

## The Scottish theatrical landscape leading into the emergence of the National Drama

Barbara Bell

The theatre industry at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century in Scotland was inherently weak and consequently fragmented, hemmed about with conventions and regulations that made the job of the manager a difficult one. Whilst increasing numbers of towns and cities possessed purpose-built theatres or spaces capable of being 'fitted up' for short-term engagements, nowhere saw theatre all the year round and even in the largest cities, the theatres were open for perhaps three or four nights per week. John Jackson managed the Patent houses in Glasgow and Edinburgh at various times during the period and moved his company between the two locations, replicating the repertoire. In 1805 he advised readers of *The Caledonian Mercury* that the Theatre Royal in Glasgow would open on 24 April '[t]he characters precisely the same as performed in Edinburgh and expressed in the bills of the day'. In smaller towns and villages the travelling companies often followed the agricultural or civic calendars, arriving for the Assizes, Race Weeks or Agricultural Shows at the same time each year.

A major obstacle was the division of theatres into those holding an official Patent, the Theatres Royal, permitted to perform the full range of pieces, and the Minor or illegitimate theatres whose repertoire excluded 'serious' and/or prose drama. This created an artificial gulf between commercial rivals which often resulted in costly squabbles in the courts about supposed infringements of the Patent, or direct competition between establishments in which the same materials were treated differently according to the regulations under which each theatre worked.<sup>1</sup> An example of this occurred in 1800 when the Edinburgh Theatre Royal and the Royal Circus simultaneously seized on the popular tales of Peru, first dramatised by Kotzebue as *The Spaniards in Peru* (1797), subsequently altered by Sheridan as *Pizarro* (1799) and in which the villainous character of Pizarro was seen as being a thinly veiled depiction of Napoleon. (Burwick: 33-34 in eds. Cass and Peer 2008: 27-

40) Whereas the Theatre Royal could simply advertise Sheridan's 'Tragedy', the Royal Circus gave more explanation, which both justified its handling of 'CORAZ; Or, The Virgin of the Sun' (1799) by emphasising the lack of prose dialogue, and also trumpeted the currency of its repertoire.

[...] as performed in London upwards of Sixty Nights, an entire New Splendid Spectacle (in Two Parts) Interspersed with Recitative, Song And Action ..... Principally taken from Marmontel's INCAS OF PERU and the German Drama of the Virgin of the Sun of KOTZEBUE, being the first part of his Popular play of the Death of Rolla; recently performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, with alterations, by R.B. Sheridan Esq., under the Title of "PIZARRO".

(*Caledonian Mercury* 1 March 1800)

These two theatres were, at least, reaping the benefits of an expensive production which then enjoyed a run of more than one night's performance, whereas the usual structure of the repertoire was for two or three pieces; a substantial main piece followed by something lighter (interlude/comedy/farce/pantomime) interspersed with music and dancing, all of which changed nightly.

There was a certain tyranny to the shape of the early nineteenth-century repertoire which required the manager and company be able to present, quickly and back-to-back, dozens of pieces in a season. This encouraged the repetition of similar types of pieces as variations on a theme to fit the talents of a company, each of whom had a 'line of business' they had been engaged for. The critics regularly berated managers for miscasting from the fixed set of performers available to them and it was difficult to obtain alternative actors at short notice, when travel within Britain was slow and subject to the vagaries of the weather. In Scotland, with no particular attachment to much of the imported repertoire for the majority of the populace, managers were even more forced to rely for a draw on the latest from Drury Lane or a guest artist, carrying with them a reputation made outside Scotland, who would appear for a limited time and perform their most celebrated characters for that small play-going audience. In 1790 Burns complained about the lack of original Scottish work on Scottish stages in his theatre Prologues. (1790)

What needs this din about the town o' Lon'on,  
How this new play an' that new sang is comin'?

Why is outlandish stuff sae meikle courted?  
Does nonsense mend, like brandy, when imported?

Is there nae poet burning keen for fame,  
Will try to gie us sangs and plays at hame?  
([www.robertburns.org](http://www.robertburns.org) online)

Scotland offered additional difficulties to the managers in that the overwhelming majority of the performers were not Scots, so that managers were forced to bring in local amateurs to fill out Scottish speaking parts as required. In London, an approximation of a Scottish accent might suffice, a caricature might be welcome, but it was evident that Scottish audiences expected better in the case of those roles which could be said to warrant some authenticity by virtue of having been written by Scots. Jackson, commenting on the stage history of Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*, noted that

Scarce a season has since passed without a repetition of the opera: but the assistance of the towns-people has constantly been called in for some character or other, as it is almost an impossibility for a company of comedians, selected from England, to fill up the parts with propriety, particularly before a Scotch audience. (1793: 332)

The case of Home's tragedy, *Douglas*, was slightly different in that the roles of Lady Randolph and her son, the foundling shepherd boy Young Norval, had been taken up by the London stage almost from their first presentation as major tragic roles which could stand independent of their Scottish setting. Jackson's *History of the Scottish Stage* reveals that *Douglas* had been one of the first theatrical performances he had seen on his arrival in the capital. It was the first night of its London performance and Jackson comments that, aside from the fine acting of Mr. Barry as Young Norval, '[T]he play was superbly and fancifully dressed, but without the least badge of national distinction.' (1793: 332) The result of this was that in Scotland, Young Norval and Lady Randolph were roles which were assigned to actors regardless of their nationality, whether they were stars bringing their celebrated interpretations of the characters, as was the case with Mrs. Siddons, or new aspirants to the stage trying out an entry-level tragic role before a paying audience.

There was another style of work that was very popular, originating furth of Scotland, featuring 'Scotch' characters and best described as Covent Garden Caledonian, in which clichéd caricatures of faithful servants, or pawky peasantry with impenetrable accents, were included for comic effect. It should not be thought that the critics were altogether indifferent to this trend, *The Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808-1826* complained that a new farce at Drury Lane contained 'a Jew, an Irish servant, and a Scotch lady, characters remarkable only for their total superfluity'. (Cherry and Lawler, 1808: 268) Fewer of these pieces travelled north; however, when they did it was noticeable that in Scotland it was usually the professional performers who took on these 'Scotch' roles, in which caricatured Scots speech was inbuilt and which then assumed another level of parody.

One oddity, in the sense that it may have originated in Scotland and travelled South, was *Hooly and Fairly; or, the Highland Laddie* (1787). It first appeared at Sadler's Wells, advertised as 'a new Musical Piece, consisting of Singing and Dancing [... t]he Words of the Airs Selected from the celebrated Allan Ramsay' (*Public Advertiser* 1787) and enjoyed a two month run 28 May – 28 July 1787.<sup>2</sup> After its first appearance at Covent Garden on a Benefit night for the Scots actor, Mr. Johnston, with Mr. Graham from the Edinburgh theatre making his first appearance as the Old Woman, *The European Magazine and London Review* declared that '[T]his piece comes from Scotland; for the meridian of which country it is better adapted than for England'. (May 1798: 329-330) It is listed in Nicoll Vol.III as first appearing in 1789, which may be a typographical error, and 'Author Unknown' but was described by *The History of the Theatres of London: containing an Annual Register* (1798) as a 'Scotch Interlude, consisting of songs and dancing'. *The Monthly Mirror* of 1798 reported that the Greenock company of comedians were having a deal of success at Inverary, where the Duke of Argyle had fitted up a theatre for them. 'Hooly and Fairly produced more laughter, and was better represented, than I remember to have seen it on the London boards'( 1798: 183).<sup>3</sup>

At first sight, it would seem that early nineteenth-century Scotland was being offered the same repertoire, a mix of eighteenth-century 'romantic' tragedies and comedies of manners, a smattering of Shakespeare, some exotic spectacles, the odd new Gothic horror and an endless supply of lightweight farces, as would be

played in any other provincial theatre in Britain. Alongside these were played the limited, approved, Scottish repertoire in which Home's *Douglas* and Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* sat alongside *Macbeth*, a Mary Stuart play, either Schiller's or the 1789 John St. John piece, and a clutch of Scotch 'ballets of action', such as *Jockey and Jenny; or Love in the Highlands*. When theatres were playing up to ten different pieces in a week, there might only be the odd Scots song or favourite *pas seul* between the pieces that spoke directly to the mass of the audience; there was not the range of characters which would see Scots as other than temporary guests, called on for local colour, on their own stages.

