Andrew M<small>ONNICKENDAM</small>. *The Waverley hypertext homepage*.
http://www.seneca.uab.es/SCOTT/

Despite the overwhelming abundance of good Romantic webpages, the scarcity of sites on Sir Walter Scott stood out until recently as a somewhat incongruous situation in the Net, given the spectacular attention commanded therein by all of the other major Romantic figures. It seemed that the old prejudice against Scott, and the misgivings about his relatively minor place in the canon, had also been transferred to the Internet, taking the form of a sustained absence, or banishment, from hyperreality. An important shift in this situation is now signalled by professor Andrew Monnickendam's website, *The Waverley hypertext* (seneca.uab.es/SCOTT/), which promises to open an ongoing series of important exchanges and to help us all to relocate not only *Waverley* itself, but the whole of Scott's production, within the various debates going on at present on cultural revisionism, nationalism, conceptions of the «British» and of Empire.

It is especially important to state from the outset that the page really lives up to its condition as a *hyper-text,* so that the emphasis is put on its *textual* contribution just as much as on its *virtual* or interactive status. This amounts to say that professor Monnickendam's text is in itself a contribution to Scott studies, an important interpretative effort in its own right, no less scholarly for its being located in the Web. The central section on *Waverley* itself is of capital importance here, offering a sober yet thought-provoking commentary of the whole text which deserves to be examined in detail even if the reader is well-versed on the topic. For the novel is revised from chapter to chapter, not with the aim of providing a summary or a companion to it, but with the aim of interrogating the text and of playing with it; of re-opening it

rather than closing it. The examples can be picked out almost at random: the commentary of Chapter III, for instance, revises Waverley's literary education and registers Scott's seeming scepticism about it, but it does not come to any ready-made conclusion; instead, we are led towards a set of questions: «Is a love of literature harmful?… How much of the description of Edward's education could have roots in Scott's own upbringing?» Similarly, the comical/decadent description of Bradwardine's company in Chapter X raises other questions: is Scott trying to create a caricaturesque environment there? Is he trying to find «a way of avoiding any serious discussion of the validity of Jacobite claims?» Interestingly, the answers to these questions are not provided: it is left to us to think about them and come with our own responses.

Such an open, suggestive reading is constantly put in the context of other voices and perspectives on the novel. At several points through the chapter commentaries, we will find other links that will lead us to various sub-sections on Scott's major critics: a comment on historicity may lead us to Lukács, or a question about the education of Waverley may take us to Jane Millgate's perspective on this topic. A sum total of ten outstanding Walter Scott critics are discussed in this site, and they are approached with a helpful lack of theoretical jargon and an obvious intention to value their contributions positively, even if they do not fit within the common critical consensus. Such is the case of E.M. Forster, whose seminal *Aspects of the novel* is reasonably vindicated here as a key text which once played an important role in offering, beyond Forster's intentions, a «form of surrogate critical theory» at a moment when English Literature «lacked a critical centre»; while

current critics such as Ian Duncan (with his identification of revolution as a reactionary adventure) or George Dekker (with his perspectives on the Jacobite society in the novel) are made to interact with the issues raised in the commentaries to the specific chapters. The reader is, of course, invited to make these perspectives collide or combine through his/her own travel through the site, which may follow a different itinerary each time, thus producing different readings of *Waverley.*

Indeed, one of the most remarkable features of this site is that it remains painstakingly true to its interactive, intertextual status. The links to other websites are not stored away in a specific section, which would thus assume (as is customarily the case through the Net) a secondary status in the site itself. On the contrary, each of the sections and subsections here contains direct links to other Romantic sites which the reader may feel inclined to visit at any particular moment after/while reading Monnickendam's text. Thus, it is really possible to make the text here merge or contrast with other considerations or viewpoints even as we read it, without having to reach back to the home page or to give any kind of pre-established hierarchy, or pattern, to the phases of our reading. Even within the site itself, Scott is not seen as an isolated voice, but is placed within a network of textual traditions and encounters, from Shakespeare to James Buchan and beyond (and the reader is invited to contribute his/her suggestions as to the literary inheritors of Scott). Perhaps some of the most interesting contributions that professor Monnickendam makes involve not only Scott himself, but his predecessors and contemporaries. The sections on Boswell and Samuel Johnson, for instance, contain a suggestive reading of their works on Scotland (Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* and John-

