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“A’ THAT’S PAST FORGET—FORGIE”: NATIONAL DRAMA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY ON THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY STAGE

Paula Sledzinska

For centuries, theatre has provided a space for a discussion of social, cultural and political affairs. The link between theatre and politics is of a particularly critical kind, as it is often within the dramatic texts, and on the stage, that the turmoil of revolutionary transformations, historical tragedies, and future visions were portrayed or challenged, and the shapes and images of communities, or indeed nations, explored.¹ The urge to engage in drama on a national level is well articulated by Walter Scott himself who argues that “the infancy of nations” is “as prone to this pastime as that of individuals.”² To paraphrase his words using psychoanalytic theory, the inherent inclination of human beings for playful enactment of early fantasies is reflected in the dramatic exploration of possible political realities.³ Heroes of the past and champions of the future were thus brought together in a newly imagined national milieu, offering meaningful insights into the long-established reality of the uneasy communal self.

Scottish National Drama is a genre based primarily on the adaptations of Scott’s *Waverley Novels*. While most nineteenth-century European national theatres aimed to refine the artistic tastes of the society or incite to a struggle for independence, adaptations of Scott’s works became involved in the construction of a new concept of “Scottishness” within the British Empire.⁴ Considering the ambiguities surrounding the question of Scottish

¹ See Karen Hermassi, *Polity and Theatre in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

² Walter Scott, “Essay on the Drama,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (orig. 1819; Edinburgh: Constable, 1824), I: 629; *Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Cadell; London: Longman, 1827), VI: 259.

³ See Patrick Campbell, “Introduction,” in *Psychoanalysis and Performance*, ed. Patrick Campbell and Adrian Kear (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁴ Cf. S. E. Wilmer, “Introduction,” *National Theatres in a Changing Europe*, ed. S.E. Wilmer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1-5.

national identity in post-Culloden Scotland, Barbara Bell's suggestion that the National Drama provided a cultural arena for a celebration of Scottish identity merits further discussion.⁵ What could "Scottish" identity mean if the purportedly common heritage providing the unique character to the celebrated Scottishness "liberated from the thralldom of breeches" was in itself being constructed during that day?⁶ An examination of dramatic texts staged at Theatre Royal Edinburgh makes it possible to claim that the vision offered by the Scottish national repertoire was not as "Celtic" or as fixed as has been believed.⁷

In search of alternative interpretations of the "invention" of Scotland, this paper examines adaptations of Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* and *Waverley*. I am particularly interested in how the conflicted Lowland and Highland traditions became incorporated into the new image of the nation. Illuminating the tensions arising from the distinct regional identities, I analyse the discursive treatment of the Gaelic heartlands probing Berthold Schoene's argument that the incorporation of Highland culture into the pan-national imagery is the most striking symptom of internal colonialism.⁸

By contrast with those European cultures that explicitly defied the intellectual aura of the Age of Reason, Scotland's transition between the Enlightenment and Romanticism seems to have been a much smoother and more fluid process. A reflection of this can be found in the stylistically experimental but also economically and socially conscious works of Scott. Nevertheless, while aesthetic pluralism is certainly enriching, it is also indicative of the intricacies associated with Scotland's construction of the national self. Indeed, it illuminates one of the main tensions within the Scottish national identity, namely the uneasy relationship between the past, the future and the transitional present. Although the Enlightenment is often associated with antiquarian fascination with the past, in Scotland the allure of "the dusty rusty and musty"⁹ did not really signify sentimental escapism

⁵ Barbara Bell, "The National Drama and the Nineteenth-Century," in *The Edinburgh Companion To Scottish Drama*, ed. Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 47-59 (58).

⁶ Scott to his son, May 26, 1821, in H.J.C. Grierson, ed., *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, 12 vols (London: Constable, 1932-1937), 6: 452. (quoted by Trevor-Roper, as in next note, 211).

⁷ See, e.g. Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History* (New Haven CT: Yale University), *passim*.

