

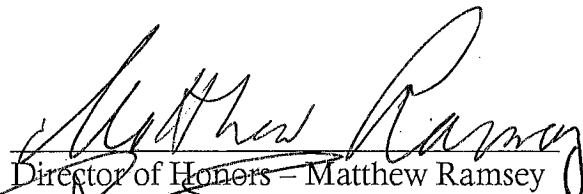
The End of the Patent System:
How Politicians and Performers Reformed the Victorian Theatre

By
Samuel Mallick

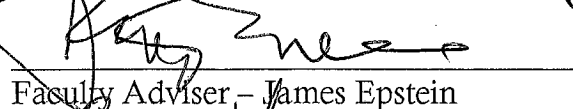
Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of History of Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Honors in History

April 2014

On the basis of this thesis defended by the candidate on April 23, 2014
we, the undersigned, recommend that the candidate be awarded honors
in History.



Director of Honors – Matthew Ramsey



Faculty Adviser – James Epstein



Third Reader – Peter Lake

In memory of Paul Callihan,
my first director and the man who taught me to love theatre.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....1
Chapter 1.....13
Chapter 2.....32
Chapter 3.....47
Epilogue.....67
Epilogue.....69
Primary Source Bibliography.....71
Secondary Source Bibliography.....74

Introduction

Several days before the Reform Bill of 1832 received Royal Assent and officially expanded voting rights across England, Parliament appointed a Select Committee on Dramatic Literature to explore the possibility of reforming the laws governing the theatre. It was more than coincidence that placed these two events so close to each other. The nineteenth century theatre was, like other aspects of English society at the time, seen as something in need of reform. The London stage was an institution in transition, and its changing state was a product of broader notions of reform and improvement. This thesis explores the intersection of changes in the nineteenth century London theatre and the Victorian notions of reform and improvement. To understand this, I look at actor-managers and producers, particularly of Shakespeare, who achieved preeminence in their times. I use this methodology because the celebrity of these actor-managers kept them both in the public eye and towards the top of the cultural hierarchy. I am interested in how the regulations on theatres changed through the century and how actor-managers, politicians, and critics attempted to make theatres both profitable and respectable enterprises. The queen attended the theatre, as did members of the working class. This bringing together of classes made the theatres reflective of Victorian society as a whole. New laws brought liberal social reform, including liberalizing theatrical entertainment.

While at the beginning of the century only the patented Theatres Royal at Drury Lane and Covent Garden were legally allowed to present all types of performances, legislation passed in the mid-century overturned this monopoly. I argue that these reforms were born out of the Victorian ideal of improvement and that the increasingly free market

improved the quality of theatre and created an environment in which commercially minded actor-managers were more successful than those who cared primarily for artistic merit. The Victorian climate of social change and an overall goal of personal and societal improvement were exemplified in the theatre. I argue that actor-managers adapted to this new theatrical climate to mixed success and that, ultimately, the actor-managers who succeeded in producing commercially profitable high-quality entertainment were those who embraced the idea that a production could be both popular and culturally sophisticated.

A number of keywords are critical to this study. The words class, culture, respectability, improvement, and reform are all complex terms that lack definitive definitions. "Class" can be problematic because the term word is purposefully vague. Early in the century, the term class became more widely used to categorize people based on socioeconomic standing. Historian Asa Briggs writes, "In one sense 'class' was a more indefinite word than 'rank' and this may have been among the reasons for its introduction. In another sense, however, employment of the word 'class' allowed for a sharper and more generalized picture of society, which could be provided with a historical and economic underpinning."¹ I will borrow Briggs's understanding of class as way to categorize English society, acknowledging that the terms upper, middle, and lower class are oversimplifications. Further, he implies that notions of culture, improvement, and reform applied to all classes. Producers intended sophisticated theatre for the upper and middle classes and popular theatre for the middle and lower classes, but members of all classes were free to attend any type of theatre they chose.

¹ Asa Briggs, "The Language of 'Class' in Early Nineteenth-Century England," in Asa Briggs, *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs Volume I: Words, Numbers, Places, People*, (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1985), 7.

The term culture is, according to historian Raymond Williams, one of the most difficult terms in the English language because its development was complex and it has different meanings in different contexts.² Victorian poet and essayist Matthew Arnold, in his seminal *Culture and Anarchy*, argues that culture is not a means of social class definition but rather “a study of perfection” and defines culture as “a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world.”³ Arnold removes culture from questions of class and places it outside the realm of social or artistic hierarchy: “[Culture] does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make all live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, and use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely,—to be nourished and not bound by them.”⁴ Arnold defines culture here as a transcendent entity through which “the masses” are actually united with the upper classes.

Notions of class and culture are in turn tied to Victorian concepts of improvement and reform. Williams notes conflicting views from the upper classes about how to treat the lower classes. He suggests that Arnold’s argument in *Culture and Anarchy* includes components of this notion of improvement, but that the improvement must first be internal. Williams writes, “Arnold recommends a merely selfish personal cultivation: that although he professes concern about the state of society, the improvement of this state must wait on

² Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), accessed on books.google.com, 87.

³ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 1875 (Project Gutenberg, 2003), accessed April 10, 2014.

⁴ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*.

the process of his internal perfection.”⁵ Reformers often sought to improve the lower class, printing cheap magazines to provide them with “proper” reading material. By improving individuals within the lower classes, the elite attempted to improve society as a whole. Self-improvement was connected to societal improvement. These understandings were also connected to the idea that the quality of art could be improved. Providing the lower classes with an opportunity to see legitimate drama at theatres across London was itself an attempt to bring about all of these kinds of improvement.

Improvement and reform are also connected to ideas of respectability. Historian Peter Bailey asserts that respectability was “a principal prerequisite for true citizenship.”⁶ Respectability had to be a product of improvement, though. Asa Briggs in *The Age of Improvement* states, “Respectability shone out as a virtue only when it was contrasted with the lack of it; cleanliness, sobriety, forethought, and thrift could never be taken for granted.”⁷ In the theatre, as with all other areas of society, ongoing evaluation of the institution was key. Extending Brigg’s argument, Victorians could never assume that the theatre was inherently edifying, clean, safe, or polite. Thus, the theatre needed improving.

Notions of improvement are key. Historian Kathryn Prince cites general periodicals such as *Penny Magazine*, which was funded by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge that attempted to educate the English public. Publishers extended that practice

⁵ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 118.

⁶ Peter Bailey, “‘Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up’ Towards a Role of Analysis of Mid-Victorian Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Spring, 1979), 338.

⁷ Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, (London: Longmans, 1959), 450.

to theatre as well. *Pictorial Shakespeare*, for example, was meant for working class readers. The publication was intended to be cheap, interesting, and edifying reading material.⁸

The idea that culture was subject to improvement supports the idea that culture was flexible. Historian K. Theodore Hoppen admits a difference between high and low culture in the mid-Victorian period, but he argues that Victorians were concerned with the commercial aspects, not just the artistic merit, of various forms of culture.⁹ Actor-manager Samuel Phelps made money on his high culture productions of Shakespeare, and playwright and MP Edward Bulwer-Lytton moved for and chaired a Select Committee to reevaluate the theatre in 1832 partly because, as a playwright, he stood to benefit financially from legal reforms. These reforms, enacted in 1843, most importantly removed the monopoly of the Patent theatres on what was known as legitimate drama. After the Restoration, the introduction of Patent laws restricted performances of legitimate dramas, “straight plays,” preeminently the works of William Shakespeare, to the Theatres Royal. Eventually, London outgrew the Patent laws. Unpatented theatres began to produce Shakespeare illegally, and the term legitimate drama became more ambiguous.