The result of the constricted repertoire was that when the Scottish National Drama emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century, prompted by the success of stage adaptations of the works of Sir Walter Scott, a part of its success resulted from its filling a perceived gap in what was offered to Scottish audiences. There had plainly been a dearth of Scottish material on Scottish stages over many years; what was there was limited and gave a view of Scotland, its history and people which was above all acceptable to the British government.

Advertisements in *The Caledonian Mercury* and *Aberdeen Journal* for the Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen theatres during the period January 1800 to January 1801 listed over 50 pieces, of which no more than a handful had Scottish connections. The Edinburgh Theatre Royal performed *Macbeth* and O'Keefe's *The Highland Reel* and there were a couple of instances of Scottish music listed. In addition on 9 February 1800 the *Royal Circus*, whose energetic efforts were causing Stephen Kemble, then manager of the Edinburgh Theatre Royal, so much concern, brought forward 'An Entire New Splendid Scotch Spectacle' of *Hallowe'en; or, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbaine* (1799).

**Royal Circus.**

75

This present **MONDAY**, February 9, 1800  
 An entire New Naval Devertisement, of Singing and Dancing,  
 CALLED  
**THE SAILOR'S FESTIVAL.**  
 Consisting of *Glees, Songs, Dances, &c.*  
**A HORNPIPE**—by Miss ADAMS.  
**PAS SEUL**—Miss CABANEL.  
**NAVAL PAS DE TROIS**—Mr MONTGOMERY—Miss CA-  
 BANEL—and Mrs HELME.  
 To conclude with a Musical Medley, expressive of  
**UNANIMITY**  
 And Success to  
**LORD DUNCAN AND THE BRITISH FLEET.**  
**NEW EQUESTRIAN EXERCISES**  
 Clown to the Horsemanship—Mr PORTER.  
 After which, (first time) interspersed with new Songs, Duets,  
 Glees, Combats, Reels, Strathspeys, &c.  
 An Entire New Splendid Scotch Spectacle, called  
**HALLOWE'EN,**  
 Or, the **CASTLES** of **ATHLIN** and **DUNBAIN**,  
 Previous to which, a Pantomimic Selection, called  
**HARLEQUIN'S RENOVATION.**  
 In which will be introduced, the celebrated  
**DYING AND SKELETON SCENES.**  
 And a Comic Duette by Master **BLACKMORE** and  
 Miss **S. ADAMS.**

The Public is respectfully informed, the Stage, &c. will  
 acquire superior Brilliancy, this and every future evening, from  
 an extensive addition of **PATENT LAMPS** just arrived from  
 London, with Oil of the best quality.

Tickets to be had of Mr **WALKER**, Pool's Hotel, and of  
 Mrs **ADAMS** at the Box-office—of whom places for the boxes  
 may be taken.

Illustration 1: Caledonian Mercury, 9  
 February 1800 Image © THE BRITISH  
 LIBRARY BOARD. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

This piece by J.C. Cross, the originator of *Cora; or, The Virgin of the Sun*, took its inspiration firstly from Burns' poem of the same name and in the main from Mrs. Ratcliffe's 'Highland Story' of *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbaine* (1789). Although a piece without spoken dialogue, it was also characteristic of the impetus behind the emergence of the Scottish National Drama. This was not due to any sustained innovation on the part of the Patent theatres despite the fact that the Edinburgh Theatre Royal subsequently conducted such a successful campaign to portray itself as the original home of the National Drama that Murray's claim is being repeated to this day. (Moody 2007: 21-23; 34) <sup>4</sup> By repeating Murray's exclusive claim to the National Drama, contemporary scholars continue to fix the National Drama to the Patent system, imposed from London, and diminish the scope of its origins, whereas the true strength of the Scottish National Drama was that it emerged from the wider theatrical culture in Scotland, played by family troupes in Lowland barns and on the northern professional stages before ever the Edinburgh Theatre Royal acknowledged the groundswell of enthusiasm for this new national repertoire. However, in considering the impact of the repertoire in the years before the National Drama came about, the most significant thing about the Royal Circus advertisement was perhaps the music which preceded *Hallowe'en* on the bill, namely

a 'Musical Medley, expressive of UNANIMITY And Success to Lord Duncan and the British fleet'.

Whilst the Theatres Royal, even though they held Patents from the Crown, were not overtly organs of the British state their repertoire, shared by theatres large and small, operated as propaganda for the British and wider Imperial projects, both in terms of what was said onstage and also who it was aimed at. One of the major changes brought about by the emergence of the National Drama was the way in which it drew a new, wider, audience to Scottish theatres to see work that spoke more directly to them. Previously, the Scottish Patent houses had been the province of a small number of socially confident groups, notably the nobility, professions such as the law and above all, the military. Whilst the large scale occupation of parts of Scotland by Government troops in the aftermath of the '45 Jacobite Rebellion was in the past, the impact of Government regulations to ensure that the Highlands should not rise again, which had largely dismantled the old clan structures and appropriated the symbols (tartans, weaponry, pipers and dancers) to the new Highland regiments so important to the British government, alongside the current readiness of both regular troops and militias in expectation of trouble from France, meant that a good deal of Scotland, and certainly the major cities, were garrisoned towns. The officers, posted far from home and family and discouraged by regulation from marrying, occupied their leisure time in hunting, racing and such cultural pursuits as appealed to them, particularly the theatre where it was available.

The first night of *Cora* at the Royal Circus had been advertised as 'By Desire of the Right Honourable LORD DUNDAS/And the Officers of the North York Militia' and the orchestra for that evening had been supplemented by a military band. In fact, military bands were regular participants on nights with military patronage and the repertoire 1800-1815 contained a wide variety of pieces with military connections from three by O'Keefe (*The Poor Soldier* 1793, *The Rival Soldiers* 1797, *The Highland Reel* 1788) to Andrew Cherry's comedy *The Soldier's Daughter* (1804).

By 1805 John Jackson had regained control of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Theatres and *The Caledonian Mercury* advertised 114 pieces of which, yet again, a bare handful have Scottish connections.

Plays, etc., taken from the pages of the *Caledonian Mercury*, *Aberdeen Journal* for the calendar year January 1805 to January 1806: venues include Edinburgh Theatre Royal; Glasgow Theatre Royal; Royal Circus Edinburgh; Aberdeen Theatre; Theatre, Trades Hall, Banff.