⁸ See Berthold Schoene-Harwood, "'Emerging As the Others of our Selves'—Scottish Multiculturalism and the Challenge of the Body in Postcolonial Representation," *Scottish Literary Journal*, 25.1 (1998), 54-72.

⁹ This phrase is used by Richard Humphrey in *Scott: Waverley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 25.

or an anxious push towards primitivism with its idealisation of an imagined Golden Age. Quite the contrary: for the Scottish literati, scrutiny of the past led to the formulation of laws and theories contributing to the understanding of mankind in its contemporary state. The past was therefore valued in as much as it had brought the society to the present, which was, in fact, looking very much outward into the future.

This significantly problematises identity politics. While the rational drive towards modernity was well reflected in the writings of such thinkers as Adam Smith, the way in which the concept of progress became interpreted led to the formation of a discursive chasm between the Lowlands and Highlands—the latter epitomising an earlier stage of societal development.¹⁰ The economic destitution of the Highlanders at the beginning of the nineteenth-century triggered a wave of criticism filled with racial and linguistic contempt. The discriminatory theories were powerfully articulated by, for instance, the antiquarian, John Pinkerton, the infamous anatomist involved in the murder scandal of Burke and Hare, Robert Knox, and James Bruce, who in reported for the *Scotman* in 1847 on the destitution in the Highlands and Islands. Describing his encounters with the Gaels, Bruce blatantly argued that:

it is a fact that morally and intellectually they are an inferior race to the Lowland Saxon, and that before they can in a civilised age be put in a condition to provide for themselves and not to be throwing themselves on the charity of the hard-working Lowlander, the race must be improved by a Lowland intermixture, their habits, which did well enough in a former stage of society, must be broken up by the force of Lowland example.¹¹

Such demonstrations of racist disdain were widely disseminated in nineteenth century popular press. The profound peripheralisation of the Highlands, combined with their sentimentalisation and emblematic positioning in the construction of “national” imagery, appears to justify Schoene’s colonial assessment of the identity-building process in Scotland. Still, such an interpretation seems to imply a wholly conscious and

¹⁰ Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. Ronald L. Meek, D. D. Raphael and P. G. Stein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 14; Alexander Brodie, *The Scottish Enlightenment Reader*, Part VII, ‘Social Theory and Politics’, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997), 475-88.

¹¹ James Bruce, “Inquiry into the Distress of the Highlands and Islands: Letter II, 22 Jan 1847,” in *Destitution in the Highlands. Letters on the Present Condition of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, reprinted from *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh, 1847), 16-17. For detailed exploration of attitudes towards Highlanders, see Krisztina Fenyo, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances During the Famine Years, 1845-1855* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000).

purposeful action on the part of the Lowlanders seen as methodically eradicating the Highlanders to subsequently take over their paraphernalia and adapt them for their own political agenda. However, the reality of the national image-forging seems to have been more subtle than that. As revealed by texts such as John Sinclair's *Observations on the Scottish Dialect*, Lowland Scots were themselves deeply anxious about their own cultural and linguistic inadequacies which they saw as impeding their potential for progress within the structures of Empire.¹² It is thus the sense of *peripherality*, perceived within themselves in the context of Britain and, in an *amplified* form, within the Highlanders, that the Lowland Scots appear to have been psychologically struggling with. The ambivalent attitude towards the Highlands, which the Lowland Scots felt subconsciously linked to through the memory of ancient past, and from which they desperately attempted to distance themselves in the project of imperial modernisation, is well articulated by Kenneth McNeil who argues that:

On the one hand, they zealously seek to preserve or to recover that part of themselves they feel is becoming lost forever, and on the other hand, they obsessively seek to reform that same part, which represents for them the vestige of a Scottish savagery.¹³

