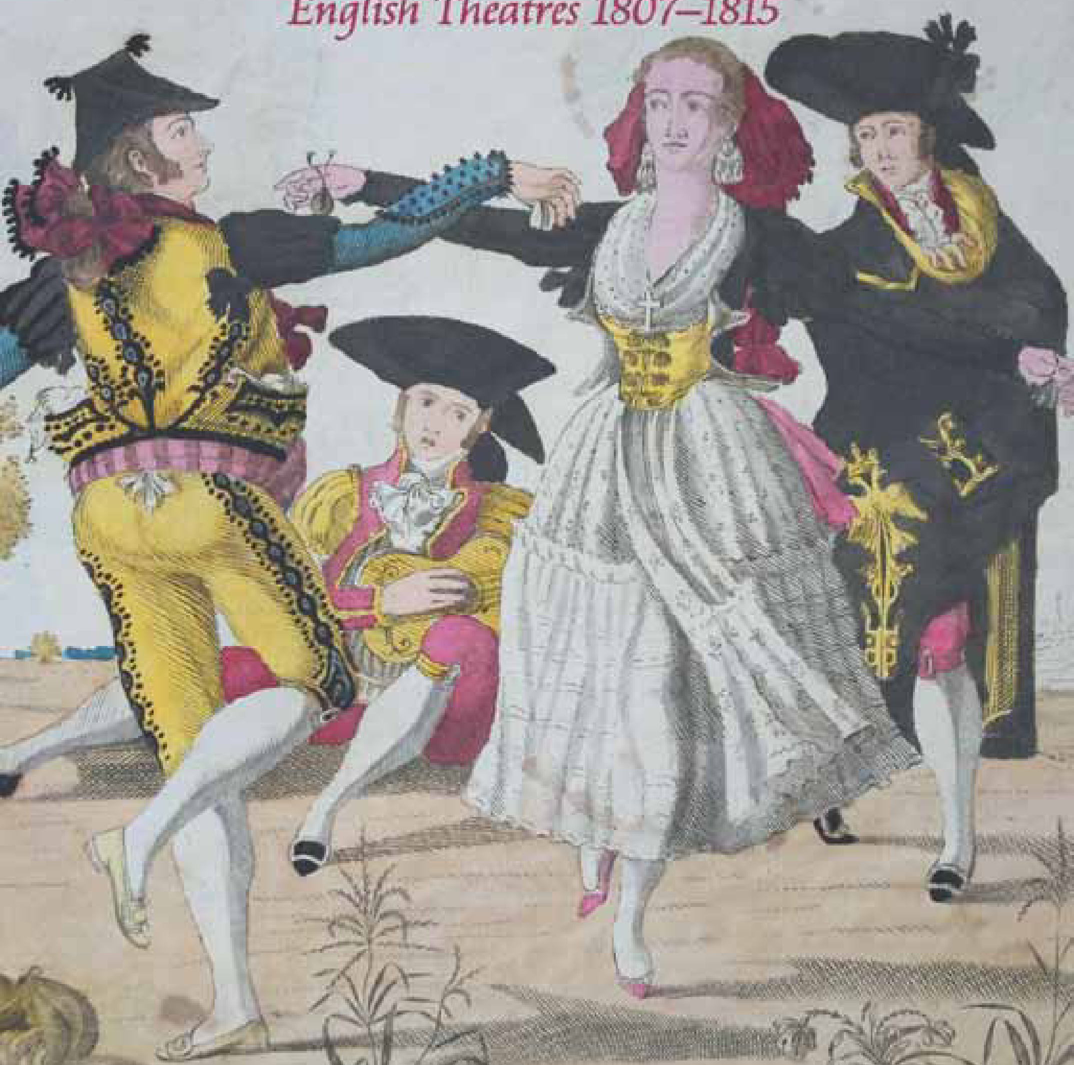
Staging the Peninsular War

English Theatres 1807–1815



SUSAN VALLADARES

ROUTLEDGE

STAGING THE PENINSULAR WAR

From Napoleon's invasion of Portugal in 1807 to his final defeat at Waterloo, the English theatres played a crucial role in the mediation of the Peninsular campaign. In the first in-depth study of English theatre during the Peninsular War, Susan Valladares contextualises the theatrical treatment of the war within the larger political and ideological axes of Romantic performance. Exploring the role of spectacle in the mediation of war and the links between theatrical productions and print culture, she argues that the popularity of theatre-going and the improvisation and topicality unique to dramatic performance make the theatre an ideal lens for studying the construction of the Peninsular War in the public domain. Without simplifying the complex issues involved in the study of citizenship, communal identities, and ideological investments, Valladares recovers a wartime theatre that helped celebrate military engagements, reform political sympathies, and register the public's complex relationship with Britain's military campaign in the Iberian Peninsula. From its nuanced reading of Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *Pizarro* (1799), to its accounts of wartime productions of Shakespeare, description of performances at the minor theatres, and detailed case study of dramatic culture in Bristol, Valladares's book reveals how theatrical entertainments reflected and helped shape public feeling on the Peninsular campaign.

For Pollyana and Eric,
with all my love

Staging the Peninsular War

English Theatres 1807–1815

SUSAN VALLADARES
Worcester College, University of Oxford, UK

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2015 by Ashgate Publishing

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 © Susan Valladares 2015

Susan Valladares has asserted her right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the author of this work.

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
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:
Valladares, Susan, 1985-
Staging the Peninsular War: English theatres 1807–1815 / by Susan Valladares.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4724-1863-0 (hardcover)
1. Theater–England–History–19th century. 2. Peninsular War,
1807-1814–Literature and the war. 3. English drama–19th century–History and criticism.
4. War in literature. 5. Soldiers in literature. I. Title.
PN2594.V35 2015
792.0941’09034--dc23

2015002613

ISBN: 9781472418630 (hbk)
ISBN: 9781315610542 (ebk)

Contents

List of Figures *vii*
Acknowledgements *ix*
List of Abbreviations *xi*

Introduction 1

1 *Pizarro*, 'Political Proteus' 15

2 Performing Shakespeare 59

3 Spectacular Stages 107

4 Playing to the Provinces 153

Afterword 201

Appendices A–C: Introduction *211*
Appendix A: Calendar of Covent Garden Playbills 1807–1815 *215*
Appendix B: Calendar of Drury Lane Playbills 1807–1815 *286*
Appendix C: Calendar of Bristol Theatre Royal Playbills 1807–1815 *349*

Bibliography *379*
Subject Index *413*
Appendices Index *423*

List of Figures

1.1 James Gillray, *Pizarro Contemplating Over the Product of his New Peruvian Mine*, 4 June 1799. © The Trustees of the British Museum. 33

1.2 James Gillray, *Pizzarro*, etched by J. Chapman. 1 October 1799. Harry Beard Collection. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 34

1.3 James Gillray, *John Bull and the Alarmist*, 1 September 1803. © The Trustees of the British Museum. 36

1.4 William Holland, *The Ghost of Queen Elizabeth!!,* 20 July 1803. © The Trustees of the British Museum. 41

1.5 *The Royal standard of our country (with) Queen Elizabeth's speech to her people, when threatened by the Spanish Armada, 1803*. © The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford. Curzon b. 12 (6). 42

2.1 Thomas Rowlandson, *King Joe and Co. Making the Most of their Time Previous to Quitting Madrid*, 25 September 1808. © The Trustees of the British Museum. 60

2.2 Playbill advertising *Remorse* and *Harlequin & Humpo; or, Columbine by Candleight!* at Drury Lane Theatre, 25 January 1813. © The Art Archive/Garrick Club. 74

2.3 William Sharp, *Mrs Siddons as Queen Catherine* (depicting Sarah Siddons as Catherine of Aragon in *Henry VIII*), from the original drawing by John Hayter, published by J. Dickinson, June 1829. Harry Beard Collection. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 88

2.4 Isaac Cruikshank, *The Arrest of Sir Fs Burdett, M.P.*, frontispiece from *Walker's Full Account of the Arrest of Sir Francis Burdett* [1810]. © The Trustees of the British Museum. 90

2.5 Isaac Cruikshank, *King John's First Appearance at the New Theatre Covent Garden*, November 1809. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 96

3.1 Thomas Rowlandson, *Sadler's Wells Theatre*, 1 June 1809. Harry Beard Collection. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 110

3.2 Robert Wilkinson, *North East View of the Surrey Theatre, formerly the Royal Circus, near the Obelisk, Great Surrey Street*, 1 May 1814. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 112

3.3 Henri L'Evêque, *His R.H. the Prince Regent of Portugal and all the Royal Family, embarking at Belem quay for Brazil the 27th November 1807, engraved by F. Bartolozzi*. [1813]. © The Trustees of the British Museum. 119

3.4 Isaac Robert Cruikshank, *The Battle of Salamanca*. Illustration from Francis L. Clarke's *The Life of the Most Noble Arthur, Marquis and Earl of Wellington*, 1812. © The Trustees of the British Museum. 136

3.5 Unmounted fan leaf in commemoration of Wellington's successes at Salamanca and Vitoria, published by J. Lauriere [1813]. © The Trustees of the British Museum. 141

4.1 William M. Bennett, *William Dimond, Esq*., published by Vernor, Hood & Sharpe, 1 January 1808. Harry Beard Collection. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 161

4.2 J. Barton Pym, *A Study of the French Imperial Eagle taken by His Majesty's 2nd Battalion at Barrosa, 5 March 1811*, published by Anthony Cardon, April 1811. © The Trustees of the British Museum. 166

4.3 Charles Williams, *The House that Jack Built*, published by S.W. Fores, 28 September 1809. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 170

4.4 Title page of music score for *The English Fleet in 1342*. © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. 177

4.5 Playbill advertising *The Battle of Salamanca* and *Harlequin's Choice* at the Regency Theatre, Bristol, 30 December 1812. Photography by David Emeney. Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives. Reproduced by kind permission of Bristol Reference Library. 194

5.1 Bilingual Playbill advertising *A Defesa da Ponte de Amarante* at the Real Teatro São Carlos, 16 January 1811. © The Art Archive/ Garrick Club. 205

Acknowledgements

Thank *you* for picking up this book. I hope you enjoy reading it. The years of its making have been graced by acts of generosity and kindness far greater than I could ever have imagined.

This book began as a doctoral thesis at the University of Oxford, where I received invaluable financial assistance from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Oriel (and subsequently Worcester) College, the English Faculty, Santander, the British Association for Romantic Studies and the Society for Theatre Research. I am grateful to the librarians, archivists and curators who welcomed me into their reading rooms; and to Eduardo Caparó, from the Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, and Jill Gage, from the Newberry Library in Chicago, who gave me 'virtual' access to their collections. Thanks to Paulo Tremoceiro for his excellent tour of the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo; Heather Romaine and her team at the University of Bristol's Theatre Collection for creating such a calm, relaxed working environment; and Jane Bradley at Bristol Central Reference Library for her kind assistance. Marcus Risdell's expert knowledge and delightful stories involving mountains and ukuleles ensured that my visits to the Garrick Club were always occasions that I eagerly looked forward to. Thanks, also, to all the staff at the Bodleian Libraries; especially Edmond Annonce, for invariably greeting me with a smile; Ernesto Gomez, for his cheerful encouragement throughout; and Colin Harris for being a dear friend.

I was first introduced to the pleasures of Romantic-period theatre by Jane Moody. She has left a legacy that is as brilliant personally as it is academically, and remains an important source of light in my life. Fiona Stafford has supported this project's development from doctoral thesis to book with a buoyancy and dedication for which I will always be grateful. Much more than a supervisor, Fiona continues to be tremendously generous with her knowledge, time and friendship. This book's strengths, Fiona, are undoubtedly yours – its weaknesses my own. Diego Saglia and Nicholas Halmi were model examiners who made the viva a truly enjoyable experience: I offer them my warmest thanks. I am also grateful to this book's readers, who responded to earlier versions with shrewd, insightful comments. *Caro* Diego, thank you for *all* your help in shaping this book; and *chevalier* Steve, thank you for always offering your support from the sidelines. Deep thanks, also, to my commissioning editor, Ann Donahue, who has overseen this book's publication with such incisiveness, kind attention and patience.

I am indebted to Stephen G. Williams, Laura Ashe and Faith Binckes for the opportunity to complete this book in the beautiful surroundings of Worcester College, where I have benefitted from the amiability, intellectual curiosity and generosity

of new colleagues. Glenn Black has supported me throughout my academic career with steady encouragement – and the perfect 'master plan'. I am grateful to Marjory Szurko, for her always affectionate support; Paulina Kewes and Andrew McNeillie for their enthusiasm for this book; Femi Oyebode, for poems and friendship; Maria de Deus Duarte for making CETAPS such a congenial research base; James Grande, for introducing me to the Cobbett papers; Fernando Durán López for keeping in touch; and to Bob Malloy, for a generous and wholly unexpected gift as the manuscript of this book reached its final stages of preparation.

