

A Dark Ecology of Performance:  
Mapping the Field of Romantic Literary Celebrity through Gothic Drama

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**Abstract**

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Gothic drama reached a height of popularity in the 1790s, partly due to celebrity actors like Sarah Siddons. Yet we know very little about the relationship between the many writers of gothic dramas and the celebrity apparatus. Although critics such as Richard Schickel regard literary celebrity as strictly a twentieth century phenomenon, recently other scholars have been arguing for a broader historical view. Richard Salmon, for instance, has cited photography, investigative journalism, and the phenomenon of authors being interviewed at their homes as evidence of the machinery of celebrity culture operating in the 19th century; David Higgins and Frank Donoghue have argued for the importance of periodical writing in the 18th and 19th centuries, and Claire Brock and Judith Pascoe have pointed out the feminization of fame and public theatricality in the Romantic period. And Tom Mole, in addition to examining the career of Lord Byron in the context of celebrity culture, has recently edited a collection of essays on the material and discursive elements of celebrity culture from 1750 to 1850 to provide a “synoptic picture of celebrity.”

Yet the most popular and profitable literary genre of the Romantic era has remained a stepchild of criticism, the victim of a disjuncture between literary critical study of dramatic texts and historical study of performance culture. This dissertation aims to bridge the gap by examining gothic playwriting as a literary act that conjures the material and discursive elements of celebrity culture. I pivot away from analyzing the purely textual production to emphasize space as a distinctive object of study in a sometimes opaque cultural field.

The study looks at three gothic dramas written by poets long before they achieved the stamp of critical recognition: William Wordsworth's *The Borderers* (1797), Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* (1798), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Remorse* (1796/1813). It treats portraiture galleries, private parties, coffeehouses, and academic institutions as distinct nodes of the celebrity apparatus that shape the dramaturgy of those plays. The major critical perspective through which I take up the literature is geocriticism, a spatial humanities approach undergirded by human and critical geography that highlights the relation between capitalism and urban spaces, looking at celebrity spaces as pedagogical environments.

By focusing on the gothic drama for its ties to celebrity as a transgressive identity and on spaces of cultural consumption, this dissertation concludes that not only did portraiture galleries, coffeehouses, and private parties influence the dramaturgical choices of these plays, but that these writers used the Gothic drama as a vehicle to perform their professional identities--through what I call a "poetics of publicity." A range of political issues are illuminated by this topic, including the slave trade (Coleridge), gender constraints and mobility of economic power in public life (Baillie), and the vapid zeal for physiognomic approaches to aesthetic consumption that obscured the rise of poverty and homelessness in England during the early years with the war with France (Wordsworth).

This dissertation not only contributes to a growing critical interest in celebrity studies, but is equally compelling as it posits a geographical and temporal point of origin for the modern celebrity in British Romanticism. As Su Holmes and Sean Redmond say in the inaugural edition of the journal *Celebrity Studies* in 2010, the principal task of this type of investigation is “to defamiliarize the everyday” and thereby “to make apparent the cultural politics and power relations which sit at the center of ‘the taken for granted.’” Indeed, investigating the powerful cultural forces that produce celebrity writers and actors impel us to confront how texts (and canons) are shaped by, and shape the discursive spaces in which society negotiated understandings of individuality.

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## **Dedication**

For my mother.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to begin by thanking, yet once again, my mother to whom this dissertation is dedicated. Without her unwavering support through my undergraduate and graduate education, this project would not have been possible. Next, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my lovely wife, Haley, for her patience, love, and support through the six years that were necessary to bring this project to fruition, especially in its last two years through the birth and raising of our amazing daughter, Isabella Rose. Your herculean efforts and selfless work-life juggling acts were truly an inspiration—our daughter is fortune to have you as a mother and role-model. I would also like to thank my sister Lisa and my father, and the rest of my family for their support and encouragement along the way. And, I would also like thank our beloved friend Annette Heide-Jessen and the excellent staff at Kaffeeklatsch for providing the space where yet another milestone for our family has been realized, as most of this dissertation was composed there.

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## Introduction

“Celebrity can in fact be through which a modernizing society communicates with its past.”

—Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead*

“An individual is not distinct from his place; his is that place.”

—Gabriel Marcel

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1842 when William Wordsworth published his only drama, *The Borderers*, in *Poems of Chiefly Early and Late Years*, he was one of the most painted poets of his time. His image had been on display in galleries throughout London, Edinburgh, and Paris, and then the following year, he was named poet laureate. Clearly, Wordsworth had achieved a form of celebrity in his lifetime. And yet his prefatory remarks in *Poems* (1842) regarding the composition of this gothic drama speak to his aversion to the manner in which gothic dramas thrust authors into the spotlight:

For myself I had no hope nor even a wish (tho’ a successful Play would in the then state of my finances have been a most welcome piece of good fortune) that he [Richard Sheridan] should have accepted my performance so that I incurred no disappointment when the piece was judiciously returned as not calculated for the stage. In this judgment I entirely concurred, & had it been otherwise it was so natural for me to shrink from public notice that any hope I might have had of success would have reconciled me altogether to such an exhibition. (814)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, William. *The Borderers*. Ed. Robert Osborn. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1982. Print. Wordsworth, William, 1770-1850. Works. Selections. 1975.

Wordsworth was not alone in trying his hand at one of the most spectacular, popular, and profitable genres in the 1790s: an inordinate number of the early Romantic poets wrote gothic dramas, not as closet dramas or mental theater but with the hope that they would be staged, even though few actually did see the boards.<sup>2</sup> Although the justification for each writer may differ, the act of playwriting conjures the cultural industry of theatrical celebrity. For example, evidence suggests that Joanna Baillie wrote *De Monfort* with the celebrity actress Sarah Siddons in mind for the lead role. And John Genest has suggested that Coleridge's *Remorse* was substantially revised because London's regency theaters had only "middling actors" on hand (38); in 1813 Siddons and her brother John Kemble had retired, and Edmund Kean would not take the London stage for another two years.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is my contention that due to the celebrity power associated with the late Georgian stage, when composing a gothic drama, inevitably, writers wrote with the actors, the audiences, and the potentiality of fame in mind. What is unclear, however, is the depth to which writers imagined celebrity culture beyond the proscenium arch and how, what I call "celebrity spaces"—portrait galleries, private performance spaces, coffeehouses, and academic institutions—impacted poetic output and inculcate self-promotional tactics, or perhaps what might be read as a "poetics of publicity." Indeed, the fear of public exhibition Wordsworth writes about in his preface to *The Borderers* speaks to the intersections of economics and public exhibition associated with the theater, and simultaneously links it with other sites of cultural

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<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth submitted his play, *The Borderers*, to the actor Thomas knight in 1797, Coleridge wrote *Osorio* with Siddons in mind for the lead role the same year, Scott published translations of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* in 1799, Lamb offered his play *John Woodvil* to Kemble in 1799, who refused it, Godwin had two plays performed: *Antonio* (1800) and *Faulkner* (1807) at Drury Lane, Joanna Baillie began publishing her series of plays in 1798 after a rather successful publication run of poetry earlier that decade, Southey wrote a number of dramatic works, as well as less known figures like John Tobin; and William Blake, in 1783 composed a tragedy, Edward III in *Poetical Sketches*. Literary influences include Shakespeare, Ben Johnson, Elizabethan poetry, William Collins, Thomas Gray, *Ossian*, and Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.

<sup>3</sup> Genest, John. *Some Account of the English Stage: From the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*. Printed by H.E. Carrington:--Sold by Thomas Rodd, London, 1832. Web.

production, namely the Royal Academy's annual "Exhibition," where Joshua Reynolds has been identified as a key individual in the celebrity-making machine of portraiture art.<sup>4</sup> By treating literature as a discursive practice of cultural production, authoring and authorship become conjoined, and literary production is never uncoupled from the power structures of capitalism, metropolitanism, and the cultivation of a professional identity.

In his book *Byron's Romantic Celebrity*, Tom Mole elaborates a theory and a history of celebrity that he locates in the Romantic era, arguing "that we have had celebrities since the late eighteenth century and a celebrity culture since the beginning of the nineteenth" (1).<sup>5</sup> For Mole, the celebrity apparatus—which consists of an individual, an industry, and an audience—produces celebrity culture when these three components are working together "to render an individual personally fascinating" (2). The prime mover of such an apparatus is Byron, according to Mole, where his *Childe Harold* unfolds "the real romance of [Byron's] life," due to its status as a "laminar text that overlaid revelation and concealment" (2). The reader engages in a quest to decode the individual's authentic subjectivity, a reading practice that "also piques the reader to search for a further extratextual layer of authenticity" (2). Mole refers to this practice as the "hermeneutics of intimacy," a reading practice that I would argue has roots in the decoding practices associated with the gothic novel and 18th century theatrical celebrity culture, especially figures such as David Garrick and Sarah Siddons who became "It," to borrow the term from Joseph Roach's book of the same title, when they performed dramatic roles in plays that featured the supernatural and other machinery of the gothic.

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<sup>4</sup> See Martin Postle's et al. *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity*. London: New York: Tate Pub. 2005. Print.

<sup>5</sup> Mole, Tom. *Byron's Romantic Celebrity: Industrial Culture and the Hermeneutic of Intimacy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

Making this link between reading practices of the gothic novel and theatrical celebrities defines the general aims of this dissertation: it argues that the Gothic drama of the 1790s was the theater of grand spectacle and the theater of celebrity *par excellence*, and those early Romantic poets who endeavoured to create a body of drama at a time of revolutionary political, social, and aesthetic changes were immediately connected beyond the proscenium arch to the topographical and imaginative geographies of the cultural industry of celebrity. This industry represents the confluence of radical freedom amidst new economic and political forms represented in the Gothic Castle—the embodiment of physical oppression—and with the villain-hero—the precursor to the Byronic overreacher epitomized in *Manfred*. Moreover, by focusing on gothic drama as a genre of remediation and adaptation precipitating its cultural ties to popular cultural consumption, eighteenth century metropolitan public spheres will be shown to be an assemblage of connected geographies of production, circulation, and spectacular spaces of conspicuous consumption. Ultimately, this dissertation aims to show how the theatrical celebrity industry is imbricated into a larger field of cultural spatial production, one that trades on excavating the dark recess of consciousness and overwriting the past with the promise of a new identity, which can be traced to gothic drama. For as P. David Marshall has convincingly suggested, “celebrity is the potential of capitalism, a celebration of new kinds of values and orders, a debunking of customary division of traditional society [...] celebrity inaugurates a new public sphere” (6).<sup>6</sup>

Yet the most popular and profitable literary genre of the Romantic era has remained a stepchild of criticism, the victim of a disjuncture between literary critical study of dramatic texts and historical study of performance culture, what Jeffrey Cox describes as disappearing “down a vampire trap door of dramatic history” (2). This dissertation aims to bridge the gap by examining

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<sup>6</sup> Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Second ed. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2014. Web.

gothic playwriting as a literary act that conjures the material and discursive elements of celebrity culture. I pivot away from analyzing the purely textual production to emphasize space as a distinctive object of study in a sometimes opaque cultural field.

The study looks at three gothic dramas written by poets long before they achieved the stamp of critical recognition: William Wordsworth's *The Borderers* (1797), Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* (1798), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Remorse* (1797/1813). It treats portraiture galleries, private parties, coffeehouses, and academic institutions as distinct nodes of the celebrity apparatus that shape the dramaturgy of those plays. The major critical perspective through which I take up the literature is geocriticism, a spatial humanities approach undergirded by human and critical geography that highlights the relation between capitalism and urban spaces, looking at celebrity spaces as pedagogical environments.

### **A Hermeneutics of (Gothic) Intimacy**

The Gothic novel, as a technology, solicits a hermeneutical reading experience. In the early decades of the eighteenth century, English writers were excavating their medieval origins, uncovering a forgotten Anglo-Saxon history. According to E.J. Clery, two important works of literary history appeared in the decade preceding Horace Walpole's groundbreaking gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto*, those were Thomas Wharton's *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (1754 ; enlarged edition 1762) and *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) by Richard Hurd. Along with these works and the poetry of William Collins, Thomas Gray, Edward Young, and James Macpherson's *Ossian*, we can see *The Castle of Otranto* as participating in a zeitgeist of looking to the past. Following in this spirit, gothic novels structure the reading experience as a participatory act of translating or discovering an ancient manuscript: the preface to Walpole's

*The Castle of Otranto* situates the romance as an Italian text printed in 1529. Such a structural experience establishes the early gothic formally as prototypical detective fiction, where “[t]he reader is thus obligated to enter upon a hazardous adventure marked by semiological uncertainty” (Grizelj 114).<sup>7</sup>

Similar historical excavation practices were adopted by naturalistic actors seeking to understand their characters. Catherine Burroughs has noted the importance of Sarah Siddons’s *Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth* (1834) as a record of an actor’s thorough preparation for a role, what we might refer to today as method acting. In *Remarks* Siddons encourages actors to suppose an extra-textual psychological life for their character; in the case of her Lady Macbeth, she hypothesizes a past history of high dignity and command, and a childhood and early married life in which nobody opposes her wishes. Charles Macklin (1690-1797) reportedly spent a considerable amount of time among London’s Jewish populations while researching his role as Shylock.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, audiences were encouraged to explore the real and imagined lives of actors, especially actresses: descriptions of their characteristics appeared in Harris’s *List of Covent Garden Ladies* (published from 1757-1795), while publications like *The Secret History of the Green Room* (1792) offered brief accounts of performers and gossip about their personal life.<sup>9</sup> The public sated their intense interest in the lives of actors and characters through an expanding print culture in the eighteenth century in the form of reviews, satires,

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<sup>7</sup> Grizelj, Mario. “In the Maelstrom of Interpretation: Reshaping Terror and Horror between 1798 and 1838 — Gleich, Hoffmann, Poe.” *Popular Revenants the German Gothic and Its International Reception, 1800-2000*. Woodbridge: Brewer: Boydell & Amp: 2012. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture. Web.

<sup>8</sup> See Todd M. Endelman’s *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000*. Berkeley; Los Angeles: U of California, 2002. Jewish Communities in the Modern World; 3. Web.

<sup>9</sup> And like some actress, prostitutes such as Margaret Leeson, Ann Sheldon, and Teresa Constantia Phillips published the stories of their own careers. Other high-profile prostitutes, such as Fanny Murray, Kitty Fisher, and Sally Salisbury and Fanny Davies, attracted unauthorized biographies. See Kristina Straub’s *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth Century Play and Sexual Ideology*; Cheryl Wanko’s *Role of Authority: Thespian Biography and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century Britain*; Felicity Nussbaum’s “Actress and the Economics of Celebrity, 1700-1800” in *Theatre and celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, Ed. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody. pp. 146-168.

encomiums, biographies and autobiographies, coupled with the portraits and prints that circulated the actor's image for consumption. Similar to the gothic novel, such acting and reading practices traded on the desire to uncover an alluring (sometimes erotic) extra-textual history. Laura Engel, in her book *Fashioning Celebrity: Eighteenth Century British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making*, argues that Mary Robinson's celebrity drew from the formal gothic reading experience, explaining

Gothic narratives create suspense, desire, and mystery for readers and spectators. Gothic ideology problematizes the relationship between reality and fantasy, illusion and truth, surface and depth, goodness and evil. The same ideas operate in the creation of an alluring celebrity persona. The celebrity is real and extraordinary, accessible and just out of reach...Celebrities tend to operate as ghosts, haunting the minds of their audiences long after they have ceased to be there in physical reality. (Engel 60)<sup>10</sup>

Engel argues Robinson self-fashions her celebrity through her gothic novels and her scandalous affair with the Prince of Wales. Indeed, this process of uncovering the past has deep ties with how the gothic explores the darker side of human consciousness and the desire to reveal secrets.

The Gothic drama sprung from the same well as the gothic novel. Four years after his *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Horace Walpole wrote *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) ushering in another new form of literature. His play would not see the Regency stage, however, due to its subject of incest, for Walpole believed that "it would shock, rather than give satisfaction to an audience (251).<sup>11</sup> Although this new genre provided both a form of entertainment and a reflection upon a world of political, social, and cultural innovation, the gothic would become a

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<sup>10</sup> Engel, Laura. *Fashioning Celebrity: Eighteenth Century British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2011. Web.

<sup>11</sup> Walpole, Horace, and Frank, Frederick S. *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story; And, the Mysterious Mother: A Tragedy*. Peterborough, Ont. Orchard Park, NY: Broadview, 2003. Print. Broadview Literary Texts.

powerful force on the London stage only after 1789. This is marked not only by the fall of the Bastille, but also the publication of Ann Radcliffe's first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne*.<sup>12</sup> Where most drama is structured to fulfill our expectations, gothic drama provokes terror in the audience. This subject position is important not only because it satisfies a new craving for what Gillen D'Arcy Wood calls "the shock of the real," but also because it shifts the perspective from one of a disinterested spectator to the audience aligning with the psychological and emotional state of the character.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps this shift opened up pathways for audiences to develop an intense interest in that character, as they did with David Garrick's performances, and in turn blur the lines between where that character ends and the real life of the actor begins. Further, Gothic dramas, especially those composed in the 1790s, were formalistically closer to the early gothic novel, in that they invited audiences to grope for meaning alongside the protagonists, while they focused on the radical sense of interiority and subjectivity that populate many of the writers' poetry whom we associate with the Romantic period.

John Genest explains gothic drama as "a jumble" of tragedy, comedy, opera, and other such grand spectacles such as ballets, pantomimes, and burlesques.<sup>14</sup> Paula Backscheider, commenting on the popular appeal of this genre, suggests that

Gothic drama undoubtedly succeeded as mass art so prodigiously because it managed to unite nearly unprecedented spectacle and excitement with the elements we know

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<sup>12</sup> Radcliffe's novels provided the fodder for at least ten dramas, several of Radcliffe's novels were adopted by James Boaden who also staged Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* as *Aurelio and Miranda* at the Drury Lane in 1798. Other gothic inflected novels such as William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* also saw the stage: George Colman the Younger adapted Godwin's novel for the stage in 1796 as *The Iron Chest*. Benjamin West staged as version of Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was adapted by Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* at the English Opera House in 1823.

<sup>13</sup> Wood, Gillen D'Arcy. *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760-1860*. 1st ed. New York, N.Y.: Palgrave, 2001. Print.

<sup>14</sup> Genest, John. *Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*. Bristol, England: Tokyo, Japan: Thoemmes; Edition Synapse, 1997. Print.

consumers find most satisfying in entertainment art. It depended on spectacular setting, mood music, and acting in specific styles as much—or even more than—it did upon a predictable set of characters, conflicts, icons, and resolution. (167)

And we know it was successful because, as Paul Ranger has pointed out, during the 1790s there were anywhere between two to six Gothic dramas performed each year, in a repertoire that admitted few new plays during a season (10).<sup>15</sup> Yet as Backscheider acknowledges, “this conception is not Adorno’s brand of passive consumers in which consciousness has become mindless conformity” (167). For this reason I would like to suggest that the Gothic drama’s brand of popular consumption, by mixing several different genres of drama, both high and low, provided different points of entry and appropriation for writers. The spectacle and predictability ushered in a highly alluring existential viewing experience, conjoining liberation and capitalism, to form elements of our modern sense of consumer capitalism and fuel the engine of celebrity industry.

### **Gothic Castles and Villain-Heroes in a Time of Revolution**

In the Introduction to *Seven Gothic Dramas* Jeffery Cox explains that the central movement of gothic drama is from enclosure to liberation, with not only castles but dungeons or convents commonly represented as an oppressive institution of the play’s world. Conservative reactions to the Gothic in the 1790s implicated the same cultural forces associated with liberation, to reinvoke Marshall’s definition, forces that celebrated “new kinds of values and orders” and debunked the “customary division of traditional society” (6). Satiric or parodic texts such as *The Rovers* (1798) in the *Anti-Jacobin* indicate that this new form of drama “undermined

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<sup>15</sup> Ranger, Paul. *'Terror and Pity Reign in Every Breast': Gothic Drama in the London Patent Theatres, 1750-1820*. London: Society for Theatre Research, 1991. Print.

the social, political, religious, and moral order” (75).<sup>16</sup> Coleridge echoes this position in his review of Charles Maturin’s *Bertram*, which he saw as participating in “the modern jacobinical drama,” what he later elaborates more fully on in *Biographia Literaria*. But Coleridge’s seemingly paradoxical criticisms of the gothic were nothing new: nearly two decades earlier his review of Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1797) for the *Morning Post* links the Gothic’s radicalism to eroticism and moral transgressions. Wordsworth shared in his friend’s criticism of the gothic, and its readers, when he explained in the preface to the 1800 edition to *Lyrical Ballads* “there must be a great change of scene; there must be a magnificent stage effect, there must be a grand spectacle to rouze [sic] the imagination” (18). And yet, both he and Coleridge participated in this genre, which is precisely what makes such a phenomenon worthy of critical attention.

Edmund Burke’s description of the French constitution in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* as a ruined castle charged Gothic castles with more immediate political significance in 1790s.<sup>17</sup> Similar to the early gothic novels, the castle is “an emblem of the past’s influence in the present, the hold that the old world—even in decay—has upon the future” (Cox 19). The Bastille, was seen no longer an actual tool of oppression, but as an emblem of the past the needed to be overcome. Instead of adopting the gothic device of displacement of time and space, several gothic dramas featured the actual Bastille early on in the Revolution—John Dent’s *The Bastille* (1789) and John St. John’s *The Island of St. Marguerite* (1789). Moreover, paraphernalia of the French Revolution flooded the English material market: one could raise a toast in pro and anti-revolutionary mugs, purchase sport medallions displaying political allegiance or enjoy the powerful political prints of the day (Cox 21). The print market was equally inundated with actual

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<sup>16</sup> Cox, Jeffrey. “Gothic Drama.” *Handbook of Gothic Literature*. Ed. Mary Mulvey-Roberts.

<sup>17</sup> See works written during the Revolution: Ann Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). Thomas Christie’s *Letters on the Revolution in France* (1791)

accounts of the fall which painted a dark reality to gothic drama stagecraft featuring oppressive dungeons, torture, and miraculous liberation. The consumer objects associated with the Revolution in circulation are tantamount to the commodity fetishism associated with purchasing theatrical celebrity memorabilia—the reproduction of an actor’s image on a variety of commodities from large format print engravings to porcelain trinkets.

Along with the gothic castle taking on new meaning in the 1790s, we see the rise of the villain-hero, which perhaps, like the titan tragic figures that made Garrick famous, pave the way for the proliferation of celebrity. The villain-hero, like the celebrity, transcends institutional and hegemonic structures by embodying radical freedom. As had often been noticed since the point was made by Bertrand Evans, in his groundbreaking book *Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley*, the focus of the Gothic drama becomes the villain hero, the precursor of the Byronic hero. This prominence can be traced, according to Evans, to the weakness of the official hero. Evans cites Wordsworth’s character Mortimer from *The Borderers* as one of the earliest and more interesting villain-heroes, as the playwright forces his villain to recognize and denounce his own evil. The gothic villain-hero hides repressed desires and violent feelings creating a dark inner life, mirroring the Shakespearean figures made famous by Garrick, Kemble, and Siddons—Richard III, Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth—“each have the energy, the charismatic presence, and the absolute sense of their own selves that mark the tragic figure” (Cox 52). Writers called on audiences (and readers) to sympathize with these villains or atomize their complex consciousness, a theater of sympathy that can be traced back to the interest with human passions found in David Hume’s *A Dissertation on the Passions* and Adam Smith’s *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1759).<sup>18</sup> Add to this list, the sentimental novel, where we find that later in the

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<sup>18</sup> See John Mullen’s *Sentiment and Sociality: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (1988).

Romantic period, the decorum of sensibility began to take on new verbiage as a theater of sympathy epitomized by Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* and Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian*.

Such interest in the psychology of characters was later expressed in Thomas De Quincey's essay "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth," which examines the effective depth of the scene immediately following the murder of Duncan. De Quincey points out how Shakespeare shifts sympathy away from the murdered, which is "an incident of coarse and vulgar horror," to the murderer (570). He argues that "our sympathy must be with him (or course I mean sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them—not a sympathy of pity or approbation" (De Quincey 570). The horror associated with the murdered person creates a singular event of "overwhelming panic," whereas when murder is treated as "a fine art," according to De Quincey, audiences are able to peer into the "jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred—which will create a hell within [the murderer]; and unto this hell we are to look" (570).<sup>19</sup> Joanna Baillie's "Introductory Discourse" to the *Plays of the Passions* published first in 1798 also invokes similar box-peering metaphors with her notion of a "sympathetik curiosity" telling her readers of the satisfaction one might derive from lifting the "roof of a [criminal's] dungeon, like the *diable boiteux*, and looking upon [him] the night before he suffers, in his still hours of privacy" (70).<sup>20</sup> Audiences are drawn to these transgressive

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<sup>19</sup> This tendency is also associated with an interest in criminal psychology; De Quincey's own essay references the notorious case of John Williams, a sailor who "had thrown London into a panic in the December of 1811 by murdering the Marr family and twelve days later, the Williamson family. De Quincey describes these murders at length in a postscript to his two essays "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts." Cf. William Godwin's *Caleb Williams: Things as They Are* as an investigation into criminal psychology.

<sup>20</sup> Marjean Purinton has shown how similar taxonomic propensities are inflected within gothic drama. Investigating George Colman's adaptation of *Caleb Williams* as *The Iron Chest* and *Blue-Beard*, Purinton shows how these two plays invert the phenomenon of the private collectors' curiosity cabinets and can be seen as a "staged curiosity cabinet into which spectators were invited to peep—a space that was intended to invoke the same feeling of fright and awe that were the objects of the curiosity cabinet" (250).

figures—criminal, the murderer, the villain. Gothic drama invites audiences to admire these figures, for they embody the possibility of “an individual revolt counter to the communal liberation represented in the ruined castle” (Cox 31). This is one of the reasons that makes Baillie’s *De Monfort* pivotal for this dissertation; it uses gothic drama to highlight how oppressive male figures and institutions confine women, even the most culturally powerful women such as Sarah Siddons. If gothic representations are in fact the product of cultural anxieties about the nature of human identity, the stability of cultural formations, and processes of turbulent change, the theatrical celebrity helps to stabilize and ameliorate that existential indeterminacy. They, too, are like the gothic castle in decay, a marker of temporality, a specter of loss and a substance of potentiality. The quest to decipher their authentic character is also an act to recover their original performance textually, and an opportunity for the public to exert control, even ownership, over that performance.

### **Celebrity as a Discursive Formation in the 18th Century**

In his book *Celebrity and Power*, David P. Marshall argues that “celebrity can be seen as instrumental in the organization of an affective economy culture” which is inextricably linked to the “historical progression toward capitalism and democracy.”<sup>21</sup> Marshall claims that the celebrity is the independent individual par excellence; he or she represents the meaning of freedom and accessibility in a culture” (246). Marshall also claims that celebrity as a signifier articulates a way of thinking about individuality and producing the self through the public world (436), what we might rename as a semiotics of celebrity. Other historians of celebrity, such as Fred Inglis, have written that historical circumstances such as the “rise of urban democracy and a

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<sup>21</sup> Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Second ed. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2014. Web.

two-hundred-year expansion of its media communication,” have “together with the radical individualization of the modern sensibility made fame a much more transitory reward and changed public acclaim from an expression of devotion to one of celebrity” (Inglis 6). He goes on to argue that “the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provide the earliest opportunities to study the way in which the *theater*, distorting and magnifying mirror of its society, assumes the significance it never loses as providing the leading ladies and men of the cast of celebrities. Sarah Siddons, David Garrick, and Kean anticipate Bernhardt, Ellen Terry and Irving and point forward to Hollywood” (Inglis 8).<sup>22</sup>

Approaches to celebrity have been shaped by a number of critics: Leo Braudy, Daniel Boorstin, Francesco Alberoni, Richard Dyer, and Alexander Walker have pioneered studies of film stars, while critics such as Chris Rojek and Graeme Turner have offered sociological perspectives on contemporary celebrity in film, music, and the internet. Literary celebrity, first argued by critics as Richard Schickel, was situated as strictly a twentieth century phenomenon, a byproduct of human-interest journalism. But recently critics have been arguing for a broader historical view of literary celebrity, as in Richard Salmon’s investigation of the relation between photography and investigative journalism in the 19th century when authors were interviewed at their home, and films historians arguing that Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) was a pivotal figure in the transition from theatrical to cinematic celebrity.

Joseph Roach has observed that “the celebrity of eighteenth-century actors and actresses were at least anticipatory and perhaps generative of modern celebrity because their images began to circulate widely in the absence of their persons, a privilege once reserved for duly anointed sovereigns and saints” (5). Roach has also suggested that certain actors acquired the aura of

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<sup>22</sup> See Lisa Freeman’s *Character’s Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth Century English Stage*

dignity, power, and authority from the roles they played, radiating the importance they imitated on stage. For example, David Garrick “gained an unprecedented level of cultural capital not only by playing Shakespearean tragic heroes, but also through the revival of authentic productions (as opposed to the adaptations more commonly performed) and his success as presenting himself as the public preserver of Shakespeare’s memory” (qtd. in Rosenthal 164).<sup>23</sup> Historically, audiences have been attracted to celebrities for their “real” factor, the idea that the celebrity on stage or on screen is the same person in real life. Felicity Nussbaum in *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-century British Theater* argues: “The highest praise for a star actress in eighteenth-century commentaries was that she consistently became the person she impersonated, alleviating the strain between public and private identity but more significantly between uncertain rank and recognizable status.”<sup>24</sup> Borrowing Joseph Roach’s concept of “public intimacy,” Nussbaum suggests that actresses actively constructed private personas in order to “allow patrons to feel that they ‘knew’ the actress,” which in turn fueled sales of tickets, memoirs, portraits, and the production of celebrity culture. Heather McPherson, and Laura Rosenthal have argued that the appearance of authenticity, the notion that that the actress’s persona off stage was linked to her persona on stage, particularly in relation to the remarkable career of Sarah Siddons, is at the heart of what makes a startlingly successful female celebrity.<sup>25</sup> According to Laura Engle’s *Fashioning Celebrity: Eighteenth-century British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making* eighteenth-century audiences’ fascination with actresses suggests that female celebrities had the potential to disrupt, revise, and reinvent traditional models of

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<sup>23</sup> Rosenthal, Laura J. “Entertaining Women: The Actress in Eighteenth-Century Theater and Culture.” *The Cambridge Companion to British Theater, 1730-1830*. Ed. Jane Moody and Daniel O’Quinn. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 2007. 159-173. Print.

<sup>24</sup> Nussbaum, Felicity. *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-century British Theater*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania, 2010. Web.

<sup>25</sup> McPherson, Heather. “Siddons Rediviva: Death, Memory and Theatrical Afterlife,” Ed. Tom Mole. *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print

female identities by calling into question the relationship between authenticity and theatricality central to ideas about desirable femininity both on- and off stage.”<sup>26</sup>

Several critics have looked at literary celebrity in the Romantic period: both David Higgins<sup>27</sup> and Frank Donoghue<sup>28</sup> have argued for the importance of periodical writing in the 18th and 19th centuries, and Claire Brock<sup>29</sup> and Judith Pascoe<sup>30</sup> have pointed out the feminization of fame and public theatricality in the Romantic period. In addition to publishing a monograph examining the career of Lord Byron in the context of celebrity culture, Tom Mole has recently edited a collection of essays on the material and discursive elements in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture 1750-1850*.

The role that theatrical celebrities played in the 18th century alert us to the ways in which actors functioned as spectacles of subjectivity, thus studying celebrity cultural reveals the extent to which the attitudes of high Romanticism were elaborated in opposition to that culture. This is important because the default critical position remains the notion that Romantic poets focused on “posterity” and simply distanced themselves from, or ignored, or were hapless about, modes of contemporary celebrity.<sup>31</sup> Recently David Worrall in *Celebrity, Performance, Reception: British Georgian Theatre as Social Assemblage* has investigated the social networks of human actors (players and audiences), which are also intrinsically concerned with the range of roles of non-

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<sup>26</sup> Engel, Laura. *Fashioning Celebrity: Eighteenth-century British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2011. Web.

<sup>27</sup> Higgins, David Minden. *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity and Politics*. London; New York: Routledge, 2005. Print. Routledge Studies in Romanticism

<sup>28</sup> Donoghue, Frank. *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-century Literary Careers*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1996. Print.

<sup>29</sup> Brock, Claire. *The Feminization of Fame, 1750-1830*. Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print. Palgrave Studies in the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Cultures of Print.

<sup>30</sup> Pascoe, Judith. *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997. Print; Pascoe, Judith. *The Sarah Siddons Audio Files: Romanticism and the Lost Voice*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 2011. Print. Theater--theory/text/performance.

<sup>31</sup> See Andrew Bennett’s *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity* and Lucy Newlyn’s *Reading, Writing and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception*

social actors.<sup>32</sup> These non-social actors include not only the different playhouses (particularly as distinct built environments of eighteenth century London and the provinces) but also the effects on social assemblage of distance (on the Georgian touring circuits, or across a metropolis or national region). These explicit physical environments in which the social takes place can be linked to the transformational forces of capitalist market economics, agencies which are connected to human social formations, but are not controlled or are determined by them (Worrall 241). Celebrity is fundamentally linked to the ideologies of consumer capitalism and to our contemporary notions of the engagement with public life. Worrall's excellent study helps to reorient the critical gaze of celebrity studies to call attention to theatrical celebrity culture as a network of spaces, especially urban spaces, and how they animate meaningful connections with capitalism that allow us to address both the material and symbolic frameworks that make up the celebrity as a cultural industry. I argue that celebrity studies must be attentive to the intersections between capitalism, the social production of space, and the mental, sometimes imaginative maps, that writers create.<sup>33</sup> As such, a historiography of celebrity in the 18th century must pay close attention to the intersection between metropolitan built environments as structures (both in the physical sense and from a Marxist perspective) of capitalism and culture industry. However, this dissertation concerns itself with the key spatial sites of the early modern celebrity apparatus and the spatial stories that emerge from the writers when they inhabit and imagine those spaces,

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<sup>32</sup> Worrall, David. *Celebrity, Performance, Reception: British Georgian Theatre as Social Assemblage*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 2013. Print.

<sup>33</sup> Several excellent studies have attended to the constitutive forces of space in the eighteenth century: Daniel Brewer's "Lights in Space" (2004), Cynthia Wall's *The Literary and Cultural Places of Restoration London* (1998), Miles Ogborn's *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680-1780*; Ogborn's and Charles Withers *Georgian Geographies* (2004), Amanda Flather's *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (2007), and finally the most recent collection dedicated to space, *Gender and Space in British Literature. 1660-1820*.

following Marshall's claims that there exists a pedagogical function to celebrity as it inaugurates "a new public sphere" (6).<sup>34</sup>

This dissertation is a movement towards the cultivation of the spatialized historiography of literary celebrity in the Romantic era by focusing on the social spaces of celebrity sites. It is by no means exhaustive in its investigation of gothic drama, nor is it offering a complete appraisal of all Romantic poets who wrote plays. Instead, it acts as a thought experiment for looking at the act of playwriting mostly confined to the 1790s. Ultimately, this dissertation helps to continue to demystify, what Robert Hume has identified as the "persistent suspicion that Gothicism is a poor and probably illegitimate relation of Romanticism,"<sup>35</sup> and to recover Gothic drama from the annals of Romantic drama, as "modern critics have seen the Romantic period as a time when literature and the stage experienced a near-complete divorce from one another," and its explicit relation to celebrity culture. This is precisely why I have selected canonical authors early in their careers for this investigation: William Wordsworth's *The Borderers*, Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort*, and the Coleridge's *Osorio* and *Remorse*, two versions of the same play, marking two very different times in his life.

The two major critical perspectives through which I take up the literature that appears in this dissertation are celebrity studies and thinkers interested in place and spaces. Within the first, celebrity studies allows literary scholars a new inroad, one less perverted by the canonization as a hegemonic apparatus, in that it allows critics to view literature as a form of media that crosses into other media in a non-hierarchical manner. Traditionally, literature is studied as a single material (or sometimes immaterial) phenomenon free from the marketplace, remediation, or

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<sup>34</sup> Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Second ed. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2014. Web.

<sup>35</sup> See Hume, Robert D. "Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 84, no. 2, 1969, pp. 282–90.

practices of embodiment. There seems to be a paradox of embodiment that was ushered in by the Romantics—an aversion to those things physical or even visible with the rise of discourses and practices advocating for the “education” of self through private reading practices. By reinserting both author and text within the theatrical celebrity apparatus, we are able to trace the complex networks and forces acting upon a given author from the social to economic, to the political and cultural networks, all interweaving a web of events and relations when composing a gothic drama. Yet celebrity studies alone, as I will demonstrate, comes up short as a singular lens through which to study writers as they enter these networks, for such analyses tend to privilege anthropocentric or textual discursive investigations. Instead, by applying a dual interdisciplinary approach to literary studies interested in questions of networks, spatial humanities (ala human geography) helps to reposition space and place as significant features in the creation of the early celebrity apparatus. By looking closely at the evolution of a writer’s celebrity beginning with the act of playwriting early in their career, we can trace the evolution of these networks. Where a critic’s gaze is fixed upon individuals, cataloguing information, and branding them, audiences participate in what Tom Mole has called the “hermeneutics of intimacy,” as their reading practices become an interminable detective-like quest to gather information and decode the truth about a particular individual. Indeed, this act of detection and inference is a prominent feature of early gothic literature, and as this dissertation will show, finds a perfect marriage with the invention of the celebrity. As this mechanism expands and proliferates, the author’s actions (what she wrote, how she publishes and imagines her audience) become more beholden to the controlling gaze of newspaper and periodical critics and the predilections of the readership or marketplace. However, outside (if there is an outside) this mechanism, lie space and place, where locality and space condition both the gaze and the hermeneutical practice. With this in mind, I

want to suggest that space and place are fundamental constitutive forces within celebrity studies and have been neglected. The celebrity actress Sarah Siddons, for example, is not simply mentioned as having been seen in a general, she being seen is directly connected with a specific location, and that supplemental information adds to the construction of the individual, while simultaneously constituting that "social" space. Within this example, lies another important feature of spatial theory that will be crucial to this dissertation, and that is the significance of the objects in relation to individuals and their environments.

This dissertation poses the question, how can celebrity studies work against its own anthropocentric and textually discursive drive to consider the complex networks, such as spaces, that constitute such a phenomenon? Moreover, when studying Romantic drama, few scholars have looked beyond the proscenium arch to investigate the spatial component(s) of cultural production. And since the production of any drama coincides with production in the capitalist sense, the urban spaces where these plays are performed, the Drury Lane and Covent Garden, become inseparable from the burgeoning London commerce. For spatial thinkers like Henri Lefebvre "the urban is social centrality, where the many elements and aspects of capitalism intersect in space despite merely often being part of the place for a short time, as is the case with goods or people in transit" (280).



## Chapter One

The Hermeneutics of Heads and Tales:

Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and Wordsworth's *The Borderers*

"Born *Originals*, how comes it to pass that we die *Copies*?"  
—Edward Young

Poets, Painters, and musicians;  
Lawyers, doctors, and politicians:  
Pamphlets, newspapers, and odes,  
Seeking fame by different roads.  
—Mary Robinson

William Wordsworth wrote *The Borderers* between 1795-1797 at a time during his career when he was caught between the borders of poverty and the desire to make a living as a poet. After two failed attempts to have the play staged—one in 1797 at the Drury Lane, and the other in 1798 at the Convent Garden—*The Borderers* lay undiscovered until 1842, a gothic manuscript in its own right, when it was published in *Poems of Chiefly Early and Late Years*. When William Wordsworth published his only drama, he was one of the most painted poets of his time. His image had been on display in galleries throughout London, Edinburgh, and Paris. The following year he was named poet laureate. This investigation begins by looking to Wordsworth's closest contact with theatrical celebrity culture in the months prior to composing *The Borderers*—his experiences in London—to investigate the "spatial story" of that drama.

### Spatial Stories from Wordsworth's "Residence in London"

Book Seven of *The Prelude* ("Residence in London") captures Wordsworth's most sustained remarks on encountering London's visual spectacles. According to William Galperin,

it provides a virtual “case history” in support of Benjamin’s thesis. And it does so through its reluctant, if notably spectacular, resistance to the very “aura” or sublimity to which, in its celebration of the individual poetic mind, the poem is otherwise committed. Moreover, just as Benjamin speculates, this resistance remains a function of the masses...[it] properly characterizes “their” culture. (114)<sup>36</sup>

Yet I would suggest that Wordsworth is not simply separating himself from the culture of the masses. Rather, “Residence in London” tells a spatial story of the tactics he applies when navigating London as a young poet embarking on a literary career, where literary fame is intimately tied to the theatre. Indeed, Wordsworth’s lived experiences in the city have drawn a plethora of critical attention, especially from those who address semiotic or phenomenological failures juxtaposed with the visionary imagination. For example, Stephen Gill argues that Wordsworth’s vision of the city is a failed hermeneutic attempt (73).<sup>37</sup> David Francis Taylor notes the rapid expansion of signifiers in the capital results in “semiotic overload...but also the loss of semanticity” (81).<sup>38</sup> And C.R. Stokes more closely approximates Wordsworth’s encounter with theatricality and commerce when he suggests that embodiment is central to the readability of the city, in that “embodiment itself can be seen as a culturally produced phenomenon, derived from spatialities and temporalities unique to the city” (203).<sup>39</sup> However, through the seemingly chaotic barrage of visual cultural references, there is a repetition of an hermeneutic attempt

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<sup>36</sup> Galperin, William H. *The Return of the Visible in British Romanticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993. Print.

<sup>37</sup> Gill, Stephen. *William Wordsworth's The Prelude: A Casebook*. Oxford; New York: Oxford UP, 2006. Print. Casebooks in Criticism.

<sup>38</sup> Taylor, David Francis. "Wordsworth at the Theater: Illegitimate Spectacle in Book 7 of *The Prelude*." *European Romantic Review* 20.1 (2009): 77-93. Web.

<sup>39</sup> Stokes, C.R. "Sign, Sensation and the Body in Wordsworth's 'Residence in London.'" *European Romantic Review* 23.2 (2012): 203-23. Web.

worth paying a second look at—that is, the act of reading faces to decode of the inner life of the individual.

The first physiognomic attempt appears after Wordsworth recounts the “wondrous power of words” that brought to life the “green groves and wilderness of lamps...gorgeous ladies, fairy cataracts, / and pageant fireworks” (123-124)<sup>40</sup> of Vauxhall Hall and Ranelagh. We learn that Wordsworth “pursued ... day by day” the Whispering Gallery of St. Paul’s, the tombs of Westminster, and the “Giants of Guildhall” beyond the Tower of London (140, 130-131). The description shifts to the “Babel din, / The endless stream of men and moving things” and the “wealth, the bustle, and the eagerness” of life on the Strand (158-59, 161). Wealth and poverty are sharply contrasted here: “glittering chariots with their pampered steeds” navigate the crowded streets with “Punctual skill” past a “scavenger that begs with hat in hand” (163,170,164). This scene then gives way to Wordsworth’s first physiognomic attempt:

Here, there, and everywhere, a weary throng,  
 The comers and goers face to face—  
 Face after face—the string of dazzling wares,  
 Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,  
 And all the tradesman’s honours overhead:  
 Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page  
 With letters huge inscribed from top to toe;  
 Stationed above the door like guardian saints,  
 There, allegoric shapes, female or male,  
 Or physiognomies of real men,

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<sup>40</sup> Wordsworth, William, and Halmi, Nicholas. *Wordsworth's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*. First ed. New York; London: W.W. Norton &, 2014. Print. Norton Critical Edition.

Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea,  
 Boyle, Shakespear, Newton, or the Attractive head,  
 Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day. (171-183)

When we follow his route from the pleasure gardens down the Strand, we see that the shop doors adorn with Shakespeare and the “physiognomies of the real men” could in fact be Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery, which had a monument of Shakespeare above its door. The sculpture situates a reclined Shakespeare in between two muses (painting and poetry), two “allegoric shapes” of “females” that perhaps are “guardian saints” of sorts. Further, we can interpret the conflation of storefronts and title pages with Boydell’s volume of prints that were on display and for sale in the gallery: the printed volumes reproduced the same sculpture that adorned the gallery storefront as its title page. Wordsworth’s movement in urban space yokes tradesmen and London’s most fashionable, which mirrors the high and low culture of painting and prints brought together within one space at the Shakespeare Gallery.<sup>41</sup>

With the second reference, Wordsworth describes himself as one “often in the overflowing streets” (595) the throngs of people moving “forwards *with* the crowd” (emphasis mine; 596). Inserted within the crowd his physiognomic perception fails him: “The face of everyone / That passes me is a mystery” (597-598). This failure is a stark contrast to the speaker in Blake’s “London” who quite aptly “marks in every face [he] meet[s] / Marks of weakness, marks of woe” (3-4). This semiotic failure is interrupted by the “spectacle” of a blind beggar, but unlike the indecipherable faces within the crowd, the beggar bears a “label” explaining his story,

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<sup>41</sup> See William Blake’s remarks on portraiture art in his Marginalia “Annotations to the Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds” in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, pages 635-664. For additional verses on Reynolds specifically, see “To the Royal Academy,” pgs. 512-513. Blake, William, et al. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Newly rev. ed., Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Books, 1988. Print.

whence he came and who he was, signifying for Wordsworth “the utmost we can know / Both of ourselves and of the universe” (620-621). Travelling with the crowd Wordsworth discovers that

Amid the moving pageant, 'twas my chance  
 Abruptly to be smitten with the view  
 Of a blind beggar, who, with upright face,  
 Stood propped against the wall [...]  
 And on the shape of this unmoving man,  
 His fixed face and sightless eyes, I looked,  
 As if admonished from another world. (610-613, 622-624)

The beggar is cast in a still moment of theatrical spectacle, and the boon of otherworldly knowledge that Wordsworth is able to extract from this scene comes through the hermeneutical process of interpreting bodily and verbal texts. The textual label appears to be the missing piece of information necessary to have decoded the mysterious faces of the crowd, suggestive of a hermeneutical process to which theatergoers were general accustomed—in that plays were often read, or a review of the play which frequently included excerpts, prior to attending the performance. But this also points to the manner in which viewers decoded the portraits at the Shakespeare Gallery, where substantial portions of the text accompanied the paintings and prints. Thus the directionality of his movement with the crowd then can be read as an act of acculturation: Wordsworth moves not only physically with the crowd, but also with their tastes and habits. These acculturated matters of tastes help to explain the poet’s “smitten[ness]” by the spectacle of the beggar, an aesthetic disinterestedness for which some scholars have reproached Wordsworth. More generally, the theater—both in its high and low forms—contains a gravitational pull that cannot be separated from the orbits of commerce and fame, nor can it be

easily removed as a modality of vision, for “the base of outward things, / These chiefly are such structures the mind / Builds for itself” (624-626).