In this study, I generally associate the terms elite culture, high culture, high art, and highbrow performance with entertainment intended for the educated, wealthy classes. “Popular” refers to art that is intended for wider audiences, which many contemporaries considered to be less sophisticated. This distinction reflected critical standards as they stood at the beginning of the century. Definitions of hierarchy became more complicated at the century’s end when certain theatres presented highbrow productions of Shakespeare for

⁸ Kathryn Prince, *Shakespeare in the Victorian Periodicals*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 21.

⁹ K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation: 1846-1886*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 391.

popular audiences. While opera, light opera such as Gilbert and Sullivan, music halls, melodrama, and farce were important parts of Victorian culture, the Patent laws dealt directly with legitimate drama and, therefore, for simplicity's sake, I focus primarily on Shakespeare.

The Patent laws constructed a system of cultural order in which the Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres were on top. The fact that the British government chose to restrict productions of legitimate drama shows they felt the need to protect the integrity of legitimate drama, but the very term legitimate drama is confusing. Legitimate drama encompassed the plays of Shakespeare and other comedies and tragedies, particularly those in five acts. In this thesis, I understand legitimate drama to be straight plays presented within the realm of high culture in the first half of the nineteenth century. Contemporary dramas could be considered legitimate if they were presented as comedies, tragedies, or histories after the model of Shakespeare, though the definitions of the genre were not explicitly stated. By the mid-nineteenth century, non-Patent theatres felt capable of producing legitimate drama and, by the end of the nineteenth century, many did so with great success. The changing nature of the London theatre scene led to a need for legal reform. In 1843, the term began to fade from use and was replaced with the more broad term stage play in the Theatres Act of 1843.

The overturning of the Patent Laws was contemporaneous with changes in London and in the profession of acting. Theatre historian Michael R. Booth claims that significant growth in the population of London meant that the few patent theatres were no longer able to serve the city, meaning that theatres were built out of necessity, often far from middle-

and upper-class neighborhoods.¹⁰ The opening of more theatres came hand-in-hand with a growing respect for actors. While late Georgian celebrity actors were often idolized, as evidenced by colorful postcards depicting them, they were still viewed with a certain degree of suspicion. Michael Baker, in *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*, chronicles the social rise of the profession of acting from 1830 to 1890 and cites greater recognition of acting as a legitimate career.¹¹ The audiences of theatres also were viewed with suspicion at the beginning of the century. Jerry White, a historian of London, writes, “The reckless enthusiasm of the London theatre audiences, their outspoken criticisms rudely expressed, their hugger-mugger mingling of classes, all helped condemn the theatre in some eyes... Until the end of the 1850s gatherings of prostitutes in even the legitimate theatres kept many respectable families away.”¹² The eventual rise in the “respectability” of the theatre parallels the breakdown of the Patent law and the popularization of Shakespeare and other legitimate drama. By becoming more respectable, theatres proved their deservedness to produce legitimate drama. By producing legitimate drama, theatres in turn became more respectable and therefore more deserving.

The production of legitimate drama at Patent theatres, however, did not preclude the production of lower genres, just as the holding of a Patent did not mean the theatre was exclusively for the elite. Theatres would sometimes present a double-bill of a legitimate drama and a musical or farce.¹³ The after-pieces were not always as culturally elite as the

¹⁰ Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4.

¹¹ Michael Baker, *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*, (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978).

¹² Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Random House, 2007), 276.

¹³ This kind of double-bill dates back to ancient Athens, when playwrights would present a trilogy of tragedies followed by a satyr play in the festival of Dionysus.

dramas they followed. *Surrender of Trinidad*, a simple, patriotic after-piece “was meant to provide light entertainment, music and spectacle, to round out an evening at Covent Garden.”¹⁴ Such pieces did not undermine a theatre’s attempt to be respectable. The behavior of audiences was more important than the quality of art produced when evaluating a theatre’s respectability; the fact that eating, drinking, and smoking were allowed in music halls impeded their ability to be respectable in the 1860s.

At the start of the century, the presence of prostitutes, mistresses, and rowdy pits made some theatres suspect, but theatre scholar Richard W. Schoch writes, “The theatre made a bid for respectability, that most cherished of nineteenth-century virtues.”¹⁵ This ascent to respectability occurred side-by-side with a blurring of the hierarchy of art and proved to be integral to the development of Victorian drama. The evolution of Sadler’s Wells theatre from an unsavory venue to one of London’s leading producers of Shakespeare exemplified this trend. The universality of Shakespeare helped bridge geographical and socioeconomic divides. His works in particular allow for cultural fluidity.

In *Highbrow Lowbrow*, Lawrence Levine looks at the cultural fluidity of Shakespeare in America, examining the belief that high culture, which is more refined and socially exclusive, was inherently better than low or popular culture, which is more easily digestible by all people.¹⁶ Levine’s first chapter focuses on performances of Shakespeare, challenging the binary of high culture and popular performance. Levine charts Shakespeare’s movement

¹⁴ James Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15.

¹⁵ Richard W. Schoch, “Theatre and mid-Victorian society, 1851-1870,” in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, Joseph Donohue, ed.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521650687>, accessed April 10, 2014 (331).

¹⁶ A modern American comparison might be the difference between Grand Opera, historically intended to be “high culture” appealing to the educated and wealthy, and the “Grand Ole Opry,” a country music radio broadcast intended for widespread appeal.

from lowbrow to highbrow performance in America over the course of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ This recognition of cultural hierarchy as a sort of moving target applies directly to a study of Shakespeare in Victorian England. Scholars sometimes look at performance as a product of (and for) specific classes, but this is an oversimplified view. In a highly stratified society like Victorian England, the theatre reinforced divisions within society through its spatial arrangement and pricing, but it did so under one roof. Tickets for the pit were the cheapest, and the audience was typically the rowdiest there. The gallery was more expensive, and boxes were the most expensive. In this way, the theatre can be seen as a microcosm of English society. However, Levine highlights the fact that American theatres often produced plays with target audiences. Depending on the form of presentation, producers could use Shakespeare to attract different classes to the theatre.

Levine argues that Shakespeare shifted from lowbrow to highbrow in America. In Victorian London, however, Shakespeare legally belonged to the Patent Theatres. While the working classes did feel entitled to attend these theatres, performances were relatively inaccessible to the working classes.¹⁸ Most working people lived far from the Theatres Royal, located in the West End. The worst parts of the city were in old London, mostly south of the Thames.¹⁹ Though unpatented theatres were located closer to working class neighborhoods, they could not legally produce Shakespeare and were known for disorderly audiences. Opening Shakespearian performance outside the Patent theatres, therefore, gave actor-managers the opportunity to share Shakespeare with sections of the working and middle classes and simultaneously improve audience behavior across London.

¹⁷ Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow Lowbrow*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

¹⁸ Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, 4.

¹⁹ White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, 29.

Theatre managers faced great financial risk. While there was variation within the management and ownership structure of theatres, the typical Victorian theatre manager leased a theatre from its owners and assembled his own resident repertory company. Managers were responsible for all the artistic and administrative aspects of the institution. They received the profits or bore the losses. Many managers did not last long in this system. Actor-manager William Charles Macready had to step down from management of both the Covent Garden and the Drury Lane, and Macready's father sustained great financial losses in the theatre as well. Actor Barry Sullivan and others had short-lived ventures into London management. Booth argues that, while bad management could often be the cause of theatres going under, more often the larger economic state of the country was the reason for unsuccessful management.²⁰ While he makes a good case, he does not give adequate weight to the larger social and cultural issues being played out in the theatre. As more theatres performed legitimate drama in more parts of London, popular tastes in drama began to win out. In the early part of the century, the Theatres Royal could perform drama however they liked. The theatre artists at the Covent Garden and the Drury Lane were the cultural arbiters because they had no competition. Later in the century, however, artists at other theatres whose considerations were driven by the commercial desire to draw a popular audience began to produce legitimate drama. In this way, the wider public became cultural arbiters.