George Barnwell; Poor Gentleman; No Song, no Supper; **A scene from the Gentle Shepherd (2)Ed.Th.R.**; The Mountaineers; Fortune's Frolic; Folly as it Flies; Catherine & Petruchio; Jane Shore; The Tale of Mystery; Devil in a Bottle – panto; The Heir at Law; Love Laughs at Locksmiths; Othello; The Will for the Deed; The Blind Bargain; The Turnpike Gate; Romeo and Juliet; The Purse, or, the Benevolent Tar; The Suspicious Husband; Barnaby Brittle or A Wife at her Wits End; Mirth and Magic – panto; Speed the Plough; **New Scotch Divertisement – Olympic Circus**; Who's the Dupe; The Way to get Married; Modern Antiquities or, the Merry Mourners; The Way to get Married; **Macbeth (2) Ed.Th.R.**; The Lyar; The Wheel of Fortune; Harlequin's Restoration or Animated Statues; Raising the Wind; Everyone has his Fault; Pizarro; The Wrangling Lovers or Like Master Like Man; The West Indian; Old Age Metamorphosed – new pastoral ballet; The Devil in a Bottle; Lovers Vows; The School of Reform; or, How to Rule a Husband; **Mary, Queen of Scots, Ed.Th.R.**; **Oscar and Malvina – Olympic Circus (6)** - panto; He Would be a Soldier; The Midnight Hour; The Tumbler's Wedding – ballet; The Egyptian Pyramids – divertissement; The Apprentice; **Douglas – Ed.Th.R.**; High Life below Stairs; The Jolly Tars; or Jack's Return – comic dance; Laugh When you Can; The Castle Spectre; Love and Festivity – pastoral ballet; Tailor's Journey to Brentford; The Hermit of the Cave; or, the Benevolent Witch; Thirty Thousand; or, Who's the Richest; The Pigmy World or Ombres Chinoises – serio comic capriccio; The Village Lawyer; Much Ado About Nothing; The Honey Moon; Agreeable Surprise; The Stranger; The Wrangling Lovers; Dermot and Kathleen – dance; The Weird Sisters – panto; Raising the Wind; Hamlet; The Lying Valet; As You Like It; Lock and Key; All the World is a Stage; Wives as they Were and Maids as They Are; Fortune's Frolic; The Soldier's Daughter; The Sultan or, A Peep into the Seraglio; Everyone has His Fault; King Lear & his Three Daughters; The Rivals; **The Highland Laddie, Ed.Th.R.** – song; Sylvester Daggerwood; The Duce is in Him; To Marry or not to Marry; The Follies of a Day; The Chapter of Accidents; Jacob Gawkey's Rambles to Bath; The Rival Soldiers; **Overture – The Highland Reel/Burns Songs – Corri's Rooms**; The Deaf Lover; Oronooko; The Miser; The Deserter of Naples; The Distrest [sic] Mother; Animal Magnetism; The Gamester; Venice Preserv'd; The Belles Stratagem; The Irishman in London; The Wags of Windsor; The Road to Ruin; The Citizen; **The Wonder; A woman keeps a secret - Banff Trade Hall**; Henry of Transamere; **Highland Society of London Piping Competition – Ed.Th.R.**; Barbarossa; Don Juan; or, the Libertine Destroyed; British Bravery; or, The Tars Triumphant – historical panto; The Black Forest; or, the

Natural Child – panto; Isabella of Arrogan [sic] or, Monkish Cruelty; Harlequin Mariner; or, the Witch of the Oaks; La Perouse; or, the Desolate Island; The Spoiled Child; The Quaker; The School for Friends; The Delinquent; The Irish Reapers.

The bold pieces/events with Scottish connections demonstrate the tiny number of evenings when Scottish characters actually spoke and therefore the importance of music in maintaining one accessible strand of Scottish culture, through favourite songs, 'national' overtures and events such as Mr. Napier's Military Concert at Corri's Rooms and the Highland Society of London Piping competition, held in the Theatre Royal, at which '[b]etween the Acts Some Highlander's [-] exhibit Cudgel/Broadsword Exercises' and also 'different kinds of Highland Dancing'. A report on the day noted that the Earl of Moira thoroughly approved 'the encouragement given for the preservation of our ancient, warlike, and national music and manners' (1 August 1805).

The list also makes clear the limited access to the stage for Scottish performers, who often took on national roles for debuts. The performance of *Macbeth* on 2 February 1805 advertises the role of Lady Macbeth as '(for that night only) by a lady of this city' whilst *Douglas* on 25 February features 'the part of Douglas by a Young Gentleman his first appearance on any stage'. The 'Young Gentleman' may have been a local amateur, since children from theatrical families were usually named on their debuts. Finally, the 'tragedy' of *Mary Queen of Scots* on 16 February 1805 was possibly a performance of the 1789 play by the Hon. John St. John; performances of Schiller's play regularly highlighted the actress playing Queen Elizabeth.

The six performances of *Oscar & Malvina* at the Royal Circus, now returned to Edinburgh, demonstrated the popularity of this ballet pantomime which originated at Covent Garden in 1791 and was the most widely seen and long-lasting adaptation from Ossian on Scottish stages. In the 1760s George Anne Bellamy had commissioned an Ossianic afterpiece from an Edinburgh 'gentleman' and played 'Commela' [sic] there and in Glasgow to great applause, declaring that 'This little piece alone, tacked to any indifferent comedy, would fill the house'; (Bellamy 1785: 182-189) however, it had not survived in the repertoire and *The Caledonian Mercury*

advised readers on 16 February that 'Great preparations, we understand, have been making all this week [...] for the much admired Scottish Pantomime of *Oscar & Malvina* which is to be produced on Monday next'. On 25 February the Royal Circus were advertising that 'From the great numbers disappointed for want of room the whole of the last week [...] to see the favourite Scots heroic pantomime [...] it will be repeated'.

The 'Theatrical Journal' section of the 1791 *European Magazine & London Review* gave an account of the *Oscar & Malvina* Covent Garden première which was enthusiastic about the performances, music, scenery and overall arrangement of the piece by Mr. Byrne. The description of 'The Fable' included mention of several scenes which offered spectacular action, notably the hero Oscar's leap from a tower where he has been imprisoned into the arms of his men waiting below, the stealthy approach of the raiding party on the villain Carrol's camp, hiding flaming torches beneath their clothing and a final combat on the high bridge to the camp. There is also a description of an earlier bucolic scene in which the hero and heroine, 'unconscious of Carrol's treachery, indulge themselves in [...] the rustic sports of their dependants, who [...] present them with a trial of strength and skill (after the manner of Highland peasantry)'. (1791: 309)<sup>5</sup>

In trying to assess the overall state of Scottish theatre during the period, it must be recognised that there is an under-explored hinterland of theatrical activity, writers of one or two pieces and companies that operated throughout the country in smaller venues. Perhaps there was more 'national' material used by these companies than by the Patent Houses, where the privileged groups who patronised the Theatres Royal might be thought to have more unionist sympathies. The 1805 advertisement for the Theatre, Banff, in *The Aberdeen Journal* (4 September), is for a small company 'The Cynosure; or, North Scots Company of Comedians, Smith, Bennett & Co.' who are pleased to let the populace of Banff know that they have refitted the Trades Hall with new scenery, dresses, etc., and will open shortly for a brief season. The company also present their compliments to previous patrons in Fochabers, Elgin, Forres, Nairn, Dingwall and Tain 'with a grateful sense of past favours'; however, far from offering an alternative to the type of piece seen in the Theatres Royal, they undertake to play 'the most fashionable and favourite pieces

that have been performed [...] on the London stages' beginning with performances of Susan Centlivre's *The Wonder; A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714) and a farce of metropolitan life in Foote's *The Liar* (1762).