Seen in that light, the violence of "Improvement" verges on an act of subconscious self-loathing in which the distinctiveness of the Highlands constantly shifts between its discerning and celebratory interpretations.¹⁴ Admittedly, it is hardly arguable that the Highlands did, and still do, offer a distinctive contrast to the metropolitan South—yet this can be portrayed as a problem or as a resource. What Walter Scott did in his 1822 Edinburgh pageant for King George IV—a celebration which culminated in the staging of the National Drama of *Rob Roy*—was thus not to elide internal divisions within the Kingdom of Scotland, but to capture the fluid hybridity of the Scottish self and simply rephrase and reshape the perceptions of Scotland which had been already functioning beyond her borders.¹⁵ The most vivid and, simultaneously, most contentious

¹² See John Sinclair, *Observations on the Scottish Dialect* (London: Strahan; Edinburgh: Creech, 1782), 1-2.

¹³ Kenneth McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire; Writing the Highlands 1760-1860* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2007), 6.

¹⁴ See, e.g., James Loch, *An Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the Marquess of Stafford, in the Counties of Stafford and Salop and on the estate of Sutherland* (London: Longman, 1820), esp. 85-102.

¹⁵ See John Prebble, *The King's Jaunt: George IV in Scotland, August 1822: one and Twenty Daft Days* (London: Collins, 1988); McNeil, as in n. 13, analyzes the two-pronged function of such organizations as the Highland Society of London, established in 1778.

component of Scotland's distinctiveness, which had been long shunned and repressed as an embarrassing, antiquated "Other" thus became extracted and internalised, subverting the stagial anxieties, and indeed introducing one of the most recognisable manifestations of cultural nationalism to have ever emerged in the western world.

The identity-building intricacies of the nineteenth-century Scotland found a vivid reflection in literature, music and, undoubtedly, the National Drama. An examination of Isaac Pocock's iconic *Rob Roy* and John W. Calcraft's *Waverley* reveals the way in which theatre engaged with the socio-cultural complexities of its times. The two texts, as well as the fortunes of their productions (here presented in an extremely abbreviated format), offer a valuable insight into the concepts and ideas which became readily embraced by the public, as well as those which never truly established themselves on the national stage. The rise of the "Walter Scott Drama" in 1817 initiated major developments in the treatment of Scottish identity on the stage.¹⁶ Barbara Bell argues that the adaptations of Scott's novels

brought into Scotland's theatres thousands of her people who had never entered them before. Once the floodgates were open, the Scots, hungry to reassert their shared cultural identity in a public arena, returned again and again to see their national heroes and heroines portrayed in authentic Scottish settings by Scottish actors with Scottish accents.¹⁷

These observations offer a valuable insight into the tremendous impact the National Drama had on Scottish society. They also draw attention to the sheer volume of "Scott-enthusiasm" in the Romantic period. What should not be forgotten, however, is that the sense of shared experience was in the process of discursive construction.¹⁸ This construction did not pass without criticism – voiced even by Scott's son-in-law and biographer, John Gibson Lockhart, who, commenting on the orchestration of King George IV's visit to Edinburgh, referred to it as a universal hallucination.¹⁹ Thus, any claims as to the "authenticity" of Scottish national identity should be taken with a

¹⁶ See Penelope Cole, "The 'Ethno-Symbolic Reconstruction' of Scotland: Joanna Baillie's *Family Legend* in Performance," *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, 1.2 (2008), 95-105.

¹⁷ Barbara Bell, "The Nineteenth Century," in *A History of Scottish Theatre*, ed. Bill Finlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 143.

¹⁸ See Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism; The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); Graeme Morton, *Unionist-Nationalism* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999).

¹⁹ J. G. Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 10 vols (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1837-38), VII: 67-68.

pinch of salt, especially that the professedly authentic play settings abounded in images of “Romantic” Highland glens. Indeed, some of the most famous actors and activists, such as Mr Henry Siddons, were in fact English.²⁰ The present analysis of National Dramas will begin with Pocock’s famous *Rob Roy* and then move onto an investigation of Calcraft’s *Waverley*, which has been given little attention in criticism so far.

