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“ARRANGED IN A FANCIFUL MANNER AND IN AN ANCIENT STYLE”: THE FIRST SCENIC REALIZATIONS OF SCOTT’S WORK AND THE DESIRE FOR A NEW REALISM ON SCOTTISH STAGES

Barbara Bell

The impact of early nineteenth-century dramatisations of works by Walter Scott on the existing visual theatrical framework was to begin the process of changing the relationship between a play-text and the stage scenery that framed the action to more directly embody the world of that specific text. This led to the rise of scenic realism on the nineteenth-century stage and in Scotland, at least, it strengthened the relationship between the theatre and the population as a whole, through the emergence of a repertoire that connected more immediately with its audience. This paper focuses on stage designs by Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840) for two key dramatisations of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* (London: Covent Garden 1819; Edinburgh: Theatre Royal 1820). It also looks briefly at the challenges surrounding a study of objects, not one of which survives.¹

Early nineteenth-century theatres performed two or three pieces per night, changing nightly, ten or twelve pieces in a week and with limited resources and storage space they relied on stock scenery comprising painted backcloths, borders and wing flats. If spectators saw four different plays featuring a scene in a bedchamber, library or forest glade, it was the same bedchamber or library or forest glade.² An announcement of “new scenery” on a playbill signified a considerable investment from which management wanted an on-going return, eventually adding those new cloths to the stock.³ This might suggest that Georgian scene-painting was

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¹ Christina Young of Glasgow University is leading a project entitled “The Power to Transform,” documenting all the extant painted stage cloths in the UK (2018-2020). A surviving Nasmyth cloth may emerge.

² Occasional exceptions to this arrangement were spectacles with fantastic and/or exotic locations.

³ *Caledonian Mercury* (25 November 1819): subsequent citations as *Cal.Merc.*, with date. The critic approves of good stock scenery over more specific pieces. This traditionalist is also approving of the improved lighting which shows off the inhabitants of the boxes to the rest of the auditorium.
blandly generic; however, this was also a period during which many major artists trained and/or worked on stage scenery. Scottish stages also saw work by David Roberts R.A. (1796-1864), William Leighton Leitch (1804-1883) and John Wilson (1774-1855) during this period. The most celebrated stock scenery outside London was designed and painted by Alexander Nasmyth for the Theatre Royal, Queen St., in Glasgow. Nasmyth produced a complete set for the theatre in 1804 alongside a famous Act Drop, the painted front curtain displayed between the pieces, which was exhibited in his Edinburgh studio before its removal to Glasgow (Cal.Merc., 23 July 1804). David Roberts, who worked at the Glasgow theatre and later with Nasmyth on scenery for the Edinburgh Heart of Mid-Lothian, wrote enthusiastically in his Journal about Queen Street’s collection of “chambers, palaces, streets, landscapes, forest scenery, etc,” while an article in The New Monthly Magazine in 1828 described how

Nasmyth [sic], of Edinburgh, painted a whole set of scenes ... many of which were so excellent as to add greatly to his own fame as an artist, and to give a celebrity to the Glasgow theatre far beyond that attained by any of its rival provincials.

Even as a number of Scotland’s major artists worked on her stages, their opportunities to paint Scottish subjects during this period were severely limited, since depictions of Scotland were dominated by a repertoire policed by the official Stage Censor in London to exclude potentially inflammatory national materials. The scenery required for this restricted Scottish repertoire, for example The Gentle Shepherd, Douglas, Macbeth, and a clutch of so-called “Scotch” ballets, was a mixture of the pastoral and the unspecified mythic. During the late eighteenth century an additional layer of expectation had been created by the emergence of a Gothic-revival persona which had enveloped the Scottish landscape, seeping onto her stages. Dale Townsend’s 2014 analysis of “Shakespeare, Ossian and Scottish Gothic” concludes that during the mid-eighteenth century, Macbeth was “appropriated in Gothic writing as a means of

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4 The Scottish watercolourist William Leighton Leitch worked with David Roberts R.A. at the Theatre Royal, Queen Street, Glasgow and after his death in 1864 Leitch painted a series of vignettes of Roberts’ early Scottish scenery. These include a view of the theatre’s paint room which conveys something of the colossal size of these pictures. National Library of Scotland Acc.13282.
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asserting Scotland’s otherness…. Scotland becomes as Gothic as Radcliffe’s Italy… literally ‘another country’ of darkness and distance.”