With the advent of the National Drama it became an accepted strategy for Scottish managers to open a new theatre or season with a national piece as a demonstration of competence and a gesture to the locality. *The Wonder* does contain Scottish characters; however, they are products of the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Centlivre had set out her Whig sympathies by dedicating the play to the Duke of Cambridge, later George II. In 1805, the piece plays both as a stalwart of the legitimate repertoire and also a work solidly in favour of the Union and of Scotland's important role as a provider of loyal officers and reliable troops. *The Wonder* presents a Highland officer as a lover, or at least a philanderer tamed by love. His loyalty is firmly to the Government party and almost his first comment is to applaud the Government who 'give us good Protestants leave to hope for Christian burial' and have called him homeward. His name proclaims his allegiance, and Colonel Britton<sup>6</sup> has with him his faithful Highland servant, Gibby.

Fred: ...what have we here?

Col: My Footman, this is our Country Dress you must know, which, for the Honour of *Scotland*, I make all my Servants wear.

(I,i)

He later introduces himself to his startled new father-in-law as '[A]n honest *North Briton* by Birth, and a Colonel by Commission, my Lord' (V,iii). The revised text of 1776 softened some of the characters' more bawdy language and pointedly mercenary attitudes to marriage. It is unclear at this distance whether Smith, Bennett & Co., chose to use the 'modern' version; however whilst his views on pimping for his master as a suitable route to preferment were toned down in the later text, in both versions Gibby speaks an almost impenetrable phonetic approximation of dialect, which a recent modern edition (Centlivre in ed. O'Brien, 2004) helpfully translates in the footnotes.

It was clear that outwith Scotland, Gibby was a favourite character, seen by *The Biographia Dramatica* (1812) as 'justly drawn, and very well finished' (ed Jones

1812: 421). Within Scotland, Professor Ragussis noted that Walter Scott complained of Cumberland's *The Fashionable Lover* (1772) that his lone Scots character, the honest servant, Colin Macleod, has little 'to distinguish it from the Gibbies and Sawnies which had hitherto possession of the stage, as the popular representations of the Scottish nation'. Cumberland himself admitted that he had 'no other guide for the dialect of my Macleod than what the Scotch characters of the stage supplied me' (2010: 141). However, Ragussis chooses to begin the quotation after Scott's comment, perhaps more significant to a consideration of the Scots on Scottish stages, that what Colin Macleod does demonstrate that is new, is 'tameness.'

The complexity of the Scottish theatrical picture at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the challenge it presents to the scholar are amply demonstrated by the work of Archibald Maclaren, whose bilingual play in Gaelic and English, *The Highland Drover*, is touched on by Ian Brown elsewhere in this issue. Maclaren wrote, according a *Memoir* of his life, (Anon 1835) over a hundred pieces many of which have or, in the case of those which were never published, appear to have a Scottish setting and/or characters. His subjects were varied, from an Ossianic history piece (*Kenneth, King of Scots; or, the Female Archers* 1807, a revised version of *The Chance of War; or, The Villain Reclaimed* 1801) to the visit of King George IV to Edinburgh (*The Royal Visit; or, All Alive in Auld Reekie* Interlude 1822) and if one takes at face value the descriptions which preface the printed editions listing where they had played, Maclaren challenges Joanna Baillie's claim to be the most regularly and widely performed contemporary playwright in Scotland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Tracking his career and performance of his pieces throughout Scotland would certainly enhance our knowledge and understanding but since he was working in the smaller, touring, companies who rarely advertised in the print media and whose bills hardly survive, it would be a considerable challenge. It is therefore a real fillip that Jan Macdonald should have located the details of a Benefit night, given for Maclaren, at the Theatre Royal, Dumfries, on 26 December 1792. (Macdonald in Kennedy 2011) He selected two of his own works, *The American Slaves or Love and Liberty: a Comic Opera* (1792) and *The Siege of Perth, or Sir William Wallace, the Scots Champion* (1792) for the evening, yet if one is thinking in terms of his representing an emerging, more independent, theatre for Scotland then Maclaren's status as an ex-soldier, enlisting

on two occasions in the British Army and writing a variety of pieces celebrating the exploits of British forces against the French, places some of his work in a similar vein to that seen in the Theatres Royal. Maclaren was mixing a conventional support for the British state with more distinctively national and thematically challenging material, even if his later 'alterations and additions' to *The Highland Drover* (1805; Bell in ed Findlay 1998: 137-139) for its London debut demonstrate that he was capable of utilising all the metropolitan stereotypes of Scots, if he thought it would benefit his cause.

From a limited exploration of the theatrical hinterland it becomes clear that there was a web of connections between playwrights, performers, managers and patrons which would merit closer inspection. Whilst Archibald Maclaren was a theatre professional, despite his sometime recourse to a military career, Andrew Shirrefs was from an entrepreneurial family who had property in Aberdeen and a plantation in Jamaica. Crippled in childhood, Shirrefs worked primarily as a bookseller and occasional publisher in Aberdeen and Edinburgh. He also wrote poetry, a few stage prologues and epilogues and one complete play, 'in imitation' of *The Gentle Shepherd*, titled *Jamie and Bess*. The piece could be thought derivative in many respects, but it is written in a rich Doric verse. *Jamie and Bess* was performed, according to the 1787 edition, in Aberdeen, Elgin and Inverness, and once in Edinburgh (1796) alongside an interlude, *The Sons of Britannia*, never published, for the author's benefit. The plot of *Jamie and Bess* is a familiar confection of lost heirs, picturesque pastoral poverty, gentry in disguise and the eventual restoration of the young lovers to their rightful stations with the added bonus of a now wealthy father's return '[a]ttended by black servants, in a coach' (V.i, 1787: 178). The Prologue and Epilogue were written by the manager, Mr. Sutherland, whose subsequent engagement in Dumfries drew Burns' enthusiastic support for his plans for a new theatre and it was Burns who recalled in his *Journal* (10 September 1787) having met Shirrefs, calling him 'a little decrepid [sic] body with some abilities.' Shirrefs' crippled state and relationship with his crutches are themes running through many of his poems and are at the heart of what is perhaps his most speaking theatre piece, a 'poetical dialogue' between the author and a theatre manager over a glass in the Greenroom. (Shirrefs 1790) The manager tries to

persuade Shirrefs to speak the prologue himself, but 'Cripple [sic] Andy' is not minded to agree to his suggestion.

Suppose I now would grant your strange request,  
And, arm'd with these, I'm in due station plac'd ;  
Up goes the curtain — I in front appear,  
Transfix'd, like statue, moulded with the chair.  
One glance obtain'd, the Ladies scarce can sit,  
While bursts of laughter echo thro' the Pit.  
And then the Beaux (for Beaux are men of sense)  
Can't fail to shew their wit at my expence.  
(228-229)

He then imagines losing his temper with their teasing and losing his crutches, amidst a shower of walnut shells, trapping him onstage.

Maclaren and Shirrefs, two playwrights utilizing Scotland's rich languages, may differ in terms of their ambition and level of output, but their theatrical careers formed pieces of the same fragmented picture, within which there was no central idea of Scotland, its people and history as being a fit subject for the stage, to bring the whole into focus.