I am grateful to the members of the Anglo-Hispanic Horizons network – *queridos* Diego Saglia, Ian Haywood, Agustín Coletes Blanco, Alicia Laspra Rodríguez and Graciela Iglesias Rogers – for stimulating conversations and much solidarity. Thank you, also, to Sally Paley, Chris Sutherns, Julie Cochrane, Tricia Buckingham and Helen Gilio for their help in securing the reproduction rights for the illustrations included in this book. My special thanks to the production team at Ashgate for bringing these words to both page and screen; and to Ally Bethiaume, Patrick Smith and Nikki Selmes, especially, for supervising the entire process with such professionalism and kindness.

On an even more personal note, I am grateful to James Plumtree for his intellectual encouragement, unparalleled thoughtfulness and *carinho*; Charlotte Hobbs, 'history buddy' *extraordinaire*, for being such a true friend; Kiran Hinds, for the loving, gentle push that I needed to pursue this dream; Malihe Tabatabaie, for reminding me to be kind to both the book and myself; Natalie McDonald, for being such a good listener; Tomoe Kumojima, for her genial smile; Alice Violet, for her wonderful camaraderie; Rhea Ramnarine, for believing in me; and Meiko O'Halloran, for genuine friendship since our first acquaintance.

Thank you to my family – for everything. Mãeinha, I shall always treasure the memory of watching my first play with you at the small theatre in Catete (*começa, começa*) and the delightful afternoon that we spent together at the Real Gabinete Português de Leitura – thank you for keeping me focused on what matters the most. Tia Jô is never far from my heart. Tia Gloria, thank you for a love of books that makes the world a brighter place, and for a greatness of spirit that continues to take me by surprise. Tia Bibi, thank you for always knowing how to make me laugh and enjoy 'the lightness of being' (be it driving a *Fusca*, watching films together, or simply sharing stories). Uncle Bob, thank you, above all, for your loving patience. Tio Tadeu, thank you for the books and newspaper clippings. Vó Mita, thank you for making me feel so loved. Tio Nemézio, thank you for unconditional love (and the honour of being your *princesa*).

My mum, Pollyana, has been this book's most willing and most careful reader. To look back upon this book's trajectory is to relive precious memories of happiness shared with her and my brother, Eric. From reading those all-important e-mails at Guildford bus station, to finding 'the Fernando Pessoa bench' at Worcester College and learning to jump the waves (and swim) at Leme beach, Mum and Eric, you have nurtured this book in more ways than I can number. Thank you for your untiring confidence in me: *sem vocês eu nada sou*. I dedicate this book to you both, with all my love.

List of Abbreviations

AA	Astley's Amphitheatre
BCRL	Bristol Central Reference Library
BG	*The Bristol Gazette*
BM	*The Bristol Mirror*
BTR	Bristol Theatre Royal
CC	*The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, edited by Kathleen Coburn *et al*. 16 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969–2001
CG	Covent Garden Theatre
DL	Drury Lane Theatre
DW	*The Dramatic Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, edited by Cecil Price. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973
EOT	*Essays On His Own Times in 'The Morning Post' and 'The Courier',* edited by David V. Erdman. 3 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978
ER	*The Edinburgh Review*
FFBJ	*Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*
KB/ 4/4	'Theatre Royal References (September 1805–August 1814)', Kathleen Barker Archive, University of Bristol Theatre Collection
KB/ 21/1	'Regency Theatre', Kathleen Barker Archive, University of Bristol Theatre Collection
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
MC	*The Morning Chronicle*
MM	*The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners*
MP	*The Morning Post*
MR	*The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal*
PH	*The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, edited by T.C. Hansard. 36 vols. London, 1806–1820
SP	Sans Pareil Theatre
TB	*The True Briton*
TE	*The Theatrical Examiner*
V&A	Victoria & Albert Theatre Museum Collection

This page has been left blank intentionally

Introduction

On Saturday, 23 January 1813, London's winter patent theatres were both staging new plays. Drury Lane had been advertising Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Remorse* for the past week. Its characters were to consist of 'Spaniards' and 'Moors', there would be 'An Invocation by Mr Bland' in Act 3, and the delivery of a prologue and epilogue on the first night, as was customary for new pieces.[1] Not to be outdone, Covent Garden announced that its new play, Robert Jameson's *The Students of Salamanca*, would bring together the company's main comic talents (including Richard Jones, John Fawcett, William Abbot and Charles Mathews) and display new scenery, costumes and decorations.[2] The competition was fierce and, as it turned out, there could only be one winner. In spite of best efforts to compress and revive *The Students of Salamanca* as a one-act piece (*The Delusion*) Covent Garden's comedy proved a failure. *Remorse*, on the other hand, received mixed critical reviews but was warmly applauded. It would become one of the most successful new tragedies on the Romantic stage – second only to Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *Pizarro* (1799).[3] But if *Remorse* and *The Students of Salamanca* looked to different genres and made disparate claims to literary quality, they did share one important attribute (also characteristic of *Pizarro*): a Spanish theme.

The *British Review* recognised that in 1813 this interest in Spain was no coincidence:

> At the present moment … any thing relating to the Peninsula is an object of interest; together with our victorious dispatches we have Spanish buttons, chocolate, mantles, fans, feathers, and bolderos [*sic*]; was it then to be supposed that the zeal of managers, shouldering each other in the eager discharge of a new office, should forget to provide us with a new Spanish play? Undoubtedly not.[4]

The 'victorious dispatches' that feature at the head of this jumbled list of Spanish items point unmistakably to Britain's involvement in the Peninsular War (1808–1814) – known in Portugal as the period of the 'French Invasions', in Spain as 'the War of Independence' and by Napoleon, famously, as his 'Spanish Ulcer'. As David Chandler explains, 'what began in 1807 as an opportunistic invasion of a practically defenceless Portugal rapidly expanded into a major struggle

1 DL Playbill, 23 January 1813 (Garrick Club).

2 CG Playbill, 23 January 1813 (Garrick Club).

3 J.C.C. Mays, Introduction to *Remorse* (Stage) *CC: Poetical Works: Plays III.2*, 1041.

4 *British Review*, May 1813, 361.

involving whole populations as well as armies'.[5] It also resulted, significantly, in an unexpected Anglo-Spanish alliance. This book offers the first in-depth study of the role played by the English theatres in mediating the Peninsular War and its related debates. As a popular, lively, often boisterous public space – patronised by mixed-sex audiences of different social classes and age groups – the theatre offers an ideal lens for studying the reception of a conflict that initially garnered almost unanimous support but soon after became troublesomely partisan.

Portugal and England had enjoyed good trading relations since the Middle Ages, but Spain had long been considered a national enemy. In the eighteenth century alone, England and Spain were on opposing sides during the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1714), the War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718–1720), the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–1748) and the American War of Independence (1775–1783). Unsurprisingly, this ensured that Spain's place in the cultural imagination remained firmly associated with the Spanish Armada of 1588 and the notorious 'Black Legend' that defined the Spanish colonial system as 'fanatical, tyrannical, and grievously inhumane'.[6] To revise these age-old suspicions would be no mean feat (even when faced with a common enemy as powerful as Napoleon), but could the theatre offer a platform for cultural redress? How was the Peninsular War depicted on stage? Did representations of Spain and Portugal undergo any significant change during this period? In its search for answers to these questions (and the articulation of several others), this book aims to provide a literarily and historically informed account of English dramatic culture between 1807 and 1815 – years often overlooked as a 'black hole' in the nation's theatre history.

It is only relatively recently that the Peninsular War – long the subject of an impressive historiography – began to receive considered attention from Romantic literary scholars, whose work tended to focus more prominently on the ideology of the French Revolution and the turbulent 1790s. Following Linda Colley's interdisciplinary *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (1992), Simon Bainbridge's two monographs, *Napoleon and English Romanticism* (1995) and *British Poetry and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (2003), proved especially important for contextualising our interest in the Revolutionary debate with a longer view of the Napoleonic Wars. The early 1990s also witnessed major advances in theatre studies, which began to contest the view that Romantic drama was more 'mental' than 'corporeal' (a view that privileged the figure of the playwright in his or her closet over the potential anarchy of bodies on stage and in the auditorium). Julie Carlson's *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (1994) was one of the first studies to successfully challenge this false binary. Arguing that theatrical discourses were, in fact, central to the

---

[5] David Chandler, *Dictionary of the Napoleonic Wars* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1993; 1999), 331.

[6] Rebecca Cole Heinowitz, *Spanish America and British Romanticism, 1777–1826: Rewriting Conquest* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 7.

construction of Romantic national identities, Carlson focuses especially on Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose tragedy *Remorse* significantly shaped his contemporary celebrity.[7]

As a poet, playwright, lecturer and political journalist (with specific interests in the Peninsular War), Coleridge also features prominently in this book. But whereas Carlson's approach is concerned with the canonical over the popular, mine aims to bring forgotten playwrights, performance venues and marginalised geographies to the centre of discussion. In Chapters 1 and 2 of this book the critical spotlight is directed at the entertainments put on at the patent theatres during the Peninsular War; but Chapter 3 focuses on London's minor theatres; Chapter 4 on the wartime audiences that attended Bristol's Theatre Royal and Regency Theatre; and the 'Afterword' on theatrical culture in Lisbon during the city's occupation by foreign troops. Throughout, I aim to capture the range of contemporary responses to the Peninsular War as registered by the period's most popular 'Spanish' play (Sheridan's *Pizarro*), revivals of Shakespeare, and the predominantly spectacular performances available at the minor theatres (with the book's final chapter on Bristol illustrating how each of these responses was replayed on the provincial stage). In doing so, I attempt to follow the footsteps of Gillian Russell, who, in *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics and Society, 1793–1815* (1995), celebrates the 'plurality' of contemporary dramatic performances by discussing entertainments as seemingly distant from each other as were the plays in the licensed theatres from the amateur productions directed, acted and even promoted by sailors on deployment.

In place, therefore, of a model that pits the period's different kinds of theatrical experience in opposition to each other, I hope to testify to the enabling possibilities of playing across seemingly demarcated lines.[8] Although the

[7] Carlson seeks to challenge 'two cardinal principles of Coleridge studies: emphasis on imagination necessitates hostility to theatre; rejection of revolution implies a full-scale retreat from political action'. Julie Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 25.

[8] In addition to the studies by Carlson and Russell already mentioned, major contributions to Romantic-period theatre studies of recent date include: Misty Anderson, *Female Playwrights and Eighteenth-Century Comedy: Negotiating Marriage on the London Stage* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Betsy Bolton, *Women, Nationalism, and the Romantic Stage: Theatre and Politics in Britain, 1780–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Frederick Burwick, *Romantic Drama; Acting and Reacting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and *Playing to the Crowd: London Popular Theatre, 1780–1830* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Daniel O'Quinn, *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London 1770–1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Julia Swindells, *Glorious Causes: The Grand Theatre of Political Change 1789–1833* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); David Francis Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition: Empire, Revolution, & Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and David Worrall,

Licensing Act of 1737 had given the patent theatres a monopoly on spoken drama that amounted to virtual cultural hegemony, there remained, as David Francis Taylor argues, 'the potential for subversive statement and polemical activity within the supposedly controlled sites, and under the royal banner, of the patent theatres'.[9] Free from the divisions once imposed between the imaginary spaces of 'mental theatre' and the movement of bodies on stage, or of 'high' versus 'popular' cultures, this book explores the variegated theatrical fare available at the English theatres (metropolitan and provincial, patent and minor) during the Peninsular War.[10]

Since access to early nineteenth-century theatrical repertoires remains limited, this book is the first to provide 'A Calendar of Plays for Covent Garden, Drury Lane and Bristol Theatre Royal: 1807–1815'.[11] The Calendar shows that many of the plays performed on the patent stages were established favourites, enjoying a long history of re-appropriation by managers and audiences alike. While the Calendar does not provide cast lists or box office receipts (except when relevant for Bristol's Theatre Royal), it offers valuable clues, for instance, about the pairing of different plays, and managers' financial considerations when devising an evening's entertainment. As Jeffrey Cox has convincingly demonstrated, 'factors of scheduling' could have a crucial effect on a play's reception history and box office success.[12] The Calendar offers important empirical evidence for the argument that even the most topical of wartime plays needed to fit within the established repertoire.[13]

Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship, and Romantic Subcultures 1773–1832 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and *Celebrity, Performance, Reception: British Georgian Theatre as Social Assemblage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

9 Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, 11.

10 As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue: 'The classificatory body of culture is always double, always structured in relation to its negation, its inverse'. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), 20.

11 Drury Lane, Covent Garden, the Haymarket (as of 1766) and provincial Theatre Royals (thereafter) enjoyed a monopoly on spoken drama that would last until 1843. A word must be said about the Haymarket, which is excluded from this book on account of an unusual licence that confined its entertainments to the summer season (when Drury Lane and Covent Garden were closed). This meant that although it was considered a 'patent' theatre, it neither competed directly with Covent Garden and Drury Lane nor the minor theatres, which faced very different legal restrictions. For a comprehensive account of performances at the Haymarket, readers are referred to William J. Burling's *Summer Theatre in London, 1661–1820, and the Rise of the Haymarket Theatre* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000).