Charles Dibdin’s *Annals of the Edinburgh Stage* records Nasmyth’s own “Gothic” scenery as being thought “sublime and beautiful,” and there was another speaking example of this Gothic tendency in 1805 when John Wilson, a Scottish marine artist then working in London, provided one Minor house, the Olympic Circus in College Street, Edinburgh, with scenery for “the grand, serious, tragic and heroic pantomime called, *Oscar & Malvina*.”

Gothic and Scottish images were chosen to “represent” locations that had no counterpart in reality and were rather the depictions of ideas about Scotland: the inside of a “Romantic Cavern” was said to have “Secret Passages, &c”, whilst a scene entitled *The Grand Armory [sic] of Fingal*, was described as “representing Implements of War arranged in a fanciful manner, and in an ancient style.”

The elaborate displays of weaponry which became emblematic of the Scots Baronial style reflected the ancient and martial character assigned Scotland during a period when the British state was depending on their Scottish regiments to fight against Napoleon and for the nascent Empire. Whilst Scottish regiments campaigned abroad, at home, an emphasis on the “ancient” and “fanciful” meant that Scottish scene painters grasped at any opportunity to demonstrate their skills on familiar scenes that Scottish audiences would appreciate and in Walter Scott’s work they found real-world locations identified and often described in great detail. In 1811, the Edinburgh Theatre Royal saw J.F. Williams (1785-1846) produce scenery for one of the first adaptations of *The Lady of the Lake* by E.J. Eyre (1767-1816), which demonstrated a subtle shift in the work of the stage painter.

The scenes listed in the printed text do feature some generic views, “The mountains – a cataract, and a rude bridge thrown across a deep glen”, and in Act III, scenes within Stirling Castle do not cite any historical source, but are simply “A Guardroom”, “An Audience Chamber.” However, there are also some very specific locations, for example, “The Pass of Benlede” and Dibdin says that the “scenery was

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10 *Caledonian Mercury* (18 February 1805), an advertisement for the Olympic Circus.

announced as being prepared from views taken on the spot.”12 Williams then took the opportunity of a raised profile to provide a set of “local scenes” for a pantomime, *Harlequin in Leith*, on his Benefit Night.13

![Fig. 1: Alexander Nasmyth, Stage Design for The Tolbooth, ca.1819. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection](https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/1668424)

Nasmyth was both an artist and a teacher, encouraging his students to work directly from Nature and what they saw around them. The celebrated Act Drop for the Glasgow Theatre Royal was a “Grand VIEW from DUNOTER HILL, of the CLYDE, GREENOCK, PORT GLASGOW, DUMBARTON CASTLE & TOWN, KILPATRICK IRON WORKS, the GREAT CANAL, &C” (*Cal.Merc.*, 23 July 1804). Figure 1 is a Nasmyth stage design for the interior of the Edinburgh Tolbooth taken “from a sketch made in 1817.”14 In fact, the bulk of surviving evidence of Nasmyth’s theatre work lies around adaptations of *Heart of Mid-Lothian*. Martin Meisel’s important 1983 study *Realisations* concentrates on fine art

14. Alexander Nasmyth, Stage Design for The Heart of Midlothian: The Tolbooth, c.a.1819, oil on canvas. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1977.14.64: [https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/1668424](https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/1668424). The hyphenation in Scott’s title was commonly omitted by contemporaries, as here by Nasmyth, as frequently also by playwrights and theatres on playbills.
interpretations of Scott scenes, whilst Janet Cooksey’s 1991 study of Nasmyth gives an overview of his stage work. However, more recently Richard J. Hill’s 2010 work, *Picturing Scotland through the Waverley Novels*, features a chapter on Alexander Nasmyth’s role as an early illustrator of Scott that uses his scenery for *Heart of Mid-Lothian* as evidence.

Working with the Scott adaptations involves materials that are scattered, incomplete or simply misleading and the Edinburgh Theatre Royal’s 1820 production from *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* is a case in point. The process begins with Thomas Dibdin and Daniel Terry who both wrote adaptations of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* which were three acts long and first appeared in London. The Daniel Terry play, for which his father-in-law, Alexander Nasmyth, sent sketches to Covent Garden for realisation by their scenic artist, J.H. Grieve (1770-1845), deviated wildly from the novel and was consequently a failure. It does not appear that Terry’s piece was ever played in Scotland and Terry had no direct hand in the production of the Edinburgh play.

