithesis of all that was symbolized by the earth, the sky, and the sun. 4

the belief has a possible origin in a number of sources:-

(1) Mythology.

Teutates, 'God of the People', one member of the Celtic Triune, had victims drowned in his honour.[5]

Aegir and Ran, Norse/Icelandic god and goddess of the sea welcomed victims of drowning.[6]

According to Sidonius, the Saxons, returning from their raids were required to sacrifice every tenth captive to the sea-god.[7]

4. Charles Squire, Celtic Myth and Legend Poetry and Romance, New York, 1979, First pub. 1905. p.48.
5. A.Ross, The Folklore of the Scottish Highlands, London, 1976, p.131.
6. H.R.Ellis Davidson, Gods and Myths of the Viking Age, New York, 1981, First pub. 1964, p.129.
7. loc. cit.

(2) Legend.

Cross fertilization of legend is seen in the Celtic legend of Nine Maidens of the Sea and the Norse legend of the Nine Sea Women who held down Ruad's ship.[8]

Norse legend influence on Celtic custom (or vice-versa) may be detected in the following -

a. Afterthe drowning of his two sons,Egil Skallagrímsson wished that he could attack the sea-god with his sword, and addressed him as 'Ale-Maker'.

b. The inhabitants of the islands around Lewis used to follow an ancient custom of sacrificing to a sea-god called Shoney at Hallowmas, on which occasion they brewed ale and poured it into the sea.[9]

(3) Economic Reasons.

Desire for gain is often cited as a reason, and may indeed have been so in the case of impoverished islanders.

(4) Observation.

'Who was't shot Will Paterson off the Noss? - the Dutchman that he saved from drowning I trow'. (P 160-161)

'What the sea will take, the sea must take - that's what my father would say. And there was many a story told in those days of men being saved that were innocent in their lives to the day they were taken from the sea,but turned wicked after, and robbed and sometimes went to murder the hand that saved them.'(Michael the Ferry to his son in The People of the Sea.)[10]

8. Ellis Davidson, op.cit., p.130.

9. E.J.Guthrie, Old Scottish Customs, Glasgow, 1885, p.187-188.

10. David Thomson, The People of the Sea, London, 1954, p.193.

As a direct result of oxygen deprivation, many of those rescued would have exhibited, as Cleveland does in his moodiness and unreasonably hostile attitude to Mordaunt, very aberrant behaviour. This would bolster the belief by leading to the conclusion that in some cases they would have been 'better off dead' and in others that they were now nothing but a menace to their community. In Cleveland Scott has demonstrated the symptoms perfectly without understanding the cause.

This makes no difference of course, to his able handling of a fascinating motif, an uniquely appropriate choice of focus for a novel about Shetland. In combining it with the other familiar unit from oral narrative - the two brothers who do not know each other - Scott displays an easy manipulation of his thematic material. Scott was repelled by the belief, and does not permit it to arrive at its traditional conclusion. Cleveland harms Mordaunt, but does not kill him, and in doing so he earns Norna's hostility and initiates his alienation from Minna, - Norna parts the 'crimson foot and the crimson hand' forever (P 585), intent on her plan for uniting Minna and Mordaunt.

* * * *

While The Pirate is quite literally filled with motifs of Shetland folklore - mermaids, sea-monsters, omens, corpse-lights, drows, magicians, and 'legends of Berserkars, of Sea-kings, dwarfs, giants and sorcerers that Mordaunt hears from the local Shetlanders (P 22), the real spirit of Shetland is vested in Norna of the Fitful-head. Related to the Fowd of Shetland, Magnus Troil, she is a person of some substance, but she is also part of the shadowy past of her father, the mysterious Erland, who pored over the legends and lore left by the bards and scalds (P 298), passing on his skills to Norna. Devoted to these obscure studies, Norna claims to have called up the legendary dwarf Trolld to gain knowledge[11] (P 303-305).

While any scene involving Norna is dramatic, the occasions of 'the storm', 'the stool' and 'the spell' are outstanding examples of Shetland folklore and tributes to Scott's own form of wizardry.

11. Cf. Óðin calling up the dead *vǫlva*.

The episode of the storm is built around the Northern belief that witches control the weather [**Motif D2142.0.1**]. This belief was widely held, extending from Finland to the west coast and islands of Scotland, and the motif is found in northern narrative and in such Scottish tales as Maggie Osborne,[12] Morag of Scourie,[13] and Dodyag of Mull and Captain Forat.[14] The last is the tale of an intrepid witch of Mull, who defended the island against the black arts of a Spanish sea-captain. When Scott visited the Northern Isles, he met an ancient inhabitant of Stromness, Bessie Millie, who was still selling favourable winds to seamen on the basis that she could still raise storms (P 662-663).

By cleverly explaining Norna's position as a 'pretender' (P 79-80), whose pretensions are accepted as fact in the little anachronistic world of Shetland, Scott is enabled to portray her as sorceress/prophetess/Pythoness with complete freedom - she can disappear, cast spells, predict the future, seem to fly and walk through walls - and the reader too, is freed from inhibitions, and can enjoy to the full her supernatural extravaganza.

Scott arranges a sudden and striking entrance into the novel for Norna. She receives no introduction apart from some inarticulate and alarmed exclamations from Tronda Dronsdaughter, and, wearing a costume like that of the Greenland prophetess,[15] she arrives abruptly in the Yellowley's kitchen with the impact of a thunderclap.

There is a variety of reactions to her appearance; Tronda, the typical credulous islander, believes implicitly in Norna's powers; the devious Bryce Snailsfoot appears to do so; Triptolemus, rather bewildered, does not quite know what to believe, and Mordaunt has no belief in her powers, but is impressed by her dignity and bearing. It is in the battle of wits and words with Baby that the clash of cultures is concentrated. Fresh from Scotland, Mistress Baby sees the lofty Norna as nought but a bogus witch, and is all for 'bittling' and burning. Scott reflects the force of the storm raging outside in the interchange between the two formidable women in the kitchen.