It is difficult to know the exact number of *Rob Roy* productions in the nineteenth century, but a conservative estimate settles on at least a thousand.²¹ Pocock’s adaptation was undoubtedly *the* most successful one. It originally premiered at Covent Garden on 12th March 1818 and reached Theatre Royal Edinburgh on 15th February 1819, saving the company from financial disaster.²² The reviews in the local papers were unanimously positive and the *Scotsman*’s critic famously declared that:

He, who is at once a man and a Scotsman must be delighted with *Rob Roy*. Why should we not be proud of our national genius, humour, music, kindness, and fidelity?—*why not be national?* We found ourselves pre-eminently so on Monday evening. Our recollection of the novel of *Rob Roy*, and the almost universal genius of the author ... gave sufficient interest to this musical drama at its commencement; and the manner in which the different parts were cast and supported not only preserved it to the last, but made it grow upon us, so as to become absolutely intoxicating.²³

The impact of *Rob Roy* on the audience was electrifying and, according to the *Annals of the Edinburgh Stage*, fervent throngs who had never entered theatre before continued to pour into the auditorium. The production was visually stunning, not only thanks to the acclaimed scene paintings of the “Glasgow Bridge, the Clachan of Aberfoyle, and the Lake by moonlight,” but also due to the fact that certain performances included hosts of fully armed “Jacobite” warriors, choirs of Highland lassies, real waterfalls and roles performed on horseback.²⁴

²⁰ University of Edinburgh Image Collections:

<http://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/UoEwal~1~1~67246~100912:-Theatre-Royal,-Edinburgh-playbill> (accessed on: 21/09/16).

²¹ H. P. Bolton, “Playing Rob Roy as Robin Hood,” in *Scott in Carnival; Selected Papers from the Fourth International Scott Conference*, ed. John H. Alexander and David Hewitt (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1993), 478-490 (480). Barbara Bell suggested, at the Reworking Walter Scott conference, that there may have been more than two thousand productions.

²² James C. Dibdin, *Annals of the Edinburgh Stage* (Edinburgh: Richard Cameron, 1888), 286.

²³ *The Scotsman* (20 February 1819).

²⁴ *Courant* (18 February 1819).

Ann Rigney has argued that the musicality of the National Drama, combined with the plays' familiar stories and characters, enabled the society to participate in a shared celebration of cultural heritage.²⁵ Such participation does not preclude discursive tensions. If *Rob Roy* brought to Edinburgh performances thousands of people who had not entered the theatre before, we may wonder how familiar these crowds were with the dramatic plot. Recent findings might indicate that the adaptations enjoyed a far more popular position amongst the general public than the original works.²⁶ Thus, arguably, the National Drama was *shaping*, not simply expressing, the notions of what the "national" stories and characters were. How should this heritage be understood in the face of the ambivalent contemporary treatment of the past? An exploration of discourses operating within the play sheds some light on that matter.

The character who attracted most attention amongst audiences of the National Drama was Bailie Nicol Jarvie. The success of this figure would have arguably been less spectacular had it not been for Charles Mackay, "The Real Mackay," whose talent and charisma rendered him inextricably linked with Nicol's dramatic persona. In a letter to Daniel Terry, Scott himself thus expressed his praise for the actor:

I was actually electrified by the truth, spirit, and humour which he threw into the part. It was the living Nicol Jarvie; conceited, pragmatical, cautious, generous, proud of his connection with Rob Roy, frightened for him at the same time, and yet extremely desirous to interfere with him as an adviser.²⁷

Nicol represents the Lowland, Hanoverian values, through his commerce and progress-driven world-view, yet he is *related* to the Highlander Rob and he is not attempting to hide or dispute it. His connection to Rob is fully revealed during his encounter with Helen MacGregor:

Bailie. Yes! I carena wha kens it—I'm a MacGregor!—We're baith MacGregors!

...

Helen. What fellow art thou, that dare claim kindred with our clan, yet neither wear our dress nor speak our language?—Who are you that have the tongue and habit of the hound, yet seek to shelter with the deer?

