

HOW ROMANTIC IS A ROMANCE?: SIR KENNETH'S AESTHETIC EXPERIENCES IN WALTER SCOTT'S *THE TALISMAN**

郭如蘋

國立中山大學

The English Romantic period has been characterized as an age of intellectual and imaginative climate. Some English poets and writers were fascinated by the exotic of the Middle Ages and its contact with the far Eastern world. Among early nineteenth-century novelists, Sir Walter Scott played an important leading role in the movement of medieval revival. John Lauber remarks that “from 1815 to 1830, at least, Scott was the most widely read novelist in the world” (100). Richard Maxwell is not as “conservative” as Lauber in estimating the effect of Scott’s works; Maxwell asserts that between “1830 and 1930, the Waverley novels were omnipresent” (419, italics mine). The Waverley Novels, a series of some twenty-three artistic pieces written during 1814 and 1831 and constructed around different fictitious plots (Lauber 101), brought success and fame to Scott, whose career as writer began late, with his first novel, *Waverley*, or ‘Tis Sixty Years Since, published anonymously in 1814. This series of publications establishes Scott’s status as a historical novelist, whose

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significance and influence has been expounded in Maxell's lengthy article. Within this sequence of writings, *The Talisman* was published along with *The Betrothed* in 1825. As James Ballantyne had predicted before publishing *The Talisman*, the novel would take readers by storm. Ballantyne contends that "I had no suspicion of the Saladin either in the Emir or the Physician[;] he burst upon me quite by surprise. Both are wonderfully well managed . . ." (qtd. in Grierson 239-40). Ballantyne was satisfied with Scott's characterization, despite a gradual decline observed by later critics in Scott's repeated characterizations and settings.

John Buchan, however, in the second quarter of the previous century, obviously thought that *The Talisman* did not bring as much success to Scott as his other novels. Despite some of his favorable comments on the novel, Buchan asserts that *The Talisman* is "all book-work, for Scott knew nothing of the East, and not very much of the inner soul of the Crusades. . . . There is nothing subtle in the delineation of Richard or Saladin or Sir Kenneth of Scotland or the jealous crusading chiefs, but each portrait is adequate for this kind of tale" (273). Buchan's commentary gives an impression that if the reader expects to treat *The Talisman* as a brilliant piece of writing, the result might be disappointing. A much more serious accusation is that Scott's novels lack "aesthetics." To give one example, Lauber claims that the "lack of interest in himself [Scott] is paralleled by a lack of concern with aesthetic issues" (119). In addition, Samuel T. Coleridge assumed the weaknesses of the *Waverley* Novels to be the "absence of the higher beauties . . . of style, character, and plot," which in an "'age of anxiety' . . ., like the early nineteenth century, readers sought escape on the easiest terms" (qtd. in Lauber 120). For Robert Louis Stevenson, Scott failed also in "aesthetic seriousness" (qtd. in Lauber 122). The above agreement from these prominent critics on Scott's lack of aesthetics in *The Talisman* seems to contradict my experience of reading. It will therefore be interesting and legitimate to explore whether aesthetics and sophisticated characterization find expression at all in this romance.

Ever since the beautiful-sublime split in mid eighteenth-century Europe, the sublime has been much more discussed than the beautiful, and the Romantics' predilection for the sublime has cornered the beautiful to oblivion. Recently, discourses on the beautiful are increasingly heard. For example, Elaine Scarry calls for a return to the beautiful in her little book "On Beauty: And Being Just" (1999) in the hope of getting rid of political arguments against beauty. In addition, Sara Friedrichsmeyer draws our attention to acknowledge the beautiful. She argues that the knowledge of aesthetic beauty in teaching and research helps "account for the power of imaginative writing, [and] . . . ask[s] *why certain texts are beautiful, why they touch us, why they have the power to keep us reading*" (5, italics mine). Friedrichsmeyer goes on to explore the significance of aesthetic education and queries: "Is beauty related mainly to pleasure, or is aesthetic appreciation a form of insight into the world and ourselves, a kind of knowledge?" (6). It is this very *insight* into the world and oneself based on an aesthetic attitude in which the present exploration is interested.

The Talisman, categorized as a historical novel with the backdrop of the third Crusade, apparently deals with a world dominated by male figures, such as kings, princes, lords, knights, and so on. Earlier in his work *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, Immanuel Kant devotes a section to "the Distinction of the Beautiful and Sublime in the Interrelations of the Two Sexes." There he holds to a view that the "fair sex has just as much understanding as the male, but it is a *beautiful understanding*, whereas ours [men's] should be a *deep understanding*, an expression

that signifies identity with the sublime” (78). Following this logic, the world of men is deemed equivalent to that of the sublime; consequently, *The Talisman* can be easily regarded as a novel *only* about the sublime. Yet, the novelist portrays and represents at least one scene for the beautiful and one for the sublime, respectively corresponding to a special kind of aesthetic judgment—one scene occurs in the Carmelites’ chapel at Engaddi and the other on St. George’s Mount. In the light of Kant’s aesthetic theory, this paper will argue that Sir Kenneth’s aesthetic experiences to a great extent contribute to a new kind of aesthetic language, oblique yet indelible, that enriches Scott’s novel.¹

I. Methodology

On the importance of an aesthetic education, Robin Jarvis has noted well that the paired concepts of the beautiful and the sublime are “the latitude and longitude of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century aesthetics, part of the machinery of thought for any well-educated person” (178). The single most important British source then for the Romantics was Burke’s *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Though published before the start of the Romantic period, it remained influential for contemporary thought. Much as it was so, however, Jarvis finds a deficiency of power underlying Burke’s work so much so that it cannot properly delineate the British Romantic mind. Jarvis contends that Kant’s contribution “was to produce a theory of the sublime that seems far more attuned . . . via its insights into forms of mental and spiritual self-empowerment, to British Romantic literature than the ideas of Burke and his fellow native theorists” (180). These *forms of mental and spiritual self-empowerment* formulate the idea of “some measure of absolute value” (176) that Jarvis also finds retained in Kant’s account of aesthetic contemplation. It is this insistence on the absolute value of aesthetics that has distinguished Kant’s theory from Burke’s, the latter of which brings one to a more purely empiricist psychological direction. The present study will not consider the empiricist aspect of aesthetics; instead, the concept of “disinterestedness” plays a vital role. Kant’s aesthetic theory, therefore, seems more inspiring for a better understanding of Scott’s aesthetic language.

Kant is famous for his aesthetic theory about the judgment of the beautiful and the sublime. His *Critique of Judgment* (1790) is widely regarded as one of the most important achievements of Western aesthetics. There is no doubt that trying to adopt such a formidably complex theory means there are manifold difficulties to be tackled. This analysis will encounter at least two major difficulties. Firstly, to attempt a discussion of Kant’s elaborate argument and cryptic and oftentimes meandering references in a limited scope is merely absurd and impossible—not only is it hard to handle but difficult to digest. To mitigate the theoretical confusion that may be overwhelming, this paper will use Henry E. Allison’s research and study on Kant’s aesthetic theory as a supplementary aid. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, while the following analysis will refer to human beauty, Kant does *not* regard the

¹ The characterization of King Richard and Saladin, Christian and Muslim, as well as the interaction between them are also interesting and delicate, yet only the character Sir Kenneth will be focused here due to the limitation of space and time. Sir Kenneth stands out because he is the only one among the three knights mentioned by Buchan that experiences both a beautiful and a sublime moments.

judgment of human beauty as a pure and disinterested judgment, which will be further discussed. In spite of these difficulties, this research will proceed by focusing on some major concepts upon which the whole argument of the “Analytic of the Beautiful” and the “Analytic of the Sublime” is constructed. For the first “Analytic,” the elements of “disinterestedness,” universal satisfaction, and “purposiveness” will be discussed. As for the “Analytic of the Sublime,” the emphasis will be on an oblique relationship between the sublime and morality and moral life.² A much more workable and promising direction in the following discussion will begin with the vital element of *disinterestedness*—though it has an asymmetrical significance in these two “Analytics.” Thus said, I do not attempt to prove the direct influence of Kant’s aesthetic theory on Scott’s literary achievement;³ nor does it attempt to exhaust the significance of the two “Analytics”; neither would it aim to construct an overarching frame as Kant did. Instead, Kant’s approach of dealing with aesthetic experiences is employed in the hope of bringing a better understanding of Scott’s portrayal of Sir Kenneth as a knight, capable not only of entertaining aesthetic delight but also of aesthetic judgment.

Kant actually encountered numerous hurdles when he drew up the concept of *disinterestedness*.⁴ He defines *interest* as “the satisfaction which we combine with the representation of the existence of an object” (2:46).⁵ The major problem is whether a disinterested liking or pleasure, noncognitive and nonpractical, is possible at all. For Kant, such a pure aesthetic judgment of taste is possible *only* when it is based on feeling rather than a concept. Kant seems to treat interest as if it was a wall that can be, and needs to be, torn down, because it is an obstacle intervening between the object and the subject. The ideal of disinterestedness apparently challenges human nature, which is believed to be drawn or prone to the desires and determinants of existence.

