story’, since any history we find in the ballads is manipulated, one event being layered upon another (or more) and heroic deeds and persons celebrated rather than recorded. Disentangling elements of historicity can be, to put it mildly, frustrating and often pointless. The ballads are drama, after all, and the narrativity they display treats the catastrophe of Opposing forces even when a song is based on an actual event. While Child did include a section of ‘historical ballads’ he was careful to warn against tying these too closely to recorded history. The art and worldview of the ballad maker is what shapes the ballad story, and the ritualising of performance in different contexts tends to wrest ballad reality away from history and toward human interaction, to ‘presence’ the actors in a series of abrupt scenes, which may be comic as well as tragic (the emphasis in this volume is very much on the latter). Nevertheless in balladry, as Professor Cowan remarks, the history that the songs relate is generally counter to the ‘official’ histories of the establishment.

Herein, too, lie the attempts by Scott (and others) to interfere in an evolving process of print-influenced singing that he did not fully understand but which both he and Child recognised instinctively as important, even from a simple aesthetic standpoint of ballad language and action or, alternatively, of historical reference. Regarding this process, Valentina Bold lucidly dissects the relationship between Scott, Child and the Hogg family ballads (116-41). Charles Duffin's otherwise thoughtful disquisition on ‘making history from ballad texts’ (19-35) is oddly innocent of the vigorous contemporary ballad singing tradition in Scotland, whether ‘source’ or ‘revival’. The dust jacket of this volume proclaims, after all, that among other topics the songs of `the twentieth-century travelling fraternity' are surveyed, but there is in fact no mention of traveller ballad singers (e.g. Sheila Stewart, Duncan Williamson, Jane Turriff and others) who are still flourishing and have a story to tell about the history in the ballads they sing. This was already strikingly evident from The Mackie Sang disc issued by the School of Scottish Studies in the mid-1970s. Perhaps, in the end, it is the modern folklorist collectors who have the last word when they emphasise – even in relation to ballads based on an historical event – not only the ballad’s dramatic core and changing social contexts but also its stirring immediacy, its subjection of the recorded past to a theatre of presence and interaction.

J a m e s  P o r t e r
University of Aberdeen


Reading a text by Hogg can be an unnerving experience. Readers can never rest easy that they know what they are reading – tragedy becomes farce, history becomes romance, the deadly serious becomes the comic at the blink of an eye and yet in the end it all holds together. Hogg's anecdotes of Scott provides yet another example of this. What, finally, are we to make of a text which at one point praises Scott as a generous benefactor and at another point accuses him of gross snobbery? How, too, should we react to a work which claims to be about Scott but is at least equally concerned with its author, Hogg; a text in which, as Jill Rubenstein points out, the author exhibits ‘simultaneous repression and indulges of selfhood’?

These may be difficulties but the effort of surmounting them is well worthwhile. If we judge Hogg by conventional standards and criticise him for a role which is overly invasive for a biographer we will miss the point and the value of the text. This is not an account of Scott but of Scott's relationship with Hogg or, perhaps more accurately, of Hogg's relationship with Scott. What makes it in the end fascinating and compelling reading is that Hogg does not present us with a balanced and distanced account of someone's else's life but rather opens up to us a particularly interesting relationship between two people, a relationship which attracts our attention because, like real-life relationships, it is not without its ups and downs, its tensions and disturbances. What further adds to the interest is that we can observe Hogg trying to present a certain perspective on this narrative and then at other times encouraging his readers to see it in a rather different light.

This edition presents two rather different versions of Hogg's anecdotes of Scott; firstly the text of the manuscript now in the Alexander Turnbull library which Hogg prepared for inclusion in a projected but never published life of Scott by John McCrone and then another text from a new revised manuscript prepared for its American publication and now in the Pierpont Morgan Library. These two texts are expertly edited and fully and helpfully annotated by Jill Rubenstein while Douglas Mack has provided an authoritative history of the genesis of the text with very full quotation from the relevant correspondence.

Jill Rubenstein's excellent introduction to these texts provides us, amongst other things, with a balanced and perceptive account of the two writers' complex relationship, avoiding the temptation to redress the errors of his own time by presenting Hogg merely as the victim of Scott's snobbery and recognising instead that Scott's attitude to Hogg was ambivalent: he 'regarded Hogg as something of a loose cannon, disapproving of his love affairs, intemperance, and financial improvidence' although he was 'undeniably fascinated by the authenticity of Hogg's genius and, most likely, flattered by his adulation' (xiv). Hogg's attitude to Scott was, as noted above, similarly ambivalent. As Douglas Mack notes, while 'Hogg must have found Scott's friendship a source of great comfort and support', at the same time Scott's 'occasional lapse into patronising condescension' would have been 'particularly painful and humiliating for Hogg precisely because of the value he placed on Scott's opinion' (xxxii-xxxiii).

One of the most interesting reflections within the texts of the tensions within the relationship lies in the various strategies which Hogg employs in placing...
himself in relation to Scott. Much of it is covered in Jill Rubenstein's sensitive and perceptive introduction which discusses, amongst other things, how Hogg places Scott, but not himself, within a feminising domestic setting. Another of Hogg's strategies has to do with the deployment of Scots and English. By reporting Scott's comment about his wife that 'she does not speak the broad Scots as well as you and I do' Hogg records Scott's view that both Hogg and Scott were fluent speakers of Scots yet throughout the anecdotes he regularly presents himself accounts of their conversations in which he speaks Scots and Scott speaks English. Hogg achieves several things by this. Given the strong associations by this time of Scots with the oral and of English with the literary it helps reinforce an implicit claim of the anecdotes that Hogg possesses the authority of the voice of the people while Scott's authority lies in books. In this context there is perhaps a double edge to Hogg's praise of Scott's remarkable memory when he tells us that, when he sought Scott's help with correct details about 'noblemen and gentlemen' mentioned in his historical tales, Scott could always instantly find the information needed in a book (40). A picture of Scott as a man of books is powerfully established here (although it is only fair to say that Hogg goes on immediately afterwards to record an impressive instance of Scott's memory of oral texts). By contrast Hogg intended in originally writing his anecdotes that they should be introduced as a record of his own oral account. As Mack notes, this was highly significant for Hogg because for him 'the oral carries with it associations of unaffected honesty' (40). Not only by this overall device but also by presenting himself as a Scots-speaker and thus associating himself with the oral, Hogg implicitly claims this unaffected honesty for himself. Contrast with this criticism of the 'thousands of lees [Scott] told regarding the anonymous novels' (11). While the use of 'lees' softens the criticism by avoiding the highly condemnatory 'lies', the emphasis put on the word 'lees' by Hogg's punctuation serves to highlight it as Hogg's own choice of word and thus to remind us of his own status of Scots-speaker and by implication an honest man.

Returning to Hogg's account of Scott's remarkable memory we should note too that it is specifically for references to 'noblemen and gentlemen' that Hogg turns to Scott. While it may be said that this is because they are the ones most likely to be referred to in books, the implication remains that Hogg is his own authority for the actions of working class people. It is, of course, those very working class people that are the speakers of Scots and the implication sits well with Hogg's implicit association of himself (but not Scott) with the working classes through his own use of Scots in conversation. At the same time it also merges with another recurrent theme of the texts, the suggestion that Scott was a snob in contrast to Hogg 'who alas to this day could never be brought to discern any distinction in ranks save what was constituted by talents or moral worth' (43). Scott's snobbery thus becomes a crucial issue for Hobb since it contrasts strongly with Hogg's own implicit claim to be one of the people and thus possess the authority of their voice.