²⁵Ann Rigney, *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 70. It should also be remembered, however, that the patent system itself discouraged non-musical, entirely serious works altogether and thus the musicality may be seen as influenced by *political* circumstances.

²⁶ For the independent "lives" and success of Scott's adaptations, see Rigney, above; on the widely-available chapbooks, which were often based on the National Dramas rather than Scott's novels, see Barbara Bell, "Nineteenth Century", 157.

²⁷ Scott to Daniel Terry (18 April 1819), in Grierson, as in n. 6 above, V: 362.

Bailie. Why, my mither, Elspeth Macfarlane, was the wife o' my faither Nicol Jarvie;—she was the daughter o' Parlane Macfarlane, and Maggy Macfarlane married Duncan M'Nab, wha stood in the fourth degree—

Helen. And doth the stream of rushing water acknowledge any relationship with the portion that's withdrawn from it for the mean domestic use of those who dwell upon its banks?

Bailie. Maybe no; but when summer's sun has dried up the brook, and left naething but the chucky-stanes, it wad fain hae that portion back again.²⁸

Bailie, thus carefully negotiates his own identity and position between the Highlanders. The distinctiveness of the two regions is well depicted here through the different forms of linguistic expression. Bailie's speech is rendered in Scots and Helen's is stylised as eloquently poetic, drawing on no less than the Gaelic panegyric code.²⁹ Bailie acknowledges his relation to the Highlanders—usually when it is necessary. This could be criticised as morally relative, but it can also be interpreted in less fixed or condemning terms. Indeed, such a position brings to mind the concentric nature of modern identities commented on by T. C. Smout, who emphasises the situational character of self-identification amongst Scots in the British Empire. Understood in such a way, the seemingly opposite loyalties may be operating within the self without being perceived as mutually exclusive.³⁰

Still, it should be noted that the adaptation largely reduces the explorations of socio-political circumstances offered in Scott's novel. Pocock's drama omits considerable fragments of the novel devoted to a potentially subversive analysis of the precarious nature of commercial society.³¹ Undoubtedly simplified in its structure and meaning, the drama thus elides a significant level of complexity in the assessment of both the British modernity and Nicol himself, whose flaws became dissolved in an overpowering sense of good-hearted joviality:

²⁸ Isaac Pocock, *Rob Roy*, in *Waverley Dramas: Kenilworth, Rob Roy, Guy Mannering, Ivanhoe &c.*, (London: George Routledge, 1845), 51-52.

²⁹ On juxtaposition of noble and lowly creatures in the Gaelic Panegyric Code, see Ronald Black, *An Lasair: Anthology of 18th Century Scottish Gaelic Verse* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), 525.

³⁰ T. C. Smout, "Problems of Nationalism, Identity and Improvement in later Eighteenth-Century Scotland," in *Improvement and Enlightenment: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar University of Strathclyde 1987-88*, ed. Tom Devine (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1989), 2.

³¹ On socio-economic tensions within the Union, see, e.g., Andrew Lincoln, "Scott and Empire: The Case of *Rob Roy*," *Studies in the Novel*, 34.1 (2002), 43-59.

In the person of the beloved Bailie, the newly theatre-going member of the expanding urban middle class ... could see himself and his friends, rather thinly disguised as his own recent ancestor, depicted sympathetically and humorously upon the stage.³²

Bailie may be neutrally described as an ancestor of the contemporary readers or audiences, but *through him* the familial self-identification extends to Rob, which is a far more radical idea.

There can be no doubt that the figure of Rob became significantly romanticised in the process of adaptation which shifted towards a melodramatic *national tale* ending with a reconciliatory appeal to “forget-forgive” the atrocities of the Jacobite period.³³ Snodgrass suggests that the taming of Jacobite fears and the communal *forgiving* of Rob’s wrongdoings become evocatively sealed in the drama through Burns’s ‘Auld Lang Syne’ included in the text, and sometimes functioning as its subtitle.³⁴ This could be seen as offering a nostalgic preservation of Rob’s memory within the Lowland “national” consciousness. In such an interpretation the Highland “macho,” Rob, and the ancestry which he is representing, become deprived of contemporaneous potency and turn into a communally preserved “museum-like exhibition” (*ibid.*, 180).

