



Scott, Chaucer and Medieval Romance: A Study in Sir Walter Scott's Indebtedness to the Literature of the Middle Ages

Jerome Mitchell

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While the influence of Shakespeare on Sir Walter Scott has long been recognized, the importance of medieval literature in shaping his creative imagination has never before been examined in depth. Jerome Mitchell's new book fills this significant gap through a wide-ranging study of Scott's indebtedness to Chaucer and to medieval romance, especially the Middle English romances, for story-patterns, motifs, character types, style and structure, and detail.

Mitchell establishes more completely and accurately than any previous critic the extent of Scott's knowledge of medieval literature. His examination of Scott's poetry, especially the long narrative poems, demonstrates their debt to Chaucer and medieval romance. The heart of the book is a detailed analysis of the Waverley Novels.

Scott's debt to medieval literature, Mitchell shows, was vast, profound, and elemental; it is the single most important source area for the Waverley Novels, their warp and woof. Moreover, it is probably the key to Scott's immense appeal—the very dimension which enabled him to cast an everlasting spell on his contemporaries, even on such great men as Byron and Goethe, and which has charmed generations of readers to the present day.

This pioneering book, based on extensive research in Scotland, including Sir Walter Scott's personal library, sheds new light on the narrative substance and texture of Scott's poems and novels. Both the general reader and the serious student will derive from it a more informed appreciation of Scott's impressive achievement.

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