

THE PICKERING MASTERS

The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt

A View of the English Stage

Edited by
Duncan Wu



ROUTLEDGE


THE PICKERING MASTERS

THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

Volume 3

A View of the English Stage

THE PICKERING MASTERS

THE SELECTED WRITINGS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

Consulting Editors: David Bromwich
Stanley Jones
Roy Park
Tom Paulin

THE SELECTED WRITINGS
OF WILLIAM HAZLITT

Edited by
Duncan Wu

VOLUME 3
A View of the English Stage

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1998 by Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited

Published 2016 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright ©Taylor & Francis 1998

© General Introduction Tom Paulin 1998

© Editor's Introduction, editorial and Introductory Notes Duncan Wu 1998

The moral right of the editor has been asserted

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

BRITISH LIBRARY CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Hazlitt, William, 1778–1830

Selected works of William Hazlitt. – (The Pickering masters)

1. English Essays – 18th century

I. Title II. Wu, Duncan

824.7

ISBN 13: 978-1-13876-322-7 (hbk) (vol-3)

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Hazlitt, William, 1778–1830.

[Selections. 1998]

The selected writings of William Hazlitt / edited by Duncan Wu;
consulting editors David Bromwich, Stanley Jones, Roy Park, Tom Paulin;
introduction by Tom Paulin.

p. cm.

Contents: v. 1. An essay on the principles of human action; Characters of Shakespear's plays — v. 2. The round table; Lectures on the English poets — v. 3. A view of the English stage — v. 4. Political essays — v. 5. A letter to William Gifford, Esq; Lectures on the English Comic writers; Lectures on the dramatic literature of the Age of Elizabeth — v. 6. Table talk — v. 7. Liber Amoris; The spirit of the age — v. 8. The plain speaker — v. 9. Uncollected essays.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 1–85196–369–3 (set : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–361–8 (v. 1 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–362–6 (v. 2 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–363–4 (v. 3 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–364–2 (v. 4 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–365–0 (v. 5 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–366–9 (v. 6 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–367–7 (v. 7 : alk. paper). ISBN 1–85196–368–5 (v. 8 : alk. paper). — ISBN 1–85196–397–9 (v. 9 : alk. paper).

I. Wu, Duncan. II. Title

PR4771.W8 1998

824'.7—dc21

98–10129

CIP

Typeset by Antony Gray, London

VOLUME 3

Contents

List of abbreviations	ix
Introductory note	xi
Directory of principal singers, actors and actresses	xiii

A VIEW OF THE ENGLISH STAGE 1

Preface	3
Mr Kean's Shylock	9
Mr Kean's Richard	11
Mr Kean's Hamlet	15
Mr Kean's Othello	19
Mr Kean's Iago	20
Antony and Cleopatra	21
Artaxerxes	23
The Beggar's Opera	24
Richard Cœur de Lion	26
Didone Abandonnata	27
Miss O'Neill's Juliet	29
Mr Kean's Richard	31
Mr Kean's Macbeth	34
Mr Kean's Romeo	38
Mr Kean's Iago	41
Mr Kean's Iago (concluded)	45
Mr Kean's Richard II	51
The Unknown Guest	54
Love in Limbo	56
Mr Kean's Zanga	57
Mr Kean's Abel Drugger	58
Mr Bannister's Farewell	58
Comus	60
Mr Kean's Leon	63
The Tempest	64
My Wife! What Wife?	67

CONTENTS

Mr Meggett's Octavian	69
Mr Harley's Fidget	70
My Aunt	71
The Iron Chest	71
Living in London	73
The King's Proxy	74
The Maid and the Magpie	75
The Hypocrite	76
Mr Edwards's Richard III	78
Miss Hughes's Mandane	79
Lovers' Vows	80
Downton's Shylock	81
The School for Scandal	81
Mrs Alsop's Rosalind	83
The Will	84
John du Bart	84
The Beggar's Opera	86
Miss O'Neill's Elwina	88
Where to Find a Friend	90
Cymon	92
Miss O'Neill's Belvidera	93
What's a Man of Fashion?	94
Miss O'Neill's Monimia	94
Mr Kean's Duke Aranza	95
The Merchant of Bruges	96
Smiles and Tears	98
George Barnwell	100
The Busy Body	102
Mr Kean's Othello	103
A New Way to Pay Old Debts	104
The Midsummer Night's Dream	106
A New Way to Pay Old Debts	108
Love for Love	109
The Anglade Family	111
Measure for Measure	113
Mr Kean's Sir Giles Overreach	116
The Recruiting Officer	117
The Fair Penitent	119
The Duke of Milan	121
Miss O'Neill's Lady Teazle	123
Guy Mannering	124

CONTENTS

Mr Kean	124
Mr Kean's Shylock	126
The Oratorios	128
Richard III	130
Mr Bibby's Sir Pertinax	131
Romeo and Juliet	132
Mr Kemble's Sir Giles Overreach	134
Bertram	136
Adelaide, or the Emigrants	140
Every Man in his Humour	142
Mrs Siddons	144
New English Opera-House	146
The Jealous Wife	148
The Man of the World	150
The Poor Gentleman	151
Miss Merry's Mandane	152
Exit By Mistake	153
A Man in Mourning for Himself	155
The Beggar's Opera	155
The Italian Opera	156
Old Customs	159
My Landlady's Night-Gown	160
Love in a Village	161
Castle of Andalusia	162
Two Words	163
The Surrender of Calais	164
The Wonder	164
The Distressed Mother	166
Lovers' Vows	168
Miss Boyle's Rosalind	169
Mr Macready's Mentevole	170
Mr Macready's Othello	171
Mr Stephen Kemble's Falstaff	173
Theatrical Debuts	174
Mr Kemble's Cato	175
The Iron Chest	176
Mr Kemble's King John	178
Coriolanus	180
The Man of the World	183
Jane Shore	185
The Humourous Lieutenant	186

CONTENTS

Two New Ballets	187
Mr Booth's Duke of Gloster	188
Figaro	189
Mr Booth's Iago	190
Mr Booth's Richard	191
Frightened to Death	193
Double Gallant	194
Two New Melo-drames	196
Don Juan	197
The Conquest of Taranto	200
The Touch-Stone	202
The Libertine	204
Barbarossa	206
Mrs Siddons's Lady Macbeth	207
Mr Maywood's Shylock	208
Mr Kemble's Retirement	209
Notes	215
Books referred to in the notes to volume 3	264