12. Hannah Aitken, A Forgotten Heritage, Edinburgh and London, 1973, pp.50-51.

13. J.Bruce Wyatt (ed.), Selected Highland Folk Tales, gathered orally by R.MacDonald Robertson, Edinburgh and London, 1961, pp.90-91.

14. ibid., pp.107-108.

15. The best surviving description of a *völva*, an account of whom is found in Þorfinns Saga Karlsefnis.

Scott uses the outcome of this encounter to foreshadow the ultimate collapse, at the end of the novel, of Norna's elaborate charade. Despite her praise of the 'Kempions of the North' (P 77), her dramatic delivery of the splendid storm-soothing poem (P 86-87), her regal behaviour, and her patronizing gift of the mysterious gold coin, it is Norna, and not the practical Mistress Yellowley, who is perceived to have lost ground. With her mind turning swiftly to more important things, such as serving out the goose, Baby dismisses her, 'I am glad she is gane - the dour carline .... witch or no witch, we'll eat our dinner, and defy her. ... Say your best college grace, man, and let us eat and drink'(P 93-94). Beliefs like the one embodied in the motif Scott has chosen are losing credibility, and Norna, symbolizing old Shetland, is losing her power and will have to change.

* * * *

In his account of 'the stool', traditionally the scaffold or high-seat of the *Völuspá* or *völva*/ prophetess or *spae-wife*, and on this occasion a large window transformed into a Laplander's hut (P 324), Scott has preserved an interesting and accurate picture of a performance not readily available outside the sagas. The chanting or singing of rhymes or verses by a circle of women (the ward-locks) around the incantation-scaffold was sometimes a prerequisite of prophecy, and Scott has recalled this in the rhyming questions and answers of Claud Halcro, at the same time registering the Shetland propensity for *veesicks* and *goadiks* (rhymes and riddles), so well-described by Jessie M. Saxby.[16]

In incorporating this folk-belief[**Motif D 1733.4**] Scott contrived to save it from desuetude and, through Norna's replies,to control the direction of his narrative. He has been careful in his presentation of an ancient and exotic motif, not deviating from his

16. Saxby, op.cit., pp.56-72.

models in song and saga, but allowing himself an additional touch of artistry in the manner in which the performance is terminated. Traditionally the prophetess leaps from the stool or scaffold, but Norna, with characteristic mystery, just disappears (P 338). In this method of avoiding further questions there is a glimpse of the behaviour of a certain seeress of old who pretended to faint for the same reason.[17]

Norna's sudden and inexplicable disappearance is in accord with her nocturnal visit to Minna and Brenda (P 295). With her frightening and melancholy message still ringing in their ears, her prophecies have extra meaning for them. Cleveland is sceptical of what he hears, but the rest of the guests are evidently convinced of her powers, which Lady Glowrowrum,no less than Baby, condemns as evil. In noting her comments, Scott relates his motif to the ambivalent attitude of Shetland society towards Christianity.

* * * *

The spell which Norna uses to restore Minna's peace of mind and sensible speech[**Motif D 2025**] is a very old one, common in the north of Scotland, but particularly prevalent in Shetland. As described by Saxby[18] it is a good deal more involved, with the patient sitting in a tub, the lead being poured through the 'bools' or finger-holes of the handles of a key into a bowl of water on the patient's head while he or she murmurs solemnly,

May Gude show His face
And gie me His grace.

Saxby calls the procedure 'rimin da hert', and tells how when it is over, the leaden heart is wrapped in red cloth before being hung around the patient's neck.

Norna could not use the holy words even if Scott had known about them, because she, like Elspeth Mucklebackit, had nothing to do with God, believing God would have nothing to do with her. This scene is

17. In Saxo's account of the birth of Hrólf Kraki, a prophetess pretends to faint in order to avoid giving any more answers. (Saxo Vol.I, p.202)

18. Saxby, op.cit., pp.175-176.

Norna's last opportunity to play the part of the Pythoness, for from hereon her plans begin to go awry. Scott spares no effort in building a magnificent backdrop for her. The journey to her dwelling is spun out as long as possible, until it seems that Magnus, Minna and Brenda must have reached the roof of the world. Norna lives in a 'singular location' which can only be reached by negotiating a 'precarious path' (P 424), and crossing a 'brigg of dread' (P 426). They must go down a crooked, dusty passage, past Norna's familiars, a grinning dwarf and a bristling seal, in order to reach her eerie workroom. This is magic stuff, with no wickedness in it, Norna is not like Lady Glenallan or Elspeth. The reader is meant to enjoy her theatrical performance - the incantations, the versifying, the hair-tearing, and all the mumbo-jumbo and hocus-pocus of the spell-casting - as an imaginative reconstruction of the past.

* * * *

CHAPTER 6

Scott and Glamourie.

In commencing his haunting essay 'In the Scots Glamourie' Lewis Spence writes,

> It is the enchantment, the veritable magic of her environment, which has made Scotland the most poignantly mysterious and haunting region in Europe. Nature is and always has been her supremest artist, exercising a powerful sorcery of soil and atmosphere the influence of which surpasses the achievements of that human genius which seeks to imitate it. 1

Glamour is an originally Scottish word that was made popular in literary use by Scott, and consequently adopted into English. It is a corruption of the old word for learning, *grammar*, and with the suspicion of the uneducated for learning, came to have the same meaning as O.Fr. *gramaire*, book of magic, book written in mysterious letters and words by magicians and wizards. Scott uses it in Stanza 9 of The Lay of The Last Minstrel in the compound *glamour-might*, which means the power of fascination or enchantment, or the power to cast spells,

> It had much of glamour-might,
> Could make a lady seem a knight.

