

**FOLKLORE TRADITIONS IN WALTER SCOTT'S POETRY: NATIONAL,
STYLISTIC AND CROSS-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS***N. J. Yusupova**Senior Lecturer, Urgench Innovation University,**Khorezm, Uzbekistan**E-mail: [narstzan@gmail.com]*

Abstract. Oral folk poetry is one of the most precious spiritual heritages of every nation, shaped across centuries of collective creativity. The present article examines how Walter Scott (1771–1832), one of the foremost representatives of English Romanticism, drew on national folklore as the principal aesthetic and ideological foundation of his verse poetry. The study applies a combination of close textual analysis and comparative-typological methodology to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1808), and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810). Analysis reveals four principal mechanisms of folkloric integration in Scott's verse: deployment of the minstrel frame narrative, systematic linguistic archaization, oral-formulaic diction, and the structural use of supernatural motifs. It is argued that Scott's folkloric poetics constitutes a deliberate program of cultural preservation and national identity construction. Comparative analysis, drawing on Russian and Uzbek scholarly traditions, identifies structural parallels between Scott's methods and those of Central Asian oral epic transformation. The findings contribute to comparative folklore studies, Romantic literary history, and cross-cultural literary methodology.

Keywords: Walter Scott; English Romanticism; folklore; ballad tradition; linguistic archaization; oral poetry; national identity; comparative literature; IMRAD.

1. INTRODUCTION

Oral folk poetry (folklore) is the precious spiritual heritage of every nation, created over centuries of collective human experience. Folklore studies is a discipline that examines this heritage in conjunction with many humanistic fields: literary criticism, linguistics, cultural studies, art history, and history. In its significance, oral folk poetic creation approaches artistic literature; in all its genres, the word remains the primary means of expression [1].

A question naturally arises about the distinctions between literature and folklore. Folklore differs from literature in its vital content, its ideological meaning, and its artistic character. The principal genres of folklore have preserved the features of ancient syncretism of the arts. Furthermore, certain genres of folklore have no equivalent in written literature, and vice versa. The two forms of verbal art also differ in their methods of depicting images and in their individual means of artistic expression.

Interest in folklore manifested itself in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century — precisely at the moment when science, art, and industry were undergoing a revolution that transformed literature. Thus the era of Romanticism was born. Folklore always exerted a strong influence on the development of artistic creation, but in the aesthetics of Romanticism it played a special role: interest in folklore is characteristic of every Romantic writer [2]. The Romantic poets used the heroes and characters of folklore in their verses; unlike the Classicists, they

wrote poetry in the popular language, avoiding complex rhymes and elevated diction, and depicted their own national heroes in place of ancient mythological figures, striving to demonstrate the richness of oral folk creation as an inexhaustible source of artistic material [3].

Walter Scott (1771–1832) occupies a unique position in this Romantic engagement with folklore. A lawyer by training and a collector of oral tradition by vocation, he produced his three-volume anthology *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–1803) as a systematic documentation of Border oral poetry before turning to original verse composition. Despite the considerable scholarly attention devoted to Scott's prose fiction [4; 5], the poetic dimension of his folkloric practice — and in particular its stylistic and comparative implications — has received comparatively less systematic analysis.

The present study addresses this gap. Its aim is to identify and analyze the principal mechanisms through which Scott incorporated national folklore into his major verse romances, and to situate these mechanisms within a broader comparative framework encompassing Russian and Uzbek scholarly traditions. The study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What structural and stylistic devices does Scott employ to integrate oral folk tradition into literary verse? (2) How does Scott's folkloric poetics function ideologically in relation to national identity formation? (3) What structural parallels can be identified between Scott's methods and those of Central Asian oral epic transformation?

2. METHODS

The study employs a multi-method approach combining three principal analytical frameworks. The primary method is **close textual analysis** (stylistic reading) of Scott's three major verse romances: *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1808), and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810). These texts were selected as the most representative and most widely studied examples of Scott's verse poetry, and as the works in which his engagement with folklore is most systematically developed. Textual analysis focuses on lexical, morphological, syntactic, and narrative features, with particular attention to the presence and function of folkloric elements.