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Cumberland viii John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*, in *The British Stage*, ed. Richard Cumberland (14 vols., 1817), vol. 8
- Cumberland ix Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour*, adapted by David Garrick, in *The British Stage*, ed. Richard Cumberland (14 vols., 1817), vol. 9
- Cumberland xiii Nicholas Rowe, *The Orphan*, in *The British Stage*, ed. Richard Cumberland (14 vols., 1817), vol. 13
- Dennis John Dennis, *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker (2 vols., Baltimore, 1939–43)
- Dibdin Douglas Kinnaird, *The Merchant of Bruges; or, Beggar's Bush*, ed. Thomas Dibdin (London, 1818)
- Erdman Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Essays on his Times*, ed. David Erdman (3 vols., London, 1978)
- Fielding Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones A Foundling*, introduction and commentary by Martin C. Battestin, ed. Fredson Bowers (2 vols., Oxford, 1974)
- Gifford *The Plays of Philip Massinger*, ed. William Gifford (2nd edn., 4 vols., London, 1813)
- Howe *The Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe (21 vols., 1930–4)
- Inchbald Nicholas Rowe, *The Fair Penitent* in *The British Theatre*, ed. Elizabeth Inchbald, vol. 10 (1816)
- Jones Stanley Jones, *Hazlitt: A Life* (1989)
- Jones (1983) Stanley Jones, 'Three Notes on Howe's Edition of Hazlitt: Paine, Porson, and Campbell', *N&Q* 30 (1983), pp. 230–2
- Jones (1995) Stanley Jones, 'More Hazlitt Quotations and Allusions: Shakespeare, the Bible, Milton, Quintilian/Steele, Pope, Burke', *N&Q*, 44 (1995), pp. 186–7
- Larpet Dougald MacMillan, *Catalogue of the Larpet Plays in the Huntington Library* (1939)
- Lee *The Dramatick Works of Mr Nathanael Lee* (3 vols., London, 1784)
- Letters *The Letters of William Hazlitt*, ed. Herschel Moreland Sikes, assisted by Willard Hallam Bonner and Gerald Lahey (1978)
- Mason *The Poems of Mr Gray*, ed. William Mason (York, 1775)

SELECTED WRITINGS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT: VOLUME 3

- McDowell *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke Volume 9: I: The Revolutionary War 1794–1797; II: Ireland*, ed. R. B. McDowell (Oxford, 1991)
- Mitchell *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Volume 8: The French Revolution 1790–1794*, ed. L. G. Mitchell (Oxford, 1989)
- Morley *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley (3 vols., 1938)
- Munby *Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons*, ed. A. N. L. Munby (11 vols., 1971–5), vol. i, pp. 99–151
- N&Q *Notes and Queries*
- Waller *The Plays of Molière*, tr. A. R. Waller (8 vols., Edinburgh, 1907)

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

A View of the English Stage

Hazlitt's collected dramatic criticism was published April 1818. He had attended the theatre for twenty years before he began to write about it, and was continuously engaged in daily or weekly dramatic criticism for the *Morning Chronicle*, *The Champion*, *The Examiner* and *The Times* from October 1813 to the end of 1817. He did little theatre reviewing thereafter; in 1820 he did a monthly article for *The London Magazine*, and in 1828 reviewed drama for *The Examiner* for a few weeks.

Text

There are no extant manuscripts. After the first issue of 1818 there was a second in 1821, the sheets being the same in both cases. William Hazlitt Jr edited a 'second edition' in 1851 (reissued 1854), which in fact contained only a selection of the pieces from the 1818 edition. The first edition was reprinted as *Dramatic Essays* in 1895 with notes and an introduction by William Archer and Robert W. Lowe. Archer and Lowe took the liberty of correcting dates and quotations. And in 1906 W. Spencer Jackson published an edition which reprinted the articles directly from the newspapers in which they originally appeared; passages omitted from the book by Hazlitt were enclosed within square brackets. Jackson included three articles from the *Examiner* but omitted by Hazlitt in an appendix. His fine editorial work provided the source for most of Howe's annotations, and has been exceedingly helpful to me.

I have taken 1818 as my copy-text; it was in that form that Hazlitt wanted to enshrine his reviews in book form and he produced no further authorised edition. Wherever possible, I have collated reviews against the original newspaper or periodical sources and have included variants of critical interest in my annotations. Anyone wishing to see the original texts may find many of them in *The Examiner* (reprinted in facsimile by Pickering & Chatto), or in Jackson's edition. I have intervened to make the following substantive emendations: 'supriority' is corrected to 'superiority' (p. 75); 'Bentevole' to 'Mentevole' (p. 170 — apparently Hazlitt's error); 'tome' to 'some' (p. 201); and 'appaling' to 'appalling' (p. 207).

Reception

The *British Critic*, which usually took a rather negative line on Hazlitt, offered an approving, if patronizing, notice. It began by observing that Hazlitt 'is no lover of readers that fare sumptuously in a clean shirt every day', before commending the volume, 'For there is in it very little Jacobinism, and to the best of our belief, no blasphemy'.¹ After a lengthy summary of the contents, with exhaustive quotations, the review concludes:

He possesses naturally considerable acuteness, and has talents for composition of no ordinary quality; but unfortunately he seems to have upon him an almost maniacal dread of being *tame*; he writes, if we may so express ourselves, like a man in convulsions; and appears to think, that unless he clenches his fist and 'grinds his teeth', to use an expression of his own, 'like a man with a locked jaw', his manner will want the proper emphasis . . .²

The *British Review* decided by May 1819 that, with four books in print, one of them having gone into a second edition, Hazlitt could no longer be ignored; but its attentions could not have been less welcome to him. His aim, it begins by saying, 'appears to be to destroy the very foundations of morality and decorum, by a series of periodical attacks upon all received opinion, and by the systematic ridicule of every thing that is serious or respectable'.³ The thrust of this reviewer's argument is that in the *View* Hazlitt elevates the theatre to a scale of importance out of all proportion to its actual value. Hazlitt's discussion of Kean's 'intensity' is mocked, as is his praise of Sarah Siddons. The reviewer then picks up Hazlitt's promotion of the theatre as a device for education and uses such plays as *The Beggar's Opera* to suggest that this only goes to show how degraded his own moral standards are.