and he includes the following note,

> Glamour, in the legends of Scottish superstition, means the magic power of imposing on the eyesight of spectators so that the appearance of an object shall be wholly different from the reality. The transformation of Michael Scot by the witch of Fauldshope was the genuine operation of glamour. 2

Baby uses it contemptuously in The Pirate, telling Triptolemus that the house is not about to fall down just because 'a randy quean

1. Lewis Spence, 'In the Scots Glamourie', in Rhoda Spence, (ed.), The Scottish Companion, Edinburgh, 1955, p.21.

2. Scott, Lay of the Last Minstrel, Note xxxi.
Michael Scott was turned into a hare by the witch of Fauldshope.

should boast us with her glamour' (P84). The *glamour-might* that Scott wields over his readers enables them to experience the enchantment of lore and legend, where, as Spence says,writing of the ballads, 'we are never quite certain whether we walk on good Scots earth or tread the shores of Phlegethon'. [3]

It is in some of Scott's most fleeting references that he captures the sense of what Spence describes as 'the sorcery of soil and atmosphere' of Scotland. In phrases as velvety soft as the brush of a moth's wing, as whispery quiet as the rustle of old silk, or as quick and sharp as the prickle of a thornbush, he calls up the mystery and the 'grammarye'of the hills and glens.

(1) 'Gie it back', says Baby of a coin, 'or it will be a sclate-stane the morn' (P 90).

(2) 'Gather the green hollin', says old Elspeth, 'and burn! burn! burn! the auld witch Elspeth' (A 436).

(3) 'There's something no that canny about auld Janet Gellatley', says Bailie Macwheeble (599).

(4) 'The knight's to the mountain, his bugle to wind', sings Davie Gellatley (W 71).

(5) 'Have you seen another ghaist at the Humlock-knowe?' asks Oldbuck of Caxon. (A 80)

(6) 'I sought nane and gat nane, like Michael Scott's man', declares Edie Ochiltree (A 501).

In expressions like these, Scott reawakens the Scottish reader to the magic of his homeland, and arouses the curiosity of the Sassenach, who perceives that something otherworldly must lie behind them.

3. Spence, op.cit., p.25.

When, in The Pirate, Baby locking at the gold coin which Norna has given to Triptolemus, says, 'Gie the lady back her bonny die there ... it will be a sclate-stane the morn, if not something worse' (P 90), she is voicing a long-held Scottish folk-belief regarding fairy gifts. Baby is implying that, if Norna is some sort of witch, then her coin is worthless. Fairy money has been known to change to gingerbread,[4] while gold has a habit of disappearing altogether.[5] In the case of coins such as the one Triptolemus was holding, it was often observed, as Baby predicts, that they changed overnight to smooth, flat, round pieces of slate about the size of coins, called 'sclate-stanes'. **[Motif F 340 Fairy Gifts]**

In The Antiquary, when Elspeth Mucklebackit in her distress of mind suggests to Lord Glenallan that he 'gather the green hollin' (A436) and have her burned, she is recreating the past. The last burning of a witch in Scotland took place in 1722 at Dornoch, when an insane old woman confessed to having been in the service of the Devil. Scott says 'The accounts of the trials of witchcraft form one of the most deplorable chapters in Scottish history'.[6] At the same time, as Swire has noted, 'It is very hard to understand why, knowing the consequences, women should have confessed, unforced, and even boasted of their witchery'.[7] While it seems quite clear that many of them were poor, pitiful, innocent old women, it also appears that others were depraved, wicked sinners, whose chief desire was to do evil.[8] The ordinary folk took what precautions they could to protect themselves against them. The 'green hollin'with its red berries, with which homes are traditionally bedecked at Christmas, was originally placed about houses,particularly on doors and windows, to keep out witches and fairies.[9] Coral, rowan berries and holly berries, being red,were much prized as amulets against witchcraft, and necklaces were made of them to protect children.[10] Oak, rowan, ash and holly were all proof against witchcraft, and therefore efficacious in burning a witch. **Motif 381 Getting Rid of Fairies]**

4. Dorson, op.cit., p.47. 5. Aitken, op.cit., p.18.

6. Way., Note 1, p.115.

7. Otta F.Swire, The Highlands and Their Legends, Edinburgh and London, 1963, p.77.

8. See Isabel Adam, Witch Hunt, The Great Scottish Witchcraft Trials of 1697, London, 1978.

9. Ross, op.cit., p.123.

10. E.B.Simpson, Folk Lore in Lowland Scotland, London, 1908, p.155.

Auld Janet, in Waverley is an innocent old soul, who after being confined and starved for several days was ready to believe and say anything at her trial as a witch (W 114-115). Although she was freed and under the Baron's protection, her appearance and her reputation ensured that the credulous and the careful would still regard her as a witch, or at least as 'uncanny'. Years after her trial Duncan Macwheeble refuses to go down to her cottage in the gloaming, saying 'There's something no that canny about auld Janet Gellatley' (W 599). Cautious man that he is , he asks her up for dinner, because 'it's best no to lightly them that have that character'. In an interesting chapter on witchcraft Aitken includes a verse which describes how a community, in fear of a *kimmer* like old Janet, deals with the problem by keeping her 'at ease',

> Kimmer gets meat and kimmer gets meal,
> And canties lives kimmer, right couthie and hale;
> Kimmer gets bread an' kimmer gets cheese,
> An' kimmer's uncanny e'en keep her at ease. 11

While a strong-minded nasty old woman could, as Aitken says, 'terrorize a community'. it is equally true that kindness and a bit of bread and cheese might have a happier result.