The second method is **historical-genetic analysis**, which traces the origins of specific folkloric elements in Scott's poetry to their sources in English and Scottish oral tradition as documented in the *Minstrelsy* and in the scholarly tradition of ballad collection (Child [6]; Buchan [7]). This method enables the identification of specific transformations that oral material undergoes in the process of literary adaptation.

The third method is **comparative-typological analysis**, following the approach developed by Zhirmunsky [8] for the study of typological parallels in literary history. This method is applied to situate Scott's folkloric poetics within a broader cross-cultural framework, drawing on Veselovsky's historical poetics [9], Propp's structural morphology of folklore [10], and Uzbek literary scholarship on the transformation of oral epic tradition [11; 12]. Comparative analysis does not presuppose direct historical contact between the traditions under examination; rather, it identifies structural convergences arising from analogous socio-historical conditions — specifically, the transition from orality to literacy under the conditions of Romantic nationalism.

The corpus of primary sources comprises the three verse romances listed above, together with Scott's critical and editorial writings in the *Minstrelsy*. Secondary sources include English, Russian, and Uzbek scholarly literature on Romanticism, folklore studies, and comparative literary history. All textual citations from Scott's poetry are drawn from standard scholarly editions.

3. RESULTS

Close analysis of the selected verse romances reveals four principal mechanisms through which Scott integrates national folklore into literary art. Each mechanism operates simultaneously at the level of form, style, and cultural meaning.

The minstrel frame narrative. The famous opening of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* frames the entire poem through the figure of an aged minstrel — the last representative of a dying oral tradition — performing before the Duchess of Buccleuch. This framing device encodes within the poem's architecture a meditation on the historical transition from orality to literacy. The minstrel frame performs several simultaneous functions: it authenticates the narrative by grounding it in ostensibly historical oral transmission; it introduces the elegiac register that pervades Scott's folkloric poetry; and it foregrounds the act of storytelling as itself a cultural practice worthy of commemoration. In this respect Scott anticipated the theoretical concerns later formalized by folklore studies as a discipline.

Linguistic archaization. Scott employs systematic archaization — the selective use of archaic lexical, morphological, and syntactic forms — to create the impression of temporal and cultural distance appropriate to a folk aesthetic. Forms such as *thee*, *thou*, *dost*, *hath*, and *yclept* appear throughout his verse, functioning as indexical signs pointing toward a pre-modern linguistic register. This strategy corresponds to what Bakhtin called stylization: the conscious imitation of another's discourse for artistic purposes [13]. Linguistic distance mythologizes the narrative world, placing it in a temporal zone that is simultaneously historical and legendary — precisely the zone occupied by folk tradition.

Oral-formulaic diction. Scott's verse exhibits significant oral residue: recurring epithets, formulaic scene-openings, and repetitive structural patterns that echo the compositional habits of oral tradition as theorized by Lord [14]. In *Marmion*, the device of recurring apostrophe — direct address to landscape, to historical figures, to the reader — replicates the performative address of the oral bard to a live audience. Such features acquire full significance only when read against the background of the oral tradition Scott was simultaneously documenting and elegizing.

Supernatural folk motifs as structural elements. In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, the figure of William of Deloraine riding by moonlight to retrieve the magic book from Michael Scot's tomb draws directly on local Border legend, transforming legendary material into a structuring element of the plot. Second sight, fairy lore, prophetic dreams, and spectral visitation throughout Scott's verse are not ornamental exotica but constitute a serious and structurally significant engagement with the mythological substrate of Border folk culture.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis demonstrate that Scott's engagement with folklore is neither incidental nor merely decorative but constitutes a coherent and systematic program operating across all levels of poetic composition. The four mechanisms identified — minstrel framing, archaization, oral-formulaic diction, and supernatural structuration — work together to produce a literary mode that is simultaneously backward-looking in its cultural reference and forward-looking in its nationalist ideology.