NOTES

- 1 *British Critic*, 10 (October 1818), 441–5, p. 441. The judgement that the *View* contains 'very little Jacobinism' is, when all is said and done, baffling. One of its glories is that it is suffused with bitterness and rage at Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo and the Bourbon restoration.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 444–5.
- 3 *British Review*, 13 (May 1819), 313–39, pp. 313–14.

DIRECTORY OF PRINCIPAL SINGERS, ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

WILLIAM ABBOTT (1789–1843), a member of the Covent Garden company for many years from 1812.

FRANCES ABINGTON (1737–1815) was tremendously successful in Dublin before returning to London where, under Garrick's management at Drury Lane, she was a distinguished comic actress, excelling in parts such as Beatrice, Lady Townley, Millamant, and Charlotte in *The Hypocrite*. She joined Covent Garden in 1782, and retired from the stage in April 1799. Neither Hazlitt nor Lamb saw her perform, though Lamb refers favourably to her in 'The New Acting', *The Examiner* 1813.

MRS ALSOP did not continue long on the stage. She was the daughter of Mrs Jordan and Richard Daly, the Irish theatrical manager.

GIUSEPPE AMBROGETTI was in London 1817–21. Hazlitt saw him in *Don Giovanni*, April 1817 (p. 199 below).

CARLO ANGRISANI (b. circa 1760), a bass whom Hazlitt heard in *Don Giovanni* in April 1817 (see p. 199, below).

SAMUEL JAMES ARNOLD (1774–1852) was manager of the English Opera House, the Lyceum in the Strand, from 1809. He was also the author of some execrable plays, including *The Unknown Guest* and *The King's Proxy* (pp. 54–6, 74–5, below). He managed Drury Lane from 1812 to 1815, when he resigned after Whitbread committed suicide. He reopened the English Opera in 1816. During the 1820s he was friendly with Lamb.

JOHN BANNISTER (1760–1836) began his career under Garrick's patronage in 1778. According to Lamb, he was to become one of the most popular actors 'with the town'; Leigh Hunt described him as 'the first low comedian on the stage'. He created the parts of Walter in *The Children in the Wood* and Echo in *The World*, which he reprised for his farewell performance on 1 June 1815, which Hazlitt attended and enjoyed (see pp. 58–9, below). Hazlitt saw him on his first visit to the theatre in London, c. 1793. Lamb mentions him in 'On Some of the Old Actors', 'Old China', 'Stage Illusion', 'The New Acting' and 'The Old Actors'.

ANN SPRANGER BARRY (1734–1801) first appeared at Drury Lane in 1767–8, and soon acquired a great reputation both in tragedy and comedy. She married Spranger Barry the actor in 1768.

GEORGE BARTLEY (?1782–1858) made his London debut in December 1802 as Orlando. He spent some years as an understudy for Bannister, who took serious roles, and then toured the provinces, often taking comic parts. He married Sarah Smith in 1814, whose reputation overtook his. On 13 October she appeared as Ophelia, and on 12 April he played his favourite character, Falstaff. They went on a highly successful tour of America in 1818.

SARAH BARTLEY see SARAH SMITH

LADY ELIZA BECHER see ELIZA O'NEILL

PIERRE IGNACE BEGREY (1783–1863), appeared in London, 1815–22.

WILLIAM BLANCHARD (1769–1835), one of the Covent Garden comedians.

MARIA THERESA BLAND (1769–1838) made her first appearance at Drury Lane (as Miss Romanzini) in 1786. Hazlitt heard her on the same bill with Dignum and Suett, 'in the year 1792, the first time I ever was at a play'; see the *Plain Speaker* dialogue, 'The New School of Reform', vol. 8, below. The year, however, may have been 1790.

JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH (1796–1852), whose first important appearances in London are noticed by Hazlitt on pp. 188–9. His career went into rapid decline after the engagements that caused such a fuss at Drury Lane and Covent Garden (see p. 259, below), and he emigrated to America in 1821.

SARAH BOOTH (1793–1867) worked in the provinces before making her London debut in 1810. She became a member of the Covent Garden company, in which capacity Hazlitt saw her in *The Tempest* in 1815 (see p. 65, below).

SUSANNAH BOYCE, dancer, one of three children of Thomas Boyce the dancer and actor. She was one of the Drury Lane company 1805–19, and frequently acted in Brighton.

JOHN BRAHAM (?1774–1856), one of the most successful tenor singers of the day, first appeared at Covent Garden in 1787. He became principal tenor there in 1801, and held undisputed supremacy in opera, oratorio and concert performances for about forty years. Hazlitt heard him in the oratorios of 1816 (see pp. 128–30, below).

MISS BRISTOW, wife of Joseph Grimaldi from 1802 onwards, an actress at Drury Lane.

VIOLANTE CAMPORESE (b. 1785), a soprano whom Hazlitt heard in *Don Giovanni* in April 1817 (see p. 199, below).

ANGELICA CATALANI (1780–1849), Italian soprano and opera singer, sang before Napoleon at St-Cloud in 1806, and in December made her London debut at the King's Theatre. She was tremendously successful, and remained in England until 1814, winning enormous praise and high fees. Appearances included the first English performance of *Le nozze di Figaro*, June 1812. Vincent Novello was her pianist and conductor. For nearly three decades she sang at all the great opera

DIRECTORY OF PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS

houses in Europe. She sang again in England, in 1824 and 1828, immediately before she retired to Florence.

ROBERT COATES (1772–1848), also known as Romeo Coates, Diamond Coates, and the Amateur of Fashion. He was a highly eccentric actor, and in time his audiences grew weary of laughing at him. Hazlitt had little time for him (see p. 223, below).

THOMAS COBHAM (1786–1842) appeared as Shylock at Covent Garden, 16 April 1816, and provided a performance that was, according to Hazlitt, ‘a vile one’ (see p. 130, below). Despite a more successful second appearance on 22 April, Cobham left London for Dublin and the provinces.

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CONWAY (1789–1828) made his first London appearance at Covent Garden as Alexander the Great on 4 October 1813. He starred later in the year as Othello, Jaffier (in *Venice Preserv'd*) and Romeo. He played Romeo again when Eliza O’Neill made her London debut as Juliet, Thursday 6 October 1814 at Covent Garden. Hazlitt thought well of her but had some very harsh words for him, for which he later apologized (see pp. 31, 222–3; he thought little of Conway in the part of Theseus (p. 107).

GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE (1756–1811) was a star in the provinces before ever appearing in London. A giant in the theatre, he was a brilliant actor, and a chronic alcoholic. After many relapses into debt and drink he appeared in London for the first time, 31 October 1801, at Covent Garden, as Richard III. He was an instant success, and went on to play Shylock, Iago and Macbeth, among other roles. His biggest successes were probably as Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, Iago, Richard III, Sir Giles Overreach, Shylock and Sir Archy McSarcasm. His final performance in London was as Falstaff on 5 June 1810. Hazlitt compared his Richard III and Macbeth to that of Kean (pp. 12, 37 below), and pronounced him ‘one of the very best actors we have had on the stage’ (p. 131).

MRS CRAUFORD; see ANN SPRANGER BARRY

GAETANO CRIVELLI (1774–1836), a tenor, whom Hazlitt heard in *Don Giovanni* in April 1817 (see p. 199, below).

MARY ANN DAVENPORT (1765?–1843) first appeared at Covent Garden in 1794. Early in her career she developed a strong reputation as a character actress, playing such roles as Mrs Malaprop, Mistress Quickly in *1 Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and Mrs Peachum in *The Beggar’s Opera* (a role to which Hazlitt thought her particularly well suited, see p. 87, below). Hazlitt also saw her in *What’s a Man of Fashion?* (see p. 94, below).

MARIA REBECCA DAVISON (?1780–1858) was a leading actress at Drury Lane for her first season there, 1804. She remained with the company for the next fourteen years. In September 1819 she made her first appearance at Covent Garden as

Lady Teazle. Hazlitt saw her a number of times, including at Jack Bannister's farewell performance in *The World* (see pp. 58–9, below); he accused her of horse-play in *Where to Find a Friend* (p. 92).

MARIE THÉRÈSE DE CAMP see MARIA THERESA KEMBLE

VINCENT DE CAMP (Maria Theresa Kemble's brother) (1779–1839), actor and singer, described by Lamb as 'a fellow with the make of a jockey and the air of a lamplighter'. He began to act in 1792, and was a member of the Drury Lane company 1813–14. He created the part of Isidore in Coleridge's *Remorse*, 1813. He was apparently an actor of doubtful talent, usually cast in comedy. Hazlitt had little good to say about him after seeing *The Hypocrite* (pp. 77–8). He went to the provinces in 1814, and later emigrated to America.

MARIA DICKONS (?1770–1833), vocalist, played a number of parts including that of Polly in *The Beggar's Opera* and Mandane in *Artaxerxes*. She joined the Drury Lane company in 1811, and sang in the oratorios there in 1813 and 1815. Hazlitt saw her in May 1815 in Arnold's wretched concoction, *The Unknown Guest*, in which, according to him, she did not distinguish herself (p. 55). After a successful tour of the continent, 1816–19, she reappeared at Covent Garden and retired in 1820.

JAMES WILLIAM DODD (1734–96), English comedian who was the original Sir Benjamin Backbite in *The School for Scandal*, 1777. He is remembered fondly by Lamb in 'On Some of the Old Actors', and by Hazlitt in his review of Bannister's farewell performance (p. 59, below).

WILLIAM DOWTON (1764–1851) trained as an architect but ran away with a company of strolling players. He made his first London appearance at Drury Lane under Wroughton's management in 1796, and became one of the most versatile actors of the day. Not commended by Hazlitt as either Polonius or Shylock (see pp. 18, 80–1), he won measured approval for his performance in *The Hypocrite* (p. 77), and even praise for his part in *The Double Gallant* (p. 196). In October 1815 he played Shylock at Drury Lane at the behest of Byron.

JOHN EDWIN THE YOUNGER (1768–1805), comedian, son of John Edwin the elder (1749–90). Lamb refers to him in 'On the Acting of Munden', as does Hazlitt in his review of Bannister's farewell (p. 59).

DANIEL EGERTON (1772–1835), member of the Covent Garden Company. Hazlitt saw him act with Mr Bibby in *The Man of the World* (p. 131).

SARAH EGERTON (1782–1847) first appeared in London in 1811 and retired in 1835; wife of Daniel Egerton. Hazlitt thought well of her Meg Merrilies (p. 124).

ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON (1774–1831), actor, and manager of Drury Lane, 1819–26. He was responsible, as lessee of the theatre, for the engagement of Kean, Pope, Holland, Dowton, Munden, Harley, Oxberry, Knight, Braham and Madame Vestris, among others. He won enthusiastic praise from Hazlitt for his role in *The World* opposite Jack Bannister (p. 59).

DIRECTORY OF PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS

- JOHN EMERY (1777–1822) made his London debut in 1800 and quickly became a versatile character actor, spending most of his professional life as part of the Covent Garden company. His speciality was country folk; for Hazlitt's opinion of him see pp. 65–6, below. Lamb praises him in 'Stage Illusion'.
- CHARLES FARLEY (1771–1859), actor, dramatist, and stage-manager. For many years he was involved with the staging of pantomimes at Covent Garden; he was known for inventing mechanical devices for use in the theatre. He is the special effects man whose work Hazlitt lampoons at pp. 84–5, below.
- ELIZABETH FARREN (1759–1829), who first played in London in 1777, in 1797 married the 12th Earl of Derby. Her last appearance was in the character of Lady Teazle (8 April 1797). Hazlitt writes of her in *Notes of a Journey*: 'The last English actress who shone in genteel comedy was Miss Farren, and she was just leaving the stage when I first became acquainted with it.'
- HARRIET FAUCIT was the wife of Saville Faucit, also an actor. She first played Desdemona at Covent Garden, 7 October 1813, and occasionally repeated the role. Hazlitt described her portrayal as 'very pretty' (p. 172).
- JOHN FAWCETT (1769–1837), comedian and dramatist whose talents Hazlitt generally admired; see, for instance, his comments on *The Agreeable Surprise*, p. 151.
- JOSEPHINE FODOR-MAINVIELLE (b. 1793), opera singer, whom Hazlitt heard during the oratorios of 1816 – one of her first appearances in London (p. 129). He saw her also in *Don Giovanni* the following year (p. 198).
- MARIA FOOTE (?1797–1867), English actress, daughter of the manager of a theatre in Plymouth. She played Juliet at the age of thirteen and appeared at Covent Garden in 1814 in Elizabeth Inchbald's *The Child of Nature*. Hazlitt was evidently very taken with her in that role (see p. 26). She went on to play Beatrice, Desdemona, Ophelia and Rosalind. She was notorious for some well-publicised love affairs and retired from the stage in 1831 to become the Countess of Harrington. Lamb too was evidently enthralled by her looks.
- HENRY GATTIE (1774–1844), vocalist and actor, was a member of the Drury Lane company from 1813 until his retirement in 1833. Hazlitt commended him in *The Maid and the Magpie* and *The World* (pp. 58, 76).
- JULIA GLOVER (1779–1850) was sold by her father to Samuel Glover, the supposed heir to a large fortune, in 1800; this slowed down her career, but she managed to appear as the original Alhadra in Coleridge's *Remorse*, 23 January 1813. On 12 February 1814 she took the part of the Queen in *Richard III*, opposite Kean (see p. 14, below), and went on to play Emilia to his Othello. She also played Andromache on Macready's first appearance at Covent Garden, September 1816. Hazlitt provides a judicious assessment of her talents at p. 148, below.
- JOSEPHINA GRASSINI (1773–1850), Italian contralto who became very popular in Italy and France, before making her London debut in June 1804. She travelled