The “Analytic of the Beautiful” consists of four moments, dealing with quality, quantity, relation, and modality respectively. From the outset, Kant points out the significance of quality in aesthetical judgment. There are two main conditions in the first moment. The first one is that the judgment of taste is aesthetical, neither conceptual nor logical, and the second, the delight which determines the judgment is independent of all interest. That is to say, any concern related to the agreeable or the good is coupled with interest. For the first condition, Kant declares as follows:

² It should be noted that the beautiful also has moral aspects, yet the sublime “clearly stands in a much more intimate relation to morality than does the beautiful, whose foundation lies, rather, in the subjective conditions of judgment, which have nothing directly to do with morality” (Allison 341).

³ Scott only has a very indirect relationship with Kant through one of the German philosopher’s disciples, Anthony Florian Madinger Willich. See Micheli and Wellek 11.

⁴ As Allison has remarked, “the view that the judgment or experience of beauty was disinterested . . . was far from the prevailing opinion of aestheticians of Kant’s time in either Great Britain or Germany,” and highly problematic too because “the heart of the difficulty lies in the connection between interest and existence” (85).

⁵ While doing research at an earlier stage, I could only have access to the translation of J. C. Meredith (1952); only afterwards the translation of J. H. Bernard (2000) was available. Since these two translations divide “The Critique of the Aesthetical Judgment” in different manners, it would be ideal to indicate both the number of the section and the page number of the quotes for further and easy reference. Section 2, page 46 will henceforth be abbreviated as 2:46.

In order to distinguish whether anything is beautiful or not, we refer the representation not by the Understanding to the Object for cognition, but by the Imagination (perhaps in conjunction with the Understanding) to the subject, and its feeling of pleasure or pain. The judgment of taste is therefore not a judgment of cognition, and is consequently not logical but aesthetic, by which we understand that whose determining ground can be *no other than subjective*.⁶ (1:45-46)

Here, an aesthetic pleasure is distinct from a practical pleasure. Allison explains that Kant stresses the concept of pleasure, “distinguishing a *practical pleasure*, by which is meant one that is necessarily connected with desire for an object, from a merely contemplative pleasure or *inactive delight*, which is not so connected with desire” (89). Allison’s term *inactive delight* is inspiring, and will be discussed in detail later in the section of Sir Kenneth’s experience of the beautiful. Another point in the above quote from Kant is that he separates aesthetic from cognitive judgment. What characterizes the judgment of taste is the faculty of imagination, which may act in conjunction with understanding yet never with cognition. In the second condition of the first moment, Kant brings up his famous proposition of “disinterested” aesthetic judgment. He argues that the satisfaction which determines the judgment is independent of all interest. He has come up with a very strict standard as to a pure judgment of taste—it has to rule out all concepts, practical purposes, and the desire of the real existence of an object. What Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* adds to the aesthetic story is “the radically new idea that there can be a liking that is *not* so connected with the representation of the existence of the object of that liking . . .” (Allison 90). Thus concludes the first moment: “*Taste* is the faculty of judging of an object or a method of representing it by an *entirely disinterested* satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called *beautiful*” (5:55).

In the second moment, the quantity of aesthetic judgment is based on a universal satisfaction. The beautiful is represented as the object of a universal satisfaction, universal in the sense that out of aesthetic experiences arises a communicable pleasure devoid of any concepts. Therefore, the first and the second moments cohere in the statement which concludes the second moment: “The *beautiful* is that which pleases universally without [requiring] a concept” (10:67). After elucidating the quality and quantity of the judgment of taste, Kant now brings in one of his difficult, obscure terminologies in the third moment: the idea of “purposiveness” to indicate the relation between the object and the subject. Kant relates the faculty of desire to will, and the result of will is deemed purposeful, while “purposiveness without purpose” is intelligibly possible when there is nothing to do with will or purpose (10:68). Thus beauty is “the form of the *purposiveness* of an object, so far as this is perceived in it *without any representation of a purpose*” (17:90). Allison explains that the Kantian subjective purposiveness further involves a harmonious mental state: “the object of a

⁶ Kant’s prominent contribution to the history of aesthetics is to place emphasis on the subjective aspect rather than the objective reality of an object in an aesthetic activity. In the Neo-Classical age, reason ruled almost every discipline and almost left no room for subjective expression and imagination of a beautiful object. Hence Kant’s aesthetical “Copernican Revolution” has significantly changed the concern from the object to the subject, from the external attributes of the object to the internal feeling of the subject.

pure judgment of taste” is deemed purposive “insofar as it occasions the harmonious (and purposive) mental state that is the source of the universally communicable pleasure of taste” (132). This mental state of harmony is pivotal in that it is “the primary locus of purposiveness in the analysis of taste, since it provides the actual determining ground of the judgment of taste” (127). In this way, purposiveness and quantity and disinterestedness are integrated. Lastly, the fourth moment is concerned with the modality of the aesthetic satisfaction. Kant declares that the “*beautiful* is that which without any concept is cognised as the object of a *necessary* satisfaction” (22:96). Such a necessity cannot be dispensable; it has to be *exemplary*, in other words, “a necessity of the assent of *all* to a judgment which is regarded as the example of a universal rule that we cannot state” (18:91). An act of the aesthetical reflective judgment must thus be represented “according to *quantity* as universally valid, according to *quality* as devoid of *interest*, according to *relation* as subjective purposiveness, and according to *modality* as necessary” (24:105).

In the “Analytic of the Sublime,” on the other hand, the place of disinterestedness seems to yield to a moral dimension. The deployment of this analytic is puzzling and has incurred a series of discussions. For instance, Allison explains that “the inclusion of it in the *Critique of Judgment* seems to have been a last-minute decision, and Kant clearly viewed it as parergonal to the central systematic concerns of the work” (303).⁷ More surprising than this are Kant’s difficulty to integrate the sublime fully into the framework of the *Critique*⁸ and his sudden change of mind from discussing a purely reflective judgment, *i.e.* the beautiful, to a determinative judgment, *i.e.* the sublime (Allison 304-07). Kant is supposed to discuss the sublime under the four headings—quality, quantity, relation, and modality, but he was only able to deal with the first three in a less than satisfactory fashion (Allison 305-06). Yet, despite all these confusions and zigzagging structure, these “flaws” will not mar the argument of this research. Quite on the contrary, the very *connection* between aesthetic judgment of the sublime and morality can be said to be serendipity that will mould the theory and text into one. Kant argues that “a feeling for the Sublime in nature cannot well be thought without combining therewith a mental disposition which is akin to the Moral” (29:135). This is not to say that the feeling of the sublime *is* a moral feeling, or in aesthetic language, “a purely aesthetic response”; the sublime feeling is, however, compatible with, and analogous to, a moral feeling (Allison 324).

Similar to the delight in the judgment of the beautiful, the satisfaction found in the judgment of the sublime does not depend on a sensation, as in the case of the pleasant, nor on a definite concept, as in the case of the good. On the other hand, different from the beautiful, the sublime is to be found in boundlessness, not in a

⁷ For further textual evidence to support the last-minute inclusion of the “Analytic of the Sublime,” see Allison 304-07.

⁸ There are other difficulties, the major one of which is that readers need to adopt a different approach to read Kant’s “Analytic of the Sublime.” Allison explicates Kant’s dilemma as such: “On the one hand, he came to realize that the sublime is too closely connected with his concern to ground a transcendental function for judgment and to establish a connection between aesthetic judgment and morality to be omitted altogether, while, on the other hand, he also saw that it differs too sharply from the liking for the beautiful to be easily contained within the analytic framework developed for the treatment of the latter (the original project of a critique of taste)” (307).

limited form. Kant finds the sublime feeling in natural objects such as mountains, or artificial architecture like St. Paul's Cathedral and the pyramids.⁹ We call many objects of nature *beautiful*, yet it is incorrect to call any object of nature *sublime*, since "true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the [subject] judging, not in the natural Object . . ." (26:117, original brackets). Another characteristic about the sublime is a "negative pleasure." The satisfaction in the sublime is bound up with the representation of quantity and involves not so much a positive as a negative pleasure—"a pleasure that arises only indirectly; viz. it is produced by the feeling of a momentary checking of the vital powers and a consequent stronger outflow of them, so that it seems to be regarded as emotion . . ." (23:102). In face of a gigantic natural object, the observer is overwhelmed by the magnitude and struck by the inadequacy of his/her imagination to comprehend the object in a single intuition. Out of the inadequacy comes respect for the object. As Kant declares, "The feeling of our incapacity to attain to an Idea, *which is a law for us*, is RESPECT" (27:119). This *respect* reflects a moral mentality and attitude, which constitutes a state of mind abounding with a "feeling of a supersensible faculty" (25:110). The negative pleasure involved is a complex mental state in which the mind firstly feels checked, yet then a consequent outflow of powers and an emotional satisfaction ensue.