A piece advertised nine times in *The Caledonian Mercury* and once in *The Aberdeen Journal* between 1800 and 1815 is John O'Keefe's musical farce *The Highland Reel* (1787). O'Keefe, an Irish actor/playwright was to declare in his *Recollections* (1826 rpt. 1969 in Ragussis 2010: 77-78) that only an Irish actor could play Irish characters 'and I will venture to say, that none but an Irishman can write an Irish character'. Possibly it was this conviction that prompted the playwright to include a measure of self-justification in the Introduction to the 1790 printed version of *The Highland Reel*; 'the popular reception it met with, particularly in Edinburgh, evinces the author's judgement and taste in his dramatic writings on that Kingdom'. (O'Keefe 1790)

The play is set on the island of Col, where the crooked Steward, McGilpin, is about to defraud his foster daughter, Jenny, out of her mother's legacy, to throw her lover off his farm tenancy over a dubious debt and is trying to prevent his daughter, Maggy known as Moggy, from eloping, although who her intended is, her father is never quite sure. There is a comical highland piper, Shelty, a fake recruiting officer and his sergeant, McGilpin's African servant, Benin, and a brace of Lairds, more or less in disguise. The fortunes of this piece appear to have been largely dependent

on the actress<sup>7</sup> who took on the role of Moggy, a breeches role without breeches. Moggy is lively, wilful, inventive and kind-hearted; when the gentle Jenny proposes to follow the drum and her lover, who has been forced to enlist, so she thinks, in despair at losing both farm and bride, she sends Moggy her last funds to help her and her true love, Davey, elope. Rather than accept her sacrifice, Moggy determines to rescue Jenny's Sandy by dressing up as his young 'brother' and offering herself and Jenny's money to the recruiters in exchange for Sandy's freedom.

In 1806, the last night of the season at the Edinburgh Theatre Royal was a Benefit for Mrs. Orger, a London-born actress. George Colman's comedy, *The Heir at Law*, was followed by Mr. Berry's rendition of 'The Awkward Recruit', a ballad bemoaning the lot of 'poor Will just come from drill', (Anon at Bodleian Ballads Online) and '(by particular desire)' *The Highland Reel*, when Mrs. Orger, as Moggy, would introduce 'the favourite Scots Song of "The gallant Forty-Second"'. There are at least two songs with this title<sup>8</sup>; however, they all deal in some way with the impact of a young man's enlistment into the 'Forty-Second' or the Black Watch.<sup>9</sup> Since Moggy is dressed in a kilt, jacket and bonnet and has persuaded the crooked recruiting officer and his sergeant that they are enlisting a likely lad, who will certainly grow taller, it is probable that she sang the version which begins:

It's noo I am a sodger, and they ca' me Willie Brown,  
I used to be a weaver lad, and lived in Maxwelltown,  
But noo I am enlisted, and to Perth I'm going a wa'  
To join that gallant regiment that's cau'd the gallant forty-twa.

#### CHORUS

Noo, you talk about your First Royals, and your Scottish Fusileers,  
And your Aberdeen Militia, and your Dundee Volunteers,  
Or any other regiment that's lying far awa',  
But bring to me the tartan of the gallant forty-twa.

([www.rampantscoltand.com](http://www.rampantscoltand.com))

Whilst the play does portray the potential dangers of drink and gambling when recruiters are about, the rotten system whereby 'Captain Dash' has been promised a commission in 'the India service' if he can supply 100 enlisted men and the way in which poverty can drive a man to enlist, any real criticism is blunted by the comic action and is further weakened by the choice of 'The Gallant Forty-Twa' with its

valorisation of one of the original regiments raised from within to 'watch' the Highlands and any potentially troublesome inhabitants.

The decade from 1805 when Britain regained control over her seaways to the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 marked a time of economic expansion in Scotland and the growing population of its cities.<sup>10</sup> In some respects this was a period which belonged to the Guest Artists who arrived to play their favourite roles, supported by the resident company, and often left carrying with them a large percentage of the season's projected takings.<sup>11</sup> Notable amongst these were G.F.Cooke and Master Betty, the Infant Roscius. Cooke's favourite characters included Sir Pertinax Macsycophant and Sir Archy Macsarcasm, particularly pointed caricatures from comedies by Macklin. *The Man of the World* (1781) and *Love-a-la-Mode* (1759) were very little played during this period, except when Cooke 'came down' from London. Master Betty's principal Scottish role was Young Norval where he had, at least, the advantage of being an appropriate age to portray the character.

As the period progresses it is also possible to see an impetus for change building in the extent to which the existing Scottish repertoire is repeated and its use becomes specialised so that, for example, works appear on Benefit nights when a good crowd was an imperative, in combinations of more than one Scottish piece, and on nights when the occasional theatre-goer might be minded to attend, such as Christmas Eve or New Year's Day.

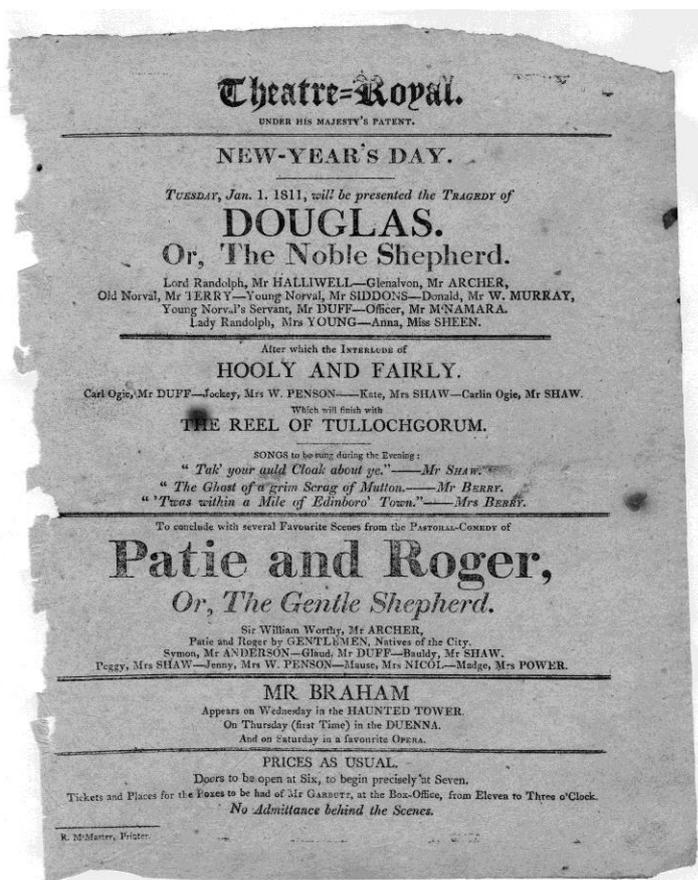
At the Edinburgh Theatre Royal on 21 April 1808 Mr. Rock's Benefit featured *The Young Quaker; or, The Fair American* and the advertisement in *The Caledonian Mercury* is expansive about the local talent supporting him.

The Entertainment of the Gentle Shepherd having been received on Monday last with the most unbounded applause, it will [...] (by particular desire and for the last time) be repeated. The Characters of Roger, Symon, Glaud and Jenny by the same Lady and Gentlemen, who met with so much approbation on the last night of its performance [...] a Prologue written and to be spoken by the Gentleman who performs SYMON. By desire, the favourite Scots song of 'Gude forgie me for lien' by the same lady who performs the part of Jenny.

Theatre servants, without personal followings to guarantee a good house, were particularly fond of including Scottish items in their evening's entertainment. The Theatre Royal's band advertised a 'celebrated National Overture' and 'the most

admired SCOTS TUNES during the evenings' for their benefit on 14 May 1810, whilst Donald McGlashan, the Box Keeper had a benefit on 8 May 1811 when *The Clandestine Marriage* was followed by the farce of *Hooly and Fairly*.

Scottish works in combination were popular around Christmas and New Year. *The Glasgow Herald* advertised the tragedy of *Mary Queen of Scots* with the 'Grand National Pantomime' of *Oscar & Malvina* at the Theatre Royal, Queen St. on 1 January 1810.