The Dibdin play was workmanlike, tailored to a London audience, advertised as a “Romantic Caledonian Romance” whose scenery comprised “picturesque and appropriate views” by John Wilson, and was widely performed after its first appearance. Thomas Dibdin’s *Reminiscences* recount how Mrs. H. Siddons, lessee of the Theatre Royal, acquired a copy of his play “properly marked for representation” and he goes on to describe its glittering career in Edinburgh. Indeed, the

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17 Terry admitted as much to Scott in a letter about a forthcoming adaptation of *The Antiquary*, “...deviation from the story, experience shows to be bad – the public expect as rigid adherence as possible to it.” *Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, 10 vols, ed. Grierson, Cook et al. (London: Constable & Co. 1932-37), vol. 6, 10-11: in a letter to Terry (10 November 1819) note 3 refers to an undated letter to Scott from Terry, postmarked 5 November 1819. J.H. Grieve was a Perth man with a genius for developing new painting techniques for use with gas-lighting. His son Thomas provided a set of scenery for the Edinburgh Theatre Royal’s revival of *Heart of Midlothian* in 1831.

18 “Royal Circus and Surrey Theatre”, *Morning Post* (14 January 1819), 1, col. 1.

Edinburgh Theatre Royal had obtained a licence for Dibdin’s version. They advertised it on 11th December 1819 as a coming attraction, but had by that time already been trumped by the Minor house, the Pantheon Theatre, who had begun to advertise it as “in preparation” on 8th November (Cal.Mercury, 11 December 1819, 8 November 1819). The Pantheon’s first performance had been on the 9th December and they apparently did well with it, whilst audiences were thin in Shakespeare Square, where Murray was playing a more legitimate repertoire, including those works in prose and blank verse, such as Shakespeare, only available by law to the Patent houses, the Theatres Royal (Cal.Merc., 9 December 1819).20

Unfortunately, in this instance, Hill has become confused over which plots went with which plays, artists and theatres. This weakens his overall argument, that the work of Nasmyth on illustrations for the novels was heavily influenced by his work on Daniel Terry’s “Edinburgh” adaptation of Heart of Mid-Lothian. Hill has been misled by some apparently reliable sources and has consequently overlooked a key decision by Nasmyth, an exploration of which might have developed his argument further. In order to unravel the history of Nasmyth’s scenery and the play which appeared at the Edinburgh Theatre Royal, it is best to read the novel, all the extant printed texts, the usual contemporary sources, newspaper reviews, journals, and so on, and then to examine the playbills in sequence.

Once W. H. Murray, Harriet Siddons’ brother and the manager of the Theatre Royal, had made the decision to abandon a competing production of the Dibdin version, a deal of rewriting must have occurred over that Christmas and New Year. The play eventually done in Shakespeare Square was attributed to Murray and was five acts long, an amalgamation of a mass of character-driven detail from the novel with material adjusted from both Dibdin and Terry.21 Whatever its origins, the piece that emerged onto the stage of the Edinburgh Theatre Royal was by some way the most substantial and sympathetic contemporary stage adaptation of a Waverley novel. This is the play that appeared on 23rd February 1820, thereafter in a

20 The Theatre Royal’s repertoire during this period included Jane Shore, Guy Mannering and Romeo and Juliet.

21 W. H. Murray, The Heart of Midlothian. WD4 in Richard Ford, Dramatisations of Scott’s Novels: a catalogue (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1979) collects together the various editions and contemporary references. An amalgamation of the Dibdin and Terry pieces had been done at the Theatre Royal Bath in early December 1819 and attributed to William Dimond. It was never printed but W. H. Murray was born in Bath and connections may have enabled him to get a copy of this script: William Dimond, The Heart of Midlothian, Bath, 3/12/1819 “[A combination of DIBDIN’S and TERRY’S versions of Scott’s novel.]” For the identification, see Allardyce Nicoll, XIX Century Drama 1800-1850, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), II: 297.
run of 34 nights and “for the last time” on 24th April. Two days later, it appeared for the “first time” as the supporting piece on the bill, compressed “into three acts.” For several years, when it was the main piece of the evening it played in the five-act version, and when it was an afterpiece they used the three-act compression.

The key issue is that Nasmyth created two sets of scenery for *Heart of Mid-Lothian* plays, first for a London theatre/audience and then for the Edinburgh Theatre Royal, which was determined to make a statement of ownership with this production. It is in the spaces between them that we might speculate on the impetus behind Nasmyth’s choices and glimpse something of the impact of the requirements of the Scott dramatisations on the theatre industry as a whole.