Although Kant divides the sublime into the "mathematically sublime" and the "dynamically sublime," this study will not go into the details of the differences between them. Since "Kant argues repeatedly that the true locus of the sublime (whether mathematical or dynamical) is the self, rather than external nature" (Allison 331), it will perhaps not be urgent to dwell on the specifics of these two categories, particularly when the focus of the discussion here is on the moral self upon perceiving a great natural object. The named supersensible faculty will turn out to be a moral feeling. The judgment of the sublime does not seem as pure as that of the beautiful, yet this interest should be regarded as an offshoot, not the determining ground of the judgment of the sublime. Jarvis succinctly sums up the significance of Kant's aesthetic theory: "His account of aesthetic contemplation as involving a free play of imagination . . . lies behind all subsequent theories that try to establish a separate realm for art and to retain some measure of *absolute value*" (176, italics mine). Though Jarvis gives an aperçu of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" rather than that of the two "Analytics" altogether, his observation of Kant's insistence on *absolute value*, absolute in *disinterestedness* and absolute in the *supersensible faculty* of moral feeling, is to be echoed some decades later in Scott's portrayal of Sir Kenneth's aesthetic experiences.

II. Sir Kenneth's Experience of the Beautiful

The Talisman is a novel as well as romance dealing with the attempt of King Richard the Lion-Heart to reclaim the Holy Land during the third Crusade. The two warring parties, Christian and Muslim, have gathered in Jerusalem at the beginning of the novel, waiting for the chance of laying siege to each other's camps. Inside the multi-national camp, an uprising plan is fermented. On the other hand, Sir Kenneth, the knight of the Crouching Leopard, is dispatched by the Crusade council into the

⁹ Elsewhere, Kant provides a list of natural object of the same nature: overhanging rocks, clouds moving with lightning flashes and thunder peals, volcanoes, hurricanes, the boundless ocean in a state of tumult, the lofty waterfall of a mighty river and so on (28:125).

desert of Syria to convey a political message for the King to a hermit, called Theodorick of Engaddi. Before meeting the hermit, the knight encounters and fights with an eastern warrior, who is later revealed to be Saladin, the Soldan of Egypt and Syria. After Kenneth returns to the camp, an unexpected ring incident happens, and this almost takes his life: Kenneth is accused of treason, yet the Saracen king saves him from danger. A talisman given by Saladin to Kenneth refreshes their friendship.

Scott does not forget to adorn these military, masculine episodes with romantic portrayal of courtly love, which is exhibited between Lady Edith Plantagenet and Sir Kenneth. There are a few ways to know how Sir Kenneth feels about the beauty of Lady Edith Plantagenet, two of which are: when he has a *direct* experience of her beauty, and when he has an *indirect* experience of it. There are indeed some chances that bring Kenneth and Edith together, face to face, great opportunity for Kenneth to appreciate Edith's beauty. Yet, at least two occasions are just not the right ones to provide sufficient information about his feeling for her beauty. On the first occasion, Queen Berengaria, King Richard II's wife, proposes a wager, takes the ruby ring from Edith's finger despite the latter's protest, and uses it to lure Kenneth, who is on duty on Saint George's Mount, to come to her pavilion in order to test his loyalty to Edith. The Queen thought he was waiting in the neighboring tent for further instruction, whereas in fact he was right behind the canvas partition attached to her pavilion, overhearing what the Queen was conversing with her attendants. Later he is revealed to Edith by a dwarf, Nectabanus. The first words Edith utters to Kenneth are "Hasten to your post, valiant knight!—you are deceived in being trained hither—ask no questions" (175). Her impatience and anxiety about his negligence are further intensified by her repetition of ordering him to leave immediately.

On the second occasion, which occurs much later in the novel, when Kenneth meets Edith alone, he is disguised as a mute Nubian slave so as to conceal his identity after he is sentenced to death by Richard due to the above-mentioned military failure. The disguised knight is afraid of exposing himself and just wouldn't speak to Edith, albeit her continuous pleading. Edith almost recognizes Kenneth, yet his constant silence displeases her so much that she leaves him behind in her tent (310-12). Both of these two meetings end up with abrupt leaving, more with misunderstanding than understanding. During these two meetings, the lady and the knight are either under stress or conditioned by the then political crisis; when he finally has some chances to be alone with her, he either becomes numb or is forbidden to speak. Despite his admiration of her, the goddess of Fate really lays a heavy hand on him so that it seems they have met at the wrong moments. From their direct contact as these two occasions show, the reader can hardly perceive how Sir Kenneth feels about Lady Edith, not to mention her beauty.

The scene in the chapel at Engaddi can perhaps better, if not best, exhibit Kenneth's experience of the beautiful and his judgment of taste in a subtle way. After the fight between Kenneth and Saladin, the hermit receives both knights into his cave for rest. The next morning the hermit wakes Kenneth up; without telling him where they are going, the hermit leads him to ascend to a small Gothic chapel. There is a sudden change from darkness to light along with a series of visual and olfactory stimulations. Since Theodorick has sinned due to a moral discretion years ago when he eloped with a girl, he cannot look on the treasure which Kenneth is going to behold (64). When Kenneth alone enters the apartment, brilliant luster welcomes him:

. . . he perceived that the light proceeded from a combination of silver lamps, fed with purest oil, and sending forth the richest odours, hanging by silver chains from the roof of a small *Gothic* chapel, hewn . . . out of the sound and solid rock. (65, italics mine)

It is worth noting that the designation, *Gothic*, signifying a concept, cannot be Kenneth's idea but Scott's, since the term was not coined until the early seventeenth century, if not later. Kenneth can at most know this is a Christian chapel, but not in the least a *Gothic* one. Yet, the lack of knowledge does not hinder him from appreciating the exotic beauty of the chapel. Kenneth marvels at the rarest skill applied on the columns, observes "a very rich curtain of Persian silk," and decides that the beauty here is "in the finest tone of the architecture of the age" (65). If Kenneth presupposes the function of the chapel and uses this conceptual content as the determining ground of his assessment of beauty, then his aesthetic judgment is not a pure one, according to Kant, because his assessment is conditioned by a concept of some purpose that the object is thought to serve. An aesthetic mood already permeates the account of the chapel scene.

While examining the mysterious surroundings in this chapel, "one of those cloisters where the noble Christian maidens had formerly openly devoted themselves to the services of the church" (67), Kenneth soon witnesses a religious ritual performed by a group of veiled professed nuns of the order of Mount Carmel, together with many veiled novices. Kenneth begins to feel the effect of the mystic and the beautiful:

the solemnity of the place and hour, the *surprise* at the sudden appearance of these votaresses, and the visionary manner in which they moved past him, had *such influence on his imagination* that he could scarce conceive that the *fair* procession which he beheld was formed of creatures of this world, so much did they resemble a choir of *supernatural* beings, rendering homage to the universal object of adoration. (67, italics mine)

The picturesque ceremony of the Carmelites' ritual appeals to his imagination and emotions. Scott adopts the adjective *fair* to depict Kenneth's feeling for the ethereal beauty, and, his taste. Kenneth here passes a judgment of taste: explicitly by the adjective, *fair*, and implicitly by the impact on his imagination, which can also be aesthetic. Taste is, according to Allison, "the capacity to appraise the beauty (or lack thereof) of particular objects (or their representation) by means of feeling" (73). We realize that Kenneth is not a knight excelling only in fighting; his observation of the votaresses' fanciful movement, his feel for the solemn atmosphere, and his stretched imagination for these supernatural beings all show his propensity for the qualities that arouse his aesthetic feeling.

The appreciation of the stylistic decoration in the cloister serves as a prelude to later analysis. During the first round when the procession passes him as it moves around the chapel, Kenneth notices the manner of their gliding. Yet, in the second round when

they passed the spot on which he kneeled, one of the white-stoled maidens, as she glided by him, detached from the chaplet which she carried a *rosebud*, which dropped from her fingers, perhaps unconsciously, on the foot of Sir Kenneth. *The knight started as if a dart had suddenly struck his person*; for, when the mind is wound up to a high pitch of feeling and expectation, the slightest incident, if unexpected, gives fire to the train which imagination has already laid. But he *suppressed his emotion*, recollecting how easily an incident so indifferent might have happened, and that it was only the uniform monotony of the movement of the choristers which made the incident in the slightest degree remarkable. (68, italics mine)

The above passage throws light on both the physiological and psychological aspects of the beholder. Scott describes Kenneth's physiological reaction as vividly as it can be—the knight *started as if a dart had suddenly struck his person*, a dynamic interaction between the high pitch of attentiveness and the low one of the dropping of the rosebud. His physiological changes are indeed beyond control; yet, when they transform into a psychological dimension, *this* Kenneth succeeds in suppressing. Interestingly, no sooner has Kenneth pondered about the act than another rosebud is laid at his feet by the same novice. Scott carefully delineates Kenneth's psychological imagination as follows:

This second intimation could not be accidental—it could not be fortuitous, the resemblance of that half-seen but beautiful female hand with one which his lips had once touched, and, while they touched it, had internally sworn allegiance to the lovely owner. Had further proof been wanting, there was the glimmer of that matchless *ruby ring* on that snow-white finger, whose invaluable worth Kenneth would yet have prized less than the slightest sign which that finger could have made; and, veiled too, as she was, he might see, by chance or by favour, a stray curl of the dark tresses, each hair of which was dearer to him a hundred times than a chain of massive gold. It was the lady of his love! (69, italics mine)

Since all the nuns and novices in the progression are veiled, there is no way of identification among them. Yet, the second intimation of the rosebud along with the ruby ring captivates his heart. Of course the reader can imagine that the “half-seen but beautiful female hand” and “a stray curl of the dark tresses” also bring delight to Kenneth; the effect of the rosebuds, however, seems to last longer: these are the very objects that he is soon to hold in hand. While Kenneth is still immersed in his imagination, the procession leaves the cloister and disappears from his sight. Only darkness accompanies him now. But to Kenneth,

solitude, and darkness, and the uncertainty of his mysterious situation were as nothing—he thought not of them—cared not for

them—cared for nought in the world save the flitting vision which had just glided past him, and the tokens of her favour which she had bestowed. *To grope on the floor for the buds which she had dropped—to press them to his lips, to his bosom, now alternately, now together—to rivet his lips to the cold stones on which, as near as he could judge, she had so lately stepped—to play all the extravagances which strong affection suggests and vindicates to those who yield themselves up to it, were but the tokens of passionate love common to all ages.* (69-70, italics mine)

From these last four passages, we learn that Scott excels in creating a romantic episode and atmosphere. It also becomes crystal clear that Kenneth ascribes beauty to these two objects: rosebuds and the ruby ring; the contemplation of them brings pleasure to him. He gropes on the floor for the buds and presses them to his lips and to his bosom as if these small yet delicate things partake of Edith's beauty. Lauber once makes a general observation on Scott's young characters and claims that Scott, along with Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and William Makepeace Thackeray, all "represented young people in love with each other, but always *a love without passion*" (122, italics mine). Sir Kenneth's love gesture for Edith proves to be a counter example of Lauber's observation. Yet, as the discussion moves on, the reader perceives a detached attitude in Kenneth vis-à-vis his passionate action dramatized here, two emotions that seem to contradict one another yet may not do so in Scott's presentation of the episode.

Before moving to the topic of Edith's beauty, some explanation concerning Kant's idea of the relationship between adherent beauty and a pure judgment of taste needs to be addressed. Kant distinguishes *free beauty* from *adherent beauty* as follows:

In the judging of a free beauty (according to the mere form) the judgment of taste is pure. . . .

But human beauty (*i.e.* of a man, a woman, or a child), the beauty of a horse, or a building . . . presupposes a concept of the purpose which determines what the thing is to be, and consequently a concept of its perfection; it is therefore adherent beauty. (16:82)

Kant states that free beauty does not presuppose a concept of what the object is meant to be, while adherent beauty does. Kant also regards the human figure as the *ideal* of the beautiful: "We must yet distinguish the normal Idea of the beautiful from the *Ideal*, which latter . . . we can only expect in the *human* figure. In this the Ideal consists in the expression of the *moral*, without which the object would not please universally and thus positively . . ." (17:89). The beauty of the human figure adheres to the rational idea of morality and perfection; consequently this species of beauty is determinant of certain purpose. Yet, Allison points out a problem here: "Kant seems unsure as to whether the distinction he has in mind is between kinds of beauty or

kinds of judgment about beauty” (142). Thus the question is: does Kant regard judgments of adherent beauty as judgments of beauty at all? Likewise, in the chapel scene, it should be explained whether Edith’s beauty belongs to the category of free or adherent beauty. This ambiguity or problem, however, will not obstruct the following discussion—Kant talks about human beauty in general, not particularly about *veiled* beauty and identity.

Here the question of Edith’s “identity” is interesting and important for the subsequent analysis. She is *conceptually* known as King Richard’s kinswoman: “she was called Plantagenet, and the fair Maid of Anjou, and admitted by Richard to certain privileges only granted to the royal family, and held her place in the circle accordingly” (200). The king treats her with much respectful observance, mostly because she had come with Eleanor, the celebrated Queen Mother of England and was appointed to be her most constant attendant. In the chapel scene Edith is veiled throughout, and Scott tells us that scarcely her two fingers are visible from under the veil, not to mention her face and figure. Neither her beauty nor her identity is revealed; both of them are veiled, so there is no way to determine the moral character of this “flitting vision.” Despite her tactic of dropping the two rosebuds and revealing her ruby ring, a gesture to make known her identity, Edith is not able to define herself at this moment, merged, as she is, in the collective identity of those veiled nuns. Her inability to define herself then, either physically or morally or in whatever aspect, puts her in a situation of non-cognition category. That Kant classifies human beauty into the category of adherent beauty is due to the fact that human beings have a moral purpose, that they can define themselves, hence no free beauty and no pure aesthetic judgment. Since adherent beauty is conditioned by a concept of what the object is meant to be, while Edith cannot define herself either from her own or Kenneth’s perspective, it should be reasonable to argue that the representation of Edith’s beauty cannot be understood in the context of the Kantian adherent beauty; nor can Kenneth think that she is beautiful because she presupposes a concept which determines what she is morally. In other words, her function or moral identity is metaphorically “veiled.” Scott does not describe Edith’s charm *per se*;¹⁰ instead, he depicts the feeling reflected by her beauty to Kenneth. The aesthetic experience of Kenneth is still universally communicable even two centuries later, since the readers are able to imagine and appreciate Edith’s superior beauty, not through an objective description of her external beauty, but through Kenneth’s subjective feeling represented by his emotional intensity.

After describing Kenneth’s tokens of passionate love common to all ages, Scott continues,

But it was *peculiar* to the times of chivalry that, *in his wildest rapture*, the knight *imagined of no attempt to follow or to trace the object of such romantic attachment*; that he thought of her as of a deity, who, having deigned to show herself for an instant to her devoted worshipper, had again returned to the darkness of her

¹⁰ Scott at most employs the term *beauty* explicitly to characterize “the bright eye of the lovely Edith, whose beauty, indeed, consisted rather more in that very power of expression, than an absolute regularity of contour or brilliancy of complexion” (72).

sanctuary. . . . (70, italics mine)

At my first reading, this passage escaped my attention as inconspicuous. On the second and third readings, however, a question comes up: why does Kenneth not imagine any attempt to follow Edith, if he already suspects that she is his lover? There can be various possible reasons for his decision. Immersed in the holy atmosphere, he would not dare to disturb the ritual even after it has finished. Another aspect, one that is perhaps more relevant to the medieval chivalric culture, can be accounted from a social perspective. Kenneth's behavior can be read as relating to the code of chivalry, a code which educates the knights to observe courtesy and discipline, moderated by composure and beauty.

Culture plays a pivotal role in the intellectual activity of aesthetic judgment. Kenneth represents a refined culture, despite his initial lower social status compared to that of Lady Edith or King Richard. Kant also stresses the significance of a great(er) culture in passing aesthetical judgments. He formulates a triangle among moral ideas, culture and the sublime by arguing that "without development of moral Ideas, that which we, prepared by culture, call sublime, presents itself to the uneducated man merely as terrible" (29:130). Though his focus is on the sublime, the element of culture can also apply to an appreciation of the beautiful. Moral Ideas, or code of chivalry when translated back into the Middle Ages, consist of the set of rules and ways of behaving which knights were expected to observe. On the one hand, Kenneth's behavior, the inaction not to explore Edith's identity on the spot, denotes a sense of discipline, and on the other, implies a contrast between impulsiveness and composure. Scott does not use the word *discipline* to describe Kenneth's manner, yet its essence cannot be more manifest. The term *disciplina* is accentuated in C. Stephen Jaeger's discussion of a courtier bishop, Otto of Bamberg, whose "conscientiousness, fastidiousness, and sense of propriety" in the rituals of baptizing the heathens on his first proselytizing mission to Pomerania were praised by the witnesses (128). The summation of Bishop Otto's decorous manners is his *elegans et urbana disciplina* (129). Jaeger further explains that *disciplina*, a medieval formulation,¹¹ which has no counterpart in classical Latin, is one of the elements which comprise the bishop's inner *composicio* (129). Though Jaeger does not characterize *disciplina* in the language of the beautiful, already there is suggestion of the correlation between "elegant and urbane breeding" and a sense of beauty. Furthermore, in the study of Middle High German (MHG) romance, Jaeger finds the MHG counterpart of *disciplina* is *schöne und hövesche zuht*, translated as "beautiful discipline" (132). It is brilliant for Jaeger to discover and integrate the social and aesthetic aspects of an individual manner. Accordingly, courtly disciplines are *beautiful* disciplines, under which one is not supposed to act impulsively or inelegantly. Kenneth's manner actually demonstrates, as Jaeger would put it, "the meaning of courteous, restrained good manners, the result of a courtly education" (130).