12 Jeffrey N. Cox, 'Spots of Time: The Structure of the Dramatic Evening in the Theater of Romanticism', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 41.4, (Winter 1999), 403–425 (403).

13 See introduction to 'A Calendar of Plays for Covent Garden, Drury Lane and Bristol Theatre Royal: 1807–1815' (henceforth 'Calendar').

Many of the plays performed in the early nineteenth century were stock pieces with a Spanish theme. This was largely in response to the fact that 'Spanish romance' had been one of the first new subgenres to appear on the Restoration stage. As the editors of *The London Stage* report: 'This kind of play, based upon a Spanish source, placed its emphasis upon a rigid code of conduct, had a plot filled with intrigue, and emphasised one or more high spirited women in the *dramatis personae*'.[14] In *The Spanish Plays of Neoclassical England* (1973) John Loftis identifies Samuel Tuke's *The Adventures of Five Hours* (1663) – an adaptation of Antonio Coello's *Los empeños de seis horas* (which, in the seventeenth century had been mistakenly attributed to Calderón) – as a prime example of the Spanish intrigue comedies that would prove popular with English audiences well into the nineteenth century. Characterised by fast-paced action, these comedies of mistaken identities and nocturnal contrivances often showcased the Spaniard's uncompromising attachment to honour. But as Spanish dominance approached its end in the 1660s there was, as Michael Duffy explains, 'a growing contempt' for such behaviour: 'Spanish pride, insolence and overbearing arrogance … understandable during Spain's greatness … were insufferable now Spain was in decline'.[15] As such, audiences were generally invited to dismiss, rather than emulate, the Spanish codes of conduct presented on stage. Did the Peninsular War challenge this interpretative norm? Could old 'Spanish' plays, with their cast of haughty dons, imposing duennas and indolent servants still secure packed auditoriums after the Anglo-Spanish alliance of 1808?

Understanding how the Peninsular War related to the longer history of the representation of Spain in the English theatres is an important aim of this book. My argument begins with a discussion of Sheridan's *Pizarro* that explains how old favourites could take on new meanings in order to keep up to date with shifting political sympathies. There is, indeed, an important distinction to be made between the plays and entertainments that were written in direct response to the Peninsular Campaign and older plays that were (often informally) adapted to cater to the demand for topical narratives, or otherwise seen to carry new meanings as a result of changes to public opinion on the war and national politics. The theatrical repertoires of the early nineteenth century were characterised by their variety and 'protean' nature, as much as familiarity. Stock plays with Spanish themes, such as John Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (1634), Susanna Centlivre's *The Busy Body* (1709), William Congreve's *The Mourning Bride* (1697), Edward Young's *The Revenge* (1721) and John O'Keeffe's comic opera *The Castle of Andalusia* (1782)

---

[14] Emmet Avery, Charles Beecher Hogan, William Van Lennep, Arhur Hawley Scouten and George Winchester Stone, eds. *The London Stage 1660–1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces, together with Casts, Box-Receipts, and Contemporary Comment*. 11 vols. 'Part 1: 1660–1700' ed. William Van Lennep, with a critical introduction by Emmett L. Avery and Arthur H. Scouten (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960–68; 1965), 1: cxxii–xxiii.

[15] Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1986), 25.

were frequently performed in English theatres at the time of the war in Spain and Portugal.[16] These well-known plays did not, however, represent stable, unchanging texts. At the start of the conflict, they could be read against the grain, as I suggest in my analysis of *Pizarro* (Chapter 1) and Thomas Dibdin's 1803 comic opera, *The English Fleet in 1342* (Chapter 4). But as support for the war began to waver, their anti-Spanish quips and criticisms could also be taken at face value, as this book also illustrates.

Although the Anglo-Spanish alliance of 1808 made it a diplomatic and political requirement for Britons to revise their received image of Spain, attempts to rework representations of the stage Spaniard remained hampered by historical prejudice, or, at the very least, political caution. For audience members disappointed with the course of the war in Spain, the comic Spaniard (almost invariably dressed in sixteenth-century costume) seems to have embodied the reasons ascribed to Spain's demise since its celebrated 'Golden Age'. By proposing readings of the old and new, successful and unsuccessful plays and entertainments staged between 1807 and 1815, this book examines the extent to which the Peninsular Campaign helped redefine the theatre's importance as a forum for the contestation, as well as celebration, of war.

Britain's military operations in Spain and Portugal offer an especially interesting opportunity to engage with what has been labelled the 'total war' experience. After 1792, as David Bell explains, there began 'an astonishing transformation in the scope and intensity of warfare'.[17] Bell draws upon the theories proposed by the French historian Jean-Yves Guiomar to argue that it was the distinct 'fusion of politics and war that distinguishe[d] "modern total war" from earlier incidents of unrestrained or even exterminatory warfare' and 'drove [its] participants relentlessly *toward* a condition of total engagement and the abandonment of restraints'.[18] In order to sustain popular involvement in this new kind of warfare, a range of cultural forms were deployed and print, especially, became central to the daily experiences associated with total warfare. This was exemplified by the contemporary growth in newspapers, military memoirs, war poetry, and the emergence of new genres such as the historical novel. Mary Favret's penetrating examination of 'how military conflict on a global scale looked and felt to a population whose armies and navies waged war for decades, but always at a distance', underlines the importance of understanding Romantic

[16] It was common practice in the eighteenth century to perform earlier plays in altered form. Elizabeth Inchbald duly notes that it was 'as altered by Garrick' that *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* secured its place in the early nineteenth-century repertoire. *The British Theatre; or, A Collection of Plays, which are acted at the Theatres Royal, Drury-Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket … with Biographical and Critical Remarks by Mrs lnchbald*. 25 vols. (London, 1808), Introduction to *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, 6: 4.

[17] David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Modern Warfare* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 7.

[18] Bell, *Total War*, 8.

wartime as ‘war mediated, brought home through a variety of instruments’.[19] In this book I foreground the theatre as a multimedia event that actively engaged with the inevitable complexities of this process of mediation. In Chapters 2 and 3 I respond, specifically, to Favret’s important theorisation of wartime ‘dailiness’. Whether ‘legitimate’ or ‘illegitimate’, the nation’s theatres provided a space in which producers and consumers came into direct contact with each other, and affective responses to the military campaign were continually reworked.

As Gillian Russell contends, the contemporary response to war was ‘played out in the streets, commons, and theatres of Britain, as much as it was in the printed media of the period’.[20] My argument remains, for the most part, confined to the various theatres studied herein, but my observations are predicated, nonetheless, upon Russell’s broader interest in theatricality and the ways in which, after the declaration of war against France in 1793, British society was effectively ‘militarized’.[21] Russell details how the patent and minor theatres contributed to this process by staging spectacular re-enactments of Britain’s naval and land battles, for example.[22] In the chapters that follow I explain how these military entertainments continued to define the theatrical repertoires available during the Peninsular War. Indeed, it can be helpful to think in terms of continuity, since many of the dramaturgical practices set in place during the 1790s remained prominent between 1808 and 1814. Consider, for instance, the staging of the Gothic narratives, dramas and melodramas to which the French Revolution imparted particular poignancy.[23] George Taylor argues that these forms’ popularity after 1789 attested to ‘a genuine therapeutic need’ for the representation of ‘entrapment, dislocation, loss of family and the sensations of having lost voice, sight or hearing’.[24] In *Remorse*, which was an important but not drastic reworking of Coleridge’s earlier, revolutionary drama *Osorio* (1797), the playwright retained many of his original Gothic trappings. This suggests that what Russell calls the ‘textures of feeling’ borne by the French Revolution remained both politically and commercially viable in the early nineteenth century.[25] But the years 1808 to 1814 marked a period of change, as well as continuity. Public opinion had, after all, been variously shaped and

---

[19] Mary Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Warfare* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 9; 11.

[20] Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics and Society, 1793–1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 18.

[21] Russell, *Theatres of War*, 80.

[22] Russell, *Theatres of War*, 59–78 esp.

[23] On the relationship between romantic drama and melodrama see Jeffrey N. Cox, ‘The Death of Tragedy; or, the Birth of Melodrama’, in *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre’s History*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 161–81.

[24] George Taylor, *The French Revolution and the London Stage 1789–1805* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 208.

[25] Russell, *Theatres of War*, 3.

reshaped since the French Revolution, causing the questions articulated in the dramas of the 1790s to acquire new significance.

This book charts how the Peninsular War ascribed its own urgency to issues such as civilian involvement in war, patriotism and the articulation of national identities. As the conflict that constituted the British army's largest land campaign and witnessed the rise of Arthur Wellesley as a national hero, the Peninsular War revalorised the figure of the soldier. (The soldier was prominent not only in the auditorium, but also on stage, where his representation acquired additional nuance from the regular employment of soldiers as supernumeraries.) Although sailors continued to enjoy the spotlight in many of the plays and entertainments staged after 1808 – hornpipes, for instance, remained in high demand, especially in a naval city such as Bristol – this book attests to the popularity of military themes and the stage's pronounced interest in the Irish soldier in particular.

Scottish and Irish soldiers accounted for a significant proportion of the British army sent to the Peninsula (approximately 28% of which were Irish).[26] These men's political and religious sympathies often aroused the suspicions of their English peers, however: 'the ambivalent position of Irish soldiers, so many of them Roman Catholics in a Protestant army, and loyal servants of a state against which their countrymen periodically rebelled, was not lost on leaders and comrades alike', Richard Holmes expounds.[27] Notwithstanding, the Irish regiments sent to Spain and Portugal won significant acclaim. Holmes singles out the 88th Regiment of Foot (Connaught Rangers), whose fighting record in the Peninsula 'placed it amongst the bravest of the brave', and provides several examples of the Irish soldiers' recognised merits.[28] The Irishman (an already popular character in English drama) would continue to exert a comic stage presence, but during the Peninsular War attempts to reform the Irish stereotype began to be extended in a new direction. The genial Major O'Flaherty of Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian* (1771) exemplifies the strategic turn to sentimentalism by eighteenth-century playwrights eager to associate their Irish characters with sensibility and essential benevolence. But testimonials of Irish grit during the Peninsular War called for an even more pronounced emphasis on national courage and hardiness, as Chapters 1 and 3 explore.

By considering the stage Irishman as well as the Spaniard, this book chronicles the re-imagining of stereotypes deemed both proximately and more distantly 'other'. My interest in the English theatres' representations of Portugal as well as Spain strikes a conversation between Anglo-Lusitanian and Anglo-Hispanic Romanticism that aims to realise a similar expansion in methodological

---

[26] Graciela Iglesias Rogers, 'Soldiering Abroad: The Experience of Living and Fighting among Aliens during the Napoleonic Wars', in *Britain's Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society 1715–1815*, ed. Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 40.

[27] Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket* (London: Harper Collins, 2001; 2002), 64.

[28] Holmes, *Redcoat*, 59 and ff.

perspectives. Diego Saglia's immensely influential monograph *Poetic Castles in Spain: British Romanticism and Figurations of Iberia* (2000) has ensured that Spain – once one of the 'most neglected' of Romantic geographies – is now the subject of important scholarship from both sides of the Atlantic.[29] But Anglo-Lusitanian studies have unfortunately failed to excite the same degree of international attention.[30] In *Poetic Castles* Saglia acknowledges that 'importantly related cultural geographies such as Portugal or Gibraltar have been only touched upon in passing', while Rebecca Cole Heinowitz's *Spanish America and British Romanticism, 1777–1826: Rewriting Conquest* (2010) excludes Portugal and Brazil altogether, as her title indicates.[31]

It is important to remember, however, that the Peninsular War transformed both Spain and Portugal into Europe's new theatre of war. This was poignantly registered a couple of months after the cementing of Britain's new alliance with Spain, when news arrived of the Anglo-French armistice known as the Convention of Cintra. Following the French army's defeat at the Battle of Vimeiro (an early success for the British expeditionary forces led by Sir Arthur Wellesley), the Convention was signed on 30 August 1808. It cleared Portugal of the invading army, but its terms were embarrassingly generous. Sir Harry Burrard and Sir Hew Dalrymple, the British generals who replaced Wellesley and took charge of the negotiations with Kellerman the Younger, failed to recognise the decisiveness of their victory over the French Commander in Chief, Général Jean Androche Junot. The Convention thus went so far as to guarantee the French army's safe conveyance (complete with their weapons and stolen treasures), and allowed the routed soldiers to re-enlist upon their return to France. When these terms were printed in the *London Gazette* (16 September 1808) they made for inflammatory reading. Burrard, Dalrymple and Wellesley were recalled to London where all three commanders faced a court of enquiry.