The first scene listed on the Covent Garden bill is a view of “Salisbury Craigs [sic] and Arthur’s Seat, with Dean’s Cottage in the distance” and three extant images illustrate some of Nasmyth’s thinking around historical accuracy. An 1801 engraving of Edinburgh from the South East by Alexander Carse, contains three particular points of interest.\(^\text{22}\) The chapel ruins are largely recognisable then and now, the South Bridges, completed in 1788, fill in the valley between the Royal Mile/Castle and the University buildings and in the middle ground a small-holding sits tucked into the hillside.

Figure 2 which is undated shows a similar view by Nasmyth, the chapel and South Bridges are both there and the small-holding is roughly sketched in the same place.\(^\text{23}\) A charming addition to the scene is a fine pen-and-ink cartoon of an artist drawing with a familiar figure hovering over him and inspecting his work. The slight stoop, stick and the large hairy dog at his heels make it very likely that this is Scott, but whether the image records an actual scene or a metaphorical one, as Nasmyth tries to do the subject justice, is difficult to say.\(^\text{24}\) The Terry play contained several scenes ostensibly in and around the Gardens of Holyrood Palace and the artist is facing away from the cityscape and towards the palace.

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\(^{24}\) The figures are surrounded by what could be seen as Jeanie Deans’ herd of milk cows.
Fig. 2: Alexander Nasmyth, “Edinburgh from Arthur’s Seat,” n.d.
National Galleries of Scotland, Cronish Torbock Bequest

Fig. 3: Alexander Nasmyth, “Edinburgh,” n.d.
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection
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Figure 3, also by Nasmyth, appears to be a product of this overall process.25 This is an older Edinburgh, perhaps more suitable for the period of the play: the ruins of St. Anthony’s Chapel are more substantial with an extra storey to the tower and the South Bridges are gone, whilst the foreground suggests the tumbled mass of Muschat’s Cairn. The small-holding has gone but now there is a but an’ ben isolated in the middle distance.

The review of Terry’s play printed in the Caledonian Mercury for 22 April 1819 applauded the scenery, but it is clear that Nasmyth is working to a London audience with its tastes and prejudices. At Covent Garden, the image of David Deans’ cottage was adjudged especially apt.

the artist has given a most picturesque, and yet most severe similitude of the decaying huts in which the earlier generations of Scotch purity divorced themselves from comfort and the world. The uncleanness and dismantling of the outhouses, the ruggedness and patchwork of the building, the narrow window, and the dilapidated door, are formidably true (CalMerc Review, 1819).

Scott emphasises Deans’ industry which leads to his modest success, enabling his move to St. Leonard’s Crags; he merely says of the farm that it was “lonely” and he later notes David Deans retreating to his “well-stocked byre.”26 It is plainly out of character that either David Deans or the hard-working Jeanie should have lived in a disintegrating ruin; however, the London critic approved mightily of a set design which confirmed what they were expecting of the period and sect. The scene is lauded as an accurate example of a type rather than arising out of the world of these specific characters.27 Nasmyth created a design for the interior of Deans’ cottage which survives, and whilst it is sparsely furnished it is not a ruin.28 At the moment it is unclear whether this interior, much like the Tolbooth scene, was created exclusively for the Covent Garden production, the Edinburgh production, or was used for both.

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26 On Deans’s and Jeanie’s industry and its contribution to their move to a new home, see esp. chs. 8 and 9: Scott, The Heart of Mid-Lothian, ed. David Hewitt and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Pres, 2004), 64-84.

27 A sketch by one of the Grieve family for this scene, showing a derelict set of buildings, is in the Grieve Family Collection of Theatre Designs, University of London, Senate House Library, MS1007/548.

Fig. 4: Alexander Nasmyth, “St. Anthony’s Chapel” in *Six Designs from Real Scenes...* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1821) Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland
It is actually the fluid placement and appearance of Muschat’s Cairn and the ruins of St. Anthony’s Chapel within the contrasting scenic designs for Covent Garden and Shakespeare Square which clarifies some of the issues facing the artist. The original cairn had been removed in the late eighteenth century for road improvements, but Scott had placed it closer to the ruins of the chapel for best effect in the novel. Nasmyth’s sketch for this scene at Covent Garden (Act II, sc. iii) does not seem to have survived, but the review description reprinted in the *Caledonian Mercury* was detailed: “... a pile of broken rocks blocking up the centre of the view, with the ruins of a tower on the height, ridges of rock on the right and left, and the whole impression fierce and fearful” (*Cal. Merc.*, 22 April 1819).