It will not be too far fetched to link up restrained good manners with the attitude of *detachment*. The naturalness conveyed by Scott's language in the above

¹¹ Jaeger asserts that the courtly ideal *disciplina* developed in secular courts between the mid-eleventh and mid-twelfth centuries (132), hence appropriate to apply this concept to the manner of Sir Kenneth.

passage is also remarkable. Kenneth does not need to repeatedly instill into his mind a negation for the reality of Edith's existence in order to cultivate detachment. Jaeger has studied "court ideals and their effect in educating human sensibilities, their civilizing influence" (x). His picture of the medieval court ideals can be used as a mirror against which Kenneth's behavior can be examined. Kenneth's refined sensibility and taste for the beautiful prove the effectiveness of court culture on him; he actually demonstrates the courtly ideal *disciplina*, or rather, "beautiful discipline." Kant also emphasizes the importance of a detached attitude in his aesthetic theory as follows: "We must not be in the least prejudiced in favour of *the existence of the things*, but be quite *indifferent* in this respect, in order to play the judge in things of taste" (2:47-48, italics mine).

What Kant thinks of "the existence of the things" can be extended to the revelation of Edith's identity. In the "no attempt" passage, neither a liking for charm nor a liking for the agreeable is involved in the recognition of this veiled lady; Kenneth is concerned, not with the existence of the object in itself but with what he makes out of this representation in himself. It is feeling rather than concepts that must be the primary factor to be considered. Jarvis very well rephrases Kant's idea that "in aesthetic contemplation our minds are not working as they habitually do, organising the flow of sense data into objects of perception and then attaching these to 'concepts'" (180). Hence, the "concept" of Edith's identity does not obstruct Kenneth's judgment of her beauty. Just as a sentiment of beauty is indifferent as to whether its objects actually exist or not, so Kenneth need not be bothered about the nature of the object, in this case, the identity of Edith—a concept of the end that defines what she is. Compared to Kenneth's dynamic, expressive tokens of love—groping for the rosebuds, pressing them to his lips and bosom, and riveting his lips to the cold stones on which his lover lately stepped—the static dimension of Kenneth's affection for Edith is now presented. To feel rapture yet not to show it is what common people are not capable of. That is why the novelist marvels at Kenneth's inaction. Contrary to a romantic attachment, his inaction shows a detachment that has great significance in Kant's aesthetic theory. There might be doubt whether Kenneth makes a pure judgment of taste or not since he recognizes Edith. However, to *recognize* Edith and to *pursue* the knowledge of her identity are two totally different concepts: the former is a mental state, coupled with understanding and imagination, while the latter results in an action, though still related to a mental activity; the former is more static, compared to the latter; the former is a state of content, while the latter, of a desire to know her identity as Edith; and lastly, the former leads to an aesthetic inaction, whereas the latter to a will, a desire, and hence undermines the purity of a judgment of taste. If Kenneth had insisted on finding out Edith's identity, the act would be governed by a determinate concept, then its outcome is a cognition, interested and purposeful.

Kenneth remains satisfied to have enjoyed the moment of contemplation of the beautiful object,¹² and this inaction is further correlated with an aesthetically harmonious state. Some contrasts from the "no attempt" passage impress the readers: Kenneth's wild rapture and a feeling of extreme happiness sharply contrast with his immobility. His inaction does not mean that he cares nothing about his beloved; on

¹² "Object" here simply refers to its counterpart, subject, without any implication of reification.

the contrary, he cares about her too much to the extent that he is unwilling to destroy this *moment*¹³ of aesthetic pleasure. Not that an action brings delight, but inaction does. This mental state can be succinctly summed up by Allison's term, *inactive delight* or a "merely contemplative pleasure" (89). To some extent, the inactive delight has something to do not so much with *purpose* as with *purposiveness without purpose*. Kenneth is wondering why Edith should appear here:

But that she should be here—in the savage and sequestered desert—among vestals, who rendered themselves habitants of wilds and of caverns, that they might perform in secret those Christian rites which they dared not assist in openly; that this should be so, in truth and in reality, seemed too incredible—it must be a dream—a delusive trance of the imagination. (69)

The answer is beyond his comprehension. Yet, there must be a reason for her presence—she must appear *as if* a concept or a purpose lies at the basis of it. This is not aiming at determinate cognition, though—all the speculation does not involve an objective purposiveness since this purpose is not a real finality, only a subjective one. To quote Kant again, "*Beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, so far as this is perceived in it without any representation of a purpose*" (1:17), that is, the "subjective purposiveness." It requires composure in mind and peace in thought. Hence, Kenneth does not even bother to discover why Edith should appear in the chapel. "The veiled lady is Edith, my love," says Kenneth—it is *as if* she appears "for" him! While Scott is trying to strike a balance between Edith's series of actions and Kenneth's inaction, there is a delicate kind of reciprocal activity or intelligence between Edith and Kenneth (72).¹⁴ A romantic quietness flows between the two of them: one is not admitted to reveal her identity, the other unwilling to expose it. That is to say, his pleasure in recognizing her precedes his desire to verify her identity. Allison determines "the *peculiar* quality of the liking for the beautiful by contrasting it with the interested likings for the agreeable and the good" (90, italics mine). By accident, both commentators, Allison and Scott, pick up the modifier *peculiar* to characterize such a quality in Kenneth's judgment of the beautiful.

What makes such a mental state subjectively purposive is that "it enhances the

¹³ Kant's term *moment* in the judgment of the beautiful vividly captures the feeling of evanescence and brevity. In *The Talisman*, it is also true that the passages or scene revealing moments of the beautiful are rare and transient. Yet, the intense quality involved makes these moments even more impressive. One would harbor a vain wish of expecting a novel or romance to be romantic throughout the entire course of action. Should there be continuous and numerous aesthetic moments, the beautiful moment subsides or collapses into melodrama or comedy. This paper does not claim that the two scenes discussed represent the entire novel; what has been emphasized is rather the quality than the quantity of the emotional intensity in Sir Kenneth's aesthetic experiences.

¹⁴ Scott explains to the readers that before they "meet" in the chapel, they had never spoken to one another (72). Despite the fact that his lips had once touched her hand (69), the two of them are simply like strangers, at most, acquaintances. Yet, a mysterious and romantic intelligence subsists between them.

reciprocal activity of the imagination and understanding” (Allison 127). To borrow Allison’s expression, “the (*harmonious*) state of increased vitality is precisely what the subject endeavors to *preserve*” (122, italics mine). What Kenneth has done goes against the common assumption that all desire contains or implies action or impulse. The above discussion has proven the quality of Kenneth’s feeling, and the quality does not stand merely by itself; “the quality of the feeling (its disinterestedness) is the key to the determination of the quantity of the judgment (its subjective universality)” (Allison 77). Thus, across almost two centuries, the readers still appreciate such a beautiful moment, and for those readers that may likewise make a similar judgment of taste, albeit in an indirect fashion, the feeling assumes both a quality (disinterestedness) and a subjectively universal quantity.

Lauber observes that in the novels *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary*, Scott’s primary interest seems to be in portraying “‘manner,’ character types, ways of life, that had *vanished in his own more progressive era*” (111, italics mine). Likewise, in the episode of Kenneth’s experience of the beautiful, Scott describes a manner of detachment far distinct from what was commonly expected in his own age. That is what Scott finds peculiar in Kenneth’s conduct. In a progressive era, people tend to have a mentality of efficiency and effectiveness; an enthusiastic commitment is usually preferable to inaction. In a different vein from his contemporary *Zeitgeist*, Scott is able to nourish a detached artistic attitude in one of his characters. He can be said to conduct a cultural critique. Remarkably, Scott skillfully dramatizes a mixture and simultaneity of plenitude and detachment. The feeling of the beautiful lifts Kenneth up, yet it does not lead him to desire more—the canvas of the storyline is not tinted with any drop of insatiable appetite of progression.

III. Sir Kenneth’s Experience of the Sublime

Allison claims that “the cultivation of taste and the experience of beauty contribute to the development of morality” partly since they help “to wean us from an excessive attachment to sensuous interests . . .”; this line of logic will continue to help us enter the realm of the sublime, when taste is made “suitable both as a preparation for and as a symbol of morality” (219). As discussed in the previous section, Sir Kenneth has impressed us with his tranquil state of mind in the aesthetic moment, yet this tranquility is soon to be challenged when he is carrying out a great task on Saint George’s Mount, the highest point in the camp of the Crusading army.