However, in spite of the ultimate failure of the Jacobite cause, the treatment of Rob as nothing but a token of “sentimental remembrance” of bygone past is problematic. He is an extremely dynamic character who capably navigates between the Highland and Lowland political and economic realities, communicates in three different languages, and effectively saves the “progressive” characters from oppression on several occasions throughout the play. This could be explored using elements of psychoanalytical theory, according to which theatre is a liminal space, in which audiences become transported from the conscious limitations of everyday socio-political reality into a territory where fears and desires are unrestrainedly enacted and tamed.³⁵ Performance here is understood as a playful manifestation of fears and fantasies and anxieties; and the stage functions as a transitional space in which neuroses become transformed into theatrical pleasure.³⁶ *Rob Roy* can thus be seen as addressing the

³² H. Philip Bolton, *Scott Dramatized*, 2 vols (London: Mansell Publishing, 1992), vol. 2, 163-64.

³³ Cf. Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, as in n. 18 above, 138-41.

³⁴ Charles Snodgrass, “Staging Scottishness: The Dramatization of Scotland in Scott’s *Rob Roy* and the New Scottish Parliament,” in *Culture, Nation and the New Scottish Parliament*, ed. Caroline McCracken-Flesher (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 175-95 (178).

³⁵ See Margaret Rustin, *Mirror to Nature: Drama, Psychoanalysis and Society* (London: Karnac Books, 2002), 6-9.

³⁶ See Patrick Campbell, as in n. 3 above, 2.

society's deeply rooted *anxieties* concerning the transgressive "Highland" past. In his "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage," Freud suggests that theatre encourages the audiences to identify with rebellious characters in order to explore and resolve the repressed conflicts within themselves.³⁷ "Mediated" through his relation with the ubiquitously loved Bailie Nicol Jarvie and the widely recognised and emotionally-stirring musical repertoire, the brave and uncompromising Rob thus becomes reclaimed into the "national" Scottish *and* British self:

Fran. Long the State has doom'd his fa',
 Rob Roy MacGregor, O!
 Still he spurn'd the hatefu' law,
 Rob Roy MacGregor, O!
 Scots can for their country die,
 Ne'er from Briton's foes they flee –
 A' that's past forget – forgie,
 Rob Roy MacGregor, O!
Chos. – Let your hands &c.

Diana. Scotland's fear and Scotland's pride,
 Rob Roy MacGregor, O!
 Your award must now abide,
 Rob Roy MacGregor, O!
 Long your favours hae been mine,
 Favours I will ne'er resign –
 Welcome then, for auld lang syne,
 Rob Roy MacGregor, O!³⁸

A very different image is offered in John W. Calcraft's *Waverley*. Calcraft's play never gained an acclaimed status on the Edinburgh stage. Even though the national repertoire was frequently published together as "Waverley Dramas," the piece itself tended not to be included in these collections. Published separately and produced only a few times, the play has been coldly disregarded in popular and academic criticism. The phenomenal success of Scott's novel contrasts sharply with the adaptation's failure. A closer examination of Calcraft's *Waverley* helps to explain the unforgiving reviews of its production in Edinburgh Theatre Royal.

According to H. Philip Bolton, one of the very few critics discussing the history of *Waverley* drama at any length, the total number of its productions reached around forty.³⁹ Calcraft's work was published in 1824

³⁷ Sigmund Freud, "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage," translated by Henry Alden Bunker, *Tulane Drama Review*, 4.3 (March 1960), 146-47.

³⁸ Isaac Pocock, *Rob Roy*, 68.