Book VII features a young Wordsworth consuming the products of a cultural industry, in what Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* perhaps would term a “tactic.” De Certeau makes the distinction between “strategies,” used by institutions and power structures, and “tactics” used by modern subjects in their everyday lives. Tactics are the ways in which individuals negotiate the strategies that were set out for them. For instance, de Certeau points to the city with its design and the maps that are made which codify its layout. He refers to these structures—both physical and authoritative—as strategies, suggesting “the ways in which a subject navigates the city—selecting shortcuts, wandering aimlessly, or taking favorite walking routes—are tactics, a style of agency to work on things in order to make them [her] own, or to make them ‘habitable’” (de Certeau 164).<sup>42</sup> In short, people construct their sense of self out of the available objects that are an expression of the strategies of institutions, what then become their “spatial stories.” When applied to Book VII in general, Wordsworth’s spatial story becomes a tactic to remix the institutionalization of commerce and taste with phantasmagoric description, where tactics shift from concrete place names to the mind wandering aimlessly through memory and sensation. But specifically, the literary marketplace becomes a site of mechanical reproduction (“tradesmen”) and celebrity (“blazon names” of “real men”). The speaker’s point of view is detached from the “weary throng” suggesting an estrangement, a vantage point that plays strongly to the anxiety of influence Shakespeare held over Wordsworth while composing *The Borderers*. Once inserted firmly within a theatrical modality of vision, the poet is drawn to a

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<sup>42</sup> Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: U of California, 1984. Trans. Steven Randall. Print.

blind beggar. It is my contention that this desire to read faces maps onto *The Borderers*, and thus Wordsworth's tragedy can be seen as a document that first dramatizes these central concerns.

With this in mind, the general aim of this chapter will be to show how the Shakespeare Gallery functions as a significant social force in the cultural production of celebrity, and *The Borderers* can thus be seen as participating in the cultural (re)production of that apparatus. Thus, this first section investigates the significance of one of these exhibition spaces—the literary gallery—as a Bourdieuan *habitus* instrumental in the creation and dissemination of the (theatrical) celebrity through portraiture art. I will go on to demonstrate how these spaces were sites for cultivating a national bourgeois identity for the general citizen, but for Wordsworth a project like Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery meant something much more. It represented a space where poets, painters, and celebrity actors converged in a never-before-seen business venture that mixed capitalism and lofty principles of high art, a space where England's bard was used as cultural capital for new painters struggling to make a name for themselves, and where some paintings cast the faces of contemporary actors in their most prized roles, obfuscating the overall claim for whose "gallery" it truly was. Moreover, I will argue that this space, and the paintings and prints within, turn readers into spectators due to the novelistic materialism of the images that evoke an extra-textual reading of the play, a hermeneutical process conditioned by the naturalistic acting method. But to truly understand the uniqueness of the Shakespeare Gallery as a *habitus* for the poet, it is important to have a clear picture of the importance of the rise of the gallery space and the cultural, political, and economic tensions it brought with it in Georgian London.

## Exhibitions in the Mighty City

Eighteenth Century Londoners witnessed an explosion of visual media. Peter de Bolla positions the emergence of the “cultural of visuality” with the presentation of paintings by living artists in 1747, what we today would understand to be a public exhibition space (10).<sup>43</sup> But it would not be until the 1760s that public exhibitions of art become a mainstay in contemporary metropolitan life.<sup>44</sup> These exhibitions, according to Richard Altick’s *Shows of London*, “were giving practical realization to Bacon’s advocacy of things over words as instruments of knowledge, thus beginning the ideological divide between the limits of verbal and visual signifiers” (10).<sup>45</sup> Simply titled “Exhibition,” implying its uniquely important status, the Royal Academy of Arts founded in 1768 staged its annual exhibitions in rented space on Pall Mall for the first eleven years of its existence. Then in 1780 they were moved to the newly remodeled Somerset House on the Strand, where prior to this the RA conducted its pedagogical and administration operations. This grand new building, designed by William Chambers, provided a single location for the Academy’s school, library, and collections, complete with a “Great Room,” a top-floor gallery to display works of art. “The Exhibition” occurred every spring and featured a remarkable variety of visual spectacles, and though contemporary art could be found scattered throughout London in other venues, there was only one official showcase for the achievements of modern British painters, sculptors, and architects. The Exhibition, and especially the Great Room, also provided a social space, where being seen was as intensely

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<sup>43</sup> De Bolla, Peter. *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-century Britain*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 2003. Print.

<sup>44</sup> In 1770, the author Horace Walpole proclaimed that “the rage to see exhibitions is so great, that sometimes one cannot pass through the streets where they are” (quoted in Charles Leslie and Tom Taylor, *Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, 2 vols. [London 1865] 1:356.)

<sup>45</sup> Altick, Richard D. *The Shows of London*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap of Harvard UP, 1978. Web.

important as seeing the novel displays crowded together on the walls. This spirit of competition carried into the commercial enterprise, as David Solkin observes:

The Great Room may have been designed to show pictures of such elevated intellectual ambition as to transcend the particular circumstances of their production; but instead the RA supplied its audience with highly individualistic demonstrations of theatricality and novelty, fundamentally in tune with the intensely competitive spirit of contemporary entrepreneurial capitalism. (xi)<sup>46</sup>

The grand ideals of the RA's pedagogical program were expressed in public lectures by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his *Discourses*, which institutionalized a national culture of taste.<sup>47</sup> Seen here in the third *Discourse*, delivered in 1770, Reynolds asserts a nationalistic discourse that imagined British art as an equal with its European cultural counterparts:

The Moderns are not less convinced than the Ancients of this superior power existing in the art; nor less sensible of its effects. Every language has adopted terms expressive of this excellence. The *gusto grande* of the Italians, the *beau ideal* [*sic*] of the French, and the grand style, genius and taste among the English, are but different appellations of the same thing. (34)<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, terms such as “genius” and “taste” can be traced back to the earlier eighteenth century British discourses on aesthetics, evident in the writings from Shaftesbury and Richardson. As

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<sup>46</sup> Solkin, David H. *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*. New Haven, Conn.: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Courtauld Institute Gallery by Yale UP, 2001. Print.

<sup>47</sup> In Frances Blanshard's *Portraits of Wordsworth* (1959) she suggests “The influence of the *Discourses* on taste would surely be to disparage portraiture. This was their effect of Wordsworth himself. He had received a copy of the *Discourses* from his friend Sir George Beaumont, and when he thanked him was moved to chide Reynolds for failing to give up his precepts: ‘It is not a pity, Sir George, that a man with such a sense of the dignity of his art, and with such industry, should not have given more of his time to the nobler departments of painting’” (33).

<sup>48</sup> Reynolds, Joshua. *Discourses on Art*. New York: Collier, 1966. Print.

John Barrell asserts: “in the early decades of the eighteenth century in England, the most influential attempts to provide the practice of painting with a theory were those which adopted the terms of value of the discourse we now describe as civic humanism...with the foundation of the Royal Academy, for the Academy was a public institution” (1-2).<sup>49</sup> The operations of the exhibitions, however, differed greatly from the lofty pursuits of the ideal.

The inscription above the door of the Great Room best encapsulates those lofty pursuits, for on it read the fiat: “Let No Stranger to the Muses Enter.” This space was intended for one to exercise his or her “taste,” but at times this site “was more like a shop window for artists scrambling, often frantically, for public attention, acclaim, and therefore business” (Myrone 78).<sup>50</sup> In light of this, Reynolds seized the opportunity during the reopening of the Exhibition in the new Somerset House in the spring of 1780 to restate the cultural ambitions of the Academy and to delineate the commercial from the moral value of art, insisting that the most supreme artistic achievements be addressed to the intellect rather than the senses, and although “[t]rade and its consequential riches makes high cultural pursuits possible, commercial activity provides humanity with only sensual comforts” (qtd. in Myrone 79). It was these notions, coming from the “Ninth Discourse” that sought to firmly establish the centrality of the artist in national life. But the Academy grappled with the realities of its failure to galvanize the material support needed for the sole production of high art. The more ideal imagined pieces in the Great Room, began to be accompanied by paintings that occupied a lower rung on the hierarchy of genres. The pinnacle of this hierarchy was history paintings, large-scale works taken from literature or significant events

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<sup>49</sup> Barrell, John. *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: "the Body of the Public"*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986. Print.

<sup>50</sup> Myrone,, Martin. “The Sublime as Spectacle: The transformation of Ideal Art at Somerset House.” *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*. Ed. David Solkin. New Haven, Conn.: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Courtauld Institute Gallery by Yale UP, 2001. Print.

in history. But given the rise of profitability of portraits, Reynolds saw how the genre of allegorical or “grand manner” portraits allowed for the production of paintings that mimicked the formal appearance of historical paintings while also attending to the financial imperatives due to the mass popularity of portraits. Martin Myrone explains:

Modern-life scenes from West’s *Death of Wolfe* (1770) onwards provided elevated subject matter that was understood by a broad audience much less familiar with the ancient literary and historical themes that were posited as the most appropriate basis for ideal painting. Likewise, encompassing both portraiture and narrative element, theatrical subjects also provided a means of producing a high-minded art that was none the less responsive to the peculiarities of contemporary public taste. (80)

Though these elevated subject matters were made possible through the financing of portraiture art, this lesser genre also worked to “foster an interrogative sociality, and with assistance from the press, Royal Academy portraits encouraged and responded to an interest in personalities that linked regional and metropolitan centers through institutions like the theater” (Pointon 93).<sup>51</sup> Personalities of the likes of Sarah Siddons provided the collective interest from the viewing public and the press to catalyze the culture of celebrity through a symbiosis of theater and portraiture painting. During the 1780s and 90s, Sarah Siddons, more than any other actress was exhibited at the Somerset House. Because the Exhibition occurred in the spring, as the winter program at the theater drew to a close, the audience’s curiosity for the performer was sated by these paintings. As Gill Perry has noted, “At the RA, portrayals of actors or actresses in their stage roles provided the viewing public with a ‘memory’ of the performance previously

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<sup>51</sup> Pointon, Marcia. “Portrait! Portrait!! Portrait!!!” *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*. Ed. David Solkin. New Haven, Conn.: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Courtauld Institute Gallery by Yale UP, 2001. Print.

witnesses at the theater, while contributing to another form of spectacle—that on offer at the exhibitions themselves” (111).<sup>52</sup> Thus while patrons of these exhibits were gawking at the their favorite actors and imagining those performances they, too, became the object of the gallery-goer’s gaze, and at once caught in a transaction of conspicuous bodily consumption. This was facilitated by the physiognomic approach to action inculcated from the performances. Siddons, like Garrick, was admired for her versatile range of facial expressions and her ability to convey several types of passions at once. She learned the Le Brunian formula for the passions that created the seismic shift to naturalism in the theater, but she applied them, according to Shearer West, in a way that would be both accessible to her adoring public and deliberately evocative for art connoisseurs” (106).<sup>53</sup> Indeed, she makes acting a veritable art object, and in doing so inspired a new kind conspicuous consumption—“rather than that of color, brushstroke, and composition—a connoisseurship of the body” (West 106).

The acknowledgement of literature as an appropriate subject for historical painting evinced the growing numbers of literate bourgeois art consumers (19-20).<sup>54</sup> Thus, English writers began to enjoy similar critical and popular attention associated with the rise of the gallery consequently turning exhibition spaces into public scenes of reading society and self. As the next section will demonstrate, these literary galleries explicitly blended the ideal and the commercial, a division Reynolds’s *Discourses* at the RA attempted to naturalize within the emergent cultural consumption practices of English bourgeois identity.

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<sup>52</sup> Perry, Gill. “The spectacle of the muse: Exhibiting the Actress at the Royal Academy.” *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*. Ed. David Solkin. New Haven, Conn.: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Courtauld Institute Gallery by Yale UP, 2001. Print.

<sup>53</sup> West, Shearer. *The Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representation in the Age of Garrick and Kemble*. London: Pinter, 1991. Print.

<sup>54</sup> Altick, Richard D. *Paintings from Books: Art and Literature in Britain, 1760-1900*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1985. Print.

### Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery: Synthesis and Rivalry in the Sister Arts

Among the several literary galleries to emerge in the 1790s were Macklin's Poet's Galley, Fuseli's Milton Gallery, Robert Bowyer's Historic Gallery fashioned after David Hume's *History of England* in 1792, and of course, Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery. Thomas Macklin's project was announced in 1787 with the plan to commission 100 paintings of England's most revered poets from several of England's most acclaimed artists, Joshua Reynolds, George Romney, Thomas Lawrence, and Angelica Kauffman to name only a few. Macklin staged annual exhibitions from 1790-1795, which were then published, bound and sold monthly as prints. The Milton Galley had a similar aesthetic and commercial objective to exhibit the paintings and sell the prints, with the exception that the art was produced by a single artist: Henri Fuseli (Johann Heinrich Fussli) announced with a prospectus published in September of 1791. But it was Henry Fuseli's fantastical paintings and engravings that made significant contributions, according to Louisa Calé, by "turning reader into spectators."<sup>55</sup> Calé explains that Fuseli regarded poetry as an inexhaustible source of inspiration for the visual arts, and like Blake, there is virtually no picture among his work, which in some sense has not been derived from a literary source. And like Blake, he did not practice the division set forth by Lessing's *Laocoon*, i.e., between poetry and painting. Fuseli vigorously sought to explore the creative imagination of the arts by drawing from the mythical and fantastical elements from works by Milton and Shakespeare. A proponent of the *Strum und Drang* movement, he believed that the process of bringing forth what is great and sublime in art remained the privileged task of genius, a position that ran contrary to

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<sup>55</sup> Fuseli was a close friend to publisher Joseph Johnson, Wordsworth's first publisher; he published *Descriptive Sketches* and *An Evening Walk*, and was the ringleader for the group of dissenters that Wordsworth consorted with while in London prior to his move to Racedown Lodge when he composed *The Borderers*.

Reynolds's *Discourses*. Focusing on subjects like the actor David Garrick, Fuseli employed Garrick's physiognomic approach to the passions in an effort to learn how to capture the moment of highest tension—Lessing's "pregnant" moment—and express this in a dynamic manner in a static medium. According to his first biographer, John Knowles, Fuseli believed that the artist must seize "the middle moment, the crisis, that is the moment of importance, big with the past and pregnant with the future" (Knowles 96).<sup>56</sup> Calé has referred to the Milton Gallery as "an event in textual transmission, somewhere between an anthology and an abridgment of *Paradise Lost*" (14), noting that the gallery catalogue marks editorial interventions, and as a result, it is up to the reader-viewer to reconstruct the poem as a continuous action. The act of textual reconstruction was further facilitated by the fact that subscribers were able to purchase the folio of prints and enter the process of decoding the visual amidst the absence of the verbal text. And like the great room of the RA where painters were vying for notoriety, the literary gallery became a space where the lesser-known painter could trade on the process of English canonization, and thus: "by connecting himself to the poet the painter immediately partook, and became a share, in all the advantages of his established notoriety" (Calé 30). Art then participates in a wider field of cultural production, in which the union of poetry and painting depends on the production and circulation of celebrity (Calé 30-31). But it would be Boydell's Shakespeare that would bring together all three: poetry, painting, and the celebrity actor—in a perfect marriage between the commercial and the aesthetic.

Where early theatrical portraiture art seemed to favor the senses, in an attempt to seize a moment of theatrical time in space, John and Josiah Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, beyond containing a rich commercial history, featured artists who attempted to appeal to the viewer's

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<sup>56</sup> Fuseli, Henry, and Knowles, John. *The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli*. Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus, 1982. Print.

imagination. Many critics, however, feared that the Shakespeare Gallery would be nothing other than a mere gallery of the contrived theatrical poses and frivolous decorum, as was expressed by a writer for the *Public Advertiser*: “There was some reason to fear that our painters would have sought for and gathered their ideas from the theater, and given us well-dressed Ladies and Gentlemen... There was some reason to fear a representation of all that extravagance of attitude and start which is tolerated, nay in a degree demanded, at the playhouse” (May 6, 1789). But Boydell, similar to the project of the RA, sought to raise the status of British artists in a Eurocentric art world, while popularizing the history genre as the works were modeled on the monumental forms of high Renaissance history painting. However, not all paintings were freed from the trappings of portraiture and celebrity. According to Ronald Paulson, “it was the opinion of some critics that the best parts were the portraits—the character of the faces—which were the most ‘English’ parts of the composition, some would have even said the most ‘Shakespearean’”(27).<sup>57</sup> A critic for the *Gentleman’s Magazine* wrote that “the beauty of many heads, considered separately from the figure to which they belong seems intuitively to indicate their proceeding from a school chiefly attentive to portrait painting” (“Remarks on the Shakespeare Gallery,” *Gentleman’s Magazine* Dec. 1790). Moreover, several works included “barely disguised” portraits of Siddons and Kemble furthering their visibility while assimilating them as classical art objects into the popular conception of them,<sup>58</sup> while William Hamilton’s

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<sup>57</sup> According to Paulson, “Bardolatry’s emphasis on character deepened the theater-portraiture alliance by stimulating artist to yoke Shakespeare with the English Portrait tradition. (See *Book and Painting*, 32.) Paulson, Ronald. *Book and Painting: Shakespeare, Milton, and the Bible: Literary Texts and the Emergence of English Painting*. 1st ed., Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1982. Print.

<sup>58</sup> Siddons and other famed actors like Kemble were “staged” in other historical paintings that successfully merged the grand style with their acting method. For example, Henry Harlow’s “The Trial of Queen Catherine (1817) places Siddons in an obvious theatrical pose looking directly out at an audience, while Kemble and others people the scene.

treatment of *Love's Labor's Lost* and John Downman's *As You Like It* both reproduce Siddons' acting style in photographic like detail.<sup>59</sup>

Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery opened on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 1789, with 34 paintings by 18 artists. Following the inaugural year, 22 paintings were added and a catalogue was issued that contained extensive passages from the play and even in some cases, the entire scene. Additionally, Humphry Repton produced *The Bee* a 54-page pamphlet review, written at Boydell's behest, containing critical reviews of each painting, often in comparison with the scene. These textual compliments to the paintings and prints are especially noteworthy because their material performance fixes a visual interpretation to the text, what art historian David Solkin sees as a "dimension of novelistic materialism" (265). Solkin's analysis returns us to Calé's claims about the Milton Gallery working as an abridgment of the text, yet it is further suggestive of an acculturated interpretative experience. Calé turns to Wolfgang Iser's notion of the "implied reader" to explain how a viewer of the Milton Gallery fills in the "blanks" and "gaps" through a set of instructions provided by the text. Iser's phenomenological analysis proves useful if we are interested only in an individual's cognitive operations and not the historical and cultural processes that condition reading practices, which would be in line with Stanley Fish's concept of "interpretative communities." However, Solkin's turn of phrase appears to have Bakhtinian traces within it, and ultimately paves the way for a deeper and more complex understanding of the reading experience within the Shakespeare Gallery and its relation to celebrity culture.

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<sup>59</sup> According to Frederick Burwick "Several of the artists who contributed to Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery—among them Edward Edwards, John Graham, Robert Smirke, Richard Westall—also provided theatrical scenes from Bell's 34-volume *British Theater*; although these illustrations seldom provide any hint of staging, they are useful in supplementing the study of gesture: depicting, for example, Sarah Siddons as Lady Macbeth clutching a candle as she paces her darkened bedchamber, or, in *Measure for Measure*, as Isabella with her arms outstretched in supplication to Angelo to spare her brother's life" (63). See Burwick, Frederick. "John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and the Stage." *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 133 (1997): 54-76. Web.

To say that a painting from the gallery has a “dimension of novelistic materialism” is to suggest that it contains multiple discourses. Mikhail Bakhtin theorized that the modern novel is not made up of a single voice (monologic), rather it possesses several varying modes of communicating (dialogic), what he would go on to call “heteroglossia.” Although Bakhtin's critical aim is focused on the failure of traditional linguistic approaches, arguing that to position language as emanating from a direct single controlling author severs it from its natural dynamic social field. True living language exhibits “heteroglossia,” a polyphonic discourse. The novel, as seen by Bakhtin, comprises a multiplicity of “centrifugal” forces at work in language seen in social types of speech and the diversity of voices interacting with one another.<sup>60</sup> I would like to suggest that paintings from the Shakespeare gallery emit similar centrifugal forces, especially when we consider a synthetic experience a single play rendered by multiple artists using a variety of stylistic techniques.

Take for instance *Macbeth* as the singular text on which Richard Westall, Henri Fuseli, and Joshua Reynolds' have cast their disparate visions. In Westall's “Lady Macbeth with a Letter,” he has chosen to use the likeness of Sarah Siddons in her most famed role and features her in a neoclassical robe, clutching the letter to her breast with an upward facing gaze. She is pictured with bulky masculine features accentuated by the expansive robe cloaking her feminine form, possibly portending Lady Macbeth's call to be “unsexed.” This statuesque masculinity works to recodify her famously pathos-driven performances into an aesthetic discourse congruent with the RA's espoused principles, for according to Gill Perry, when mediated through the conventions of high art, any actor's form of bodily expressions had to suit the grand

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<sup>60</sup> Bakhtin, M. M., and Holquist, Michael. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: U of Texas, 1981. Print.

and historical style of painting, what could be understood as a field of containment (120).<sup>61</sup> This disciplining of the body has the double function of controlling the “madwoman in the attic,” while also lifting celebrity to the level of sublime high art. Yet her solitude evokes a more intense meditation on Lady Macbeth’s own sublime introspection, allowing the viewer to identify with, if not rehearse, the theatrical absorption necessary to probe the inner life of a character. Focusing on an earlier moment in the play, Fuseli’s “Macbeth, Banquo, and the Three Witches” presents a conflation of baroque inspired super-human figures and a nightmarish intensity, in what could only be described as the artist’s ability to “explore the arcane reaches of the play’s supernatural dimensions and the fashionable tastes for the gothic, the Sublime and the uncanny (Sillars 219).<sup>62</sup> Macbeth and Banquo are situated as large figures on the heath with of the weird sisters pitched high atop a thunderstorm cloud at the upper-right corner of the canvas. While Fuseli employs Renaissance iconography to render Macbeth and Banquo with classic heroism, the angular position of their bodies and the extreme chiaroscuro represents their psychical disbelief amidst the violent forces of nature commanded by the three witches, thereby placing the scene firmly within the emotional lexicon of *Strum und Drang*. Combined, these elements offer a powerful visualization of the play beyond a singular moment of action to suggest Macbeth’s larger moral progression. The third and final interpretation comes from Sir Joshua Reynolds and though he looks to a later moment of the play—“Three Witches, Macbeth, Hecate”—this painting similarly brings together events beyond the named scene—i.e., Act IV. Scene I. Here, Reynolds populates the cavern scene in *Macbeth* with a collection of daemons,

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<sup>61</sup> Perry, Gill. “The spectacle of the muse: Exhibiting the Actress at the Royal Academy.” *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836*. Ed. David Solkin. New Haven, Conn.: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and the Courtauld Institute Gallery by Yale UP, 2001. Print.

<sup>62</sup> Sillars, Stuart. *Painting Shakespeare: The Artist as Critic, 1720-1820*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.

sprites, bats, frogs, snakes, and other animal refuse, both live and dead; the periphery is something on par with Fuseli's fantastical *Titania and Bottom*, but is mingled with schizophrenic imagery, textual proof that his Shakespeare paintings did not practice the process of revealing the universal within the particular as his *Discourses* advocate. Reynolds recreates the "ingredients" named in the witches' incantations and the visions that emerge: a crowned child bearing a tree, a bloody child, and the warning to "Beware the Thane of Fife" (4.1.72). The three witches retain something of the theatrical portrait tradition by downplaying their feminine forms, but this is offset by their origin in the figures of Sibyls and devils from the ceiling and wall of the Sistine Chapel, an allusion which adds resonance to their moral ambiguity. Stuart Sillars remarks on this ambiguity by positing that the additional likeness between Macbeth and John the Baptist suggests that "Macbeth saw the witch and her companions as a divine foreshadowing of some ideal future state, not as the 'instruments of darkness' as which Banquo recognizes them, and represents Macbeth's complete misreading of the witches' moral identity" (205).<sup>63</sup>

Where Westall's work is representational, Fuseli and Reynolds's belong to the realms of the symbolic and iconographic. The effort to unify image and text is complicated by the shadow of a celebrity's actual performance codified in high renaissance art, the imaginative psychoscape of Fuseli's impressionistic pregnant moment, and Reynolds's phantasmagoric pictorial "ideal." Collectively they represent competing discourses: theatrical portraiture/neoclassical, Baroque /sublime, and biblical topos/gothic.

Placing objects within this gallery alongside (or in the foreground) of *The Borderers* in search from the "raw material" of the play does not allow the literary critic to address the cultural and institutional significance of such a space, nor does it acknowledge the changing tide to

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<sup>63</sup> Sillars, Stuart. *Painting Shakespeare: the Artist as Critic, 1720-1820*. Cambridge, UK; New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

visualize Shakespeare in the eighteenth century. I would like to argue that cultural material from a spatial perspective would provide a more dynamic understanding of the literature since, though on the surface the paintings appear to be a stable form that mediates a contextual reading of Wordsworth's play. Instead, the objective is to trace how literature negotiates various kinds of cultural meanings. Plainly, the Shakespeare Gallery, similar to the RA, is a locus of institutional power where celebrity is integral in the production of that power structure. In the subsequent section, *The Borderers* will be shown as at times undermining or resisting such authorities as with the proliferating critical discourses on the aesthetic power of theatrical actors. *The Borderers* is not presented as an ekphrastic work; rather it reproduces a particular brand of hegemony that presents the celebrity and the gallery as a high cultural institution, emanating a "diversity of social speech types, languages, voices, which are artistically organized" (Bakhtin 576). Language, like consciousness, is never unitary, only as an abstract grammatical system of narrative forms. Such a grammatical system in painting would be composition, form and color. Yet, an analysis of only these elements elides the "living language" of the synthetic encounter which yields the most obvious claim to any marriage of text and image: "there is no link that could move from the visible to the statement, or from the statement to the visible. But there is a continual relinking which takes place over the irrational break or crack" (Deleuze 55).<sup>64</sup> These "relinking[s]" give birth to the stratification of literary and pictorial language as a socio-ideological construct that is governed by its genres and the professional discourses that works to stabilize the generic. The gallery as a space works to maintain the authoritative discourse. Indeed, this reading experience transports the viewer from the concrete reality of a shared communal performance to the private reflection of a scene both frozen in time and bursting from

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<sup>64</sup> Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1988. Trans Seán Hand. Print.

the frame. As Walter Benjamin reminds us: “painting simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience” (126).<sup>65</sup>

The Shakespeare Gallery presented a revolutionary commercial and nationalistic literary enterprise, which ultimately furthered the visual reading of Shakespeare through a performance rich version of novelistic materialism. The entrepreneurial and democratic spirit that it encompassed situates it as a paramount space in the construction and dissemination of the celebrity. P. David Marshall has suggested that the development of modern celebrity depends on “its association with both capitalism, where the celebrity is an effective means for the commodification of self, and democratic sentiments, where the celebrity is the embodiment of the potential of an accessible culture” (25-26).<sup>66</sup> Such accessibility was made that much more possible as the sentimental movement grew in the latter part of the eighteenth century; and responses to Shakespearean character come to depend on the notion that he is a figure for *all* men under the influence of passion.<sup>67</sup> I would like to argue that this is precisely what one experiences in this space. For Henri Lefebvre, space is to a certain extent like language, in that it is not a neutral, innocent entity, embedded within it and itself experience is one of ideologies. Within urban spaces such as the gallery, capitalism is intimately connected to the variety of

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<sup>65</sup> Morra, Joanne. and Smith, Marquard. *Visual Culture: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. London; New York: Routledge, 2006. Print. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies.

<sup>66</sup> Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, London: U of Minnesota, 2014. Print.

<sup>67</sup> William Guthrie’s *Essay upon English Tragedy* (1747) is notable for his insistence on naturalness in character. Henry Home, Lord Kames’s *Elements of Criticism* operating under the chief criteria of verisimilitude criticizes Shakespeare’s portrayal of certain character suggesting that “in any severe passion which totally occupies the mind, metaphor is unnatural (III, 132). He read Lady Macbeth’s hardening of her heart to commit the terrible crime without the attempt to conceal her motive as an “unnatural” portrayal of psychological realism stating, rather hopefully, that “I hope there is no wretch to be found, as is here represented” (II, 189-191). According to Joseph Donohue, “Kames analysis prepares the way for more sympathetic treatment of villainy by removing the source of evil from the villain’s heart and placing it in some exterior place of influence” (195). See Joseph W. Donohue’s *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2015. Web.

invisible networks of discourses. And reproduction is only further underscored by the bodily representation of the dominant figures: celebrity actors.

### **Facing Shakespeare: Caught between Famine and Fame**

Wordsworth moved from London to Racedown Lodge in the summer of 1795, thus releasing him from the “bondage” of life in “the vast city” (Moorman 272). He had already published “Descriptive Sketches” and the early version of “The Salisbury Plain” poems two years earlier, but since then had been experiencing a long period of poetic inactivity, what Wordsworth called “a long-continued frost” (qtd. in Moorman 272). Mary Moorman notes that “[w]hen Wordsworth came to Racedown he was half-way through his twenty-sixth year. At his age Milton had already written the ‘Ode on the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,’ and was in the full flow of his genius. Wordsworth’s poetic-spring time was slow in coming, harsh and raw like a north-country” (279)<sup>68</sup>. Exacerbating an already wrought situation, Dorothy and he were in dire need of money. Still awaiting an inheritance that was tangled in the courts, they were forced to practice the strictest economy, subsisting mainly on what their garden provided them. Those first two months at Racedown were spent in revising and adding to “Salisbury Plain.” He then began *The Borderers*.

Wordsworth lays the scene for his tragedy on the English and Scottish border during the reign of Henry III. A band of crusaders are led by the young idealist Mortimer. An outsider, Rivers, with a mysterious past has recently joined them and who has already attached himself to the band’s leader in a fashion most distressing to them, for they vaguely recall sordid rumors of a dark deed committed in Palestine. We also learn that Rivers is bound to Mortimer due to a life-

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<sup>68</sup> Moorman, Mary Trevelyan. *William Wordsworth, a Biography*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1957. Print.

debt but “gratitude is a heavy burden to a proud spirit.” At the climax, Oswald’s past is revealed, and we learn that as a young man he had set out for Syria under a captain with whom he had close ties, and whose daughter had exacted a promise not to desert her after. However, the crew in an effort to rid himself of their captain concoct a tale to convince Rivers that the captain “had designs on his honour,” and Rivers leaves the captain on an island to starve. Upon learning that he had been duped, Rivers is consumed with remorse, but is able to recover after some time by adopting a new philosophy that looks at all human feelings as acts of weakness and recognizes no authority other than his own reason. Pride thrusts Rivers into the world to enact his philosophy upon the object of his jealousy and hatred—Mortimer, knowing his love for the young Matilda who happens to be the sole caregiver of her elderly father, Herbert, who has recently returned from the holy land to find he has been ousted from his barony. Rivers sets his plan in motion by employing a beggar woman to misinform Mortimer that Matilda is really her daughter and that Herbert, despite his outward saintly look, is in fact an imposter and has bought her with the intention of selling her to the lecherous Lord Clifford in exchange for restoring Herbert’s claims to noble rights. Once the seed has been planted disrupting Mortimer’s impressions of Herbert, Rivers goads him to murder Herbert. Mortimer, however, is unable to capitulate and resorts to abandoning Herbert doubling Rivers’s actions. Consumed by the actions her treachery set in motion, the beggar woman confesses to the band, they then kill Rivers, who refuses to acquiesce to remorse. Mortimer also confesses and ends the play calling for monuments to be erected to tell his tale as he wanders the world alone.

The engine of Wordsworth’s gothic drama hinges on epistemological grounds: the validity of verbal and visual signifiers: what inner knowledge can be gleaned through the senses and the power of tales to shape, twist, and drive a good man “into so heinous a crime”

(Wordsworth 35). As Reeve Parker observes, “*The Borderers* dramatizes as its central concern the potential (and potentially tragic) cleavage between what the “physical” eye can know by the face of things—what it can discern of ‘character’ through visual appearance and gesture—and what lies concealed as the invisible reality within” (100).<sup>69</sup> At first glance, Parker’s insights point to the discourse of physiognomy, a discourse that saw a resurgence of interest with the 1792 translation of Johann Caspar Lavater’s *Essays on Physiognomy*. But under closer examination, key points in the dramatic structure, where a crisis of bodily legibility occurs (especially facial), coincide within allusions to Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *Macbeth*. These allusions erect the dramatic structure of Wordsworth’s tragedy, driving what can be known on the surface of things juxtaposed with the powers of fantastic tales to darken perceptions and misshape truths. Critics, such as Geoffrey Hartman has commented on Wordsworth’s indebtedness to Shakespeare during his early years, arguing that *The Borderers* is “written in a Shakespearean verse the poet had to purge before developing his own” (125).<sup>70</sup> And Jonathan Bate points out that “*The Borderers* taught Wordsworth the essential art of writing dialogue, of creating an easy blank verse that rendered the speaking voice” (93).<sup>71</sup> Yet these accounts dismiss the prevalence of the visual interpretations of Shakespeare at the time, especially the likes of the Shakespeare Gallery which commingled and confused the celebration of England’s great bard with the image of the celebrity actors. This parallels the “truths” of public (surface) perceptions, while what lies hidden beneath the surface is the truth of sublime genius, a truth that reading a single image will give you deep insights into Shakespeare’s poetic power. This is not to suggest that there exists an analogical

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<sup>69</sup> Parker, Reeve. *Romantic Tragedies: The Dark Employments of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 2011. Print. Cambridge Studies in Romanticism; 87.

<sup>70</sup> Hartman, Geoffrey H. *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814*. New Haven: Yale UP. Web. Wordsworth also “purged” many of the overt Shakespearean allusions when the play was finally published in 1842.

<sup>71</sup> Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*. Oxford: New York: Clarendon; Oxford UP, 1986. Print.

relationship between a particular painting from the Shakespeare Gallery and that precise scene, but that the dramaturgical and dialogical structure in the clearest of Shakespearean allusions tells us something not simply about writing dialogue but about a tension with appropriating a brand of discourse—a way of seeing—that was being conditioned by the institution of the theater and painting, best exemplified in Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery. This modality of vision is congruent with the passage from Book Seven of *The Prelude* that establishes a tension between encountering fame and reproduction and Wordsworth’s ability to understanding the depths of the poor, as the Blind beggar is transformed into a theatrical portrait. Indeed, theatrical portraiture art celebrated Shakespeare through a new radicalized commercial event of narcissistic consumption that could not be divorced from mass reproduction and bodily visual consumption. *The Borderers* puts into question, what is the cost of appropriating this dominant modality of vision when it becomes naturalized by bourgeois “public” urban spaces.

The first act turns on the need for “ocular proofs” structured on *Othello*. The villain Rivers has just returned with a letter written by Matilda lamenting her father’s forbiddance of the marriage between her and Mortimer, to which Mortimer remarks: “’Tis a strange letter, this— You [Rivers] saw her write it?” (1.1.25). Mortimer questions the connection between the language in the letter and his knowledge of the character of its author.<sup>72</sup> Authorial intention is put in question here and a disjunction emerges between language and bodily action. The letter has been separated from its author and the “strangeness” of it can be understood as the validity of language to represent the subject faithfully once it is severed from its origin. Once language is performed by another it puts in question verbal and visual texts as meaning-making apparatuses.

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<sup>72</sup> In *Picture Theory* W.J.T. Mitchell suggests “Wordsworth locates the essence of poetry in speech, song, and silent meditation and consistently treats writing as a mere supplement to speech” (Mitchell 119). See Mitchell, W. J. T. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1994. Print.

Mortimer's reaction—"You saw her write it"—becomes an anxious grasp to confirm the original speech act as physical confirmation of a congruency between the verbal and visual. Rivers, who ironically will be the greatest progenitor of false tales, claims to have been an eye-witness to its composition: "And [I] saw the tears with which she blotted it" (1.1.26).<sup>73</sup> Robert Osborn notes the structural dependency on *Othello* of Mortimer using Rivers as a "go-between," much as Othello enlists Iago for a similar service, but this borrowing does not stop here. The double marking of the letter (language and tears) that Rivers witnesses further parallels the double marking of the most famous stage prop—"a trifle light as air"—the handkerchief in *Othello*. The double marking establishes, through eyewitness testimony, Mortimer's belief in the validity of speech to accurately represent the reality of an individual's private inner life: the letters on the page commingled with physical evidence of Matilda's bodily emotions. Moreover, visible language and the act of writing that language is the ocular proof required by Mortimer to reassure him of Matilda's true self, hence the uncanny reaction to the disjunction of reading words that did not seem to accurately represent her character. *Othello* thus becomes integral as a structuring device to think through the epistemological problem of language (and its origins) and confirming a physical performance, which also brings us to how the Shakespeare Gallery (and celebrity actors in general) obfuscates original genius.

However, in a gender inversion, where Othello recounts his "moving accidents" to Desdemona, Wordsworth's remix features Matilda seducing Mortimer by telling him tales of her father's adventures. This performance conjures a mental image absent of the thing-in-itself:

"Though I have never seen his [Herbert's] face, methinks, / There cannot come a day when I

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<sup>73</sup> While composing *The Borderers* Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, were engaged in a debilitating lawsuit that left them teetering on poverty. With this in mind, the motif of "false testimonies" takes on greater implications, a critique of juridical institutions perhaps. See Mark Schoenfield's *The Professional Wordsworth: Law, Labor & the Poet's Contract*. Athens: U of Georgia, 1996. Print.

shall cease / To love him. (1.1.60-62).<sup>74</sup>The tale cultivates emotions of affection and adoration for both the teller (Matilda) and the subject of the story (Herbert), binding Mortimer emotionally to each character, evinced through the play of a grammatically indeterminate object:

It was my joy to sit and hear Matilda  
 Repeat her father's terrible adventures  
 Till all the band of play-mates wept together  
 And that was the beginning of my love.  
 And afterwards, when we conversed together  
 This old man's image was still present: chiefly  
 When I had been most happy. (1.1.65-71)

Matilda can be seen as the poet-in-performance, an actor who has rehearsed her part to perfection, so much so that the “band of play-mates” experience a communal act of catharsis. This purgation gives way to a joyful mental image that anticipates the now famous phrase “emotion recollected in tranquility.” Yet Matilda’s rehearsed, emotionally evocative performance reduces Mortimer to a state of sympathetic reverie, dislocating and displacing the primary object of his love. The logical inference would place Matilda as that object (“that was the beginning of my love”); although the persistence of “This old man’s image” into his conversations with Matilda renders the direct object indeterminate. The performance of watching another in a state

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<sup>74</sup> In *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination*, David Simpson argues that Wordsworth’s writing suggests but does not confirm a distance between the persona of the poet in charge of the artifact of the text, and the narrator who enunciates it.” In the case of “Gypsies” and “Simon Lee” Wordsworth adopts incidents that happened to others as his own, or his speakers’; a gesture which implies both identification with and distance from the attitudes therein explored. The experience of reading these poems carefully is thus one of continual *displacement* and *dislocation*; we are constantly confused about the degree to which we are witnessing the transcribed limitations of others (a dramatic speakers) or being ourselves invited to occupy perspectives of authority” (182-183; emphasis mine). Wordsworth’s own dramatic narrators, as in “The Thorn,” often emulate the poet-in-performance as described in the 1802 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, where the poet will “slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with those of his characters and subjects” (*Prose Works*, 1:138).

of reverie reproduces the theatrical absorption of the narcissistic conspicuous consumption, and thus portends Mortimer's tragic flaw: he is unable to see what is right in front of him.

Further, Mortimer conflates the subject of the tale with the teller of it, akin to the way in which Charles Lamb criticizes the auditors' confusion when viewing a play. In Lamb's view, the increase in popularity of actors and critical attention to the art of performance had come at the expense of the dramatic text. "It is difficult for a frequent playgoer to disembarrass the idea of Hamlet from the person and the voice of Mr. K[emble]," he complained, "we speak of Lady Macbeth while we are in reality thinking of Mrs. S[iddons]" (98).<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, in his essay "On Garrick, and Acting," Lamb proclaims that the statue of Garrick in Westminster Abbey indeed was not a tribute to Shakespeare, but a symbol of the poet's fall from popular regard in favor of the celebrity actor. The insidious effect of Garrick's unprecedented fame as a stage performer, Lamb suggests, was to subordinate Shakespeare's poetic genius to the actor's art of dramatic interpretation. If Wordsworth had Siddons in mind when he crafted the part of Matilda, it is possible that Mortimer's reaction to her father's rehearsed tales could be understood as a metatheatrical device to dramatize his susceptibility to performed tales and to show how such misplaced idolatry obfuscates the true agent of action. Moreover, this scene, while feminizing Mortimer as the auditor of the "terrible adventures," eliminates the dialogic power of narrative; Matilda is positioned as mechanical reproducer of language that is not truly hers.<sup>76</sup> Thus,

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<sup>75</sup> Lamb, Charles, Lamb, Mary, and Lucas, E. V. *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*. London: Methuen &, 1903. Print.

<sup>76</sup> In the Shakespearean counterpart, there is the potentiality of indirect discourse but only the possibility. When pleading to the Duke that Desdemona's love is not the result of witchcraft, Othello says that after hearing such a horrible tale:

She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd That heaven had made her such a man; she thank'd me, And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her, I should but teach him how to tell my story, And that would woo her. (1.2.30-35)

Mortimer's love for Matilda is not fully realized because the original agent of creation is supplemented by performance.

Matilda's love for her father is confirmed through the congruency of hearing the tale and reading his face. Her sense of self and her filial bond to her father are constructed in a fantastical story repeated to her since she was a child: "Think not, father, I forget / The history of that lamentable night / ...as you oft told me" (1.1.144-146). Where Mortimer confuses and fuses performer and author, Matilda finds confirmation in the congruency of tales and legible faces: "When I behold the ruins of that face, / Those eye-balls dark—dark beyond the hope of light, / And I think that they were blasted for my sake."<sup>77</sup> Matilda simply confirms a tale of action told by the subject of that action: direct discourse not mediated via performance.

Where Matilda's rehearsed tales of her father's adventures produce the desired effects within Mortimer, her narratorial power fails to paint a sympathetic mental image of Mortimer in her father eyes. The effort to convince her father that Mortimer is a worthy suitor takes the form of a theatrical apostrophe:

O could you hear his [Mortimer's] voice:  
 Alas! you do not know him. He is one  
 (I know not what ill tongue has wronged him with you)  
 All gentleness and love. His face bespeaks  
 A deep and simple meekness: and that Soul,  
 Which with the motion of a virtuous act  
 Flashes a look of terror upon guilt,

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<sup>77</sup> The social construction of the subject as thematized in the drama through storytelling, places in question the notion of genius as original artist in possession of innate abilities. Wordsworth often returns to his own writing to rewrite and rethink selfhood, perhaps he believed that his own work was the only stable context of selfhood.

Is, after conflict, quiet as the ocean,

By a miraculous finger, stilled at once. (1.1.133-141)

The description parallels the dramatic affective power of an actor that is often found within a dramatic review. She begins with his voice, moves to his face, then internally to his soul, and finally completes the movement outwardly to the “motion of a virtuous act.” There is a clear analogical relation between the characteristics of the authentic inner self being represented on the exterior of an individual and their actions. What is more, the audience would inevitably focus on two subjects: their memory of Mortimer and those parts of Matilda, dramatizing the disjunction between verbal and visual texts.

Wordsworth’s de Certeauvian remixing of *Othello* continues with greater complexity as Rivers dupes Mortimer into believing that the mental image of Herbert (what has been created and never verified visually) is false; that he in fact is not Matilda’s father and plans to sell her to the evil lord Clifford as his concubine. In order to do so, similar to the plot mechanism of the handkerchief in *Othello*, Rivers employs an object as false circumstantial evidence, but instead of a prop piece that would stand out in a bare Elizabethan stage, Wordsworth selects, in an age when spectacle reigned the London theaters, a Beggar Woman’s concocted tale to function as that “trifle light as air” to which the whole of the tragedy revolves. Wordsworth’s prefatory essay on Rivers explains the emplotment:

to make the non-existence of a common motive itself a motive to action is a practice which we are never so prone to attribute exclusively to madmen as when we forget ourselves...In private life what is more common than when we hear of law-suits prosecuted to the utter ruin of parties, and the most deadly feuds in families, to find them attributed to *trifling* and apparently inadequate sources? (66)

What in *Othello* appears to be a trifling object, takes the form of “nonexistence” and “inadequate sources” in the Beggar Woman in *The Borderers*. From inadequate sources spring tales of the impossible, what Wordsworth explains earlier in “a short essay illustrative of that constitution and those tendencies of human nature which make the apparently motiveless actions of bad men intelligible to careful observers” (“The Fenwick Note” 815). Within the essay Wordsworth explains Rivers’s tragic flaw as his belief in “superstition,” which can be understood, given that Mortimer is his copy, as a susceptibility to tales of the fantastic. This would explain why Matilda’s tales of her father’s “adventures” affect him so profoundly and her theatrical apostrophe of Mortimer does not evoke the emotional responses that she intended within her father. Yet these fallacious tales appear to be framed by tales of the fantastic, and the repetition of such tales appears to produce a debilitating effect in the auditor.

Prior to the stage appearance of the beggar woman, Rivers weaves a sympathetic tale within the eighteenth-century tradition of mad maidens, playing to Mortimer’s own susceptibility to the irrational:

—You marked a Cottage,  
 That ragged Dwelling, close beneath a rock  
 By the brook-side: it is the abode of One,  
 A Maiden innocent till ensnared by Clifford,  
 Who soon grew weary of her; but, alas!  
 What she had seen and suffered turned her brain.  
 Cast off by her Betrayer, she dwells alone,  
 Nor moves her hands to any needful work:  
 She eats her food which every day the peasants

Bring to her hut; and so the Wretch has lived

Ten years; and no one ever heard her voice. (1.3.5-15)<sup>78</sup>

Rivers's tale, cast in the eighteenth century sentimentalism of Cowper's "Crazed Kate" in *The Task*, is a significant plot mechanism for several reasons. First, the dramatic fall of Mortimer is modeled on an object in *Othello* that has the double function of symbolizing the institution of marriage and its successful consummation. The handkerchief has been written on twice: once with the name of the Othello's mother and a second time, symbolically, with the blood that marks the sexual consummation of the marriage, and more paramount to the tragedy, the fidelity of Desdemona's previously purity. The Beggar Woman, on the other hand, is a gross perversion of the failure of such institutions with Rivers functioning as the fiendish begetter of the vagrant as circumstantial evidence. Rivers's tale transitions here from the sentimental to the supernatural and continues thus:

But every night at the first stroke of twelve

She quits her house, and, in the neighbouring Churchyard

Upon the self-same spot, in rain or storm,

She paces out the hour 'twixt twelve and one—

She paces round and round an Infant's grave,

And in the churchyard sod her feet have worn

A hollow ring; they say it is knee-deep—

Ah! what is here?