It occurs that a serious political crisis occurs between Richard the Lion-Heart and Leopold, the Archduke of Austria, a prince leading his knights to join the Crusade under Richard’s leadership. The Archduke of Austria, “rather a weak and a vain than an ambitious or tyrannical prince” (141), is credulously instigated by Conrade, the Marquis of Montserrat, who is an ally of the General Master of the Knights Templars, to pull down the English banner from the Mount and place his own banner there instead (156). Richard, as the leader of the crusade campaign, is greatly enraged upon hearing this, and despite the fact that he has just recovered from a fourteen-day disease he will not show the white feather in front of these allies and knights, or else he will lose his political authority as well as be looked down upon. This conflict temporarily ends in Richard’s decree that Kenneth guard the English banner, which is

repositioned back on the Mount. It is against the backdrop of this radical political crisis that we must understand the general need for a strengthening of Kenneth's moral commitment to the mission. Richard addresses Kenneth thus:

Valiant Scot, I owe thee a boon, and I will pay it richly. There stands the banner of England! Watch it as novice does his armour on the night before he is dubbed. Stir not from it three spears' length, and defend it with thy body against injury or insult. Sound thy bugle if thou art assailed by more than three at once. Dost thou undertake the charge?" (158)

"Willingly," answers Kenneth, "and will discharge it upon penalty of my head" (158). Richard seems to set Kenneth up to test his capability. Approaching Saint George's Mount, both Kenneth and the readers soon feel a sense of danger and fear:

In the days of chivalry, a dangerous post or a perilous adventure was a reward frequently assigned to military bravery as a compensation for its former trials; just as, in ascending a *precipice*, the surmounting one *crag* only lifts the climber to points yet more *dangerous*. (161, italics mine)

Scott places Kenneth over a crag and the knight has to ascend a precipice, which lifts him to points yet more dangerous. The references to a dangerous post or a perilous adventure, the ascending of a precipice, and the surmounting of one crag are those things that indicate danger, with the feeling of fear understood. Similar to Burke, Kant also relates the sublime to fear and danger. As Kant asserts, "If nature is to be judged by us as dynamically sublime, it must be represented as exciting fear" (28:124). Saint George's Mount presents itself as fearful, hence the feeling of the sublime in the mind of Kenneth.

Though Kenneth regards the perilous surroundings as fearful, the grandeur of his surroundings has no dominance over him and he is not afraid of it.¹⁵ In face of danger, even the most virtuous and bravest among the knights may be subjected to the temptation to subordinate the pursuit of his life to self-interest; not so for Kenneth. He does not harbor the idea of the futility of moral endeavor in the face of a hostile, alien world, nor does he speculate that the effort will be in vain. The fear actually helps attune his mind to the uncompromising demands of morality, or called in Kenneth's age, code of chivalry. In other words, there is an oblique connection among the sublime feeling, danger, fear, and moral feeling, or as Allison explains, a "demonstration of a significant analogy, though not an identity, between the feeling of the sublime and moral feeling" (324). Scott continues delineating the mountain scene:

It was midnight, and the moon rode clear and high in heaven, when

¹⁵ Kant compares a situation similar to this to the following instance: "the virtuous man fears God without being afraid of Him" (28:124).

Kenneth of Scotland stood upon his watch on Saint George's Mount, beside the banner of England, a *solitary* sentinel, to protect the emblem of that nation against the insults which might be meditated among the thousands whom Richard's pride had made his enemies. *High thoughts rolled, one after each other*, upon the mind of the warrior. It seemed to him as if he had gained some favour in the eyes of the chivalrous monarch, who till now had not seemed to distinguish him among the crowds of brave men whom his renown had assembled under his banner, and Sir Kenneth little recked that the display of *royal regard* consisted in placing him upon a post so *perilous*. *The devotion of his ambitious and high-placed affection inflamed his military enthusiasm*. (161, italics mine)

The Mount becomes something absolutely or mathematically great, especially when the English banner is standing there; a flat area of ground might not be capable of eliciting such a sublime feeling. Scott in a simple stroke presents a sense of distance and magnitude that sets off Kenneth: "All nature around him slept in calm moon-shine or in deep shadow. The long rows of tents and pavilions, glimmering or darkening as they lay in the moonlight or in the shade, were still and silent as the streets of a deserted city" (162). Standing high on Saint George's Mount and overlooking the whole camp, Kenneth becomes small. This is reminiscent of Kant's expression: "*the sublime is that in comparison with which everything else is small*" (25:109).

How does the extrinsic natural landscape strengthen one's commitment to duties? The origin lies in the faculty of human reason *per se*. Allison explains that since the sublime concerns ideas of reason, "Kant insists that true sublimity is to be found only in the mind, and all that may be said about an object is that it is suitable for exhibiting or evoking such sublimity" (310). The felt sublimity inspires Kenneth to remain committed to the task assigned. As Allison observes, it is not only our cognitive faculties that are functioning; imagination also assumes a central importance (314). According to Kant, the sublimity in nature "elevates the Imagination to a presentation of those cases in which the mind can make felt the proper sublimity of its destination . . ." (28:126). Through the medium of reason and a sense of honor, sublimity in a thinking person is aroused. This is what Allison remarks as "the respect for our own vocation or the ideal of humanity within ourselves, which underlies the feeling of the sublime" (310). In Kenneth's mission on the Mount, Scott exactly depicts such an emotion towards an external enormous object which is attuned into a moral feeling via the working of reason.

Kant further characterizes a movement arising from the feeling of the sublime: "the feeling of the Sublime brings with it as its characteristic feature a *movement* of the mind bound up with the judging of the object . . ." (24:105). In the feeling of the sublime, the mind feels itself *moving*; similarly, Kenneth also feels his mind *moving* when his high thoughts roll, one after each other. Such an emotion is beyond our sensible faculty, a supersensible faculty that turns out to be a moral feeling. The mountain reminds him of his nature as autonomous moral agent. In other words, the feeling of his supersensible nature is occasioned by the perception of the craggy

mountain, and his mind is filled with code of chivalry. Natural objects like mountains “raise the energies of the soul above their accustomed height, and discover in us a faculty of resistance of a quite different kind, which gives us courage to measure ourselves against the apparent almightiness of nature” (Kant 28:125). A noble thought it is when Kenneth does not care that Richard has placed him upon such a perilous post—because Kenneth is motivated to devote his ambitious and high-placed affection which inflame his military enthusiasm, to raise the energy of his soul above its accustomed height, so to speak. Such a state reflects Kenneth’s unquiet mind, full of emotional vibration due to his sublime feeling for the magnitude of Saint George’s Mount as he stands upon it. Scott depicts Kenneth’s rolling thought as follows:

He upon whom Richard had conferred the distinction of guarding his banner was no longer an adventurer of slight note. . . . An unknown and obscure fate could not now be his. If he was surprised and slain on the post which had been assigned him, his death—and he resolved it should be glorious—must deserve the praises as well as call down the vengeance of Coeur de Lion, and be followed by the regrets, and even the tears, of the high-born beauties of the English Court. He had now no longer reason to fear that he should die as a fool dieth. (161)

Kenneth begins to imagine himself as a newly-risen hero, who will deserve the court’s respect should he be sacrificed. It might sound like a bit of vanity at the first reading; Scott, nevertheless, defending Kenneth that he is not vain for selfish purpose, goes on to say that

Sir Kenneth had full leisure to *enjoy* these and similar high-souled thoughts, fostered by that wild spirit of chivalry, which, amid its most extravagant and fantastic flights, was still *pure* from all selfish alloy—generous, devoted, and perhaps only thus far censurable, that it proposed objects and courses of action *inconsistent* with the frailties and imperfections of man. (161-62, italics mine)

Here emerges an aesthetic pleasure, or rather, a “negative pleasure” because it involves the risk of death. Kant explains that in the experience of the sublime there is “at the same time a pleasure thus excited, arising from the correspondence with rational Ideas of this very judgment of the inadequacy of our greatest faculty of Sense . . .” (27:119-20). Beginning with the feeling of danger, fear and now moving to a subtle kind of joy, Kenneth demonstrates what Kant describes as the joy in the sublime: “the pleasurable arising from the cessation of an uneasiness is *a state of joy*” (28:124). The joy that Kenneth feels is grounded in his sense of honor and of chivalry after his uneasiness about danger has ceased. In a word, in the complex mental state the mind firstly feels checked, yet then a consequent outflow of emotional powers ensues. Kenneth complies with the code of chivalry and decides to guard the English banner till life forsakes him. As Allison in another context says, this

is a “feeling of an agent involved in moral deliberation and decision” (327). Scott has thought highly of Kenneth’s noble character, and in a roundabout way makes fun of the common frailties and imperfections of human beings. Interestingly Kant in his “Analytic of the Sublime” also attributes aesthetical value to soldiers, or their counterparts in the Middle Ages, the knights. Kant thinks the soldier is worthy of receiving great admiration because he is one “who shrinks from nothing, who fears nothing, and therefore does not yield to danger . . .” (28:127). Kenneth also imagines that if he unfortunately dies on mission, the peculiar veneration for him from the ladies in the court will still remain. The hallmark of the sublime characterized by a transformation of an initially negative effect on the imagination into a delight is thus exemplified in Scott’s description of Kenneth in accepting this task.