All the songs which Davie Gellatley sings in Waverley are beautiful, but none more hauntingly so than the romantic ballad with which he welcomes Edward to Tully-Veolan. Unfortunately Edward is too preoccupied with finding the Baron to appreciate its loveliness, but he learns in the future the importance of paying attention to the words of Davie's songs. While he stands wondering what to do next, the reader is able to enjoy the magic of Scott's picture of Davie, dressed in 'antiquated and extravagant' attire of scarlet and grey, singing, in the terraced garden with its 'profusion of flowers and evergreens cut into grotesque forms', lines of exquisite delicacy,

11. Aitken, op.cit., p.40.

The Knight's to the mountain,
His bugle to wind;
The Lady's to greenwood,
Her garland to bind.
The bower of Burd Ellen
Has moss on the floor,
That the step of Lord William
Be silent and sure.
(W 71)

From this point, concerns of the real world gradually diminish in importance, as the enchantment of the beauty and balladry of the Borders, which Davie has captured in his song, begins to work its spell on Edward and the reader transporting them into a domain where legend lives and nothing but thought separates the past and present. **[Motif P 428 Musician]**

In The Antiquary, as Edie Ochiltree will tell Lovel (A 287), Oldbuck 'amaist flung auld Caxon out o' the window' for insisting that he had seen 'a ghaist at the Humlock-knowe' (A 287). After the dinner-party he looks up from his book in the parlour of Monkbarns, and, whether it is because the old man's 'meagre face, thatched with thin grey locks' (A 80) and his white sleeve remind him of a ghost, or because Caxon fears that he might 'frighten the ladies', Oldbuck immediately demands, 'Have you seen another ghaist at the Humlock-knowe?'(A 80). The reader is not to assume from this question (any more than from his possession of a 'unique broadside'(A 35) on the topic of 'certain dreadful Apparitions in the County of Oxon') that Oldbuck has any belief in the supernatural. Rab Tull's ghost and the one Caxon saw are alike to him, figments of the imagination. There are hints of other ghosts in The Antiquary when Edie Ochiltree and Lovel are hiding in the cave beneath Saint Ruth's (A 71). Edie tells of Sanders Aikwood's belief in the existence of *worriecows* and *gyre-carlins*, but Scott, as usual, explains them away. There are good traditional ghost stories in Scotland, and it seems a pity that Scott did not make more use of them. The White Lady of Avenel in The Monastery, an uneasy hybrid, could have been happily replaced by a genuine Scottish spectre. The ghosts of Scotland generally fall into two categories; to the first belong ghosts of persons who have died

'before their time' - victims of accident, suicide or murder - who have to remain on earth until their proper time has come. The second type is comprised of those who are worried about a crime or a wrong they have committed, and cannot rest until a living person helps to rectify it, which is not always possible. Whether he likes it or not, Scott conjures up all these possibilities by the mere mention of a 'ghaist', and no amount of rationalization completely eliminates them. Even Caxon's slight pale whiff of a ghost remains to haunt the imagination, drifting about its unquiet grave under the hemlock covered hillock. [**E 200 - 599 Ghosts and Other Revenants**]

When Edie Ochiltree in The Antiquary uses the proverbial saying, 'I sought nane and gat nane, like Michael Scott's man', any Scots reader would immediately recall the story in which it is found. There are many legends about the famous wizard, but these particular words concern his encounter with the Witch of Fauldshope,[12] a housewife who was believed to be practising magic. Michael went to see her to ask her to stop doing this, and she seized his staff, which he had laid by, and turned him into a hare with it. He managed to escape and to regain his shape and his staff, but he was very shaken. To teach the witch-woman a lesson, he sent his man to her to ask for some bread. Knowing that she would refuse, he prepared a scroll for the man to take with him on which was written,

Maister Michael Scot's man
Socht breid and gat nane.

The woman refused the bread, as Michael expected, and the man stuck the scroll on the lintel over the door. The witch-woman immediately began running round and round the kitchen saying the words, and so did anyone else who came through the door, servants,and farm-workers wanting their breakfast. Her husband looked through the window, and upon seeing the kitchen full of exhausted people all still running and gasping the words, he went to Michael Scott and begged him to help. Michael ordered his man to go through the door backwards, taking the scroll down with his left hand as he did so. The spell was broken, the people recovered, and there was no more witchcraft from the wife. Michael Scott's magic formula [**Motif D 1273**] acts as a

12. W.M.Petrie, Folk Tales of the Borders, London, 1950, pp.85-87.

charm, not only in the tale of the witch of Fauldshope, but whenever it is heard, by the memories it arouses.

In the three novels Scott makes countless other allusions which yield a wealth of lore and legend. In The Pirate, when Minna becomes ill,'some hinted that the maiden had been struck with the evil eye' (P 381). This introduces a very broad topic; the evil eye or *Droch Shuil* was also known as Overlooking[13] in Scotland, and as the Oncast in Shetland.[14] It could destroy, corrupt, or acquire what it looked at, could ruin milk in cows and nursing mothers, spoil butter in churns, wreck weaving on looms, but was powerless over running water.[15]

Oldbuck makes a joke about the presence of Redcowl in the Castle of Glenstyrim (A 111), implying that he is common to most castles, but Scott knows that he was no joking matter, being originally and particularly the demon of Lord Soulis, the black warlock of Hermitage Castle. Lord Soulis was eventually overcome by Thomas of Ercildoune, using information left in the Red Book of Michael Scott. The method is found in the old tale The Gruesome Brew at the Ninestane Rig.[16] Enough to say that Redcowl kept his cap crimson by soaking it in the blood of Lord Soulis's victims.

In The Antiquary Lovel's bad dreams in the Green Room are attributed to the fact that he has been 'haunted by the night-hag' (A 124). As has been noted, the night-hags rode at Hallowmas, using borrowed horses, brooms and sticks, but on occasions human beings were also used as steeds.[17] Since witches sometimes rode furiously as far as France, it is little wonder that their victims often awoke in the morning feeling weary.