Playbill from the Henderson Collection Sc3:93, by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C. ©

Whilst a year later, the Edinburgh Theatre Royal was playing the tragedy of *Douglas*, the interlude of *Hooly and Fairly* and the pastoral comedy, of *Patie and Roger; or, the Gentle Shepherd*, a cut-down version of the larger piece to focus on 'several favourite scenes' featuring Patie and Roger, played by 'Gentlemen, natives of this city.' (1 January 1811)

No matter how many opportunities, there might be to utilise Scottish materials, new pieces were, however, slow to appear. In the period January 1810-January 1811 the *Caledonian Mercury* and *Aberdeen Journal* advertise over 89 named pieces and/or events with only seven instances of complete dramas and/or pantomimes, harlequinades, etc., with Scottish characters and four that originate in Scotland.

'Scottish' Works taken from *The Caledonian Mercury, Aberdeen Journal* – theatres are the Aberdeen Theatre, the Edinburgh Theatre, Shakespeare Square and the Edinburgh Theatre Royal.

**The Family Legend** – Edinburgh, Theatre Royal  
**Highland Reel** – Moggy, 1<sup>st</sup> time Miss Mudie her Benefit, Aberdeen Theatre  
*'celebrated National Overture' 'the most admired SCOTS TUNES'* – Benefit The Theatre Band – Edinburgh, Theatre Royal  
*Grand National Overture* – Edinburgh, Theatre Royal  
*Attempt to play the Union Pipes – repeat 'musical' Benefit Mr. Fitzmaurice* Edinburgh Theatre Royal  
*Exhibition of the Ancient Martial Music of Scotland' – Royal Highland Society of Scotland – dancing of highland reels between the acts – Edinburgh, Theatre Royal*  
**Oscar & Malvina; or, the Hall of Fingal** - 'grand national pantomime' – Edinburgh, Theatre, Shakespeare Square  
**The Magic Cave; or, Harlequin in Scotland** – comic harlequinade – Edinburgh Theatre, Shakespeare Square.  
**Macbeth** – Guest Artist Mrs. Siddons – Edinburgh Theatre Royal  
**Macbeth** – Aberdeen, Theatre  
**The Lady of the Lake** – 'a new grand Melo-drama founded on the popular poem'/'the views taken on the respective spots by Mr. J.F. Williams' – Edinburgh, Theatre Royal  
**Douglas** - 'tragedy' Young Norval by Miss Mudie – Aberdeen, Theatre  
**Marmion** – song by Guest Artist, Braham – Edinburgh, Theatre Royal.

There were, nevertheless, some significant changes afoot in the management of Scottish theatres. In Aberdeen, Mrs. Mudie had taken control of the Theatre (1824: 249)<sup>12</sup> a couple of years earlier, when the usual mix of pieces had been supplemented with a couple of 'new' dances, *Jockey and Jenny* and *The Scots Ghost; or, Little Fanny's Love*. Now her daughter, aged 12, if her debut on the Belfast stage in 1805 aged under seven is to be believed, 'A Wife for Master Betty' in *The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners: With Strictures on their Epitome, the Stage*, vol 20, 118) is given two 'breeches' parts, one an import, the other a

valued icon of the Scottish stage, which were calculated to announce her as a capable performer and to endear her to local audiences, in *Moggy McGilpin* and *Young Norval*.

In Glasgow, John Jackson had briefly had control of the magnificent new Theatre Royal in Queen St., but he had died in 1806 and the Glasgow theatre had proved too large to be sustained by the regular Glasgow audience. Messrs. Bartley and Trueman had the Theatre Royal from 1810 to 1812, and found it equally difficult to make it pay, whilst in Edinburgh, Henry Siddons had arrived from London in 1809 with his Scottish wife Harriet Siddons, neé Murray, and her brother W.H. Murray, who would go on to play such an important part in the overall fortunes of the Scottish theatre over the next forty years.<sup>13</sup>

Henry Siddons had, after some manoeuvring, shifted the Patent from the theatre in Shakespeare Square, which now operated as a Minor, to the new Theatre Royal at the top of Leith Walk, a refurbishment of the old Circus. There he engaged Alexander Nasmyth to design a Gothic interior for the theatre and to supply new scenery. He also began to darken the auditorium.

The death of Henry Siddons in 1815 at the age of 41, robbed the Edinburgh theatre of a hard-working, thoughtful, manager who had endeavoured to build on the fortunes of that theatre. Dibdin, in his *Annals of the Edinburgh Stage*, (1888) appears conflicted in that he comments that 'The success of the Theatre seemed to date from Siddons death, which event directly gave it the first impetus' (271) whilst his next, Chapter XVII on 'Rob Roy', begins by noting that 'The production of *Rob Roy* came at a time [1819 ed.] when the managerial coffers were empty, seasons bad, and few indications of improvement' (286).

One of Henry Siddons' most significant actions as Manager of the Theatre Royal was to bring forward works that had not been proved in London. *The Monthly Mirror*<sup>14</sup> praised the Manager's efforts for that first season.

The production of several new pieces, and a careful attention to the suggestions of individuals, as well as a deference to public opinion evince a desire to please, which will always meet with its reward and accordingly this season has been one of the most productive ever known here. Among the new plays, there have been two got up here, for the first time upon any stage [*The Family Legend ...*]. On the first, I

will not trouble you with any remarks, because, as the authoress is a Scotswoman, and the play founded upon a favourite Scots tradition, I might appear to you not to be actuated by strict impartiality. I shall only mention that it has been well received, although not with such unequivocal marks of approbation as '*The Friend of the Family*' [a comedy by Henry Siddons]. (314)

The critic in *The Edinburgh Annual Register* was not quite so well disposed to Siddons' comedy, declaring that it was one of those well-constructed but commonplace pieces whose fortunes were dependent on the talents of the performers.<sup>15</sup> The *Register* praises Mr. Siddons for 'at once gratifying his own taste, and [paying] the most acceptable compliment to that of the public, by bringing forward [...] the plays of our national bard' (393) with productions of *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, but has to admit that they were not well supported. The production, on 29 January 1810, of Joanna Baillie's *The Family Legend* prompts the *Register* to remind its readers that 'Since the appearance of Douglas, the enthusiasm of the Scottish audience had not been awakened by a story of their native land from the pen of a native poet' and says that they came 'prepared to receive and support, with generous and kindred cordiality the efforts of genius' (395-6).

Whilst the *Register* ultimately thought that Miss Baillie wrote 'dramatic poems' rather than dramas, (398) news of the piece was spreading. *The Glasgow Herald* of 2 February 1810 gave a lengthy review of the play and a separate, comprehensive, synopsis. Overall, it felt that the play was 'interesting in incident and elegant in language' (4) but could bear some pruning, which the *Herald* was sure it would receive. On 12 February, the paper printed the Epilogue, written by McKenzie and spoken by Mrs. H. Siddons. The Glasgow Theatre was evidently searching around for new national materials; on 3 March 1810, Mr. Trueman's Benefit included the 'Entertainment' of 'The Last Words of Marmion' and by 20 March Messrs. Bartley and Trueman were advertising the 'First Night of Miss Baillie's New TRAGEDY' noting that it had been 'performed at the Theatre-Royal, Edinburgh, with most unbounded and general applause'. The notice highlighted, 'Previous to the play, and between the Acts[...] Several Old and Appropriate Scotch Marches'. It was December before *The Aberdeen Journal* would give advance notice of Mrs. Mudie's

production of 'Miss Baillie's celebrated New Tragedy[...] with Appropriate Dresses, and Splendid Scenery' (12 December 1810).