son'*s Journey to the Western Isles*), which offers a detailed account of their approach to nationalism, their perception of the Highlands and their reading of its role in eighteenth-century politics. But this is no mere enumeration or academic revision: the reading concentrates on the blind spots or absences in, say, Boswell's text as much as on his direct remarks; his silences, and his selective choice of itinerary (as, for instance, his avoidance of Culloden in his journey with Johnson), are given as much attention as his direct comments. Hence, as in the interpretation of *Waverley*, the reader is invited to interrogate the texts rather than passively examine them.

Any good website must be in a state of continual transformation, and this one actually encourages the viewer to participate in the process of change and improvement: almost all sections remind us that their status is provisional, and that we can play a part in their enlargement. The interactivity of the process is thus enhanced again: some parts of the site, such as the one on Scott's literary inheritors, have actually been conceived so as to depend heavily on the suggestions that the readers make to the author. Others seem to invite the idea that the reader has to select his/her own conditions for a correct reading: the section on historical background, for instance, does not attempt to be exhaustive, only suggestive of some perspectives or historical contexts that have a bearing on the novel, and which the reader will be able to complete or to substitute for others. One of the effects of this multiplicity of reading possibilities is that, at some point, we are forced to reach back to our everyday reading experience, to our own ongoing activity of interpretation, and to remind ourselves that it offers no more than another set of possibilities too. Every selection of contexts, just like any intertextual exchange, is provisional or incomplete: we choose and delimit the bounds and

contents of our readings, but these are always open to further revision by other readers, who will establish their own. Literature is a privileged place for dialogue, and it is one of the key virtues of Andrew Monnickendam's *Waverley* homepage to remind us that this is so,

and to encourage us to keep the dialogue alive.

Joan Curbet
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Catalonia

Brian MCFARLANE. *Novel to film: an introduction to the theory of adaptation.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1996, viii + 279 pages.

Many film directors avoid the problem of having to create *ex nihilo* by finding a scriptwriter to adapt a book rather than dream up an entirely new story. This has certain advantages. There is a ready-made plot and more or less rounded characters, and if the novel is well-known, familiarity with the original may boost interest in the film. Recent examples of famous fictions transformed into films are Austen's *Sense and sensibility* (Lee), James's *Portrait of a lady* (Campion), Ishiguro's Booker-Prize winning *Remains of the day* (Ivory), and another Booker success, Ondaatje's *The English patient* (Minghella).

Inevitably, the film version raises questions about the relationship to its verbal origins. Many critics and scholars are quick to point out what the film leaves out, take the director to task for altering developments in the plot, and generally voice disappointment, basically, that the director did not do what they themselves would have done. A fruitful comparison, however, does not stop at cataloguing differences, but tries to do justice both to a director's intentions (which may differ from the author's) and to the instruments the two different media, language and film, have at their disposal to tell the «same» story. If conducted in this spirit, a systematic investigation of a novel and its corresponding film can shed light on the two art works themselves as well as con-

tribute to more theoretical insights into medium-specific and medium-independent dimensions of story-telling.

Brian McFarlane has undertaken such a project. In his *Novel to film: an introduction to the theory of adaptation* he aims to avoid the impressionistic talk about film adaptations that mars, he claims, so many studies in this realm, as well as to provide specific concepts for discussing the nature of the transformation process. Employing what he himself terms «a modified structuralist approach» (201), he distinguishes between transferable and non-transferable elements. For example, while a plot can usually be kept intact in the adaptation, such devices as «first-person narration» and «omniscient narration» do not have a direct equivalent in cinema. All elements pertaining to the way in which a narrative is presented in a certain medium belong to what McFarlane calls «enunciation», to be distinguished from the elements that are not medium-spe-