Baby Yellowley, in The Pirate, asks Triptolemus, 'Why are you crying on me, and me in the middle of my housewifeskep?' (P 62), an appropriate question in the context. It will be straightway clear to some readers that Scott is echoing a line of the old ballad, Get up and Bar the Door, which deals with the subject of strange unwanted guests, just like the situation in the kitchen at Harfra. The

13. Ross, op.cit., p.77.
14. Swire, op.cit., p.44.
15. Saxby, op.cit., p.175.
16. A.A.MacGregor, The Peat-Fire Flame, Edinburgh, 1947, p.277.
17. Petrie, op.cit., PP. 97-104.
18. W.N.Neill,'The Last Execution for Witchcraft in Scotland,1722' in The Scottish Historical Review, Vol.20, 1923, pp.218-221.

gudewife in the ballad refuses to bar the door, as her husband requests, saying,

> 'My hand is in my hussyskep,
> Goodman, as ye may see;
> An it shouldna be barred this hunder year,
> It's ne'er be barred by me.' 19

As a result of this, two strange men enter and silently eat up all the puddings the wife has made. Scott uses these lines, too, in The Antiquary, when Oldbuck is cross with Mr Blattergowl for eating the remains of the 'glorious chicken-pie',

> Oldbuck half-whistled, half-hummed, the end of the old Scottish ditty, -
> O, first they eated the white puddings,
> And then they eated the black, O,
> And, though the gudeman unto himsell,
> The deil clink down wi' that, O! (A 108)

When, in The Pirate, Norna goes to the coffin of the long-dead warrior Ribolt Troil (P 402) to obtain a piece of lead for the spell she intends to use on Minna, Scott is reflecting the ancient custom of seeking assistance from the dead. This may be observed in the shuddery old Scottish tale of The Death Bree,[20] and it will be remembered that in some accounts, the mother of the Brahan Seer, Coinneach Odhar, received his divining stone through a dead Viking princess buried in Scotland.[21]

When the Baron of Bradwardine returns to Tully-Veolan (W 635), he is overcome to see his bears restored,

> He fell into a deep study as they approached the top of the avenue, and was only startled from it by observing that the battlements were replaced, the ruins cleared away, and (most wonderful of all) that the two great stone bears, those mutilated Dagons of his idolatory, had resumed their posts over the gateway. (W 635)

19. Petrie, op.cit., pp.120 12..

20. Scottish Fairy Tales, Folklore and Legends, Collected and Published by Gibbings & Co., Ltd., London, 1902, pp.189-192.

21. Ross, op.cit., pp.35-36.

It will be recalled that, when Edward made his way back to the village after his sojourn at Ullswater, he found the two bears, which were said to have guarded Tully-Veolan for centuries, 'hurled from their posts' (W 565) and lying among the rubbish. To the Baron, their restoration seems truly miraculous, and in this Scott reinforces the fanciful notion prevalent in Scotland that such household guardians cometo life on Midsummer Night. The bears, now rampant again, may be seen as echoing the behaviour of such ancient sentinels as the huge stone eagles of Foulis Castle,[22] which are said to predict the future in the stance which they adopt for the ensuing year.[**Motif 771.5.1. Castle/House Guarded by Animals.**]

* * * *

By allowing the edges of jewel-like motifs such as these to protrude through the fabric of his narrative, Scott artfully entices the reader to detect more and more enchanting secrets enmeshed in his works. The charm of the treasures so discovered ensures that, through many readers, the awareness and knowledge of the old language and lore of Scotland which Scott strove so earnestly to perpetuate, will be preserved and passed on.

* * * *

22. Swire, op.cit., p.158.

CHAPTER 7

Folklore in The Pirate.

According to Lockhart, at whose home many of the chapters were written, Scott derived great enjoyment from working on The Pirate[1], an undertaking which commenced 'several years later than the agreeable journey from which it took rise.'[2] On his visit to Shetland and Orkney and the Hebrides on board the Lighthouse Yacht in 1819, Scott made careful and copious notes of all he heard and saw. With his antiquarian interests, and his imagination that lived, as Lang says, 'so much in the past'[3], he must have been fascinated by the romance and remoteness of the Northern Isles, formed in the Ice Age, and inhabited in the Stone Age. Showing unbounded enthusiasm Scott tramped in bogs, rowed in *gios*, explored subterranean caverns, scaled precipitous cliffs, examined ancient stones, and clambered through Pictish *brochs*. Writing in his diary of his inspection of the Stones of Stennis, he twice makes comparisons with features in Eyrbiggja Saga[4], indicating that the experiences of his visit were enlivening and supplementing the wealth of legendary and saga knowledge that he had accumulated during his life-time. When he came to compose the novel, he had, therefore, no shortage of material on which to draw, although he confesses to 'the state of manners' being 'necessarily in a great degree imaginary', because he was 'induced to go a generation or two farther back.'[5]

Not until the writing of George Mackay Brown[6] has been there been such a mix of ancient and modern, such a melding of Norse and Scottish legend, history and imagination, as Scott wove into The Pirate. In this novel he escapes from the notions of necessary progress, writing to please himself of an unsophisticated world of the pre-technological past where even an improved hoe is suspect. His subtle and creative blending of folklore, fact and fiction casts a spell over his readers today, as it did when first published, enabling and encouraging them to enter the realm of Ultima Thule

1. Lockhart, op.cit., p.463.
2. The Pirate, Author's Introduction, p.xxv.
3. ibid., Editor's Introduction, p.xvi.
4. Lockhart, op.cit., p.275
5. The Pirate, Author's Introduction, p.xxiv.
6. George Mackay Brown's first novel, Greenvoe, was published in 1972.

and to experience its magic. Although he is fairly accurate in organizing his structure,[7] Scott is more concerned with conjuring up the unique spirit of Shetland, - its freshness, its romance, and its difference. In all his Scottish novels Scott is dedicated to preserving folklore, and to demonstrating the impossibility of divorcing the present from the past, but in The Pirate he moves into other areas, exploring the reception of folklore by communities and individuals; retention, dissemination and alteration of motifs; and growth, survival and demise of legends. For this reason, The Pirate, better than any of his other novels, provides an excellent study in which to observe his method of integrating folklore material into his fiction in order to 'hook and play the fertile fusion of the real, the actual with the marvellous that is inherent in folk cultural expression'.[8]