[A female Beggar rises up, rubbing her eyes as if in sleep—a

Child in her arms.] (1.3.16-22)

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<sup>78</sup> This story closely resembles Mary Robinson's tale of woe (*The Maid of Buttermere*) that Wordsworth lifts from the bowels of public scandal and rebuke and places it in the gilded lines of *The Prelude* in Book Seven.

Rivers's fantastic tale culminates in the uncanny manifestation of the beggar woman, transforming him into a poet-conjuror figure.<sup>79</sup> Yet she is not the authentic "maiden" for the story; Mortimer once again couples the tale with the incorrect body. This feigned supernatural manifestation links this dramatic device with the machinery of the Gothic. According to David Simpson, "[t]he earliest poetic representations of that class [mendicants] are contained within a relatively comfortable vocabulary of 'social Gothic'" (161).<sup>80</sup> By this he means that unlike the supernatural that occupy Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* or Matthew Lewis's gothic tales, characters like the beggar woman and the vagrant woman of *An Evening Walk* are positioned as disruptors of the social order; we might place the banditti in Ann Radcliffe's novels as another obvious example. Simpson goes on to argue that "the beggar woman is an example of poverty corrupted and exploited by the promise of reward to act in conscience" (161).

The Beggar's first utterances maintain the spirit of supernatural fiction as she recounts two horrible dreams that are in actuality authentic indicators of her economic deprivation, but tales of madness and dreams ultimately obfuscate her authentic role as someone suffering from poverty. Once the beggar woman tells her two dreams, each of which consists of the death of her child, first "crying for bread" killed by a bee sting, and then the other dream describes the child being mauled and eaten by a strange dog, Mortimer responds overwhelmingly harsh to her saying after the tale of the first dream that "We have no time for this. / My babbling gossip, / Here's what will comfort you" (1.3.34-35), giving her money. She responds, "You would not talk thus if you knew / What life this is of ours.... You gentle folks have warm chambers"

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<sup>79</sup> Rivers assumes an other-worldly quality once more towards the end of the second act when he stumbles upon the beggar woman and her companions taking refuge in the very dungeon where he and Mortimer are plotting to dispatch Herbert. What Osborn sees an inversion of Macbeth and the witches as Rivers makes a threatening claim: "Begone, ye slaves! Or I will raise a whirlwind / And send you dancing to the clouds as leaves" (II.iii.245-246).

<sup>80</sup> Simpson, David. *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement*. New York: Methuen, 1987. Print.

(1.3.45-28) Mortimer, interrupts her again, calls her a “prater” and mocks her—“Pray, good Lady, / Do you tell fortunes?” (1.3.61-62). The irony here is that Mortimer, when confronted by someone in need, who is speaking directly to him recounting real events in her life, he turns a blind eye.<sup>81</sup> This is made that much more ironic by his earlier statement: “Never may I own / the heart which cannot feel for one so helpless” (1.1.39-40). Following Mortimer’s cutting remarks, the beggar woman’s response establishes the ethical preoccupation of the drama and Wordsworth’s central concerns as a poet:

Oh! Sir! You are like the rest.  
 This little one—it cuts me to the heart—  
 Well! They might turn a beggar from their door,  
 But there are mothers who can see the babe  
 Here at my breast and ask me where I bought it:  
 This they can do and look upon my face. (1.3.62-67)

The direct discourse and the visibility of “one so helpless” is used to contrast the subsequent exchange. It is not until the beggar woman recounts the mendacious tale concocted by Rivers about Herbert that Mortimer becomes interested, wildly interested in fact, and similar to Matilda’s desire for more of the story, Mortimer desires confirmation, eye-witness testimony, of Herbert’s treachery through the beggar woman’s tale: “But to your story,” “I must have more of this—you shall not stir / An inch until I am answered,” “Speak,” “Speak out!” “Nay, speak out, speak out--” (1.3.95, 125-127, 131, 134-135). Once she deviates from attempting to clarify that Herbert was not her husband and relate a tale of her own personal authentic woe, Mortimer

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<sup>81</sup> Mary Jacobus has shown that the Female Vagrant is a major development upon the “tragic super-tragic” portrayal of the destitute woman in “An Evening Walk,” especially so in Wordsworth’s new preoccupation with the woman’s inner life. (See Mary Jacobus, *Tradition and Experimentation in Wordsworth’s Lyrical Ballads 1798* (Oxford, 1976), 133-58.

replies “Enough!” signaling his lack of sympathy (1.3.143).<sup>82</sup> Unaffected by the visible sight of her decrepit condition and by her authentic tale of woe, Mortimer’s mind latches on to the information about Herbert’s treachery, and only after the Beggar Woman leaves the stage does the knowledge become a reality. The stage direction (“*After some time*”) prior to this speech indicates that Wordsworth wanted his audience to witness the profound change in character that this information had on Mortimer. (This may have been a fruitful moment for the naturalistic actor to display his emotional legibility.) That the knowledge seems to disembodiment Mortimer is significant because the “burthen” of the knowledge clings to the “mind” but seemingly more so to the body.<sup>83</sup> Here, language disembodies as opposed to the actor embodying language. Once the knowledge *sinks in*, Mortimer calls for the Beggar woman again to confirm his thoughts, to substantiate the teller of the tale and the knowledge that came with it. The stage direction points to the central epistemological conflict (“*Calling the beggar. She Returns; looking at her steadfastly in the face*”) as Mortimer reassures himself, “You are Matilda’s Mother? / It does me good to look upon you” (1.3.164). The tale must be processed then reconfirmed within the face of the origin of that emotion evoked via language. And indeed, emotion is most obviously processed by Mortimer in his emphatic proclamation—“now I *do* love thee [Matilda]” (1.3.163)—but his ill treatment of the beggar woman only intensifies the emphasis on the aesthetic distance of fantastic storytelling as a mechanism to elicit the proper interested response. Mortimer represents the class of Londoners who frequent the theater and galleries, valorized sites and privileged fields of consumption that exclude such population like the Beggar

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<sup>82</sup> While at Racedown, Wordsworth wrote to William Matthews about the foothold poverty had taken throughout England: “We are now at Racedown and both as happy as people can be who live in perfect solitude. We do not see a soul. Now and then we meet a miserable peasant in the road or an accidental traveler. The Country people are wretchedly poor; ignorant and overwhelmed with every vice that usually attends ignorance in that class, viz--lying and picking and stealing &c &c.”

<sup>83</sup> This corporeal burden receives more attention in a separate poem that Wordsworth wrote while he was composing *The Borderers*: “On Suicide”

Woman. The “prattle” and “gossip” that offend him is further commentary on the gross stimulant that the newspapers supply especially when it comes to theatrical actors, which in one sense renders the vagrant the embodied sublimation of Wordsworth’s complaints in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. This is a failure of the disinterested spectator to be awakened by direct contact with an individual in “reality.” During the eighteenth century Adam Smith had often imported theatrical metaphors to explain the sympathetic imagination. Both Hume and Francis Hutcheson also used theatrical frameworks for their psycho-aesthetic inquiries. In *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), Hume describes someone who enters into the sentiments of others as a “beholder” and refers to someone who elicits “natural sympathy” as a “spectacle.” And Hutcheson’s *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* (1728) floats between considerations of “Spectacles of Pity” on stage and in the world, between situations where people are spectators to the “characters” of others and to the “characters” in plays. The implications of a perspective that casts people as spectators to each other should not dismiss the growing theatricality of social relations precipitated by the burgeoning visual culture. Where mass-media celebrity operates according to the principle of the simulacrum, adducing the private individual as public spectacle and this “spectacle” is not a simple “collection of images,” as Guy Debord recognized; “rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (122).<sup>84</sup> Jason Goldsmith has made the connection between this complex structure of meditation and Benedict Anderson’s concept of the nation as an “imagined political community,” which is one of many possible “networks of social sympathy” (22). Thus, places like Vauxhall Gardens and the Shakespeare Gallery that Wordsworth mentions in Book 7 of *The Prelude* allow for what Peter de Bolla calls “the visibility of visibility.” This scopic regime

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<sup>84</sup> Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone, 1994. Print.

means entering into an economy of empty exchange: what could only be described as conditioning tendencies towards scopophilia. Indeed, this developing modality of vision becomes more intelligible and equally significant once we tarry within the aporia of auditors' failure of reading, and thus sympathizing with a class of people not their own.

If *Othello* structures the epistemological crisis of ocular proofs and establish the pole of the failure to see authentic suffering and poverty, *Macbeth* is used to establish the other pole: the fault lines of pride. Two key features are borrowed from Shakespeare's exploration of pride and guilt: Rivers takes on the role of Lady Macbeth in the way in which he goads Mortimer to kill Herbert telling him that "Today you will assume a character / More awful and sublime" (2.1.77-78); and Mortimer, like Macbeth, sees a resemblance in the face of this victim. However, where Macbeth sees the face of his father in Duncan—"Had he not resembled / My father as he slept I had done't" (2.2.14-15)—Mortimer sees "something in [Herbert's] face the very counterpart of Matilda" (2.2.272). The first act of *The Borderers* borrows heavily from *Othello* to initiate the dichotomy of false tales and ocular proofs, in the second act however, once the tragic fall has begun, Wordsworth draws from the psychology of guilt in the second act of *Macbeth* to paint Mortimer's moral dilemma. These differences play strongly to problems of representation. With the first allusion, Rivers's speech to Mortimer assumes an uncanny doubling of the Christ imagery Matilda uses to describe Mortimer to her father, though Matilda's concludes with Christ's calming of the sea of Galilee, Rivers invokes the sublimity of omnipotent power playing to Mortimer's egotism:

Yours is no common life! Self-stationed here,  
 Upon these savage confines we have seen you  
 Stand like an isthmus 'twixt two stormy seas

That checked their fury at your bidding—

[...]

Your single virtue has transformed a band

Of fierce barbarians into ministers

Of beauty and order. (2.1.60-67).

This scene is significant for two reasons: the repetition with difference in these speeches speaks to the notion of heteroglossia: the language of one is brought in and altered by another. Lady Macbeth puts her husband's manhood in question to spur his on to murder Duncan, whereas Rivers raises Mortimer to god-like levels. He endows Mortimer with dominion over the natural world: Matilda's apostrophe speaks to his sublime metaphysical qualities—

...and that soul,

Which with the motion of a glorious act

Flashes a terror-mingled look of sweetness,

Is, after conflict, silent as the ocean (1.1.37-40)

River's reimagining of Christ emphasizes Mortimer's nonexistent accomplishments, what could be understood as an encomium to his independence ("self-stationed") and greatness ("no common life"). Mortimer's desire for notoriety and fame continues on in different moments in the play, but are initiated here as we find that both superstition and pride lead to the protagonist's undoing.<sup>85</sup> Yet this imagery shifts from dramatic illusion in speech to tragic reality as Herbert's death is caused by Mortimer neglecting to provide him with the necessary sustenance to survive. Ultimately, the significance of the beggar woman comes full circle: Mortimer's blindness to the

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<sup>85</sup> The play concludes with Mortimer calling for monuments to be erected in his name: though they serve as a cautionary tale, they nonetheless erect a material permanence and posterity, something that Wordsworth was much concerned with. See David Higgins.

real “face” of her pain is most fully realized in the neglect of Herbert, which occurs because of his pride and desire for greatness. This is rendered tragically ironic when he declares

We look

But at the surface of things

The deeper malady is better hid—

The world is poisoned at the heart. (2.3.338-344)

This proclamation is covered over with naïve blindness: Mortimer is unable to detect the villainy on Rivers’s *sur-face*, as the rest of the banditti so easily perceives.

Firm in the belief that he has gained a deeper knowledge to the life of things, Mortimer’s speeches begin to grow in length and rhetorical power. Act Three marks the first major transition in Mortimer as his speeches nearly double in length from the previous two acts. Before Mortimer assumes his new identity as an enlightened seer of reality—believing before that “all things were shadows”—Rivers soliloquy positions the audience as witnesses to a mental theater of sorts

We dissect

The senseless body, and why not the mind?

These are strange sights--the mind of man upturned

Is a strange spectacle. (3.2.25-28)

Mortimer then appears on stage to become the spectacle of this madness. He begins by renouncing a Neoplatonic belief that “all things were shadows—yea, /Living or dead all things were bodiless” (3.2.72-73) instigated by his attempted murder of Herbert. He goes on to proclaim himself a teacher, going forth dispensing a deep knowledge; he calls then for an inhumane apathy that echoes Lady Macbeth’s unsexing:

Now for the corner-stone of my philosophy:

I would not give a denier for the man  
 Who, on such provocation as this earth  
 Yields, could not chuck his babe beneath the chin,  
 And send it with a fillip to its grave. (3.2.92-94)

The re-gendering of Mortimer places one of the most widely celebrated scenes of *Macbeth*, where Sarah Siddons plays Lady Macbeth, within a masculine framework, thereby appropriating the cultural power of women in general and Siddons in particular.<sup>86</sup> After the heinous image of infanticide Mortimer's mental image shift curiously to Matilda: "That such a one! / So pious in demeanour! In her look / So saintly and so pure! (3.3.96-98); the character's own absorption and confusion of the mental images of Matilda and Herbert that have been curiously conflated throughout the play. As Mortimer begins to separate himself from humanity in an effort to muster-up the courage necessary to dispatch Herbert once and for all, even after his philosophizing, he is unable to reconcile the disjunction between Herbert's appearance as being "so pious in demeanour! In his look / so saintly and so pure."

The feminization of Mortimer and the predominance of the female vagrant represented in the play as the Beggar Woman, leaves one to wonder how significant Siddons's effect upon him was especially as she was the dominating image when memories (and actual images) surfaced regarding *Macbeth*, the feminization of theatricality exhibitionism. In the conclusion to the third act we find Mortimer alone on the edge of the heath, separated or "cut off from man," as he says: "No more shall I be man, no more shall I / Have human feelings" (3.3.70-72). The exchange Mortimer has with Herbert leaves him in private reflection of a sublime nature:

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<sup>86</sup> In *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, when talking about *Macbeth*, Hazlitt is quick not to dismiss the power of Siddons portrayal: "In speaking of the character of Lady Macbeth, we ought not to pass over Mrs. Siddons's manner of acting that part. We can conceive of nothing grander. It was something above nature (53; electronic copy)

Deep, deep and vast, vast beyond human thought,  
 Yet Calm—I could believe that there was here  
 The only quiet heart on earth.--In terror,  
 Remembered terror, there is love and peace. (3.5.1-4)

We find a similar reconciliation in the boat stealing episode in *The Prelude*. But his solitude is interrupted by Rivers, who professes how he is bound to his “master,” for Mortimer has “taught mankind to seek the measure of justice / By diving for it into their own bosoms” (3.5.24-25). Rivers goes on to once more raise Mortimer up to god-like standards by echoing some of the earlier sublime imagery:

You have obeyed the only law that wisdom  
 Can ever recognize: the immediate law  
 Flashed from the light of circumstances  
 Upon an independent intellect.  
 Henceforth new prospects ought to open on you,  
 Your faculties should grow with the occasion. (3.5.41-47)

The irony in this moment is that though Rivers claims Mortimer is establishing an “independent intellect,” he still says that he “will cleave to [him]” and in the most telling line Mortimer inquires, “Wherefore this repetition.” Curiously, it is Mortimer’s speeches that are filled with the allusions to Shakespeare, whereas Rivers’s are imbued with Miltonic language. Rivers interrupts his peace just as Shakespeare interrupts Wordsworth's possibility of establishing “an independent intellect.” But both Iago and Satan aims are to pervert or ruin that which is good, Rivers on the other hand is in need of a copy. He creates in Mortimer a mirror to see his own deeds. It is in Rivers’s confession to Mortimer in the climax of the drama that we see a thematic connection

between the indirect actions performed by the characters and the indirect discourse. As Robert Osborn has identified, the account of his crime is a fusion of several sources;<sup>87</sup> the most prominent of these is the connection to *Caleb Williams*, where Falkland's crime, like Rivers's, is set off by a blow that wounded his pride more than his person, and rather than murder the captain directly, as Falkland does, Rivers abandons him on an island at sea.

While writing *The Borderers*, Wordsworth wrote a prefatory essay that does much to connect the theme of pride. The essay is a character analysis centering on the psychological makeup and history of Rivers, and is an example of Wordsworth participating in the genre of theatrical criticism that emerged as a result of the newly formed celebrity apparatus, to which we could add Sarah Siddons's *Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth*. Theatrical criticism brings us back to the reading experiences of the Shakespeare Gallery as the viewer often would draw on the hermeneutical process of what came prior to and subsequent to that high moment of drama. Read through the lens of celebrity studies, the dramatic essay is a para-text that connects back to the novelistic materialism in the paintings. What is more, a closer look at the beginning of the essay reveals the central preoccupations of the poet at the time of the play's composition in the late 1790's. The essay begins thus:

Let us suppose a young man of great intellectual powers, yet without any solid principles of genuine benevolence. His master passions are pride and the love of distinction. He has deeply imbibed the spirit of enterprise in a tumultuous age. He goes into the world and is betrayed into a great crime. --That influence on which all his happiness is built immediately deserts him. His talents are robbed of their weight, his

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<sup>87</sup> In addition to *Caleb Williams*, Osborn notes the "principal inspiration for this abandonment may have come from the current events in which Wordsworth had great personal interest. Captain Bligh, of the Mutiny of 1789, was, like Rivers's captain, imperious of temper and hated by his crew.

exertions are unavailing, and he quits the world in disgust, with strong misanthropic feelings. (165)

It is difficult not to read this passage biographically, and many scholars have, by pointing out the parallels with Wordsworth's whole cloth subscription to the spirit of the early Revolution, then his reappraisal and rejection of Godwinism, all of which is catalogued in "Books Ten, Eleven and Twelve" of the 1805 *Prelude*. In Books Eleven and Twelve, "Imagination, How Impaired and Restored," Wordsworth recalls the fervor of the Revolutionary principles that he was drawn to and then tempered himself from "a Power " that is "the image of right reason" and "gives birth / To no heat of passion or excessive zeal, / No vain conceits, provokes to no quick turns/ Of self-applauding intellect. (11. 20-27). However, we see the themes of pride and distinction continue to emerge through the end of the 1790's with "Lines Written on a Yew Tree," which shares similar echoes of talents and pride

He was one who own'd  
 No common soul. In youth by genius nurs'd,  
 And big with lofty views, he to the world  
 Went forth, pure in his heart, against the taint  
 Of dissolute tongues, 'gainst jealousy, and hate  
 And scorn, against all enemies prepared,  
 All but neglect: and so his spirit damped  
 At once, with rash disdain he turned away,  
 And with the food of pride sustained his soul  
 In solitude. (12-21)<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Wordsworth, William, Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Lyrical Ballads: 1798 and 1802*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford UP, 2013. Ed Fiona J. Stafford. Print. Oxford World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

However, this crisis is as much about what it means to be a poet as it is what leads him to be susceptible to such intellectual positions.<sup>89</sup>

Mortimer's flawed sympathetic identification is intimately tied to the motifs of fame and famine. Kenneth Johnston points out that while composing *The Borderers*, William and Dorothy were in an "anomalous position to observe the poverty-stricken West Country" and like the Pedlar in his soon-to-be-composed "Ruined Cottage," "he could afford to suffer with those whom he saw suffer" (354).<sup>90</sup> Johnston claims that Wordsworth was well aware that he stood blessedly but precariously outside their suffering and that the uneasiness of his financial situation, a situation he recalled over fifty years later in the prefatory remarks amended to *The Borderers* that began this chapter. Deep questions about his role as a poet plagued his and redefined his poetry in a fundamental way over the next two years: "How does one write poetry about poverty? What is the perspective from which telling stories about it can be seen as part of the solution, rather than part of the problem?" (478). At Racedown Wordsworth began to develop a kind of human inventiveness, "the ability to project himself into the minds and bodies of the poor, the old, the senile, and the sick" (479). Moreover, earlier evidence from Wordsworth's second residence in London, prior to moving to Racedown, suggests an active interest in highlighting this social disease through another element of the celebrity apparatus: the periodical.

### **The Philanthropist: Developing a Taste for the Poor**

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<sup>89</sup> Another interesting parallel with these Books of *The Prelude* is the monument to the murderer and the monument that Mortimer calls for at the end of the play, both speak to a more sustain interest in posterity found in *Essays upon Epitaphs*.

<sup>90</sup> Johnston, Kenneth R, *The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet, Lover, Rebel, Spy*. 1st Ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998. Print.

From February 1795 to that August, Wordsworth resided in one of the most populated cities at that time and was looking for ways to establish himself as a poet as well as make a living.<sup>91</sup> His first two publications were met with less than favorable reception, and Wordsworth then looked to the very sources that produced such critical reception—the literary magazine. In a series of letters to William Matthews, the two plotted out what they envisioned to be “a monthly Miscellany” to be called the *Philanthropist*. In a letter to Matthews, Wordsworth mentions the areas with which the magazine will concern itself:

Besides essays on Morals and Politics, I think that I could communicate critical remarks upon Poetry, &c &c, upon the arts of Painting, Gardening, and other subjects of amusement. But I should principally wish our attention to be fixed upon Life and Manners, and make our publication a vehicle of sound and exalted morality. (66)

Beyond concerning himself with critical remarks about painting in the literary magazine, Wordsworth was greatly concerned about the state of the poor in England. Looking to the essay on poverty in the *Philanthropist*, Wordsworth attacks the upper class inability to truly see and empathize with the poor “They read of the afflictions of their fellow-creatures, as they would amuse themselves with a tale or a romance, and they pity the unfriended child of want, perishing for a morsel of bread, as they would pity the desponding and forlorn hero of the piece, or the unfortunate virgin confined by necromancy in some enchanted castle” (445). Similar to a bad books that are “steeped in vapid tales of Sensibility and escapist Gothic novels,” they fail to see the reality around them. But there is also the complaint waged against the theatrical exhibitions, which remediates these tales, where the legibility of the body through the physical theater or theatrical paintings, quite possibly are the more devious culprits in conditioning a disinterested

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<sup>91</sup> Duncan Wu posits that *The Borderers* was inspired partly by repeated visits to the Covent Garden and Drury Lane theaters during his stay in London, February-August 1795. (See *Wordsworth: An Inner Life*, 88.)

spectator while also giving rise to the motif of want of distinction and wasted talent—what was partly motivating the young poet at that time as well.

This new modality of vision sought to penetrate the depths of the character to understand their entire history. It was not enough just to see the physical degradation on the face of a vagrant, but to understand the complete history of the individual. This is precisely what the discourse of celebrity bring to Wordsworth's economy of performative poetics: to see and read a desperate figure but then to understand their complete tale, much of what Tom Mole refers to as the hermeneutics of intimacy, what we saw most strongly represented in the theatrical portraiture blind beggar scene of *The Prelude*. In *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse*, Gary Lee Harrison demonstrates how the change in perspective on the poor between Cowper and Wordsworth involves a similar descent from the high position of the loco-descriptive to the low of the picturesque, calling this descent “both topographical and ideological, for the view from the promontory correlates with the privileged gaze of what Burke terms the ‘natural aristocrat,’ while the view from the valley correlates with the less privileged vantage point of the middling and lower classes” (62 in *Vagrant Muse*). A vertical shift in hierarchy, but a lateral shift in proximity as well, one that shares the ideological of the middling and the low given the vulgar popularity of the theater. Harrison argues that “Wordsworth's representations of the laboring poor...displace what we might call--invoking an apt metaphor from Roger Sales's *Pastoral and Politics* (15)—Cowper's picturesque ‘long shot’ with a potentially disturbing “‘close up shot’” (61) Wordsworth's poetry, for Harrison, substitutes for the panoramic distance a disturbing proximity, where the spectator comes face to face with, if not “squalor and dirt,” at least the “squalid appearance” and “mean employments” of poverty (61). This brings us back to the significance of the crisis of seeing in *The Borderers* that must be coupled with the other elements

that blinds the charters: that of pride. Rivers tells Mortimer that once he returned, the tale “was spread abroad” and his “power at once / Shrunk from me.” Rivers continues on to extend the motif of the famished man by claiming that he was fed the food of “popular applause.” And Mortimer’s final act of dislocation situates him within the vagrant aesthetic, though he calls for monuments to be erected in his name--a tale that would not be transmitted by a person. These characters’ sublime ambition speaks to Wordsworth’s professional pursuits.

What lies at the heart of the conflict between Mortimer and Rivers, what Wordsworth will later bemoan along with William Hazlitt and Daniel Boorstin is that celebrity culture is a perversion of meritocracy in which recognition has become uncoupled from achievement and authenticity. The Beggar Woman’s social stance is characteristically made legible on her face, and the features of the vagrant should reveal her subjective interior to the sympathetic observer. The events of the drama beg the question as to what simply lies on the surface or that the “authentic” interior reality is inaccessible to onlookers and an individual does not reveal him or herself consciously and through language.

One of the most significant fragments to emerge from this play was “The Ruined Cottage.” What later would encompass the first book of *The Excursion*, it was hailed by F.R. Leavis as “The finest thing Wordsworth ever wrote.” Herbert Reed saw Wordsworth’s poem as “the germ of all of his subsequent development.” And as Mark Reed noted, it was the poet’s “first mature work, saying that it “it hardly less significant [than *Lyrical Ballads*] as a point of commencement for the modern poetic tradition.”<sup>92</sup> In the introduction to the Cornell edition, James Butler says rather firmly that “*The Ruined Cottage* is not a work of social protest” though

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<sup>92</sup> F.R. Leavis, *Revaluations: Tradition and Revolution in English Poetry* (London, 1936), p. 179; Herbert Reed, *Wordsworth: The Clark Lectures, 1929-1930* (London 1930), p. 133; Mark L. Reed, review of *The Music of Humanity*, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 69 (1970), 528.

it “does accurately reflect social conditions” (4). The first correspondence from Racedown, Wordsworth indicates that “The country people here are wretchedly poor.” Margaret’s abandonment in *The Ruined Cottage* is similar to Martha Ray in “The Thorn,” Emily in *The White Doe of Rylestone*, and Ellen in *The Excursion*, Book VI. The performative qualities of Wordsworth’s labors can be seen in such lines as

He had rehearsed  
 Her homely tale with such familiar power,  
 With such a countenance of love, an eye  
 So busy, that the things of which he spake  
 Seemed present, and, attention now relaxed,  
 There was a heartfelt chillness in my veins. (266-269)

*The Borderers* is both an indictment of a superstitious brand of readers who view the poor through the prism of the gothic Romance and that of the theater, where the actor’s face confirms the entirety of a character’s passion and history. However, the hermeneutics of intimacy that conditions a new modality of vision worked on Wordsworth in creative ways, and his desire for distinction was at odds the apparatus celebrity actors traded on. In the end, perhaps Wordsworth laments the dual hermeneutical process of decoding text and image for he adopts it with the Blind Beggar, but the theatrical portraiture art modality of vision is not sufficient to capture the depth of the Blind Beggar’s being, and only his poems would perform such an act. However, Wordsworth perhaps decided that the image was necessary to perform the truth of his poem as his authentic act of representing the indigent class in Northern England, hence the proliferation of his own images.

### Poetic Exhibitions: Wordsworth's Quest to Recognize Himself

Exhibitions appear to occupy a paradoxical position within Wordsworth's writings. The "Advertisement" to the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* invokes the creator of the most grand exhibitions, Joshua Reynolds, the one responsible, as we shall see in the next chapter, for raising the theatrical celebrity to high art. In it he writes that "[a]n accurate taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition" (47-8). Indeed, Wordsworth employs the cultural capital of Reynolds' name as *the* arbiter of taste to remind his readers that taste is only apprehended through laborious study of great writers, but the reference also conjures the commercial and theatricality that are inextricable from Reynolds and the exhibitions at the time, two poles between which Wordsworth would struggle for decades to come.

Wordsworth's relationship to theater and painting has been well documented as of late. Judith Pascoe's *Romantic Theatricality: Gender Poetry and Spectatorship* catalogues the collaborative venture between Benjamin Haydon and Wordsworth. In it Pascoe investigates the vehicle of portrait painting as a mode of performance and explores the "self" Wordsworth helped to disseminate through his sitting for a wide spectrum of portrait painters and sketch artists. The popularity of these exhibitions, especially Boydell's, demonstrates the powerful role theaters played as purveyors of culture and marked the first dissemination of "high art" to the masses: first through the exhibition of the paintings in a public hall, and through the reproductions of the engravings. Evidence of this power role occupied by the theater can be found in the success of Benjamin Haydon's *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, which staged Wordsworth as a reverent witness to the miracle.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy's Egyptian Hall in 1820, the painting received confirmation of its success by the celebrity actress, Sarah Siddons. Haydon's diary captures the ostensibly "private" theatrics as Siddons made her way to the painting through a crowd of eight hundred invited guests: "The whole room remained dead silent, and allowed her to think. After a few moments George Beaumont, who was extremely anxious, said in a delicate manner: 'How do you like the Christ?' Everybody listened for her reply. After a moment, in a deep loud, tragic tone she said, 'It is completely successful.'" (qtd. in Pascoe 184). The popular success of the painting was based equally on an interest in identifying the celebrity (Wordsworth) and the two others (Newton and Voltaire) who had been placed in the painting anachronistically. Of the painting, Haydon issued a catalogue which pointed out the biblical figures as well as the "models" for these figures. Pascoe concludes that "in allowing Haydon to use his face in the painting, Wordsworth was helping to guarantee the artistic public interest in his work. Wordsworth helped Haydon peddle his painting, and Haydon helped Wordsworth put his face before the public without seeming to do so" (211).

Haydon was one of a wide spectrum of artists responsible for fashioning a "public" version of Wordsworth, one that worked to link the poet with the locale of the Lake District. And according to Blanchard, Haydon's *Wordsworth on Helvellyn* (1842) is one of the most successful dramatizations of the "poet of nature," In it the poet is featured with a downcast gaze situated within the sublime landscape of the tallest peak in the Lake District; indeed, the look typical of absorptions as argued by Michael Fried.<sup>93</sup> But beyond depicting a subject oblivious to the gaze of his audience, Wordsworth is portrayed in the act of composing a poem. In fact, the poem he's composing is a sonnet regarding one of Haydon's grand portraits, "On a Portrait of

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<sup>93</sup> See Fried, Michael. *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988. Print.

the Duke of Wellington.” The painting represents perfectly the reciprocal relationship between the two artists—Haydon paints Wordsworth during the peripatetic creative process of composing a sonnet in praise of a painting by Haydon. Indeed, the promotional methods first practiced by Garrick with Hogarth and Siddons with Reynolds carried over into literary enterprises. But Haydon’s powerful image of the aged bard, was not exhibited for eager audiences seeking to join their imaginative version of the poet above the fog of a Lake District mountain top. It was a more tempered version of the poet that we become the image Victorian audiences would link with the language and the land.

In 1834, a portrait of Wordsworth went on display at the Royal Academy Exhibition painted by Henry William Pickersgill. This was to become the authentic look of the poet, commissioned at the behest of “the Master and a numerous body of the fellows” of his Cambridge college at St. John’s. A review in *The Athenaeum* captures the public’s seemingly insatiable desire for a type of metonymical confirmation of the solitary poet:

It is not enough for an artist to draw a cold map of the human countenance, and because he has placed the nose right, and the eyes not wrong, and opened a mouth where a mouth should be, to think he has done enough and wipe his brushes and desist. No, the genius of art must do more; we demand for Wordsworth, not a look equal to the management of the stamp revenue for Westmoreland alone, but something of that dignity of intellect, which dictated his truly noble poems; we want a little inspiration; we desire such expression as will induce the spectator to say, “that is the look of a poet.”

Beyond being displayed as high art, the Pickersgill appeared as the frontis piece of the collection of poems in 1836 (engraved by W.H. Watt) and was subsequently reprinted in six more editions of poems (1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1846, 1849). The Pickersgill portrait also appeared as the

frontis-piece for the first American edition of *Harper's Magazine* in 1850. It also inspired

Wordsworth to write a sonnet declaiming its "truth to life." According to Christopher Rovee,

unlike his poems, whose materiality he could mystify in a language of genius, portraits gave a Wordsworth of the surface, courting publicity even while subjecting his image to misappropriation. Wordsworth's handling of the promotional opportunity afforded by this portrait summarizes his ambivalence about a literary marketplace that rewards an author's willingness to undertake theatrical self-promotion. (152)

But the Pickersgill tells us more than the tale of disseminating the image of the poet as a new national icon of domesticity, Wordsworth's own remarks about the success of the painting speak to his knowledge of the commercial side of the literary galleries of the 1790's, especially his knowledge of the failure of the Shakespeare gallery. Referring to his endorsement of the portrait, Wordsworth explains his wishes for the "business" of the engravings to the bookseller Edward Moxon:

We all like it exceedingly...In all probability it will be engraved, but not unless we could secure beforehand 150 Purchasers. I do not say *Subscribers* for it would not be asked as a favor. To further the intent my I beg of you to receive the names of such persons as it *might* suit, to write them down in your Shop?...[I]t is not wished to have a Board or Advertisement of this intention in your Shop, but merely that you should receive such Names as might offer. (qtd in Rovee 152)

Arguably Wordsworth is recalling the failings of Boydell's promotional tactics: and the way in which Shakespeare's genius was overshadowed by the vulgarities of a marketplace that traded on mechanical reproduction and the performances of the celebrity actors of that time. This is

precisely why *The Borderers* occupies a significant point in the promotional and aesthetic development of the author.

According to Christopher Rovee, portraiture art embodied a mixture of classes and discourses: “at its most grandiose, as in the elite canvases by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Lawrence, it embodied the mixing of mercantile and propertied classes that is the special hallmark of British industrialism. At its simplest, as in the engravings of working class individuals often circulated in portraiture books, it proffered a plain and radically inclusive social body” (4). This is precisely how the power of the Shakespeare Gallery not only yokes these to economic poles, but did so with the power of celebrity, an apparatus that provided the greatest possible projection into an accessible culture. Indeed, this is what celebrity studies makes possible: to take *The Borderers* out of ideological discursive scholarly practices that register it as a text purely about Wordsworth’s indebtedness to Shakespeare or the crisis associated with The French Revolution and Godwinism. The task then is to place the Beggar Woman at the center of the play, not as the ground for an art/nature conflict, but inserted among the universalizing forms of incipient bourgeois hegemony. Criticism is partly to blame for this occlusion, and appears to contain its own resistance to the visible, or proves to contain its own patriarchal high cultural antitheatrical sentiment. Discursive networks can be traced independently of authorial intentionality. We see that in the groundbreaking work of Stephen Greenblatt<sup>94</sup> and more directly the work of David Simpson, who writes that “Wordsworth’s experiences of and meditations upon the vagrant poor are...implicated within the same preoccupations with property and labour that we have seen to figure so largely in his moral and aesthetic doctrines” (161). He goes on to write that the Beggar Woman within *The Borderers* is not a “complicated personality, nor does

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<sup>94</sup> See *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (1988).

she raise any awkward questions for the reader of the protagonist” (Simpson 161). This position, I would argue is evidence of the critical tendency to elide over, and even fall victim to the dominant bourgeoisie visual discourses that, like Mortimer, dismiss the a character on such basis.

The power of ideology is to obfuscate what then becomes naturalized in the poet’s later efforts to “create a veritable gallery” of himself. But even Judith Pascoe’s insightful study, in her effort to elucidate the Wordsworth public “theatricality” reduces the significance of *The Borderers* to a final remark in her concluding paragraph on “Performing Wordsworth,” when she writes that though the Fenwick note works to perform a stance that eschews public exhibition, he went on to participate in acts of literal exhibitionism on several other fronts (228). She does make clear early that “the fact that Wordsworth’s two most prominent literary forerunners [Shakespeare and Milton] had galleries devoted to illustrations of their life and works may help to explain Wordsworth’s willingness to sit for an array of artist ranging from distinguished portraiture to amateur sketchers” (207). But taking literary gallery to be a “register of literary immortality” only understands it as a yardstick and not as an indoctrinating *space* that codified celebrity and disseminated its hegemonic apparatus, not simply through Shakespeare, but the actors and artists as well. It accomplished this through the two-fold function of it being an actual space and a producer of an imaginary one through the discursive print networks circulating a new brand of way to see. Culture then, is seen as a form of domination in that manner in which it covers over the plight of the poor through tales of the fantastic. As such, the Beggar Woman is the nodal point of the play’s imbrication into this discourse of gallery spaces. And the fact that Mortimer weeps for Herbert’s starvation while the Beggar Woman pleads for conciliation only works to further underscore the oppressive bourgeois scopic regime. Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated the myriad forms under which this discourse appears in the play and indicated

how those competing discourses are active in organizing the interwoven motifs of the visual, fame, and the poor. On the surface, critics have not been blind to Wordsworth's preoccupation with posterity or the poor; it is my contention, however, that these are not simply themes, but that they are differentially embedded figural traces of the text's anxiety concerning those very matters. Celebrity studies, especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century allow us to recontextualize bourgeois hegemony and trace its reverberation in other media. In the next chapter, we see how celebrity actress Sarah Siddons's gender bending private performances of Joanna Baillie's tragedy *De Monfort* utilizes domestic spaces to challenge prescribed gender roles intended for public display. Where this chapter positioned celebrity as a subjugating apparatus, the subsequent chapter will display its power to subvert such structures of patriarchal authority.

## Chapter Two

Remediating “The Tragic Muse”:

Joanna Baillie’s *De Monfort* and Sarah Siddons’s Private Theatrics

Ye tuneful sister of the Lyre,  
 Who dreams and Fantasies inspire;  
 Who over poesy preside,  
 And a lofty hill abide  
 Above the ken of mortal fight,  
 Fain would I sing of you, could I address ye right.

—Joanna Baillie, “An Address to the Muses” (1790)

“Activity is the trait of genius, and its restlessness, however tormenting to the possessor, becomes the spring of its noble exhibitions.”

—“Sketch of Mrs. Siddons,” *Monthly Visitor* (October 1800)

In April and May of 1800, Joanna Baillie’s *De Monfort* was produced at the Drury Lane Theater with the titular roles played by the sibling celebrity actors Sarah Siddons and John Philip Kemble. That same year, the third edition of the *Plays of the Passions* appeared, with Baillie claiming authorial rights for the first time.<sup>95</sup> These seemingly disparate events initiated a link between Baillie and Siddons that left an indelible mark on the collective consciousness of the public, evinced here in a Hampstead publication, *The Living and the Dead* that was reprinted on Joanna Baillie’s death:

There is something exceedingly striking in the appearance of Joanna Baillie. Though she is no longer young, and her features have lost the glow and freshness of youth, the rays of

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<sup>95</sup> See Jeffrey Cox’s “Staging Baillie,” in *Joanna Baillie, Romantic Dramatist* p.146-167, 158-159.

beauty still linger about her countenance, and over its expression the tyrant has had no power. Her face is decidedly tragic, not altogether unlike that of Mrs. Siddons--and capable of portraying the strongest and deepest emotion. Her air is lofty and reserved; and if there be a dash of hauteur in her manner, amounting at times, almost to sternness, there is, on the other hand, something delightfully winning in the tone of her deep fine voice. Her eye--I hesitated long before I could decide its hue, and after all, I am not quite certain whether it be dark blue or hazel--has a most melancholy expression; though time has not quenched its fire or bent, in the slightest, her erect but attenuated form. She appeared about 50; thin, pale, and dressed with a Quakerlike simplicity; and though some might be inclined to say she is too conscious of her powers, and to quarrel with the precision of her manner, there is much of the majesty of a genius about her, and, in person altogether, she is one, who once seen, is not easily forgotten. (Slagle 290)

The writer's description follows the programmatic response of discovering the essence of someone's character through surveilling the body. The description begins at her face and compares the "look" of tragedy with that of Siddons's. Though there is no explicit mention of it, the writer's gaze filters Baillie through Joshua Reynolds's painting of Siddons, *The Tragic Muse*. However, the author's gaze is inadequate in totalizing its object—"I hesitated long before I could decide hue [of her eye], and after all, I am not quite certain whether it be dark blue or hazel." Yet, like Reynolds's grandiose historical portrait of Siddons, Baillie possesses a numinous aura of her own: "there is much of the majesty of genius about her." It is important to note that here the author is not declaring Baillie a genius, but instead attributes a noble *quality* associated with genius to her. To name her a genius would be to acquiesce to the tension between determining the truth of her through the observing gaze and, what would be best described as the

lack of her approachableness: the “dash of hauteur in her manner” and being “too conscious of her powers.” Assigning an incomplete ontological status can be seen as just one of several rhetorical devices by which female artistic power was simultaneously identified and dismantled within the press.

The aims of this chapter are to show how Baillie’s *De Monfort*, with a part crafted for and played by Sarah Siddons, critiques the patriarchal gaze of the media that sought to determine female artistic power. Siddons as the first modern theatrical celebrity is celebrated through the masculine discourses of high pictorial art, the same discourses we saw in the previous chapter that became the standard viewfinder for cultivating English taste. In this chapter, we will see how Baillie critiques this modality of vision and its hyperbolic tendencies, because elevating Siddons to a level of high art sanitizes the true sublimity of her performances. Moreover, her sublimity is conflated with that of the artist that she is representing—whether it is the native genius of Shakespeare or increasing the celebrity of Reynolds, since most of his contemporaries agreed that *The Tragic Muse* was by far his best work. Yet Siddons’s iconography as the tragic muse becomes a floating signifier initiating a discourse (and debate) on the possibility of female genius as she performs dramas from female writers like Baillie and delivers private readings of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and performs Shakespeare most tragic figures—Hamlet and Macbeth—in the early decades of the nineteenth century. For as we shall see, the status of genius was yoked to theatrical celebrity and private performance spaces through Siddons’s gender-bending private theatrics.

### **Restaging and “Unsex’ing” the Tragic Muse**

Sarah Siddons first took the stage at age 11, playing the role of Ariel in *The Tempest* and

continued acting well into her teens. It was in 1774 that one of her performances caught the attention of David Garrick, and a year later she made her debut on the London stage, this time playing Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. These early performances, however, were met with less than favorable reception, and thus she returned to more provincial stages for the next seven years to hone her craft. Siddons retook the London stage in 1782 as Lady Macbeth. The 1782-83 and 1784-85 seasons marked the mercurial success of the actress, as she appeared in the first season more than eighty times in seven different parts, and in the following season taking the boards seventy-one times in an astonishing seventeen different roles. The frequency at which she appeared before the public eye was furthered by a series of portraits of her at the Royal Academy: when the winter season came to a close, audiences shifted their focus and continued interest in the actress to the Somerset House. The proximity of London's visual and dramatic art exhibitions created an important transactional promotional relationship between theater and painting, for which the media supplied information on how to properly view the actress. Art historian Gill Perry has suggested that "[j]ournalistic reviewers of the theater and fine arts—doubtless the same writers often covered both fields—shared an overlapping vocabulary, as a reflection of the basic consumption. This close multi-layered relationship is crystallized in the portraits of theatrical performers which regularly attracted so much attention at the annual exhibitions" (111-112).

Siddons's performances had a reputation for possessing the power to incapacitate her audiences by evoking paroxysms of actual pity and terror in both women and men. To witness her power as an actress was not an aesthetic experience had by the disinterested spectator, but that of total immersion in the real. Siddons specialized in abandoned wives or wronged lovers, her most celebrated roles by the press include Lady Randolph in Home's *Douglas*, Calista in

Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, Mrs. Beverly in Moore's *The Gamester*, and Belvidera in Otway's *Venice Preserved*. Yet no role fascinated and threatened the male psyche like her Lady Macbeth. Portraits of the actress, according to some critics, tempered these more passionate performances. "When mediated through the conventions of high art, any actor's forms of expression had to be subtly recoded," says Gill. What this meant in Siddons's case, since she specialized in tragedy, was that portraits were able to represent her in accordance with the rules governing the most serious and dignified form of pictorial art—history painting in the grand style such as Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse*. Reynolds, "had successfully endowed a celebrity likeness with the trappings of high mythological art, in a potent combination which carried metaphorical possibilities beyond Siddons's symbolic and theatrical role-playing as the personification of tragedy" (Gill 120). Following the opening of the 1784 show, press reviews waxed lyrical about the work's "dignity," "sublimity," and "excellence," using language borrowed from the critical discourse on history painting. Shearer West points out in his *The Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representation in the Age of Garrick and Kemble* that Siddons's own acting style was "deliberatively evocative for art connoisseurs" (106). Her "grand style" of acting transformed her into "an aesthetic object, inspiring a new kind of connoisseurship—a connoisseurship of arms, legs, eyebrows and postures, rather than of colour, brushstroke and composition" (106-07).

It was not simply the painter's deployment of art-historical allusions or the press's lexical choices which offered the spectacle of Siddons the possibility of a recoded "sublime" status. The model of respectable femininity which she was seen to embody was equally crucial in enabling these symbolic possibilities. According to biographers she led an exemplary domestic life as a faithful wife and mother, qualities that helped inscribe her name "in the highest rank of theatrical

merit” (Boaden 12). Robyn Aselson has suggested that “her dignity on and off stage did a great deal to reclaim acting as a respectable occupation for women, and in the many paintings of her she became a noble but passionately intense embodiment of female theatricality” (72).<sup>96</sup> Indeed, her status as an aesthetic icon yoked the perfectibility of her domestic life with the reverential and the numinous of high pictorial art, manufacturing a goddess-like celebrity status for Siddons.

This brand of symbolic iconography became the standard lens through which Siddons appeared in the eyes of her adoring public. Even her brother, John Kemble, appear to be susceptible to this manner of seeing the actress. His annotations and comments in the marginalia of Elizabeth Inchbald’s *British Theater* (1806) suggest that Kemble used it as a sort of prompt book. In it, Kemble takes great care in the close scrutiny of Siddons’s body and gestures, remarking on how she carefully constructed each passion. Referring to private readings of various Shakespearean characters that she performed, Kemble draws parallels to those readings and Reynolds’s *Tragic Muse*:

Mrs. Siddons in her readings was like the Tragic Muse—she sate [sic] in a chair raised on a small platform—and the body and posture which always presents itself to us is that in which she contemplates Hamlet’s ghost. Her eyes elevated—her head a little drawn back and inclined upwards—her firm Countenance filled with reverential awe and horror—and her chilling whisper scarcely audible but horrific. Sir Joshua Reynolds’s picture of Mrs. S as the Tragic Muse gives a [powerful] conception of the General Effect of her look and figure in these readings. (qtd. in West 109)

Kemble’s remarks represent the new discursive practices that sought to move the theatrical actress from a sexualized object to a highly aestheticized one through the singular lens of

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<sup>96</sup> Aselson, Robyn, Bennett, Shelley M., Leonard, Mark, and West, Shearer. *A Passion for Performance: Sarah Siddons and Her Portraitists*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1999. Print.

Reynolds's painting. The dislocation of the female body in the reduction to parts places sexualized femininity in a neoclassical mode; Reynolds's own *Discourses* become the new law by which the normative visual discourses would measure the actress in her public and private performances, covering over what could not be described, or better yet, what appeared to disrupt heteronormativity.