widely, and was back in London for the season of 1814, when Hazlitt heard her in *Didone Abandonnata* (see pp. 27–8, below). She returned to Italy after Napoleon's final defeat.

JOSEPH GRIMALDI (1779–1837) was the foremost clown and comic actor of his generation. He made his first appearance at Covent Garden in the part of Orson in Thomas Dibdin's *Valentine and Orson*, 9 October 1806 – a part in which Hazlitt apparently saw him (see p. 66, below). His greatest success was probably as Squire Bugle, and later as the clown, in the pantomime of *Mother Goose*, December 1806 (frequently revived thereafter).

JOHN PRITT HARLEY (1780–1858) made his first appearance in London at the English Opera House in July 1815. Soon afterwards he joined the company at Drury Lane, where he remained till 1835, and made a great reputation as a comic actor and singer. After Jack Bannister's retirement, he succeeded to many of his friend's parts, including Sylvester Daggerwood, in which Hazlitt saw him in 1816 (p. 149).

SARAH HARLOWE (1765–1852), a low comedy actress who first appeared at Covent Garden in 1790. She frequently acted chambermaids, shrews and old women.

CHARLES HOLLAND (1768–?1849), actor, played with the Drury Lane company, 1796–1820. His career was undistinguished; Hazlitt thought ill of his performance in Kean's *Richard II.* (p. 54).

CHARLES INCLEDON (1763–1826), the tenor, a good singer but a bad actor, appeared at Covent Garden from 1790 till 1815. Hazlitt saw his first appearance at the New English Opera, in *Love in a Village* in August 1816; on that occasion he commended Incledon as 'a true old English singer', but in *The Castle of Andalusia* a week or so later, he was more critical (see pp. 161, 162).

HENRY ERSKINE JOHNSTON (1777–?1830), the 'Scottish Roscius', was well established as a supporting actor in London by the time Hazlitt defended his acting in *The Man of the World* (pp. 183–4).

JOHN HENRY JOHNSTONE (1749–1828), actor and vocalist, was a member of the Drury Lane company from 1803 to 1820. Hazlitt commended him in *Where to Find a Friend* (pp. 91–2).

RICHARD JONES (1779–1851), known as 'Gentleman Jones', trained as an architect, but was compelled to turn to the stage because of his father's financial difficulties. After a successful career in the provinces he made his London debut at Covent Garden in October 1807 as Goldfinch in *The Road to Ruin*. He went on to become one of the most popular comedians on the stage. Hazlitt thought well of him as Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 31, below), but thought him the principal cause of the 'diversity of wretchedness' he witnessed in July 1815 (p. 68).

DOROTHEA JORDAN (1762–1816), one of the greatest of English comic actresses,

DIRECTORY OF PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS

and for long the mistress of the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William IV. She was part of the Drury Lane company from 1785 to 1809.

EDMUND KEAN (1787–1833) began his stage career in the provinces. At Dorchester one of his performances was witnessed by Arnold, the stage-manager of Drury Lane, through whom an engagement was made with the management of that theatre. Kean insisted on playing Shylock, and though the management and his fellow-actors were incredulous as to his powers, his success was undisputed (see Hazlitt's comments, pp. 9–10, below). Hazlitt's reviews in the *Morning Chronicle* did much for his reputation. Henceforward his many triumphs in London were associated with the Drury Lane theatre, except for a short period from 1827 to 1829, when his services were transferred to Covent Garden.

FRANCES MARIA KELLY (1790–1882), actress and singer, made her first appearance at Drury Lane at the age of seven. She joined the company in 1799 and played with all the great actors and actresses of the day: John and Charles Kemble, Mrs Siddons, Mrs Jordan, Munden, Suett, Liston, Mathews, Bannister and Catalani. She was especially associated with Kean, whom she had known in childhood, and played Ophelia to his Hamlet. In 1816 the deranged George Barnett, a desperate admirer, shot at her on stage at Drury Lane. Lamb proposed marriage to her in 1819, but she rejected him. They nonetheless remained good friends for the rest of his life. Hazlitt invariably thought highly of her.

LYDIA KELLY was the younger sister of Frances Kelly. Hazlitt saw her in *Old Customs* in August 1816, a play he did not really care for (pp. 159–60).

MICHAEL KELLY (1762–1826), actor, vocalist and composer, uncle of Frances Kelly, won success in Italy and Austria in the 1770s and 1780s, and appeared in the first performance of Mozart's *Le Nozze de Figaro*. He sang at Drury Lane in 1787, and remained a popular performer in England until 1808. As musical director at Drury Lane, 1793 onwards, he composed musical settings for many dramatic works, including Coleridge's *Remorse*. Hazlitt was unimpressed by his work on Arnold's *The Unknown Guest* (p. 54).