When he was asked to contribute illustrations of the *Waverley Novels* by Constable in 1821, Nasmyth offered up a design for the St Anthony’s Chapel scene, Figure 4, as one of three for the *Heart of Mid-Lothian*. Comparing it with the description in the review, it seems likely that this was related to the scene displayed at Covent Garden which was a very large theatre with variable sight-lines so that a central placement for the “tower” was probably preferable. However, when he came to create the same scene for an Edinburgh audience, Nasmyth would take a different approach.

Nasmyth was not apparently the first choice of scenic artist for the Edinburgh Theatre Royal’s *Heart of Mid-Lothian* in that both the *Scotsman* and *The Caledonian Mercury* confidently announced that J.H. Grieve would be supplying most or all of the *Heart of Mid-Lothian* scenery for what was then a planned production of the Dibdin play. Grieve had created the scenery for their celebrated production of Pocock’s *Rob Roy* in February 1819 and his cloth depicting Glasgow Old Bridge was widely applauded. Whether the reception for Nasmyth’s designs for Covent Garden were a factor in his elevation, or whether he was better able to produce the cloths at short notice is unclear, but the work for the expanded five act play was finally done largely by Nasmyth with David Roberts, who had already produced scenery for the Dibdin piece in Glasgow, contributing what he later called “a couple of Gothic scenes, which ... stamped my reputation as a painter.”

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29 Alexander Nasmyth, “St. Anthony's Chapel,” in *Sixteen Engravings from Real Scenes supposed to be described in the Novels and Tales of the 'Author of Waverley' &c.* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1821) in NLS ref: (F.4.d.21).

30 *The Scotsman* (20 November 1819), 374 only mentions Grieve; *Cal. Merc.* (18 November 1819) says that Grieve and Nasmyth will work together.

Fig. 5: Alexander Nasmyth, “Six Designs of Stage Sets for 'The Heart of Midlothian,’” Dec 1819-Feb 1820, National Galleries of Scotland
Figure 5 is the well-known set of thumbnail sketches by Nasmyth for the play and the artist has made a point of noting the short time-scale, 29th December 1819 to 8th February 1820, allowed for the delivery of these scenes. The St. Anthony’s Chapel scene is at top left. Scott valued the Edinburgh Theatre Royal in good part because he considered it to be an ideal size both for seeing and hearing. For Edinburgh, it is clear that Nasmyth has changed the point of view and perspective on the chapel ruins. In terms of dimensions, whilst the Covent Garden scene is expansive, the audience member seeing the ruined tower from a distance, set squarely in an impressively craggy setting, the Edinburgh point of view is taken roughly from the spot where the earlier sketches (Figures 2 and 3) were done and the ruins in consequence appear to be closer, giving the performance space both an intimate and a menacing atmosphere. In addition, the scene was set by moonlight and for the Edinburgh audience there would be a frisson of anticipation in suddenly seeing the familiar rocky file and picturesque ruins literally in an unfamiliar light, lowering over the scene.

In contrast to the Covent Garden spectator observing from afar, now Nasmyth preferred to bring the local audience into the scene and into the characters’ state of mind, bound on an uncertain adventure in what should be a well-known place: the domestic grazing ground has become a sinister environment, with its distinctive silhouette (shorn of any additional ‘historical’ masonry) that the audience would recognise, encompassing the novel’s conceit about the hour and placement of the cairn.

Hill cites the Edinburgh thumbnails and then concentrates his argument on three versions of the exterior of the Tolbooth, none of which feature there. Nasmyth did submit a Tolbooth exterior for Constable’s edition, but if Hill was determined to use Nasmyth’s stage scenery from The Heart of Mid-Lothian to support his argument, a more intriguing question might have been to ask why, in the case of St. Anthony’s Chapel, Nasmyth did not use the view he created for the Edinburgh production but chose the Covent Garden image? Up close, was the ruin not imposing enough, or Gothic, or “Scottish” enough to convey the desired impression to a readership unfamiliar with the original? Was he differentiating for the page

33 During this period the Edinburgh Theatre Royal held 1,500, whilst Covent Garden held 3,000 spectators.
Fig. 6: Details from Figs. 4 and 5, showing contrasting perspectives on St. Anthony’s Chapel in Nasmyth’s designs for London and Edinburgh
between the location and the location “in performance” or was there an expectation that these illustrations would match those displayed at Covent Garden?  