The eventual repeal of the restrictions of legitimate drama gave the public a greater ability to determine cultural tastes. While the actor-manager system continued to dominate London theatres and powers of censorship were decidedly in the hands of the Lord Chamberlain's office, removing the Patent laws allowed market forces greater influence.

²⁰ Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*.

Formerly un-patented theatres often produced Shakespeare to greater financial success than the Drury Lane or the Covent Garden. This change in preeminence shows the fluidity of cultural hierarchy, even one with a legal definition. The notion of a cultural hierarchy is problematic, however, because Shakespeare, often referred to as the National Dramatist, belonged to all Englishmen and women, regardless of class.

Many Victorians were familiar with Shakespeare's plays. Aside from popular productions of Shakespeare, the English were most familiar with the Bard through periodicals. According to Prince, in periodicals intended to educate young boys and girls about Shakespeare, depictions of Shakespeare, "helped to shape a nascent sense of national identity among England's youth, embracing adventure, exploration, and conquest for boys, self-sacrificing daughterhood—and eventually motherhood—for girls."²¹ These periodicals used Shakespeare's popularity to instill English ideals—adventure in the age of imperialism and motherhood in a society with strict gender roles—in children from a young age. By producing his work, theatres could blur the lines between popular performance and high culture. Regardless of class or political affiliation, all English people held Shakespeare in common and felt a certain degree of ownership of his works. It is through Shakespeare that these actor-managers navigated the turbulent theatrical developments of the nineteenth century.

Chapter One provides a brief history of the Patent laws. It discusses the laws as practiced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century through the lens of the Kemble family of actors, who experienced critical and popular success under the system. It explores how their approaches to Shakespeare helped define high culture performances in the first

²¹ Prince, *Shakespeare in the Victorian Periodicals*, 37.

third of the century. Chapter Two focuses on the mid century, opening with a discussion of William Charles Macready. Macready testified in favor of the Patent system in 1832 and managed both the Covent Garden and Drury Lane before the laws were actually repealed. It then turns to the Theatres Act of 1843 that ended the Patent system, and finally it discusses Barry Sullivan, an actor in the same vein as Macready, who experienced difficulty managing in London in the mid-late century. Chapter Three examines the Select Committee of 1866, which recommended that music halls be given the same privileges and restrictions as theatres. It then turns to Charles Kean and Samuel Phelps, two successful actor-managers who adapted to a new theatrical climate in ways that allowed them to be successful both artistically and commercially. Kean turned to touring when he found managing in London to be too expensive, and Phelps brought sophisticated performances of legitimate drama to new audiences by performing outside of the traditional West End venues. As the culture of the London stage and the laws that governed it changed, the business of operating a theatre had to change as well. While the changes were by no means universally appealing, actor-managers had to either adapt to this brave new world of the post-Patent era or face financial and artistic ruin.

Chapter 1: Questioning the Patent Laws

This chapter opens with a brief history of the Patent Laws. It then considers the end of the era in which these laws governed the London theatres, specifically the careers of the Kemble family who dominated the theatre in that period. It connects Charles Kemble to the Select Committee of 1832, which cited a decline in the state of the theatre as a reason to repeal the Patent Laws. The popularity of the work of the Kembles indicates that it was in fact the strength of the late Georgian theatre that stimulated a need for reform. The public felt entitled to see legitimate drama because Shakespeare's place as the national playwright transcended class, but in London, the Patent monopoly restricted those performances to two theatres for most of the year. By the nineteenth century, the demand had outgrown the legally limited supply.

A History of the Patent Laws

The Patent laws first took effect in 1660 when Charles II reopened theatres after the Interregnum. Charles granted letters patent to Thomas Killigrew for the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and William Davenant for the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. These Patents permitted the Theatres Royal to perform legitimate drama. The early years of the Patent system proved effective. Charles II maintained a close relationship with the proprietors of the Theatres Royal, attended their productions frequently, and even requested to see certain plays translated or adapted.²²

In 1766 Samuel Foote of the Haymarket theatre received a letter Patent for the summer months, when the Drury Lane and Covent Garden were closed, allowing a third

²² Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 62.

London theatre to perform legitimate drama. The term legitimate drama was in and of itself a source of controversy by the nineteenth century. Katherine Newey defines legitimate drama as “the spoken or regular drama of the repertoire of plays in English,”²³ and while some Victorians believed that the five-act format followed by Shakespeare and other playwrights was a component of legitimate drama, Newey’s more general definition is fitting. When asked by the Select Committee of 1832 to define legitimate drama, actor William Charles Macready responded, “I know no other way than by taking what has been considered as the rule hitherto, by appropriating the five act plays as belonging to the large theatres.”²⁴ The five-act format was fairly standard from Elizabethan times through the restoration and into the nineteenth century. Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s *The School for Scandal*, one of the most successful late eighteenth century plays, and other well-liked dramas followed the format, making it a staple, if a not defining characteristic, of legitimate drama. By and large, legitimate dramas were considered more serious than musicals and therefore, some thought, more deserving of legal protection. Minor theatres, theatres without letters patent, were compelled to produce less serious works.

By the nineteenth century, however, the minor theatres began to skirt the Patent laws, and their effectiveness was questioned in publications as well as the House of Commons. In addition to questions of defining legitimate drama, there were questions regarding the censorship of Patent theatres as well as questions of whether or not the law reflected the new sensibilities of the nineteenth century. Certainly the laws as enforced were no longer totally effective. Historian Adrian Poole states that in the illegitimate theatres

²³ Katherine Newey, “The Idea of a National Drama.”

²⁴ Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), Primary Sources on Copyright (1450-1900), eds L. Bently & M. Kretschmer, www.copyrighthistory.org, ProQuest: Parliamentary Papers (1831-32) Paper No. 679, VII:1.

(those that did not hold patents) Victorians could find “all kinds of Shakespeare, both serious and burlesque, alongside the nautical melodramas and pantomimes.”²⁵ These forms of alternative Shakespeare were illegal, but they were by no means isolated incidents. By the early 1810s, the minor theatres were performing legitimate drama illegally. By the end of that decade the Theatres Royal were sending employees to the minor theatres to catch them in the act.²⁶ This kind of extralegal maneuvering was not only applied to the works of Shakespeare. Contemporary authors found themselves unable to turn a profit due to managers editing and then performing their plays. To remedy this, the Dramatic Literary Property Act, passed in 1833, ensured that “The Author of any Dramatic Piece shall have as his Property the sole Liberty of representing it or causing it to be represented at any Place of Dramatic Entertainment.”²⁷ The Act explicitly protected the rights of playwrights to credit and financial compensation for performances of their plays. While this Act brought about some of the changes recommended by the Select Committee of 1832, the old Patent system remained in effect until 1843.

The rest of this chapter examines performers who rose to prominence in the last decades of the Patent system. Despite the struggles the Theatres Royal faced, the wild popularity of actors at those theatres and desire to produce legitimate drama elsewhere demonstrated the strength of the London theatre despite the fact that the city had outgrown the Patent system.

The Kembles, The Covent Garden, and the O.P.s

²⁵ Adrian Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, 12-13.