In Scott's carefully drawn northern community he has placed three distinctive custodians of the traditions of Shetland, - 'the Father of Hialtland' (P 249), Magnus Troil, the Udaller, 'descended of an old and noble Norwegian family' (P 4), Norna of the Fitful-head, representing the ancient *völva*, and Claud Halcro, a latter-day *skald*. The experiences of the two men have been varied, and their characters and reactions to folklore differ, but fundamentally they share a kernel of belief in the ancient faith to which Norna passionately adheres. Magnus, who, true to the traditions of his race, is 'frank tempered and generous to his people, and kind and hospitable to strangers (P 4), passes or snippets of local lore in his conversations with Basil Mertoun (P 10), Mordaunt (P 39), Triptolemus (P 217,P 221), Bunce (P 561), and Brenda (P 417-421), with the brevity and pragmatism of a blunt, bluff, practical man. But he rises in defence of Norna's supposed 'high powers' when Brenda challenges them, and warning his daughter not to seek to be wiser than her fathers, he declares, 'I believe according to the belief of my fathers' (P 419). Kindly Claud Halcro, whose 'vivacity of spirit' has 'supported him under the thousand vicissitudes of a changeful and precarious life' (P 184), in

7. Critics have been diligent in pointing out that Triptolemus is an anachronism, and that women do not participate in the Paba Sword Dance.

8. J.Truten, 'Folklore and Fakelore': Narrative Construction and Deconstruction in the Scottish Novels of Sir Walter Scott', in J.H.Alexander and D.Hewitt, (eds.), Aberdeen, 1993, p.130.

his chosen role as bard of Burgh-Westra, keeps alive, for his own pleasure and for the entertainment of the inhabitants, 'translations or imitations of the Scaldic lays' (P 226), tales of Norse heroes, Champions, Sea-kings and Berserkars, and legends of Mermaids and Shoupeltins (P 239). Sojourns abroad have lent a degree of sophistication to the elderly poet, but when he begins following 'corpse lights' (P 374), and mistakes Minna for a ghost, it is obvious (as Scott explains), that he has not 'in his travels in foreign parts, been able by any means to rid himself of his native superstitions' (P 373). The dominant female figure, Norna, the self-styled Reimkennar , possesses a mind so disturbed by tragedy and immersion in arcane studies that on one level of her reasoning she is convinced that she has progressed from being a devotee of ancient lore to the state of high priestess of it. On another level she works diligently at enlisting allies and preparing strategies to maintain her reputation. In fashioning Norna,Scott has employed skill that many critics fail to appreciate. Her delusions allow her to escape from the constraints of time and logic to act as a legendary figure. She is the medium through which the ancient lore of Shetland is transmitted to the reader, and the artistry and effectiveness of this mode of transmission, and the fascination of the matter transmitted, are not in any way diminished just because her delusions are finally removed, revealing her as a rather pitiful old woman.

Since she is in no danger of being burned, Norna is able to enfold herself in witch-like trappings, and to indulge ostentatiously in apparently supernatural behaviour. She dresses in singular fashion, her costume on the night of the storm at Harfra resembling that of the Greenland prophetess in Þorfinns Saga Karlsefnis.[9] She lives in a strange, lonely dwelling - the ruins of a *broch*, perched high on a desolate *stack* - which can only be reached by crossing a 'brigg of dread', where her sole companions, as constant as two familiar spirits, are her dumb dwarf and her pet seal. Norna is popularly held to be, not in league with the Devil, but with Odin and the old gods and spirits, from whom she has learnt to cast spells for good or evil, to compose magic songs, to prophesy, and to communicate with the dead. It is generally accepted by the local community that she is invulnerable, that she can fly and pass through closed doors, and travel with magic speed. Scott has, in fact, used some twenty

9. Also known as Eiríks Saga Rauða.

easily identifiable Scandinavian folklore motifs to build up the portrait of Norna as a northern seeress.[10]

In 'a land of omens and superstitions' (P 372), although their reactions vary, all the natives, from Magnus down to old Tronda, subscribe to some form of belief in Norna's powers and in the body of folklore that she represents. It is evident, moreover, from the remarks of Provost Torfe up in Kirkwall, that among the Orcadians the Shetlanders have a reputation for dealing in witchcraft (P 589). The exception to this widespread acceptance of the occult is Brenda Troil. She may tremble (P 224), but Brenda is a clearer thinker, a stronger Christian, and more progressive than the imaginative, romantic Minna, who, though Christian, still clings to the old gods. Brenda is able to rationalize the supernatural in Norna's midnight tale of horror (P 311), and while she is unimpressed by Norna's elaborate ritual (P 438-442), she has earlier correctly surmised that 'as Minna's disease appeared to have its seat in the imagination' (P 420), any fantastic remedy might be effective. Scott has created in Brenda an interesting example of an unassuming individual challenging communal belief.