This new pictorial vocabulary for reading Siddons as an aesthetic object quickly became mechanically reproduced in Romantic dramaturgy when producing a play with the celebrity actress in mind. According to Paula Backscheider, director, designer, playwright, and performers cooperatively created a work of art that at individual moments became a "still" and deliberately resembled popular painting subjects and styles (179). Critic Michael Wilson has averred that "dramatic action could be conceived as a sequence of sustained, emotionally-charged pictorial situations whose voyeuristic qualities were sublimated in the mutual testing by character and audience of aesthetic sensibilities, converting the sensual to the sensuous for the gaze of the connoisseur" ("Columbine's Picturesque Passage" 205). Perhaps what was most captivating for her audiences and what made these still moments desirable were Siddons's transitions, her capacity for moving rapidly from one passion to another. One reviewer lamented the failure of painting as a medium to seize the dynamism of those movements: "I wish it were in the power of the painter to fix every change of that living picture upon the canvas!" The vain wish to capture and seize the rapidity of Siddons's transitions represents, on one level, the difficulty by which the gaze, and by default, the faculty of understanding was unable to seize the actress in performance; however, it also speaks to the subconscious male desire to arrest and confine female power, a power that she so naturally displayed on stage. Reynolds's painting of Siddons, arrests the female body in every sense of the word, for she is not embodying a particular role at

the pregnant moment of high drama, but rather staged sitting and rendered mute. Indeed, Siddons is tragically the muse: positioned as the object of inspiration not the subject of creation.

Yet not every image of Siddons features a passive figure. Several sketches and paintings show her gaze meeting the viewers' or represent the actress having masculine features. Thomas Campbell, Siddons's biographer, claims she was one of the few actresses in performances "to meet the gaze of spectators in impassioned parts" (55).<sup>97</sup> Sketches by George Romney and Thomas Lawrence reproduce this neglected performance history. And though it is common in the neoclassical mode to assign bulky forms to both male and females: a brief survey of Henri Fuseli's paintings shows this adherence—Siddons's masculinity speaks not of an adherence to modes but her display of artistic power and genius. And, as we saw in Kemble's remarks, Siddons's appropriations of male characters like Hamlet in private readings challenged the dominant image of her as the icon of perfect femininity. Paula Backscheider notes that "combined with her inclusion of both-sexed gendered behavior," descriptions in the press suggest that "she recalled the gothic protagonist, not the heroine" (207).<sup>98</sup> Backscheider's research has shown that in a survey of thirty-three portraits of Siddons as herself, eleven display her meeting the gaze of the viewer, whereas none of the sixteen that show her in stage performances depicts her returning the gaze of the viewer (Backscheider 208-209). Indeed, one can conclude that once the actress is removed from the theater and presented solely for the viewer, it is perhaps a safer medium to recall the primordial challenge of dominance inherent in meeting the gaze of the other, for to render Siddons' within her domain, where audiences assume a hidden voyeuristic role, as she confronts their gaze, is doubly threatening.

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<sup>97</sup> Campbell, Thomas. *Life of Mrs. Siddons*. New York: Harper, 1834. Print.

<sup>98</sup> Backscheider, Paula R. *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993. Print.

Masculine representations of Siddons anticipate a break in art historian John Berger's formula: men act and women appear. Berger bring us back to our contemporary moment with commercial displays of the body in advertisements. Susan Bordo explains in "Beauty (Re)discovers the Male Body" how Calvin Klein pioneered the voyeuristic display of the male body in an effort to market to homosexual men in the 1980's. Bordo posits that the representations of male bodies are encoded with messages, sometimes challenging or aggressive. She terms these displays as "face-off masculinity," where the viewer is "facing off or being stared down" by the model—what anthropologist David Gilmore has documented as a private test of dominance. Bordo tell us that "the most compelling images are suffuse with 'subjectivity'—the speak to us, they seduce us...In fact they exert considerable power over us—over our psyches, our desires, our self-images"(186).<sup>99</sup> Such a comparison is apropos because though jeans or cologne are not being sold, the "face-off" representations of Siddons challenge the viewer in a manner that is culturally reserved for men. Siddons's "face-off" images operate also as a historical account of the subconscious reactions to her more powerful performances, including her Lady Macbeth.

Many of the qualities Siddons developed in Lady Macbeth point to the character's powerful intellect, what she calls "a naturally higher toned mind" (222).<sup>100</sup> These qualities demanded a subtlety of reinterpretation designed to show the audience that she perceives more quickly and fully than her husband. Performing a female character who commands and manipulates her husband is but one example of her revolutionary, and androgynous interpretation of female power, leading Judith Pascoe to postulate that Siddons's sexuality was not non-existent

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<sup>99</sup> Bordo, Susan. *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*. 1st ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999. Print.

<sup>100</sup> Robertson, Fiona. *Women's Writing, 1778-1838: An Anthology*. Oxford; New York: Oxford UP, 2001. Print. Oxford World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

so much as it was ambiguous (20).<sup>101</sup> It was this ambiguity that lies at the heart of the discourse of the sublime often attributed to her performances. A poem inspired by Siddons's portrayal of Lady Macbeth published in the *Monthly Mirror* for June 1798 singles out the most indescribable aspects of her art: "But who shall paint that energy of soul / Which animates the wonders of that form, / Beyond all colours radiantly sublime." The speaker, thinking through the medium of pictorial aesthetics, recodes her boundless power—"that energy of soul"—within a culturally palpable form.

Indeed, within the public collective consciousness two major images reigned: on the surface was the highly aestheticized iconography of Siddons as *The Tragic Muse*, but lurking within the dark corners of the imagination, threatening patriarchal stability, was her Lady Macbeth. For Backscheider, one of the most subversive things that a female player can do in a highly gendered society is to resist the patriarchal binary opposition of "either/or," and adopt instead a position of "both/and." Siddons's interpretation of Lady Macbeth as being both the most captivating woman and "unsexed," while to many even masculine, partakes of this possibility. We see evidence of this in the representations of her that emphasize her physical strength or even masculinity (Backscheider 214). Theater historian Celestine Woo contends that Siddons's "seeming adherence to the dominant ideologies of domesticity and conventional gender expectations in fact functioned as a way to present a resistant emergent ideology" (102).<sup>102</sup> Thus Siddons's body became "a Foucauldian site for the representation of warring sexualities and powers, and made the possibility of "both/and" fascinating and dangerous" (Backscheider 215) to many of her viewers. I would like to suggest that Baillie recognized the

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<sup>101</sup> Pascoe, Judith. *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997. Print.

<sup>102</sup> Woo, Celestine. *Romantic Actors and Bardolatry: Performing Shakespeare from Garrick to Kean*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2008. Studies in Shakespeare. Web.

very nature of this possibly and employed Siddons's body (and celebrity) to reimagine and wage the war for the legitimacy for female artist power in her gothic drama *De Monfort*.

**“Whose *De Monfort* Is It Anyway?”**

*De Monfort* on the surface appears to employ the tableau and psychological machinery of the gothic dramas from that time: antique castles, convents, dark forests and inwardly tormented characters. But more than recapitulating the standard gothic *mise-en-scene*, the power of Baillie's drama lies in another trope associated with the gothic, the notion of indeterminacy: there are in fact two De Monforts—Jane and her brother—just as there are two celebrity actors playing the parts, leaving Siddons/Jane De Monfort as the potential lead. The indeterminacy of lead roles in single-name title plays on a semiotic slippage that harkens back to Siddons's *Lady Macbeth* and extends to encompass the broader cultural and social signifiers *De Monfort* is working to comment on or overturn. That is, if Siddons had the power to rise from support to lead as she often did in her performances, Baillie would use that expectation to her advantage. This semiotic fluidity relies on the assumptions and interpretations of Sarah Siddons as a celebrity—one critic has gone as far to suggest that *De Monfort* is an “investigation into ‘Siddons mania’” (Cox 53). However, the cultural and historical significance of the drama goes well beyond a study of Siddons as celebrity as we shall see, for Baillie destabilizes the ingrained representation of Siddons as the ideal of domesticity and the perfectibility of high art—and in the process opens a unique brand of the signification for women writers to inhabit.

In his introduction to *Seven Gothic Dramas*, Jeffrey Cox explains that Baillie was writing at a time when the regency theater was already marked by a split between narrative and spectacle, what Laura Mulvey has identified as a formula of classic cinema. In Mulvey's formula, men control the action (the narrative), while women exist for display (the spectacle).

And that the pleasure in looking is derived from the audience identifying with the gaze of the active male protagonist, which is fixed on the female character as passive erotic object. This formula is easily discernible within the opening scenes of *De Monfort*: the two main male characters (De Monfort and Rezenvelt) are preceded by narratives filled with their heroic actions and exploits, anecdotes that work to reveal their *true* characters, while the description of the main female character, Jane De Monfort, is painted by two different male characters and centers on her physical appearance. Although drama in the 19th century may anticipate Mulvey's formula, as Cox points out, Baillie's *De Monfort* works to disrupt it.

The manner in which the male characters describe Jane's beauty is central to Baillie's commentary on the aesthetic perceptual categories that recoded Siddons's performances for bourgeois audiences. If we look closely at the narratives that precede Jane's appearance, the first occurs in an exchange between Count and Lady Freberg, when they inquire into the well-being of De Monfort's sister. Count Freberg refers to her as "Noble Jane de Monfort" (1.1.159). Lady Freberg quickly corrects her husband's obtuse slip into informality saying, "You surely meant to say the Lady Jane?" (1.1.162). In response, Freberg demonstrates the deliberateness of the utterance, and insists that such formal pretenses fail to capture Jane's *true* self:

FREBERG: Respect Madam! Princess, Empresses, Queen,

could not denote a creature so exalted as this plain appellation doth.

The Noble Jane De Monfort

LADY: (*Turning from him displeased to Monfort*) (1.1.163-166)

After correcting his wife and insisting that Jane is above all "appellations" of description, he evokes her full name yet again and thus enacts a sort of linguistic copulation of excess. One can imagine how those five words conjure a more intimate image of Jane as Freberg drifts into a

deep imaginative reverie of adoration. And the more completely that Freberg employs all of the words that construct a hyper-idealized Jane, the more of her he is able to possess through language. Seen through Mulvey's prism: to construct an excessive and elaborate narrative about Jane as disembodied subject allows Freberg to control signification of Jane as fantasy. For Mulvey, film codes the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order, where "women stand in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of women still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning" (439).<sup>103</sup> Indeed, the schism between Freberg and his wife enacts the drama of Mulvey's claims: Lady Freberg's intervention marks an effort to maintain social propriety and semiotic control; her husband's blatant disavowal of propriety, on the one hand can be read as a transgressive act to violate Jane linguistically and dismiss Lady Freberg as a surrogate meaning maker, while simultaneously imposing a fixed "silent [excessive] image" of Jane. And what begins as a polemic on the propriety of formal addresses, foreshadows further commentary on competing perceptual practices between men and women, in what can be understood as Baillie's attempt to "allow characters [especially women] to speak for themselves" ("Introductory Discourse" *Plays of the Passions* 99).

Elevating Jane rhetorically disrupts the epistemological foundation of who Jane really is. And knowing that Jane was fashioned from and for Sarah Siddons, such aggrandizement points us to the most obvious image of nobility associated with the actress, Sir Joshua Reynolds painting *The Tragic Muse*. But this is only the first, and albeit brief mention of Jane prior to her arrival on stage, and one that lacks any physical description. The first full physical description

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<sup>103</sup> Warhol, Robyn R., and Price Herndl, Diane. *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*. Rev. [2nd] ed. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 1997. Print.

comes from the beginning of the second act, another male character infatuated by Jane, and that description is befuddled and imprecise. As the Frebergs prepare to host a large party, Jane De Monfort has just been sighted in the territory of the court:

PAGE. Madam, there is a lady in your hall,  
Who begs to be admitted to your presence.

LADY. Is it not one of our invited friends?

PAGE. No, far unlike to them; it is a stranger.

LADY. How looks her countenance?

PAGE. So queenly, so commanding, and so noble,  
I shrunk at first in awe; but when she smil'd,  
For so she did to see me thus abash'd,  
Methought I could have compassed sea and land  
To do her bidding.

LADY. Is she young or old?

PAGE. Neither, if right I guess, but she is fair;  
For time hath laid his hand so gently on her  
As he too had been aw'd.

LADY. The foolish stripling!  
She has bewitched thee, boy. Is she large in stature?

PAGE. So stately and so graceful is her form  
I thought at first her stature was gigantick,  
But on a near approach I found, in truth,  
She scarcely does surpass the middle size.

LADY. What is her garb?

PAGE. I cannot well describe the fashion of it.

She is not deck'd in any gallant trim,  
 But seems to me clad in the usual weeds,  
 Of high habitual state; for as she moves  
 Wide flows her robe in many a waving fold,  
 As I have seen unfurled banners play  
 With the soft breese.

LADY. Thine eyes deceive thee, boy,  
 It is an apparition thou hast seen.

FREB. (*Starting from his seat, where he has been sitting during the conversation between the Lady and the Page.*) It is an apparition he has seen.

Or it is Jane De Monfort. (*Exit, hastily*) (2.1.15-42)

The conjunction of creature, excess, and apparition place Jane on par with the supernatural, thus establishing the indeterminacy of a masculine phenomenological ethos. Thomas Campbell, Siddons's friend and biographer commented that the play's first full description of Jane was a "perfect picture" of Mrs. Siddons. Reinforcing Freberg's hyperbole, the page describes the unnamed figure as "queenly," "commanding," and "noble," and shrinks in awe at her power in the same manner that reviewers and audiences alike reported on Siddons. And the description of her "garb" is an ekphrastic moment that reproduces the renaissance drapery that covers Siddons's body in *The Tragic Muse*, a reproduction that recalls Reynolds's inspiration for the painting—Michelangelo's *Isaiah*. Moreover, the page's description parallels the report from the Hampstead publication *The Living and the Dead* that began this chapter, proving that the page not only reproduces the perfect high art image of Siddons, but also the psycho-social phenomenological effect of encountering the performative body of Siddons specifically, and female genius in general. Thus Baillie's play works to disrupt the patriarchal discourse of the narrative gaze, for once Jane appears, her actual image does not match the previous description

given by the male characters. According to Jeffrey Cox, Baillie wanted the audience to be conscious of the way in which the male gaze seeks to capture Jane but fails to do so. Cox goes on to suggest that *De Monfort* “can be read as an investigation of ‘Siddons-mania,’ the nearly hysterical response to the performances of Sarah Siddons” who was “the perfect actress for the gothic dramas, for she was at her best in the two stances the Gothic demanded for women; women were either terrorized and mad or stoic and indomitable, but they were always passive” (53). Although I would agree with Cox that Baillie uses Siddons to perform a type of linguistic subversion between male narrative and female spectacle, I would argue that Baillie restages Reynolds’s painting in order to draw out the darker side of Siddons’s sublime performances, where the absence of passivity points to an overturning in the order of cultural power.

### **Jane/Siddons and the Feminine Sublime**

The dialectical performance of Siddons as Jane and Jane as Siddons functions as the embodiment of what Barbara Freeman calls the “feminine sublime.” According to Freeman, “[t]he feminine sublime is neither a rhetorical mode nor an aesthetic category but a domain of experience that resists categorization, in which the subject enters into relation with an otherness—social, aesthetic, political, ethical, erotic—that is excessive and unrepresentable. The feminine sublime is not a discursive strategy, technique, or literary style the female writer invents, but rather a crisis in relation to language and representation that a certain subject undergoes” (2). She goes on to argue that the primary aim of her investigation is to demonstrate the dominant ideology of misogyny that haunts the canonical theories of the sublime and to suggest another mode of envisioning it (7). Although Freeman selects novels as the objects of her investigations rather than poetry, which had a greater canonical and generic authority on the

sublime than did novels, I would like to suggest that drama both as text and performance is a rich object of inquiry to explore such boundaries of representation. This is precisely why the modern celebrity apparatus emerges from the theater. And because Baillie's play critiques the domains of experience that resist representation, it makes *De Monfort* a prime domain for investigating the feminine sublime. This calls to mind Jean-François Lyotard's reading of the sublime as not the presentation of the "unrepresentable," but the presentation of the fact that the unrepresentable exists. And here is where Baillie employs, with great subtlety, the machinery of the gothic.

But to call *De Monfort* a gothic play is an anachronistic classification her contemporary reviewers would have eschewed. They instead envisioned Baillie's dramas as an antidote for the gross spectacle of the popular plays at that time. Many even hoped that Baillie would "return British drama to the weighty seriousness of Shakespeare" (Colon xxxv), and not embrace the ridiculous spectacle of ghosts and corpses that were en vogue. Yet as shown in Chapter One, even Shakespeare drew from the machinery of the gothic to explore the psychological dimensions of humanity, and with great success. But beyond looking at the gothic machinery of the play, Mulvey's formula allows us to revisit the politics of the sublime and the ways in which her classic formula mirrors the politics of Burke's gendering of the sublime and the beautiful. Baillie's project of semiotic disruption, as an attempt to disrupt Burke's masculine ethos of the sublime, arguably holds greater stakes for female writers of the time, for even Burke was not immune to Siddons's celebrity, as Judith Pascoe has pointed out.<sup>104</sup> Burke's psycho-aesthetic formula parallels the male desire to control Jane De Monfort through a formulation of beauty as something finite, controlled (passive) through the elastic meaning-making apparatus of language. Indeed then, the presence of her body disrupts the male authority of *authoring* Jane, and

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<sup>104</sup> Pascoe, Judith. *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1997. Print. See pages 95-129.

Siddons's performance of Jane as celebrity actress only adds to this epistemic destabilization.

Baillie's "Introductory Discourse" to the *Plays of the Passions* published with *De Monfort* in 1798 provides additional insight into the poet's project to reimagine female power through overwrought aesthetic categories. Concerned by the triviality of reporting on gaudy outward appearances she writes that "it is easier to communicate to another how a man wears his wig and cane, what kind of house he inhabits, and what kind of table he keeps, than from what slight traits in his words and actions we have been led to conceive certain impressions of his characters" (68 in "Plays of the Passions"). For Baillie the keen observer must employ a "sympathetick curiosity," for most are misdirected by meretricious considerations, an aesthetic concern akin to Wordsworth's rebuke of ostentatious poetic diction, and no doubt Baillie's own preface had an enormous impact on Wordsworth's poetic theories. Similar to the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Baillie argues that the scope of humanity's "sympathetick curiosity" be sharpened on characters in "extraordinary situation of difficulty and distress" (69). When we remove the top of the box to peer in on humanity in their darkest hours, Baillie says "under the influence of every passion, humour, and impression; in the artificial veilings of hypocrisy and ceremony, in the openness of freedom and confidence, and in the lonely hour of meditation [the characters] speak" (82). Critics looking to the "Introductory Discourse" on the *Plays of the Passions*, point to "sympathetick curiosity" as the cornerstone of Baillie's dramatic theory. It is easy to see how witnessing De Monfort's psychological decline due to his intense jealousy of his childhood rival Rezenvelt, leading eventually to murder, supports Baillie's reformatory aims. Yet the subtlety and power behind Baillie's commentary on female artist power is revealed in a less remarked upon section, that of heroes and heroines.

The jubilation expressed from both the count and the page incite the audience's riotous

expectations of seeing Siddons. Cox argues that this conscious construction and the act of drawing on the power of Siddons's performances suggest that "Baillie sought to disenchant the conventional image of woman as passive responder" citing the roles that Siddons specialized in. Roles such as Lady Randolph in Home's *Douglas*, Belvidera in Otway's *Venice Preserved*, Mrs. Beverley in Moore's *The Gamester* all featured "wronged or abandoned wives" (53). Even in one of her most famed roles as Lady Macbeth, Cox cites Siddons's writings on playing the role, claiming that her power originates as a seducer, her power over Macbeth is because Lady Macbeth is "most captivating to the other sex," rendering her a passive sexualized object, instead of an autonomous character who is "a manipulator of the action." Cox, himself, I would like to suggest, is partly reproducing the same sexualized discourses that assign power solely through objectification. A closer look at Siddons's character analysis of Lady Macbeth reveals that she focuses on Lady Macbeth as a wife, and the power that Cox glosses over is the same power that critics during the eighteenth century were critical of women for having: mental power.

We know that Baillie had not read Siddons's *Remarks on Lady Macbeth* since it was not published until 1834. However, this document does necessitate closer examination when considering the star power of Siddons in relation to this role, for as Charles Lamb wrote in his essays on Shakespeare's tragedies: "We speak of Lady Macbeth, while we are in reality thinking of Mrs. S[iddons]" (409).<sup>105</sup> Lamb's frustration begs the question: were audiences thinking of Siddons the actress and the player of Lady Macbeth while watching *De Monfort*? What we do know, however, is that Siddons remarks on this character surely do not classify her as a "wronged or abandoned wife."

Siddons's "Remarks on the Characters of Lady Macbeth" were published in the second

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<sup>105</sup> Charles Lamb's essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation," in *Poems and Essays*, 1879

volume of Thomas Campbell's *Life of Mrs. Siddons*. These remarks followed in the tradition of literary analysis that emerged in the 18th century due to the fascination with naturalistic acting methods. Actors and well as reviewers probed not only for the truth of the inner lives of these characters but their peripheral lives and histories. Wordsworth's essay on Rivers discussed in the previous chapter belongs to this new genre of criticism. Actors attempted a thorough intellectual preparation for a role through what we would see as having close ties to method acting. Siddons, herself, encouraged actors to suppose an extra-textual psychological life for their character. Thus her extra-textual criticism provides insight to the manner in which she played the character in the 1780's and 90's and points to why she requested Baillie "to make more Jane's for me!"

It is clear from the first sentences of "Remarks," Siddons did not imagine Lady Macbeth, as Cox claims, as one of several characters "reconceived...in relation to more powerful men" (53). She writes in the opening that "in this astonishing creature one sees a woman in whose bosom the passion of ambition has almost obliterated all the characteristics of human nature" (218).<sup>106</sup> She uses this opening to delineate the softer side of the supposed "monster," the lines that Cox latches onto where Siddons is talking about the character of her beauty which she believes to be "most captivating to the other sex,—fair, feminine, nay, perhaps, even fragile." What Cox omits is the other half of the equation that Siddons sees in Lady Macbeth that makes her so attractive: "Such a combination, only respectable in energy and *strength of mind*, and captivating in feminine loveliness, could have composed a charm of such potency as to fascinate the mind of a hero so dauntless, a character so amiable, so honorable as Macbeth" (emphasis mine; 219). To omit the strong powers of mind is tragic indeed. Siddons goes on to explain that Lady Macbeth's strong mind is what actually leads to her ultimate demise, and that her mind is

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<sup>106</sup> Robertson, Fiona. *Women's Writing, 1778-1838: An Anthology*. Oxford; New York: Oxford UP, 2001. Print. Oxford World's Classics (Oxford University Press).

actually stronger than her husband's. Focusing on the third act of the play, Siddons invents the history, through some kind of mixture of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis, that Lady Macbeth in her childhood was indulged in all wants and desires, had "no directors, no controllers and that in womanhood her fascinated lord had never once opposed her inclinations. Thus she was accustomed to control her entire life" (220). And it is now under the "rod of chastisements" that she must "support the spirits of her weaker...more selfish husband. Yes; in gratitude for his unbounded affection, and in commiseration of his sufferings, she suppresses the anguish of her heart, even while that anguish is precipitating her into the grave which at this moment is yawning to receive her" (221). On Lamb's account, it was not Siddons's fragility but her ambition and natural leadership that made audiences sit in awe of her Lady Macbeth. The fragility of her sex, in the end, in her effort to suppress her torments are for Siddons part and parcel with her feminine nature. These things are "soon overwhelmed by the enormous pressure of her crimes. Yet, it will be granted, that she gives proofs of a naturally higher toned mind than that of Macbeth"(222). In the end, Lady Macbeth is far from a passive character in the mind of Siddons. The sublimity of her mind seems to be what attracted her audiences and cultivated her fame. But such appropriations of the sublime became subordinated to the discourse of the beautiful, what is passive and fragile. Siddons's remarks on Lady Macbeth's passivity indirectly return us to the dangers and masculine fears of female unrepresentability.

Jane De Monfort bears a striking relation to Siddons' description of Lady Macbeth. The page's description of Jane corresponds to the mixture of femininity and power that captivates Macbeth. Phillip B. Zarrilli has argued that each time "an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a 'theory' of acting--a set of assumptions about the conventions and style which guide his or her performance, the structure of the actions which he or she performs, the shape that those

actions take...and the relationship to the audience” (3).<sup>107</sup> Catherine Burroughs claims that Siddons’s theory of acting can be extracted partly from her “‘Remarks’, revealing that she paid careful attention to the performative experiences both on and off stage” (53).<sup>108</sup> Writing on Siddons performances, Ellen Donkin explains that “although audiences demanded from the text the comfort and familiarity of the norms of Womanhood, what in fact they responded to in performance was something that potentially ruptured that comfort and familiarity” (278). Thus the “self-effacing silent sufferer, writhing thus under her internal agonies” is mirrored in Jane’s “unsexing” as a devoted sister. Though she is not reeling from the mental anguish that Lady Macbeth is, her self-description works as its own cultural critique:

I am no doting mistress,  
 No fond distracted wife, who must forthwith  
 Rush to his arms and weep. I am his sister:  
 The eldest daughter of his father’s house:  
 Calm and unwearied is my love for him. (2.1.87-91)

Not only does Jane remove herself from the erotic gaze by establishing her subject position through negation, she also positions herself at the peak of the familial hierarchy. She possesses a logical love for her brother, one that is not overly sentimentalized by the inevitability of a sexualized role. This same unsexing may justify the liminality of the page’s description, since he seems to have a difficult time placing her within categories of an erotic object.

Jane appears to bear De Monfort through his own moments of hellish torment, similar to Lady Macbeth, with strength and resolve, contrary to the passive female gothic figures. It is

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<sup>107</sup> Zarrilli, Phillip B. *Acting (re)considered: Theories and Practices*. London; New York: Routledge, 1995. Print. *Worlds of Performance*.

<sup>108</sup> Burroughs, Catherine B. *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women Writers*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania, 1997. Web.

important to note that in her *Remarks*, Siddons sees Lady Macbeth's devotion to her husband and willingness to listen to his agony, an agony that she herself does not verbalize, as proof of her "tenderness and sympathy," and that she possesses a grand nobility and graciousness "of filial as well as maternal love." True to Siddons's study of her characters, Lady Macbeth is understood from the variety of roles women occupy, not simply or solely as an erotic object intended for the patriarchal gaze. According to Catherine Burroughs, this kaleidoscopic interpretation of character led to more robust persons rather than flat characters (56). And her close study of the text eliminated the possibility of playing the role prescriptively; instead, Siddons discovers how Lady Macbeth learns through "'the complicated pangs of terror and remorse,' ... to sympathize with another person" (Burroughs 55). And even in moments of depraved emotion and great hubris, the experiences of affliction allow her to participate in Macbeth's misery. Essentially, she learns to sympathize in the play and thus anticipates the cornerstone of Baillie's dramatic theory: "[i]n examining others, we know ourselves... we know what we ourselves might have been on the rack, on the scaffold, and in the most afflicting circumstances of distress" ("Introductory Discourse" 74).

The aesthetic impulses of Baillie's dramatic theory bear a direct relation to the early formations of the celebrity apparatus. Bringing together Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, P. David Marshall explains the crucial role the audience plays in star formation. Beginning with Jauss, Marshall makes clear that the celebrity, like any text, "is not a static or stable phenomenon" (66).<sup>109</sup> A text is a dynamic object and because the reader's "horizon of expectations" is dictated by the reader's expectations, it changes in relation to the past. This is not to suggest a pure telos; instead, Jauss emphasizes how a text's reception can only be fully

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<sup>109</sup> Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, Minn.: U of Minnesota, 1997. Print.

understood when looking how it has been received throughout history.

Marshall then turns to Iser to sharpen the understanding of celebrity within the framework of reception theory. For Iser, the “indeterminacy of meaning” plays strongly into how a text is constructed by the audience. Readers create temporary *gestalts* that shape-shift as they encounter new information about the plot and characters. This same transformation carries over nicely in that the audience’s reception of the celebrity changes as new information is produced about the celebrity, and in turn drives the hermeneutical machine of inquiry. A gossip column, a new review, a public sighting, all contribute to the construction of celebrity as a floating signifier. This is why Baillie’s character Jane De Monfort works as a power critique of both the male gaze and Siddons’ mania, simply due in part that they are related to the same machinery.

For example, once Jane arrives at the “splendid apartment in Count Freberg’s house [which is] fancifully decorated” in Act II, she self-consciously places herself as an outsider of the festivities. Calling attention to the plainness of her garb she says “this homely dress / Suits not the splendor of such scenes as these” (2.1.74-76). Freberg attempts to elevate the status of her dress by claiming that “such artless and majestic elegance / So exquisitely just, so nobly simple, / Will make the gorgeous blush” (2.1.75-77). However, Jane is quick to correct the embellishments and rhetorical pomp by urging Freberg to “be more consistent... / And do not praise a plain and simple guise / With such profusion of unsimple words” (2.1.78-80). Here, Baillie uses this moment, in conjunction with the prefatory remarks in the “Introductory Discourses” to display the disjunction between the rhetorical pomp of the male narrative and the authentic ontological status of Jane. Language, especially when “embellished with poetical decoration” (93),<sup>110</sup> covers over and confines the feminine object here, not showing her as the

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<sup>110</sup> Baillie, Joanna. *Plays on the Passions (1798 Edition)*. Ed. Peter Duthie. Peterborough, Ont.; Orchard Park, N.Y.: Broadview, 2001. Print. Broadview Literary Texts.

thing itself. Moreover, we have a clear distinction between male and female gaze and who is able to control the narrative in the story. Thus, though Jane disrupts the tranquility of the domestic spheres—rousing jealousy in Lady Freberg and spurring the rivalry between De Monfort and Rezenvelt to a tragic climax—her greatest force lies in being an epistemic disrupter. However, we cannot discount the role that her brother De Monfort plays in highlighting Jane’s power and the perceptual and epistemological differences between the male and female gaze.

In the beginning of the play we learn that De Monfort’s hatred for Rezenvelt has changed him from a “comely gentleman” (1.1.98) and that he possesses a “gloomy sternness in his eye / Which suddenly repels all sympathy” (1.1.78-79). De Monfort performs the same kind of physiognomic inquiry as Mortimer does in Wordsworth’s drama—he reads bodies for the discrepancies between appearance and reality. De Monfort agonizes over the treachery that Rezenvelt masks with devious smiles. And Freberg, the play’s great equivocator, is obtuse to Rezenvelt’s Janus-faced urging that the two reconcile. But it is in his urging where we see the inability of public opinion to capture the essence of the real person lying beneath represented in Freberg’s praise of Rezenvelt as

so full of pleasant anecdote,  
 So rich, so gay, so poignant in his wit,  
 Time vanishes before him as he speaks,  
 And ruddy morning thro’ the lattice peeps  
 Ere night seems well begun. (1.1.193-196)

But the true performance is De Monfort’s, for he attempts to veil the reality of his own feelings, unable to perform the necessary passions that he feels within.<sup>111</sup> Rezenvelt can be seen as a

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<sup>111</sup> Arguably, his homoerotic passion for Rezenvelt is sublimated or repressed due to the cultural codes of the time. Eve Sedgwick has noted that the gothic novel, and by association gothic drama, was the first genre to make visible

critique of the pompous and solemn gravity of the plays from Beaumont to Fletcher that Baillie criticizes in her “Introductory Discourse.” Here, Baillie rails not against the gothic dramas or melodramas of her time as Wordsworth does in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, but heroic drama with its “great and magnanimous heroes, who bear with majestic equanimity every vicissitude of fortune” (32). Baillie sees the emphasis on plot as too aristocratic and rhetorical, too concerned with a tradition of imitation rather than focusing on human nature, and investigating the internal struggles of the mind. This is precisely why Rezenvelt works as such a powerful foil for De Monfort, his command of rhetorical pomp veils his true intentions, and it is the disjunction between verbal sign and bodily sign that De Monfort finds most troubling. However, Freberg’s praise never becomes fleshed out: the audience does not witness the Longinian sublimity that Freberg claims Rezenvelt possesses, as Baillie continues to show how differently one can view and understand an object. As with Jane, the audience witnesses the great disparities between De Monfort and Rezenvelt’s interpretation of the world, especially in a state of excitement. Once De Monfort reveals his hatred for Rezenvelt —“Detested robber; now all forms are over: / Now open villainy, now open hate!”(3.3.193-194)—his unquiet mind processes the natural landscape in horrific detail, thus fulfilling Baillie’s theoretical aims to analyze a character experiencing intense passions. What is at stake in these varied perceptions is the feminization of the gothic and what I would call the hyper-masculine sublime typically located in poetry written by men.

The polarity of feminization and hyper-masculine sublimity is evidenced further in the perceptual difference between Rezenvelt and De Monfort in Act Four, which harkens back to the

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homoeroticism. The other possibility for the origin of De Monfort’s passions is the subtle suggestion of an incestuous relationship, which would play out that much more profoundly in the staged version of the play with Kemble and Siddons, real brother and sister duo. See Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992. Print. Gender and Culture.

Janus-faced representations of Siddons as Jane and Jane as Siddons. The fourth act opens on “A wild path in a wood” with De Monfort in pursuit of Rezenvelt. He enters the scene “with a strong expression of disquiet, mixed with fear, upon his face, looking behind him, and bending his ear to the ground, as if he listened to something” (361). De Monfort’s reactions register a Radcliffian terror of nature at night. He responds to his surroundings as if they contain some supernatural prognostications of the horrible crime he is about to commit:

How hollow groans the earth beneath my tread!

Is there an echo here? Methinks it sounds

As tho’ some heavy footstep follow’d me.

I will advance no farther...

Things horrid, bloody, terrible do pass,

As tho’ they pass’d not; nor impress the mind

With the fixed clearness of reality.

*(An owl is heard screaming near him.)*

*(Startling.)* What sound is that?

*(Listens and the owl cries again)*

It is the screech owl’s cry.

Foul bird of night! What spirit guides thee here?

Art thou instinctive drawn to scenes of horror?

I’ve heard of this. *(Pauses and listens.)*

How those fallen leaves so rustle on the path,

With whisp’ring noise, as tho the earth around me

Did utter secret things!

The distant river, too, bears to mine ear

A dismal wailing. Oh mysterious night!

Thou art not silent; many tongues hast thou. (4.1.1-4, 10-22)

After De Monfort exits the scene, Rezenvelt enters and “continues his way slowly across the stage, but just as he is going off the owl screams, he stops and listens, and the owl screams again” (362). He responds to the same surroundings thus:

Ha! does the night bird greet me on my way

How much his hooting is in harmony

With such a scene as this! I like it well.

Oft when a boy, at the still twilight hour

I've leant my back against some knotted oak,

And loudly mimick'd him, till to my call

He answer would return, and thro' the gloom

We friendly converse held.

Between me and the star-bespangl'd sky

Those aged oaks their crossing branches wave,

And thro' them looks the pale and placid moon.

How like a crocodile, or winged snake

Yon sailing cloud bears on its dusky length!...

A hollow murm'ring wind comes thro' the trees;

I hear it from afar; this bodes a storm.

I must not linger here—

*(A bell heard at some distance.)*

What bell is this?

It sends a solemn sound upon the breeze.

Now, to a fearful superstitious mind,

In such a scene, 'twould like a death-knell come:

For me it tells but of a shelter near,  
 And so I bid it welcome. (4.1.32-44, 49-57)

In the first encounter with the landscape, De Monfort interprets the surrounding areas with trepidation. He feels pursued by the natural environment; his state of mind has removed him from the natural world: nature is not a place for rejuvenation or for spiritual awakening. Instead, the horror of it mirrors the horror in his mind, a mind fixated on committing murder. Rezenvelt, however, feels at one with the natural world, even in its darkest hour. Presumably, the owl that De Monfort hears as a harbinger of the atrocious act he is about to commit brings Rezenvelt back to his youth.<sup>112</sup> Michael Gamer see this deliberate doubling as one of several moments where Baillie allows the audience to experience a gothic scene, first as the impassioned character does, then through the ironic detachment of the other characters. The doublings of the scene allow audiences to enjoy the gloomy pleasures of a scene reminiscent of *Romance of the Forest* and *Fountainville Forest*. This detachment takes on another level of doubling as De Monfort's so-called projections manifest in reality—he in fact will kill Rezenvelt, making the representation of horror real—and Rezenvelt's perceptions are false—embodied in his false bravado, an unnatural overly poetic veneer Baillie associates with Beaumont and Fletcher's imitative male heroes. This additional doubling is important for Baillie's staging of the feminine sublime, in that it continues to put on display the falsity associated with the male gaze. Here, it is important the De Monfort's perceived reality takes on more culturally coded feminine qualities because, like the heroines of a Radcliffe novel, what he sees is real and thus adds to the legitimacy of the feminine sublime vision.

If the gothic was the perfect locale to stage subjectivity, *De Monfort* critiques the

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<sup>112</sup> Baillie first experimented with this phenomenological psychology in her early poem, "An Address to the Night."

reigning aesthetics category that worked to describe mental processes. For Gamer, “Baillie’s project is not to debunk supernaturalism but to move it into the minds of her characters as a way of revising existing models of psychology and subjectivity” (140). The primary aim of her dramaturgy is to trace causes (passions) to their effects (the observable actions of others). However, the secondary effect is the tracing of the observable world as a violent act of subjugation. As such, Jane fully gains the power of narration at the end of the drama when she covers over the reality of De Monfort’s heinous crime. Interpreted through the lens of celebrity studies, Jane fulfills the wish of the female celebrity; she exhibits control over public opinion.

### ***De Monfort and Private Theatrics***

After *De Monfort* closed in May 1800, Siddons visited Baillie at her home and requested that the dramatist “Make me more Jane De Monfort’s.” Ellen Donkin points out that this request marks the first instance, to her knowledge, when an actress “approached a woman playwright to propose this kind of collaboration” (166). Following the end of the production, Siddons continued to do solo readings of her own condensed version of the play for fund-raisers and private gatherings, at least through 1802. Solo readings of the play cast a complex representation of performing gender: the singularity of Siddons removed from the stage and shorn of all other actors, makes her the sole focus of the gaze, while simultaneously the progenitor of all actions within the play, making her the embodiment of the “and/both” Foucauldian site of the warring sexualities. But paradoxically, unlike the oversized auditoriums of the Drury Lane and Covent Garden theaters, private theatrics required much less exaggerated gestures, thereby deemphasizing the presentation of the body. Within the proximity of a private performance, Siddons could stress the poetics of Baillie’s drama, showing the true genius of the text. Yet as this final section of this chapter aims to make clear, the private performance space is the second

key spatial node in the formation, dissemination, and interpretation of celebrity, as it moves the actor or actress from the confines of the proscenium arch to various public and private appearances, all of which are reported on in the ever-watchful gaze of the media.

Celebrity actors, especially women, were subject to the ideological structures of a male-dominated arena. Though the actress was conceived of as a public commodity that representation was constructed on the notion of a private, domestic identity, especially one that fell into a binary of whore/mother. Charles Inigo Jones's celebrity memoir best encapsulates this split in his histrionic biography of Eliza O'Neill. In it he remarks on her unmarried status as the reason for her sexual appeal: "While she continues Miss O'Neill, and an interesting unprotected female, she will find that patronage which generosity and every better bias of public regard will continue undiminished to extend to her."<sup>113</sup> But once she is married and "places herself under the protection of a husband...the charm is over, for she eventually *sinks into a wife*." Jones's loss of sexual appeal can be understood as how the institution of marriage usurps what power women have as an object serving the sexual pleasure of the gaze. To prolong an adoring public's erotic fantasies, Jones encourages O'Neill to remain unwed as long as possible, "in a state of single blessedness." The influence of performance and theatrical culture on the cultural mobility of women in general and writers specifically is at the heart of Jones's discussion. Leigh Hunt observed that it was the actor who provides people with "a link between the domesticities which they represent, and the public life to which they have become allied by the representations...the business they deal in brings us into their society as if into their own houses, humours, and daily

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<sup>113</sup> Jones, Charles Inigo. *Memoirs of Miss O'Neill; Containing Her Public Character, Private Life, and Dramatic Progress, from Her Entrance upon the Stage; with a Full Criticism of Her Different Characters, Appropriate Selections from Them, and Some Account of the Plays She Has Preferred for Her Representations*. 2d ed. London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1818. Print.

life” (137).<sup>114</sup> And Hunt’s observation anticipates P. David Marshall’s argument that the development of the celebrity is connected to ways of “making sense” of the social world (51). For Marshall this process of making sense through the individual “is simultaneously an activity of the members of dominant culture, who are instrumental in the procreation of the celebrity sign, and of the other members of subordinate cultures, who are for the most part the audience that remakes the sign” (Marshall 51). This is especially true for female celebrity actors as they operate in a liminal position in betwixt and in between the sphere of domesticity and the public life of commerce. Marshall’s claim that “celebrity is a locus of formative social power in consumer capitalism” (51) helps to deepen our understandings about this professional identity, one that suffers the vicissitudes of a commodity and sexual identity; however, as we saw in the previous chapter, painters like Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough helped to raise the actress from associations with prostitution to an object of high art, arguably though still an object of the patriarchal gaze. Indeed, the cultural power of celebrity, unfolds in a different manner within private theatrics, especially for celebrity actresses as they cross back into domains in which they have been granted cultural power and authority.

Domestic spaces allowed for a new level of power not previously granted to women in the theaters, especially the patent theaters.<sup>115</sup> The private setting allowed for a greater sense of intimacy between spectators and actor. Thus private theater performances were especially suited for Baillie’s theoretical underpinnings as “the private theatrical experience encouraged serious self-reflection about the performative features of social acting” (Burroughs 144). To more fully

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<sup>114</sup> Hunt, Leigh. *Men, Women, and Books; a Selection of Sketches, Essays, and Critical Memoirs, from His Uncollected Prose Writings*. New York: Harper and Bros., 1847. Print.

<sup>115</sup> One such example would be Elizabeth Berkeley Craven, who from 1780-1805 composed, translated, adapted, or altered nineteen plays. In the 1790’s she worked as an actress, playwright, producer, translator, musician, and singer at the Brandenburgh House private theater.

understand the significance of private theatrical performances in a domestic space, I propose a spatial turn in this investigation to feminist geographers who have been interested in mapping how domestic spaces constitute or structure identity in relation to production. This theoretical foundation is especially apt for celebrity studies, since theatrical celebrity actresses like Siddons earned a considerable income. The female theatrical celebrity inhabited a predominately urban space as a wage earner and when she transitions to work in a domestic space she thereby carries with her the masculine power of producer. According to Gillian Russell, “the period after the accession of George III in 1760 witnessed a development in all forms of leisure, stimulated by a booming economy that followed the end of the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763). Not only were new venues and forms of entertainment developed, but the elite and gentry household also featured significantly as a venue for sociability in the form of balls, masquerades, concerts, card parties, and private theatricals. Women were prominent in such entertaining because of the authority they traditionally exercised as managers of households” (192). Print media disseminated news of such activities, thereby blurring the boundaries between public and private spaces. We can see Mole’s term, “hermeneutics of intimacy,” in operation here with private theatric reports as “intelligence about private ball, masquerades, and private theatrics developed as a distinctive subgenre of investigative journalism: it served the interest of the print media by attracting readers intrigued by the affairs of the fashionable world” (193). Thus private theatrical performances were a key feature in the celebrity apparatus as they recorded Siddons’s public sightings at private venues outside the confines of the proscenium arch thus embodying celebrity power as a floating signifier.<sup>116</sup> Catherine Burroughs has argued that “No professional actor

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<sup>116</sup> The private theatrical movement in England took place primarily between 1780 and 1810, according to Marvin Carlson. Private theatrical performances, like those depicted by William Hogarth’s painting from 1732-1735, *A Scene of “The Indian Emperor”* showing the children of John Conduitt performing in a private production of one of Dryden’s plays.

during the romantic period moved between so-called public and private spaces more successfully than Sarah Siddons, in the sense that few scandals appeared in her life, and none had any real impact on her reputation as a highly respectable actor, mother and wife” (51). Burroughs adds that from our contemporary vantage, “one can read the target of Baillie’s dramaturgical critique [in the “Introductory Discourse”] as those cultural restraints that place inhibitions on a more spontaneous approach to social performance, one that would allow an individual to cultivate different modes of acting, which could shift according to the space inhabited” (*Closet Stages* 128). Actresses in particular because of their presence in a public space and their enacting of passions on stage, were associated with unfeminine conduct and sexual availability. Yet Siddons as celebrity actress floated freely between the public and private sphere due to her public image of domestic perfectibility but remained a fascinating (and threatening figure) through the haunting images of her sublime performances as the great disruptor of male power.

*De Monfort* was serendipitously suited for private performance, and thus was charged with a new cultural significance with Siddons’s gender-bending performances. Baillie’s Gothic drama, unlike many of the time, did not feature a castle as the physical embodiment of male structural authority; instead, the key scene of Jane’s public appearance occurs at the Freberg’s private party. Indeed, an uncanny doubling manifests as this dramaturgical anomaly blurs the lines between reality and dramatic illusion when Siddons performed the role in private domestic settings. Yet Siddons’s private performances of *De Monfort* were not the only performances that took place beyond the proscenium arch that arguably had an impact on the cultural linking of Siddons and Baillie.

Throughout the length of her career, Siddons delivered a series of private and public solo performances and readings for highly exclusive audiences such as the king and queen of

Frogmore to public readings at the Argyle Public Room in London. She read from Shakespeare's plays and delivered passionate readings of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. After seeing her performance of *Macbeth* Benjamin Robert Haydon wrote that it was superior to both Kemble's and Kean's. Moreover, she had performed private readings of *Hamlet* steadily throughout the 1790's, and Joanna Baillie had witnessed several of these performances as well. Baillie had praised Siddons's performance of *Hamlet* at the Argyle Room in 1813, but thought it inferior to her reading of *Macbeth* the previous week, believing it to be too focused on performance rather than reading, claiming that Siddons relied too heavily on "countenance and gesture." Perhaps Baillie was thinking not only of the immediate performance but of the manner in which she imagined, or more properly hoped, the celebrity actress was performing her *De Monfort* for private audiences. Regardless of Baillie's opinion, Siddons's private readings, where she performed male roles such as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* and read from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, only intensified Siddons's performances as engendering sublime power, a power that was reserved, culturally, for male writers.

