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BRITISH DRAMA OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Between the advent of the French Revolution and the short-lived success of the Chartist movement, overworked and underpaid labourers struggled to achieve solidarity and collective bargaining. That history has been told in numerous accounts of the age, but never before has it been told in terms of the theatre of the period. To understand the play lists of a theatre, it is crucial to examine the community which that theatre serves. In the labouring-class communities of London and the provinces, the performances were adapted to suit the local audiences, whether weavers, or miners, or field workers. Examining the conditions and characteristics of representative provincial theatres from the 1790s to the 1830s, Frederick Burwick argues that the meaning of a play changes with every change in the performance location. As contributing factors in that change, Burwick attends to local political and cultural circumstances as well as to theatrical activities and developments elsewhere.

FREDERICK BURWICK is a research professor at University of California, Los Angeles. The author and editor of 32 books and 150 articles, he has been named Distinguished Scholar by the British Academy (1992) and by the Keats–Shelley Association (1998). The International Conference on Romanticism presented him with a Lifetime Achievement Award (2013). He is editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (2009) and general editor of the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Romantic Literature* (2012). Recent monographs include *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting* (Cambridge, 2009), *Playing to the Crowd: London Popular Theatre, 1780–1830* (2011), and, co-authored with Manushag Powell, *British Pirates in Print and Performance* (2015).

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Acknowledgments

One thing has led to another. From the emphasis on dramatic theory in *Illusion and the Drama: Critical Theory of the Enlightenment and Romantic Era* (Penn State, 1991), I was prompted to turn to the dynamics of performance and audience response in *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). The concern with audience and spectatorship led me, in *Playing to the Crowd: London Popular Theatre, 1780–1830* (Palgrave, 2011), to examine the differences in the urban communities supporting the unlicensed theatres of London. Aware of the influence that local audiences might bring to bear on what plays were performed, and how they were performed, I pursued the present wide-ranging investigation of the provincial theatres in both rural and urban communities. In *British Drama of the Industrial Revolution* I scrutinize theatres in the market towns as well as in the manufacturing centres.

Finding necessary leverage in the performances at those theatres catering to the tastes of the aristocracy, gentry, and comfortably established industrialists, I observe the political tensions that were played out nightly in theatres throughout Britain. During the years in which labourers were forbidden public assembly, gatherings nevertheless took place in theatres serving the factory workers, merchants, weavers, tin miners or colliers, farmers or field labourers. Laws were ratified to render illegal all attempts to organize the workers or to rally in behalf of more humane conditions. The present study endeavours to illuminate the extent to which labouring-class drama found the means, necessarily covert, to circumvent censorship and advocate changes for those who delved the mines, tilled the fields, and sweat through long hours at low wages in the factories.

From the outset I realized the extensive research that would be necessary. The great archival task was in retrieving a large number of now forgotten plays and explaining their performance and appeal in terms of social and economic conditions affecting labouring-class audiences. Originally published in small acting editions, complete with notes on costumes and

set designs, many of these plays bear the imprint of Thomas Hailes Lacy, John Cumberland, John Duncombe, John Roach, Thomas Lownds, or John Thomas Dicks. Lacy alone published ninety-nine volumes of play anthologies amounting to some 1,458 plays. Long sequestered in libraries, more and more of these volumes have been distributed in microfilm, and are being digitalized and gaining wider accessibility through Chadwyck-Healey and other e-archives.

Fortunately I was guided to resources that provided the primary data by colleagues who shared their expertise. Fortunately, too, I was provided funding for travel and research. At the Wordsworth Summer Conference, 2011, I was impressed by the command of details that informed a presentation by Irene Wiltshire on the Peterloo Massacre. An expert on Elizabeth Gaskell, Irene has extensive familiarity with labouring-class struggles in the Manchester area during the nineteenth century. Responding generously to my request for help, she acquired data from the County Record Offices of Manchester County and Lancashire County Record Office, from the Local Studies Unit in Manchester, in Rochdale, and in Middleton, and also from the Stalybridge Library and the Bolton Museum. She also visited Chetham's Library in Manchester and followed through with the research that I had commenced there. She read a draft of the entire work and rescued me from numerous typographical embarrassments. Any embarrassments that remain result from my own subsequent tampering.