---

[29] Diego Saglia, *Poetic Castles in Spain: British Romanticism and Figurations of Iberia* (Atlanta: Amsterdam, 2000), 11. For a sample of Saglia's extensive contributions to Anglo-Hispanic studies, see this book's bibliography. In recent years there has also been an intensification of interest in the cultural legacies of 'la Guerra de la Independencia' within Spain itself, as exemplified by the publication of *Libertad frente a Tiranía: Poesía inglesa de la Guerra de la Independencia (1808–1814). Antología Biligüe*, selected and translated by Agustín Coletes Blanco and Alicia Laspra Rodríguez (Madrid: Fundación Dos de Mayo – Espasa, 2013) – the first bilingual anthology of Peninsular War poems. Notable studies of the theatre include: María Mercedes Romero Peña and Emilio Palacios Fernández, *El teatro en Madrid durante la Guerra de la Independencia: 1808–1814* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2006); María Mercedes Romero Peña, *El Teatro de la Guerra de la Independencia* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2007); and Ana María Freire López, *El teatro español entre la Ilustración y el Romanticismo. Madrid durante la Guerra de la Independencia* (Madrid: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2009).

[30] Scholarship within Portugal is nevertheless thriving. See, for instance, the research conducted by the Lisbon-based Centre for English Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies (CETAPS) <http://cetaps.com> [Accessed 21.07.13].

[31] Saglia, *Poetic Castles*, 18.

William Wordsworth added his voice to the furore with what we now know as his longest prose pamphlet, *Concerning the Relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, To Each Other, and to the Common Enemy, At This Crisis; And Specifically as Affected by the Convention of Cintra…* (1809). It was initially intended for publication in instalments in the *Courier*, but finally printed as a stand-alone publication on 27 May 1809.[32] By this time, however, Wordsworth had come to consider the Convention more philosophically, as only one symptom of the nation's general moral and political decline. His catalogue of grievances included the British army's forced retreat from Corunna and the scandalous details of the 'Mary Anne Clarke affair'.[33] Wordsworth's recognition of a troublesome imbrication of national and international politics also runs throughout this book, which recovers the complex ideological debates about Britain itself that took place during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Domestic, as much as foreign, concerns are central to the recovery of English theatrical culture during the Peninsular War, as this book highlights in its discussion of the Old Price riots of 1809–1810, and the commotion that resulted from the arrest of Francis Burdett.

The 67 nights of rioting that transformed the auditorium of Covent Garden Theatre and caused its actor-manager John Philip Kemble such acute woe need little rehearsing after Marc Baer's seminal study, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* (1992). My argument requires, nevertheless, that I underline Baer's observation that at the time of the protests, only the war with France received more media coverage.[34] The two events went hand-in-hand. Baer relates, for example, how the Old Price protestors (O.P.s) assumed the behaviour of patriotic citizens and delivered enthusiastic renditions of 'God Save the King' and 'Rule Britannia'. He also notes that they objected to the opera singer Angelica Catalani's expensive engagement with placards that read 'No Foreigners' and similar xenophobic messages.[35] Theatre-goers hissed, whistled, danced, raised banners and even sported a range of O.P. ephemera (including handkerchiefs, medals and other fashionable accessories that publicised their message).[36] As the *Theatrical Examiner* judiciously reported: 'the actors ...

[32] On *Cintra*'s complex publication history see 'Introduction: General' to *Concerning the Convention of Cintra: A Bicentennial Critical Edition*, ed. Richard Gravil and W.J.B. Owen (Tirril: Humanities – Ebooks, 2009), 70–89.

[33] From 1 February to 20 March 1809 the Duke of York's mistress Mary Anne Clarke was under investigation for the illicit sale of army commissions and promotions. See Gravil and Owen (eds), 'Commentary' to *Concerning the Convention*, 256.

[34] Marc Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 45.

[35] Baer, *Theatre and Disorder*, 27.

[36] Baer describes this kind of behaviour as the hallmark of 'activist audiences' and notes that it was 'only a variation of the normal patterns of audience participation in or reaction to the theatre'. *Theatre and Disorder*, 182.

had become the audience, and the audience the actors'.[37] Chapter 2 explores the implications of this for Kemble's subsequent repertoire at Covent Garden, while Chapter 4 examines the riots' surprising effect on the behaviour of theatre audiences in Bristol.

The *Examiner* was not, of course, the only newspaper to pounce upon the ironies that surfaced during the Old Price riots.[38] The *Morning Chronicle*, for example, turned to *Coriolanus* in order to equate Kemble's inept handling of the protestors with the war hero's contemptuous address to the plebeians of Rome. Coriolanus was a role that Kemble had played to acclaim in 1789 and 1806 but was (understandably) reluctant to revive until 1811, as I discuss in Chapter 2.[39] In its effective citation of Shakespeare *against* Kemble, the *Morning Chronicle* demonstrated that the bard could be applied for democratic, even radical uses, in addition to the politically conservative interpretations favoured by Kemble himself. The actor-manager's success as Rolla (from Sheridan's *Pizarro*) was also aggressively cited against him when, on 9 November 1809, the *Statesman* duly printed 'A Parody on Rolla's Address':

> *They*, by a strange frenzy driven, bawl, and call aloud for the *Old Prices; we* give them *blows*, and *threaten* them with *imprisonment* to obtain the *New*. *They* laugh at threats *they* do not fear; and *defy* all Bow-street runners, whom they hate. *We* serve JOHN BULL, whom we treat with *scorn*; and *our money* is the *god* whom we adore … They *boast* they come to *improve* our *estate, encourage* our *talents*, and *free* us from all foreign aid. Yes; they want to impress *liberality* on *our* minds; but no, *we* are the slaves of *passion, avarice*, and *pride*.[40]

The *Statesman* here turns Rolla's speech on its head in order to expose Kemble as an avaricious conquistador in his own right. These parodies testify firstly, to the sequestration of the contemporary repertoire as a political weapon (effective, principally, because of its widespread familiarity); and secondly, to the characterisation of audiences who were not merely spectators, but informed and critically self-aware political agents.[41]

---

37 *TE*, 24 September 1809.

38 The press provided extensive coverage of the O.P. riots. 'The five papers, that have distinguished themselves by their violence on opposite sides, are by name *The British Press*, *Morning Post*, *Statesman*, *Morning Chronicle* and *Times*'. (The first two papers lent their support to the Managers, while *The Times* betrayed notable inconsistencies in its early coverage of events.) *The Rebellion; or, All in the Wrong. A serio-comic-hurly-burly, in scenes, as it was performed for two months at the new Theatre Royal, Covent Garden …* (London, 1809), iv–v.

39 *MC*, 23 November 1809. *The Rebellion* (essentially a collation of previous issues of the *MM*) claimed that the *MC* 'preserved a consistent conduct throughout'. *The Rebellion*, v.

40 *The Rebellion*, 82–3.

41 Performances on the opening night finished at about 11 p.m. but the disturbances continued for another two hours. The account provided in *The Rebellion* describes the

The Licensing Act had, of course, been designed to keep a lid on overly 'activist audiences' by authorising the close monitoring of British drama by the Lord Chamberlain's Office.[42] The Act, which among other things, made it a statutory requirement for new play scripts to be sent to the Examiner of Plays two weeks prior to performance at a patent theatre, empowered the Examiner to do away with any references to politics or religion.[43] John Larpent, who was incumbent in the post from 1778 until his death in 1824, recommended extensive revisions to H.B. Code's *The Spanish Patriots A Thousand Years Ago* (1812).[44] Yet, of the Spanish- and Portuguese-themed plays in his extensive collection, only one obviously topical entertainment seems to have been refused a license. This was an application from Drury Lane dated 11 February 1809, requesting permission to perform a 'Monody on the Death of Sir John Moore', which I discuss in Chapter 1. Facing heavy fines and the threat of a revocation of their licence if they failed to comply with the Examiner's decisions, theatre managers usually adopted a system of in-house censorship before submitting play-scripts for formal evaluation. Sheridan's revisions to Theodore Hook's *The Siege of St Quintin* (1808), also detailed in Chapter 1, amount to a suggestive example of the practices employed.

Not even a rigid code of theatrical censorship, however, could restrict the Romantic stage to a simplistic, or one-sided view of contemporary politics. In fact, far from reducing the theatre's capacity to provide political commentary, the Licensing Act seems to have encouraged playwrights and managers to explore ever more innovative modes of delivering topical addresses. As Gillian Russell succinctly puts it, the laws 'generated the sensitivity which is the concomitant of censorship'.[45] Domestic concerns were often displaced to fictional, historicised settings and/or re-imagined in foreign, exotic locations. 'The correspondence between event and incorporation', as Jacky Bratton calls it, may sometimes have been more oblique than transparent, but allegorical readings (because always personal, provisional and essentially plural) offered an effective means of dodging censorship.[46]

O.P. protestors as having 'quitted the field, covered with *all* the glory of *conquest*, which encircles the brows of VISCOUNT TALAVERA!'. *The Rebellion*, 5.

[42] See note 35, above; and Baer, *Theatre and Disorder*, 166–88.

[43] The Licensing Act of 1737 made it illegal for performers to act 'for hire, gain or reward' outside of Westminster; Covent Garden and Drury Lane were effectively awarded a monopoly on spoken drama; the Lord Chamberlain was made responsible for licensing all playhouses; and it became a requirement for new play-scripts to be sent to the Examiner of Plays two weeks prior to an intended performance (with the Lord Chamberlain retaining the right to censor with no appeal). See David Thomas, 'The 1737 Licensing Act and its Impact', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre 1737–1832*, ed. Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 91–106.

[44] Larpent marked long passages from Code's play for excision. See Larpent Collection 1733.

[45] Russell, *Theatres of War*, 16.

[46] J.S. Bratton, 'Introduction' to *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790–1930*, ed. J.S. Bratton, Richard Allen Cave, Breandan Gregory, Heidi J. Holder and

Allegory also offered much more, of course. In Walter Benjamin's and Paul de Man's formulations, allegory is associated with emptiness, loss and the impossibility of arriving at a single, complete truth – an impossibility that may have reflected the disparate, alienating experiences engendered by the Napoleonic Wars.[47] Although this potential remains in the background rather than foreground of this study, I employ allegorical readings in order to look beyond a play's surface meanings, and to access what remains concealed or just beyond reach (for reasons that include but are not exclusive to censorship). As with any example of allegory, the readings I offer can only ever be suggestive. I hope, however, that readers of this book will be stimulated to provide their own interpretative extensions, qualifications and improvements to the analyses provided herein; and, in doing so, recover an important aspect of the early nineteenth-century theatrical experience. Contemporary reviews (both private and public) of the performances on offer at the wartime theatres suggest that audiences were not only very much attuned to the allegorical readings demanded of them but took pleasure in exceeding these (as powerfully evinced by the behaviour of the O.P. protestors). During this period of experimentation with generic hybrids and advances in stage technique and effect, audiences enjoyed a sense of participatory politics that appears to have been nothing short of liberating.

This book invites its readers to explore the implications of the recognised overlap between theatrical and political cultures by focusing on the Peninsular War as a period during which – to employ the words used by the *British Review* – new 'Spanish' plays wrestled with the old; 'Spanish buttons, chocolates, mantles, fans, feathers, and bolderos [*sic*]' became politicised props (especially at the minor theatres); and the playbill itself – that first token of an evening's entertainment – was read as a 'victorious dispatch' in its own right.[48] The Peninsular War proved bloodier, more expensive and ideologically divisive than anticipated. This book shows that for the war's entire duration, however, Spain and Portugal remained prominent on stage, alternately exciting and exasperating the crowded, buzzing auditoriums of England's metropolitan and provincial theatres.

Michael Pickering (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 4.

[47] 'Allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is fully, though painfully, recognised as a non-self'. Paul de Man, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality', in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, with an introduction by Wlad Godzich, 2nd ed., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1971; 1983), 207.

[48] On the 'militaristic' language associated with the acting profession in this period, see Russell, *Theatres of War*, 179–82.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 1
Pizarro, 'Political Proteus'

In the spring of 1799 'expectation was on tip-toe' for Richard Brinsley Sheridan's new play.[1] *Pizarro*, a spectacular five-act tragedy adapted from August von Kotzebue's *Die Spanier in Peru* (1796), boasted an all-star cast including John Philip Kemble, Sarah Siddons, William Barrymore and Dorothy Jordan; a musical score with accompanying vocal parts especially composed by Michael Kelly; and 'entirely new Scenes, Dresses and Decorations'.[2] In anticipation of 'overflowing' audiences, Drury Lane unbolted its doors as early as three o'clock in the afternoon. Managers correctly predicted that the already well-advertised play, celebrating 'the joint reputation of Sheridan and Kotzebue, and the first dramatic attempt of the former, after an interval of twenty years', would be certain to excite the eager curiosity of metropolitan audiences.[3] While the first performance pointed to the need for 'judicious' alterations and curtailments (in order to cut down the play's excessive running time), reviewers confidently identified its 'purity of moral sentiment' and 'genuine and enthusiastic bursts of heroic patriotism' as 'indisputable claims to the patronage of the Public'.[4] *Pizarro* was played consecutively for the remainder of the season, bringing in revenue that was desperately needed to replenish Drury Lane's depleted coffers.[5] By 1815 the text had already been issued in thirty different editions and *Pizarro* was secure in its status as a recognised 'favourite' of the patent theatres. It would be frequently staged at Drury Lane, Covent Garden and provincial Theatres Royal until the mid-nineteenth century.