However, Baillie's strong female protagonists did not stop with Jane De Monfort, though that drama seems to have made the greatest impression on reviewers. Her third volume of *Miscellaneous Plays* published in 1812 featured heroines atypical of the gothic representation of females in the throes of passion. These plays were all grouped under a single passion: fear. The first drama of the collection, *Orra*, stages the gothic as a reading experience that is titillating for the eponymous female protagonist, similar to Austen's Catherine Morland from *Northanger Abbey*. But Orra experiences real threats in the gothic world, not gibbering ghosts in dark castles, but socio-cultural institutional imprisonment, for she wishes to remain unmarried and in sole control of her hereditary rights. Thus the real threat of this play is patriarchal structures that limit

female autonomy. Baillie writes in an address “To the Reader” that she chose to write a second tragedy on fear, *The Dream*, with a male protagonist because she was “unwilling to appropriate this passion in a serious form to [her] own sex entirely, when the subjects of the other passions hitherto delineated in [her Plays on the Passions] series are men” (Works 229). She rejects the notion that women are more susceptible to “the dominion of Superstitious Fear” than men, claiming that if a man were “lodged for the night in a lone apartment where a murder has been committed” and “circumstances [arose] to impress him with [the] belief” that “the restless spirit from its grave might stalk around his bed and open his curtains in the stillness of midnight” (Works 228). Baillie’s description here reproduces the precise events that lead to De Monfort’s demise. But more than succumbing to superstitious fears, Baillie points out that women have displayed courage equal to their male counterparts in the face of death: “on the scaffold...women have always behaved with as much resolution and calmness” (Works 229). The image of a woman on the scaffold surely evokes Marie Antoinette’s solemnity and courage in the face of certain death, an image that brings us back to Burke’s sublime, though in its more monstrous manifestations during the French Revolution. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke employs theatrical imagery to describe the young queen’s tragic demise, in such a fashion that it would satisfy Poe’s definition of the highest aesthetic subject: the death of a beautiful woman. Burke’s conservatism is aimed at the dangers of boundless passion. The subtext, however, is powerfully misogynistic: the sublime consummates the destruction of female power. But for Burke there is no feminist subtext, only an opportunity to theatricalize the death of Marie Antoinette to display the superiority of (male) English traditions and conservatism through the virtual consumption/destruction of the female body. This is achieved by drawing on Siddons’s performances, what can be seen then as another indirect attempt to subdue the feminine sublime.

In *The Phantom* (1836), a musical drama set in Scotland, Baillie, unlike her other drama, incorporates a the appearance of a ghost, which cannot be explained away. It is an authentic supernatural occurrence, opening on the joyous scene of a highland wedding. This joyous scene is interrupted by the appearance of the ghost of Emma Graham (as Jane De Monfort disrupts the festival at the Freberg's). Emma was by all past accounts described as a perfect domestic angel. Her return, however, is marked by the need for a letter to be discovered and read, a letter which contains a dark secret: that she has had an improper romance—revealing a secret engagement with Basil Gordon, and now there is a dissonance between story that entombed her and the reality of her Emma's life. Baillie combines the image of the domestic angel with that of an apparition. Although Emma has subverted her father's authority with the clandestine engagement and returns as an apparition, it is only through the supernatural that the audience learns of Emma's transgressive act, and similar to the description of Jane as an apparition on the fringes of society, the supernatural allows her a mobility that was not originally granted to her given the political, religious, and social power structures, in a similar manner that we can understand how the gothic allows Siddons and Baillie a parallel mobility.

Indeed, Baillie uses Jane De Monfort as an epistemological disruptor by playing on the previous constructed images and roles embodied by Sarah Siddons, which work to highlight the male gaze of the cultural machinery of celebrity power that sublimates Siddons, and by default, feminine (artistic) power. The disruption of the male gaze works as a critique of the power that women in general and women writers in particular are deprived of, which ultimately mirrors the gender politics associated with the Burkean sublime, an aesthetic signifier at the time that was used to describe the "indescribable" elements of Siddons performances. Burke's sublime engenders a particular visual discourse, we can situate Baillie's arguably subversive dramaturgy

within this larger cultural framework, one that more fully addresses the implications of female genius, since in Burke's as well as many other 18th century thinkers critical calculus, genius was measured by the sublimity of a work of art. Siddons's private performances of *De Monfort* and other private readings of works from Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Shakespeare's most dramatic male characters, such as Hamlet, work to further the singular star power of Siddons. These private gender-bending performances were instrumental in cultivating Baillie's own celebrity as "female genius" given Siddons's cultural fluidity as a celebrity. As Marvin Carlson note in his book *The Haunted Stage*,<sup>117</sup> all audiences are continually "ghosting" past performances and past performers onto the plays that they watch, seeing both the current play and their own recollections of past performances at the same time (7). This process of ghosting arguably also takes place when writers conceive of new parts for celebrity actors, and thus past performances of individual actors haunt the playwright as she composes a new dramatic text. Ultimately then, Siddons tilts the gender scale with her private readings and performances towards masculinity, and this is carried into the masculinity of Baillie's professional identity, best seen in Lord Byron's claim that in order to write tragedy one must have testicles, and thus "Mrs. Baillie must have borrowed them to write."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Carlson, Marvin. *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 2002. Print. Theater--theory/text/performance.

<sup>118</sup> *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchland, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1982 vol. 5, p. 203.



### Chapter Three

#### Staging the Coffeehouse Table: Food Activism and Coleridge's Early Celebrity

There sat a party from the rest aloof,  
 With elbows on the table, and their necks  
 Crane-like extended, with their mouths wide open  
 To catch each weighty syllable, that fell  
 From yon grave Orator; whose ceaseless voice  
 Colloquial magnetism has infus'd  
 O'er their expiring faculties: his hands,  
 Which move with uniform and steady sway,  
 With accents slow and solemn well accord.  
 At the commencement of this long harangue,  
 Some of the boldest of his audience call'd  
 For proofs and documents and vouchers, that  
 Might back his strong assertions, or coerce  
 With doubts and queries, or with keen retorts.  
 This dread invasion on the Rights of Tongues.

—Philip Smyth, “The Coffeehouse, A Characteristic Poem,” 1795

“Humans have communication by way of food.”

—Roland Barthes, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption”

Philip Smyth's poem begins with an epigraph by Pope, “The proper study of mankind is Man,” and like the celebrity actor who presented new and startling ways to experience and analyze the inner life of an individual, the coffeehouse was a central location for the new cultural industry of sociality, information, and thus subjectivity.<sup>119</sup> The coffeehouse for Coleridge was a complex space; it represented a place to deliver his lectures to earn money for his Pantisocracy migration with Robert Southey; it contained a population he associated with luxury, vanity and

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<sup>119</sup> The prefatory remarks of another poem featured the same year, “The Coffeehouse,” in the *Monthly Magazine*, point to how writers imaged the coffeehouse as a source of poetic fodder: “this poem contains a considerable share of humor, and may be read at those houses from which our author has taken his characters. “The Coffee-House.” *The Critical review, or, Annals of literature*; Jun 1795; 14.

imposture; and it afforded him an opportunity to perform an early mode of his public identity. Indeed, to lecture is to perform, and often lectures in the eighteenth and nineteenth century occurred in theatrical spaces. It is interesting then to consider that just prior to composing *Osorio* Coleridge lectured predominantly in coffeehouses, whereas he delivered his later lectures (1808-1818) on Shakespeare, Milton, and the fine arts in academic institutions. These later lectures coincided with the revisions to *Osorio*, which was ultimately renamed *Remorse* and staged at the Drury Lane in the spring of 1813. Thus, the composition and production history of *Osorio/Remorse* is bookended by Coleridge's public performances as a lecturer in two entirely different social spaces. This gothic drama reflects the spatial story of each one of those metropolitan spaces, and ultimately tells us a great deal about how those spaces, and his playwriting activities, mediate changing versions of his public identity.

“The sociability of Romantic lecturing,” to borrow a phrase from Gillian Russell, brings to mind the close relationship between lecturing and acting, and historically it gave rise to its own brand of celebrity performers throughout the Georgian era. Russell explains that “[i]n his use of the arts of performance, the capacity to attract an audience, through the manipulation of speech and gesture, the lecturer could harness the power of the actor, while remaining in his own character, not subjecting himself or his audience to the uncertainties of impersonation” (124). Of these lecturers, John Thelwall, a key member of the London Corresponding Society, indeed earned his celebrity as an impassioned speaker. Thelwall believed that lecturing was superior to acting because the lecturer was not subject to a script written by others: the lecturer could appear in his own character giving “utterance to the genuine sentiments of his own mind, and the real passions of his soul” (129). Yet unlike the political theater of the Beaufort buildings where Thelwall often lectured, the coffeehouse offered a political safe-house from William Pitt's spies

looking to charge political lecturers with treason, as he eventually did with Thelwall, John Horne Tooke, and Thomas Hardy. Coleridge used the coffeehouse, however, not only as a place to express his political views more freely, but also to make his audience aware of the ethical implications of their spatial situatedness as related to their consumption practices.

### **The English Coffeehouse: A Brief Cultural History**

The first coffeehouses in England emerged in 1652, with the greatest numbers in the latter part of the 17th century and much of the 18th. Though many contemporaries and historians have estimated the number of coffeehouses in the 18th century to be between 2,000 and 3,000, a more realistic estimate brings the number today down to around 500 (Ellis 11). A majority of these establishments were concentrated around areas of finance, industry, and culture, essentially operating in wealthier districts such as St. James, the Regent theatres, Fleet Street, and Exchange Alley.<sup>120</sup> This created a curious cross-section of patronage based on proximity: coffeehouses near the theater centers were populated with theater-goers and prostitutes,<sup>121</sup> while those in the vicinity of Exchange Alley became a location to obtain specialist news services for financial information,<sup>122</sup> a cultural phenomenon satirized in Daniel Defoe's *The Anatomy of Exchange Alley; or, A System of Stock-Jobbing*. Markman Ellis notes in his comprehensive study of coffeehouse culture that

[t]he routines of everyday life in court and chambers brought lawyers, law students and

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<sup>120</sup> According to Markman Ellis's *The Coffee-house a Cultural History* "while there were over 500 coffee houses in London there were nearly 8,000 gin houses with many residing the poorer areas" (173). Ellis, Markman. *The Coffee-House: a Cultural History*. London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004. Print.

<sup>121</sup> In the early eighteenth century Molly King, one of the most famous matrons of coffee, was the proprietor of King's Coffee-House in Covent Garden Market, a notorious location where gentlemen mixed late at night with market traders and ladies of pleasure.

<sup>122</sup> Ellis notes that "coffee-houses maintained specialized books listing commodity prices, rates of exchange of foreign coin and the price of government stocks" (173).

clerks back to the same establishments located in clusters near the Inns of Courts; the Chapter Coffee-House, nearby in Paternoster Row, was the haunt of booksellers and printers, and the hack writers they employed. [...] For wits and poets an important concentration of coffee-houses emerged in Russell Street, a broad street leading off the crowded piazza of Covent Garden, close to the theatres. (2004, 150–151)

Historically, the reopening of the theaters broadly coincided with the establishment of coffee-house sociability in London, which in part aided in the development of this circulatory network of cultural consumption. Coffee-houses near the theaters soon established a reputation for a theatrical clientele, both for consumers and producers of theatrical entertainments. Coffee-houses such as Will's, positioned adjacent to the Covent Garden, helped to establish the reputation of the celebrated poets and playwrights of the early eighteenth century, including William Congreve, William Wycherley, Thomas Southerne, the Earl of Rochester, the Earl of Roscommon, Nicholas Rowe, George Etherege, William Walsh, John Vanbrugh, Samuel Garth and Joseph Addison. These coffee-house wits are the model for and the evidence of the early professionalization of literary criticism throughout the Restoration and the eighteenth century (Ellis 263).

The English coffee-house reshaped the social ecology of London, and brought with it a new culture of “convivial sociability based on conversation and discussion” (Ellis 149). As Ellis points out, “to scholars, both of the arts and the sciences, coffeehouses became one of the most significant locations for debate and the exchange of ideas, evolving into an important research tool, somewhere between a peer-review system, an encyclopedia, a research center and symposium” (150-151). Coffeehouse patrons had unprecedented access to a wide range of information: economic, literary, and theological. Indeed, to an eighteenth century mind, entering

a coffee-house was tantamount to walking into the Internet (Ellis 158). In the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas wrote of the salons, theaters, and coffeehouses of the 18th century as formative spaces for a bourgeois public sphere in which opinions could be traded and connections made outside the formal exchange of economic life. For Habermas, coffeehouses are the spatial counterpart to the new mediated forms of social exchange represented by the spread of newspapers and the growth of popular literary forms where there existed “a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing equality of status, disregarded status altogether” (37).<sup>123</sup> This emerging public sphere was established as inclusive by principle, and anyone with access to cultural technology like novels, journals, plays, had the potential to claim the attention of the debating public. Explaining the importance of the periodical in binding these networks of consumption practices, Habermas writes that

[w]hen Addison and Steele published the first issue of *The Tatler* in 1709, the coffee-houses were already so numerous and the circles of their frequenters already so wide, that contact among these thousandfold circles could only be maintained through a journal. At the same time the new periodical was so intimately interwoven with the life of the coffee-houses that the individual issues were indeed sufficient basis for its reconstruction. The periodical articles were not only made the object of discussion by the public of the coffeehouses but were viewed as integral parts of this discussion; this was demonstrated by the flood of letters from which the editor each week published a selection. (42)

Button’s Coffee-house that Habermas refers to here was an arena for literary debate where writers of the likes of Addison, Steele, Pope, and Swift would gather each evening to cast their keen judgments on new plays, poems, novels, and manuscripts, making or breaking literary

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<sup>123</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1989. Print.

reputations in the process.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, coffeehouses were important urban sites for the emergent celebrity apparatus in the 18th century; they are a key node in the formation of the public sphere, where media consumption and production intersect, especially with respect to cross-pollination of theatrical and literary culture. And as we will discover, Coleridge targets the consumption practices--food and media--that occur within these spaces.

### **Widening the Gyre of Domestic Affections**

From 1795 to 1798, Coleridge gave 32 lectures in Bristol to raise funds for his pantisocracy emigration with Robert Southey. Their topics ranged from politics to Natural and Revealed Religion, to the slave trade, the Corn Laws, and even one reportedly on the hair powder tax of 1795. According to Peter Mann, they constituted an effort by Coleridge to find himself and create a personal philosophy in which his views about religion, politics, morality, and the nature of man as an individual and as a social being could be drawn together and related (CC liii)<sup>125</sup>. Moreover, a closer analysis of these lectures makes possible a fuller understanding of his political attitudes in the 1790s; they shed light on the larger implications of the relationship between Romantic writers and society and provide evidence of the nature and depth of Coleridge's religious convictions. And most importantly, they tell us a little something about

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<sup>124</sup> In *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832*, Jon Klancher explains how "eighteenth-century writers used the periodical to organize audiences, but also why their 'widening circle' of readers perceptibly fragmented in the political crises of the 1790s"(10). According to Klancher the Romantic era encompassed the greatest rise in periodicals: over 4,000 periodicals were published between 1790 and 1832, which played a significant role in shaping the taste and public discourse of the period. Deidre Lynch reports that "Habermas .... narrativizes the relationship between commerce and the public sphere--outlining a process in which commercialization represents the sad, feminized sequel to public sphere conversation," and, as the volume editors say, she goes on to challenge this view "by considering shopping as a model of sociability" (13; see "Counter Publics: Shopping and Women's Sociability" in *Romantic Sociability*). Klancher, Jon P. *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832*. Madison, Wis., University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. Russell, Gillian, and Tuite, Clara. *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*. Cambridge, U.K.; New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002. Print.

<sup>125</sup> Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Lectures 1795: On Politics and Religion*. Ed. Paul Kegan. London: Princeton, N.J., Routledge; Kegan Paul; Princeton University Press, 1971. Print.

Coleridge's brush with the world of theatrical celebrity as his performances earned him recognition as a rising star early in his career: a former Bristolian writing a quarter century after Coleridge's lectures on politics and religion remarked that he had appeared "like a comet or a meteor in our horizon" (qtd. in CC vol. 1 xxxviii).

Most of what we know about these lectures comes from Joseph Cottle's *Early Recollections* (1837), a period of his life that Cottle celebrated as the "Augustan Age of Bristol" when "so many men of genius were there congregated" (ix). London and the Lake District dominate much of the scholarly writing on the Romantic experience. Yet Bristol played a large role in Romantic period political writings. As acknowledged by Nicholas Roe in the introduction to *English Romantic Writers and the West Country*, "the provincial diversity of English Romantic writing continues largely to be absorbed into the Anglo-British monoculture that obscured those archipelagic identities" of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish Romanticisms (4).<sup>126</sup> This critical attention to outlining regional voices is equally important in assessing the constructions of Romantic literary celebrity as a phenomenon associated with urban spaces, especially those like Bristol that were associated with leisure and trade. With approximately 55,000 inhabitants during Coleridge's stay, Bristol was the fifth largest urban constituency, and possessed a vibrant public life with several newspapers, theaters, coffeehouses and a large lending library. Moreover, Bristol had an active and wealthy Dissenting community which supported Coleridge's Unitarian and radical literary efforts, and the city's distance from London may have allowed Bristol radicals briefly to hold back the government reaction that had resulted in charges of treason

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<sup>126</sup> Roe's collection is not the first to expand the limited geographical investigations: the groundbreaking work of Tom Mayberry's *Coleridge and Wordsworth in the West Country* and Berta Lawrence's *Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset* also explore Romantic writing and the landscapes and cultures of England's West Country. Mayberry, Tom. *Coleridge & Wordsworth in the West Country*. Far Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire; Wolfeboro Falls, NH, A. Sutton, 1992. Print. Lawrence, Berta. *Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset*. Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1970. Print.

against John Thelwall and others in London in 1794. The city itself was expanding into a transitional phase that, by concentrating wealth and labor, established the preconditions for the urbanization of industrialization. In Bristol, these resources flowed primarily into the expansion of foreign and domestic shipping industries.

Because Bristol was the epicenter for the English slave trade and contained a sizable population of the wealthy, it served as a prime location for Coleridge to expose, as he refers to it in his lectures, the “polished English citizen’s” participation in this “Tartarean confederacy” (CC 247). The slave trade had been intensely debated in Bristol for some time prior to Coleridge’s lecture: On Monday, 28 January 1788, more than 600 Bristolians met at the city’s Guildhall “to take into consideration the most fit and wholesome measures for the abolition of the Slave Trade” (*Bristol Gazette*, 24 January 1787, qtd. in Roe 101). Although he lectured on a variety of topics, it is his lecture on the slave trade where Coleridge infuses the space of the lecture—in this case the coffeehouse—with the message. He thereby transformed the coffee-house into a theatrical space where his auditors were transported through the vast circulatory global networks of the slave trade.

Public lectures, especially in the 1790s, were accompanied by a rich climate of theatricality. John Thelwall and Joseph Priestley were just a few of the prominent lecturers appearing in coffee-houses and private clubs in London and Bristol, and were among some of the models that Coleridge looked to for his own lectures.<sup>127</sup> This confluence of theatricality and politics led William Godwin to argue against the validity of such spaces as proper forum of

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<sup>127</sup>See Gillian Russell’s *Romantic Sociability*. An historical account of coffee-houses and the formation of radical circles appeared in *The Literary Magazine and British Review* in April of 1790, telling of Persian and Turkish rulers banning the consumption of coffee and coffeehouses in general, while drawing parallels with similar prohibitions during the reign of Charles II for fear of insurrection “because it was considered as likely to promote the forming of private assemblies” (*The Literary Magazine and British Review*, April 1790).

political expression. He suggested that “[s]ober inquiry may pass well enough with a man in his closet, or in the domestic tranquility of his own fireside: but it will not suffice in theaters and hall of assembly” (qtd. in Gillian 128). However, as previously noted, coffee-houses became political sanctuaries from the Gagging bills, and Bristol, more than London, offered a location free from Pitt’s panoptic surveillance.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, Coleridge viewed the “domestic tranquility” of [one’s] own fireside” as detrimental to political, philosophical, and religious *action*. “Inquiry in the closet” did not attend to the atrocities and social inequities transpiring beyond the home, a fundamental blindness he associated with political radicals and atheists like Godwin. Attesting to the need for concrete experience in one’s ethical actions, Coleridge wrote in the first issue of *The Watchman* that “one should be personally among the poor” (CC 110).

Coleridge’s opposition to Godwin is undergirded by an adherence to David Hartley’s philosophical system found particularly in his *Observations on Man* (1749). Although Coleridge proclaimed in a letter to Thomas Poole that he had cast off the manacles of Hartley’s mechanistic philosophy in 1798, “the doctrines of necessity and the association of ideas together constituted the greatest single influence upon many of his political as well as religious attitudes” (xxix).<sup>129</sup> Unlike Godwin’s universal benevolence that is predicated upon an individual’s merit, Hartley’s theory indiscriminately transforms love of self into love of friends and family, then widens the circle to love of all mankind. According to Leonard Deen, “Godwin’s rationalist utilitarianism tended to ignore concrete experience; Hartley’s more sentimental or feeling-full utilitarianism appealed to it at every point” (497).<sup>130</sup> Concrete experience is elemental for Hartley’s theory of

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<sup>128</sup> Thelwall was not immune to Pitt’s surveillance practices, nor were many others. See John Barrell’s “Coffee-House Politicians.” *Journal of British Studies* 43.2 (2004): 206-32.

<sup>129</sup> See chapters VII and VIII of *Biographia Literaria* for a more complete discussion

<sup>130</sup> Deen, Leonard W. “Coleridge and the Radicalism of Religious Dissent.” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 61.3 (1962): 496-510.

domestic affections and the point of origin for moral sympathy, what Coleridge refers to in an early letter to Southey as “Home-born Feelings.”<sup>131</sup> Writing on the topic of Pantisocratic friendship, he explains that

Warmth of particular friendship does not imply absorption. The near[er] you approach the Sun the more intense are his Rays—yet what distant corner of the System do they not cheer and vivify? The ardour of private attachments makes Philanthropy a necessary habit of the Soul. I love my Friend—such as he is, all mankind are or might be! the deduction is evident.—Philanthropy (and indeed every other Virtue) is a thing of Concretion—Some home-Born Feeling is the center of the Ball, that, rolling on thro’ Life, collects and assimilates every congenial Affection. (1:86)

Indeed, many scholars have shown how Hartley’s system influenced Coleridge’s opposition to Godwin’s social and moral philosophy, and how this system can be found in his earlier works such as “The Eolian Harp.” However, few have demonstrated how Hartley’s ethical gyre, beginning with domestic affections, plays a key role in the narrative structure of arguably one of the single most important lectures Coleridge delivered while in Bristol.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, few critics if any, have connected the faculty of taste with Hartley’s theory of vibrations and his ethics, or better known as his “theopathy.”

Following Sir Isaac Newton’s theories of the physical world, David Hartley explains in

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<sup>131</sup> Nicholas Roe argues that “[t]he philosophical basis of Southey’s and Coleridge’s respective ideas of Pantisocracy were contradictory: Coleridge would have responded to Southey’s Godwinism by insisting that ‘love and friendship were the means to human regeneration, and in this respect Coleridge was fundamentally at odds with Godwin’s disinterested rationalism in *Political Justice*’” (115; qtd in Taussig 130). Roe reports earlier on that the Pantisocrats “would create a model society, a ‘center’ from which the cumulative momentum of affection would proceed to the regeneration of ‘all mankind’” (113).

<sup>132</sup> In some ways this parallels Jon Klancher’s discussion of the “habituated readers” of *The Watchman* and radical journalism. Regarding the motto of *The Watchman*--The Truth will set you free--Coleridge writes that “Truth was not for everyone, the Truth will always already be recognized as the Truth by a mind habituated to receive it” (38). See Jon Klancher’s *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832*.

*Observations on Man* how ideas are formed through what he referred to as the “doctrine of vibrations.” According to Hartley, external stimuli of the five senses generate simple ideas, which in turn generate feelings and more complex thoughts such as memory. Increasingly complex ideas are built up from sensations by means of association, a process through which ideas are combined. He explains this principle thusly,

Since therefore sensations are conveyed to the mind, by the efficiency of corporeal causes upon the medullary substance, as is acknowledged by all physiologists and physicians, it seems to me, that the powers of generating ideas, and raising them by association, must also arise from corporeal causes. [...] And as a vibratory motion is more suitable to the nature of sensation than any other species of motion, so does it seem also more suitable to the powers of generating ideas, and raising them by association. (Hartley, *Observations on Man* 72)<sup>133</sup>

As Shelley Trower points out, “Hartley’s work was probably the first comprehensive attempt to integrate associationist philosophy with Newtonian physics, to ground mental processes in the physical” (16). Drawing on Newton’s *Principia* and the “Queries” to *Opticks*, Hartley proposed that “motions” from the external world cause vibrations to run along the “medullary substance” of the nerves, which consists of particles small enough to transmit rather than interrupt the vibrations, the pores or spaces between which are filled with even smaller, “infinitesimal” particles of ether (Trower). This is precisely where Coleridge adapts Hartley’s theory to “The Eolian Harp” as an explanation for poetic inspiration. Robert Miles has related the prevalence of these ideas among Coleridge’s contemporaries to popularity and influence of other forms of literature; he explains responses to popular forms of Gothic literature in terms of eighteenth-

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<sup>133</sup> Hartley, David. *Observations on Man: His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations. In Two Parts. ... By David Hartley, M.A.* London, First Printed in MDCCXLIX. Reprinted by J. Johnson, 1791. Print.

century associationism, which “increasingly relied on the figuration of the mind as a kind of vibrating machine, where the ‘nerves’ stood as the individual strings” (49). The reader of popular novels, Miles observes, was described as “a detached observer waiting for her receptive mechanism – her ‘nerves’ – to be played upon” (51).<sup>134</sup>

If we look more closely at Coleridge’s adoption of Hartley’s doctrine in “On the Slave Trade,” we find evidence of the conjoining of reading and bodily taste, and the problem of habitual behaviors equally dependent on habitation. This conjoining is derived from Hartley’s distinction between voluntary and automatic actions. Hartley explains that

[t]he motions of the body are of two kinds, automatic and voluntary. The automatic motions are those which arise from the mechanism of the body in an evident manner. They are called automatic, from their resemblance to the motions of automata, or machines, whose principle of motion is within themselves. Of this kind are the motion of the heart, and peristaltic motion of the bowels. The voluntary motions are those which arise from ideas and affections, and which therefore are referred to the mind; the immediately preceding state of the mind, or of the ideas and affections, being termed will, as noted in the last article. Such are the actions of walking, handling, speaking, &c. when attended to, and performed with an expressed design. (Hartley I, iii-iv )

And yet, repetitive *voluntary* actions are at risk of transforming into mechanistic behavior:

“repetition of pleasure and pain association, mental, visual and bodily taste, in combination they may be more difficult to untrain the pleasure derived...It may be observed here that the desires of particular foods and liquors is much more influenced by the associated circumstances than

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<sup>134</sup> The published version of the lecture on the slave trade following the section on novel-reading women states that: “Nay, by making us tremblingly alive to trifling misfortunes, it frequently prevents it, and induces effeminate and cowardly selfishness” (CC 298).

their tastes” (181). Hartley claims that these pleasurable states leave “miniatures of themselves,” traces within the individual’s system and thus preclude the process of building up more complex associations. Hence, according to “On the Slave Trade,” polished citizens engage in mechanistic actions, for they have been conditioned through particular forms of media to feel but not act, returning to the same spaces (coffeehouses) to consume commodities and debate politics. Thus the law of Association, for Coleridge, came to be an issue of passive versus active consumption of information.<sup>135</sup>

### **The Faculty of Taste in Hartley’s *Observations on Man***

Coleridge’s “On the Slave Trade” begins by posing two questions: “When arise our miseries?” and “Whence arise our vices?” to which he answers, “From artificial Wants.” He goes on to suggest that “if we confined our wishes to the actual necessities and real comforts of Life” miseries and vices would be abated, for “what Nature demands Nature everywhere amply supplies” (235). This natural satisfaction is not found in merely sating bodily wants; instead, “the mind must enlarge the sphere of its activity, and busy itself in the acquisition of intellectual attainment.” In what is acknowledged as the first instance of his theory of the primary and secondary imagination, Coleridge urges his auditors to “develop the powers of the Creator” and “imitate Creativeness” through the faculty of the imagination, in that it “stimulates to the attainment of *real* excellence” (235). Yet not to pursue the noble “striving that urges us the ascent of Being” to seek the divine, the motive for which, as Coleridge describes, “this restless

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<sup>135</sup> Jerome Christensen’s explanation of Coleridge’s move from the philosophy of Hartley is similarly predicated upon a figurative application of this brand of mechanistic behavior, for Coleridge “was committed to a mythos of progress in philosophy and in his own philosophical career. That the overthrow of Hartley became vital to Coleridge’s sense of progress does not, however, license the presumption that it occurred.” See Jerome Christensen. ““Like a Guilty Thing Surprised”: Deconstruction, Coleridge, and the Apostasy of Criticism.” *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986): 769-87. Web.

faculty was given us” causes “the Savage [to] eagerly [seize] every opportunity of intoxication—and hence the polished citizen lies framing unreal Wants, and diverts the pain of Vacancy by the pestilent inventions of Luxury” (235-236).<sup>136</sup> He proceeds to catalogue the commodities the English receive as a result of this inhuman industry: “West Indies Sugars, Rum, Cotton, log-wood, cocoa, coffee, pimento, ginger, indigo, mahogany, and conserves,” explaining that “not one of these items are actually necessary or useful—with the exception of cotton and mahogany” (236). And in return for these commodities, England exports “[a] vast quantity of necessary Tools, Raiment, and defensive Weapons...so that in this Trade as in most others, the poor with unceasing toil first raise and then are deprived of the comforts which they absolutely want in order to procure Luxuries which they must never hope to enjoy” (237). This trade essentially works to replace, or more properly distract, an individual from painful toil with the fantasy of attaining luxuries (and the life associated with it), what we might understand as an early theorization of Marx’s commodity fetishism. Further, such artificial wants remove the individual from the necessity of “home-Born Feelings,” thereby erecting a dichotomy between illusion and reality, where paradoxically life’s real necessities are obtained by expanding the sphere of the imagination, ostensibly in a movement stretching towards the divine. This spatial metaphor of circling forces resonates through both the lecture and, as we shall later see, Coleridge’s gothic drama *Osorio*.

Once Coleridge establishes that a restless imagination lies at the center of the slave trade, he explains the dubious methods by which Bristol’s citizens are recruited to work on slave ships,

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. Wordsworth’s remarks in the 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads* regarding the historical circumstances that were among the “multitude of causes, unknown to former times,” which were acting “with combined force” on the mind, one of the foremost was “the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.”

bound into physical, economic, and psychological enslavement. Borrowing from Thomas Clarkson's remarks in *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade* (2nd ed 1788), he explains that the "profligate character" (237) is lured with the promise of high wages. Capitalizing, on their "desires for intoxication," these licentious persons are seduced into employment

with Music and Dancing, and ke[pt]... in an intoxicated state for some time. In the interim, the Slave-merchant comes and makes his application—the unfortunate men are singled out—their Bill is immediately brought to them—they are said to be in more debt than even two months' advance money will discharge. They have therefore the alternative made them of a Slave-vessel or a Gaol. (237)

This ultimatum then is bound by "articles of agreement," which transfers sovereign power to the transient space of the trade vessels: "The first Clause is, that the crew shall conform and demean themselves in every respect according to the late act of Parliament for the better regulation of Seamen in his Majesty's service" (238). Noting the "artful Substitution" of Majesty for merchant, Coleridge questions if "any Regulations make it even probable that the men belonging to Slave-ships can be treated with humanity—for the officers, employed as the immediate Instrument of buying, selling and torturing human Flesh, must from the moral necessity of circumstances become dead to every feeling of [compassion]" (238). Coleridge reckons that

every Slave Vessel from the Port of Bristol loses on an average almost a fourth of the whole Crew--and so far is this trade from being a nursery for Seamen, that the Survivors are rather shadows in their appearance than men and frequently perish in Hospitals after the completion of the Voyage—many die in consequence of the excesses, with which [they indulge] themselves on Shore as compensations for the intolerable severities they

undergo. In Jamaica many rather than re-embark for their native Country beg from door to door, and many are seen in the streets dying daily in an ulcerated state—and they who return home, are generally incapacitated for future service by a complication of Disorder[s] contracted from the very nature of the Voyage. (238-239)

Here, we find echoes Godwin's philosophy, in that necessitarian principles attribute constant and debilitating inebriation to the pressing guilt of their deeds and to a system corrupting the individual rather than an innate character flaw. Moreover, rather than immediately addressing the cruel treatment of Africans, a Hartleyan ethics based on domestic affections begins with "home-Born Feelings" in Bristol and the laws that allow their corruption and consequent enslavement. The dancing and music, then, veils the real, and like the crew of the Mariner's vessel "rais[ing] their limbs like lifeless tools," Bristol's own men become a lifeless crew scattered through the streets of distant lands and English hospitals, painting an image of ubiquitous sickness and death.

Coleridge shifts then to the "object of the trade," the Africans, and erects a dichotomy between the pastoral existence of the Africans, situated happily "beyond the contagion of European Vice," and their terrible lot as slaves. Existing in a state analogous to his and Southey's Pantisocratic utopia, the Africans are described as

peaceful inhabitants of a fertile soil, they cultivate their fields in common and reap the crop as the common property of all. Each family like the peasants in some parts of Europe, spins weaves, sews, hunts, fishes, and makes basket fishing-tackle & implements of agriculture, and this variety of employment gives an acuteness of intellect to the negro which the mechanic who the division of Labour condemns to one simple operation is precluded from obtaining. (240)

By showing that the Africans embody the practices of shared property and communal labor,

Coleridge reinforces the correlation between enduring, repetitive labor and the ability to develop “an acuteness of intellect.” In his sixth lecture on *Revealed Religion*, given the following week, he says this about the impact of uneven labor practices to facilitate the existence of commerce and its connection to “artificial wants”:

When I consider my own wants which of them might I obtain through Commerce were now unknown? Does Commerce bring me Corn, or Bricks or Wool? The True advantages of Commerce consist in debauching the field Labourer with impropotional toil by exciting in him artificial Wants. The necessaries of twenty men are raised by one man, who works ten hours a day exclusive of his meals. How then are the other nineteen employed? Some of them are mechanics and merchants who collect and prepare those things which urge this field labourer to unnatural Toil by unnatural luxuries--others are Princes and Nobles and Gentlemen who stimulate his exertions by exciting his envy, and others are Lawyers and Priests and Hangmen who seduce or terrify him into passive submission. (CC 223)

Coleridge focuses his critical gaze on not only uneven labor practices, but equally the social and political network that makes capitalist industrialization and the consequent consumerism operate. Clearly, beyond the acuteness of intellect that a variety of employments precipitates, such variety also removes the individual from the fear, envy, and the unnatural urging that accompanies commerce. Moreover, the connection between Africans and Europeans maintains an ethical anchor in the center of domestic affections. He concludes that “[c]ommerce then is useless except to continue Imposture and oppression” (224) linking artificial wants with an inauthentic identity.

The contagion of European vice metastasizes abroad as war and corruption, as the lecture

moves to the west coast of Africa. Coleridge explains that Europeans, similar to how they exploit profligate Englishmen, “inoculate the petty tyrants of Africa with their own vices—they teach them new wants, to gratify which they bribe them to murder, that they themselves may inflict the most grievous ills of slavery upon the survivors” (241). Plucked from their burning towns, branded with the “arms and names of the company or owner,” they are then led shackled into the diseased bowels of the vessel. “[T]he hot & pestilent vapours arising from their confinement” once aboard the ship (241), continues the motif of disease that began with the English citizen who “diverts the pain of Vacancy by the pestilent inventions of Luxury.”<sup>137</sup> Here, Coleridge describes the dreadful experience of being stacked into the vessels like cargo and the ubiquity of pestilence that flesh, and even the planks of the ship, are heir to.

Ushering his auditors to the colonial outposts along with those enslaved, Coleridge once again fixes his critical gaze on how laws devalue human life to mere property, thereby allowing “dreadful cruelties [to be] exercised upon the negro slaves” (243). We are told, for example, that in Barbados if a slave undergoes punishment from his master for running away, and should “suffer in member or in life, no person shall be liable to any fines” (243). Or, that “if any man of wantonness or bloody-mindedness or cruel intention, willfully kill a negro of his own, he shall pay into the public treasury fifteen pounds sterling” (253). Coleridge’s pointed criticisms of these laws foreground a subsequent critique of the English government’s blind willingness to allow the trade to continue, noting that as early 1786 “these horrid enormities became the subject of general conversation and in the subsequent years petitions poured into parliament from various parts of the kingdom requesting its absolution” (243). Between an abolition bill dying in the

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<sup>137</sup> Although Coleridge draws from Clarkson’s report, *An Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) is another very likely source for such descriptive actual accounts, given its popularity at the time. Moreover, there are striking parallels between Equiano’s account, both in degree and kind, and Coleridge’s description.

House of Lords and the hollow professions of William Pitt's abolitionist leanings, Coleridge makes perfectly clear both houses' incontestable willingness to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act and their lack of conviction "to unloose the fetters from the limbs of their Brethren" (246).

Yet it is the hollow abolitionist rhetoric with which Coleridge associates the same imposture that perpetuates and accompanies the consumption practices of slave trade commodities. He pleads with his auditors to take action in the form of abstention, arguing that

[h]ad all the people who petitioned for the abolition of this execrable Commerce instead of bustling about and showing off with all the vanity of pretended sensibility, simply left off the use of Sugar and Rum, it is demonstrable that the Slave-merchants and Planters must either have applied to Parliament of the abolition of the Slave Trade or have suffered the West India Trade altogether to perish. (246)

This point marks an important turn in the lecture: prior to making a second call of abstaining from the use of rum and sugar, Coleridge reminds his auditors of the psychological distress inflicted upon those enslaved when torn from their native lands. Citing the estimated number of lives lost in total—"one hundred and eighty million of our fellow creatures"—he reminds his audiences that "all these were torn from the bleeding breast of domestic affection, that each one had wives, Brethren, Sons and Daughters—that each suffered all the Horrors of Toil and Torture" (246-247). Coleridge shifts the blame from the larger trade system in general to the consumers for their role in this "Tartarean confederacy" (247).

Extending his critique of the empty abolitionist rhetoric that occurs precisely in the same coffeehouses where he has chosen to lecture, Coleridge takes aim at "Two Classes of Men...Those who profess themselves Christians and those who (Christians or Infidels) profess themselves the zealous Advocates of Freedom" (247). As for the first, painting the existence of

the slave trade as a choice, he asks

Would you choose that Slave Merchants should incite an intoxicated Chieftain to make War on your tribe to murder your wife and Children before your face and drag them with yourself to the Market—Would you choose to be sold, to have hot iron hiss upon your breast, to be thrown down into the hold of a ship ironed with so many fellow victims so closely crammed together that the heat and stench arising from your diseased bodies should rot the very planks of the ship? (247-48)

Coleridge repeats what he has already detailed, but this time asking those professed Christians if they would wish that fate on their own families. This is not a simple evocation of empathy; more fundamentally, he projects a Hartleyan ethics of domestic affection that reminds his auditors that the African families were decimated because of English merchants. He asks then “if you shudder with selfish Horror at the very thought do you yet dare to be the occasion of it to others?” (248).

This is followed by yet another call for boycotting rum and sugar:

If one tenth part only of you who profess yourself Christians, were to leave off not all the West India Commodities but only Sugar and Rum—the one useless and the latter pernicious all this misery might be avoided—Gracious Heaven! at your meals you rise up and pressing your hands to your bosom ye lift up your eyes to God and say O lord bless the food which thou has given us. A part of that food among most of you is sweetened with the blood of the murdered. (248)

These Christians are obtuse to the “final causes” of the slave trade industry as they appear daily at their tables: both the tables in their homes and in coffee-houses. They are made conscious of their repetitive actions in that very moment—“[a] part of that food [coffee] among most of you”—through a strategic rhetorical device of moving from their own “selfish horror” informed

by Hartley's home-born feelings, back out beyond themselves. Here, selfishness is necessary to elicit action. And we might read "shudder[ing] with selfish Horror" as the affective power of the lecture vibrating through the medullary substance. Such a revelation of their involvement in this vast global trade network, Coleridge claims that

if Christ should revisit and be among the feasters as at Cana he would not change Water into Wine but haply convert the produce into the things producing, the occasioned into the things occasioning! Then with our fleshy eye should we behold what even now truth-painting imagination should exhibit to us—instead of sweetmeats Tears and Blood, and Anguish--and instead of Music groaning and the loud Peals of the Lash. (248)

Here, the imagination, an imitation of the Creator's power, rather than conjuring artificial wants, expands to reveal the final causes of those wants: that behind the consumption of these luxuries (sweetmeats and music) lie real horrors. What is key here is that the tables in their homes are analogous to the coffeehouse table, a place where they forget the Abolitionist ideals, another space where words have no direct impact to precipitate action, only the dream of an end of slavery. And through repetitive behavior, the habits of the home become the habits of the coffeehouse and Parliament.

Coleridge follows this up by addressing the "Zealous Friends of Freedom" and their vapid political discoursing that lead one to feel but not act. This group makes up the "Atheists or Deists," or what could be more generally understood as a critique of Godwinian principles.<sup>138</sup> Similar to Coleridge's direct address to the Christians, this class of men, "who soar above the vulgar Superstitions of the Gospel," are only as good as their convictions, for "True Benevolence" he suggests, "is the only possible Basis of Patriotism" (249).<sup>139</sup> He goes on to

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<sup>138</sup> See "Modern Patriotism" in *The Watchman*, Issue 18.

<sup>139</sup> In his lectures on "Revealed Religion" Coleridge refers to both the Church of England and to atheistic

explain how particular media consumption practices perpetuate a *virtual* sensibility.<sup>140</sup> He argues

Sensibility indeed we have to spare—What novel reading Lady does not flow over with it to the great annoyance of her Friends and Family—Her own sorrows like the Prince of Hell in Milton’s Pandemonium sit enthroned bulky and vast—while the miseries of our fellow creatures dwindle into pigmy forms, and are crowded, an unnumbered multitude into some dark corner of the Heart where the eye of sensibility gleams faintly on them at long intervals (249).

Similar to the tears and peal of the lash that lie behind sweetmeats and music, many media such as novels and diurnal publications possess an objective and affective power of their own, which ultimately obfuscates the Real.<sup>141</sup>

To call for the abstention from commodities such as rum and sugar was nothing novel, many abolitionists prior to Coleridge had made a similar plea, most notably, William Fox’s *An Address to People of Great Britain on the Propriety of Refraining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum*, which went through 15 editions, for which the London Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade enacted a campaign to target the growing appetite for sweet pies, coffee, sugar and chocolate. Fox showed how sugar, by the end of the 18th century, had become a staple condiment in the English table, tabulating pounds of sugar in relation to lives lost, concluding that “A family that uses 5 lb. of sugar per week, with the proportion of rum,

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materialism as extremes standing on either side of the true religion of Unitarianism, which is founded equally on reason and revelation. The idea that the two extremes were fundamentally identical was important to Coleridge at the time; he found the skepticism and atheism of Godwin and Thomas Holcroft as disagreeable as the “superstition” of the reactionary Bench of Bishops.

<sup>140</sup> In the printed version of the lecture, Coleridge distinguishes between sensibility and benevolence: “There is one criterion by which we may always distinguish benevolence from mere sensibility—Benevolence impels to action, and is accompanied by self-denial” (*The Watchman*, 139-40).

<sup>141</sup> Also see Roland Barthes’s essay “Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” where he suggests that “food has a constant tendency to transform itself into situations” (34). With respect to Coleridge’s criticism of “novel-reading women,” Timothy Morton has argued that “[t]he rhetoric of abstinence involved a particularly aversive topos, often directed towards the female consumer,” what he calls the “blood sugar” topos.

will, by abstaining from the consumption 21 months, prevent the slavery or murder of one fellow creature; eight such families in 19½ years, prevent the slavery or murder of 100, and 38,000 would totally prevent the Slave Trade to supply our islands.” Such calculations were further supported by Sir Thomas Morton Eden’s 1795-1796 study of the laboring poor, which found that sugar was no longer limited to luxury use, citing a report that a Kendal laboring family of five spends approximately one-tenth of its annual food expenditure, roughly 20 pounds, on tea and sugar.<sup>142</sup>

Coleridge’s call to boycott rum and sugar, however, is much more than a quantitative argument; he targets the falsities of a luxurious society, but also the complex network of global trade. His methodical commodity chain analysis of the slave trade links consumption with laws, gunpowder, pathologies, and media. Such a list suggests how an object mediates connections between individuals and space. A commodity such as sugar, though an everyday item even to the laboring poor, to Coleridge remains luxurious because it is a commodity attached to sociality, more specifically, the social production of space: it cultivates a specific brand of English frivolity and distraction. The novel, a luxurious instrument, simulates sensibility, and drinking a pernicious beverage is a part of that reading experience, in the same way that drinking coffee and consuming media become a part of the socio-spatial interaction between objects and actors within the coffeehouse, which through these repetitive practices stymie the engagement of the creative faculty reducing an individual to a state analogous to an automaton.

If we retrace the narrative structure of Coleridge’s lecture, we find a centrifugal movement: the auditor voyages from the Assembly Coffeehouse in Bristol to the distant lands of

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<sup>142</sup> Tim May has recently pointed out Coleridge’s liberal verbatim borrowings from Thomas Cooper’s short pamphlet published in 1791: *Considerations on the slave trade; and the consumption of West Indian Produce* by Thomas Cooper. See Tim May. *Notes and Queries* (2007) 54 (4): 504-509.

the West Indies, down the back streets of a colonial outpost with a drunken seaman racked with guilt, who has “become a shadow of himself,” off to West Africa to bear witness to the senseless wars necessary to obtain slaves, and then finally return back to the Bristolian coffeehouse, where invariably members of the audience are sipping coffee sweetened with the blood of those enslaved, to comprehend the virtual benevolence that coffeehouse consumption and political discoursing practices falsely evoke, and in turn create their own brand of mental enslavement. All of this is done with the intention to reveal the importance of spatial awareness, or better understood as authentic domestic affections, since for Hartley such affections and sympathies must begin at the local level. In doing so, Coleridge transforms Hartley’s theory of associationism in *Observation on Man* to a centrifugal ethics of domestic affections, thereby yoking objects and actors in an affective network of consumption. However, the lecture takes on a new purposefulness once in print in his periodical *The Watchman*, as Coleridge aims to circulate a more “permanent” media in a space inundated with ephemeral media in an effort to enlarge the imagination.