By this point Siddons had moved on to Scott's long poem, *The Lady of the Lake* (1810). Scott wrote to Joanna Baillie in November 1810 with the news that the poem was to be dramatised in two theatres.

Meanwhile the lady of the lake is likely to come to preferment in an unexpected manner for two persons of no less eminence than Messrs. Morton and Reynolds play-carpenters in ordinary to Covent Garden are employd in scrubbing carmining [?] and cutting her down into one of those

new fashiond sloops calld a Melo drama to be launchd at the theatre and my friend Mr. H. Siddons emulous of such a noble design is at work on the same job here.

(27<sup>th</sup> November 1810)

The *Caledonian Mercury* was already advertising the 'new grand Melo-drama' with scenery, 'The views taken on the respective spots by Mr. J.F. Williams' (19 November 1810), but it was 15 January 1811 before the piece, with music by J.A. Jones, opened at the Edinburgh Theatre Royal.<sup>16</sup>

These pieces, written and presented for the first time in Scottish theatres might have represented a new spirit of independence; however, they were not the type of works which could engender the affection for the adaptations taken from works like *Guy Mannering* (1815), *Rob Roy* (1817) and *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818) and the theatres, large and small, soon fell into the familiar pattern of grouping together the limited repertoire for maximum possible return. On Christmas Eve 1813 the Edinburgh Theatre Royal presented, for 'the only night it can possibly be acted this season, Miss Baillie's 'National Tragedy' of the FAMILY LEGEND' followed by *Hooly and Fairly* and 'Allan Ramsay's GENTLE SHEPHERD', whilst in 1814 an itinerant company<sup>17</sup> were offering a double bill of the 'Historical Tragedy of Mary, Queen of Scots' followed by the 'Scotch Interlude' of *Auld Robin Gray*.

When the Lord Chamberlain's office of the Stage Censor eventually came to consider and to allow stage adaptations of the *Waverley* novels, it was in an atmosphere within which London was now less concerned about suppressing cultural expressions of national identity from 'North Britain' particularly coming,

obliquely, from an author popular in Whitehall and at Court. In addition the military presence in Scotland was reduced, with some regiments and militias stood-down or amalgamated at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, whilst others were gone abroad to guard the borders of the burgeoning Empire lands. What would begin to emerge over the next fifty years was the myth, built on fact, of the Scottish soldier, the faithful Highland warrior sentimentally attached to Scotland, but firmly committed to the British Empire cause. (Gould 2012:191) <sup>18</sup>

The repertoire operating in Scotland before the emergence of the National Drama benefitted the few and that rarely included the theatre-makers. When the National Drama appeared it brought in new audiences who felt a connection with the pieces shown; with characters from Scotland's history and scenes from the common fund of knowledge, a range of heroes, heroines, villains, confidantes and comic characters as well. These patrons would return to see such pieces again, indeed at the height of its popularity (1820-1835) barely a week went by in a theatre without its playing a work from the National Drama (Bell in Findlay 1998: 147-148) <sup>19</sup> and it consequently ushered in a period with a level of financial security previously unknown to Scottish managers, and opportunities for the advancement for Scottish performers, all of which allowed sustainable growth within the industry.

#### Works Cited.

*Aberdeen Journal, The*. 1805. 4 September. Aberdeen: Chalmers.

Anon. 1802-1819. *The Awkward Recruit*. London: J. Pitts. Available at: <http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/static/images/sheets/10000/07336.gif>

Anon. *The Gallant Forty-Twa*. (song). Available at: <http://digital.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/14931> .

Anon. *The Gallant Forty-Twa* (song). Available at: [http://www.rampantscotland.com/songs/blsongs\\_fortytwa.htm](http://www.rampantscotland.com/songs/blsongs_fortytwa.htm)

Baker, D. E., Reed, I. and Jones, S. eds., 1812. *Biographia Dramatica, or, A Companion to the playhouse: containing historical and critical memoirs, and original anecdotes, of British and Irish dramatic writers from the commencement of our theatrical exhibitions*. Vol. 2. London: printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown.

Baker, D. E., Reed, I. and Jones, S. eds., 1812. *Biographia Dramatica, or, A Companion to the playhouse: containing historical and critical memoirs, and original anecdotes, of British and Irish dramatic writers from the commencement of our theatrical exhibitions*. Vol. 3. Jones, S. ed. and extended. London: printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, pp. 420-421.

Bell, B. 1998. The Nineteenth Century. In: Findlay, B. (ed) *A History of Scottish Theatre*. Edinburgh: Polygon, pp. 137-139; 147-148.

Bellamy, G. A. 1785, An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy (1767). In: *The Monthly Review*. Volume 72. London: Ralph Griffiths, pp. 182-189.

Burns, R. 1787. *Journal*. Entry for Monday 10 September (quoted at the Aberdeen entry). Available at: <http://www.robertburns.org/encyclopedia/Aberdeen.27.shtml>

Centlivre, S. 2004. *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret*. O'Brien, J. ed and introduction. Peterborough, Ontario, Canada: Broadview Literary Texts.

Dibdin, J. C. 1888. *Annals of The Edinburgh Stage: with an account of the Rise and Progress of Dramatic Writing in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Richard Cameron.

Dibdin, T. 1824. *The Biography of the British Stage*. New York: Collins and Hannay, pp. 249-250.

*Edinburgh Dramatic Review, The*. 1822. 14 December, p. 203.

*Glasgow Herald, The.*, 1810. 23 March. n.p.

<http://www.theglasgowstory.com/story/?id=TGSC0> .

Gould, M. 2012. *Nineteenth Century Theatre and the Imperial Encounter*. London: Routledge.

Macdonald, J. 2011. On Our Humble Dumfries Boards... the Plays, the Performers and some of the Politics in the First Ten Years of the Dumfries Theatre. RSE @ Dumfries and Galloway series, 18 February. Report by Kate Kennedy. Available at [https://www.royalsoced.org.uk/On\\_our\\_humble\\_dumfries-board.pdf](https://www.royalsoced.org.uk/On_our_humble_dumfries-board.pdf)

Maidment, J. 1835. *Memoir of Archibald Maclaren, Dramatist: with a list of his works*. Edinburgh: unknown binding.

*Monthly Mirror: Reflecting men and Manners: With Strictures on their Epitome, the Stage, The*. 1810. Vol. 7 New Series. London: J. Wright, p. 314.

Moody, J. 2007. Dictating to the empire performance and theatrical geography in eighteenth-century Britain. In: Moody, J. and O'Quinn, D. (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to the British Theatre, 1730-1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 21-42.

O'Keefe, J. 1790. *The Highland Reel, A Comic Opera in Three Acts*. Dublin. Available at <https://books.google.co.uk/books>.

O'Keefe, J. 1826. *Recollections of the Life of John O'Keefe* (2 vols., rpt. New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1969). In: Ragussis, M. 2010. *Theatrical Nation: Jews and Other Outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 77-78.

*Public Advertiser, The*. 1787. 28 May, Iss. 16542. London, n.p.

Shirrefs, A. 1790. *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. Edinburgh: D. Willison.

*True Briton, The*. 1798. 28 April. London, n.p.

Wife for Master Betty, A 1805.. In: *The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners: With Strictures on their Epitome, the Stage*. Vol. 20. London: J. Wright, p. 118.

---

#### Endnotes.

<sup>1</sup> The adaptations of the works of Scott which formed the bulk of the National Drama could be said to have circumvented the Patent system, creating a degree of unanimity in the audience experience, in that the original materials were freely available to all, so that both Patent houses and Minors could offer their audiences depictions of characters who spoke the same dialogue in every type of venue.