This chapter investigates how and why Sheridan's tragedy about the Spanish conquest of Peru became one of the defining narratives of early nineteenth-century Britain. *Pizarro*'s first reviewers were quick to recognise that Sheridan recycled many of his parliamentary speeches for the play's dramatic oratory. William Pitt the Younger, for example, reportedly claimed that there was 'nothing new' in *Pizarro*; that he had 'heard it all long ago in [Sheridan's] speeches at Hastings's trial'.[6]

---

1 Michael Kelly, *Reminiscences*, ed. Roger Fiske (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 253.

2 DL Playbill, 24 May 1799 (Garrick Club).

3 *The Times*, 25 May 1799.

4 *The Times*, 29 May 1799.

5 In its first season alone, *Pizarro* brought in £13, 624 9s. 6d. Avery, Hogan, et al. (eds), *London Stage 1660–1800*, 'Part 5: 1776–1800', 11: 2097.

6 Qtd. by John Loftis in 'Whig Oratory on Stage: Sheridan's *Pizarro*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8.4, (summer 1975), 454–72 (459).

In *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992) Sara Suleri takes this as her cue to explore *Pizarro*'s debts to Sheridan's highly publicised involvement in the impeachment of Warren Hastings, and to examine how Sheridan's management of theatrical sympathies helped re-condition the imperial and humanist concerns expressed in his parliamentary speeches.[7] Julie Carlson has since identified at least five alarms of invasion in the focal speech delivered by the Peruvian hero, Rolla: 'those sounding between Peru and Spain, India and England, and England and France … the literary invasion of England by Germany in the 1790s and the perpetually immanent invasion of Ireland by England in the same years'.[8] More recently still, David Francis Taylor has written on *Pizarro* as a tragedy that 'recycles the tropes of both the impeachment and 1798 rebellion-propaganda as part of an extended meditation on the powerlessness of the orator in his attempt to inscribe accountability within the apparatus of colonialism, and the inability of eloquence, however applauded, to counter regimes of despotism and torture'.[9] Taylor's analysis of Sheridan's allusions to his own complex political oratory gives due consideration to *Pizarro*'s inflections of both Indian and Irish colonial concerns. But even these nuanced readings interpret the play on an allegorical level prone to overlook *Pizarro*'s specifically Spanish theme and – what is perhaps one of its most fascinating qualities – the play's phenomenal stage success for over 60 years.[10] This chapter argues that *Pizarro* needs to be contextualised both synchronically and diachronically if we are to truly understand its evolution as a 'national' dramatic mainpiece.

---

[7] In 1786 Edmund Burke produced 21 charges ('of high crimes and misdemeanours') against Warren Hastings, the former governor-general of India. Sheridan, who was responsible for making the case for the fourth charge (i.e., against Hastings's oppressive treatment of the begams of Oudh), delivered a five-and-a-half hour speech on 7 February 1787. This speech won great acclaim and ensured that Sheridan continued to play a central role in the impeachment proceedings. Hastings was formally impeached on 10 May 1787. The prosecution before the House of Lords began on 13 February 1788 and concluded in 1795, when Hastings was acquitted by a large majority. See 'Hastings, Warren (1732–1818)', P.J. Marshall in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, October 2008 <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/12587> [Accessed 17.10.2014]; and Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, 67–71 esp.

[8] Julie Carlson, 'Trying Sheridan's *Pizarro*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38 (3/4), (fall/winter 1996), 359–78 (362).

[9] Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, 126.

[10] See Myron Matlaw, 'This is Tragedy!!! The History of *Pizarro*', *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 43, (1957), 288–94. Matlaw provides a broad overview of the play's reception in Britain and the United States between 1799 and its last performances (in 1866 and 1874 respectively). He insists, however, that 'a study of the later history of the play does not reveal any relationship between times of political stress and resurgence in the popularity of the play' (290). Matlaw notably neglects to consider how the Peninsular War – the event most likely to challenge British perceptions of Spain – might have affected *Pizarro*'s reception history.

Set in sixteenth-century Peru, Sheridan's play offers a particularly interesting example of how stage geographies interacted with the sites of theatre production in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England. By 1799 the Spaniard was, after all, nothing short of a bugbear in the English imagination. Lingering hostilities associated with Mary Tudor's marriage to Philip II, the Protestant purges, the Spanish Armada and Spain's 'Black Legend' (with its attendant narratives of colonial rapine, superstition and bigotry) ensured that Spain remained associated with strong feelings of political and cultural revulsion.[11] It is no coincidence, then, that the plots of Sheridan's comedies *The Duenna* (1775) and *The Critic* (1779) were also predicated upon anti-Spanish sentiment. Puff's play 'The Spanish Armada' (in *The Critic*) ends unforgettably with a '*flourish of drums*' and an orchestra playing 'Britons Strike Home' and 'Rule Britannia' as the English fleet advance and fire-ships destroy the Spanish squadron.[12] This characteristic hostility to Spain meant that when *Pizarro* premiered in 1799 it was easy for audiences to imagine the eponymous villain of the play as Napoleon Bonaparte. For most contemporary reviewers, *Pizarro*'s Gothic scenery and dramatisation of the Black Legend functioned as metaphors for the sublime and destructive figurations of a Europe beset by post-revolutionary anxieties. This chapter remains sensitive to these early responses but also draws attention to the ways in which *Pizarro*'s public valence was subsequently affected by other political events, including, notably, the Anglo-Spanish alliance of 1808.

In *The Political Proteus* (1804) – a series of ten letters addressed to Sheridan – William Cobbett underscores *Pizarro*'s shifting significance, interpreting the tragedy's extended run as a counterpart to what he considered its author's all-too slippery reputation as a Member of Parliament. Cobbett deconstructs the 'true English feeling' attached to Sheridan and his putatively patriotic drama by juxtaposing the playwright's early and well-known opposition to the war with his seemingly contradictory speeches in response to the 1797 Naval Mutinies and

[11] *Pizarro* is replete with references to the Black Legend. In 1.1 Pizarro tries to prevent Davilla from killing the Peruvian cacique, Orozembo, whom, he claims, should undergo the pain of torture (1.1, *DW*, 2: 664). The Inquisition makes another grotesque appearance in Elvira's anticipation of the tortures that await her as Pizarro's prisoner (4.3, *DW*, 2: 693). Interestingly, the latter speech is marked for substitution in the Drury Lane promptbook (1799), where a marginal note [here transcribed in italics] replaces Elvira's description of torture with a lover's sentimental narrative: '*Quench these eyes, that so oft – O God! – have hung with love and homage on thy looks! Pierce this dishonour'd bosom which was once thy pillow! – I will bear it all, – for it will all be justice. – But when thou hopest that thy unshrinking ears* may at last be feasted with the music of my cries, I will not utter one shriek, nor groan …'. This rewriting suggests that the play's more violent references to the Black Legend were moderated for stage production. Garrick Club copy of the Drury Lane Promptbook of *Pizarro* (1799), 61.

[12] Sheridan, *The Critic* (3.1), in *DW*, 2: 550

support for the Volunteer Movement after the collapse of the Peace of Amiens.[13] Cobbett's acerbic attack on Sheridan's politics and dramaturgy underscores how, during the course of the Napoleonic Wars, audiences' appreciation of *Pizarro* had been critically conditioned by changing social, economic, political and cultural factors.

The first section of this chapter considers the dangers ascribed to *Pizarro*'s phenomenal popularity and what this might suggest about the relationship between English tastes and contemporary international politics. As the best-known 'Spanish' play of the period, Sheridan's *Pizarro* testifies to the effectiveness of spectacle on a large scale, the cult of celebrity actors and the theatre's interest in the affective possibilities of history. Its success was not, however, confined to the stage. The play's popularity spawned various generically broad reworkings of its historical theme. These adaptations were available for mass consumption as competing translations, histories, chapbooks, songs and juvenile dramas. As a result, before the end of its first year of performance, critics had already begun to complain of a *Pizarro* surfeit, expressing anxiety about the play's ideological migration from the boards of the patent theatres to contemporary culture at large.

In this chapter's second section, I examine Sheridan's controversial decision in 1803 to issue Rolla's exhortation against foreign invasion as a stand-alone broadsheet. 'Sheridan's Address to the People: Our King! Our Country! And our God!' (1803) was published on the heels of Robert Emmet's failed Irish rebellion, while Britain resumed its war preparations after Amiens. Sheridan's broadsheet helped reinvigorate the topicality of his play-text. At the same time, however, by extracting Rolla's impassioned speech from its dramatic frame, Sheridan created a new context for the interpretation of the political ideology encoded in his play. Ever suspicious, Cobbett contemptuously derided 'Sheridan's Address' as 'typographical harlotry', 'stuck up on every dead wall, rotten post, and dirty corner in the metropolis'.[14] His language resonates, interestingly, with the accusations levelled against the play by its many conservative critics, who described *Pizarro*'s popularity as a 'contagion' – and whose fears that its message of popular resistance and liberation could spread indiscriminately, seemed only exacerbated by the newfound textual autonomy granted to Rolla's speech. In the second, crucial phase of the war against Napoleon, the relationship between Sheridan's Spanish-themed drama and the society in which it was performed remained troublesomely problematic.

Between 1808 and 1814, as explored in the final section of this chapter, *Pizarro* was once again invested with fresh political resonance. Napoleon's attempted invasion of Spain, the heroic resistance put up by the *madrileños* in the *dos de mayo* rebellion, the spread of revolution across the Spanish provinces, and the cementing of the Anglo-Spanish alliance meant that by June 1808, Iberian

---

13 William Cobbett, *The Political Proteus: A View of the Public Character and Conduct of R.B. Sheridan Esq.* (London, 1804), 68–94.

14 Cobbett, *Political Proteus*, 80.

politics had taken a strong hold of British sympathies.[15] Sheridan himself advocated for the Peninsular cause when he introduced the affairs of Spain to the House of Commons.[16] The Foreign Secretary, George Canning, responded favourably: recognising that 'no interest could be so purely British as Spanish success', Canning elaborated upon the need to conquer 'from France the complete integrity of the dominion of Spain in every quarter of the world'.[17] While *Pizarro*'s historicism meant that it was still possible to conflate French aggression with the ambition of the Spanish conquistadores, in the summer of 1808 it became a political imperative to revise the play's damning representation of Spanish imperial malignity. Hitherto a French ally and rival imperial power, Spain was now regarded as a nation actively resisting French expansionism by leading the crusade against Napoleonic tyranny. With Sheridan's theatrical success and political agenda once again overlapping, it is essential to unravel the extent to which his play's negative portrayal of the Spaniards was able to accommodate the turn in national political sympathies.

Pizarro's status as a dramatic stock piece on the Romantic stage provides a valuable opportunity to trace contemporary audiences' critical responses to political change, and to tap into the process by which theatre contributed to the formation of national identities during the Napoleonic Wars. *Pizarro*'s openness to interpretation permits it to be read as a palimpsestic play, whose meanings were constantly negotiated and contested by the complex performative, social and political relations that tied together the Romantic-period stage and state. By supplementing my study of Sheridan's play-text with a range of sources, – including playbills, periodicals, newspapers, popular prints, songs, biographies and literary anecdotes – this chapter situates *Pizarro* within the broader social and cultural discourses that helped define Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. Questions of nationhood, the processes of history and the link between agency and patriotic action came under intense scrutiny and revision during this period. Sheridan's *Pizarro* embodies fascinating evidence of how these issues were variously defined, reflected and refracted by the contemporary stage.

---

15 The 'Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Alliance between his Britannic Majesty and his Catholic Majesty, Ferdinand VII' was signed in London on 14 January 1809 by George Canning (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) and Juan Ruiz de Apodaca (named as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of Ferdinand VII). *The Annual Register of a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, For the Year 1809* (London, 1811).

16 Hansard (House of Commons, HC), 'Parliamentary debates: Affairs of Spain', (15 June 1808), in *The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time* (London, 1812), 11: 886.

17 Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 11: 892.

The Initial Reception, 1799–1800

Pizarro's first reviewers expeditiously attributed the play's frenzied reception to its political appeal. Setting aside its merits on 'a dramatic point of view', the emphasis was placed, instead, on the techniques by which Sheridan had 'applied the text to the duties of this Country'.[18] For many, *Pizarro*'s Spanish theme offered a conveniently transparent allegorical rendering of the war against France, which had begun in 1793. As the *True Briton* explained:

> Though the struggle is between SPANIARDS and the PERUVIANS, the author has been impelled by a true sense of the important contest in which we are engaged.[19]

Arguing along the same lines, the *Morning Post* claimed that in *Pizarro* Sheridan was 'pleading at once the Peruvian and the British cause'.[20] The charges of cruelty levelled against Bonaparte for his Egyptian and Syrian campaigns even helped underline his biographical affinities to the upstart tyrant Pizarro.[21] Audiences' fascination for the theatre's new stage designs, Sheridan's fame as a playwright and the vogue for German dramas undoubtedly contributed to the play's box-office appeal, but the play's first reviewers nevertheless agreed that the interest excited by *Pizarro* was, above all, political and patriotic. War, the national character, and the resolution to fight for ideals would, from the outset, define the logic of *Pizarro*, both on stage and off.