### ***The Watchman: Perishable versus Permanent Media***

Coleridge published “On the Slave Trade” in the fourth issue of *The Watchman*. The printed version contains notable alterations: it presents a dialectical structure of argument and rebuttal, making it easier for his readers to see the validity of his data-driven argument; it omits the more graphic description of what slaves endured onboard the shipping vessels; it is peppered with Coleridge’s own poetry from the period; and finally, he adds an additional literary reference at the end of the essay, a commentary on entertainment media tantamount to Wordsworth’s rebuke of the Gothic and newspapers in the “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads* — “The merchant finds

no argument against it in his ledger: the citizen at the crowded feast is not nauseated by the stench and the filth of the slave-vessel—the fine lady’s nerves are not shattered by the shrieks! she sips a beverage sweetened with human blood, even while she is weeping over the refined sorrows of Werter or of Clementina. Sensibility is not benevolence” (298 in *Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose*). By referencing Goethe’s *Werther* and Richardson’s *History of Sir Charles Grandison* Coleridge targets the cult of sensibility in particular, and the novel in general, as a frivolous form of entertainment. Seen in a larger cultural context, Coleridge participates in the gendered discourse slinging arrows at women, for they were seen as a critical literary market force.<sup>143</sup> Coleridge understood the use-value of politicized materials in flux within coffeehouses and ale-houses, where diurnal media consumption was to the detriment of the individual, not solely because of the media, but where these media were consumed.

The Prospectus to *The Watchman* announces the periodical as an antidote for more ephemeral media like newspapers and cheap political pamphlets. For Coleridge, the regularity of such a publication “could be bound up at the end of each year, so as to become an annual register, a less perishable” and therefore “more attractive vehicle for Men of Letters.” As Lucy Newlyn has suggested, “*The Watchman* from the very start advertised itself as a miscellany, inviting its readers to become writers in a democratic and communal fashion, as though it were indeed a ‘spacious coffee-house’” (197). This was a rhetorical mode that Coleridge would continue when writing for the *Morning Post* and *The Courier* from 1798 to 1818, a style tailored to an imagined cohort of “London coffee-house men and breakfast-table People of Quality” (13-14).<sup>144</sup> We might understand this rhetorical positionality, according to Jeffrey Cox, as a

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<sup>143</sup> For an excellent study on the masculinist response to women in the literary market see Jacqueline Pearson’s *Women’s Reading Britain, 1750-1832: A Dangerous Recreation*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge UP, 1999.

<sup>144</sup> See letter to Daniel Stuart dated October 2, 1800 in *Letters from the Lake Poets: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth*.

conservative version of how Leigh Hunt imagined the space from which he wrote *The Examiner* as “his tavern-room for politics, for political pleasantry, for criticism upon the theater and living writers. The Indicator is his private room, his study, his retreat from public care and criticism, with the reader who chuses to accompany him” (qtd. in Cox *Poetry and Politics*, 73).<sup>145</sup>

However, Coleridge expressed “a certain level of condescension towards the fashionable world of coffeehouse philosophers and politicians, none of whom [possess] the rigours of the austere metaphysical reasoning” (*Collected Letters I*, 627). Knowing that his philosophical convictions expressed in *The Watchman* would not by themselves ameliorate the imposture of coffee-house patrons, Coleridge also targeted the consumption practices of the poor.

*The Watchman* continued the lecturer’s pleading “for the Oppressed, and not to them,” a position that Coleridge first espouses in the “Introductory Address” of his lecture *Conciones ad Populum* published in December of 1795. In it he writes that

[s]ociety as at present constituted does not resemble a chain that ascends in a continuity of Links—There are three ranks possessing an intercourse with each other: these are well comprised in the superscription of a Perfumer’s advertisement, which I lately saw—“the Nobility, Gentry, and People of Dress,” But alas! between the Parlour and the Kitchen, the Tap and the Coffee-Room—there is a gulph that may not be passed. He would appear to me to have adopted the best as well as the most benevolent mode of diffusing Truth, who uniting the zeal of the Methodist with the views of a Philosopher, should be *personally* among Poor, and teach them their Duties in order that he may render them susceptible of their Rights...The human Race may perhaps possess the capability of all excellence...but assuredly the over-worked Labourer, Skulking into an Ale-house is not

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<sup>145</sup> Cox, Jeffrey N. *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt, and Their Circle*. Cambridge; New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.

likely to exemplify the one, or prove the other. (*Lectures 1795*, 43)

Coleridge continues this sentiment in *The Watchman*, as the reading habits of the poor who “[skulk] into an Ale-house,” are excluded from democratic citizenry. In the first issue of *The Watchman*, dated Tuesday, March 1st, 1796, Coleridge explains that “the poor man’s curiosity remains unabated with respect to events in which, above all others, he is deeply interested; and, as by the enormous expense, he is precluded from having a weekly newspaper at his home, he flies to the ale-house for the perusal. There he contracts habits of drunkenness and sloth” (2).<sup>146</sup> Coleridge is not advocating for a private reading experience that would somehow educate the poor. Rather, he acknowledges that the poor’s desire for the news, necessary knowledge for democratic citizenry, is prohibited by the cost of that media, and the only access to that reading technology is in a space that facilitates drunkenness and idle behavior. Between the lectures and *The Watchman* a dialectical tension emerges between public and private spaces, and the consequentialism of habitation. The poetry Coleridge was writing from 1795-1797 brought together the dichotomy of private and public spaces as well as the topic of poetry as a profession. Within this surge of printed material and activity there is scattered evidence that Coleridge recognized the tension between his theoretical and practical sense of the city. On one hand, Coleridge saw the city as littered with objects of corruption: “[i]t is melancholy to think, that the best of us are liable to be shaped & coloured by surrounding objects—and a demonstrative proof, that Man was not made to live in Great Cities!” (224).<sup>147</sup> On the other, it held spaces and opportunities to be “among the poor” and disenfranchised. It is interesting then to consider the cultural status of *The Watchman* since it was filled with news, essays, and original poems from Coleridge, as well as the arduous tour that he took on endeavoring to peddle his periodical

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<sup>146</sup> *The Watchman*, No. 1 Tuesday, March 1, 1796.

<sup>147</sup> See letter to George Dyer dated March, 10th, 1795 in *Collected Letters Vol. I*, page 154.

throughout England, like some itinerant lecturer-bookseller.<sup>148</sup> And yet, writing a drama on some “popular subject” equally brings together the conflicted acts of needing to earn money while composing a text for the consumption of the general public who inhabit such locations as coffeehouses and alehouses. Perhaps this is why Coleridge chose to compose a gothic drama given the revolutionary change necessary for individuals to understand the weight of their choices, since domestic affections and the viability of sociality and media consumption become topics explored in *Osorio*. Thus, Bristol coffeehouses were not simply a happenstance locale to wage an abolitionist polemic. Rather, the coffeehouse was a space intimately tied with how Coleridge envisioned his wider audience, and thus tailored his rhetorical style, and ultimately his literary outputs as a “poetics of publicity.”

### ***Osorio*: Staging the Coffeehouse Table**

On February 4th, 1797 Coleridge received a letter from William Bowles on behalf of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, asking him “to write a tragedy on some popular subject” (*CC Plays* III. Vol 1, p. 47).<sup>149</sup> The play was rejected for the stage despite this personal request on the grounds that it was far too metaphysical.<sup>150</sup> Like Wordsworth and Baillie, there is evidence to

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<sup>148</sup> See Nicholas Roe’s “Coleridge’s Watchman Tour” *Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 21, Spring 2003, pp.35-46.

<sup>149</sup> In that letter, Coleridge confesses to Sheridan that he is “puzzled” by the phrase “popular subject.” He proceeds to speculate whether Sheridan was referring to “a fictitious or domestic subject, or one founded on well-known History.” Coleridge cites the “four most popular tragedies of Shakespeare” as “either fictitious, or drawn from Histories and parts of History unknown to Many.” Then he acknowledges that the “impression from Schiller’s ‘Fiesco’ is weak compared to that produced by his ‘Robbers.’” He concludes this speculation by surmising that with such productions as *The Robbers* and Shakespeare’s tragedies, “[t]he Spectators come with a prepared Interest” which perhaps speaks to why he ultimately selects Gothic drama as the genre to reorient their interest on a more serious subject matter, that of the slave trade. (Coleridge 304). See letter No.175 “To Richard Brinsley Sheridan” dated Feb. 6th, 1797 in *Collected Letter of Coleridge Vol. 1, 1785-1800*. Ed. Earl Leslie Griggs. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1956. Print.

<sup>150</sup> Coleridge did continue, however, correspondence with Sheridan regarding possibly staging the play, but nothing came of it. He planned to print then either two fragments from the play or the drama in its entirety as the second volume in his third edition of his poems (See letter to Cottle dated 18th of Feb, 1798). He also considered publishing it alongside *The Borderers*. The two fragments “The Foster-Mother’s Tale” and “The Dungeon” eventually did appear in *Lyrical Ballads*.

suggest that Coleridge wrote *Osorio* with Siddons in mind for the lead role (a point that will be covered in greater detail in the final chapter of this dissertation).<sup>151</sup> Moreover, similar to the manner in which Wordsworth and Baillie structure the dramaturgy of their plays to both play to and critique the celebrity apparatus amplified by gothic drama, Coleridge's gothic drama plays to an audience craving shock and sensation. *Osorio* centers on two brothers, Albert and Osorio, who both love Maria. Albert was originally betrothed to Maria, but driven by jealousy, Osorio petitions his friend and servant Ferdinand to murder Albert, though he is unable to do so, and Albert is stolen aboard a slave ship for several years. The play begins with the return of Albert to Granada during the reign of King Philip II, when all Moors were forbidden to wear any religious garb associated with Islam. Yet Albert defies this edict and disguises himself in Moresco robes aligning himself with the subjected population. He concocts a plan to evoke remorse in his brother by means of showing him a painting of the failed assassination. Osorio, on the other hand, has been trying to win Maria's favor, but she has been lost in deep melancholia since Albert's disappearance. Osorio, then, concocts a plan to hire a strange wizard (Albert), who is known to have the power to "bring the dead to life"--in an fantastical incantation performance where he directs the wizard to conjure up a portrait of Maria, the same portrait that she gave to Albert, but was recovered by Ferdinand during the attempted assassination. Osorio intends this conjuring act to be the final proof that Maria requires to let the memory of Albert go. However, the real trick occurs in the incantation scene when Albert switches the portrait Osorio gives him for the picture of the assassination, render all present—Osorio, Maria and the brother's father Valez—awe-

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<sup>151</sup> This might account for the prominence of Maria's speeches, unless he had Alhandra in mind for Siddons, which also could have been a possibility given her roles in *The Fair Penitent* and *Macbeth*. Additionally, a year prior to composing *Osorio*, Coleridge, in collaboration with Charles Lamb, published a sonnet, "To Mrs. Siddons" in *The Morning Chronicle* December 29th, 1794 where he praised the actress's powers of eliciting sympathy writing—"Thou, SIDDONS, meltest my sad heart."

struck. Yet the picture of the assassination is not enough to evoke remorse in Osorio, and Albert, still disguised as the wizard, is arrested and taken to a dungeon. Osorio then dispatches his friend, believing that he conspired with the Wizard. His death, because Ferdinand is a Moor, incites anger and the thirst for vengeance in the Moor community, especially in his wife Alhadra, who like Albert and her husband, has been treated with the cruelty of a slave and discriminated against because of her “complexion.” The climax of the drama takes place in a dungeon as Albert reveals his true identity to Maria and Osorio. And though Osorio is quick to express his guilt, he is slain by Alhadra in a cruel act of vengeance. As Bertrand Evans rightfully points out, Wordsworth’s and Coleridge’s plays “complement each other by approaching the same problem from opposite directions. Both are analytical studies of remorse” (220). And like other gothic dramas, *Osorio* incorporates similar tropes: medieval catholic superstition and tyranny, disguised figures, lecherous conniving aristocrats, gothic castles and mysterious scenes of sorcery, dungeons and murders in the name of retributive justice. Yet where Wordsworth appropriates the gothic to address the issue of rampant poverty throughout England, Coleridge’s drama remediates his political commentary on the slave trade into “some popular” medium.

Coleridge uses a medieval tableau to stage the Revolutionary politics of the 1790s. His rebellion against the oppressive regime of the Spanish Inquisition mirrors the revolutionary politics of the 1790s. Writing on the function of the Gothic after the French Revolution and England’s subsequent war with France, Robert Miles points out that “[r]epresentations of profligate European aristocrats or Inquisitorial dungeons could be seen as patriotic attacks on the lamentable state of manners and society across the channel or they could be coded as assaults on aristocracy and institutional despotism everywhere (qtd. in Taylor 107).<sup>152</sup> *Osorio* can be seen as

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<sup>152</sup> See George Taylor’s *The French Revolution and the London Stage 1798-1805*.

a coded assault on the aristocracy and on the institutional despotism of both the English government and religion. The persecution of Moors in the play is akin to that of the Reformers that Coleridge was rallying against in his lectures on politics and religion. During this time Coleridge had been reading from Robert Watson's *The History of the Reign of Philip the Second, King of Spain* (2 vol 1774). Watson's historiography most likely resonated with him not only regarding the internal political, religious, and racial unrest between the Islamic moors and the Christians, but perhaps also the colonial and imperialistic history behind Philip's conquests abroad. It is noteworthy that in 1796 England had just entered into war with Spain, and not unsurprisingly *The Watchman* is riddled with references to foreign intelligence from Spain, which paints a complex geopolitical struggle in which Coleridge was intellectually engaged. In Issue No. V (Saturday, April 2, 1796), for instance, he compares the luxury of gold and silver that make Spain a rich nation with the need to toil in unnatural labor, noting that "its riches are its bane" (134). There are several references to trade, commerce, and marine battles. He talks of Spain's colonial holdings in Peru and Mexico, and their importance to Spain's commerce. And in No. IX (Thursday, May 5th 1796), Coleridge makes clear that Britain's own commerce benefits in the "Nerves of war and the Splendours of peace" (278). Thus these and other entries in *The Watchman* provide fruitful current events on which to base in his drama "on some popular subject," while maintaining the political objective of dramatizing "On the Slave Trade."

Other popular dramas at the time that represented the slave trade for abolitionist audiences were George Colman the Younger's comic opera *Inkle and Yarico* (1787) and his tragedy *The Africans; or War, Love and Duty* (1808).<sup>153</sup> Julie A. Carlson has argued that these

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<sup>153</sup> *Inkle and Yarico* appeared several times during the 1795-1796 and 1796-1797 seasons. Moreover, several other theatrical productions featured middle-eastern Orientalist characters during these seasons. One of the most popular was *Mahmoud: or, The Prince of Persia* at the Drury Lane. This melodrama (as it is listed in *The London Stage, 1660-1800*, since the term Gothic Drama has been assigned by modern scholars) enjoyed fifteen performances in the

two plays “situate their analysis of slavery within a love/marriage plot, a common device of abolitionist literature that ostensibly humanizes slaves for British audiences, by showing that beneath difference of skin, good human hearts are all the same” (181).<sup>154</sup> Carlson goes on to point out that “by stressing the parallels between the predicaments of British wives and African slaves, these productions are said to broaden sympathy for slaves by comparing their situation to a form of subjection more familiar to British audiences” (182).

*Osorio* draws heavily from the well of England’s colonial efforts and the anxiety of Spain’s entrance into the war with France. The challenge for Coleridge was to showcase the concrete effects of these events through a sensationalist form of drama that was not moralistic melodrama. The key to overcoming this challenge was David Hartley. For Coleridge “Hartleyan theory provided a psychological account and justification of benevolence by showing how the necessary workings of the associational mechanisms inevitably transformed self-interest into a disinterested benevolence towards others and converted love of self into love of one’s family and friends, and thence in widening circles to love of mankind” (CC LXi). Coleridge gives an account of this in the third lecture on *Revealed Religion*: “Jesus knew our Nature—and that expands like the circles of a Lake—the Love of our Friends, parents, and Neighbours lead[s] us to the love of our Country to the love of all Mankind. The intensity of private attachment encourages, not prevents, universal philanthropy” (CC 163). Both “On the Slave Trade” and *Osorio* dramatize the need for domestic affections while exposing the failures of abstract philosophical reasoning, which removes the individual from present material reality. As Paul Magnuson has suggested, the majority of action that occurs in *Osorio* takes place in the form of

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1795-1796 season alone.

<sup>154</sup> See “Race and Profit in British Theater” in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theater*, specifically pages 175-188.

dreams, reveries, and staged fictions. He goes on to argue that the play erects a world where “human action is based on dreams and not on the realities of history” (64).<sup>155</sup> Reeve Parker has recently pointed out the drama’s overabundance of tropes of disguise and deception—e.g., “trick, sport, imposter, charm, spell, magic, wizardry, painting, dreams, fancy, frame, apparel, robe, garments” (114). With Coleridge’s public performances as a lecturer in mind, *Osorio* juxtaposes illusions and reality—such as Albert’s dual identities of slave/prince, Moor/Christian, and wizard/mortal and the concrete reality of racial persecution suffered by the Moor characters Alhadra and Ferdinand in contrast to Maria’s “sweet visions.”

*Osorio* continues to follow yet another thread from the lecture, that of the motif of disease. In “The Breakdown of Moral Order in Coleridge’s *Osorio*,” George Erving argues that “the profound alienation brought about by Albert’s dual identity and his unintentional contribution to a state of generalized violence makes him the first mariner Coleridge cast alone on a wide wide sea” (52).<sup>156</sup> With respect to *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Tim Fulford and Debbie Lee have pointed out tropes associated with disease, specifically yellow fever, interpreting the Mariner as aboard an actual slave ship and the death of the crew a product of yellow fever. Lee explains that

early medical studies nearly always referred to yellow fever as a Caribbean disease, and since the Caribbean was synonymous with the slave trade and colonial slavery, yellow fever itself became intimately tied to the physical and philosophical effects of slavery. Together, the medical study of yellow fever and the debate on the abolition of the slave trade and of slavery kindled a series of specific concerns—especially among British

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<sup>155</sup> See Magnuson, Paul. *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue*. Princeton UP, 1988. Print.

<sup>156</sup> Erving, George. “The Breakdown of Moral Order in Coleridge’s *Osorio*.” *Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 16, Winter 2000, pp 49-55. Print.

writers—about what happened when “foreign” matter, or “foreigners,” became part of the physical or political body. (676)<sup>157</sup>

In the lectures on *Revealed Religion* and “On the Slave Trade,” Coleridge uses an epidemiological discourse to describe the surge of luxuries imported from foreign lands that contribute to the perpetuation of atrocities suffered by those enslaved: “the continuance of these abominations depends on the will of those who consume the produce of the Trade. And is not he more particularly the Consumer who administers to others the means of providing themselves with these pestilent Luxuries?” (*Lecture on Revealed Religion* 6, Coleridge 226), whereas in the “On the Slave Trade” Coleridge argues that “the polished Citizen lies framing unreal Wants, and diverts the pain of Vacancy by the pestilent inventions of luxury” (236). Thus individuals are disillusioned and diseased by the sensuality of “unreal wants” and attempt ultimately to satiate bourgeois boredom with luxury items—“gold, diamonds, silks, muslins & calicoes for fine Ladies and Prostitutes. Tea to make a pernicious Beverage, Porcelain to drink it from, and salt-petre for the making of gunpowder with which we may murder the poor inhabitants who supply all these things” (226).<sup>158</sup> Here, as in “On the Slave Trade,” Coleridge paints a clear commodity chain analysis of this market economy. Indeed then, participating in the slave trade perpetuates the imaginary identity of a “sensible Englishman or Woman,” brought on by “imaginary wants.”

Following this thread, the unintended consequences of Albert’s actions (and by default the

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<sup>157</sup> Debbie Lee, Patrick Keane, and JR Ebbatson view the poem as an indictment of British maritime expansion where the central act of the ancient mariner, the shooting of the albatross, may be a symbolic rehearsal of colonial expansion and the enslavement of native people. Other critics have read Coleridge’s strong opposition to the slave-trade and his objections to exploitative colonial expansion in the poem: see Malcolm Ware, “Coleridge’s ‘Spectre-bark’: a Slave Ship?”, *PQ*, 40 (1961) 589-93; William Empson, “The Ancient Mariner”, *Critical Quarterly*, 6 (1964) 298-319; J.R. Ebbatson, “Coleridge’s Mariner and the Rights of Man”, *SIR*, 11 (1972) 171-206; and Tim Fulford’s essay “Slavery and Superstition in the Supernatural Poems” in *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*. Edited by Lucy Newlyn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000. 45-58. Print.

<sup>158</sup> In the published version of the lecture on the slave trade in *The Watchman*, Coleridge insists that “parliamentary orators have endeavoured to conceal the deformities of a commerce, which is blotched all over with one leprosy of evil” (136).

Mariner's) can be linked with the virtual sensibility novel-reading women participate in when they "[weep] over Goethe while sipping tea sweetened with the blood of a slave," for they are blind to the vast network of commodities and the stories behind each one of those items.

### **Slavery and the Imagination**

The dramaturgical power of Albert's dual identity lies in his disguise as a wizard endowed with the power to "bring the dead to life again." Such powers are linked with Coleridge's own oratorical powers to bring the dead back to life again by expanding his auditors' imagination. Indeed, death pervades the lecture as it appears aboard merchant ships, in plantation fields, city streets and in hospitals. Albert possesses this same haunting presence best exemplified in the second act of the play with Ferdinand's description of Albert, a description that is bathed in the poetics of gothic sublime imagery:

...of late I have watch'd

A Stranger, that lives nigh, still picking Weeds--

Now in the Swamp, now on the Walls of the ruin,

Now clamb'ring, like a runaway Lunatic,

Up to the summit of our highest Mount.

I have watch'd him at it morning-tide and noon,

Once in the Moonlight. Then I stood so near,

I heard him mutt'ring o'er the plant. A Wizard!

Some gaunt Slave, prowling out for dark employments (2.1.126-134).

To the watchful gaze of Osorio's henchman, Albert appears to be strangely present across all space and time, traversing the tallest mountain, materializing in swamps at one moment then in ruins the next, throughout all hours of the day and night. His ubiquity remains a product of

superstition as Ferdinand calls him a wizard, and then yokes that designation with “gaunt Slave.”<sup>159</sup> To refer to him as a wizard places Albert in tune with Shakespeare’s Prospero and his slave Caliban and brings to the surface the connection between illusion and reality.

Fundamentally, the theme of slavery operates in the play on two levels: the physical effects of slavery trade and the mental bondage of what Coleridge calls in the sixth lecture on *Revealed Religion* “heart-enslaving guilt.” In this first exchange between Albert and his brother Osorio we see the raw psychopolitics of slavery, the guilt-ridden heart, and break through the disguised surface. As Osorio tells Albert of his unrequited love for Maria and the plan he concocts to obtain her love, he asks Osorio if the man she once loved has died by Osorio’s hand. Enraged by the question, Osorio responds irascibly: “I’ll dash thee to the Earth, if thou but think’st it. / Thou Slave! thou Galley-slave! thou Mountebank! / I’ll leave thee to the hangman! (2.2.92-94). The invocation of “Galley-slave” reinforces the signifiers of colonial slavery, an epithet deployed as a rhetorical reduction of humanity. Coleridge wrote in *The Courier* that “A slave is a person perverted into a Thing; Slavery therefor is not so properly a deviation from justice as an absolute subversion of all morality.” As a subversion of morality the slave trade transformed British mariners into “rather shadows in their appearance of real men” (Lecture on the Slave Trade, WW 238). Osorio hurls the racial epithet because of his own “heart-enslaving guilt” for betraying his brother. That betrayal, in the most obvious sense, harks back to the importance of domestic affections, and thus the tragic irony of the play is that Osorio sees Albert as a slave and not his brother, when the aim of “On the Slave Trade” and the lectures on *Revealed Religion* are to see even those enslaved as brothers.

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<sup>159</sup> A poem published under the name of “GAUNT” appeared in the fourth issue of *The Watchman*, 25 Mar. 1796. There seems to be some debate as to whether this poem was written by Coleridge; if he did write it, it would place this act in common with Wordsworth’s who signed a poem in *The Morning Post* Mortimer at the time he was writing *The Borderers*.

This dialectic of physical and mental bondage is first developed in the opening scene of the play. The first scene opens on the shores of Granada with Maria talking with Velez, the father of Osorio and Albert, in a scene reminiscent of Miranda looking out on the ship being dashed on the shores of Prospero's island. In *Orosio* there is no moving accident on which to lament, Maria's gaze though fixed outwardly on the "skiey tints" and "green Ocean," is turned inward to melancholy scenes of a feigned existence where she conjures "sweet visions" of Albert to "live o'er again / all past hours of delight" (1.1.24). Maria later describes herself as "From morn to night I am myself a dreamer— / And slight things bring on me the idle mood" (1.1.301-302). Maria's "Sweet visions" and "idle mood" are contrasted by Velez's very real nightmares "throng'd with swarthy faces," where he is plagued by the image of "[t]he Merchant-ship, in which his Son [Albert] was captured" (1.1.65-66). After which, we are told that Osorio "roamed the coast of Afric" (1.1.91) and "fought the Moorish fiends / who took and murder'd" Albert (1.1.137-138). Maria's visions and Albert's abduction richly echo the dialectic of consuming fictive media and the concrete reality of the horrors of the slave trade. And yet, just as in the lecture where the system of commerce exploits both Englishmen and Africans alike, Granada, like Bristol, is home to Moors who are the victims of racial prejudice.

With the arrival of the Moor Alhadra in the same scene, Maria's penchant for retreating into an idle mood filled with a pleasant melancholia is juxtaposed yet again with the real vicissitudes of racism. We learn that Alhadra, along with her husband, was cast as a "nursing Mother / Into a dungeon" solely for her "complexion" by the Inquisitor, Francesco (1.1.208-209). Her monologue detailing the mental and physical torture she endured while imprisoned in utter darkness, with "black air / [that] was a toil to breathe," is a tale too horrible for Maria to hear, to which Alhadra responds:

What was it then to suffer? 'Tis most right,  
 That such as you should hear it. Know you not,  
 What Nature makes you mourn, she bids you heal?  
 Great evils ask great passions to redress them,  
 And Whirlwinds fitliest scatter pestilence. (1.1.228-232)

Maria lacks the experiential knowledge to comprehend the magnitude of suffering one endures through indiscriminate racial persecution, and must bear Alhadra's woeful tale as the Wedding Guest of *Rime* must—"Tis most right / That such as you should hear it." Alhadra's admonishing corresponds to the rhetorical function of Coleridge's lecture on the slave trade: the audience must hear this tale, and be transported from the coffeehouse through the vicissitudes of the triangle trade industry and return with an enlightened sympathetic imagination. Likewise, Maria, immersed in dreams and sweet visions, must awaken to the brutal reality of racial injustice. Shunning the realities of history, she deliberately chooses to inhabit a dream world rather than confront Albert's absence with fortitude, "For grief / Doth love to dally with fantastic shapes" as Naomi, the moor, states at the end of the play. And to this she adds the antidote: "'Tis thus by Nature / Wisely ordain'd, that so excess of sorrow / Might bring its own cure with it" (5.1.24-26). Maria's emotional expenditure pulls her from material reality, something that she must be made conscious of through Alhadra's tale of persecution when Alhadra explains further to Maria, "There is no room in my heart for puling Love-tales" (1.1.331-332). And as we shall later see, Alhadra's conviction regarding "Great evils," portends the demise of the reign of the Inquisitor through the metaphor of a negative centrifugal movement—Whirlwinds fitliest scatter pestilence."

With Albert's abduction, Coleridge inverts the historical circumstances of the slave trade.

In doing so, he dramatizes the rhetorical strategy at the end of “On the Slave Trade” when he asks his auditors: “Would you choose that Slave Merchants should incite an intoxicated Chieftain to make War on your tribe to murder your wife and Children before your face and drag them with yourself to the Market” (247). Albert, a white Christian, has been ripped from his family by “savage faces” taken aboard a merchant ship and forced to labor, ostensibly in Africa. It is not entirely clear where Albert was taken, nor do we know for sure if Osorio in fact was battling Moors on the African coast in search of his brother, but that indeterminacy fits within the structural nuances of gothic drama in the 1790s and plays on the sympathetic imagination of Coleridge’s audience.<sup>160</sup> As Coleridge reveals in the lecture, even Englishmen were exploited and enslaved, and would oftentimes be found in the streets of that colonial outpost, “ulcerated” and unable to return home to England. We might understand then Albert’s presence— “some gaunt slave prowling for dark employments”—as a ghostly reminder of how this trade reduces victims to “a mere shadow of their appearance” as he haunts the margins of Granada. If the play opens with the return of Albert on the margins of society, then the location of his cottage, described as containing “Flowers and plants of various kinds,” can be seen as a place of retirement, a space of convalescence for the trauma he has suffered, and not simply as a private locale to hatch a plan to discover the truth of Maria’s infidelity and evoke remorse in his brother for his treachery. However, unlike Albert, Alhadra and her husband have been imprisoned and tortured based “solely on [their] complexion.” These concrete details, which are based in reality, are juxtaposed with the sweet visions and nightmares that distance characters from the familial treachery represented in Osorio’s act of ridding Granada of Albert and the inquisitor’s actions of

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<sup>160</sup> Only in the preface that Coleridge drafted as an addition to the mss5 and 3 do we learn that Osorio has been shipwrecked and had written separate letters to Osorio and his family. Osorio then destroys both letters and sends assassins to intercept Albert. See pages 149-151 in *Osorio: Appendix*.

imprisoning Alhadra and her husband. This is further supported by an actual physical distancing of Albert's capture: Velez says to Maria that "We might almost have seen it from our house-top" (1.1.68). That Velez might have seen it symbolizes the physical (and emotional) distance English audiences occupy in relation to the trade: they are far removed from it, whether from sweet visions that they willfully use to distract themselves or through the sheer physical distance of the atrocities. Yet Albert's presence in Granada to discover the truth has set in motion a chain of events that eventually leads to the demise of Osorio and Alhadra's husband, Ferdinand, as acknowledged by George Erving, making his character a protean vessel for Coleridge as orator, exploited Englishmen, and the well-intentioned coffee-house politicians.

Where the lecture unfolds the cumulative agency of space, media and food, *Osorio* substitutes vapid media consumption for the aesthetic function of portraits and pictures, objects which mediate emotional experiences. For instance, when Osorio returns Maria's portrait to Albert to be used in the incantation scene—a "trick" invented by Osorio—the stage direction reads "*Alone, gazes passionately at the portrait*" (95). An icon that elicits such absorption represents the bondage of desire, and such bondage corresponds to the vapid sensibility media evokes, even in our hero. Moreover, an accoutrement such as a portrait of Maria, especially if played by Siddons, would assume a wider cultural meaning as the slave-like devotion to celebrity memorabilia regency audiences were party to.<sup>161</sup> Whereas the picture, which presents the assassination of Albert, is designed to evoke remorse in Osorio, Maurice, Albert's faithful companion, emphasizes the picture's superior aesthetic functionality when he describes Albert as "a painter—one of many fancies— / You can call up past deeds, and make them live / On the

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<sup>161</sup> There exists here, as in *The Borderers*, a strong connection to physiognomy. We know from an extract from Coleridge's letter to John Thelwall dated 19th of November 1796 that he makes connection between physiognomy and intelligence: "Your portrait of yourself interest me. As to me, my face, unless when animated by immediate eloquence, expresses great sloth and great (indeed almost idiotic) good nature."

blank Canvas—” (2.2.18-20). Here, the superstition associated with Albert’s power as a wizard to bring the dead to life again, is presented as a real power—“the truth painting power of the imagination.” Indeed, we know that these two objects are of great significance to the author given that an alternate title under consideration was *Remorse; Or, The Portrait and the Picture*.<sup>162</sup>

The portrait of Maria and the picture of Albert’s assassination operate as different yet corresponding dramaturgical cruxes. Nowhere is this more prominent than in the spectacular altar scene of Act III. Osorio requests that the wizard perform a parlor trick to show Maria that Albert has in fact died by making her portrait appear—the last object she gave to Albert before he disappeared—and thus freeing her to marry Osorio. The “trick” of this scene is a *mise en abyme* on par with the mousetrap in *Hamlet*. Yet instead of Greek tragedy as the medium to “catch the conscience of the King,” Albert swaps the portrait of Maria for a picture of his (failed) assassination, what Albert describes as “[a] picture which will wake the Hell within him, / And rouse a fiery Whirlwind in his Conscience” (2.2.162-163). There is no supernatural agency in this gothic drama, simply the illusion of it through the *mise en abyme*. Indeed, *Osorio* appropriates high gothic spectacle only to critique it, and thereby highlights the costs of an improperly stimulated imagination.<sup>163</sup>

Albert (posing as a wizard) begins the incantation by erecting a concentric model of the celestial and terrestrial spheres as he summons his soul:

Soul of Albert

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<sup>162</sup> Regarding the title, in MS 3rd Coleridge added “Remorse” in pencil at the head of the page. He also wrote in pencil preceding the text, “The Portrait and the Picture.” It is curious that when Coleridge transitions to the discussion *Bertram* in *Biographical Literaria*, he continues to explore the dramaturgical use of a portrait versus a picture.

<sup>163</sup> One of the most famous examples of this brand of spectacle that was growing in use and popularity was Matthew Lewis’s *The Wood Daemon; or ‘The Clock Has Struck’* (stage in 1808 at the Drury Lane), which featured the appearance of the wood daemon in a dragon-drawn chariot.

Hear our soft suit, and heed my milder spells:  
 So may the Gates of Paradise unbarr'd  
 Cease thy swift toils. Since haply thou art one  
 Of that innumerable company,  
 Who in broad Circle, lovelier than the Rainbow,  
 Girdle this round Earth in a dizzy motion,  
 With noise too vast and constant to be heard;  
 Fitliest unheard! For, O, ye numberless  
 And rapid Travellers! what ear unstun'd,  
 What sense unmadden'd, might bear up against,  
 The rushing of your congregated Wings?  
 Even Now your living Wheel turns o'er my head! (3.1.11-24)

While domestic affections begin with the love of self and expand outwards, the angelic forms that “[g]irdle this round Earth” provide a powerful image of what I am referring to as “centrifugal ethics.” The “Living Wheel” turning over the head of Albert (as Wizard) initiates a centrifugal movement from the will of the sorcerer to the outer celestial reaches, which then causes a centripetal movement back to earth, but seemingly at a tragic cost:

Ye, as ye pass, toss high the desert Sands,  
 That roar and whiten, like a burst of Waters,  
 A sweet appearance, but a dread illusion,  
 To the parch'd Caravan that roams at night.  
 And ye build up on the becalmed Waves,  
 That Whirling Pillar, which from Earth to Heav'n

Stands vast, and moves in blackness. Ye too split  
 The Ice-mount, and with fragments many and huge,  
 Tempest the new-thaw'd Sea, whose sudden Gulphs  
 Suck in, perchance, some Lapland Wizard's Skiff,  
 Then round and round the Whirlpool's marge ye dance,  
 Till from the blue-swoln corse, the soul toils out,  
 And joins your mighty Army. (3.1.25-43)

The incantation follows a similar geographic trajectory as "On the Slave Trade," though in reverse. We are taken from the heavens to the "desart" to the sea, encountering a caravan and a single "Lapland Wizard." John Livingston Lowes identified the textual fragments from Coleridge's collaborative ventures with Southey in this incantation speech, most notably *Joan of Arc* and *The Fall of Robespierre*. The luckless fisherman that Lowes points to in both *Osorio* and *Joan of Arc* are indeed casualties of a natural disaster, but they also signal for us vibrations of actions. Here, the reverberations of actions create "A sweet appearance, but a dread illusion" and the whirlpools swept up by the wings of angels, inadvertently lead to the death of an innocent bystander, the "Lapland Wizard." On the formal level of the dramaturgy, this description parallels the actual unintended consequential deaths associated with the arrival of Albert on the shores of Granada.<sup>164</sup> The incantation, however, corresponds equally to the function of the imagination Coleridge writes about in "On the Slave Trade," where English consumers of slave trade commodities lack the ability to see the final causes embedded within their voluptuous actions: "with our fleshy eye should we behold what even now truth-painting Imagination should

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<sup>164</sup> We find the poetic imagery of the incantation to be a repository of images later used in the *Rime* and "Kubla Kahn," two other key texts in the development of Coleridge's theory of the imagination.

exhibit to us—instead of sweetmeat tears and Blood, and Anguish—and instead of Music groaning and the loud Peals of the Lash” (248).

As high spectacle, Albert’s incantation, in addition to the two different modes of painting, features eerie music played on a glass harmonica, a rapturous chorus, and burning incense. Such stage effects evoke in Velez a cherished memory of Albert as a small child. Velez is reminded that “Albert lov’d sad Music from a child,” and that he had followed into the woods “A blind Boy / Who breath’d into a pipe of Sycamore / Some strangely-moving notes” (3.1.59, 62-64). Though on the surface this may be read as an enduring memory, its deeper meaning is suggestive of the hypnotic power of the coalescence of media and space, what can lead one to be estranged from society. And this susceptibility to melancholy media is arguably infantile since Velez’s moment of nostalgia terminates with a description of Albert as having outgrown his clothes: “Methinks, I see him now, as he then look’d— / His infant dress was grown too short for him, / Yet he still wore it” (3.1.71-73). Maria’s reaction, on the other hand, gives voice to the critique of mediation through a more explicit example of Hartleyan associationism: “This is some trick—I know it is a trick— / Yet my weak Fancy, and these bodily creepings / Would fain give substance to the shadow” (3.1.114). This echoes Coleridge’s one-step-further brand of Hartleyanism when he claims in a letter to Southey to believe in the “corporality of thought.” Maria perhaps epitomizes the failings of an imagination improperly stimulated, or what she diagnoses as a product of her “weak Fancy.”<sup>165</sup> She does, however, apprehend delusion in Osorio’s ill intentions in the subsequent act as she associates the swift changes in his countenance during the incantation scene with the tricks of an actor:

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<sup>165</sup> Coleridge went on to make a clear distinction in *Biographia Literaria* between imagination and fancy. He defines fancy as “no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word Choice. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.”

Saw you his countenance?

How rage, remorse, and scorn, and stupid fear,

Displac'd each other with swift interchanges?

If this were all assum'd, as you believe,

He must needs be a most consummate Actor;

And have so vast a power to deceive me,

I never could be safe. And why assume

The semblance of such execrable feelings. (4.2.109-116)

Reeve Parker points out that “the discourse about pantomime that pervades Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment aesthetic debate is behind Maria’s vehement excoriation to Velez of Osorio’s ‘low imposture’” (113). It is possible that such “low imposture” finds another home in the imposture that Coleridge associates with the “Friends of Freedom” and Christians in his lectures on politics and religion.<sup>166</sup>

Maria’s comment on acting characterizes spoken eloquence as a powerful form of deception, which would connect her remark to patriots like the speeches Pitt and Burke were making in the 1790s.<sup>167</sup> Later, in *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge writes that such speakers would “mesmerize” their audiences. Tim Fulford has remarked that “Coleridge was not alone in seeing Pitt as an animal magnetist” and that “[a]nimal magnetism was inextricably linked in most British minds with France and its Revolution (57-58).<sup>168</sup> In one of his political lectures of 1795,

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<sup>166</sup> This reference to “a most consummate actor,” however, is eventually excised in *Remorse*. Perhaps this was not due to Coleridge forming a more sympathetic understanding of the power of actors, but instead because the dramaturgy in *Remorse* shifts from an emphasis on the “swift interchanges” to an emphasis on the epistemology of pictorial objects.

<sup>167</sup> See Coleridge’s remarks on Burke in the second issue of *The Watchman*

<sup>168</sup> Fulford, Tim. “Conducting the Vital Fluid: The Politics and Poetics of Mesmerism in the 1790s.” *Studies in Romanticism* 43.1 (2004): 57-78. Web.

Coleridge argued that “WILLIAM PITT, the great political Animal Magnetist...has most foully worked on the diseased fancy of Englishman...thrown the nation into a feverish slumber, and is now bringing it to a crisis which may convulse mortality.”<sup>169</sup> Politicians such as Pitt, Coleridge decided, circulated a pestilence much like the yellow fever that filled merchant slave ships.<sup>170</sup>

Fulford goes on to suggest that in *Osorio* Coleridge set out a social solution that involved mesmerism, observing that “[t]he play explores the way in which ‘wizardry’ becomes a means of gaining power in a culture in which one social and ethnic group is subordinated to another” and points out that Albert, disguised as a wizard, appears to the same eerie music of the glass harmonica that was Mesmer's trademark sound effect. Fulford concludes that “Magnetists and ‘wizards’ [...] work by establishing a public ritual in which cultural, religious and physical boundaries seem to be crossed” (59). And yet, what forces *Osorio* into a mesmeric-like stupor is not merely the elaborate stage effects, nor solely the visual media, but Albert's persistent questioning, which is perhaps best seen as a form of lecturing. Following Velez's melancholy memory of Albert, *Osorio* proclaims falsely—the real acting he performs, not the panoply of emotional states that Maria incorrectly apprehends—that it would be “a joy” to see the body of the voice of the departed. Albert's questions that follow work to strip away *Osorio*'s false sensibility and paint a real picture: “What if his Spirit [did] / Re-enter'd its cold corse, and came upon thee, / With many a stab from many a Murd'rer's poniard?” (3.1.80-82). Albert's description here is arguably the most gothic moment of play, but in this moment it is employed

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<sup>169</sup> Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Lectures 1795 On Politics and Religion*, ed. L. Patton and P. Mann (London and Princeton, N.J.: Routledge and Kegan Paul and Princeton UP, 1971) 328.

<sup>170</sup> In “Slavery and Superstition in the Supernatural Poems,” Tim Fulford explains that Coleridge recalled (in “France: An Ode”) how Britons had been bewitched: “A slavish band,” they did the bidding of a cruel monarch who bound them with “a wizard's wand” (lines 27, 29). He goes on to cite that “Like the French, they were complicit with their oppressors. Brought up for generations to believe in their own inferiority, they were mental slaves who were incapable of independence because they craved a master, and that “those who exploited the people's weakness were magicians, using “wizard spell[s]” to whip them into a mob (45).

to expose Osorio's feigned sentimentalism. At the end of this tirade, with the music and chorus reaching a fever-pitch and a flash appearance of the picture, Osorio, though he orchestrated this trick, falls into "*a state of stupor*" and asks "Where am I?—'Twas a lazy chilliness" (3.1.119). Osorio expects the stage effects to accompany the appearance of the portrait of Maria, but finds instead a space of theatrical spectacle populated with a discourse of real violence and a picture—albeit briefly placed before him—that reduces him to a sickened state ("'Twas a lazy chilliness"), mirroring the chill of selfish horror that sweeps over the auditors of "On the Slave Trade." Perhaps then we can read the act of switching the portrait for the picture as Coleridge's own efforts of reorienting the spatial habitation of his audiences in the lecture and with the publication of *The Watchman*, with the hope that though the latter might circulate within coffee-houses, parlors, and taverns, it would be less ephemeral, and therefore occupy a more permanent position in the individual's mind through morally edifying vibrations.<sup>171</sup>

If the incantation scene afforded Coleridge the opportunity to perform his own "trick," the final act of the play features a more explicit commentary on mental and physical slavery through Albert ventriloquizing Coleridge the lecturer. Albert commenting on the inhumane nature of imprisonment proclaims to Osorio:

And this place my forefathers made for Man!  
 This is the process of our Love and Wisdom  
 To each poor Brother who offends against us—  
 Most innocent, perhaps—and what if guilty?

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<sup>171</sup> Though Coleridge does not speak to this, perhaps it is the mixed form of the periodical, because it includes essays, lectures, poems, and foreign and domestic intelligence that could produce the best vibrations, since Coleridge was conflicted, at that time, about the status of poetry as a luxury. On this topic see Stephen Tedeschi's "Coleridge in Bristol, 1795–1796: Literature, Politics, and the City." *European Romantic Review* 23.2 (2012): 225–45. Web.

Is this the only cure? (5.2.1-5)

Coleridge makes similar claims of fraternity informed by “love and Wisdom” in his lectures on *Revealed Religion*. And yet here he goes on to critique how such institutions infect and debilitate humanity’s natural state:

Each pore and natural outlet shrivell’d up  
 By ignorance and parching poverty;  
 His energies roll back upon his heart,  
 And stagnate and corrupt, ’till chang’d to poison,  
 They break out on him, like a loathsome plague-spot. (5.2.6-10)

He goes on further to suggest the absurdity of such a “cure” and how that answer separates one from domestic affections:

And this is their best cure! uncomforted  
 And friendless solitude, groaning and tears,  
 And savage faces, at the clanking hour,  
 Seen thro’ the steam and Vapours of his Dungeon,  
 By the Lamp’s dismal twilight! (5.2.12-15)

This speech quite clearly echoes Coleridge’s Hartleyan principles of domestic affection while showing the effects of a lack of good intellectual vibrations to temper the “energies” of the imagination with morally sound stimulation. Without such stimulation, the tubes (“every pore and natural outlet”) “stagnate” and the only phenomenological stimulation remaining is a battery of gothic horrors: “solitude, groaning and tears, / And Savage faces” within a darkened prison. Bertrand Evans’s comments on *Remorse* read Coleridge’s profession of lecturing back into this scene. He notes, “It is somehow delightful to find Coleridge, who partially identified himself

with his hero, doing exactly as we would expect—lecturing, even as the assassin approaches. Don Ordonio [Osorio, here, in the 1796 version] is literally talked into repentance by Alvar [Albert, here], whose care is ‘Chiefly, chiefly, brother, my anguish for thy guilt’” (223). Though the names of the characters have changed in *Remorse*, the action of the scene remains unchanged.

Albert and Alhadra’s speeches (and histories) are linked by the repetition of dungeon tales of imprisonment and maltreatment. Where Albert’s character partially encapsulates the exploitation of the Englishmen in the slave trade and the well-intentioned coffeehouse politicians, the character of Alhadra functions as the embodiment of vengeance and retribution, especially amidst the Revolutionary spirit as she leads a mob to storm Osorio’s castle in the final act of the play. According to Gabriel Sealy-Morris, “[i]n the figure of Alhadra, Coleridge seats his most virulent antipathy toward oppression and injustice” (301). Both Albert and Alhadra have endured the physical and psychological tortures of slavery—with Albert this is signaled by the repetitive description of his “gaunt” form. Albert is linked with Alhadra physically as well when he describes his enslavement to Osorio in the dungeon scene in the final act: “as to my complexion / My long imprisonment, the scanty food, / This scar, and the toil beneath a burning sun.” Following his commentary on the inhumane practice of confinement, Albert questions his own brother’s inability to recognize him:

Does then this thin disguise impenetrably  
 Hide Albert from thee? Toil and painful wounds  
 And long imprisonment in unwholesome Dungeons,  
 Have marr’d perhaps, all trace and lineament  
 Of what I was. (5.2.129-133)

Unlike his moorish robes, this “disguise” cannot be removed, as Albert’s appearance has been irrevocably altered through labor and torture. This is the same mechanized labor, if we recall from “On the Slave Trade,” that reduces an individual to a mere object. Coleridge argues there that “variety of employment gives an acuteness of intellect to the negro which the mechanic whom the division of Labour condemns to one simple operation is precluded from obtaining” (240). Alhadra on the other hand complains that “The black air [...] was a toil to breath,” in her “prison house” which parallels Coleridge’s description of what Africans endured aboard slave vessels: “Hot and pestilent vapors arising from confinement...[as they] choake [sic] themselves to prevent respiration” (242). Where Albert is presented as experiencing the physical torture and intellectual deprivation of mechanized labor within the colonial outposts (laboring “underneath the sun”), Alhadra’s character is used to dramatize the horrific claustrophobia experienced aboard slave vessels. Indeed, both characters allow for Coleridge to represent the different sides (and different geographies) of how families are destroyed by the slave trade: wives, mothers, sisters and brothers.