²⁶ Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre In London, 1770-1840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 31.

²⁷ Dramatic Literary Property Act, London (1833), Primary Sources on Copyright (1450-1900), eds L. Bently & M. Kretschmer, www.copyrighthistory.org.

The Kemble family held an important place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth stage. They represented a union of critical acclaim and popular celebrity. London literary magazine *The Athenaeum* wrote, “The career of the Kembles is a very familiar story to all who concern themselves with dramatic affairs.”²⁸ Sarah Siddons was the first of the Kemble family to achieve such a large degree of celebrity.

As the leading actress of her time, Sarah Siddons was exceptional. In *Actresses as Working Women*, Tracy C. Davis comments that the vast majority of actresses in the Victorian era were viewed with suspicion, paid low wages, and had little job security. She notes that most historians have ignored this fact by focusing on the few famous and successful actresses, such as Siddons, who did not fit the mold of the profession.²⁹ As a person in the public eye, Siddons’s actions influenced perceptions about the profession of acting writ large. Davis notes that actresses broke the cultural norm of a “Good Women” by working, especially in a profession that some still associated with prostitution, but they also often broke the norm of “Bad Women” by raising families.³⁰ Siddons had a husband and children, in addition to working with her brothers, especially playing opposite John in *Macbeth*, so she was associated with family to a certain extent. On the other hand, Siddons’s fame allowed her to push the envelope of acceptability. When touring Ireland, Siddons attempted the part of Hamlet in 1802, cross-dressing and drawing a large crowd of curious spectators.

Her obituary in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* wrote, “Nature bestowed on Mrs. Siddons a majestic person, a striking countenance, and a fine voice; the judgment with which the last

²⁸ “The Kembles: an Account of the Kemble Family. Including the Lives of ...” *The Athenaeum*; Aug 12, 1871; 2285; British Periodicals pg. 200.

²⁹ Tracy Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, (London: Routledge, 1991) xiii-xiv.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 71.

was modulated has seldom been equalled.”³¹ As an actress, Siddons was at the forefront of a changing approach to acting. Her brother John and others approached acting as more of an oratory exercise, but Siddons, when approaching the role of Lady Macbeth, attempted to find ways to connect and sympathize with a character whose masculine actions and advocacy of regicide made her largely abominable.³² Siddons’s approach to the part that made her famous is more akin to modern approaches to acting than were the declamatory practices of her brother.

The editor of John Philip Kemble’s memoirs called him “the first ornament of the British Stage” and his contemporaries lauded him for mastery of his craft.³³ Biographer James Boaden wrote, “To be critically exact was the great ambition of his life.”³⁴ This exactness was Kemble’s chief critical standard—he believed “good theatre” was a matter of precision. As a part of this precision, Kemble as manager sought to be historically accurate in his depictions of Shakespeare’s characters, and would later influence William Charles Macready and Charles Kean.³⁵ As an actor, Kemble brought precision to his performances. Characterized by a stiff posture and a slow delivery of lines, Kemble was a striking contrast to his sister’s more unconventional approach.³⁶ Shakespeare scholar Mark Eccles, in

³¹ “Obituary for Mrs. Siddons.” *The Gentleman's Magazine: and historical chronicle*, Jan. 1736-Dec. 1833; Jul 1831; *British Periodicals*, 87.

³² Robert Shaughnessy, “Siddons, Sarah (1755–1831)” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. Online edition May 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25516>, accessed 3 Dec 2013.

³³ *Memoirs of Mr. John P. Kemble*, *Theatrical inquisitor, and monthly mirror*, Feb. 1813-June 1819; Jun 1814; 4, *British Periodicals*, 324.

³⁴ Peter Thomson, ‘Kemble, John Philip (1757–1823)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15322>, accessed 1 Jan 2014].

³⁵ Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 36.

³⁶ Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions*, 34.

comparing performances of *Richard III*, contrasts John Philip Kemble's approach to the role as "stately and eloquent, but more like an orator than an actor" to David Garrick's complete transformation into the deformed king and Edmund Kean's passionate portrayal.³⁷

Kemble's place between Garrick, who was famous for his performances of Shakespeare at the Drury Lane, and Kean, who became one of the most famous actors of the early nineteenth century, has led some historians to view him as something of an unimportant transition point between two greater actors, but his historical significance extends beyond his prowess as an actor. Kemble's celebrity and his management of the Covent Garden during the Old Price riots make him important in understanding the state of the London theatre at the start of the Victorian period.

While manager, Kemble wished to restore the Drury Lane's glory days of Garrick productions of Shakespeare.³⁸ After several years, Kemble took an opportunity to advance his career by switching to the Covent Garden because he wanted to take on more of a financial stake, and therefore a larger degree of control, of a patent theatre. The desire to have control of a patent theatre was, indirectly, a desire to be a cultural arbiter. As the only theatres that could produce legitimate drama, the Drury Lane and the Covent Garden determined what theatre the public saw. As the sole purveyors of legitimate drama, the managers of the Drury Lane and the Covent Garden held a large sway in determining what was good theatre. Without competition except for each other, they could direct public taste. However, due to commercial considerations, even patent theatres needed to cater to both

³⁷ Mark Eccles, "Richard III on Stage and Screen," in William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Richard the Third*, edited by Mark Eccles, (New York: Signet Classics, 1998).

³⁸ Thompson, 'Kemble, John Phillip (1757-1823).

elite and popular audiences. Though box seats were more expensive, pit tickets remained important to the financial success of a theatre.

In 1809, when Kemble tried to add more box seats and raised all admission prices, the public rioted, demanding a return to the old price, or O.P. Kemble did not raise prices to exclude the working classes from the theatre. Rather, he was in financial need because the Covent Garden burned down in 1808 and the rebuilding cost the theatre £300,000. While Kemble and others found most of the money, they were short £164,000 on the new theatre and had to make up the difference. Kemble replaced a tier of dress boxes with private boxes that could be rented for the whole season, and he raised the prices of other boxes by a shilling. The gallery seats were rebuilt as worse than the gallery seats in the old Covent Garden. For the pit, Kemble raised the price from 3s.6d. to an even four shillings, an increase of a sixpence.^{39,40} While this small price increase was based on the theatre's financial needs, it outraged the public. During Kemble's *Macbeth*, the first performance in the new theatre, a riot broke out.

The scope of the O.P. riots was massive. The Covent Garden was unable to operate for 67 days due to rioting, and the whole affair was complicated by the fact that the Drury Lane had also burned down during the rebuilding of the Covent Garden and was not reopened for three years.⁴¹ The Covent Garden, therefore, had a total monopoly on production of legitimate drama. This could have been seen as an opportunity to raise prices

³⁹ Marc Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 22.

⁴⁰ Jerry White, in a note before the introduction of his *London in the Nineteenth Century* (2007), states that the buying power of Victorian currency is best understood if readers think of a pound throughout the nineteenth century as roughly £100 by early twenty-first century standards.

⁴¹ Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in late Georgian London*, 21.

and turn a profit in the absence of competition, but some felt that this monopoly gave the Covent Garden a duty to produce legitimate drama for the whole of London.