The very first performances of Sheridan's Spanish tragedy made it clear, however, that the play's relation to – and command of – public space was controversial. Since its renovation in 1794, Drury Lane had been able to accommodate more than 3,000 spectators. The stampede on the opening night of *Pizarro* was, notwithstanding, quite exceptional, even by contemporary standards. Thousands of expectant theatregoers were disappointed. 'The conflict' between those who had secured seats and those turned away was 'extremely distressing':

> Ladies of the first fashion, in full dress, were fainting; some lost a shoe, others a hat; the stair-case windows were broken; the door-keepers could not resist the torrent, and many went in without paying; the outside of the doors were surrounded by hundreds who dared not enter, and many went away who had places rather than encounter the crowd.[22]

---

[18] *TB*, 30 May 1799.

[19] *TB*, 30 May 1799.

[20] *MP*, 27 May 1799.

[21] This association pre-dated the play's premiere. See, for example, the account of the Egyptian expedition published in *The London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 10 December 1798.

[22] *MP*, 25 May 1799.

This description from the *Morning Post* divides Drury Lane's socially heterogeneous crowd into villains and victims, defining the scramble for admittance as a theatrical event in its own right. Yet, the scene, however animated, was ultimately pathetic rather than bathetic. The decidedly unembarrassed, who opportunistically made their entrance without paying, and the consequently dishevelled ladies of fashion, constituted nothing less than a microcosm of social chaos. With panicked crowds rendering the check of theatrical tickets wholly redundant, managers' traditional attempts at social segregation in terms of the theatre's physical space were woefully ineffectual. On its opening night, *Pizarro's* uncontainable popularity was tinged with a *frisson* as frightening as it was exciting.

Unsurprisingly, the popular agitation surrounding *Pizarro* resulted in several attempts to control the play's public meaning(s). Consider, for instance, the contemporary newspapers that made it their cultural duty to remark on the celebrity figures who lent their patronage to Sheridan's play: readers were variously informed that the radical Horne Tooke attended an early performance on 20 June 1799, that Lord Nelson watched the play in early December the following year, and that even William Wilberforce, who had not been to the theatre for 20 years, seemed very satisfied with it.[23] Most illustrious of all *Pizarro*'s patrons was the Royal Family, who watched the play on 5 June 1799 during its first season and ordered a command performance in 1804. Reporting on the Royal Family's first attendance at Drury Lane after an absence of four years, the *Morning Post* established an explicit comparison between the royal visit and the play's opening night:

> The difficulties of entering the galleries and pit were … excessive; the crowd was dreadful; several Ladies fainted, and one falling down near the door, was much bruised. On opening the box doors, the crowd was as great as on the first night of *Pizarro*; the railing was burst off; and the windows, which had been repaired, were again broken.[24]

On both occasions, fashionable ladies were injured by the crowds and the theatre itself damaged (through broken windows, most notably). The crucial difference was that on the evening of the Royal Family's attendance, audiences' impatience to secure the theatrical terrain could be figured as a sign of their loyalty to George III, rather than a merely voyeuristic curiosity for *Pizarro*.

The *True Briton* reported that while '*Pizarro* drew from the Audience great applause throughout' language could do scant justice to 'the rapturous bursts of loyalty and patriotism that arose on the delivery of those passages which expressed an attachment to a beloved Monarch'.[25] Sheridan, who personally escorted the Royal Family to their seats, was quick to exploit the patriotism already ascribed to

---

[23] On Nelson's visit to the theatre see *Lloyd's Evening Post* 24–26 November 1800; for Wilberforce's reaction to *Pizarro* see *MP*, 31 May 1799.

[24] *MP*, 6 June 1799.

[25] *TB*, 6 June 1799.

Pizarro by the contemporary press.[26] In this climate, even the spring flowers and shrubs that had been used to decorate the royal box could be seen to strategically evoke the Peruvian kingdom's aromatic fruits and plants, relating George III to the play's celebrated rhetoric. For the reviewer from the *True Briton*, at least, the 'electric force' operating within the auditorium constituted decisive proof 'that our excellent Monarch reigns in the hearts of his People'.[27]

On the evening of the royal performance, the Drury Lane chorus, with the assistance of the Duke of York's band, performed 'God Save the King' to an ebullient, patriotically enraptured auditorium. Audiences also responded with animation to the play's celebrated second act, which saw John Philip Kemble (who played the part of the Peruvian hero, Rolla) deliver a morale-boosting speech to the native soldiers as they prepared to defend their homeland against the Spanish armies. The *True Briton* was not alone in seizing this scene as the affective climax to both the drama and the Royal Family's response. As *Lloyd's Evening Post* observed:

> His Majesty appeared peculiarly gratified with the noble and animated address of *Rolla* to the Peruvians, in support of their just rights as an independent and happy people, against the lawless encroachments and savage ambition of foreign Invaders.[28]

Most reviewers drew attention to the applause attendant upon Rolla's stirring speech on *Pizarro*'s opening night.[29] It is likely, therefore, that it was during this high point of the royal performance that 'the King wept in the second Act', as related by the *Morning Post*.[30] This observation not only underscored the king's sympathetic attachment to the stage narrative, but also effectively positioned George III within the play's framework of heroic action, allowing the monarch to be identified with Rolla, 'the first and best of heroes' (2.1, *DW*, 2: 667), as much as Ataliba, the Peruvian king.

At the end of Act 2 scene 2 Ataliba draws his sword and leads his soldiers into battle. With paternal care, he addresses them as 'my brethren, my sons, my friends' (2.2, *DW*, 2: 670), orders Alonzo and Rolla to assume their strategic positions, and takes responsibility for leading the main assault: 'strait [*sic*] forwards will I march to meet them, and fight until I see my people saved, or they behold their Monarch fall' (2.2, *DW*, 2: 671). But in the lead up to this war cry Ataliba significantly defers

---

[26] Sheridan's ceremonious escort of the Royal Family was caricatured in many contemporary prints. See Isaac Cruikshank's *The Return from Pizarro* (5 June 1799); *Pizarro a New Play, or the Drury Lane Masquerade*, published by S.W. Fores (11 June 1799); and William Holland's *Returning from Pizarro!!* (June 1799).

[27] *TB*, 6 June 1799.

[28] *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 5–7 June 1799 (540).

[29] *Evening Mail*, 24–27 May 1799; *The Morning Herald*, 25 May 1799; *The Oracle*, 25 May 1799.

[30] *MP*, 6 June 1799.

his main address to the Peruvian warriors in order to allow Rolla to 'animate' their spirits (2.2, *DW*, 2: 669). Rolla's speech (recognised as one of Sheridan's original contributions to Kotzebue's text)[31] was a celebrated 'point' in the play, provoking wild bursts of applause and sentimental tears in the auditorium night after night.[32] As Thomas Moore observed, Kemble's success in Act 2 was further heightened by the fact that Rolla's speech was indebted to not only Sheridan's oratory during the Warren Hastings Trial, but also his response to 'The King's Message respecting the Designs of the Enemy' (20 April 1798).[33] These echoes would have permitted George III to identify in Rolla's speech Sheridan's public support for his own address to the nation at a time of possible invasion. Indeed, if the King truly 'wept in the second Act', then his response would not have been out of place: manly tears were commonplace in contemporary parliamentary culture (especially when the vindication of personal character was at stake), and would certainly have been in line with popular responses to the play from within the auditorium at large.[34]

'George III had every reason to be happy with *Pizarro*, particularly with its portrayal of kingship', writes Gillian Russell, for whom the characterisation of Ataliba is dependent upon the 'benevolent, paternalistic relationship to his people … which George III had himself done much to promote'.[35] While I largely agree with this interpretation, I would nevertheless like to complicate Russell's reading of *Pizarro* by suggesting that the force of Rolla's key speech is likely to have encouraged George III to identify (however wishfully) with the inspirational Rolla, rather than the benign but from an early stage relatively passive Ataliba.[36] Even more decisive than the points of contact between Rolla's speech and Sheridan's response to the 'King's Message Respecting the Designs of the Enemy', is the fact that in *Pizarro* heroic action is patterned, specifically, on Rolla, the war hero. After Ataliba is injured, it is Rolla who leads the charge against the Spanish armies and wins the advantage; in Act 4 Rolla saves Alonzo from Spanish imprisonment;

---

[31] Rolla's harangue – an obvious borrowing from Sheridan's parliamentary oratory – was considered critical to the 'unique' character of his adaptation. See, for instance, [Stuart Moncrieff Thriepland], *Letters Respecting the Performances at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1800), 246.

[32] As Peter Thompson explains, 'points' were 'those passages of a play that could be enlivened by eye-catching stage business, much of it traditional, and for which the actor would be rewarded by ritually repeated rounds of applause'. See 'Acting and actors from Garrick to Kean', in Moody and O'Quinn (eds), *Cambridge Companion to British Theatre*, 12–13.

[33] Qtd. by Cecil Price, 'Introduction' to *Pizarro*, in *DW*, 2: 639.

[34] Christopher Reid, 'Debating Robert Clive: eloquence and identification in the eighteenth-century House of Commons'. Paper presented at the Romantic Realignments seminar series, University of Oxford, 25 February 2010.

[35] Russell, *Theatres of War*, 57.

[36] On George III's self-styling as king, see Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty, and the British Nation 1760–1820', *Past and Present* 102.1, (1984), 94–129.

and finally, while Ataliba expresses his frustration at being unable to soothe Cora's despair, he is cut short by Rolla's arrival with Fernando (5.2, *DW*, 2: 700). At this point, Rolla appears '*bleeding*', returns Cora and Alonzo's missing child, and – in an unique invention of Sheridan's – dies on stage soon after.[37]

Rolla's heroism is powerfully reinforced by the play's stage directions, but narration also exercises a crucial role. This occurs most notably at the end of the second act, when a young boy excitedly relates Rolla's actions to his blind grandfather:

BOY	[…] [*Ascends a rock, and from thence into the tree*] O – now I see them – now –yes – and the Spaniards turning by the steep.
O.MAN	Rolla follows them?
BOY	He does – he does – he moves like an arrow! – now he waves his arm to our soldiers – [*Report of cannon heard.*] Now there is fire and smoke.

……………………………………

O.MAN	Seest thou the King?
BOY	Yes – Rolla is near him! His sword sheds fire as he strikes!

(2.4, *DW*, 2: 674–5)

Ataliba may be present, but it is Rolla who saves the day. Indeed, even Pizarro admires Rolla's actions. In Act 5, as he orders his soldiers to pursue him, Pizarro watches Rolla's escape with fascination: 'With what fury he defends himself! – Ha! – he fells them to the ground – and now –' (5.2, *DW*, 2: 699). As in the boy's report to his grandfather, punctuation by dashes imparts the excitement inspired by Rolla's actions while simultaneously suggesting the difficulty of narrating the hero's fast, spirited exertions. Throughout the play, the Peruvian is depicted as energetic, spontaneous and triumphant. His very first line, which occurs half off stage, represents him as the leader *par excellence*, with trumpets announcing Rolla's entrance as he commands the Peruvian soldiers to assume their positions (2.1, *DW*, 2: 667). In the words of the *True Briton*, Drury Lane that night delivered 'a triumph of Loyalty'.[38] The play's characterisation and patterning of action nonetheless mutually suggest that *Pizarro*'s loyalism rested less on its depiction of kingship than on the heroic agency inspired by the nation's chosen leaders – not necessarily royal.

---

[37] In Kotzebue's play, Rolla's death occurs off stage, narrated in a soldier's report to Pizarro (5.6). See *Pizarro; the Spaniards in Peru; or, the Death of Rolla. A Tragedy in Five Acts: by Augustus von Kotzebue*, transl. Anne Plumptre. 2nd ed. (London, 1799), 89.

[38] *TB*, 6 June 1799.

Strong ideological investment in the mobilising power of heroic agency defined *Pizarro* as, first and foremost, a performative text. The play's readers and spectators were bound by markedly different perceptual limitations, as underscored by the anonymous 1799 publication *A Critique of the Tragedy of Pizarro*. In an attempt to underline *Pizarro*'s numerous inconsistencies, the *Critique* focuses significantly on how the play's meanings in the closet diverge from those fostered by its Drury Lane stagings: 'stripping it of the pomp of procession, the glitter of scenery and the noise of music', 'unprejudiced by the voice of the multitude' and 'unawed by the authority of a name', the author of the *Critique* deconstructs the play's performative agency.[39] This dismissal of *Pizarro*'s 'stage-worthiness' ironically identifies the very characteristics that seem to have caused the greatest anxiety about the political and institutional uses to which Sheridan's text could be put.