In *Osorio*, Coleridge appears to provide a form of reconciliation for the experiences endured by both Albert and Alhadra. Francesco the Inquisitor the embodiment of the oppressive, antiquated Catholic institution and the character responsible for the persecution of the Moors, is destroyed by the white Christian characters, but by that of the Moors led by Alhadra. This form of social liberation and retributive justice inverts historical circumstances, as the Inquisitor is dragged away to a ship bound for the Barbary Coast (North Africa). Here, Coleridge reimagines the slave ship as a place previously associated with imprisonment, disease, torture, and the corrupt application of the law as a homeward-bound vessel overrun with music and dance:

MOORISH SEAMAN: The Boat is on the Shore, the Vessel waits,

Your wives and Children are already stow'd;  
 I left them prattling of the Barbary Coast,  
 Of Mosks and Minarets, and golden Crescents.  
 Each had her separate dream; but all were gay  
 Dancing in thought to finger-beaten timbrels! (5.1.63-68)

Granada without the oppressive tyranny of the inquisitor will no longer be home to the Moors, as their return perhaps signals for Coleridge the necessity to return the Africans of the slave trade to their rightful homes and families. With respect to Albert, when he reveals his true identity to Osorio, the stage directions support a sublime anagnorisis: “(*drawing back and gazing at Albert with a countenance expressive of at once awe and terror*).” Osorio’s verbal reaction then continues the motif of disease that began in the lectures—“Touch me not, / Touch not pollution, Albert—I will die!” The polluted, diseased state that has stricken Osorio, can be understood as a dark ether that binds the other characters and objects in a complex network of circulation and exchange through the motif of pestilence.<sup>172</sup>

### **Slavery and Consumption: Networks, Circulation, and Disease**

To import a term from Latour’s paper on political ecology, Coleridge “ecologizes” the circulatory networks responsible for such dehumanizing practices as the slave trade. The references to networks and circulation from Latour can be applied here to the circulation of disease and the circulation of sensationalist media and luxury items. Clearly Coleridge has an

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<sup>172</sup> Similar to Wordsworth, Coleridge drafted a preface for his play immediately following the first two completed drafts. In that preface he describes Osorio as “A man who from constitutional Calmness of Appetites is seduced into Pride & the love of Power--by these into Misanthropy to rather a contempt for Mankind—and from thence by the cooperation of Envy & an curiously modified Love for a Beautiful Female (which is nowhere developed in the play) into most atrocious Guilt—/ a man who is in truth a weak man yet always duping himself into the belief that is had a soul of Iron.” See p.150 in *Osorio: Appendix*.

object-oriented network analysis in mind, or a deeper conception of infrastructure, when he lists the following items: “Tea to make a pernicious Beverage, Porcelain to drink it from, and salt-petre for the making of gunpowder with which we may murder the poor inhabitants who supply all these things.” Alhadra’s speech in the final act gives voice to the internal nature that precipitates these vast networks of consumption. Just as the angry mob is about to kill Francesco, the Inquisitor, Maurice pleads with them and asks did not “Mahomet [teach] mercy and forgiveness...If he did not, he needs it for himself!” to which she responds:

Blaspheming fool! The law of Mahomet  
 Was given by him, who fram’d the soul of Man—  
 This the best proof--it fits the soul of Man!—  
 Ambition, Glory, thirst of Enterprize—  
 The deep and stubborn purpose of Revenge,  
 With all the boiling reveries of Pleasure—  
 These grow in the heart, yea, intertwine their roots  
 With its minutest fibers! (5.1.86-93)

Here, we have another Hartleyan description of how repetitive states imprint, or leave traces within the vibratory system. However, in a letter to Robert Southey dated 21 Oct 1794. Coleridge expresses how he attempts to live by what he took in the way of intellectual principles from Hartley and Priestley: “To perceive this and to assent to it as an abstract proposition—is easy—but it requires the most wakeful attentions of the most reflective minds in all moments to bring it into practice—It is not enough that we have once swallowed it—The Heart should have fed upon the truth on Insects on Leaf—till it be tinged with colour, and shew it’s food in every the

minutest fibre.”<sup>173</sup> Coleridge criticized Godwin for looking to private societies as a means of reform rather than being personally “among the poor” and insists that we must “feed on the truth’s of necessity as insects on a leaf, till the whole heart be coloured by their qualities.” This juxtaposition suggests that in *Osorio* Alhadra explains the negative characteristics of the Christian, which echo Coleridge’s lecture in the consumption figuration (“thirst of Enterprize”) and the physical and mental effects of on the vibratory system (“minutest fibers”). Yet the letter of Southey shows how the same consumption metaphor is another concern of the “Lecture on the Slave Trade”—empty philosophizing (abstract proposition”); instead, he advocates a gluttonous consumption of what is good as our daily bread. Perhaps then the reduction of humanity to an insect is an image that assists Coleridge in providing a non-anthropocentric conception of these networked spaces, one that is more in tune with a systems analysis.

The ecological representation of the slave trade within *Osorio* can be found equally in the repetition of circling whirlwinds and the verb “scatter.” Both Albert and Alhadra call forth this force of mobility, first prophetically uttered by Alhadra in the opening scene—“Whirlwinds fitliest scatter pestilence”—and then in the final act when she calls on the Moor mob to “Scatter yourselves, take each a separate way / And move in silence to the house of Velez” (5.1.106-107). These circular actions provides a clear link to Albert’s hope that “Whirlwinds raise a firey conscience.” The incantation speech, as previously noted, describes both circling winds and pillars of whirlpools, where Albert’s Lapland fisherman in his skiff is destroyed, which connects to Alhadra’s wish of an opposite fate: “It were a lot divine in some small Skiff, / Along some

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<sup>173</sup> In a letter to Robert Southey dated 21 Oct 1794, which later became a section within the Introductory Address to *Conciones ad Populum*, Coleridge expresses how he attempts to live by what he took in the way of intellectual principles from Hartley and Priestley: “To perceive this and to assent to it as an abstract proposition—is easy—but it requires the most wakeful attentions of the most reflective minds in all moments to bring it into practice—It is not enough that we have once swallowed it—The Heart should have fed upon the truth on Insects on Leaf—till it be tinged with colour, and shew it’s food in every the minutest fibre.”

Ocean's boundless solitude, / To float for ever with a careless course, / And think myself the only Being alive!" (5.1.55-58). Unlike the "wild and various..random gales" (43) with their indiscriminate directionality in a poem such as "Eolian Harp," in *Osorio* these scattering and whirling forces bind networked objects—paintings, music, altars, laws, merchant ships and small skiffs, and actors. Though the audience is reminded of the power behind these networks when Osorio rails back at his captors just before he is carried off stage: "I have strength / With this bare arm, to scatter you like Ashes!" (5.2.66-67). Thus, we might understand then, the mobility of circling forces as having both destructive and ameliorating properties: they work to rid Granada of the oppressive Catholic regime, but can also be associated with a "deep stubborn purpose of Revenge," as is the case with Osorio.

Whether whirlwinds or Vapor, there is a pervading sense of a polluted ether that binds the characters in *Osorio* to some "Tartarean Confederacy." *Osorio* effaces the geographical remoteness of the slave trade and the colonies by bringing slaves into the microcosm of Granada, and ostensibly the London stage. Where the lecture on the slave trade and its publication in *The Watchman* work to bring an awareness of the connection between the media and food commodities and the perpetuation of the slave trade, *Osorio* dramatizes the injustices of the slave trade and the dampening effects of sensationalist media experiences, while empowering the racial minority, even giving their star character, Alhadra, the final speech in the play.<sup>174</sup> All of this is done with a philosophy that bears a striking similarity to Latour's actor-network theory and the idea of irreducibility. For Latour, "nothing can be reduced to anything else, nothing can

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<sup>174</sup> In a letter to John Thelwall date Feb. 6th 1797, the same date on which Coleridge wrote to Sheridan regarding "a tragedy on some popular subject," he complains that "[m]ost of our patriots are taver & parlour Patriots" and that Thelwall's "nerves are exquisite electrometers of Taste." He goes on to apply this term of appreciation to Dorothy Wordsworth in a later letter: "her Taste [is] a perfect electrometer—it bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties & most recondite faults."

be deduced from anything else, everything may be allied to everything else” (205). When Coleridge points to porcelain, gunpowder, pathologies, sugar, novels, and parlor-rooms and taverns, he displays his understanding of the singularity of these objects and their dual positions as both objects and actors. We discover that the coffeehouse—its patrons as well the media and commodities consumed within—are all interconnected. Coffee and sugar, though everyday items even to the laboring poor in the late 18th century, to Coleridge remained luxurious and contributed to the perpetuation of the slave trade. This is why he calls on his audience to abstain from these commodities. But, unlike calls for abstention at the time by other abolitionists, Coleridge’s call reflects a deeper understanding of how an untutored imagination conjures “artificial wants,” which are attached to a spatially inflected sociality: they cultivate a specific brand of English taste habituated by coffee-houses. This is precisely why the publication of “On the Slave Trade in *The Watchman* in 1796, Coleridge’s own periodical, took on a greater level of significance for him, for he believed that that technology was a more permanent form of media than the evanescent political pamphlets and newspapers continually in flux within the coffeehouse. The narrative structure of Coleridge’s lecture, like *Osorio*, operates as a circling vibratory force, developed from Hartley’s philosophical system. As the gyre widens out from the commodities consumed by the coffeehouse patrons, the lecture moves from the ports of Bristol, across the Atlantic to the streets of Jamaica and Barbados, to the shores of West Africa, then back to the coffeehouse and Parliament. Tracing the routes of the triangle trade, Coleridge raises his auditors’ perception of their spatial habituation by attending to the ramifications of their consumption practices. Taking aim at the public and private sphere—spaces such as the coffeehouse, and ultimately the comforts of one’s home—*The Watchman* became the antidote for more perishable forms of media such as “diurnal newspapers” and political pamphlets—

consumed at coffeehouses and alehouses. Thus the coffeehouse continued to maintain a central position for Coleridge as an imagined community, proving that his public persona developed spatially as he continued this adherence to Hartley's theory into his gothic drama, *Osorio*.

## Chapter Four

### *Remorse*: Conjuring of the Science of Shakespeare's Genius

“If Mr. Coleridge had not been the most impressive talker of his age, he would probably have been the finest writer; but he lays down his pen to make sure of an auditor, and mortgages the admiration of posterity for the stare of an idler.”

William Hazlitt, “Spirit of the Age” (1825)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's gothic drama, *Remorse*, is the only tragedy of the day written by a Romantic poet to have achieved great public success during his lifetime. From its opening night on January 23rd, 1813 it saw twenty performances at the Drury Lane and was performed in provincial and American theaters, and saw a revival in 1816.<sup>175</sup> Its production and success came amidst Coleridge's series of lectures on Shakespeare delivered at academic institutions in London. “The Theatrical Register” in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (Feb 1813) advertises *Remorse* as “a tragedy by Mr. Coleridge, known to the public by his lectures on Shakespeare and Milton at the Royal Institution, &c and as a poet of no ordinary genius and acquirements.” The play was staged during a time when, as Byron describes, “a kind of rage” for Coleridge had begun.

Recounting the opening night of his play in *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge writes

I can conscientiously declare, that the complete success of the *Remorse* on the first night of its representation did not give me as great or as heart-felt a pleasure, as the observation that the pit and boxes were crowded with faces familiar to me, though of individuals whose names I did not know, and of whom I knew nothing, but that they had attended one or other of my courses of lectures. (*BL* 175)

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<sup>175</sup> *Remorse* experienced a run longer than any other new play that season—longer indeed, than any new tragedy since the time Coleridge first submitted it in 1797, except for *Pizarro*, Sheridan's adaptation of Kotzebue.

The audience applauded similarly when he concluded his lecture at the Surrey Institution on the Tuesday following the opening night of *Remorse* (CC 1050). Henry Crabb Robinson records in his diary that “He [Coleridge] was received with three Rounds of Applause on entering the lecture room and very loudly applauded at the close” (CC 497). Indeed, Coleridge had achieved a level of celebrity as a public lecturer and dramatist.

While lecturing at institutions such as the Surrey, Coleridge perfected a performative style that was spontaneous yet personal, a style derived, in part, from the naturalistic acting methods made popular by David Garrick and Sarah Siddons. Jon Klancher has pointed out that the prose style of *The Friend*, the periodical Coleridge published during this time, presented a complex “connected” style as an “audience forming strategy to counter all other strategies being deployed in the early nineteenth century” (152-153). Coleridge deploys a similar rhetorical mode in several of his lectures. In fact, many of the spontaneous and entertaining illustrations and personal anecdotes are excerpted directly from *The Friend*.<sup>176</sup> We might surmise then that because the pit and boxes were “crowded with faces familiar,” this demonstrates the success *The Friend* had at establishing a personal connection with auditors. Moreover, Coleridge extended these intimate moments of private authenticity to the theatricality of lecturing. His lecture on Milton, for instance, was described in the following manner:

When Coleridge came into the Box there were several Books laying. He opened two or three of them silently and shut them again after a short inspection. He then paused & leaned His head on His hand, and at last said, He had been thinking of a word to express the distinct character of Milton as a Poet, but not finding one that wd. express it, He

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<sup>176</sup> Given Coleridge’s penchant for borrowing, this should not come as a surprise. Thomas McFarland argues in *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* that “Coleridge’s borrowings are not only real, but so honeycomb his work as to form virtually a mode of composition” (28).

should make one ‘*Ideality*.’ He spoke extempore. (*CC Lectures 1808-1819* 1:liii)

Clearly Coleridge adopts a Garrickesque naturalistic performance mode by first cultivating a sense of anticipation and attention on his, arguably, pantomimic gestural performative body; but secondly, and most important, he renders the private, interior experience of intellectual apprehension as a public performance.<sup>177</sup>

Coleridge’s spontaneity and extemporaneous performances perhaps have something also to do with the power celebrity performers hold over their audiences.<sup>178</sup> Coleridge believed that artistic performances, especially when delivered by someone famous, encircle the auditors within the intellectual will of the speaker. He writes about this in *Biographia Literaria*, in the same section where he describes, coincidentally, the vicissitudes of the literary profession, with respect to reviewers, he instructs them first to steel themselves from “personal enmity behind the mask of anonymous criticism” and from the

abuse and ridicule in a Review, in order to make it saleable...but lastly and chiefly, for the excitement and temporary sympathy of feeling, which the recitation of the poem by an admirer, especially if he be at once a warm admirer and a man of acknowledged celebrity, calls forth in the audience. For this is really a species of Animal Magnetism, in which the enkindling Reciter, by perpetual comment of looks and tones, lends his own will and apprehensive faculty to his Auditors. They *live* for the time within the dilated sphere of his intellectual Being. (*BL* 239)

This power that enshrines the auditors within the same “apprehensive faculty” parallels

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<sup>177</sup> To some, these self-conscious theatrical moments of spontaneity caused him to veer off script too frequently. Reports from HCR of Coleridge’s 1808 and 1811-1812 lecture series complained of digressions--harangues about reviewers and unnecessary moralizing. HRC, and later William Hazlitt, argued that Coleridge’s scant reading of Shakespeare’s works unqualified him from the post of lecturer.

<sup>178</sup> See page 131 in the lecture and Coleridge’s comments on the veracity of spoken language in *The Friend*.

Coleridge's remarks in the 1808 lecture series at the Royal Institution on the mind of the poet in general and Shakespeare's genius in particular. Coleridge concludes the fourth lecture of this series by stating that "Yet still the consciousness of the Poet's Mind must be diffused over that of the Reader or Spectator--but he himself, according to his Genius, elevates us, & by being *always in keeping*, prevents us from perceiving any strangeness" (86). He goes on to define Shakespeare as a dramatic poet, which he constitutes as "deep Feeling & [possessing an] exquisite sense of Beauty.... That these feelings were under the command of his own Will--that in his very first productions he projected his mind out of his own particular being, & felt and made others feel, on subjects no way connected with himself, except by force of Contemplation--& that sublime faculty, by which a great mind becomes that which it meditates on" (80-81). It is hard to imagine that—wrapped up in a passage that expresses his travails with the profession of authorship, knowing perfectly well how a celebrity reciter (or actor for that matter) can breathe fresh life and a wild popularity into a text—he did not believe that his own role as a lecturer did not enact a similar "species of Animal Magnetism." Indeed then, the opportunity to lecture on Shakespeare's genius gives Coleridge an opportunity to perform genius, for auditors heard and understood Shakespeare, and the origins of drama, through Coleridge.

Thus in this final chapter, I argue that *Remorse* can be understood as an extension of performing Shakespeare's genius. It operates under the assumption that the academic institution, and Coleridge's lectures therein, present the poet-lecturer with another opportunity to refashion his professional image through the institutionalization of his criticism on Shakespeare. I will demonstrate that the dramaturgical changes to *Remorse*, made in tandem with the managers and actors of the Drury Lane theater, reflect key comments on dramatic structure, and that the spectacular sorcery scene of Act III is charged with new meaning, as it is analogous to the

fantastical scientific experiments conducted by those celebrity science lecturers like Humphry Davy, demonstrating that, ultimately, *Remorse* is the spectacular experiment to accompany Coleridge's aesthetic theories.

### **The Rise of the Academic Institution**

Between 1808 and 1819 Coleridge delivered more than a hundred lectures in twelve courses before audiences in Bristol and London on topics such as taste, education, the origins of drama, fine art and contemporary poetry, and of course, on Shakespeare and Milton. The primary sites for these lectures were not the raucous, smoke-filled coffeehouses, but the new formal academic institutions.<sup>179</sup> The Royal, London, Surrey, and Russell Institutions were all furnished with grand auditoriums, conversation rooms, laboratories, and libraries. They represented a new era of institutionalized forms of knowledge both in the material and social sense, and ultimately anticipate the development of the modern university (Gillian 123).

The Royal Institution was the premier institution of the literary and scientific societies, and the location for Coleridge's first lecture series, in 1808. Founded in 1799 by the scientist Count Rumford and leading members of the London Society, the institution from the beginning was dedicated "to the speedy and general diffusion of the knowledge of all new and useful improvements in whatever quarter of the world they may originate, and teaching the application of scientific discoveries, to the improvement of arts and manufacturers in this country, and to the

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<sup>179</sup> After the turn of the nineteenth century many coffee-houses became private clubs accessible to the upper classes only through the means of subscription and were not the civilized spaces of intellectual exchange, but sanctuaries from marital obligations. Many of London's most notably coffee-houses, like Jonathan's and Lloyd's, shut their doors to the public transforming the open public spaces into gentlemen's clubs. This passing era of the coffee-house was due in part to a rise in tea-drinking at the hand of political lobbying by the East India Company in an effort to protect landed Englishmen.

increase of domestic comforts and convenience” (Martin 7).<sup>180</sup> The design emphasized performance and social networks of knowledge production and dissemination. A contemporary report describes the lecture theater as “one of the most beautiful and convenient scientific theaters in Europe. It is so favorable to the propagation of sound, that though it is sufficiently capacious to contain 900 persons, a whisper may be distinctly heard from one extremity of it to the other, and no echo is ever perceived in it on any occasion” (Martin 8). The RI was also furnished with a chemical laboratory, workshops, a kitchen and dining room, and a beautiful “conversation-room,” which replicated “the eighteenth-century coffee house with its generous array of newspapers and maps” (Martin 8). It contained two reading rooms, complete with newspapers, gazettes, and literary periodical publications. Charles Lamb in a letter written to Coleridge dated 26th February, 1808, described what he loved best about these new formal public spaces:

I think public reading-rooms the best mode of educating young men. Solitary reading is apt to give the headache. Besides, who knows that you *do* read? There are ten thousand institutions similar to the Royal Institution which have sprung up from it. There is the London institution, the Southwark Institution, the Russell Square Rooms Institution, &c--  
*College quasi Conlege*, a place where people read together. (402)<sup>181</sup>

Lamb’s comments speak to a new interest in making the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual activity a public performance. And like Coleridge’s lectures, reading in public renders interiority visible for popular consumption and per the prospectuses of many of the institutions, morally edifying.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> See Thomas Martin’s *The Royal Institution* (1942) for an account of the Institution’s early years.

<sup>181</sup> See Lamb, Charles, Lamb, Mary. *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb — Volume 5 The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb, 1796-1820*. Ed. E.V. Lucas .2005. Web.

<sup>182</sup> See David Hadley, “Public Lectures and Private Societies: Expounding Literature and the Arts in Romantic

Throughout the eighteenth century, independent lecturers had been conducting courses in venues as humble as private houses and private laboratories, as unlikely as pubs and as grand as the Theater of Science and the Theater Royal Haymarket. “The content and the quality of these lectures betrayed a predictable range,” according to William Christie, “towards an exposition of the popular and the curious rather than the theoretically rigorous--a tendency, that is, towards the theatrical” (491). He goes on to conclude that “it is hardly surprising to find in public lecturing the same cult of personality and celebrity that made actors like Kean and poets like Byron such a constant source of fascination and gossip” (491).<sup>183</sup> Humphry Davy’s scientific lectures and demonstrations cultivated this cult-like popularity. Richard Holmes explains Davy’s cult following was due to his own co-opting of theatricality: “Davy bounced onto the dais, small youthful, glowing and enthusiastic. He spoke directly to his audience without notes. He made a thrilling narrative out of each experiment, performing a series of spectacular galvanic demonstrations--sparks, fulminations, explosions, with all of the skill of the conjurer” (286-287)<sup>184</sup> To Thomas Dibdin, Davy was “the mighty magician of nature” with his voltaic battery that was “immense” with its “huge cubical links of wood and metal, forming a vast mysterious chain, and giving the whole a sort of picturesque and marvelous character.” According to Jon Klancher, celebrity, charismatic authority, and sheer performative energy made Romantic lecturing a hot-ticket phenomenon in London” (5).<sup>185</sup>

Because Coleridge was lecturing on Shakespeare in the same spaces where scientific

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London." *English Romanticism: Preludes and Postludes*. East Lansing: Colleagues. 43-58. Web.

<sup>183</sup> Christie, William. "Res Theatralis Histrionica: Acting Coleridge in the Lecture Theater." *Studies in Romanticism* 52.4 (2013): 485. Web.

<sup>184</sup> Holmes, Richard. *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science*. London: HarperPress, 2008. Print.

<sup>185</sup> Klancher, Jon P. *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences: Knowledge and Cultural Institutions in the Romantic Age*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge UP, 2013. Print.

lectures took place, his dramatic criticism can be seen as occupying similar semiotic registers of truth bearing utterances that the experiments of Davy's did. A textual network was established between what was being presented in Coleridge's lectures, especially those on Shakespeare, and on the dramatizations of those lectures as they were performed on the stage of the Drury Lane Theater. The argument that I want to advance here is that there is a convergence of cultural authority and power between actors and lecturers, especially when they share the same stage, literally.

### Mapping Revisions onto the Lectures

The revisions made to *Osorio* represent Coleridge's effort to connect his lectures to Shakespeare and Milton.<sup>186</sup> However, dramaturgical alterations were commonplace in order to accommodate for an actor's particular style and range. Coleridge had written *Osorio* with Sarah Siddons and John Kemble in mind.<sup>187</sup> As some have pointed out, however, once *Remorse* went to stage, quality actors such as Siddons and Kemble were in short supply. John Genest, a contemporary of Coleridge, remarked that "too many middling actors and too few good ones were available, and Coleridge has just missed the advent of Edmund Kean" (21). Charles Maturin, on the other hand, did not miss Kean's rise. His gothic drama, *Bertram*, benefited greatly from Kean's virtuosity as a tragic actor,<sup>188</sup> which perhaps explains some of the energy

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<sup>186</sup> Reeve Parker has described *Remorse* as possessing a "dramaturgy of listening" and positions Coleridge's dramatic aims as aligned with Joanna Baillie's emphasis of staging of voices and carefully wrought poetic discourse as the essence of good theater, what he and Baillie saw as threatened by the enlargements of the area. Parker claims that "in revising *Osorio*, he further intensified theatrical effects of voice and listening already prominent in that version, adding especially moments when what's overheard resonates unexpectedly with something previously heard."

<sup>187</sup> See *CLI* page 318: to William Bowles 16 March 1797

<sup>188</sup> According to the editors, "On Kean's debut at the DL on 26 Jan 1814, virtually an unknown, and his receipts were little more than 164 pounds. On 7 March, as Richard III, he grossed 643 and on 12 March as Hamlet 666. Maturin's *Bertram*, which opened on 9 May 1816 with Kean in a tailor-made title role, had twenty-two performances before the end of the season; and the text went through seven editions before the end of the year"

behind Coleridge's criticism of Maturin's tragedy in the final chapter of *Biographia Literaria*.

Although the Preface to *Remorse* shows Coleridge's gratitude towards what each actor brought to their part, in private, he complained that while Alexander Rae was pleased with the part of Ordonio, he was hardly adequate for the significance of that role, noting that "[a]s from a circumference to a center, every ray of the tragedy converges to Ordonio" (*CL III*: to RS 8 Feb 1813).

The editors for the Bollingen Series, through their assiduous work with his manuscripts, notes, and Larpent and print editions, have given Coleridge scholars a seemingly endless wealth of information about the evolution from *Osorio* to *Remorse*. The manuscript (ms3) from *Osorio* to *Remorse*, like Thomas Campbell's manuscript of Siddons's personal copy of Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort*, is a travelogue: there are comments from some of Coleridge's most ardent supporters: Mary Robinson, Charles Lloyd, Sir George Beaumont, and William Godwin. "C revised the text in response to some of the criticisms, but variably. He appeared to take particular notice of Sir George Beaumont's comments" (1028) as Kathleen Coburn has discovered. The alterations based on comments from Coleridge's supporters in *Osorio* mss5 and 3rd and his own revisions in the latter are eclipsed by the substantial structural revisions Coleridge made in collaboration with Arnold and Raymond, and others during the three weeks the play was in the Green Room. *The Prompter's Journal* records that *Remorse* transferred from the Green Room to the stage on January 1, 1813. There were further revisions between the Larpent version and the version that was performed. For example, the time-scheme was tightened up—which would correspond to the emphasis that Coleridge places on Aristotelian formalism in nearly every lecture series—and where in *Osorio* a monologue stood in the middle of a scene, in *Remorse*, it

was placed at the beginning or end of the scene.

There are also substantial dramaturgical differences found in the printed text of *Remorse* as it evolved from *Osorio* in tandem with the stage version. The first edition is the restructured version achieved with the help of the theater manager Samuel Arnold, incorporating the new introductory scene and the rearranged third act. There is speculation that the play was sent to the printer, William Pople, about the time the play opened, with copies ready for sale as soon as the January 28th, 1813. Coleridge continued to correct copies of the first edition into the first few weeks of production in February, thus while theater-managers and actors pared down the running-time play at Drury Lane, the printed text was independently enlarging.<sup>189</sup> According to the editors, no attempt was made in the printing to conform to the usual practice of somehow marking the passages omitted by the stage version, perhaps because the production was still fluid at the time of printing, or, more probable, because Coleridge thought of the printed text as a separate entity” (Mays 1229).<sup>190</sup>

This dissertation triangulates its analysis by focusing on the ms3 of *Osorio*, and the stage and print versions of *Remorse*. It is important to note that each text bears a different stamp of collaboration, with no one version under the complete creative control of Coleridge. The public reception of that creative output went, however, to Coleridge. The success of *Remorse* was not eclipsed by the actors’ performances, so in one sense, Coleridge was the beneficiary of, as Genest puts it, “middling actors.” Yet, as Chapter Two has shown, dramatists often enjoy the dividends of celebrity culture capital due to the exquisite performances of talented actors, as Joanna Baillie did with Siddons as Jane De Monfort. I have thus chosen to triangulate these texts

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<sup>189</sup> The printer William Pople had previously done the prospectus for Coleridge's lectures starting on 18 Nov. 1811 (See *Coleridge on Shakespeare: The text of the Lectures of 1811-12*, and both printed and published the two volumes of *Omniana* in 1812

<sup>190</sup> Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Poetical Works*. Ed. S. Mays. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 2001. Print.

to highlight the period of lectures that appears to coincide with Coleridge's return to *Osorio*, when he rekindled production and publication projects. For example, in the Preface that accompanied the print copies of *Remorse*, Coleridge claims that he presented the ms<sup>3</sup> he had retrieved in 1807 from Sheridan, having altered only the name of the characters. And Mays suggests that revisions were not substantial until 1811-1812. But given this time frame, I argue that we should not separate Coleridge picking the play back up and these "substantial" revisions from the lecture series. The first series, as previously discussed, took place in 1808 at the Royal Institution, where Coleridge delivered twenty lectures between January and June, most of which centered on Shakespeare. This series establishes a structure that we see repeated through nearly all of the series. It begins with the "Principles of Taste in relation to Poetry" then moves onto the "Origin and development of Drama," then Lecture Three begins to approach a discussion of Shakespeare by starting with an analysis of the different kinds of readers and concludes with the assertion that Shakespeare draws his characters not from observation but within himself, which initiates his aesthetic theory regarding the difference between a copy and an imitation. This lecture is an interesting one to pause on though, not because of how it foregrounds some of the key theories that received fuller articulation in *Biographia Literaria*, but because it begins with, of all topics, an analysis of the distinction between regret and remorse. The fourth lecture then covers such topics as the distinction between fancy and imagination and Aristotelian unities. Little is known about the remaining lectures in this series other than that 5-20 were most likely on Shakespeare and drama, and perhaps two were delivered at the close on Milton. Unlike the other series, reports of the lectures were not published regularly in press, and beyond Coleridge's scattered notes from the period, there is little to go on.

This was not the case with the next series, which took place at the London Philosophical

Society from 1811 to 1812. There were regular reports in the *Times*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Courier*, and the *Sun*, and there are shorthand reports taken by Henry Crabb Robinson and John Pyne Collier. The full title of the course was published as “A Course of Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustrations of The Principle of Poetry and Their Application as Grounds of Criticism to the most popular works of later English Poets, those of the living included.” And the Prospectus to the lectures describes their focus as the following:

After an introductory Lecture on False Criticism, (especially in Poetry,) and on its Causes: two thirds of the remaining course, will be assigned 1st, to a philosophical analysis, and explanation of all the principal 'characters' of our great dramatist, as Othello, Falstaff, Richard the Third, Iago, Hamlet, &c.; and 2nd, to a critical 'comparison' of Shakespeare, in respect of diction, imagery, management of the passions, judgment in the construction of his dramas, in short, of all that belongs to him as a poet, and as a dramatic poet, with his contemporaries or immediate successors, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, Massinger, &c. in the endeavour to determine what of Shakespeare's merits and defects are common to him, with other writers of the same age, and what remain peculiar to his own genius. (179)

Crabb Robinson's report of the opening lecture appeared in the *Times* on the following day November 19th, 1811. In that report Robinson highlights Coleridge's position that

the causes of false criticism on the works of the imagination from circumstances which may hitherto have been thought to stand in no very close connection with our literary habits, viz.: the excessive stimulus produced by the wonderful political events of the age;--the facilities afforded to general and indiscriminate reading; the rage for public

speaking, the habit consequently induced of requiring instantaneous intelligibility; — periodical criticism, which teaches those to fancy they can judge who ought to be content to learn;—the increase of cities, which has put an end to old-fashioned village gossiping, and substituted literary small talk in its place; and the improved habits of domestic life, and higher purity of moral feelings, which in relation to the drama have produced effects unfavourable to the exertions of poetic talent or of judgment. From such topics it will be seen that Mr. Coleridge is original in his views. On all occasions, indeed, he shews himself to be a man who really thinks and feels for himself; and in the development of his moral philosophy something may be expected from him very different from critics in general on Shakespeare, Milton, and our other national poets. However, serious the design of Mr. C's lectures, in the execution he shows himself by no means destitute of talents of humour, irony, and satire. (CC 194-195)

Indeed, Robinson's report is a well-crafted puff-piece that speaks to the uniqueness of Coleridge's intellectual insights as well as his performative draw. It also conveys a sense of Coleridge's project and we can trace through the lectures and tease apart similar threads within *Remorse*. Moreover, it paints a particular kind of social consumption sphere—"the rage for public speaking...periodical criticism" and the failure of the contemporary stage as "habits...and feelings have produced effects unfavorable"—all media in which Coleridge was taking part.

Other reports, such as the one that appeared in the *Sun* on the same day as Robinson's, celebrate Coleridge's improvisatory talents:

We do not indeed know, whether the word 'Lecture' is not a misnomer; as the greater, and certainly most interesting and best reasoned part of the address was delivered from the impulse of the moment, as far, at least as the language and many of the happiest

illustrations were concerned...Not only from this Lecture, but from our former observations of the Lecturer of the Royal Institution, we are impelled to recommend Mr. C. to speak as much, and to read as little and possible. He appeared to refer to his notes rather from natural timidity, which rapidly decreased after the first moments. What his listeners may have thought, we cannot say; but assuredly we have seldom seen so many pass out of a public room with countenances more alive or more expressive of warm interest. (195-196).

Coleridge was quite attuned to the power of these reports. In a letter to Godwin two days after the fifth lecture was delivered, he urged Godwin to make sure that advertisements for the rest of the series should appear regularly in the *Morning Chronicle*. “The non-appearance of an advertisement in this newspaper for lecture,” he added, “manifestly thinned my auditory” (282). Coleridge also blamed the thin attendance on the location. By the fourth lecture, he wrote, “The room I lecture in is very comfortable, and of a grave academic appearance; the company highly respectable, though (unluckily) rather scanty; but the entrance, which is under a short passage from Fetter Lane, some thirty doors or more from Fleet Street is disagreeable even to foot-comers, and far more so to carriages, from the narrowness and bendings of the lane” (237).

Unlike the London Philosophical series, the series to follow on European Drama at Willis's Rooms in London beginning in May of 1812, the length of reports varied. What was new, however, was that these reports printed and reprinted the names of London's most fashionable and famous who were in attendance, people such as Augustus Phipps, the Beaumonts, Samuel Rogers, William Sotheby, and William Wordsworth. Willis's Rooms were in the fashionable West End of London. This series omitted the opening lectures on taste and criticism, and instead began with ancient and modern poetry. By this time Schlegel's influence

on Coleridge's lectures was substantial. This perhaps explains why in this first lecture, according to Henry Crabb Robinson's diary, Coleridge was, once again, "in a digressing vein. He spoke of religion, the spirit of Chivalry, the gothic reverence of the female sex—and a classification of poetry into ancient and romantic" (CC 425). Although this description parallels Lect. 1 of Schlegel's series, which draws a contrast between Greek and Christian culture and art, it is also possible that Coleridge had been meditating on the role of the gothic in general—superstition, medievalism, and the Inquisition—as he was revising *Osorio* for the stage. By the fifth lecture, the *Sun* was still celebrating Coleridge's "critical profundity" and was astonished by "his commanding power of extemporaneous eloquence" (The *Sun* Tuesday, 2 June 1812).

The next series, "Lectures on Belles Letters," took place at the Surrey Institution, and began in November of 1812, occupying the white-heat revision period necessary to bring *Remorse* to stage, so what was being said in these lectures formulates potentially an even more direct network material and social connection to *Remorse*. Thus, from lecturing at the Royal Institution alongside Davy's fantastical sorcery-like experiments to the deep philosophical analysis of Shakespeare's principal characters at the London Society Institution, to the fashionable West End location of the Willis's Rooms and the evangelical audiences of the Surrey Institution, the range of these locations connected Coleridge with London's premiere socialites, expanding the interconnectedness of knowledge networks and economies. And with the reports in the press reproducing key arguments from the lectures, audiences witnessed and read about many recurring themes, criticism, and characters. And as we shall see in the subsequent section, these major arguments and character analyses, even the puff-pieces touting Coleridge's genius insights and improvisational abilities, can be traced to the dramaturgical changes made to the various texts of *Osorio* and *Remorse*.

### Conjuring the Science of Shakespeare's Genius

The dramatic structure of the first act of *Osorio* unfolds a high level of uncertainty about the plot, thus trading on a structuring device held over from the early gothic novel, the hermeneutics of intimacy. The opening scene begins with Velez (the father of Albert and Osorio) pleading with Maria to accept Albert's tragic death and to marry Osorio. By the fourth line of the scene Maria breaks into a thirty-line passionate speech describing her deep melancholy for losing her beloved Albert. Her speech describes her own deep melancholy and then evokes a memory of "a crazy moorish Maid, / Who drest her in her buried Lover's cloathes" (1.1.30-31). The length and the placement of this speech is likely due to Coleridge anticipating that Siddons, famed for her gothic heroines, would be cast in the part. It plays to the audience's emotional expectations of her previous roles and places an emphasis on Maria's bereavement. Further, within the exchange between Maria and Velez, the audience learns that Albert has been kidnapped by pirates and Osorio is the valiant brother who attempted to save him. Yet these inaccurate plot points—Albert's death and Osorio's heroism—are overturned through revelation, as Albert soon arrives disguised as a Moresco. While it is not immediately clear that the disguised stranger is Albert, his presence excites the audience's desire to know his authentic identity. Maria then fulfills this desire in two ways: she drops her veil, leading him to utter her name, and she then asks a series of questions about the stranger's past. The scene concludes with a soliloquy delivered by Albert about his love for Maria and his plan to rouse Osorio's conscious and evoke remorse. Thus the opening act of *Osorio* can be understood as a structuring device held over from the popular machinery of the early Gothic novel, where madness, death, disguised strangers, and unveilings propel the hermeneutics of gothic intimacy.

The opening scene of the stage version of *Remorse*, on the other hand, immediately establishes the general action of the play with Don Alvar (formerly Albert in *Osorio*) and his faithful companion Zulimez (a character missing in *Osorio*), with Alvar plotting to rouse remorse within his brother. Identifying with Alvar's revenge plot directs the audience's interest to Ordonio (formerly Osorio) and the evil nature of the deeds that have "deeply injur'd" Alvar. (1.1.14). This reordering solicits an entirely different emotional response from the audience because it keeps nothing hidden and reflects the predictability of melodrama, a genre that was gaining popular currency in the theaters at that time. Moreover, the scene between Maria and Valdez is reordered as the second scene and her speech is pared down by nearly twenty lines, excising the tale of the Moorish maid. However, Coleridge restores this more gothic element for the print version of *Remorse*. With the restoration of the gothic element of the crazy moorish maid (and there are several more restorations in the print version that will come), Coleridge, in a sense, builds an extra-textual life in the printed version, a textual supplement that grants Teresa (the renamed Maria) a life beyond the stage. We might read this as a way for Coleridge to tap into the habits of readers and audiences—i.e., through the hermeneutics of intimacy—for there is more to her beyond the stage.

Coleridge's lectures on *The Tempest* focus a great deal of attention on beginning a play properly. Delivered in its most elaborated form in the 1811-1812 lecture series at the Surrey Institution on December 16, 1811, Lecture Nine is an important lecture not simply for the attention it pays to dramatic structure, but also because it represents several key moments in the development of Coleridge's criticism on Shakespeare and his dramatic theories in general. Moreover, this lecture marks the first of many that demonstrate the influence of Schlegel.<sup>191</sup> For

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<sup>191</sup> In a letter to HCR dated November 6, 1811 Coleridge requested to see "Schlegel's Werke," and a copy was delivered to him after he gave Lecture 8. Kathleen Coburn argues that "[t]heir impact was immediate, and he

Coleridge, this final play from Shakespeare “is a specimen of the purely romantic drama, in which the interest is not historical, or dependent upon fidelity of portraiture, or the natural connexion of events, — but is a birth of the imagination, and rests only on the coaptation and union of the elements granted to, or assumed by, the poet” (345). He goes on to note the importance of the opening two scenes: “The romance opens with a busy scene admirably appropriate to the kind of drama, and giving, as it were, the key-note to the whole harmony. It prepares and initiates the excitement required for the entire piece, and yet does not demand anything from the spectators, which their previous habits had not fitted them to understand” (345).<sup>192</sup> Coleridge notes that Prospero’s speech in the second scene “contains the finest example...of retrospective narration for the purpose of exciting immediate interest, and putting the audience in possession of all the information necessary for the understanding of the plot” (346). Whether or not audiences were habituated by the predictability of melodrama, Coleridge’s remarks would resonate with viewers of *Remorse* when they found similar “retrospective narration” take place between Alvar and Zulimez. That Alvar details these plans in the first scene initiates a predictable dramatic structure, and in so doing, Coleridge’s insights on Shakespeare’s brilliant, yet simple “preparation” aligns *Remorse* as a work comparable to *The Tempest*.<sup>193</sup>

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certainly used Schlegel’s Lect. 12 on Shakespeare...in his own Lect. 9 (CC n23; 354).

<sup>192</sup> This point echoes Coleridge’s remarks, in a letter to Robert Southey, on Sheridan’s original request to write a drama on some popular subject. In it Coleridge discusses writing a play that suits the habits of his audience.

<sup>193</sup> Opening scenes continued to occupy Coleridge’s dramatic criticism beyond *Remorse*. His comments, for instance, on Charles Maturin’s *Bertram* in the final chapter of *Biographia Literaria* criticize the improbability of the opening scene—which happens to be a shipwreck. He argues that “But what is there to account for the prodigy of the tempest at Bertram’s shipwreck? It is a mere supernatural effect, without even a hint of any supernatural agency; a prodigy, without any circumstance mentioned that is prodigious; and a miracle introduced without a ground, and ending without a result.” Coleridge surmised that not only was such a tempest necessary for the story, but that the stage effect of “quite uprightness of the flame of the wax-candles,” breaks the dramatic illusion from the opening scene. Not only does the improbability seem to diminish *Bertram* in Coleridge’s mind, but his heroic villainy, appears to be equally troubling: “Well! This man is led in by the monks, supposed dripping wet, and to very natural inquiries he either remains silent, or gives most brief and surly answers, and after three or four of these half-line courtesies, ‘dashing off the monks’ who had saved him, he exclaims in the true sublimity of our modern misanthropic heroism—‘Off! ye are men...’” In the first lecture of the 1808 series Coleridge comments on “the Laws of Unity and Place & Unity of Time, the Observance of which must either confine the Drama to as few

In *Remorse*, the revised dramatic structure prepares the audience not simply for Alvar's plan to evoke remorse in Ordonio, but introduces the object to solicit it—a painting depicting Alvar's (attempted) assassination. Ostensibly an aesthetic hierarchy between the portrait of Maria and the picture of the assassination becomes central in the opening scene between Alvar and Zulimez. By contrast, in *Osorio* both objects do not surface until Act Two in Albert's cottage: Osorio gives the portrait to Albert to be used in the incantation scene. Once Osorio leaves the cottage, Albert calls for the picture of the assassination, and the audience learns that these objects will be switched in the next scene to raise the fiery whirlwind of conscience in Osorio.<sup>194</sup> And though the picture of the assassination is mentioned as a separate object in the same scene, the revisions to *Remorse* show that Alvar has integrated the portrait within the assassination scene of the picture, depicting Alvar clutching the sacred image of Teresa tied around his neck as poniards are thrust at him.

Several of Coleridge's lectures, including those on *The Tempest*, distinguish ancient from Shakespearean drama through an analogy of the difference between statuary art and painting, a comparison developed first by Schlegel. But as Mays points out, "C[oleridge] enlarges in his own way on a distinction between ancient art as plastic and modern art as painterly that he had encountered earlier in Schiller" (n9 on 348). Coleridge argues that "the very essence of statuary was a high degree of abstraction which would prevent a great many figures from being combined into the same effect...all must be presented to the eye but the effect of multitude must be produced without the introduction of anything discordant" (349). He then proceeds to contrast

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Subjects as may be counted on the fingers or involve *gross improbabilities*."

<sup>194</sup> There is a problem though with the dramatic use of such a prop: the portrait must be small enough to be tied around one's neck, but the picture of the assassination, it is too difficult to tell if it too will be the same size or much larger. Given the manner in which Coleridge employs the term picture and the painters referenced in relation to it, it is hard to imagine that the picture of the assassination would be as small as the portrait. What then would be the dramatic result of an audience (and Ordonio for that matter) seeing a larger picture of the assassination. Could this enlargement have a relational value to Davy's experiments?

this with

a picture by Raphael or Titian—where an immense number of figures might be introduced even a dog or cat or a beggar, & from the very circumstance of a less degree of labor and less degree of abstraction an effect is produced equally harmonious to the mind more true to nature and in all respects but one superior to statuary. [...] The man of taste feels satisfied with what out of his mixed nature he cannot produce and to that which the reason conceives possible a momentary reality was given, by the aid of the imagination. (349)

The harmony of multitude that is “more true to nature” is precisely, to Coleridge, what makes Shakespeare the genius that he is, and he contrasts the “immense number of figures” in a picture with the singularity of a portrait, maintaining that “it is a mistake...to suppose that any of Shakespeare’s characters strike us as portraits” (356). Positioning *The Tempest* as one of Shakespeare’s ideal plays that appeals directly to the imagination, Coleridge highlights the bard’s uncanny ability to combine the highest characters and lowest with “organic regularity,” as opposed to “mechanic regularity,” where the latter is a slavish copy of the original. As an example, he points to Boatswain and Gonzalo in the opening scene, when amidst the storm, “a sense of danger impressed all, and the bonds of reverence are thrown off and he gives a loose to his feelings, and thus to the old Counselor pours forth his vulgar mind” (Coleridge 358).<sup>195</sup> This scene represents Shakespeare as “[t]he vital writer [who] in a moment transports himself into the very being of each character and instead of making artificial puppets he brings the real being before you” (359). His belief was that the poet regarded his story before he began to write much

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<sup>195</sup> Perhaps this is why Coleridge faults Maturin for Bertram’s misanthropy—he was safe on shore; there was no dramatic plausibility for his harsh treatment of the monks other than Maturin choosing to create a character that celebrates vice.

in the same light as a painter looked at his canvas before he began to paint, and that “the power of Poetry is by a single word to produce that energy in the mind as compells [sic] the imagination to produce the picture” (362).

