

Picturing Scotland through the Waverley Novels: Walter Scott and the Origins of the Victorian Illustrated Novel.

Richard Hill. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010. 236pp. ISBN 978-0-7546-6806-0.

During the second half of the eighteenth century in Britain, the inclusion of artistic illustration in published works of poetry and prose grew in popularity. However, it was not until the Victorian period, notably through the works of Dickens and Thackeray in the later 1830s and 1840s that the illustrated novel began to dominate public demand. From 1819 to Scott's death in 1832, Richard J. Hill, in *Picturing Scotland through the Waverley Novels*, credits the author and his publishers for directly influencing the evolution of Edinburgh's publishing renaissance. Their motivation to supply the consumer with an affordable edition of Scott's *Waverley Novels* containing quality illustrations played a role in enhancing Edinburgh's publishing capabilities and stature. The city's burgeoning publishing houses challenged London's publishing monopoly by utilising new printing technology to print portable size novels at an affordable price. Scotland's rampant industrial mechanisation and growth created the opportunity for authors and publishers to rely less on the London printing house, and create start-to-finish a quality illustrated novel fit to please the public. The steps taken by Scott and his publishers to incorporate illustrations, and their understanding of the reading public's demand for a visual component to accompany the reading experience influenced the illustrated Victorian novel that followed. In this capacity, Scott was not only the creative genius behind the enormously successful *Waverley Novels*, but an astute author aware of the publishing business, who fashioned his work with consumer demands in mind.

In the introduction and first chapter, Hill argues against what he sees as a misconception held by "traditional scholarship" that Scott was largely ambivalent to his work being illustrated: "Scott was not only complicit, but proactive in the illustration of his novels. No illustration would have taken place in Edinburgh for any of Scott's novels if his publishers had not had the author's approval" (7). Hill points out that none of the first editions of Scott's novels were published with illustrations, a fact which he ascribes to the logistical impediments that publishers faced in Edinburgh before 1820. This period's technological advancements in printing that changed the publishing market, and made it possible for publishers to satisfy the growing middle-class readership's demand for affordable novels, is what Hill finds most interesting: "An examination of the complexities of the projects undertaken by Constable, Cadell [Scott's publishers], and Scott in illustrating the novels reveals much about the literary tastes, power dynamics, markets, and technologies of the publishing and engraving trades in the early nineteenth century, and about the increasingly reciprocal relationship between literature and visual arts during this period" (6). It was to meet such changing demands of readers that Scott and his publishers produced new, illustrated editions of the *Waverley Novels*.

In Chapters two and three, Hill argues on behalf of Scott's willingness to incorporate illustrations into his novels for their artistic and historical merit and not simply because of their financial benefit. He suggests that the visual details Scott valued most in the artistic renderings of his historical novels were the "specificities of the representation of historical characters, localities, or artifacts" (5). While acknowledging Scott's preference for text over image, Hill proposes, quite convincingly that Scott's relationship with the Scottish artist James Skene solidified a reciprocal basis from which the historical information conveyed in the artist's renderings of Scottish topography helped at times to inspire the visual element of Scott's imagination—a major component of the writer's craft.

Hill moves forward from here, by moving backwards, and points to Scott's professional experience in incorporating illustrations to accompany his poetry. Hill also notes Scott's authorship of the multi volume, *The Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland* (1819-26), where greater emphasis was placed on the historical context of the image, rather than its picturesque furnishings. Simultaneously, the collected editions of *The Novel and Tales of the Author of Waverley* (1819-23) were published and became the seminal expression of the author and his publisher's understanding of the public's demand for illustrated novels. Hill expands on this, asserting that the illustrations in *The Novel and Tales* are historicised extensions of the illustrations found in the collected works of Robert Burns' poetry, published before and near the turn of the eighteenth century (47). By using relevant source material as evidence to tie Scott's vision to that of his publishers and artists, and vouching for connection between *The Novel and Tales*' illustrations to a Scottish literary lineage, Hill makes a clear case for Scott's contribution to the illustrated novel.

The author's detailed and extensive research pays off throughout Chapters three and four, where he sheds light on Scott's first publisher, Constable's, painstaking effort to introduce illustrations, and how, when the torch was passed to Robert Cadell, the affordable and portable illustrated novel came to fruition through the use of the cheaper and more durable steel plate.

The book's argument comes full circle in Chapters five and six when Hill explores the social implications of the illustrated historical novel through Scott's personal and professional relationships with his key artists, William Allan and Alexander Nasmyth. The educational dimension of the *Waverley Novels* became dynamic with the publication of the *Magnum Opus* editions where antiquarian interest in historical costume was combined with the desire to represent the historical moment as a real, lived experience. Hill hits on a major point when he declares that "book illustration was the point where painting and the novel converged to create a new, national-historical identity for Scotland in the wake of homogenising British patriotism" (131). In a matter of speaking, Scott was delivering Scottish history to Scottish people, and informing Europe of Scotland's historical singularity.

Hill's incorporation of Scott and Nasmyth's presence at the demolition of the old tollbooth in Edinburgh is perhaps the most telling, and albeit, humanising attempt he makes to attest for Scott's personal connection to Scotland, and in particular, Edinburgh. Although, more time could have been allotted in the earlier stages of the book to render a clearer picture of Scott, and his "antiquarian" motivations to preserve Scottish manners and customs, the closing chapter and conclusion of the book touches on the specific nature of Scottish "improvement" and the tumultuous changes that had occurred in Scotland in the eighteenth century, and still erupting in the age Scott was writing. Scott's anxiety and nostalgia concerning the dying past accounts for much of his motivation to preserve the past, and Hill ever so diligently – through his clever use of primary and secondary sources – illuminates those historical, technological, and antiquarian motivations that underpinned Walter Scott's historical project, and hence the inclusion of illustrations in the *Waverley Novels*.

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