The contemporary concern over performativity was not, of course, exclusive to *Pizarro*. 'Porta', the author of a two-part essay for the *Monthly Mirror* entitled 'Defence of the Stage', claimed that 'in a theatre, a moral sentiment, well written and delivered, forces its way to the bosoms of an audience, which, elsewhere, would never be heard' (imagined, in fact, 'most irreligiously asleep' in a church).[40] But even this celebration of the theatre as 'one great source of public instruction' relies, notably, on the proper expression and delivery of 'moral' sentiments. These qualifications are best understood with reference to the next issue of the *Monthly Mirror*, which included a review of Joanna Baillie's *A Series of Plays in which it is attempted to delineate the Stronger Passions of the Mind. Each passion being the subject of a tragedy and comedy* (1798). Revealingly, the reviewer for the *Mirror* considered Baillie's design 'more philosophical than practical' because audiences – 'a large assembly of people, indiscriminately collected' – 'have neither time, inclination, nor capacity to enter minutely into discriminations of character'.[41] As Elaine Hadley explains, 'theatres had become the primary public location where all kinds of people could be legally heard and where they could be "dramatized" as contentious voices in public debate. In a theater, if not in a parliamentary election, these people could "vote" their pleasure'.[42] This helps explain why the author of the *Critique* – alarmed by *Pizarro*'s extreme popularity, audiences' predilection for spectacle and Sheridan's public renown – betrayed such little confidence in the discriminatory powers of theatre-goers. As the *Critique* acknowledges, inherent in every performance is the potential to dabble in deceit and mislead by seduction. This made Sheridan's political detractors understandably apprehensive about the

---

39 *A Critique of the Tragedy of 'Pizarro'* (London, 1799), 5.

40 *MM*, January 1801, 11: 45. The first part of the essay was published in the December 1800 issue of the *MM*, 389–90. Gillian Perry suggests that 'Porta' may have been the pen name of the French actress Hyppolite Clarion, who was writing for the *MM* in 1800 and 1801. *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theater 1768–1820* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 209.

41 *MM*, February 1801, 112–14.

42 Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800–1885* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 37.

statesman's capacity to influence the crowds at Drury Lane. To many of the play's conservative reviewers, *Pizarro*'s fantasy of national liberation could all too easily morph into a nightmarish image of radical interference.

The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1799 reprints a letter in which its author ('A Lover of Variety') deals with *Pizarro* as a double-edged threat. Not only does 'A Lover of Variety' acknowledge that the play could inflame the passions of its audiences but, through complaints of being 'Pizarroed', conceives of the play as a phenomenon in its own right. *Pizarro* had achieved an unimagined degree of popularity; so much so, in fact, that according to the letter, the play now threatened the permanence of the nation's greatest institutions (including the Royal Society and Houses of Parliament).[43] Frustrated with 'the reign of the monopolising Pizarro', the author vents despair at the social ubiquitousness of Sheridan's play-text, nervously tracing its progress across the private and public spheres, the metropolis and provinces, and different social classes.[44] This anxiety finds its most dramatic expression through an arresting personification of the play:

> I shall make no objection to Pizarro at Drury Lane, or in the booksellers' shops; but I do not like to meet him at the corner of every street, to see him lurking among the dishes of the table, disputing or causing disputes among the quidnuncs of the coffee-house, and following us not only to the doors, but half up the aisles of the churches.[45]

The author had earlier invested the name of Sheridan's play with verbal force (in order to describe a culture that had been '*Pizarroed*'). Here, rather than referring to the eponymous villain of Sheridan's piece, 'Pizarro' is used to signify the abstract identity of the play itself. The technique allows 'A Lover of Variety' to extend the dangers associated with the play's villain into a diatribe against *Pizarro*'s pervasive ideology and, more specifically, its infiltration into the public domain. Locating 'himself' within the radical fringes of London's geography, *Pizarro* is described as 'lurking', 'disputing' and 'following' the city dwellers. In a fit of conservative paranoia 'A Lover of Variety' personifies and dresses *Pizarro* in the garb of a dangerous revolutionary.

Memories of the French Terror and England's own movements for domestic reform remained highly topical in the late 1790s, invigorating the surveillance culture that monitored the circulation of Sheridan's play. Habeas Corpus Suspension Acts were passed in 1794, 1798 and 1799. Sheridan, an active speaker in the House of Commons during this period, described the Habeas Corpus Bill as 'the greatest insult that could be offered to the nation'.[46] By relegating *Pizarro* to the fringes

---

[43] 'Pizarro the Universal Topic!' in *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1799* (London, 1800), 314–19 (315).

[44] *Spirit ... 1799*, 317.

[45] *Spirit ... 1799*, 315.

[46] Hansard (HC), 'Debate in the Commons on the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill' (13 February 1800), in *PH* (London, 1812), 34: 1466. See also: 'Debate in the Commons

of the metropolis, 'A Lover of Variety' thus effectively insinuates that Sheridan's radical Whig politics (seen to inform so much of his play's rhetoric) had exceeded the limits of constitutional and social propriety.[47] The author's description of *Pizarro*'s popularity as a 'general contagion' functions, unmistakably, as an appeal to authority against a public menace in urgent need of containment.[48]

Indeed, the public's fascination for Sheridan's *Pizarro* had helped promote a host of derivative texts, including a radical reworking of the play's romance that offered a happy ending for Cora and Rolla.[49] As the *Monthly Review* would succinctly put it, *Pizarro* became 'a hackneyed subject'.[50] But this did not mean that the offshoots of Sheridan's commercial success were unquestioning of their source narrative. Thomas Dutton, who marketed his translation of *Die Spanier in Peru* as the 'ORIGINAL of the NEW TRAGEDY, now performing at Drury-Lane Theatre', repeatedly claimed that *Pizarro*'s historical setting had been invalidated by Sheridan's pandering to the public predilection for spectacle.[51] Claiming that Alonzo's dress is 'better suited for a ball, or some grand festivity than for scenes of blood and carnage', Dutton's edition exposed a series of historical gaps and inconsistencies in Sheridan's drama.[52]

Peru itself, although exotic, was not entirely foreign to the public eye.[53] 'The mines of Mexico and Peru' often featured in late eighteenth-century newspaper reports as shorthand for the imperial economy. Following the loss of the American colonies, reports of native unrest in South America became prominent news items. In June 1790, for instance, *The Times* not only described Peru's 'insurgent state' but also speculated that it 'would require but little address in a British Commander to excite a general revolt'.[54] The emotive power kindled by Spain's Black Legend was explicitly recognised:

---

on the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill', *PH*, 1798, 33: 1429.

[47] Sheridan's biographer Fintan O'Toole pointedly notes that whereas in 1792 Sheridan had been seriously considered as a candidate for the role of prime minister, by 1794 he was regarded 'a potential felon'. *A Traitor's Kiss: The Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan 1751–1816* (London: Granta, 1997), 286.

[48] *Spirit ... 1799*, 316.

[49] See *Pizarro: A Tragedy in Five Acts [...] by a North Briton* (London, 1799).

[50] 'Article 38', in *MR*, February 1800, 31: 211.

[51] Thomas Dutton, *Pizarro in Peru, or the death of Rolla; being the original of the new tragedy now performing at the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane. Translated from the last German edition of Augustus von Kotzebue, with notes, &c. by Thomas Dutton* (London, 1799).

[52] Dutton, *Pizarro in Peru*, 65.

[53] In 1795 an impromptu gold rush in County Wicklow, Ireland, caused reporters to dub the area 'Little Peru' (*The Times,* 20 October 1795). Helen Maria Williams's poem *Peru* (1784) was well known by the time of *Pizarro*'s premiere, helping excite an interest in Peru that was both fictional and real.

[54] *The Times*, 3 June 1790.

> The cruelty of the first settlers from the Old World, will perhaps be never forgotten, but be handed down in traditionary remembrance from one generation to another, till the end of time.[55]

Sheridan's dramatisation of sixteenth-century Spanish designs for the New World drew upon his audiences' larger understanding of the Black Legend's continued, oppressive hold in contemporary South America.[56]

In *Pizarro* the priest Las Casas, the voice of 'reason and religion' (1.1, *DW*, 2: 662), launches a humanitarian appeal against Spanish violence:

> LAS-C Do not, I implore you, Chieftains – Countrymen – Do not, I implore you, renew the foul barbarities which your insatiate avarice has inflicted on this wretched, unoffending race! But hush, my sighs – fall not, drops of useless sorrow! – heart-breaking anguish, choke not my utterance – All I entreat is, send me once more to those you *call* your enemies.
>
> (1.1, *DW*, 2: 661)

This sentimental supplication for diplomatic intercession can be seen to dramatise the real potential, acknowledged by the contemporary press, for Britain to step in as a substitute for Spain's colonial government. In contrast to representations of Spanish imperialism as rule by usurpation and localised tyranny, the British took pride in a model of 'good governance', exchanging conquest for commerce and styling themselves benevolent settlers. Yet, if British governance was put forward as an alternative to Spanish oppression, its substitutionalist qualities were implicitly destabilising.[57] In a political essay that appeared in *The Times* in 1787, the conquest of Peru was explicitly cited in order to declaim against the persistent 'evils' of British commerce, especially slavery:

> Have not the original tracts of the natives of Montezuma's empire, Peru, and the other extended countries of South America, felt severely the dreadful effects arising from the same source? and if fresh instances should be wanting, let us look to the conduct of a *Clive* and a *Hastings*, where, to borrow from the words of a celebrated oration of Mr. Sheridan's in the British House of Commons "we may see the genius of empire wielding the bloody sceptre in one hand, and picking pockets with the other".[58]

---

[55] *The Times*, 27 August 1790.

[56] It is worth comparing *Pizarro* to earlier theatrical representations such as William Davenant's *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* (1658).

[57] Britain's imperial policy in the late eighteenth century was marked by what Daniel O'Quinn describes as 'a combination of almost unrestrained ambition and nagging trepidation that the British Empire would go the way of ancient Rome, sixteenth-century Spain, or seventeenth-century Holland'. O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 23.

[58] *The Times*, 14 September 1787.

The essay brings together the exploitation of native people, Spanish colonialism, the Warren Hastings trial and Sheridan's celebrated speech in one narratorial frame. The parallel drawn between Spain's introduction of slavery to the New World and Britain's own investment in human trafficking in the late eighteenth century, may also explain why Wilberforce broke his 20 years of abstinence from the theatre in order to watch *Pizarro*.[59] But more significantly still, the essay distinctly identifies Sheridan in the attempt to remedy these prime examples of the moral degeneracy of empire. As Suleri and Taylor have compellingly argued, Sheridan's speeches in the Warren Hastings trial would continue to inflect the patriotic rhetoric of *Pizarro*.[60] The charges of corruption and oppression directed against the East India Company hovered below the play's emotive oratory, exposing the British interest in the subcontinent as one no less sanguinary than that of the Spanish conquistadores in the Americas.

Sheridan's ideological centrality in both playhouse and Parliament thus provided competing sites for the social redemption promised by his new play. Pitt's accusations against *Pizarro*'s originality suggest that, in his opinion, Sheridan was guilty of both manipulating the theatre for political ends and conducting politics as role-play. English theatres constituted contested spaces in which political ideas were disseminated and consumed. While the newspapers' initial response had been to laud *Pizarro*'s patriotic narrative (thereby promoting and ensuring its celebrity status as a national mainpiece), the play's broad appeal was soon regarded with decided mistrust. Conservative anxiety was particularly acute by the end of *Pizarro*'s first season. Whereas to some, *Pizarro* provided evidence of Sheridan's radical sympathies, others feared that the mass appeal of spectacle could lead to the confusion of theatrical illusion with reality, or even result in altogether senseless fits of hysteria.[61] In short, *Pizarro* existed as a phenomenon both on stage and off; its meanings available for circulation, negotiation and exchange (beyond institutional control).

***Pizarro*'s Political Meanings, 1801–1803**

Between March 1802 and May 1803, Britain and France enjoyed a brief respite from war. To celebrate the Peace of Amiens, the Union Club held a grand masquerade at its headquarters, Cumberland House. No expense had been spared and tickets sold out fast, with an additional six hundred unexpected revellers raising the total count

[59] *MP*, 31 May 1799.

[60] Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), see Chap. 3 esp.; and Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, Chap. 4.

[61] See *London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 18 December 1799, for its 'whimsical' report of a sailor's impassioned response to the play: 'Whenever *Pizarro* appeared the honest Tar grumbled forth his indignation, till his feelings were fully gratified in the fall of the Tyrant'.

of guests to approximately 2,000.[62] In the area surrounding the house, the attendees were invited to stroll through an avenue illuminated by a large transparency that represented '*War* subdued by Peace'. Inside, distant views of London and Paris framed the Club's 'sumptuous' ballroom, while the billiard room, with its various allegorical representations of 'the return of *Commerce* through *Peace*', was reserved for the exclusive use of the evening's guest of honour, the Prince of Wales.[63] In this highly symbolic and carefully demarcated social space, Sheridan's *Pizarro* was also unmistakably present: the *Morning Chronicle* espied among the socialites 'above a dozen *Priestesses* and *Virgins* of the Sun, chiefly copied from the dresses of Pizarro [*sic*]'.[64] These fashionable ladies would undoubtedly have been admired for their beautiful, costly dresses and the noble, dignified air these imparted.[65] But were their costume choices also politically judicious?