<sup>2</sup> There was a gap of a few weeks, from 28 July to 20 August, before it was revived as a 'favourite Musical piece' for another month.

<sup>3</sup> This piece appeared fairly regularly in Scottish theatres during the period, under variations of the title of *Hooly and Fairly; or, the Highland Lad and the Lowland Lass*, although *The Glasgow Herald* (23 March 1810) announced, for Mr. Carleton's Benefit at the Theatre Royal, *HOOLY AND FAIRLY; or, The Grey Mare the Better Horse*, but was eventually thought too robust for national sensibilities. *The Edinburgh Dramatic Review* for the Edinburgh Theatre Royal on the night of 14 December 1822 called it a 'disgusting little " Scotch Pastoral,"' declaring that as that 'we consider its performance as a disgrace to the boards of a Theatre-Royal' deploring the Management who had allowed 'the stage to be polluted by its representation.' p.203 It is difficult to know exactly what the critic was objecting to; however, *The True Briton* (28 April 1798) listed the 'Scotch Airs' included in the piece and perhaps the Gallery had abandoned the lyrics from Ramsay and were joining in with 'Andrew and his Cutty Gun'.

<sup>4</sup> '[...] it was the Theatre Royal at Edinburgh which implicitly disputed the claims of Drury Lane and Covent Garden to exclusive possession of Britain's "national drama" by proceeding to invent and publicise a national drama of its own'. Jane Moody, 'Dictating to the empire: performance and theatrical geography in eighteenth-century Britain' in *The Cambridge Companion to the British Theatre, 1730-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.21-42, p.34

<sup>5</sup> This display of 'authentic' culture by exotic characters prefigures the treatment of a group of Native Americans to Britain in 1818, when their dances and ceremonies were incorporated into spectacles at

---

theatres across Britain, except in that instance the pieces did not claim to be set in America. When they visited Edinburgh, they participated in Pocock's *Robinson Crusoe; or, The Bold Buccaneers* (1817) and Fawcett's *La Perouse; or, the Desolate Island.*(1801)

<sup>6</sup> The Colonel's name can often be found spelt 'Briton', for example, in *The Biographia Dramatica* Vol.2 (1812).

<sup>7</sup> Both Louisa Fontenelle, a favourite of Burns, and the notorious Maria Foote were well known in the role. Existing images of them in the role of Moggy show Louisa Fontenelle in a dress with a tartan sash over her shoulder, whilst Maria Foote is pictured in Moggy's disguise, in a considerably shortened dress above the knee, tartan hose and a headdress in imitation of the shuttlecock of black ostrich feathers of the Black Watch. Available at <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Moggy+McGilpin+image>

<sup>8</sup> The version of this ballad to be sung by a young man can be found at <http://digital.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/14931>

<sup>9</sup> An alternative song is for a young woman who has seen her love march away and when the regiment return from battle he is not amongst them. The lyrics for this version are available at [http://www.rampantscotland.com/songs/blsongs\\_fortytwa.htm](http://www.rampantscotland.com/songs/blsongs_fortytwa.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Glasgow's population grew from 32,000 in 1750 to 147,000 in 1821, with a third of the increase coming during the years 1810-1821, <http://www.theglasgowstory.com/story/?id=TGSC0> whilst overall Scotland had 17% of its population living in large towns at the beginning of the nineteenth century. One or two bills survive from theatres across Scotland, for example, in Greenock and Ayr and the numerous journals and biographies of Actors and Managers published during the nineteenth century offer clues to locations of other theatres and companies, but there is no comprehensive mapping of where the performers went and how long they stayed in each location.

<sup>11</sup> Dibdin relates how Mrs. Siddons and her brother John Kemble both requested half of the receipts plus a 'free' benefit, i.e. free of expenses, at the Edinburgh Theatre Royal under Henry Siddons, so that they were not engaged at the same time.p.260.

<sup>12</sup> The 1824 *Biography of the British Stage* (Collins & Hannay: New York) offers up the unhappy tale of a Mr. Wilkinson who 'unfortunately met a Caledonian arbiter of the Stage, named Mudie, who governed the Aberdeen Theatre' (p.249) and the Aberdeen season having ended successfully, abandoned his company without 'pay or rations', so that Wilkinson was glad to join 'a small Company in the Highlands' for seven months before ending with 'a small itinerant Company in Montrose' before working his way back through the regular Glasgow, Edinburgh, Sunderland and Norwich theatres before managing to return to London and the English Opera House. (p.250)

<sup>13</sup> Whilst Murray did not invent the National Drama, he wrote favourite National Dramas, notably the five act *Heart of Mid-lothian* (1824) attributed to him and shorter works such as *Gilderoy* (1827). He was a proto-Director, meticulous in his preparation of new works, insisting on rigorous rehearsals and subsequently trained a number of Victorian actor/managers.

<sup>14</sup> *The Monthly Mirror: reflecting Men and Manners; with strictures on their epitome, The Stage.* Vol.VII New Series. (London, 1810) p.314 A footnote to this account reveals that Siddons was about to be saddled by the Chancellor with paying half of his profits for the season to the proprietors of the old Theatre Royal in Shakespeare Square, or to remove to the old theatre. When his brother-in-law took over management after Siddons' death, he gave an account of Siddons' debts which made clear the considerable difficulties in which his widow and family found themselves.

---

<sup>15</sup> *The Edinburgh Annual Register* Vol.II, part ii included a section headed 'Scottish Drama'pp.385-401 and wonders how much it will be censured for 'making the metropolis of Scotland an exception from our general rule, which excludes from critical notice any theatres save those of London'. Its opinion on Nasmyth's Gothic interior for the 'new' Theatre Royal was not high, acknowledging it as being fashionable: 'from the mansion to the mousetrap, all is Gothic' (p.386). The new Act Drop, depicting the Ruins of Melrose Abbey, was not thought suitable either and the *Register* points out that the theatre was repainted during its first break in a Grecian mode.

<sup>16</sup> A separate adaptation for Edinburgh is attributed to E.J. Eyre.

<sup>17</sup> This bill was printed by "H. Crawford, Printer", most likely the 'H. Crawford' who took over from John Wilson, in Kilmarnock, (Henderson Scottish bill no. Sc6:63, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington D.C.). It was designed to be used on a tour, with the year date (1814) printed and spaces left to fill in the day and date. The company comprised largely Messrs. Gold, Berriman, Campbell, Fraser and Mesdames Gold, Fraser, Harwood and Miss Laing.

<sup>18</sup> See Marty Gould, *Nineteenth Century Theatre and the Imperial Encounter* (London: Routledge 2012) and in particular his work on the plays which depicted the events of the Lucknow Mutiny in 1857. Gould sums up the myth of the Highland soldier as 'At once Self and Other, Colonizer and Colonized, British and Barbarian, the Highland soldier of the Mutiny dramas is the emblematic conjunction of savagery and civility' (p.191).

<sup>19</sup> In 1825, the Caledonian Theatre, Edinburgh played adaptations from Scott's work on 19 nights, whilst the Theatre Royal played them on 69 nights. In 1830 J.H. Alexander took his company from Glasgow on a visit to the theatre in Dumfries (7 October 1830-8 November 1830) when 'they performed twenty different National Dramas or plays with Scottish connections, nine forming the main piece of the evening and five appearing more than once'. See Barbara Bell, 'The Nineteenth Century' in *A History of Scottish Theatre* ed. Bill Findlay (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1998) pp.147-148 for a full list of pieces.