Alvar is also regarded as a master painter when Zulimez remarks to him: “You are a painter, one of many fancies! / You can call us past deeds, and make them live / On the blank canvas...”(2.2.41-43). This description appears in *Osorio* as well as the stage and print versions of *Remorse*. However, the print version contains an explanatory note that deepens the connection between Coleridge's references to modern painting in his lectures and the play, more specifically, the direct references to Titian. He explains to his readers in the appended note that “[t]he following lines I have preserved in this place, not so much as explanatory of the picture of the assassination, as (if I may say so without disrespect to the Public) to gratify my own feelings, the passage being no mere *fancy* portrait; but a slight, yet no unfaithful, profile of one, who still lives, nobilitate felix, arte clarior, vita colendissimus” (CC 1208). Speaking of Alvar in the third person, Zulimez explains how Alvar in his youth travelled to Venice where he

won the love...[of] the famous TITIAN  
 Who, like a second and more lovely Nature,  
 By the sweet mystery of lines and colors  
 Changed the blank canvas to a magic mirror,  
 That made the Absent present; and to Shadows

Gave light, depth, and substance, bloom, yea, thought and motion. (2.2.6-11; 1269)

This note connects with Coleridge's remark on the “man of taste” when he says that he “feels satisfied with what out of his mixed nature he cannot produce and to that which the reason conceives possible a momentary reality was given, by the aid of the imagination” (349).

Following this note, Alhadra asks if Alvar was aided “by arts unlawful, spell, or talisman” when he created such a picture (Note 2.2.23; 1270). To which Alvar responds, explaining that while in captivity, what truly aided with the creation of such a composition was

The imperishable memory of the deed,

Sustain'd by love, and grief, and indignation!

So vivid were the forms within his brain,

His very eyes when shut, made picture of them. (Note 2.2.25-28)

The picture of the assassination represents Shakespeare’s ability to fuse many into one with harmonious “organic regularity.” And with Alvar possessing the talents of Titian, and even ostensibly his apprentice, the connections are further reinforced. The portrait, on the other hand, on the level of an aesthetic object, mediates a single form analogous to statuary art and Greek drama. But on a deeper, more fundamental level, we can see the portrait of Maria representing a character who is a slave to the past, exemplified in her comment to Valdez that she conjures “sweet visions” of Alvar to “live over again / All past hours of delight” (*Remorse* Print 1.2.24-25). The picture positions Alvar as a creative genius figure, and arguably, given the reference to Titian, a surrogate for Shakespeare. And if Shakespeare projected himself into his characters, Coleridge doubles Shakespeare’s genius with the invention of Alvar, whose strong feelings of “Love grief, and indignation” and powerful memory have crafted an harmonious art object, what to some appears to be a work of sorcery. Thus not only has the first act provided the necessary information through retrospective narrative, but it has also presented the two objects by means of which it successfully “prepares and initiates the excitement required for the entire piece, and yet does not demand anything from the spectators, which their previous habits had not fitted them to understand” (357).

The incantation scene of Act Three is the next section of the drama to undergo the most significant dramaturgical alterations. This scene was hailed by the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Courier* on the 25th of January 1813 as “one of the most novel and picturesque we remember to have witnessed” (CC 1101). And Thomas Barnes wrote in *The Examiner* on 31st of January “We never saw more interest excited in a theater than was expressed at the sorcery-scene in the third act. The altar flaming in the distance, the solemn invocation, the pealing music of the mystic song, altogether produced a combination so awful, as nearly to overpower reality, and make one half believe the enchantment which delighted our senses” (CC 1101-1102). Thomas Dibdin remarked in a letter to Samuel Arnold dated the 25th of January 1813 that “There is much of the Melo-Dram in the Sorcery scene, perhaps too much for the refined chasteness of a Tragedy, but the people like this, and let them have it” (CC 1102). The spectacular gothic theatrics of the scene remain identical between *Osorio* and *Remorse*: both include the altar with incense burning, pealing music from a glass harmonica, a chorus chanting a rhapsodic incantation, and the climactic appearance of the picture: “*Gong sounds & the incense on the altar takes fire suddenly, and an illuminated picture of ALVAR’s assassination is discovered, and having remained a few seconds is then hidden by flames*” (1106). The contents of the picture, who is present to witness its fantastical appearance, and their reactions to it, however, have been altered significantly.

Act III of *Osorio* begins with Maria, Velez, and Osorio gathered around Albert at the altar. The scene is quick to get to Albert’s incantation, a speech that stretches over thirty lines, and is followed by a choral song, which deeply affects both Osorio— “This was too melancholy, Father!” (3.1.57)—and his father. For Velez, the artifice conjures a folkloric memory of Albert as a small child lost in the woods, when he had “follow’d a blind Boy, / Who breath’d into a pipe of Sycamore / Some strangly-moving notes” (3.1.62-64). The stage version of *Remorse* begins

with an additional brief scene where a “Spy” informs the Inquisitor of the incantation and plans to position himself where, “unobserved [he] may be a Witness of the Whole” (3.1.7). This scene reinforces what Parker Reeve has identified as “a dramaturgy of listening,” keeping in the audience's mind that the Inquisitor has knowledge of these ongoings and thus it builds the anticipation of Monviedro and his attendants interrupting the scene at the moment the picture is illuminated on the altar: “[*At this instant the doors are forced open, Monviedro and the familiars of the inquisition, servants, &c. enter--UE, LH--and fill the stage*]” (1106). This does not happen before, however, Ordonio who “*in great agitation*” exclaims— “The villain Isidore!” (3.1.101), believing that his companion has conspired against him. The print version of *Remorse*, on the other hand, begins with a long speech from Valdez, the father of Alvar and Ordonio, recalling a memory of Alvar as a child, which happens to be the same speech in *Osorio*, but instead of coming after he hears Alvar’s incantation and the song, Coleridge has reordered it to the opening of the scene, framing it with a reverie induced by the mystical music playing, not Alvar’s incantation speech amidst the atmosphere of the altar, pealing music, and burning incense.

The appearance of the picture, however, is much different in *Osorio* than in either version of *Remorse*: it is left visible for some time creating confusion and excitation in the characters present. Maria, once the altar takes fire, believes it to be some trick— “I know, it is a trick— / Yet my weak Fancy, and these bodily creepings, / Would fain give substance to the shadow” (3.1.112-114) and focuses on the image of Albert in the picture clutching her portrait— “O God! my picture? ...He grasp’d it when he died” (3.1.116, 118). The picture renders Osorio in a sleep-like trance, removing him from space and time: “Where am I?—’Twas a lazy chilliness” (3.1.119). After its appearance, the picture remains only for a moment before Velez absconds with it to protect Maria— “This way, my Son! She must not see this Picture” (3.1.120). What

follows is a rather long exchange between Maria and Albert to tease out the anticipation of Albert revealing his true identity—“Mysterious man! / Methinks, I cannot fear thee—for thine eye / Doth swim with pity—I will lean on thee” (3.1.144-146). Velez and Osorio then reenter and Velez shows Osorio the picture. It is then that he believes, incorrectly, that his companion has duped him—“That Villain Ferdinand!” (3.1.186). Osorio then plots to murder Ferdinand, who Velez believes is Albert’s assassin—“(holding the picture before Osorio) ‘That Moor, who points his Sword at Albert’s breast’” (3.1.232), to which Osorio responds, “A tender hearted, scrupulous, *grateful* Villain, / Whom I will strangle!” (3.1.233-234). The scene then changes to outside of the castle, what is the brief scene between the Inquisitor and the Spy at the beginning of the stage version of *Remorse*. And yet it is by Osorio’s command that Albert, who “*is crossing the stage*” (109), is arrested and taken to a “Dungeon-hole” (3.2.11).

The entirety of the altar scene in the stage version of *Remorse* is rather brief, most notably absent for the spectacular climax is Teresa; she exits the stage immediately following the incantation song and does not appear again until the next scene with Valdez. However, in the print version she is present, as she is in *Osorio*, for Alvar’s questioning of Ordonio, part of his plan to evoke remorse in his brother for his deeds—“What is thou heardst [the deceased Alvar] now? What if his spirit / Re-enter’d it’s cold corse, and came upon thee / With many a stab from many a murderer’s poniard?” (3.1.87-89). But her feelings of knowing that the scene is “some trick” occur in the print version before the spectacular appearance of the picture—as she is not present for its appearance, but instead is driven away by the impious atmosphere of the scene itself— “’Tis strange, I tremble at my own conjectures! / But whatsoe’er it mean, I dare no longer / Be present at these lawless mysteries” (3.1.114-116). The scene ends in both the stage and print version with the Inquisitor and his attendants seizing Alvar and taking him to the

dungeon.

The second scene of Act Three in the stage version of *Remorse* is markedly different than *Osorio* and there are significant additions found in the print version. Where Teresa is present only at the beginning of the sorcery scene, her presence is prominent throughout the subsequent scene of Act III. The scene begins with Teresa and Valdez attempting to make sense of the picture. It is clear to Valdez that the assassins were in the process of dispatching Alvar, and yet at that moment “despairing of defense, / At his bared breast he seem’d to grasp some relict / More dear than his life—” (3.2.43-45), to which Teresa responds, “O Heavens, *my* portrait!” (3.2.43). Ordonio then “*enters with the keys of the dungeon in his hand*” and Teresa inquires “Is Alvar dead? What then? / The nuptial ties and funeral shall be one” (3.2.50). Valdez then wonders at Ordonio why “when the wizard fix’d his eye on [him he]...look’d pale and trembled” (3.2.68-69). Ordonio collects himself and resolves to murder Isidore and begins a long speech “*reasoning to himself*” (1208), what Valdez calls “wild talk” and “mere madness” (3.2.105, 114). Teresa continues to press Valdez and Ordonio for the truth of Alvar’s demise and ultimately the location of his body, an exchange that takes place by the same altar where Alvar performed his sorcery, to which Valdez responds, “Nor he [Ordonio] nor I know more, / Than what the magic imagery reveal’d” (3.2.131-132). The continuous questioning from Teresa and the thought of being betrayed by “A tender-hearted, scrupulous, grateful villain” (3.2.133) lead Ordonio to (“[*Check*] *the feeling of surprize, and force his tones into an expression of playful courtesy*”) and he briefly “[*Strides off in agitation*]” (1110-1111). Yet in the print version the repeated questioning from Teresa, on the heels of Alvar’s conscience-probing rhetoric, evokes nightmarish delusions for Ordonio as he turns to Valdez and asks, “What if the Moors that made my brother’s grave, / Even now were digging ours?” (3.2.147-148). Valdez then reaffirms what the audience already

has been told now twice, that

Alvar ne're fought against the Moors, —ay rather

He was their advocate; but you had march'd

With fire and desolation through their villages.

Yet he by chance was captur'd. (3.2.151-154)

The scene ends with Teresa resolving to “haste but to the grave of my beloved” (3.2.167) and Ordonio plotting to murder Isidore by luring him to a cavern.

Clearly, the print version of *Remorse* continues the trend of restoring the gothic and romantic elements. For example, as outlined earlier, the incantation scene is severely truncated when compared to *Osorio* and the print version: the lines of the stage scene total 109, whereas the print version 143. A majority of these lines comprise Valdez's folkloric reverie about Alvar as a small boy, which opens the scene, and several lines in Alvar's incantation speech with regard to the Lapland wizard:

Ye too split

The ice mount! And with fragments many and huge

Tempest the new-thaw's sea, whose sudden gulphs

Suck in, perchance, some Lapland wizard's skiff!

Then round and round the whirlpool's marge ye dance,

Till from the blue swoln Corse the soul toils out,

And joins your mighty Army. (3.1.55-61)

The stage direction calls for “*Music expressive of the movements and images that follow*” (1279).

The other additions include Ordonio's wild fantasy of the Moors murdering him and his father, which is framed by a reference to a child waking from a dream and confirms Valdez's diagnosis

that

These supernatural shews, this strange disclosure,

And his too fond affection [for Alvar]

[...]

These, struggling with his hopeless love for [Teresa],

Distemper him, and give reality

To the creatures of his fancy. (3.2.138-9, 141-143)

To which Ordonio responds:

Is it so?

Yes! Yes! Even like a child, that too abruptly

Rous'd by a glare of light from deepest sleep

Starts up bewilder'd, and talks idly. (3.2.144-146)

These more fantastical elements give a new shape to the dramatic structure of *Remorse*. Indeed, the paring down of the stage version, in some instances, has been the product of tightening the time-scheme necessary for production. Yet the restoration of these longer gothic speeches, in the print version of *Remorse*, are more than recuperating what was excised in the green room.

Instead, I would suggest that the repositioning of Valdez's memory of Alvar, to take one example, can be seen as an effort to use a more romantic memory to structure the reading of the incantation scene, and more significantly, to pay critical attention to principal characters, as Coleridge does through several of his lectures.

Because many of Coleridge's comments on Shakespeare's characters focus on how particular incidences shape the individual's actions or, as in the case of *Hamlet*, his inaction, Coleridge allows a different character to begin a scene with a longer speech both for dramatic

effect and to showcase how experiences are shaped by one's deeply romantic and, at times, darkly gothic surroundings. To illustrate: Valdez's speech about dreams begins Act III (added); Isidore's soliloquy about being frightened while in "a hellish *pit!*" (4.1.12) at midnight begins Act IV; Teresa's speech about "Heart-chilling superstition!" (4.2.1) begins Act IV Scene II; Alhadra's speech delivered in the mountains by moonlight as she hears a "screech-owl" and "a herd of wolves" (4.3.6,9) begins Act IV Scene III (added); and Alvar's tale of "Friendless Solitude, Groaning and Tears, / And Savage Faces... / See through the steam and vapours of his dungeon" (5.1.13-15) begins Act V (added; Teresa begins Act V in the stage version). Much of Coleridge's comments on the *Tempest*, as discussed earlier, focus on "preparations," whether that is Prospero being "introduced first in his magic robes" (360), or with "the preparation of the reader first by the storm and then the retrospective narrative," which "gradually leads us to the appearance and disclosure of a being gifted with supernatural powers" (362); to the introduction of Ariel, for whom "the reader was prepared by what preceded: the moral feeling called forth by the sweet words of Miranda" (362); and to "Caliban who is described in such and such manner by Prospero to lead the Reader to expect & look for a monstrous unnatural creature ... it was a sort of preparation because in nature we do not receive so much disgust from sound as from sight" (364). Similar preparation can be read into foregrounding each of these scenes with gothic machinery, since the use of the romantic, magical, and gothic speeches begins with the picture in the incantation scene, which does in fact prepare readers (and eventually audience members) for fantastical events to occur in each scene: Valdez prepares readers for the incantation; Isidore for his own demise; Teresa's for "the horror of [a dungeon's] ghastly punishments" (4.2.26) that she stands in view of; Alhadra's for learning about the death of her husband; and Alvar for the agony of Ordonio's anagnorisis—an internal imprisonment—"Will no one hear these stifled groans,

and wake me? / Prepare my punishment... / And be myself alone my own sore torment”  
(5.1.221, 225, 227).

Such preparations in *Remorse* relate also to Coleridge's comments on Shakespeare's use of the supernatural in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. He says this of the opening scene of *Hamlet*: “The moment before the Ghost enters Hamlet speaks of other matters in order to relieve the weight: he speaks of the coldness of the night, and observes that he has not heard the clock strike,” and then proceeds to add more levity by referencing the “custom of drinking,” following which “[f]rom the tranquil state of mind he indulges in moral reflections. Afterwards the Ghost suddenly enters” (387). He then turns to *Macbeth* noting that a similar preparation occurs in this play: “in the dagger scene, the moment before he sees it he has his mind drawn to some indifferent matter; thus the appearance has all the effect of abruptness, and the reader is totally divested of the motion that the vision is a figure in the <highly wrought> imagination” (387). We find parallel preparation in the first scene of Act IV “A cavern, dark, except where a gleam of moonlight is see on one side at the further end of it...Ferdinand/Isidore alone, an extinguished torch in his hand” (1292). While Isidore waits for Ordonio, he attempts to divert his mind towards the trivial but is plagued by the sound of “drip—drip—drip” measuring out his final moments:

Thanks to that little crevice,  
Which lets the moonlight in! I'll go and sit by it.  
[To peer at a tree or see a he goat's beard,  
Or hear a cow or two breath loud in their sleep--]<sup>196</sup>  
Any thing but this crash of water drops!  
These dull abortive sounds, that fret the silence

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<sup>196</sup> Brackets indicate material added to the print version of *Remorse*.

With puny thwartings and mock opposition!

So beats the death-watch to a sick man's ear. (4.1.5-10)

Indeed, *Remorse* is not *Hamlet*, and though this is not an opening scene, Coleridge nonetheless takes care to prepare his audience by externalizing the feeble attempt to divert one's mind during a dark night ruled by confusion and nightmarish visions. As such, Isidore functions as a supplement to Coleridge's insights regarding both the natural inclination of human nature to avoid what is terrifying and the dramatic effect of an audience's fear aligning with the characters', the former being represented here as Isidore longs for pastoral elements ("tree," "goat," and "cow") to divert his mind away from the portending "beats [of] the death-watch" (4.1.10). His simpleton expression produces a nearly farcical scene; however, the comic aura dissipates when Ordonio arrives to weave a tale of a traitor, what Isidore calls a "cloudy tale at midnight," only to discover that he is the victim in the tale. They fight making their way off stage, the audience hears "*a loud cry of 'Traitor! Monster'*" (1299), and Ordonio returns alone to claim he has "hurl[ed] him down the Chasm!" (4.1.165). This is the same chasm, Isidore tells Ordonio he dreamt of the previous night—"I was in the act / Of falling down that chasm, when Alhadra / Wak'd me" (4.1.74-76). Ordonio then "*stands lost in thought, then after a pause*" says "I know not why it should be yet it *is*" (4.1.81). The scene enacts two separate moments of surprise framed by Isidore's attempts at diverting his mind but what arrives is that which will destroy him. Similarly, Ordonio is awestruck by the reality of Isidore's premonition within his "sleep of horrors" (4.1.68), a sleep Ordonio eventually murders, all because of his misreading of the picture of the assassination. Contrary to Valdez's statement it failed to tell all, for it was not the contents of the picture that led Ordonio down this path, but the incorrect belief that Isidore conspired with Alvar to switch the portrait of Maria for the painting of the assassination. Thus

the play enacts a chain of events that culminate in this moment of surprise, in that Isidore's dream, like Macbeth's dagger, confirms what is about to happen.

Once *Remorse* was in production, it is plausible that audiences perhaps would look for ties between Coleridge's insights into Shakespeare as dramatist and the philosophical analysis of his characters, especially as the longer speeches from different characters build in an extra-textual interest in the characters. Moreover, Coleridge continued to lecture immediately following *Remorse*'s success at the Drury Lane, and while it was in production in provincial theaters. These lectures contain not simply critical analysis of Shakespeare's characters, but also directorial remarks that increase the attention to character analysis. Such remarks sparsely populate the lecture series prior to the staging of *Remorse*. In the first lecture of the 1811-1812 series, for instance, Coleridge remarks on Miranda in the *Tempest* and the use of bodily gesture to maximize dramatic effect in the scene when Prospero tells her to close her eyes prior to the appearance of Ferdinand. He suggests that [t]he Actress who truly understands the character should have her eyelids sunk down &[be] living as it were in her dreams" (367). But it is in the 1813 Lecture series in Bristol from October to November at the White Lion, a few months after *Remorse* was in production there that we find directorial remarks in all but one of the lectures on Shakespeare.<sup>197</sup> In the first lecture of that series he claims that actors have misinterpreted Polonius, mistaking Hamlet's sarcasm for the manner in which the character should be portrayed—"Shakespeare never intended to represent him as a buffoon" (520). In the lecture that follows, the Weird Sisters of *Macbeth* receive his attention: "Mr. Coleridge began commenting on the vulgar stage error which transformed the *Weird Sisters* into witches with broomsticks. They were awful beings; and blended in themselves The Fates and Furies of the ancients with the

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<sup>197</sup> *Remorse* played in Bristol on April 5th, 1813 and August 1, 1814.

sorceresses of Gothic and popular superstition” (531). He goes on to note that Shakespeare's superior judgments with these characters can be found in their use of language and with whom they address. When they address each other—“grotesqueness mingled with terrour [sic]”—and when they address Macbeth, their language is always “solemn, dark, and mysterious” (531).<sup>198</sup> Coleridge also takes note of the improper representation of *Othello* in Lecture 4: “Mr. C argued against the idea of making Othello a negro, he was a gallant Moor, of Royal blood, combining a high sense of Spanish and Italian feeling, and whose noble nature was wrought on, not by a fellow with a countenance predestined for the gallows, as some actors have represented *Iago*, but by an accomplished and artful villain” (555). And then in the final lecture, Coleridge remarks on Shakespeare's use of history as material from which to draw his characters and plays, making note that Richard II is “not much acted,” but that this itself should not be lamented, for

he never saw any of Shakespeare's plays performed, but with a degree of pain, disgust, and indignation. He had seen Mrs. Siddons as *Lady*, and Kemble as *Macbeth*--these might be the Macbeths of the Kembles, but they were not the Macbeths of Shakespeare; he was therefore not grieved at the enormous size and monopoly of the theaters, which naturally produced many bad and but few good actors; which drove Shakespeare from the stage, to find his proper place, in the heart and in the closet; where he sits with Milton, enthroned on a double-headed Parnassus; and with whom everything that was admirable, everything praiseworthy, was to be found. (563)

Such directorial comments and remarks on relegating Shakespeare to closet drama, simultaneous with the successful production of *Remorse*, established a new cultural capital for Coleridge. He

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<sup>198</sup> Coleridge's reading here is in direct contrast to Schlegel, who argues that he “it is a mistake to think of the Weird Sisters as fates or furies...and associate them with tragic destiny, for they are ignoble and vulgar instruments of hell” (Mays 531; n16).

was able to bridge his own theatrical success with his steady lecturing success to make comments on how most performances of Shakespeare's characters were lacking. And when embodied by an actor or actress possessing superior talents, the threshold for poor performances or misrepresentation swings the pendulum to place the interest in and success of the play on the actors, for they, according to Coleridge, appropriate the appreciation of Shakespeare's genius. Yet *Remorse* is insulated from the appropriating power of celebrity actors—even though the preface to *Remorse* praises each actor and actress for what they brought to the role—instead his gothic drama trades on the very elements that he points to in his lectures that make Shakespeare a genius, some of which are structural and dramatic effects, others almost subliminal. For example, Coleridge points out that “Prospero is introduced first in his magic robes...the reader knows him as a being possessing supernatural power” (360). Alvar, too, is first introduced in a robe: the stage direction describes him standing on the shores of Granada “wrapt in a Boat Cloak” (1239), and though it is a feigned role, the most obvious parallel is that Alvar impersonates a sorcerer, and is described frequently by other characters as a wizard. Further, Coleridge’s description of Richard II as an individual, in whom “[t]hroughout his whole character may be noticed the most rapid transitions from insolence to despair, from heights of love to the agonies or resentment & pretend resignation to the bitterest reproaches” (382) echoes Teresa’s description in *Ordonio*: “saw you his countenance? ? How rage, remorse, and scorn, and stupid fear, / Displac’d each other with swift interchanges?” (4.2.46-48). And sometimes his lectures present shades of his own persona in his analysis of characters. His lecture on *Hamlet*, for example, contains identifiable autobiographical remarks.

Coleridge begins with a question: “What did shakespeare mean when he drew the character of Hamlet? [... ] He always regarded his story before he began to write much in the

same light that a painter looked at a canvas before he began to paint.... Hamlet beheld external objects in the same way that a man of vivid imagination who shuts his eyes, sees what has previously made an impression upon his organs” (CC 386). He goes on to note that “Shakespeare places him in the most stimulating circumstances that a human being can be placed in...What is the result? Endless reasoning and urging --perpetual sollicitation of the mind to act, but as constant an escape from action--ceaseless reproaches of himself (for his sloth), while the whole energy of his resolution passes away in those reproaches” (386). He concludes suggesting that “Shakespeare wished to impress upon us the truth that action is the great end of existence—that no faculty of intellect however brilliant can be considered valuable, or otherwise than as misfortunes, if they withdraw us from, or render us repugnant to action, and lead us to think and think of doing, until the time has elapsed when we can do anything effectually” (390). Henry Crabb Robinson read this final remark autobiographically: “Last night he concluded his fine development of the prince of Denmark by an eloquent statement of the moral of the play ‘Action’ he said ‘is the great end of all--No intellect however grand is valuable if it draw us from action....’ Somebody said to me, this is a Satire on himself; No, said I it is an Elegy” (391). Thus there were those in attendance, friends and known acquaintances, who circulated the perception that Coleridge conflated his own powers with that of the great bard.

The final act of the play reflects marked differences between texts. *Osorio*, begins with attention on Alhadra’s loss and the Moor’s revenge; they surround Francesco and lead him to a ship bound for Africa, ostensibly enslaving him as he enslaved the Moors. This dimension of retributive justice is omitted from the stage and print version of *Remorse*, with the exception of a longer speech from Alhadra in Act Five, a speech that is bathed in the poetics of gothic romance. This speech begins the final scene of the fourth act, and as in *Osorio*, binds Alhadra with Alvar,

as two persecuted characters exacting revenge. Her soliloquy also paves the way for one of the most significant additions to the print version of *Remorse*, next to the changes in the altar scene, namely that Alhadra kills Ordonio in the final moments of the play, which is retributive justice for the death of her husband and symbolic justice for the persecution of the Moors. The addition of her long soliloquy also connects her with Teresa, as Teresa's soliloquy ends the second scene of Act Four. Where Teresa is alone in the moonlight, Alhadra is also in "[t]he mountains by moonlight" (1305). The stage version begins with a long speech from Teresa in the dungeon, which the print version prefaces with a 36-line soliloquy from Alvar. After the emphasis on the characters at the beginning of the final scene, the revisions to the ending are most notable. In *Osorio*, the eponymous character does not die by anyone's hand. He, like Francesco the Inquisitor, is ushered off stage by the Moors:

*(All the Band cry out)*

No mercy, no mercy

*(Naomi advances with a Sword towards Osorio)*

ALHADRA: Nay, bear him forth! Why should this innocent Maid

Behold the ugliness of death?

OSORIO: *(with great majesty)*: O woman

I have stood silent like a Slave before thee,

That I might taste the Wormwood and the Gall,

And satiate this self-accusing Spirit,

With bitterer agonies, than death can give—

*(The Moors gather around him in a crowd, and pass off the stage)* (5.2.194-200)

Alhadra is then given the final speech of the play. We find this passage reworked, and it

eventually “forms the basis for the superseded proof state of *Remorse*” (163). In the 3rd MS, “Alhadra snatches [the sword] from him, and suddenly stabs Ordonio—Alvar rushes towards him, thro’ the Moors, & catches him in his arms, &.” (*CC Osorio* Appendix “Annotations” 163). Coleridge deleted Alhadra’s lines at 195-196 and revised the opening lines to Osorio’s speech: “Tis well! Thou hast avenged thyself! O woman, / I stood in silence like a slave” (5.1.21-22). The stage version appears in two different forms: the Larpent version miscopies an anomalous ms so that Naomi, Alhadra’s companion, is the one to kill Ordonio; she is then surrounded by the Moors and they hurry her off the stage. The Larpent version also contains a brief exchange between Teresa, Valdez, and Alvar before Alvar delivers the final speech of the play. In the stage version, Alhadra, instead of snatching the sword from Naomi to kill Ordonio in some melee, makes a short speech and then dispatches him:

Why didst thou leave his children?

Demon.

*(Struggling to suppress her feelings)*

Within an hour

Those little ones will crowd round and ask me,

Where is our father? I shall curse thee then! (5.1.190-194)

The ending that played the first night was that of the Larpent ms, a rather brief climatic, yet chaotic scene, so much so that reviews leave it unclear who disposes of Ordonio. *The European Magazine* even says that “Ordonio committed suicide, and the only review to name Alhadra as the avenger—the *Morning Chronicle* (25th of January 1813)—had the benefit of the text” (1205). The revisions after the opening night appear to have been extensive: they involved the insertion and repositioning of a speech by Alvar and bring forward Alhadra’s exit, ultimately

making her the avenger. And yet through all of the revisions, her longer speech, which concludes *Osorio*, is restored immediately before she “hurries off with the Moors; [and then] the stage fills with armed peasants, and servant, ZULIMEZ and VALDEZ at their head. VALDEZ rushes into ALVAR’s arms” (1324). The entire final act of *Osorio* paid great attention to the persecution of the Moors with the removal of both the Inquisitor and Osorio from the world of the drama and giving Alhadra the final speech of the play about “cruel men” and how, eventually, their “Temples” and “Mountainous Towers” fall (5.1.274-275). The ending of *Remorse*, on the other hand, restores order in a melodramatic mode with Valdez bestowing blessings upon Teresa and Alvar, while Alvar reminds the audience that remorse “Works in our guilty hopes, and selfish fears!” (5.1.292) thus bookending one of his opening speeches in Act One (what is also reprinted as the epigraph to the print edition):

Remorse is as the heart in which it grows:

If that be gentle, it drops balmy dews

Of true repentance; if proud and gloomy

It is a poison-tree, that pierced to the inmost

Weeps only tears of poison! (1.1.20-24)

*Remorse* ran for twenty-two more performances after the opening at the Drury Lane, and continued to be performed in Bristol, Edinburgh, and provincial and American theaters steadily throughout 1813-1814. While *Remorse* was circulating in performance and print, extending Coleridge's reputation as a successful dramatist, it is clear that reviews for his fall 1813 lecture series in Bristol cast him in a new performative and professional light. A report in *Bristol Gazette* on Thursday, 4 November 1813 explains,

Were Milton to return among the living, and to select from our poets him, who from

profoundness of thought and unworldly abstraction of feeling, joined to the prodigality of fancy in glowing conception, the nearest resembled himself, he would probably fix his choice on the author of “The nightingale” and of “Fears in Solitude,” poems which will continue to stir the heart and elevate the mind, when the Epics and Romaunts of our time are referred to only by literary antiquaries, as the quaint curiosities of a wonder-gaping and sophisticated age. If it be true that a poet alone can criticize a Poet, few will dispute the qualifications of Mr. Coleridge as a lecturer on Shakespeare. (514)

This series in Bristol assumed a similar structure as the previous series, with the majority of his time devoted to a philosophical analysis of characters: Hamlet, Othello, Iago, Richard II. The scientific discourse, or the perception of it, had carried from the formal academic spaces in London into the reception of his insights in Bristol. A report of his third lecture in the *Bristol Gazette*, for example, read “Mr. Coleridge...has shewn that the intricacies of Hamlet’s character may be traced to Shakespeare’s deep and accurate science of mental philosophy” (543; *Bristol Gazette*, Thursday, 11 November 1813). The report goes on to explain how

Mr Coleridge instanced, as proof of Shakespeare’s minute knowledge of human nature, the unimportant conversation which takes place during the expectation of the Ghost’s appearance: and he recalled to our notice what all must have observed in common life; that on the brink of some enterprise, or event of moment, men naturally elude the pressure of their own thoughts, by turning aside to trivial objects and familiar circumstances: so in Hamlet, the dialogue on the platform begins with remarks on the coldness of the air; and enquiries, obliquely connected indeed with the expected hour of visitation, but thrown out in a seeming vacuity of topics, as to the striking of the clock. (545)

Coleridge had successfully revealed, with microscopic precision, the “accurate science of mental philosophy in his analysis of characters,” and his spectacular experiment of *Remorse*, exemplified and initiated by incantation scene, allowed for audiences, similar to Joanna Baillie’s dramaturgical aims, to “peer into the minds of man,” peering made that much more natural for his audience through Coleridge’s self-revelations and intimate digressions that were a standard beloved fare of his lectures. Looking back several years after Coleridge’s death, Henry Crabb Robinson had this to say about Coleridge’s lectures: “he was himself aware it was impossible for him to be methodical. And those hearers who enjoyed him most, probably enjoyed his digressions” (CC 411). And yet, the report in the *Bristol Gazette* also points to another phenomenon that has been part and parcel of Romantic poets’ experiences composing and staging gothic dramas, that is the phenomenon of Coleridge’s publicity, for these performances increases the notoriety of the more culturally acceptable genres—“The Nightingale” and “Fears of Solitude”—and I would argue that it is his simultaneous success with *Remorse* that granted him the accolade that “A poet alone can criticize a poet.” Indeed then, his gothic dramatic efforts were shaped by the theatrical celebrity apparatus, both on the dramatic and scientific stage.

As it was established at the outset of this chapter, that “it is hardly surprising to find in public lecturing the same cult of personality and celebrity that made actors like Kean and poets like Byron such a constant source of fascination and gossip” (491).<sup>199</sup> And Jon Klancher noted that celebrity, charismatic authority, and sheer performative energy made Romantic lecturing a hot-ticket phenomenon in London. And goes on to say that “witnesses pointed to a startling event in the London lecturing halls: Coleridge transforming himself into a Shakespearean presence

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<sup>199</sup> Christie, William. “Res Theatralis Histronica: Acting Coleridge in the Lecture Theater.” *Studies in Romanticism* 52.4 (2013): 485. Web.

(“Transmission Failure” 175). As Peter Manning notes, Romantic public lectures helped to create and familiar the image of the Romantic poet” (229).

Coleridge’s anecdotes and extemporaneous digressions produced a sense of private insight that lecture audiences—like theatergoers—craved, making his own acting of revealing what was hidden to most in Shakespeare ostensibly a natural occurrence. When he displayed for his audience the act of apprehending, he provided them with a pregnant moment that was similar to climatic moments of apprehension by Garrick and Siddons in their most famed roles. Moreover, that Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare point to the same moments that celebrity actors were famous for—Garrick seeing Hamlet's Ghost and Kemble as Macbeth grasping after the dagger—provides a similar brand of psychological authority on human nature that attracted audiences to these performances. Because Coleridge is revealing these truths on the same stage where lecturers like Humphry Davy were also revealing spectacular truths of natural elements to the wonder of the public, a new proscenium arch of truth emerges with its own press and its own images, and its own spectacle. Thus we cannot separate the performance of *Remorse* from the print version and the importance of the two. Where the print version restores longer speeches that does two things: on the level of dramaturgy, the additions provide moments for readers, who were or would become lecture-goers, to connect with the insights that Coleridge make regarding preparations, the dramatic sights; next since the speeches were monologic, the print version creates extra textual supplements to the characters in the play, granting them a life beyond the stage. And because *Remorse* adopts similar dramatic elements that make Shakespeare a native genius, audiences would see and read those element as coming from the caliber of a poet that can criticize a Milton or a Shakespeare: *Remorse* provides the material proof of Coleridge genius, through performing and dramatizing Shakespeare's genius. And the *coup de grace* is the

spectacular altar scene that in no way is the supernatural but the performance of the supernatural. It mirrors the same fantastical experiments that occurred on the theater stages like the Royal Institution, but knowing that the incantation is a trick—both in the world of the play and as a dramatic illusion—Coleridge is able to grant a perspicuity to the audience, in a similar manner that they would have if they studied a book on chemistry, performed experiments in the academic institution's laboratory, and saw the lecture where the two were connected. Coleridge's audience, now having been to the lecture on the dramatic elements sees them in action from a disinterested point of view, and thus experiences the satisfaction of apprehending the direct connection between the theory—Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare—and the spectacular experiment—*Remorse*. The academic institution and gothic drama then can be seen as cultivating the aura of Coleridge's literary celebrity by performing Shakespeare's genius.

## Coda

By focusing on gothic drama for its ties to celebrity as a transgressive identity and spaces of cultural consumption, this dissertation concludes that not only did portraiture galleries, coffeehouses, private performance spaces, and academic institutions influence the dramaturgical choices of these plays, but that these writers used gothic drama as a vehicle to perform their professional identities—through what I call a “poetics of publicity,” and thus a range of political issues are illuminated by this topic.

William Wordsworth’s *The Borderers* with its inordinate references to faces coinciding with key dramatic moments from *Othello* and *Macbeth* structure the visual and verbal crisis and echoes a modality of vision that can be traced to the Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery. Wordsworth’s sixth month Residence in London captured in *The Prelude* conflates three separate occasions when Wordsworth lived in the “Mighty City” prior to moving to Racedown where he wrote his gothic drama. Through Book Seven we can discern a hypothetical walking route that would have taken the ambitious poet through the nexus of the literary publishing scene on Fleet Street and the fashionable walks of the Strand and Pall Mall, though many critics tend to focus on his rather elongated discussion of his experience at the “illegitimate” theater, Sadler’s Wells. The point is that Wordsworth’s engagement with the city at an early point in his career, captured in his most sustained remarks about the city—remarks that dwell on the theater as a physical space and theatricality as a mode of vision—shapes the conscious construction of his professional identity. What is more, the facial hermeneutical attempts found in *The Prelude* and that dominate *The Borderers* are part and parcel of the poetic portraits found in *Lyrical Ballads* and *The Excursion*. Indeed, his walking route is suggestive of his familiarity with Boydell’s

Shakespeare Gallery, and because this dissertation treats celebrity spaces as pedagogical environments, Wordsworth learns that the theatricality in his own portraits helps to confirm the authenticity of his poems situated in the Lake District. And because next to Sir Walter Scott, William Wordsworth was the most painted poet of his time, we discover that this fact is in direct tension with the manner in which Wordsworth's appropriates gothic drama as a device to critique the vapid zeal for physiognomic approaches to aesthetic consumption that obscured the rise of poverty and homelessness in England during the early years with the war with France, shedding further light on the manner in which he appropriates theatrical celebrity culture as a poetics of publicity.

The investigation of private performances spaces featured in Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* reveals these spaces as an important node in the geographies of celebrity. They allow the audience to have more intimate contact with the players and are an alluring phenomenon because when the players move outside of the confines of the proscenium arch they are caught in a "public sighting" not available to everyone. But in the case of Siddons, because some of these performances happened in domestic spaces, she has more power because she is a woman, a cultural power that increases with her gender-bending performances. Yet the most interesting connection to private performance spaces is a serendipitous effect: the crux of the critique of the male gaze in *De Monfort* occurs not in a gothic castle but at a party, making Siddons's private theatrics that much more profound in the scene when Jane arrives at the Freberg's party and she disrupts the control of the patriarchal gaze. I argue that the impact of her private performances of *De Monfort* would not have been as profound if Siddons did not have a lengthy career of private performances, both prior to the staging of *De Monfort* when she did solo performances of *Hamlet* in the 1790s and later in her career when she gave readings from *Paradise Lost*. I have travelled

to the Huntington Library to analyze Siddons's manuscript from which she delivered these readings, and it is interesting to note that she transcribed Milton's biblical epic line by line over a ten-year period beginning in the early years of the 1790s. She transcribed roughly a Book each year; and many of the Books are dated but also include locations, making this manuscript a diary of sorts. The most interesting entry would certainly be the year that she copied out Book IX in London (1798)—the same year that *De Monfort* was published in *Plays on the Passions*. Having thought deeply about Milton's framing of the fall through Eve perhaps enticed Siddons to the role and informs her request of Baillie for "more Janes." The *Paradise Lost* manuscript also functions as a history of those performances, for words are underlined, presumably as a prompt for emphasis. It is also telling that Book IX appear to have the most notable wear as do the early books detailing Lucifer's fall and the creation of Pandemonium. All of this is to suggest that though Baillie sought to challenge how Siddons's (and female artistic) power is confined by the institutions of the media, Reynolds's portraits of her in the Royal Academy, and male-dominated control of the regency theaters, the private gender-bending performances were a serendipitous choice on Baillie's part, and permanently couple descriptions of Siddons with Baillie in a process of "ghosting." We know that Baillie witnessed Siddons's private readings, but perhaps she was also aware of her earlier performances as Hamlet and sought to explore gender constraints and mobility of economic power in public life based on that knowledge. Thus what informs Baillie's poetics of publicity was how Siddons inhabits, or even haunts, several public and private spaces, as many of Baillie's female characters do beyond *De Monfort*.

Chapter Three investigates the importance of Coleridge lecturing in coffeehouses and how his lecture on the slave trade in that space shapes the dramaturgy of *Osorio*. Here, the spatial argument is that media circulated and was consumed in coffeehouses, analogous to the

Internet. And since celebrity culture is dependent on media, spaces such as coffeehouses dramatically increase the proliferation and consumption of celebrity. This chapter also introduced an actor-network analysis of celebrity and space that attempted to show how David Hartley's neurophysiology in *Observations on Man* could be considered an antecedent to an object-oriented ontology. In doing so, this chapter aimed to bring attention to the circulations of things in spaces, namely food commodities in tandem with media and the manner in which they solicit a particular brand of consumption, what Bruno Latour would refer to as actants. A network, according to Latour is not a stable set of relations of passive objects and active subject, instead there exists webs or networks of interaction among multiple constituents which become "quasi-objects" in themselves, these networks are only discernible, according to Latour, by virtue of their "tracers": the "subtle pathways" of connection that materialize. Similarly, the traces that are left behind and build up in Hartley's take on associationism points us to the manner that Coleridge uses his gothic drama and lectures to reveal these network connections, and thus at the center of his poetics of publicity is the idea that food commodities are objects in a vast global network that exert power. In point of fact, luxurious commodities "urge" the worker on to endure unnatural toil, thereby containing a power in and of themselves. Thus Coleridge raises an immediate perception of spatial habituation by attending to the ramifications of the consumption practices within coffeehouses. Indeed, this chapter brings attention to theatrical celebrity culture as a network of spaces, especially urban spaces, and how they animate meaningful connections with capitalism that allow us to address both the material and symbolic frameworks that make up the celebrity as a cultural industry.

The final chapter investigates the substantial changes made to *Osorio* for it to become *Remorse* (the only successful gothic drama written by a Romantic poet) and argues that lectures

at academic institutions were a form of theatrical performance, for they traded on similar consumption practices and acting techniques, and thus these spaces, in a dissertation investigating literary celebrity, are integral to the formation of Coleridge's celebrity, as he is lecturing on Shakespeare and reproducing the same dramatic elements in *Remorse* that make Shakespeare a genius. There is a subtext in this chapter however: that there perhaps exists a link between the animal magnetism and mesmerism Coleridge assigns to the lure of celebrity performers and the manner in which he envisions media and “On the Slave Trade” through Hartley’s neurophysiology. Moreover, this chapter extends the analytical opportunity for further study of academic institution lecture spaces as celebrity spaces given that “celebrity, charismatic authority, and sheer performative energy made Romantic lecturing a hot-ticket phenomenon in London” (Klancher 5).

This dissertation puts forth two major argumentative claims: gothic drama is the genre of celebrity *par excellence*; (2) celebrity culture is spatially constituted, thus each drama under consideration tells a spatial story. It seeks to introduce the concept that the gothic novel structures a reading experience akin to reading celebrities, what I call, to modify Tom Mole's phrase—“a hermeneutics of (gothic) intimacy”—and Jeffrey Cox’s observations on gothic drama, that staging castles in the time of Revolutionary politics represents the overturning of traditional institutions and that the rise of the villain hero represents rebelling against hegemonic apparatuses, correspond to P. David Marshall's claim that “celebrity is the potential of capitalism, a celebration of new kinds of values and orders, a debunking of customary division of traditional society [...] celebrity inaugurates a new public sphere”(6). Through the connection between gothic drama and celebrity culture, another key feature emerged: the mix forms of gothic drama allowed for its own version of mass marketing through fragmented remediation.

From chapbooks to that distilled novels to their most chilling parts, to ballads and drinking songs from such plays as the *The Kentish Barons* and *Julie of Louvain* that appeared in compilations and broadsides, the actors, the scene, and the story itself had a life that circulated well beyond the regency theaters. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge participated in this fragmentation:

Wordsworth published a poem in the *Morning Chronicle* under the name of Mortimer, his hero-villain, and later published a section from *The Borderers* in *Lyrical Ballads*, “The Female Vagrant.” Coleridge published an entire section of *Osorio* in *Lyrical Ballads* as “The Foster-Mother’s Tale” and “The Dungeon,” though the latter was excised after the initial edition of their poetical experiments. And after Coleridge’s *Osorio* was originally rejected for the stage in 1798, William Carnaby set the song from the incantations scene to music in 1802, and published it in May of that year as *Invocation to a Spirit: Serious Glee, for Soprano, Counter Tenor, Tenor and Bass*. The same music pamphlet also advertises settings for two earlier lyrics by Coleridge, though his authorship is not mentioned (CC 1064).

Indeed many early Romantic authors wrote gothic dramas in the 1790s, at a time when the gothic drama in particular was one of the most spectacular, popular visual culture experiences. Robert Southey, William Wordsworth, Charles Lamb, Walter Scott, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Godwin, Joanna Baillie, Hannah More, John Tobin, William Sotheby, and Matthew Lewis all wrote, and attempted to get produced, gothic dramas in the 1790s. And it is important to note that these poets were theatergoers prior to becoming playwrights, and that they too imagined the individuals and the topography that comprised much of the cultural industry of celebrity. Several late Romantic poets as well wrote gothic dramas: John Keats wrote *Otho the Great*, Percy Shelley *The Cenci*, and Felicia Hemans *Vespers of Palermo*. Each drama relies heavily on Shakespeare’s tragic figures as Baillie, Wordsworth, and Coleridge’s do. And Keats

wrote the lead of *Otho* for Edmund Kean and Shelley for celebrity actress Elizabeth O’Neill, which presents plenty of grounds of further investigations into the relation between gothic drama playwriting and theatrical celebrity culture. As such, this dissertation is by no means exhaustive in its investigation of gothic drama. Instead, it acts as a thought experiment for looking at the act of playwriting and the importance of space in relation to that act, because the criticism around the effulgence of the gothic drama writing in the 1790s tends to dismiss those writers’ experiences in metropolitan spaces. Ultimately, this dissertation helps to continue to demystify what Robert Hume has identified as the “persistent suspicion that Gothicism is a poor and probably illegitimate relation of Romanticism,”<sup>200</sup> and to recover Gothic drama from the annals of Romantic drama, as “modern critics have seen the Romantic period as a time when literature and the stage experienced a near-complete divorce from one another” (Cox 19), and most significantly, to position gothic drama’s explicit relation to celebrity culture.<sup>201</sup> Fundamentally, this dissertation not only contributes to a growing critical interest in celebrity studies, but is equally compelling as it posits a geographical and temporal point of origin for the modern celebrity in British Romanticism. As Su Holmes and Sean Redmond say in the inaugural edition of the journal *Celebrity Studies* in 2010, the principal task of this type of investigation is “to defamiliarize the everyday” and thereby “to make apparent the cultural politics and power relations which sit at the center of ‘the taken for granted.’” Indeed, investigating the powerful cultural forces that produce celebrity writers and actors impel us to confront how texts (and

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<sup>200</sup> See Robert Hume’s landmark essay “Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel.” *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 84, no. 2, 1969, pp. 282–90.

<sup>201</sup> In a footnote in their introduction to *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama*, Jeffrey Cox and Michael Gamer point out that they “see this split being enforced in the criticism when, for example, William Jewett’s, *Fatal Autonomy: Romantic Drama and the Rhetoric of Agency*, eschews the theatrical world, while Jane Moody’s, *Illegitimate Theater in London, 1770-1840*, turns away from the literary drama” (ix). They also acknowledge “this split is also replicated in anthologies” (Cox and Gamer ix). Cox, Jeffrey N., and Gamer, Michael. *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama*. Peterborough, Ont.; Orchard Park, NY, Broadview Press, 2003.

canons) are shaped by, and shape the discursive spaces in which society negotiated understandings of Romantic literary celebrity.