Kenneth seems to have struck a satisfactory balance between these two moments, the private one of the beautiful and the public one of the sublime, until the incident of the stolen banner on Saint George’s Mount occurs. Scott in this episode dramatizes a crucial event that is to control Kenneth’s fate. A new spiritual trial, besides the great physical danger, is to befall Kenneth. Nectabanus, the dwarf that Kenneth once meets in the Carmelites’ chapel at Engaddi, brings a tempting message: that he has brought the ruby ring as a token for the knight from its “owner.” Now, the ring reminds Kenneth of his experience of the beautiful in the chapel. There he once enjoyed a pleasurable mental state, one which he would endeavor to preserve ever since its occurrence.¹⁶ Immediately a dilemma arises—one voice urges him to fulfill a knight’s service to a lady, while another commands him to stay put, a typical challenge for a medieval knight whether to succumb to his lover or to obey his overlord. After struggling for some time and persuading himself that the owner of the ring might need his urgent service, Sir Kenneth decides to leave the post and follow the dwarf. It is obvious that in this incident Kenneth ranks his aesthetic, private sphere higher than his political, public sphere. This military duty Kenneth fails—a blunder in his moral life. When he finally returns to Saint George’s Mount, out of great shock he finds that the English Standard has already vanished and the spear on which it floated is lying broken on the ground. Once the equilibrium between his private and public aspects of life dissolves, he is deemed to have ignored his military duty. Without delay he confesses to King Richard what happened, knowing perfectly well the kind of penalty he will surely receive. It is true that he soon finds out the Queen’s intrigue, yet he only has himself to blame. When he is led by the dwarf to meet the Queen and Edith, he does not even give a thought to blame anyone—not the dwarf, not the waiting maids, not even the Queen, the principle plotter, who has devised the fatal practical joke. If Kenneth cares about his life that much, he might just as well claim himself to be the victim and, to his own interest, tell Richard of Queen Berengaria’s manipulation. Thus, he might have been able to clear his guilt. Yet, this would go against the style of his courtly civility. How can he attribute his own sense of shamefulness to the ladies?

Kenneth’s decision to confess and to resign himself to the punishment shows on

¹⁶ Because of his disinterested and detached manner towards the occurrence, the mental picture can be retained intact, without any contamination of determinate purposes or desire. As Kant explains the psychological state of a perceiver, “We *linger* over the contemplation of the beautiful, because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces itself . . .” (12:71-72).

the one hand, his extreme respect for order and the constituted authority, and on the other, his grandeur of ethical thought. Lauber notes that an intense respect for order has characterized the Waverley Novels as a whole. "In the Waverley Novels," Lauber states, "an ordered society is the highest political and social value, and for Scott this meant a society in which the social hierarchy is carefully preserved—although by law and custom rather than by force" (117). Scott's readers cannot but feel a sense of elevation in Kenneth, who is brave enough to undertake full responsibility and is not afraid of death. With hindsight, we are clear that Kenneth might have revealed his true identity as the Prince of Scotland, a title that might be an advantage to him. However, he doesn't do so for one major reason—he already made his vow to preserve his rank unknown till the Crusade should be accomplished and "save IN ARTICULO MORTIS" (357). He says that ". . . my pride brooked not that I should avow myself Prince of Scotland in order to save my life, endangered for default of loyalty" (357). Even Scott cannot help regard the knight's ethical decision with veneration and attribute to him a sublime soul. This reflects another aspect of his attitude of composure. Jaeger also acknowledges the significance of "sublime" in chivalric narrative, though he uses the term in a general instead of theoretical sense (242). He remarks that chivalric narrative "represents courtliness as a sublime ethical code" (242). Kenneth is a protagonist with an aesthetic temperament in a romance whose writer attends to the severe precept of duty, instead of "shallow moral precepts" in the kind of sentimental or fanciful romances Kant dismisses (29:141-42). Kenneth's chivalrous manners and behaviors are compatible with a frame of mind that is counted beautiful, and more so with one which is counted sublime.

As has been demonstrated, Kenneth has a character of calm contemplation and is able to register a peculiar disinterestedness in his true identity when facing a life-and-death crisis. There seem no misgivings whatever to disturb his tranquil mind when his fate is sealed, because he values order more than his physical existence. He does not live by passion, impulse, and desire but rather by adherence to, or what Kant terms "respect" for, the code of chivalry. Kant holds to the view that the "feeling of our incapacity to attain to an Idea, *which is a law for us*, is RESPECT" (27:119). Moreover, Kenneth has learned a hard lesson from his negligence, a lesson the sublime offers us—"a very different 'aesthetic education'" (Allison 306). Kenneth would not want to betray the sublimity of his disposition; even his humility upon his own faults "is a sublime state of mind, consisting in a voluntary subjection of himself to the pain of remorse, in order that the causes of this may be gradually removed" (Kant 28:129). As a man of integrity, he feels exceedingly shameful to have left his post without sanction, with a reason that is not supposed to be articulated. On the other hand, Kenneth is particularly thorough in that he gives priority to Edith's honor and is willing to preserve her integrity at the expense of his own life and fame. Although Scott writes in the beginning of chapter twelve that "'Tis woman that seduces all mankind" (161), this grudge Kenneth obviously rejects. When the banner incident occurs, Sir Kenneth is still considered as a poor knight socially lower than Edith. If the whole camp learns about Edith's good impression of this lowly knight, the hearsay would bring damage to her honor. He will be the last person to involve Edith in that ridiculous scandal. In order to preserve her integrity as a noble lady who has nothing to do with the trick, Kenneth decides to undertake all the responsibilities. He even asks Edith to forgive him for his presumption in believing that his poor

services can have been required or valued by her (176). Scott's portrayal of Kenneth's sense of righteousness is a positive response to Friedrichsmeyer's doubt: "Is there a place for beauty in the construction of an ethical, moral, and just universe?" (6)

Edith in a similar way is a perfect match for Kenneth: she also expresses a noble heart by trying to undertake all the responsibilities. Not to further incense Richard after the Queen's unsuccessful, emotional pleading, Edith resorts to reason in the following conversation with him:

"My lord," she said, "this good knight, whose blood you are about to spill, hath done, in his time, service to Christendom. He has fallen from his duty through a snare set for him in mere folly and idleness of spirit. A message sent to him in the name of one who—why should I not speak it?—it was in my own—induced him for an instant to leave his post. And what knight in the Christian camp might not have thus far transgressed at command of a maiden, who, poor howsoever in other qualities, hath yet the blood of Plantagenet in her veins?" (209-10)

Edith speaks from the bottom of her heart and displays her impeccable eloquence—an emotional intensity, a forcefulness, and intelligence. She acknowledges her "fault" first and then states a universal fact among all Christian knights, to which Richard finds it hard to give an immediate rejoinder; he cannot but skillfully digress to a new topic: "And you saw him, then, cousin?" (210). In Richard's utterances we sense his hidden compromising voice. Edith's eloquence is doubtlessly impressive, yet what makes her noble is that no names of the evil-doer and of those accomplices are alluded to in her account. The only party interested she refers to is her own self, the cause of this unfortunate time-killing farce. Edith refuses to hurt anyone again, despite her earlier just harshness towards the Queen. When the Queen tries to avoid facing her husband and her own fault by planning to employ the Archbishop of Tyre as a mediator, Edith exclaimed, "Oh, no, no! Go yourself madam; you have done the evil, do you confer the remedy" (203). However, lacking courage, the Queen denies "with many a pretty form of negation, that she had directed Nectabanus absolutely to entice the knight farther than the brink of the Mount on which he kept watch" (247). Edith might have as well revealed the Queen's irresponsible remarks to King Richard in order to clear her sense of guilt and, most importantly, to rescue Kenneth from being sentenced to death. When Edith is summoned to answer Richard's inquiries, she nonetheless decides to keep silent. Under the suppression of the feeling of indignation, Edith merely asserts that "I am here neither to exculpate myself nor to blame others," an utterance that brings her even more dignity (210). That is, in spite of the Queen's unconvincing self-defense that saves her own face, Edith is reluctant to plant a bad impression of the wife on the husband when pleading the King "for justice rather than mercy" (209). Edith's sense of justice is thus strikingly opposed to the Queen's exculpation of her so-called "harmless frolic" (247). The Queen tries to press upon Richard the charge of unkindness in refusing her the boon—this is to plead "for mercy rather than justice." The audacious tone of Edith largely reflects her intellectual caliber which ironically contrasts with the Queen's irresponsible attitude.

It is when Kenneth is resigned to accept his destiny with composure that fate unexpectedly exonerates him from death penalty—he atones for the crime by a meritorious service of saving King Richard’s life from his assassins. This further cements the union between him and Edith. The Soldan of Egypt and Syria is tremendously moved by the steadfast loyalty that Kenneth dedicates to Edith, and the Christian knight’s moral ideal further inspires the Soldan to help him win her hand. Formerly, the Soldan has been attracted to Edith and plans to marry her, yet he is now willing to withdraw from the contest for the lady out of his respect for Kenneth. Hence, love ennobles Kenneth’s mind, elevates his soul, and wins him Edith’s heart and love. There is no doubt that, at the end, Kenneth is exonerated anyway, yet the process matters. Scott indeed has devised a highly intriguing and complex plot to represent the code of chivalry in his own version and vision.