CHARLES KEMBLE (1775–1854), the younger brother of Mrs Siddons and John Philip Kemble, first appeared in London in 1794, and became proprietor and manager of Covent Garden. He was not suited to tragedy, and best known for such parts as Benedick and Mercutio. He was a friend of Lamb's.

MRS CHARLES KEMBLE, see MARIA THERESA KEMBLE

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE (1757–1823) was a successful dramatist and adaptor of other plays before winning success as an actor, as Hamlet, at Drury Lane in September 1783. During the next 19 years, which he spent with the Drury Lane company, he played all the major tragic and comic roles in Shakespeare. Hazlitt must have seen him act on many occasions. His last new character was Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, February 1812, and he appeared on the London stage for the last time as Coriolanus, 23 June 1817 (see Hazlitt's review, pp. 209–13).

MARIA THERESA KEMBLE (also known as Marie Thérèse De Camp) (1774–1838) was the wife of Charles Kemble. She first acted at Drury Lane in 1786 and became successful as Polly in *The Beggar's Opera*, 1792. Having married Kemble in July 1806 she migrated with the family to Covent Garden, where she remained for the rest of her career.

STEPHEN KEMBLE (1758–1822), another brother of Mrs Siddons and John Kemble, on whose Falstaff Hazlitt did a droll demolition job (pp. 172–3).

THOMAS KING (1730–1805), English actor and dramatist, who first appeared at Drury Lane in 1748 under Garrick. He was the original Sir Peter Teazle and Puff. He was later manager of Drury Lane under Sheridan. Hazlitt praised him highly.

EDWARD KNIGHT (1774–1826), English comic actor and dramatist, first appeared in London in 1809 and went on to become one of the Drury Lane company where he remained until his death. Hazlitt saw him in *The Unknown Guest* (p. 56).

JOHN LISTON (1776–1846) was the favourite actor and good friend of Lamb. His early appearances in tragedies were not notable, but he gained success as a comedic actor, becoming the first to command a salary higher than a tragedian. His skill was such that he had only to appear on stage to set the audience laughing. He and his wife frequently visited the Lambs, sometimes at their Thursday evening parties, and it would be a fair guess (though one for which I have no evidence) that Hazlitt encountered them there. Like many comics, Liston was apparently rather a depressed man, but he enjoyed practical jokes and puns.

WILLIAM LOVEGROVE (1778–1816) made his reputation at Bath, and appeared in London in 1810. Hazlitt admired his Launcelot Gobbo (p. 81).

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY (1793–1873), English actor, first appeared in Birmingham in 1810. He was engaged at Covent Garden in 1816 where Hazlitt reviewed his first appearance in *The Distressed Mother* (pp. 166–7). He went on to become one of the most eminent Shakespearean actors of the age.

MRS MARDYN had been very successful in Dublin. A false report was spread that she had eloped with Byron.

CHARLES MATHEWS (1776–1835) first appeared in London in 1803 and made his name as one of the best jobbing actors of the day. He played a wide variety of character parts, including Sir Anthony Absolute, Fluellen and Falstaff. After a series of accidents he was made permanently lame, and his acting consisted more and more of imitations; hence Hazlitt's comment that Mathews was 'an excellent mimic' (p. 7, below). He was later a friend of Coleridge and the Lambs.

LUCIA ELIZABETH MATHEWS, aka MADAME VESTRIS (1797–1856), was a distinguished dancer and contralto. Hazlitt heard her early in her career, a year

DIRECTORY OF PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS

- after her marriage to Armand Vestris, in *Didone Abandonnata*, August 1814 (p. 28, below). Success came in 1815 with her performance as the protagonist in Peter Winter's *Il ratto di Proserpina*.
- ROBERT CAMPBELL MAYWOOD (1790–1856) made his name in Glasgow before appearing in London as Shylock, Drury Lane, 25 September 1817, where he was reviewed by Hazlitt (p. 208).
- MR MEGGETT, from Edinburgh, made his first appearance at the Haymarket on 19 July 1815. For Hazlitt's opinion of him see p. 69.
- JOSEPH SHEPHERD MUNDEN (1758–1832), English comedian, first appeared at Covent Garden in 1790 where he remained for many years. He eventually moved to Drury Lane. He was a favourite of Lamb's and a friend. Hazlitt also admired him and praised his performance in *The Merchant of Bruges* (p. 96).
- CHARLES MURRAY (1754–1821), after acquiring considerable reputation in the provinces, appeared at Covent Garden in 1796. Hazlitt approved of his performance in *Adelaide* (p. 141).
- GIUSEPPE NALDI (1770–1820) first appeared in London in 1806. For Hazlitt's opinion of his performance in *Così Fan Tutte* see p. 158.
- ELIZA O'NEILL (1791–1872), afterwards Lady Becher. After much success in the provinces she came to London and made her debut at Covent Garden in the role of Juliet, August 1814 (reviewed by Hazlitt, pp. 29–31, below). Hazlitt praised her as Isabella and Belvidera; she was also good in comedy and played Lady Teazle. Her final appearance on stage was in 1819, prior to her marriage to William Becher, later created a baronet.
- MARY ANN ORGER (1788–1849) appeared at Drury Lane in 1808. She was the wife of Thomas Orger, a Quaker. Hazlitt saw her in *The Hypocrite* (p. 77).
- WILLIAM OXBERRY (1784–1824), actor, started at Covent Garden in 1807 under Kemble, and moved to the Drury Lane company in 1809. Hazlitt saw him on several occasions, admiring his performance in *The Maid and the Magpie* and *The Hypocrite* (pp. 75, 77), and contributed sixteen prefaces to Oxberry's edition of plays, *The New English Drama*.
- JOHN PALMER (?1742–98) first appeared at the Haymarket and then with Garrick at Drury Lane. He was excellent as Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch, and was admired by both Lamb and Hazlitt.
- WILLIAM PARSONS (1736–95), comedian, first appeared at Drury Lane in 1762, and quickly developed an expertise playing old men. He was much admired by Lamb and Hazlitt.
- RICHARD PHILLIPS was a dancer, actor and manager, originally from Wales. He was much promoted by Elliston.
- ALEXANDER POPE (1763–1835), actor and painter, appeared at both Drury Lane and Covent Garden. He played Aldobrand, opposite Kean, in Maturin's *Bertram* (pp. 136–9).