The ideological dimension of Scott's folklorism cannot be separated from its aesthetic dimension. By representing Border folklore as the living expression of a distinct national character — hardy, loyal, heroic, deeply attached to land and lineage — Scott's poetry contributed to the imaginative construction of Scottish national identity. This is not a uniquely British phenomenon. The function of the *kalevala* in Finnish national literature, of the *byliny* in Russian literary Romanticism, or of the oral epics in Central Asian cultural formation follows an analogous logic: the elevation of oral folk material to the status of national literature serves simultaneously to preserve cultural memory and to construct a vision of national selfhood [15]. Scott's position within this transnational phenomenon of folkloric nationalism merits greater attention in comparative literary studies than it has hitherto received.

These findings are illuminated by comparison with the theoretical frameworks developed in Russian and Uzbek scholarship. Veselovsky's theory of historical poetics traced the evolution of literary forms from collective oral creation to individual authorship — a process exemplified with particular clarity in Scott's poetic practice [9]. Zhirmunsky's concept of typological parallels offers a rigorous basis for comparing the function of folklore in Scott's verse with its function in Central Asian literary traditions, where analogous processes of codification and aesthetic transformation of oral epic heritage have been documented [8; 11]. Propp's structural morphology of folklore identifies universal narrative patterns that cut across national and linguistic boundaries, providing a metalanguage for such cross-cultural comparison [10].

Uzbek literary scholarship has made significant contributions to understanding how the *dastan* genre and the art of the *bakhshi* (oral epic singer) intersect with written literary culture [12; 16]. The parallel with Scott's position is instructive: just as Scott was simultaneously a collector, editor, and creative re-user of oral ballad material, the Uzbek literary tradition developed its own mechanisms of transforming oral tradition into written literary form. The comparative study of these two processes — separated by geography and language, yet structurally convergent — constitutes a promising frontier for cross-cultural literary research [17].

The present study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The textual corpus is limited to three verse romances; a more comprehensive analysis would include Scott's later verse and his critical writings. Furthermore, the comparative dimension of the study is typological rather than genetic: no direct historical influence of Scott on Central Asian literary traditions has been demonstrated or is claimed. As Alekseyev observed in his study of English literature, Scott «raised the local and the regional to the level of the universal» [18, p. 214] — and it is precisely this movement from the local to the universal that makes his work a productive comparative touchstone for literary historians working across different national traditions.

5. CONCLUSION



Walter Scott's verse poetry represents a landmark in the literary history of folklore: the first sustained and artistically ambitious attempt in English literature to integrate the full range of national folk tradition — ballad, legend, supernaturalism, mythological belief — into a coherent poetic program. The study has identified four principal mechanisms of folkloric integration (minstrel framing, linguistic archaization, oral-formulaic diction, and supernatural structuration) and demonstrated that these mechanisms operate simultaneously at formal, stylistic, and ideological levels.

Comparative analysis, drawing on the typological framework developed by Zhirmunsky and the structural approach of Veselovsky and Propp, has revealed significant structural parallels between Scott's methods and those of Central Asian oral epic transformation. These parallels suggest that Scott's work offers comparative folklorists and literary historians a model of exceptional analytical richness, applicable beyond the boundaries of the British literary tradition.

The findings of this study contribute to three fields: (1) the literary history of English Romanticism, by providing a systematic account of Scott's folkloric poetics; (2) comparative folklore studies, by situating Scott within a cross-cultural typology of oral-to-literary transformation; and (3) cross-cultural literary methodology, by demonstrating the applicability of Russian and Uzbek comparative frameworks to the analysis of English Romantic poetry. Further research might profitably examine the reception of Scott's folkloric poetics in non-Anglophone traditions and the specific channels through which his model influenced subsequent national literary movements in Europe and Central Asia.

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