While many believed in the cause and participated in the protests, some outside of the management of the Covent Garden sided against the rioters, however. An article in *The European Magazine, and London Review* wrote a brief update on the riot that read, “The riot and confusion in Covent-garden has continued, with little abatement, up to the 25th of this month; but we have neither room nor inclination to detail the disgusting particulars. Suffice it to say, that after the admission of the half-price company, the performances have been rendered wholly inaudible.—Many more persons have been held to bail, to answer for their misconduct.”⁴² The article displays a disdain for the disruptive behavior, as the author does not even dignify the affair with a description of how the rioters behaved. Marc Baer’s *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* details the event and analyzes it thoroughly. Baer makes two key points in his discussion of class as it pertained to the O.P. riots. First, he notes that the rioters were not homogeneous. Unskilled workers, skilled workers, clerks, businessmen, and apprentices alike, as well as a few people identified as “gentlemen,” took part in the riots.⁴³ Second, he recognizes that the riots were organized, borrowing historian George Rudé’s breakdown of leadership with three categories of leaders: leaders of the larger movement, intermediate leaders, and local leaders. Henry Clifford, a barrister and “a Catholic, grandson of an Irish peer, a republican, and a drunk” led the O.P. cause, although his motivations for doing so are unclear.⁴⁴ The tiered leadership and varied makeup of the

⁴² "Theatrical Journal," *The European Magazine, and London Review* 56, (11, 1809): 383-387. <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/docview/4421649?accountid=14816>.

⁴³ Baer 143.

⁴⁴ Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London*, 145-147.

rioters indicates that the O.P. riots fit into a larger trend of movements. While the riots were not on the same level in terms of scope or size as other movements such as Chartism, they still constituted a significant mobilization in the cause of popular rights. Because Shakespeare held an important place in English culture, and because culture transcends class, Shakespeare belonged to the nation as a whole. An increase in ticket prices, however slight, made the national dramatist less accessible. The O.P. riots ended when the managers of the Covent Garden capitulated, but the ideal of legitimate drama for all people remained.

The use of the theatre as a space for political expression had a long tradition. "Calling the Tunes" began in the early 1790s and was especially prominent in provincial theatres.⁴⁵ Audiences would demand that "God Save the King" or "Rule Britannia" be played, depending on the politics of audience members. The radical journalist Charles Charles Piggott, in his vitriolic *Political Dictionary*, criticized the singing of "God Save the King" in the theatre, calling theatres "A temple of worship, where the little, sceptered and tinsel creature is adored with more veneration and reverence, than the great Creator! It is in these places that a most impious and blasphemous song is sung."⁴⁶ The O.P. riots represented an intensification of popular protest in the theatre.

In the wake of the O.P. riots, the status quo of the theatre had been shaken. Managers could not ignore the fact that, while a large part of their income came from box seats, the people in the pit and gallery believed that attending legitimate drama was their right. They would fight for that right, just as they would fight for other rights in the

⁴⁵ Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), 735. http://books.google.com/books?id=l2aLyk-kacIC&pg=PA807&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q=%22calling%20the%20tunes%22&f=false, accessed April 10, 2014.

⁴⁶ Charles Piggott, *Political Dictionary*, (New York: Thomas Greenleaf, 1796), 171.

nineteenth century. The O.P. riots were a sign that the Patent monopolies were inherently contradictory to the idea of an improving society. Legitimate drama could edify audiences, and the public wanted to attend performances. Because of the monopoly, there was greater desire to see legitimate drama than there was legitimate drama available to the public.

For Kemble, the affair had a destabilizing effect: "The circumstance as attending the O.P. war, are too familiar to the recollection of our readers to require any minute or additional detail. It was, probably, in consequence of the opposition [John Philip Kemble] encountered from the other proprietors in his endeavours at reconciliation, that he soon afterwards sold his share in the theatre."⁴⁷ It was as John Philip Kemble faded out of management that his brother Charles rose to prominence.

Charles Kemble's Career and Testimony to the Select Committee

Charles Kemble's career began as a testament to the celebrity power the Kemble family as a whole. The editor of Kemble's memoirs wrote, "His salary was very small, his ambition very great, and, fired by the fame that attended his brother, he threw off the trammels of restraint, and obtained an offer from a provincial manager, who speculated more on the name than the talent of our hero."⁴⁸ Actors often spent time performing in the provinces perfecting their craft before they moved up to the higher-profile London stage. The Kemble name gave him a leg up despite an apparent lack of talent in his early days.

Kemble had his London debut in *Macbeth* with his brother John and his sister Sarah. Initially, he rode their coattails to very limited acclaim, but eventually he came to be

⁴⁷ Memoirs of John Philip Kemble, 328.

⁴⁸ "Memoir of Charles Kemble, (of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden)." Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes, 1825-1826 3, (08, 1825): 14. <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/docview/7908084?accountid=14816>, accessed April 10, 2014, 2.

respected for his supporting roles. Macready liked his Cassio, a middling part in *Othello*.⁴⁹ Over time, however, Kemble became one of the great actors of the early nineteenth century. He worked his entire career to foster his talents in the shadow of his siblings, and his hard work paid off: “Mr. Charles Kemble has improved in his acting, every season, for the last thirty years.”⁵⁰ This improvement of his craft led, in turn to critical acclaim of his performances.

Chiefly among Kemble’s great roles was *Hamlet*: “His *Hamlet* we consider the best upon the stage. The melancholy smile that plays upon his face, during the scene with *Polonius*, is worth a volume of elocution.”⁵¹ Jonathan Oldworthy, a frequent contributor to *The Literary Chronicle*, wrote in a letter to that publication, “If you had not the good fortune to see *Hamlet* last Monday evening, do your good taste the favour of being present at the next representation, for it is no more than the ‘plain unvarnished truth’ to say, that I ever was equally gratified at the theatre in the whole course of my life.”⁵² In this letter, Oldworthy also steps away from Kemble’s *Hamlet* to comment on the state of the drama, a common topic of discussion. Oldworthy takes a mixed view on the matter: “It has been said, and probably with great truth, that the reign of tragedy is over with us, as a people—that we have neither the simplicity of mind, nor the purity of heart, requisite for giving up our souls to the illusions of the scene, and yet are not arrived at such a high poetic taste, that

⁴⁹ John Russell Stephens, ‘Kemble, Charles (1775–1854)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15316; accessed 10 March 2014].

⁵⁰ Memoir of Charles Kemble 3.

⁵¹ Memoir of Charles Kemble 11.

⁵² Jonathan Oldworthy, *Shakespeare’s Hamlet-Mr. Charles Kemble*, *The Literary Chronicle*; Oct 22, 1825; 6, 336; British Periodicals pg. 681

recitation can delight us without it.”⁵³ While he believes that the noise in the galleries indicates a national shift away from interest in tragedy, he sees a need for it and believes that Kemble’s *Hamlet* is a shining example of how good theatre can be, viewing Kemble’s performance as its own kind of improvement within the realm of art.

Kemble’s testimony before the Select Committee looked to assert the continued superiority of drama produced at the Covent Garden, suggesting that he believed in the idea of a cultural hierarchy. When questioned as to whether the minor theatres would be able to produce legitimate drama of the same quality as the Patent theatres, Kemble responded, “Our superiority consists, I should conceive, in long experience and long exercise in acting; they are comparatively very young in it; they cannot have the same companies to represent plays as we have, therefore I should conceive it would take a considerable time before they could act plays with the same degree of perfection with which they are acted at Covent garden and Drury Lane.”⁵⁴ Like his older brother, Charles Kemble saw practiced perfection as the hallmark of good theatre and achieved greatness for his work in perfecting tragic roles. His views on theatre, as well as his success, however, were far from universal.

The Select Committee of 1832

In 1832, playwright and MP Edward Bulwer-Lytton moved that Parliament form “a Select Committee for the purpose of inquiring into the State of the Laws affecting Dramatic Literature, and the performance of the drama.”⁵⁵ Bulwer-Lytton had attended Cambridge. He was a novelist and playwright (Macready was successful in Bulwer-Lytton’s *Richelieu*),

⁵³ Jonathan Oldworthy, *Shakespeare’s Hamlet-Mr. Charles Kemble*.