³⁹ H. Philip Bolton, "Waverley (July 1814)," in *Scott Dramatized*, 49; also Dibdin,

and premiered in Edinburgh on 22nd May of the same year. It was intended as an improvement of previous dramatic attempts but, in the words of Whyte, the playwright “only succeeded in making it more tedious.”⁴⁰ The contemporary reviews do not leave any doubts as to the popular reception of the drama:

we did not anticipate success in high degree in the dramatizing of Waverley; but we were not prepared for such a failure as was witnessed on Saturday evening by a very crowded and fashionable audience. ... as one vapid unconnected scene succeeded another, patience herself would have become irritated, had not the exertions of Mrs. Siddons, at the close, cast something of a redeeming effect over the whole.⁴¹

These comments are worth further attention. First, the reviewer does not explain why the dramatic version of *Waverley* was never expected to be a success. Second, the review downplays how important “favourite” actors could be in the success of National plays (something powerfully emphasised in the assessments of *Rob Roy*), even though the role of The Baron of Bradwardine was being played by “The Real Mackay” and Flora Mac-Ivor was by the famous Mrs Siddons. But an examination of meanings conveyed by Calcraft’s *Waverley* offers a further insight into potential discursive reasons for the play’s demise.

Scott’s *Waverley* abounds in images which, depending on the critic, have been perceived as both historically accurate and invented, pragmatic and Romantic, regressively static and progressively fluid.⁴² Although the Unionist reading of *Waverley* remains dominant, the novel’s subversive undertones, which have gained strength in recent criticism, were noticed by some nineteenth-century observers, who straightforwardly categorised

Annals, 308.

⁴⁰ Henry Adelbert White, *Sir Walter Scott’s Novels on the Stage: a Dissertation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1927), 171.

⁴¹ *Scotsman* (24 May 1824).

⁴² For a selection of different approaches, see [Francis Jeffrey], in *Edinburgh Review*, 24 (November 1814), 208-243; unsigned article, in *Critical Review*, 5th ser., 1 (March 1815), 288-297; Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 117; David Daiches, “Scott’s Achievement as a Novelist,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 6 (1951), 81-95, 153-173; Alison Lumsden, “‘Beyond the Dusky Barrier’: Perceptions of the Highlands in the *Waverley* Novels,” in *Miorun Mòr nan Gall, ‘The Great Ill-Will of the Lowlander’? Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands, Medieval and Modern*, ed. Dauvit Broun and Martin MacGregor (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 2007); and Julian Meldon D’Arcy, *Subversive Scott: The Waverley Novels and Scottish Nationalism* (Reykjavik: Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages, 2005).

Edward Waverley as a national traitor.⁴³ Such a controversy over the work's ultimate meaning opens a range of possibilities for a dramatic interpretation, which, in the case of John W. Calcraft, seems to have taken the wrong direction. First and foremost, his *Waverley* misses a discursively plausible role-model. Edward, with his indecisiveness and a lack of passionate commitment to *any* principle is certainly not an appropriate candidate for this function. Rose and Flora touch upon his inadequacy in their conversation, which is virtually copied from the fifty-second chapter of the novel:

Rose. ... What is it to him, for example, whether the chief of the Macphersons, who has brought only fifty men, should be a colonel or a captain? Or how could he interfere in the altercation between your brother and young Corrinaschian whether the post of honour is due to the oldest or the youngest cadet of the clan??

Flora. My dear Rose, if he were a hero, he would interest himself in these matters, not as important in themselves, but to mediate between the ardent spirits who make them the subject of discord. You saw when Corrinaschian raised his voice in anger, and lid his hand upon his sword, Waverley lifted his head as if he had awakened from a dream, and asked, with great composure, what was the matter?⁴⁴

This fragment is meaningful, not only because it shows Edward Waverley seeming dull and disinterested in the internal politics of the North, but also because it subtly reveals Waverley's major flaw. Although he is a Hanoverian who (originally) falls in love with Flora and, by extension, with the Jacobite cause, Edward is not an able and convincing agent of a pan-Scottish or pan-British integration. An emotional and political drifter without much charisma or appeal, he fails to impress the readers and audiences who embraced such characters as the imperfect yet multi-dimensional Bailie Nicol Jarvie. Indeed, none of the play's characters represent a welcome, politically and culturally mediatory, stance.