A major resource was Brian Maidment (Liverpool John Moores University), who generously shared his knowledge of the labouring class in the nineteenth century and introduced me personally to the librarians at the Working-Class Museum Library in Salford and Chetham's Library in Manchester. Michael Powell, Librarian at Chetham's, is the master and living catalogue of the books he oversees. He also was ready to provide photocopies to save hours of transcribing. Similar help with tracing local theatre performances was provided by Angela Kale at the Scarborough Library. Further thanks are due to Jo Elsworth, Director of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, and to her staff: Heather Romaine, Bex Camington, and Jill Sullivan. Their efficiency made it possible for me to make maximum use of the extensive collection of Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson.

Kate Newey (Exeter) provided enthusiastic encouragement with her declarations that a study of labouring-class drama was greatly needed and was a topic that attracted her own interests. She readily shared with me her immediately relevant essays (cited in my commentary and bibliography). My discussion of John Banim, Richard Lolar Sheil, Thomas Moore, and

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other Irish authors is indebted to the work of Claire Connoly (Cork) and Julia Wright (Dalhousie). Especially valuable was Claire's guidance on the ways in which Irish playwrights dealt with the plight of the exploited lower classes in Ireland.

My first research in Romantic drama, 'Manuscript Journal of John Waldie' (1970), resulted in the lengthy transcription, commentary, and index made available online as *The Journal of John Waldie, Theatre Commentaries, 1799–1830* (2008). Relatively isolated from *Gleichgesinnten* during the early years of my work, I was invited in 1991 to deliver the keynote address at a Symposium on Romantic Drama (Texas A & M) organized by Jeff Cox (now University of Colorado). Since that time I found more and more colleagues actively working in the field of Romantic drama, all of them ready to share their ideas and discoveries in a relatively neglected genre of the period. In addition to Jeff Cox, Jane Moody (York) remains for me the most influential because of her pioneering work on the illegitimate theatres of London. The field was deprived of one of its foremost scholars with Jane's death in 2011. Another great loss to theatre studies in 2011 was the passing of Julia Swindells (Cambridge), who discussed with me the interactions of women radicals with the theatres and the factories and shared her unpublished notes on Mary Fildes, the women radicals, and their involvement with provincial theatres. I am indebted to her book, *Glorious Causes: The Grand Theatre of Political Change, 1789–1833* (2001).

I cannot name all of the friends and scholars from whose work in Romantic drama I have profited, but for the present study the debt to David Worrall (Nottingham Trent) is so extensive that it must be properly acknowledged here. Indeed, many of the issues addressed here explore the concerns David examined in *Radical Culture: Discourse, Resistance and Surveillance, 1790–1820* (1992) and more recently in *Theatrical Revolution: Drama, Censorship and Romantic Period Subcultures, 1773–1832* (2006). Most often in the covert disguise of another time and another place, labouring-class drama stages the repression and persecution, the protests and riots, of weavers, miners, and field labourers. In acquiring familiarity with the causes and consequences of this history of conflict, I turned most frequently to Ian Haywood's *Bloody Romanticism: Spectacular Violence and the Politics of Representation 1776–1832* (2006). More recently Ian co-edited with John Seed a useful collection of essays, *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2012).

While enjoying the warm and welcoming hospitality of Hilary Weeks (Gloucestershire) and Ben Colbert (Wolverhampton), I began taking notes from two of the most essential books for the study of the British working

class, E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968) and G. D. H. Cole, *A Short History of the British Working Class Movement, 1789–1947* (1948). My weekend in their company came to an end, and they generously permitted those two volumes to leave their bookshelves and accompany me on my ensuing twelve-week research expedition. It is not simply for their hospitality and the extended loan of their books that I thank them here, but more importantly for their interest and intellectual engagement in my sketchily defined plans for the research that was intended to inform this book.

Ample evidence was gradually accumulated through the cooperative staff and rich collections at the Working-Class Movement Museum in Salford, Chetham's Library in Manchester, the Mander and Mitchenson Collection in Bristol, the British Library, and the National Record Archive. As previously, I have made use of the Harvard Theatre Collection and the Larpent Collection at the Huntington Library. I have depended on the superb research skills of Lynda Tolly, Librarian for the English Department at UCLA. From UCLA I also have received research grants and support for the research assistance of Julia Callander, who has searched the radical periodicals for all references connecting radicals and reformers, protest and riots, labouring-class grievances, to the plays and performances of the period. Major funding for this project was provided by an Andrew Mellon Emeritus Fellowship. Without this support for travel and expenses, my access to resources would have been severely limited. First and last, I am grateful to Vicki Cooper at Cambridge University Press for supporting this project from the time I proposed it all the way through to its completion. I am grateful, as well, to Fleur Jones, who steered me through necessary revisions in the final stages of production.