The Priests (rather than 'Priestesses') and Virgins of the Sun first appear in Act 2 scene 2 of *Pizarro*, a scene famous for its magnificent setting in 'The Temple of the Sun' and Rolla's speech to the Peruvians preparatory to war.[66] The mood of thanksgiving with which the scene opens nevertheless gives way to one of *Pizarro*'s most politicised moments, wherein even the rituals performed by the Priests and Virgins conclude with a song of 'praise' that doubles as a passionate call to arms:

[Priests and Virgins]
[Kelly, Dignum, Mrs Crouch, Miss Decamp, Stephens, Dufour, Leak]
……………………………….
[Thanksgiving]
Give praise, give praise, the God has heard,
Our God most awfully rever'd!
The alter his own flames enwreath'd!
Then be the conquering sword unsheath'd,
And victory sit on Rolla's brow,
Our foes to crush – to overthrow!

(2.2, *DW*, 2: 670)

---

[62] A ticket costing twenty guineas would allow one member to attend with two ladies. *MP*, 9 March 1802.

[63] *MC,* 2 June 1802.

[64] This included Lady Holland as a Priestess of the Sun. *MC,* 2 June 1802.

[65] See also *The Times*, 1 January 1801, on ladies' fashions and the trend for 'Pizarro feathers'.

[66] While Priestesses of the Sun do not, in fact, appear in *Pizarro*, they feature significantly in Kotzebue's *Die Sonnen-jungfrau* (1789) – for English translations and adaptations, see Anne Plumptre, *The Virgin of the Sun* (1799); Benjamin Thompson, *Rolla* (1800); and Frederick Reynolds, *The Virgin of the Sun* (1812). It is possible that either the reviewer for the *MC* conflated the two plays or that the masqueraders appropriated *Pizarro*'s dramatis personae, but the Temple of the Sun nevertheless constitutes a sacred space in both plays.

While the Peruvians might, in more general terms, be aligned with liberty, in this particular scene, they are at their most war-like, and their religious superstitions furthest from the British Protestant norm. In recognition of the play's aggressive male heroics, it is significant that none of the gentlemen who attended the ball seem to have chosen to dress as either Rolla or Alonzo. In *Pizarro*, the Peruvians' private and public spheres are very carefully differentiated. When the men go to battle, the women and children retreat among the rocks to safety (3.1, *DW*, 2: 676). Consequently, the men might be understood to fight in order to protect the sanctity of the private sphere, while the Virgins symbolise female moral influence and the virtues of domesticity. In their decision to don the robes of the Peruvian nobility and align themselves with this favourite scene of *Pizarro,* the ladies at the Union Club imparted a symbolic message of social reconciliation and regeneration. By engaging with the play's complex visual register (rich in contingency) they sought to express their political sympathies through an affirmation that the Peace they celebrated had been sanctioned as noble, ethical and principled. Reinventing the interplay between theatrical and political realities, the Union ladies' '*Pizarro* masquerading' testifies to the perceived centrality that Sheridan's play had acquired in contemporary society.

When the fragile Peace of Amiens collapsed in May 1803 it brought renewed fears of an imminent French invasion. Sheridan responded to this turn in political events by also looking to Act 2 scene 2 of *Pizarro*. It is characteristic of the play's 'protean' nature that the same scene that had been used by aristocratic ladies to celebrate the Peace of Amiens could, less than a year later, represent the urgent need for a return to arms. In 1803 the playwright extracted Rolla's speech in the Temple of the Sun and retitled it 'Sheridan's Address to the People: Our King! Our Country! And our God!'. Published as a broadsheet in London and Dublin, it was widely disseminated.

Sheridan's decision to divorce Rolla's speech from its original dramatic context was, however, loaded with political implication. In an engaging discussion of the links between radicalism and visual culture in the 1790s, John Barrell contends that 'the language of theatre advertising could function as a language that addressed both the polite and the vulgar much more effectively than the language, or rather the languages, of formal political debate'; 'the sheer ubiquitousness' and consequent familiarity of the playbill making it one of the 'most conspicuous, attention-seeking, visually enjoyable advertisements around'.[67] 'Sheridan's Address', as it came to be known more colloquially, reinforced this link between theatrical and political cultures, with the broadsheet's prominence in the cities of Dublin and London giving the play's

---

[67] John Barrell, 'Radicalism, Visual Culture, and Spectacle in the 1790s', *Romanticism on the Net* (May 2007), Numéro 46 [Accessed 01.07.2012] <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2007/v/n46/016131ar.html> [DOI : 10.7202/016131ar].

rhetoric a visible presence in the propaganda campaign that sought to equip Britons for the renewed war effort.

This pitch of loyalist sentiment was variously (re)figured in satirical prints by Isaac Cruikshank, James Gillray and William Holland, whose caricatures, like theatrical performances, excited the interests of a broad urban audience, sensitive to political nuance. As Daniel O'Quinn asserts, there was a 'tight fit between theatrical performance, political life, and the print media of late eighteenth-century Britain'.[68] Visual satire circulated more widely than textual satire, and was more difficult to prosecute (however personal, and potentially libellous). In *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (2006), Vic Gatrell explains how these satires 'operated within a shame-culture in which the public demolition of reputation was the most feared of social sanctions'.[69] The numerous satirical prints that capitalised upon Sheridan's theatrical fortunes in order to denounce his politics offer a neat exposition of this; the specific identification of Sheridan with Pizarro lending support to Fintan O'Toole's argument that '*Pizarro* was much more about Sheridan than it was about either Spaniards or Peruvians'.[70]

Gillray's *Pizarro Contemplating Over the Product of his New Peruvian Mine* (4 June 1799; Figure 1.1) depicts Sheridan, in full Spanish costume, greedily handling *Pizarro*'s box-office takings. With brilliant metonymy, Gillray uses the play's narrative of colonial adventure to denounce Sheridan's exploitation of patriotic sentiment. In the print, Drury Lane's neoclassical columns are decorated with cherubim blowing the trumpet of Fame while holding scrolls that read 'Morning Chronicle – Puff Puff Puff', 'Morning Herald – Puff Puff Puff', 'Courier – Puff Puff', and 'Times – Puff Puff'.[71] Cobbett's strictures on Sheridan in *The Political Proteus* would similarly declaim against the newspapers' eulogistic reviews of *Pizarro* as 'a natural alliance, a sort of family compact, between the press and the theatre'.[72] In the early 1800s the theatre's conflation of political and financial cultures continued to destabilise *Pizarro*'s claims to patriotism, making the loyalism of 'Sheridan's Address' highly questionable.

---

[68] O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 11.

[69] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), 220.

[70] O'Toole, *Traitor's Kiss*, 345.

[71] These can also be read as allusions to Sheridan's *The Critic.* See especially 1.2 for Puff's definition of the various forms of the art, including 'THE PUFF DIRECT – the PUFF PRELIMINARY – the PUFF COLLATERAL – the PUFF COLLUSIVE, and the PUFF OBLIQUE, or PUFF by IMPLICATION – '. *DW*, 2: 514.

[72] Cobbett, *Political Proteus*, 206.

Figure 1.1 James Gillray, *Pizarro Contemplating Over the Product of his New Peruvian Mine*, 4 June 1799. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Gillray's misspelt *Pizzarro* print (1 October 1799) for the *Anti-Jacobin Review* also denounces Sheridan's claim to the laurels of patriotism (Figure 1.2).[73] Here, Gillray depicts Sheridan, mounted upon Kemble's head, with a bag of money under his left arm and a scroll in his right hand, which reads 'Spoken before a select party of Friends':

> This season true my Principles I've sold
> To fool the world & pocket George's gold
> Prolific mine! – anglo-peruvian food
> Provok'd my taste – and Candidate I stood –
> While Kemble my support with LOYAL face
> Declares THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE with stage-trick grace.[74]

[73] The print appeared in *The Anti-Jacobin* (October 1799, 4: 318) alongside a review of *A Critique of the Tragedy of 'Pizarro'*. The author of *A Critique* also uses *The Critic* to undermine *Pizarro*'s spectacular appeal.

[74] The scroll can also be interpreted as an attack on the play's 'legitimacy'. Minor theatres often circumvented the ban on spoken dialogue by inscribing key lines onto scrolls

Figure 1.2 James Gillray, *Pizzarro*, etched by J. Chapman. 1 October 1799. Harry Beard Collection. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The print's typographical enhancements elide Sheridan's distorted 'Speech' with Rolla's address to the Peruvian warriors:

> ROL. Be our plain answer this: The throne WE honour is the PEOPLE'S CHOICE – the laws we reverence are our brave Fathers' legacy – the faith we follow teaches us to live in bonds of charity with all mankind, and die with hope of bliss beyond the grave. Tell your invaders this, and tell them too, we seek no change; and, least of all, such change as they would bring us.
> [*Trumpets sound*.]
> (2.2, *DW*, 2: 669)

In the popularly perceived metaphorical exchange that equated Pizarro and his troops with Napoleon and his invading armies, Rolla's speech was seen to rebuke the revolutionary threat by upholding instead the constitutional foundation of the British monarchy. Gillray, however, rejects and reverses Rolla's supposedly 'plain answer'. Sheridan, dressed in Elizabethan costume (as Pizarro) is portrayed

and banners. See Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London*, 28–30.

instead as the consummate actor. The 'select party of Friends' whom he addresses is suggestive of the playwright's involvement with the 'Society of the Friends of the People', a radical group formed in 1792 to advocate parliamentary reform in the wake of the French Revolution. Despite appearances, Gillray insists that Sheridan retained a firm hold on his earlier, putatively seditious political beliefs.

The playwright's career as an outspoken Opposition Member of Parliament infused jarring political insinuations into *Pizarro*'s outwardly hegemonic appeal. In 'Pizzarro', Sheridan is depicted as if he were 'riding' Kemble because, according to Gillray, it was Kemble's conservative reputation that directed the play's patriotic success. As Shearer West carefully points out, in contradistinction to damning portrayals of Sheridan, *Pizarro* prints tended to emphasise Kemble as the play's dignified and justly celebrated star performer.[75] The perceived difference between Sheridan's excited opportunism and Kemble's refined 'classical' acting finds powerful expression in Gillray's print, where the artist comes short of caricaturing Kemble who is, in fact, quite flatteringly depicted with Romanised features.[76]

In his 1803 print *John Bull and the Alarmist* (1 September 1803; Figure 1.3) Gillray caricatures Sheridan as a dishevelled, self-serving bill-sticker who carries 'Loyal Bills' and the 'Sherry Andrew Address' under his arm.[77] In keeping with the personalised iconography of his earlier prints Gillray depicts Sheridan (with the drinker's tell-tale red nose) as an alcoholic 'Sherry Andrews'.[78] The pun on his name, which retains the clownish label of 'Merry Andrews', references performativity more generally: Sheridan is here depicted as an actor, whose speech to John Bull is a re-hash of Iago's warning to Brabantio in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Sheridan's ineffectual management of Drury Lane Theatre is also lampooned, with the ragged clothes and playbills peeping out of his breast pocket pointing to the well-known fact that *Pizarro*'s lucrative success had been desperately needed.[79]

---

[75] Shearer West, *The Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representations in the Age of Garrick and Kemble* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), 84.

[76] Gillray emphasises the actor's roman nose, in probable recognition that 'Kemble was the dominant Shakespearean actor of the period, and Coriolanus … Kemble's defining role'. Jonathan Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity: Rome in the British Imagination 1789–1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 194.

[77] By the mid-1790s the British government had developed a 'policy of issuing "alarms" – predictions first of treason at home, then increasingly of invasion abroad'. Mary Favret explains that by 1796 these 'alarms' were a recognised 'form of prophecy … attributed to and practiced primarily by government supporters, both sincere and cynical'. *War at a Distance*, 85.

[78] See James Gillray's *The Union-Club* (1801) where Sheridan is rendered immediately recognisable, in the words of Vic Gatrell, by 'his boozer's face bloated and nose bulbous and a bottle raised in his right hand' (*City of Laughter*, 289); and *Physical Aid, – or – Britannia Recover'd From a Trance; – also, Patriotic courage of Sherry Andrew, & a Peep Thro' the Fog* (March 1803). For Sheridan's heavy drinking and friendship with the Prince Regent, see O'Toole, *Traitor's Kiss*, 179.

[79] Sheridan whispers to John Bull (George III): 'A Corsican Thief has just slipt from his quarters, And coming to Ravish your Wives & your Daughters!'