⁵⁴ Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), 43.

⁵⁵ Parliamentary Debates on Drama and Dramatic Literature (31 May), London (1832), Primary Sources on Copyright (1450-1900), eds L. Bently & M. Kretschmer, www.copyrighthistory.org, University of Birmingham Library: Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.13.

so he had a personal stake in the laws governing the theatre, particularly those pertaining to the protection of playwrights.⁵⁶ Bulwer-Lytton stated that novels were significantly more profitable to write than plays. £50-£100 an act was a high estimate for what a playwright could hope to make when selling a new play to a West End manager.⁵⁷ By the 1860s, however, playwrights began requesting to share in the profits made by their plays, taking a percentage rather than being paid a flat rate. Dion Bouciault, an Irish playwright who was the first man to attempt this, made £10,000 off of one successful play in a year.⁵⁸ Bulwer-Lytton's concern for the protection of playwrights was not only a means of protecting his own income, however.

Additionally, Bulwer-Lytton was a supporter of broader reform during his time in the House of Commons from 1831-1841. He supported the Reform Bill of 1832 even though its passage diminished his constituency and forced him to seek election in another district.⁵⁹ Bulwer's political record suggests a link between the desire for more representation of the propertied classes and an end to the Patent monopolies. The rise of liberalism coincided with the move away from this cultural elitism. The Patent system was outdated—a relic of days before the forward-looking Victorian period. In the same year the Select Committee was formed, the Reform Bill of 1832 passed, expanding voting rights and supporting a belief in liberal reform and opposition to monopoly. The Reform Bill is key because it legitimized the notion of the middle class as an undeniable fact of society.⁶⁰ While the Theatres

⁵⁶ Schoch, *Theatre and mid-Victorian Society*, 334.

⁵⁷ Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 391.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 392

⁵⁹ Andrew Brown, 'Lytton, Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer, first Baron Lytton (1803–1873)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁶⁰ Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The self and the social in nineteenth-century England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Regulation Act of 1843, the final result of the Select Committee, was by no means a part of a liberal agenda and was, in fact, far from a complete opening of the theatres, there are striking connections between the desire for wider performances of legitimate drama and the belief in a more representative society.

The impetus for the Select Committee was the fact that contemporary practices of the theatre had evolved beyond the scope of the laws. Theatres without royal Patents for performance of legitimate drama were performing legitimate drama: “it seemed that all performances the attendance of persons pretending to a reasonable degree of education...were to be considered as infringements of the law, and as subjecting those who assist in them to serious penalties. The minor theatres were, therefore, at this moment—with their many thousand actors, proprietors, and decorators, who depended for support on their existence—without the pale of the law.”⁶¹ Rather than advocating legal action against these theatres, however, Bulwer believed that Parliament should reevaluate the law and bring it in line with current practice. Cultural practice had taken a shape different from that prescribed by the law, and Bulwer and others believed that the law needed to evolve as well.

The Select Committee agenda met with parliamentary opposition. Sir Charles Wetherell, an MP, argued that appointing a committee “was interfering very unnecessarily with the prerogative of the Crown, which had hitherto been exercised with great judgment.”⁶² The Patents issued to the Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket theatres were *royal* Patents. Taking away the monopoly guaranteed by those patents would undermine the authority of the crown. While the monarchy’s power was largely symbolic, some members of Parliament wished to uphold its authority in this matter. Either they

⁶¹ Parliamentary Debates on Drama and Dramatic Literature.

⁶² *Ibid*, 248.

viewed most theatres as unworthy of producing legitimate drama or they felt that the theatre was not worth undermining the crown. Either way, elitist opinion belittled non-patent theatres.

The Select Committee that was eventually formed to investigate the laws governing the writing and performance of drama prepared a report consisting of the minutes of their extensive investigation into drama through questioning people both in and out of the world of performance. They brought eight recommendations back to the House of Commons. First, they asserted that “a considerable decline, both in the Literature of the Stage, and the taste of the Public for Theatrical Performances, is generally conceded.”⁶³ While many did believe that the theatre was not as vibrant as it used to be, the evidence for a thriving theatrical scene suggests that the Committee’s first claim is some combination of a political move to further Bulwer-Lytton’s desire to change the laws and a misinterpretation of the state of the theatre. Bulwer-Lytton clearly wanted reform of the laws governing the theatre. He would have undermined his own agenda had he claimed that all was well with the theatre. Furthermore, many did feel that the theatre was in a state of decline, so the Committee had the grounds to make such a claim. Captain John Forbes, who held an eighth share of the Covent Garden, believed that “the passion for theatrical amusements [was] on the decline”⁶⁴ In addition to vague assertions that the drama was in decline, the Committee also reported that the London theatre faced practical problems. David Edward Morris, the proprietor of the Haymarket Theatre believed that “the Strand Theatre, the Queen’s Theatre, the Surrey Theatre and the Coburg Theatre, and I believe others in this city” were infringing on his rights to legitimate drama. The Patent monopolies were no

⁶³ Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 114.

longer effective because the minor theatres did not follow the regulation on legitimate drama. Further, Bulwer-Lytton and other playwrights were taken advantage of. Playwright James Kenney stated that his play *Massaniello* ran for over 150 nights at the Drury Lane but he was not paid anything for it.

Actor William Charles Macready was staunchly against overturning the Patent system despite the fact that he had spent two years without being engaged at either of the Theatres Royal. He argued that opening the “small theatres” to produce legitimate drama: would offer so many markets for talent, that they would take those as nightly auxiliaries that ought to be stationary actors in large theatres, in order to make an efficient regular company, which never could be the case if we had opportunities of going for large sums of money to the small theatres; it would be better for us, but I think it would be for the loss of the public, inasmuch as there would be a great many plays tolerably done, but it would be almost impossible to congregate and efficient company in any one theatre.⁶⁵

Macready advocated for keeping the Patent system in tact despite his belief that removing it would benefit him financially. He believed that opening the small theatres to production of legitimate drama would spread the talent too thinly across London. Rather than having two large companies of talented actors, there would be many small companies, each with a talented actor engaged for a short period of time at a higher rate of pay. Instead of advocating for what he claims might have benefitted him financially, Macready recommended what he believed would be best for the theatre as a whole.

Some, however, argued that there was a need for a larger number of theatres in London that were authorized to produce legitimate drama. An article in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* that appeared in February, 1830, stated that, “A greater number of persons now go to the theatres than ever did, at any former period, in this island; so far,

⁶⁵ Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), 132, 137, 227.

therefore, as respects the public, there has been no decay of patronage.”⁶⁶ The article concedes that if attendance was up it could suggest that the overall quality of theatre was generally lower. The article counters this point by arguing that, “The stars certainly are not so brilliant as of old, but the candles are brighter. It has pleased destiny to change the crop of talent occasionally.”⁶⁷ The article goes on to mention the Kemble family and other performers of the age as examples of the high-quality theatre being performed in the early nineteenth century. Indeed, careers of the Kembles and others suggest that the theatre was not in decline as much as the Committee claimed.