As may be expected, incomers to the island do not have a great degree of toleration for the eccentric beliefs of the inhabitants. Triptolemus perceives a link between the superstitions and the backwardness of his farm-workers, and suspects that many of their ludicrous bad omens are an excuse for indolence (P 71). He and Baby are shaken and impressed by Norna's knowledge of their treasure, but their staunch Presbyterian background admits no admiration of witches. Baby is adamant in this regard, addressing Norna (who in her opinion worships the Devil) as 'randy quean', 'foul warlock thief', and 'limmer', and predicting burning for her (P 84). Basil Mertoun, in educating Mordaunt, teaches him 'a disbelief in the ordinary superstitions of Zetland' (P 520); he sneers at Norna's supposed control over the weather (P 104); and when nobody can be found valiant enough to fetch her from the kirkyard, he dismisses the entire population as 'cowardly, superstitious fools' (P 393), and stalks off himself. In the end he is the catalyst who strips Norna of her delusions and pretensions, exposing them as 'the legerdemain of lunacy - the mere quackery of insanity' (P 641). Cleveland, in love with Minna, and amazed at her ignorance and simplicity, humours her by

10. See Appendix, D.Magic, E.The Dead, F.Marvels, G.Ogres, pp.78-84.

promising, 'I will believe ... in whatever you believe. The whole inhabitants of that Valhalla...But, Minna, do not ask me to fear them' (P 355). He affronts Magnus by casting doubts on Norna's ability to 'see' the success of the fishing-fleet (P 329), and when confronted by her he sums up her power in these words, 'I hold you for one who knows how to steer upon the current of events, but I deny your power to change its course' (P 59). Mordaunt, not nearly so worldly or experienced as Cleveland, enjoys the old legends told him by Swertha, Sweyn, and others. Indeed to his mind, 'the classic fables of antiquity were rivalled at least, if not excelled, by the strange Northern legends'(P 22). The enthusiasm of the story-tellers chanting in the 'rude but energetic language of the ancient Scalds' (P 24), the exotic subject matter, the romantic situations, all have their effect on Mordaunt, who listens, 'half doubting, half inclined to believe' (P 24). But he is not duped by Norna. At Harfra his reaction to her is deferential, but not credulous. He enjoys her spectacular performance 'more curious than alarmed' (P 85), and at its conclusion , despite her obvious displeasure, he resolutely adheres to his decision to sup with the Yellowleys. At the time of their meeting by the Green Loch, Mordaunt is 'decidedly convinced' that Norna is insane, and, fearing that she is in league with the Devil, he begs her to visit the minister (P 154). Finally, at Hoy, he accidentally pierces her armour, and perceives that Norna, 'however ingenious in duping others, could not altogether impose on herself (P 520). In demonstrating the general acceptance of local folklore by the natives, and its rejection by strangers, Scott provides two exceptions in Brenda and Mordaunt. As has been noted, she alone challenges traditional beliefs in a superstitious community, while of the intolerant newcomers only he appreciates the romance and magic of old lore and legends.

Bryce Snailsfoot, the Trickster figure, manipulates legend and superstition to suit himself. A mischief-maker like the mythical Loki, 'the thief, the deceiver, the sharp-tongued scandal-monger',[11] he alienates Mordaunt from the Troil family. Norna is aware that his greed and duplicity know no bounds, and that he fears her is obvious at Harfra,and at the scene of Cleveland's rescue (P 116-117). While professing great fear of the danger of the drowning Cleveland, Snailsfoot is able to change his view when it is politic and

11. H.R.E.Davidson, Gods and Myths of the Viking Age, New York, 1981, p.180.

profitable to do so (P 1.7). In spite of his malicious nature, his 'provoking slyness of look and tone' (P 506), and his 'green, goggling, and gain-descrying ' eyes, he is accepted as part of the community as Loki was accepted in Asgarð. His function in Shetland and Orkney is to carry goods and gossip about the countryside, and he is welcomed and afforded hospitality at Burgh-Westra on this account.

In his use of the motif [**D 2142.0.1 Witch Controls Winds**] as one of Norna's attributes, Scott illustrates an example of the persistence of a legend. When Basil Mertoun sarcastically compares Norna's alleged ability to that of 'King Erick' who used to 'change the wind ... by turning his cap' (P 104), Scott is relating the motif back to the legendary days of Scandinavia, when, partly due to the strained relations between Sweden and the rest of Scandinavia, anywhere north of the Swedish frontier had evil connotations. Iceland, Finland and Lapland were thought to be the abode of magicians and sorcerers, but the royal court at Uppsala was the most suspect of all, and the Swedish kings who held sway there were believed to be the most potent and awful sorcerers. King Eirik, like his predecessors, was widely feared on account of his evil powers, as Scott is careful to point out in his notes. In the Icelandic Eyrbyggja Saga, which was written shortly after the middle of the thirteenth century, it is related that Thorodd pays Thorgrima Witch-Face to whip up a blizzard while his rival is crossing a plain. Scott uses the motif in his setting of around 1700 in The Pirate, at the same time taking pains to point out that he knows of an ancient Bessie Millie, 'withered and dried up like a mummy',selling winds for sixpence at Stromness, in Orkney, as late as 1814 (P 662).Although the practice is still alive , and Scott reports the mariners as paying 'a sort of tribute, with a feeling betwixt jest and earnest', he is clearly demonstrating that it has become debased since Norna's time, and, after surviving for centuries, may well die with Bessie Millie.

As has been mentioned in Chapter 5, the motif [**N134.1 Persons Bring Bad Luck**] forms an important component of the folklore of Shetland and Orkney, where it appears in the belief that a drowning man will bring danger to his rescuer. In tracing the growth of their customs governing shipwreck, Scott shows that, little by little, this motif has been appropriated by the impoverished islanders, first as an excuse for not rescuing survivors, and then as a positive reason for letting them drown. Scott even quotes a horrible tale (which he hopes

is untrue) of a rope being cut by a Shetlander so as to *cause* the drowning of an entire crew of survivors (P 633, Note IV). While it is not unusual, in a region as lately Christianized as the world of The Pirate, to find belief in old gods and demons lingering, it is unusual to find a custom so pagan and so cruel still flourishing. This peculiar motif fulfils a dual purpose in the novel. It strengthens Scott's theory that man is the product of his environment, and it challenges the reader to envisage an environment so harsh and alien that it can engender, in an otherwise hospitable race, approval of and participation in a custom so callous,and so indifferent of life.