In *The Talisman*, Scott has embellished the historical Crusade with subjective, aesthetic experiences that occur only in transient, rare moments. As Kant sums up well: “The Beautiful prepares us to love disinterestedly something . . . ; the Sublime prepares us to esteem something highly even in opposition to our own (sensible) interest” (29:134). Throughout the development of the story, Kenneth has been very consistent in the peculiar detachment of his character, no matter in his private or public life, aesthetic or political sphere. *The Talisman* is not romantic in the sense of merely returning to the Middle Ages or to the theme of a medieval romance, although Scott “encouraged the fashionable medievalism of the Victorian Age” (Lauber 125). The display of Kenneth’s heightened emotions in his subjective and aesthetic experiences also contributes to the text as a romantic novel. Just as Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* adds to the aesthetic story a new concept of a disinterested liking for an object, Scott likewise presents a new experience of aesthetic insight in the character of Kenneth.

IV. Conclusion

Lauber agrees with most critics who have frequently complained of a lack of depth in Scott’s characters, yet Scott does not lack supporters. Lauber quotes one anonymous admirer of Scott who defends the novelist saying that he “had a *fine reticence* that forbade his disclosing either his own inner most personal feelings or those of his characters” (119, italics mine). Lauber dismisses this remark as “rather absurd.” Perhaps not that absurd—if one thinks in terms of the detachment discussed so far in this paper. This observer’s insight may be rephrased as follows: the *reticence* can be paralleled to a mentality of detachment, rightly required by a Kantian pure aesthetic judgment. Moreover, Grierson also comments negatively that Scott “never entered very deeply into his own motives” (68). In the aesthetic framework, however, the absence of motives is duly to the novelist’s advantage—there is no interest whatever to intervene in his works or characters, an attitude which allows the readers to imagine in their own ways. This unknown critic has properly found a suitable statement for Scott to correspond to Kant’s aesthetic judgment, and the modifier *fine* shows his/her taste. Contrary to the strong tradition of deflating the Middle Ages, beginning with Mark Twain, in which the “coarse sensibilities” loom large in the moderns’ love of “debunking” (Jaeger ix), Scott’s portrayal of Kenneth is about the

refinement of a knight. For the judgment of the beautiful “a mood of calm contemplation and a quite free judgment are needed” (Kant 28:128). Such a mood can be termed as “an *a priori* principle,” which raises individuals “out of empirical psychology” (Kant 29:132).

Thomas Carlyle in 1838 wrote a review titled “The Amoral Scott,” which first appeared in the *London and Westminster Review*. While commenting on Scott’s literary achievement, Carlyle complains that Scott’s works should have “other aims than that of harmlessly amusing indolent languid men: or if Literature have them not, then Literature is a very poor affair” (366). As Carlyle further contends:

. . . there is *little to be sought or found in the Waverley Novels. Not profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for edification, for building up or elevating, in any shape!* The sick heart will find no healing here, the darkly-struggling heart no guidance: the Heroic that is in all men no divine *awakening* voice. (366, italics mine)

Whereas Carlyle accuses Scott of failing to present some serious aims in his novels, a convalescent power is found by Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche. In his letter to the classical scholar Erwin Rohde in 1875, Nietzsche wrote: “When I am resting my eyes, my sister reads to me, almost always Walter Scott, whom I would call, as Schopenhauer does, an ‘immortal’; so much do I like his *artistic tranquility* [italics mine], his *andante*, that I would like to recommend him to you” (qtd. in Maxwell 421). Scott’s literary art may not awaken his readers in a Carlylean sense, yet it somehow soothes their minds in a Nietzschean fashion. As Maxwell sums up, to “appreciate Scott one must not think sharply; quite the contrary, one must lie back and rest one’s eyes . . .” (421). Kant himself also makes the distinction between movement and restfulness when he compares the sublime with the beautiful. He sums up as follows: “the feeling of the Sublime brings with it as its characteristic feature a *movement* of the mind bound up with the judging of the object, while in the case of the Beautiful taste presupposes and maintains the mind in *restful* contemplation” (24:105-06). Without Scott’s artistic skills and his representation of the element of detachment, Kenneth’s experience of the beautiful might have been merely a determinative judgment of a beautiful object. Via the character of Kenneth, Scott, in a metaphorical and roundabout way, seems to reprove a mind too much involved in personal interests at the expense of true aesthetic feeling. A sensitive reader should be able to benefit from reading *The Talisman* and learn a lesson that *awakens* him/her from interests. And we have not yet taken into consideration Scott’s vision of *disinterested* friendships, for example, between the Soldan and Sir Kenneth, or the Soldan and Richard. These episodes will further demonstrate Scott’s liberal historical perspective that will contribute to European literary history. We can also take issue with Carlyle’s claim that Scott’s works are “amoral” by juxtaposing this with the sublime moment in *The Talisman*. It will be difficult to deny that the sublime “puts us in touch (albeit merely aesthetically) with our ‘higher self’; and, as such, it may help to clear the ground, as it were, for genuine moral feeling and, therefore, like the sensitivity to natural beauty, though in a very different way, function as a moral facilitator” (Allison 343). If one takes Carlyle’s strong rebuke for granted, the

meaning of the two aesthetic moments in *The Talisman* might have been buried and lost in later generations of readers.

The Talisman has wit, liveliness, freshness of imagery, rhythm, and emotional intensity, but most of all, it reveals what Maxwell terms an “aestheticized restfulness” (421) that is particularly appealing. Unlike Buchan’s claim that *The Talisman* “goes twangingly” to its close (274), these two scenes in the story do not at all go twangingly. On the contrary, these moments foment reflective tranquility instead of howling clamor; the silence has its own aesthetic language. With the novelist’s conceptualization of the beautiful and the sublime, there is undeniable subtlety existing in both Kenneth’s taste and chivalrous manners. In that connection Scott combines aesthetics, emotions, duty, and love into one integrated domain. Though the highbrow and scholarly commentaries did not show him favor, Scott has had the best of the argument—these two moments in Kenneth’s life create the tranquil atmosphere and make a Kantian reading possible.

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ABSTRACT

Some critics during the previous two centuries complained about the lack of aesthetics in Sir Walter Scott's novels and also accused him of lacking edification and a "divine awakening voice." Among the Waverley Novels, *The Talisman* is one of the novels that has received both acclamation and criticism. It will thus be interesting to explore whether aesthetics finds expression in *The Talisman*. Written in the Romantic period and after the publication of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, the novel can be easily acknowledged as a text only about the sublime since it mostly deals with kings, princes and knights and their heroic deeds. Yet, in at least two scenes, one in the Engaddi chapel and the other on St. George's Mount, the novelist represents the essence of both the beautiful and the sublime, respectively corresponding to a special kind of aesthetic judgment. Aesthetics and morality may appear to be two unrelated disciplines by definition, yet Kant's aesthetic theory incorporates them. Focusing on the major concept of *disinterestedness* in the "Analytic of the Beautiful," and on an oblique relationship between the sublime and morality in the "Analytic of the Sublime," this paper examines whether a Kantian reading of the above two scenes is possible. Even though the vital element of disinterestedness has an asymmetrical significance in, and an asymmetrical proportion between Kant's two Analytics, this "disproportion" happens to fit the purpose of the present study. A final attempt is to answer how romantic is *The Talisman* in a Kantian sense.

Keywords: *The Talisman*, the beautiful, the sublime, aesthetic experiences and judgment, Immanuel Kant

提要

部分批評家對於史考特的小說缺乏美學有所怨言，並責難其作品缺少教化與某種「神聖、激勵人心之音」。《符咒》是同時受到讚揚與批評的小說之一。因此探討《符咒》是否表達了美學應是有趣的議題。此小說發表於康德《判斷力之批判》之後，很容易被認定為只與雄渾有關。然而，至少在小說的兩個事件中，一發生於印喀地禮拜堂，另一於聖喬治山峰，小說家再現了美與雄渾的精髓，兩者分別呼應了特殊的美感判斷。美感與道義照定義似為毫無關聯的兩種學科，但康德的美學理論卻使之產生結合。本文討論康氏兩則〈分析〉中分別提到的「無私性」以及道德性，藉以檢視對此兩事件作康德式的閱讀是否可行。本文最後企圖回應在康德的美學意涵裡，傳奇有多令人依戀。

關鍵詞：《符咒》、美、雄渾、美感經驗與判斷、康德

Ruby Ju-ping Kuo (郭如蘋) is Ph. D. candidate and part-time lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, National Sun Yat-sen University. She earns her M.A. in English from the National Sun Yat-sen University and B.A. from National Taiwan University. Her M.A. thesis titled “The Aesthetics of Marriage in The Canterbury Tales” (2003) received “Master’s Thesis Award” from National Science Council. She is currently working on her dissertation entitled “Aesthetic Space in Malory’s Le Morte Darthur.” Being selected as a recipient of the Graduate Students Study Abroad Program sponsored by National Science Council, she will be awarded a grant for seven months in 2009 to pursue her advanced research at The Pennsylvania State University.