After its first claim, the Committee made recommendations of practical changes that they believed would improve the state of the theatre. These claims are less a way to improve a theatre in decline and more a way to expand a strong theatrical system. As their second main point, the Committee recommended “that the Laws would be rendered more clear and effectual by confining the sole power and authority to license Theatres throughout the Metropolis (as well as in places of Royal Residence) to the Lord Chamberlain.”⁶⁸ Next, the Committee conceded that the Theatres Royal operating at the time were sufficient for producing legitimate drama but “that the Public should have a voice in the number of Theatres to be allowed.”⁶⁹ Fourth and fifth in the report, the committee recommended more powers of censorship given to the Lord Chamberlain and his office.⁷⁰ An important facet of the Report is the role of the Lord Chamberlain. As his office controlled censorship, the Committee wished to replace the system of Royal Patents with one in which a more direct

⁶⁶ “Dramatic Taste,” *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 1830-1869; Feb 1830; 1, 1; British Periodicals pg. 125.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 126.

⁶⁸ Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), 3.

⁶⁹ Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), 4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

and even system of censorship applied to all theatres. In 1843, this change happened, and the Lord Chamberlain's office maintained its strong censorship powers for over a century.

In their sixth point, the Committee addressed the concern that overturning the Royal Patent system would undermine the Theatres Royal at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. The Report asserts that, "it appears manifest that such privileges have neither preserved the dignity of the Drama, nor, by the present Administration of the Laws, been of much advantage to the Proprietors of the Theatres themselves."⁷¹ The committee recognized that even though the Patents gave the Drury Lane and Covent Garden cultural supremacy and a monopoly that allowed them to produce theatre how they wished, they struggled financially. The Committee made the case that keeping the monopoly in tact was not benefiting anyone financially and that perhaps a freer market might help owners and managers make money.

Seventh, the committee touched on a matter of particular importance to Bulwer: the protection of the Dramatic Writers. The Report claimed that loose copyright laws allowed managers to produce plays without proper credit and compensation given to the author, resulting in talented authors avoiding writing plays altogether.⁷² Bulwer's desire for stronger copyright laws came to fruition the following year as a part of the Dramatic Literary Property Act. Finally, the Committee concluded that actors, authors, and audience members would all benefit from a freer market of theatre as it would promote better entertainment at lower costs to the public.⁷³ While this approach was not enacted as law

⁷¹ Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), 5.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), 5-6.

until 1843, this more laissez-faire approach to theatre eventually led to theatrical success at formerly minor theatres such as the Sadler's Wells.

Conclusion

The Kemble family and their contemporaries were the last vestiges of the Patent Law-era actors. While others, like William Charles Macready, performed in the patent years, the Kembles were the last of the great eighteenth century actors whose success stemmed from and reinforced the validity of a theatrical monopoly. The Kemble family held significant cultural sway as the leading performers of their time. Anyone who attended legitimate drama knew their names and respected their talent. During their time, however, the instability of the patent laws began to become apparent. While the laws had been an effective tool for reinstating the theatre at the Restoration, times had changed, and the laws would change as well.

Chapter 2: The Breakdown of the Patent

The Theatres Act of 1843 changed the state of the English stage by making performances of legitimate drama outside of the Patent theatres legal. The very term “legitimate drama” ascribes importance to the genre. Performing legitimate drama could make a theatre legally legitimate. With the Theatres Act of 1843, a host of theatres became capable of becoming legally legitimate. The act did not, however, give cultural legitimacy to all theatres immediately. Some theatres, the Drury Lane and the Covent Garden especially, retained their status of prominence long after 1843 despite financial difficulty that plagued them in the years leading up to the Theatres Act and in the years after. This chapter will look at the Theatres Act of 1843 and the work of actor-managers who struggled with the changing theatrical climate.

Specifically, it will discuss William Charles Macready, perhaps the most famous actor of the mid-Victorian era who managed the Covent Garden and Drury Lane in the last years of the Patent system. It will then explore the Theatres Act of 1843 and will finally look at Barry Sullivan, a respected Irish actor who only found financial success outside of London. I will discuss his failed attempt at management with the Holborn in London in spite of the fact that he was a critically respected actor. Sullivan began his career in the waning years of the Patent Laws, making his London debut after they were repealed, and, like Macready, valued artistic principles.

Among these artistic principles was the glorification of Shakespeare. Macready often mentioned in his journal that he meditated of Shakespeare's plays, and both men performed his works often. Shakespeare was important to non-actors as well. Writing in a 1864 edition

of *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading*, John

Churchill Brenan argued that things in the theatre were not as bad as some critics claimed:

“I think that the drama is in a far healthier state now than it ever has been, and that the morals of the stage are becoming purer, more and more, every year. It is true that the Covent Garden has become an opera house, and Drury Lane is famous for little else besides its pantomimes; but, for all that, Shakespeare is and has been anything but neglected.”⁷⁴

Here, Brenan elevates the production of legitimate drama, specifically Shakespeare, as both the saving grace of the theatre and a way to measure its health. Special considerations were also given to Shakespeare in the debates on the Theatres Act of 1843.

The Career and Testimony of Macready

Macready managed the Covent Garden from 1837-39 and the Drury Lane from 1841-43, committing himself to making the institution of theatre more respectable. Theatre historian Richard W. Schoch notes Macready's efforts to “establish a respectable theatre where the national drama would be produced with appropriate reverence” by “staging his plays with increased attention to historical accuracy in sets and costumes, attracting royal patronage and expelling prostitutes from the theatre.” Macready attempted to further improve the theatre by expunging changes out of Shakespeare's plays.⁷⁵ Schoch argues that a central part of a theatre's legitimacy and respectability, whether it was the Drury Lane or Sadler's Wells, hinged on its performance of Shakespeare.⁷⁶ Macready's efforts to present

⁷⁴ John Churchill Brenan, “Burlesque,” *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading* (02, 1864): 81-86.

⁷⁵ George Rowell, *The Victorian Theatre, 1792-1914: A Survey*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 16.

⁷⁶ Richard W. Schoch, “Theatre and Mid-Victorian Society” in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, Joseph Donohue, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), published online 2008, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521650687.016>, (332).

Shakespeare in the highest form possible, however, were not financially profitable endeavors.

Despite the fact that Macready's father was an actor and manager in Ireland, Macready was never supposed to go into the theatre. His father sent him to Rugby School with the intention of giving him the kind of education that would allow for social mobility, which was difficult given the family's Irish nationality. Within five years, however, Macready's father had to pull him out of Rugby after losing money in theatre management. With few options, Macready decided to go into theatre for himself.⁷⁷

When the younger Macready became an actor, he brought an intelligent introspection to his roles. The *Journal of William Charles Macready, 1832-1851* reveals Macready's own opinions about his career as well as the English stage in a larger sense. On the whole, Macready comes across as jaded. Despite his preeminence as arguably the greatest actor of his time, Macready was highly self-critical. On his forty-fourth birthday, a few months before he took over the Covent Garden, he wrote an entry in his journal: "Today I am forty-four years of age. Before I left my bed, I gave my mind to long and earnest reflection on the occurrences of my past life—on the unhappiness which, in my portion of good ill, had fallen to my lot, and of its cause. Most of it is to be traced to myself, to my own violent passions, to the want of self-direction and command under events, which seemed at war with my interests or feelings."⁷⁸ This mode of self-criticism pervades much of Macready's journal. Each performance mattered in his own evaluation of his craft. The pretention with which he approached his own acting extended to his views on the theatre as

⁷⁷ Richard Foulkes, "Macready, William Charles (1793–1873)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008.

⁷⁸ William Charles Macready, *The Journal of William Charles Macready 1832-1851*, edited by J.C. Trewin, (Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale, IL, 2009), 92.

a whole. His testimony before the Select Committee of 1832, in which he argued that the Patent system should be upheld even though actors could benefit financially in a freer market, shows that Macready believed in the Patent system. Despite this shaking of the system, Macready decided to move into management of a Patent theatre.