In inimitable style, Scott arouses the reader's awareness of the romantic, fantastic landscape of the islands by his arresting accounts of its natural features, - its 'giddy cliffs' (P 21), its lonely *helyers*, its stormy beaches, and its desolate heaths. In addition, he is able to supply interesting anecdotes about these features, and items of folklore that have grown up around them. He can people the region with otherworldly creatures, - the mermaid on the sandy shore, the *kraken* in the Bay of Scalloway, the ghostly Saint Ringan in his ruined church, and the elemental Trolld hovering about the Dwarfie Stone. In keeping with the pantheistic nature of the location, Scott depicts sites of both pagar and Christian worship, describing ancient monoliths [**V 1.6.4.1. Sacred Stones**], as well as the Church of Saint Ninian, four miles from Jarlshof in Shetland, and the red sandstone Cathedral of Saint Magnus at Kirkwall in Orkney [**V 111. Churches**]. The famous Dwarfie Stone, which lies in a valley frowned over by the Ward Hill of Hoy, and is universally believed by the natives to have been the 'favourite residence' of 'Trolld, a dwarf famous in the northern Sagas', features prominently in Norna's midnight tale of terror, in which she claims (to Brenda's horrified disbelief and to Minna's reverent credulity) to have been granted an interview with the 'square and misshapen ' one on his stone couch (P 298-304). The Stones of Stennis make a similarly striking impact on the reader as Scott uses them to set the dramatic scene for the poignant parting of Minna and Cleveland. The Scottish geologist, Hugh Miller (1802-1856), remarks that 'Gray-coloured objects, when tall and imposing, but of irregular form, are seen always to most advantage in an uncertain light', and he commends Scott on his choice of 'the early morning as the time in

12. H. Miller 'Rambles of a Geologist', in J. Gunn, (ed.), The Orkney Book, Edinburgh, 1909, pp.187-188.

which to exhibit' the stones. Scott's description of the singular appearance of the place in which Cleveland awakens, although it makes little impression on the pirate, cannot fail to intrigue those who read of the 'immense blocks of stone, all of them above twelve feet, and several being even fourteen or fifteen in height' standing around Cleveland 'in the grey light of the dawning, like the phantom forms of antediluvian giants, who, shrouded in the habiliments of the dead, came to revisit, by this pale light, the earth which they had plagued by their oppression and polluted by their sins' (P 602). Perforating one of the stones is the hole known as the Circle of Odin, through which Minna had earlier proposed to clasp hands with Cleveland to plight their troth. Now, by these same stones, 'which already glimmered a greyish white in the rising sun, and projected far to the westward their long gigantic shadows', a wiser Minna announces that she will renounce to God 'the vain ideas with which my youthful imagination has been seduced' (P 625). With great expertise Scott transforms the ancient heathen sacrificial table to a place of commitment for Minna, where she erases her lingering pagan misconceptions and replaces them with Christian discernment.

The religious motifs of the two churches are invested with an ambience of antiquity and mystery. As a place of imprisonment for Cleveland, the Cathedral, in its massiveness and Gothic gloom is 'well suited to his melancholy circumstances (P 582), but it is also able to fulfil its traditional role as a place of refuge, because in its shadowy recesses lies the secret passage which Norna uses to spirit him away (P 587). The ruined Church of Saint Ninian, almost totally destroyed by the anti-Papists, is pictured as drowning in drifting sand, 'over which the gable-ends of the building, with the little belfry, ... arose in ragged and shattered nakedness of ruin' (P 397). Nevertheless, Scott reports that the power wielded by the memory of the long gone 'Saint Ringan' is so great, that fishermen still creep secretly to the remains of his church to pay him their *awmous* for safe harbourage after a perilous journey. Shoeless they creep, three times sunwise around the ruins, throwing a silver coin through a window into the saint's skeletal hand (P 398). This tale prepares the reader for the scene which meets Basil Mertoun's eyes, of Norna grimly seeking a piece of lead from the coffin of her ancestor, Ribolt Troil, a type of relic considered particularly efficacious in the spell she is

planning to use on Minna. This kind of contact with the dead has a particularly Norse flavour, reminiscent of communication with those in their grave-mounds, and of Odin's three nights on the tree in order to gain wisdom from a dead seeress.

In the realm of gossip, Scott is an expert at casually introducing a whole range of local folk motifs. The much talked of gold chain, said to be wrought by the Drows (as dwarfs are called in Shetland)[13] [**F 451.5.1.5. Money or Treasure Given by Dwarfs**], and given to Mordaunt by Norna (P 514), is transformed by the gossip of Tronda and Baby into a gift from 'the King of the Drows' to Mordaunt's father (P 72). It will be remarked that by this same means the senior Mertoun is himself well on the way to becoming a local legend, known as the Silent Man of Sumburgh (P 72). Local identities continually crop up in conversation, - Bryce Snailsfoot sells Mordaunt gun-powder 'out o' the kist of Captain Plunkett' [a prime fowler himself] 'that perished on the Scaw of Unst, wi' the armed brig Mary, sax years syne' (P 143); Swertha relates that Will Paterson off the Noss was shot by 'the Dutchman that he saved from sinking' (P160); Mordaunt remembers what 'old Sinclair of Quendale' said to a Spanish admiral (P 247); Brenda recalls with pity 'Ulla Storlson' who 'used to go, day by day, to the top of Vossdale-head, to look for her lover's ship that was never to return' (P 249); Magnus hopes that 'Captain Donderdrecht of the Eintracht of Rotterdam ' will never hear of them losing the whale because 'he would swear, donner and blitzen, we were only fit to fish flounders' (P 271), and he tells his daughters of Peter MacRaw, the old piper of Stornaway on Lewis, 'who had a seal that flapped its tail to the tune of *Caberfae*', and no other (P 433). It is obvious that already some of the subjects of these conversations have become well-known personalities in the folklore of the islands. Scott is demonstrating the ease with which, in a small community, distinctive characteristics or circumstances enable certain individuals to become legendary figures.

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13. Scott calls them 'Drows', but the correct term is Trow.

See Saxby, op.cit., Chapter IX, 'Trows and Their Kindred', pp.127 -142.