- ELIZABETH POPE (?1744–97) wife of Alexander Pope the actor. She made her first appearance in 1768 and became famous in a wide range of parts.
- JOHN QUICK (1748–1831), comedian, played at the Haymarket and Drury Lane, but for most of his career was at Covent Garden. He retired in 1813.
- ALEXANDER RAE (1782–1820) made his London debut at Drury Lane on 14 November 1812, as Hamlet. He later played Norval in *Douglas*, Romeo, George Barnwell, and Hastings in *Jane Shore*. On 23 January 1813 he was the original Don Ordonio in Coleridge's *Remorse*. A year later he played Bassanio to Kean's Shylock on the latter's London debut – a performance that failed to win Hazlitt's whole-hearted approval (see p. 3, below). On 20 October 1814 he was Othello to Kean's Iago, and on 5 November Macduff to Kean's Macbeth. His final stage appearance at Drury Lane was in June 1820.
- JAMES GRANT RAYMOND (1768–1817), actor, manager, playwright and editor, was a member of the Drury Lane company from 1799 onwards. He began managing in the 1811–12 season; he was a popular actor and a respected and skilled manager.
- SARAH SIDDONS (1755–1831), eldest daughter of Roger Kemble (and sister of John Philip and Charles Kemble), started acting as a child, and went on to become known for both her beauty and her acting talent. She began acting at Drury Lane in 1775 under Garrick's management; despite some setbacks, she went on to become an enormous success, particularly in roles such as Isabella (in Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage*), Belvidera (*Venice Preserv'd*), Jane Shore, and Lady Macbeth. Her final appearance was in 1819. See Hazlitt's article on her, pp. 144–6, below.
- SAMUEL SIMMONS (1777?–1819), a regular member of the Covent Garden company from 1796, and very successful as a comedian. Moses in *The School for Scandal* was one of his parts.
- JOHN SINCLAIR (1791–1857), tenor singer, whom Hazlitt saw in *The Libertine*, May 1817 (see p. 204, below).
- SARAH SMITH (1783–1850) made her London debut at Covent Garden on 2 October 1805 as Lady Townley in *The Provok'd Husband*. She was somewhat overshadowed by Mrs Siddons, who had a monopoly of the characters in which she would have excelled; as a result she went to Dublin, 1808–9, where she was tremendously successful. Thomas Moore wrote a melologue for her. She was welcomed back to London, this time to Drury Lane, where, 23 January 1813, she created the character of Teresa in Coleridge's *Remorse*. The retirement of Mrs Siddons in June 1812 gave her a chance to thrive, and, for a while, she did. But the appearance of Miss O'Neill in 1814 left her overshadowed once more. On 23 August 1814 she married George Bartley. Hazlitt saw her in *The Merchant of Venice* opposite Kean in January 1814 (see p. 10, below).

DIRECTORY OF PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS

- MARGARET AGNES SOMERVILLE (1799–1883), whose first appearance Hazlitt reviewed (see p. 139, below). In 1819 she married Alfred Bunn the theatrical manager. Her subsequent appearances were fitful and she retired at an early age.
- CATHERINE STEPHENS (1794–1882), English singer and actress, first appeared at Covent Garden in September 1813 as Mandane in Arne's *Artaxerxes*, and in October as Polly in *The Beggar's Opera* at Drury Lane. She played mainly at Covent Garden, 1813–22, and at Drury Lane, 1823–7. She was a great favourite of Hazlitt's, especially as Polly. She also enjoyed a successful career as a concert soprano. In 1835 she retired and three years later married the 5th earl of Essex.
- ANNA SELINA STORACE (1765–1817), vocalist and actress, returned to England after a successful career on the continent in 1787. In later years she appeared frequently with John Braham, by whom she had a son. She enjoyed a highly successful career and retired in 1807; apparently she died of depression after Braham's marriage to another woman.
- RICHARD ('DICKY') SUETT (1755–1805), comedian, enjoyed much success, particularly as Shakespeare's fools. Hazlitt and Lamb both admired him.
- DANIEL TERRY (?1780–1829) originally trained as an architect, but turned to the stage. He first played in London in 1812, and was successful in Shakespeare and Sheridan. He was an intimate friend and correspondent of Sir Walter Scott, many of whose novels he adapted for the stage. Hazlitt approved of his adaptation of *Guy Mannering* (p. 124).
- JAMES TOKELEY appeared at Drury Lane in 1813, and died 9 January 1819.
- SIGNOR TRAMEZZANI, Italian tenor who was not a favourite with Hazlitt. Hazlitt heard, and disliked, his performance in *Didone Abandonnata*, August 1814 (see pp. 27–8, below).
- MISS TYRER married John Liston in 1807. She was an actress and a singer, and was a favourite in burlesque. She was very tiny but also, according to Cruikshank's etching of her as Queen Dollabella in Fielding's *Tom Thumb*, very fat. She retired from the stage when her husband left Covent Garden in 1822 and died in 1854.
- MADAME VESTRIS; see MATHEWS, LUCIA ELIZABETH
- JAMES WILLIAM WALLACK (?1791–1864) first appeared at Drury Lane in 1807, and went on to build up a reputation as a versatile supporting actor. He went to America in 1818. On occasion he drew admiration from Hazlitt (see, for instance, p. 112).
- THOMAS WESTON (1737–76) made his London debut at Drury Lane in the summer of 1761, under the management of Foote and Murphy. He was a great success as a comic actor, most notably as Jerry Sneak, a henpecked husband, in Foote's *Mayor of Garratt*.
- RALPH WEWITZER (1748–1825) enjoyed a long career, chiefly as a supporting actor. He excelled, apparently, in French, German and Jewish parts and was said to be

the best stage Jew of the age. Hazlitt approved of him in *The Merchant of Venice* (p. 81).

SOPHIA WOODFALL was the daughter of William Woodfall, the Parliamentary reporter and drama critic. She became a principal tragic actress in Manchester and Liverpool, and was the author of two novels.

BENJAMIN WRENCH (1778–1843), after playing at Bath and York appeared in London in 1809 and became a well-known comedian at Drury Lane, The Lyceum and Covent Garden.

