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SIR WALTER SCOTT'S TEMPLAR CONSTRUCT – A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY
INFLUENCES ON HISTORICAL PERCEPTIONS.

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ABSTRACT

Sir Walter Scott was a writer of historical fiction, but how accurate are his portrayals? The novels *Ivanhoe* and *Talisman* both feature Templars as the antagonists. Scott's works display he had a fundamental knowledge of the Order and their fall. However, the novels are fiction, and the accuracy of some of the author's depictions are questionable. As a result, the novels are more representative of events and thinking of the early nineteenth century than any other period. The main theme in both novels is the importance of unity and illustrating the destructive nature of any division. The protagonists unify under the banner of King Richard and the Templars pursue a course of independence. Scott's works also helped to formulate notions of Scottish identity, Freemasonry (and their alleged forbearers the Templars) and Victorian behaviours. However, Scott's image is only one of a long history of Templars featuring in literature over the centuries. Like Scott, the previous renditions of the Templars are more illustrations of the contemporary than historical accounts. One matter for unease in the early 1800s was religion and Catholic Emancipation. Scott was not a tolerant man when it came to the extremism of Christians, especially Catholics. The Templars are the ultimate fanatics during the Crusades, and Scott's portrayal is rather scathing. His condemnation extends to Catholicism in general and is present in his characterisation of other men of religion in the novels. However, Scott was a writer of fictions set in history, and their sole purpose was the entertainment of the reader.

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