To understand the context within which Nasmyth was working, it is helpful to look closely at the Georgian theatre, particularly the Scottish theatre, as a whole. At one point, for example, Hill wonders why the stage sets “should be such an important marketing tool.” However, the layout of the scenes on the *Heart of Midlothian* bill mirrored that used earlier on the *Rob Roy* playbook, and analysis of the surrounding seasons reveals that an increasing desire to claim ownership and authenticity was a strong prompt to Murray’s pronouncements.

Having initially been wary of the “national”/popular context of the *Waverley* dramas which arrived on Minor and travelling stages across Scotland as “national” pieces before ever the Edinburgh Patent House tried them out, the Theatre Royal was now seeking to lay sole claim to the territory against the spirited enterprise of the Minors, for whom Scott’s popular novels, with their invaluable character dialogue freely available, represented a type of text with which they could challenge the dominance of the Patent Houses. In this instance Murray, under financial pressure playing a legitimate repertoire and alerted to the advantages to be gained by successful productions taken from *Guy Mannering* and *Rob Roy*, was in direct competition with the Pantheon Theatre and using every wile to position the Patent House as the reliable arbiter of the Scottish image on the stage.

Hill quotes the *Heart of Midlothian* playbook’s drawing spectators’ attention to Nasmyth’s research into old Edinburgh with the hint that “the public is respectfully requested to observe that the Views of Edinburgh are painted with an Intention to represent the City as it appeared in the Days of Porteous” and decides that the playbook is being “didactic” in directing their gaze, whereas it might be more accurate to say that Murray

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34 The “Covent Garden” image also appeared as one of Sixteen Engravings from Real Scenes Supposed to be described in the Novels and Tales of the “Author of Waverly” &c. Engraved by W. H. Lizars, from Drawings by Alexander Nasmyth (1821), available as prints from ten shillings to £1-11s-6d. See note 36 below for catalogue ref.


37 Murray inserted performances of *Rob Roy Macgregor; or Auld Langsyne* on 11 and 16 December 1819 as a direct challenge to the Pantheon’s continued success with Dibdin’s *Heart of Mid-Lothian* whilst his own plans for a larger production were taking shape.
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was alerting the audience that this was not to be regarded as new stock scenery, but rather as offering an authentic access into the world of the novel.\(^{38}\) This is one of a number of occasions when he makes pronouncements to this effect over an eighteen-month period and is a pivotal point in a marketing campaign that sought to promote the Theatre Royal as the proper home of the Scott dramatisations and by association of the emerging Scottish National Drama.

Finally, Hill decides that the Edinburgh scenery is “designed as a curiosity.” Rather it is the requirements of the differing theatres and performance texts that drive Nasmyth’s actions. To call these historically appropriate and topographically accurate designs a “curiosity” is to under-estimate their importance.\(^{39}\) The Scott dramatisations demanded a new type of picturisation which integrated setting and action within a specific shared character world, and represented the beginnings of realism on the nineteenth-century stage.\(^{40}\) Scott was locating his tales within identifiable landscapes and settings, underpinning his narratives with a mass of detail about historical context, scenery and his own particular passion, authentic costume. As every theatre, Patent, Minor or travelling, played the Waverley dramas, increasingly bills were peppered with assurances that scenes were “taken on the spot.” Stock scenery, no matter how well painted, was no longer an adequate entry into the world of the play.

\(^{38}\) When the first wave of dramatisations of Scott’s works appeared, it was the Minor/illegitimate venues which had the more consistent success with straightforward versions of the originals, whereas the Patent Houses often tried to ‘improve’ on Scott’s works in ways that audiences disliked. Murray appears to have learned the lesson, but never quite managed to squash the Edinburgh Minors.

\(^{39}\) Muschat’s Cairn appears in Nasmyth’s scenery at a location which is not historically accurate, but is “authentic” within Scott’s world of the novel. After the success of the book and play, the cairn was re-instated in Scott’s fictional location in 1823. It has since been relocated again.

\(^{40}\) Martin Meisel traces the influence of Walter Scott and the Scottish painter, David Wilkie, to a landmark of European Naturalism in Gerhart Hauptmann’s play, The Weavers (1892). Meisel emphasizes in particular Wilkie’s influence on the German School of Domestic Realism and Scott’s influence on the way that history was described in terms of its impact on ordinary folk (Meisel, 164).