RICHARD WROUGHTON (1748–1822) first appeared on stage in London in 1768; over his seventeen years at Covent Garden he became a versatile and popular actor. In 1787 he moved to Drury Lane for most of the remainder of his career, playing a vast range of characters. Although he retired in 1798 he was enticed back to Drury Lane two years later. By the time Hazlitt saw him opposite Kean in *Richard III*, in 1814 (p. 14, below), Wroughton was very close to the end of his career. Exhausted, he acted for the last time in 1815.

CHARLES MAYNE YOUNG (1777–1856) enjoyed a successful career in the provinces before appearing on the London stage as Hamlet in June 1807. He went on to play such parts as Osmond in *The Castle Spectre*, Sir Edward Mortimer in *The Iron Chest*, Harry Dornton in *The Road to Ruin*, Zanga in *The Revenge*, Old Wilmot in *Fatal Curiosity*, and George Barnwell. He understudied Kemble, often playing opposite him, but as Kemble began to restrict his appearances, Young took over as the leading tragedian of the day, excelling in such parts as Prospero, Jaques, Joseph Surface, Coriolanus, Mark Antony, Richard III, Cassius, Iago and Macheath. In 1814 his supremacy was challenged by Kean; although he continued to appear in London, in such parts as Falstaff, King John and Brutus, he began to spend more time in the provinces. At Bath he won considerable success as Lear. He appeared at Drury Lane for the first time in October 1822, as Hamlet, dividing the lead with Kean. It was as Hamlet that he retired from the stage in 1832. Hazlitt admired his Mark Antony in 1813 (p. 22, below), and in 1815 described him at some length as a ‘respectable actor’ (see p. 65, below).

A
V I E W
OF
THE ENGLISH STAGE;
OR,
A SERIES OF DRAMATIC CRITICISMS.

BY
WILLIAM HAZLITT.

“FOR I AM NOTHING IF NOT CRITICAL.”

London :

PRINTED FOR ROBERT STODART, 81, STRAND ;
ANDERSON AND CHASE, 40, WEST SMITHFIELD ;
AND BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH.

1818.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

A VIEW OF THE ENGLISH STAGE

Preface

The Stage is one great source of public amusement, not to say instruction. A good play, well acted, passes away a whole evening delightfully at a certain period of life, agreeably at all times; we read the account of it next morning with pleasure, and it generally furnishes one leading topic of conversation for the afternoon. The disputes on the merits or defects of the last new piece, or of a favourite performer, are as common, as frequently renewed, and carried on with as much eagerness and skill, as those on almost any other subject. Rochefoucault, I believe, it was, who said that the reason why lovers were so fond of one another's company was, that / they were always talking about themselves.¹ The same reason almost might be given for the interest we feel in talking about plays and players; they are 'the brief chronicles of the time,'² the epitome of human life and manners. While we are talking about them, we are thinking about ourselves. They 'hold the mirror up to Nature';³ and our thoughts are turned to the Stage as naturally and as fondly as a fine lady turns to contemplate her face in the glass. It is a glass too, in which the wise may see themselves, but in which the vain and superficial see their own virtues, and laugh at the follies of others. The curiosity which every one has to know how his voice and manner can be mimicked, must have been remarked or felt by most of us. It is no wonder then, that we should feel the same sort of curiosity and interest, in seeing those whose business it is to 'imitate humanity' in general, and who do it sometimes 'abominably,'⁴ at other times admirably. Of these, some record is due to the / world; but the player's art is one that perishes with him, and leaves no traces of itself, but in the faint descriptions of the pen or pencil. Yet how eagerly do we stop to look at the prints from Zoffany's pictures of Garrick and Weston!⁵ How much we are vexed, that so much of Colley Cibber's *Life*⁶ is taken up with the accounts of his own managership, and so little with those inimitable portraits which he has occasionally given of the actors of his time! How fortunate we think

ourselves, when we can meet with any person who remembers the principal performers of the last age, and who can give us some distant idea of Garrick's nature, or of an Abington's grace! We are always indignant at Smollett, for having introduced a perverse caricature of the English Roscius,⁷ which staggers our faith in his faultless excellence while reading it. On the contrary, we are pleased to collect anecdotes of this celebrated actor, which shew his power over the human heart, and enable / us to measure his genius with that of others by its effects. I have heard, for instance, that once, when Garrick was acting *Lear*, the spectators in the front row of the pit, not being able to see him well in the kneeling scene, where he utters the curse, rose up, when those behind them, not willing to interrupt the scene by remonstrating, immediately rose up too, and in this manner, the whole pit rose up, without uttering a syllable, and so that you might hear a pin drop. At another time, the crown of straw which he wore in the same character fell off, or was discomposed, which would have produced a burst of laughter at any common actor to whom such an accident had happened; but such was the deep interest in the character, and such the power of rivetting the attention possessed by this actor, that not the slightest notice was taken of the circumstance, but the whole audience remained bathed in silent tears. The knowledge of circumstances like these, serves to keep alive the memory of / past excellence, and to stimulate future efforts. It was thought that a work containing a detailed account of the Stage in our own times – a period not unfruitful in theatrical genius – might not be wholly without its use.

The volume here offered to the public, is a collection of theatrical Criticisms which have appeared with little interruption, during the last four years, in different newspapers – the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Champion*, the *Examiner*, and lastly, the *Times*. How I came to be regularly transferred from one of these papers to the other, sometimes formally and sometimes without ceremony, till I was forced to quit the last-mentioned by want of health and leisure, would make rather an amusing story, but that I do not chuse to tell 'the secrets of the prison-house.'⁸ I would, however, advise any one who has an ambition to write, and to write *his best*, in the periodical press, to get if possible 'a situation' in the *Times* newspaper, the / Editor of which is a man of business, and not of letters.⁹ He may write there as long and as good articles as he can, without being turned out for it,¹⁰ – unless he should be too prolix on the subject of the Bourbons,¹¹ and in that case he may set up an opposition paper on his own account – as 'one who loved not wisely but too well.'¹²

The first, and (as I think) the best articles in this series, appeared originally in the *Morning Chronicle*. They are those relating to Mr Kean. I went to see him the first night of his appearing in *Shylock*.¹³ I remember it well. The boxes were empty, and the pit not half full: 'some quantity of barren spectators and idle renters were thinly scattered to make up a show.'¹⁴ The whole presented a dreary, hopeless aspect. I was in considerable apprehension for the result. From the first scene in which Mr Kean came on, my doubts were at an end. I had been told to give as favourable an account