Although Scott's *Waverley* does not vividly propose an individual character-model for "pan-national" reconciliation, Edward's union with Rose tends to be seen as re-enacting the formulaic pattern of a Romantic national tale.⁴⁵ In such a reading, the national question becomes transposed onto the level of domestic symbolism, in which the inevitably progressive, masculine Anglo-Saxon hero weds a poetically feminine, Celtic heroine.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Critical Review*, as in previous note, 288.

⁴⁴ John W. Calcraft *Waverley; a Drama in Five Acts* (Edinburgh: John Anderson, 1824), 61.

⁴⁵ See Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, as in n. 18, and Daiches, as in n. 42, *passim*.

⁴⁶ See Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination, Patterns in Historical Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork: Cork University Press,

This paradigm has recently been destabilised in critical re-assessments which suggest that Scott implicitly questions it through the lukewarm “happy” ending of the novel.⁴⁷ Still, whether we accept the resolution as it appears, or elucidate its politically subversive undercurrents, marriage certainly provides a sense of closure to the plot. The “national” adaptation of the novel, on the other hand, removes it completely, ending the piece with the emotionally excruciating scene of Fergus M’Ivor’s execution. Such a transformation, affecting the teleological impetus of the original story (likely familiar to Edinburgh’s most “fashionable audiences”), carries problematic implications for the message conveyed in Calcraft’s work. The conclusion of the drama shifts from a symbolic praise of political reason to a profoundly melodramatic display of injustice and human tragedy. Shortly before “fainting in strong convulsions in Fergus’s arms,” Flora exchanges last words with her beloved brother:

Flora. Fergus! Fergus! They would have kept me from you—they would have deprived poor Flora of the consolation of a last embrace.

Fer. Strengthen me, heaven, that I may endure this trial with the firmness of a man. My dearest Flora! It was I who would have deceived you;—but in kindness. I wished to spare us both the bitter agony of parting.

Flora. Then it is no dream, but a terrible reality! My mind has wandered, and scarcely would admit conviction of the horrors that surround me. Those men—the muffled drums—the awful preparations! I see—I feel them all! (Calcraft, 85).

The Drama ends amidst the horror of death and despair. Presented in such a way *Waverley* strikes the reader as an explicitly Jacobite tragedy—a proposition which could not have succeeded on the nineteenth-century national stage. The difference between Calcraft’s effort and the readily embraced figure of Pocock’s Rob Roy seems to lie in the emphasis put on the passionate devotion to the Jacobite Cause which, in the case of Fergus and Flora, is the sole determinant of their characterisation. In *Psychoanalysis and Performance*, Patrick Campbell suggests that, to induce empathy for the otherwise feared character, the dramatist must ingeniously “lower the spectators’” resistance to the repressed material by “diverting” them and thus enabling them to “enter into the neurosis of the stage figure.”⁴⁸ Such a “diversion” happens in *Rob Roy*, where the Jacobite outlaw becomes “mediated” to the audience through his relation to Jarvie. No such process occurs in *Waverley*, and it is tempting to see it as a

1996), 34-38.

⁴⁷ See D’Arcy, *Subversive Scott*, as in n. 42 above, 55-74.

⁴⁸ Patrick Campbell, ‘Introduction’, 2.

powerful factor contributing to the drama's failure to capture the hearts and imagination of audiences of the Edinburgh stage.

The National Drama offers a theatrical reflection of the dynamic process of identity building in the nineteenth-century Scotland. The genre provides not just a celebration of national models and narratives, but an active discussion in which these models are being shaped. Contrary to the criticisms of Scottish identity building as regressive and "fraudulently Highland," an investigation of the dramatic adaptations of Scott's novels shows that identities rehearsed on the national stage were far from one-dimensional remnants of bygone past. Quite the contrary: they were multiple, dynamic, and undergoing continuous negotiation.

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