Macready's management of the Covent Garden in 1837 gave him an opportunity to present theatre of the highest quality. A part of the announcement of Macready's second season as manager of the Covent Garden read: "No exertion will be spared in presenting the National Drama, whether as a branch of literature or as a department of art, with every advantage."⁷⁹ Macready's quest to produce the finest art at the Covent Garden, while short-lived, was to a degree successful. In his journal, Macready recalled the queen's visit to the Covent Garden: "The ladies-in-waiting and the officers, etc. passed through the room, and at length the Queen—a very pretty little girl—came."⁸⁰ Macready seems almost uninterested in his audience with the queen. Perhaps he felt that it had no bearing on his craft and that it therefore did not matter. Typically, theatres raised admission prices at command performances for the queen, but Macready chose not to do so.⁸¹ Macready's lack of commercial consideration in this matter fits into his general philosophy of placing artistic merit above financial gain. Macready's disinterest in the queen's patronage, combined with his lack of desire to capitalize on it, shows a belief in his ability to self-determine his artistic merit. Macready was his own cultural arbiter.

Macready's critical nature testifies to his belief that not all art was created equal. Just as Macready believed there was a right and wrong way to approach the art of acting, he

⁷⁹ Quoted in Macready, *The Journal of William Charles Macready* 87.

⁸⁰ Macready, *The Journal of William Charles Macready* 109.

⁸¹ Foulkes, "Macready, William Charles (1793–1873)."

believed there was a right and wrong way to present Shakespeare in terms of technical production. On November 22, 1842, after he had stepped down from management of the Covent Garden, he wrote, “After dinner went to Covent Garden and saw the first scene of *The Tempest*. A ship was introduced and all the poetry cut out—worse acting or more inapplicable means to an end I never saw.”⁸² The Covent Garden production placed spectacle over text, which to a man like Macready seemed too much like popular performance. Spectacle could draw a crowd and help make money for a theatre, but Macready prized his artistry above financial gain.

This lack of financial concern ultimately led to a seemingly mutual agreement between the Covent Garden and Macready that Macready would not manage the theatre for a third season. Managers took on great financial risk to run a theatre, and after two years of restoring Shakespeare and promoting new drama, Macready decided the strain of management was too much for him to bear.⁸³ After a brief hiatus from management, Macready took over as the manager of the Drury Lane in 1841. His friend Charles Dickens was among those who encouraged him to do so.⁸⁴ Upon taking over the Drury Lane, Macready attempted to do more or less what he did at the Covent Garden: produce the best theatre possible.

A prompt book from his production of *As You Like It* in the 1842-43 season reveals a few things about how Macready chose to stage Shakespeare. First, he chose to take the role of Jaques, a misanthropic supporting character who delivers the famous “All the world’s a stage” speech. Clad mostly in black, Macready did not take center stage for this speech but

⁸² Macready, *The Journal of William Charles Macready* 189.

⁸³ Foulkes, “Macready, William Charles (1793–1873).”

⁸⁴ Macready, *The Journal of William Charles Macready* 170.

stayed to the left, apart from other characters. There is a certain amount of dramatic integrity to this staging choice. Rather than having an indulgent moment in the spotlight, Macready played the part realistically. Second, the forward to this prompt book describes the scenographic elements of the production. The Drury Lane used a tongue-and-groove system whereby two-dimensional scenery could slide on and off stage quickly. The scenery was all elaborately painted by Charles Marshall, recognized as one of the best scenic painters of his time. A rendering of Macready's costume, designed by Charles Hamilton Smith, shows Jaques richly dressed with a cape and sword. While introspective and realistic in terms of acting, Macready's production was nevertheless lavish and beautiful.⁸⁵ Macready saw his productions as filling a void in quality drama at the time. He felt other actors and managers did not live up to his standards of excellence.

At the end of 1832, Macready saw the young Charles Kean perform. Macready's journal reads: "Saw two acts of Kean's 'Hamlet'. Imperfect, spiritless, uncharacteristic recitation."⁸⁶ Here, Macready disparages Kean's Hamlet, a production that brought a lot of attention to the young actor. While Macready's comments may well come from a place of jealousy or fear of the rising star and are certainly too terse to be a true, detailed critique (he only saw two acts), his word choice points to a perceived lack of subtlety in Kean's Hamlet. For years, Macready continued to begrudge Kean. Shortly before he took over as manager of the Drury Lane, Macready wrote, "Now really, it is almost an excuse for expatriation, for anything in the shape of *escape* short of suicide, to think that one has lived and *had a mind* and *used* it for so many years to be *mentioned* at least in the same breath with Mr. C. Kean!

⁸⁵ Charles H. Shattuck, *Mr. Macready Produces As You Like It: A Prompt-Book Study*, Urbana, IL: Beta Phi Mu, 1962.

⁸⁶ Macready 4-5.

Particularly offensive.”⁸⁷ While some might place Kean and Macready into the same category of performers, Macready was appalled by the thought that he would be compared to an actor who tended more towards popular performance and would ultimately present theatre for wider audiences.

On Macready’s final tour in 1848, American audiences rejected Macready’s pretentious style. A rivalry between American Edwin Forrest and Macready began when Forrest was hissed during a performance of *Macbeth* in England. Forrest, believing that Macready was behind the incident, hissed him at a later performance. Macready disliked Forrest’s more physical approach to acting, and Forrest’s supporters disliked Macready’s pretentious, introspective approach. This tension, combined with American nationalist sentiments, led American audiences at New York’s Astor Place Theatre to throw food, chairs and other objects at Macready during a performance of *Macbeth*. A few days later, Macready took the stage again, this time with police stationed around the theatre. The mob outside was so violent, however, that the police retreated and nearly twenty people were killed in what came to be known as the Astor Place Riot, but Macready finished his performance.⁸⁸

The Theatres’ Regulation Act of 1843

The Theatres’ Regulation Act ultimately enacted many of the reforms recommended by the Select Committee of 1832. Debates on the bill in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords focused on two main issues. First, both Houses wished to ensure the production of Shakespeare’s plays. Second, they sought to entrust the governance and censorship of the theatres more directly to the Lord Chamberlain. Parliament felt that

⁸⁷ Macready, *The Journal of William Charles Macready* 175.

⁸⁸ Foulkes, “Macready, William Charles (1793–1873).”

English society needed theatre and affirmed its importance by resurrecting a decade-old discussion on reforming the London theatre. In an 1843 debate on the Theatres' Regulation Bill, Captain Polhill, an MP from Bedford, stated that "He could not conceive any better school for moral instruction than seeing one of our best dramas with a good moral."⁸⁹ This belief in the edifying capabilities of the institution of theatre fits directly into Victorian notions of improvement. In the minds of some of the MPs, "our best dramas" referred specifically to the work of Shakespeare. In the same debate, a significant point in support of the bill was that it would help ensure Shakespeare's continued production. With only two theatres licensed to produce Shakespeare for most of the year, there was a risk that Londoners could have no access to Shakespeare, at least temporarily. Sir J. Graham stated, "The patent theatres were closed for such a period of the year, that but for the Haymarket theatre, it might be said that Shakespeare's plays could not be played in London, for several months of the year."⁹⁰ Others took the argument further. When the House of Lords discussed the bill later that month, Lord Lyndhurst, the Lord Chancellor, raised the point that, "The patent theatres might not choose to play Shakespeare, or if they should happen to be shut up, then the country would not have his plays at all."⁹¹ However, the old issue of protecting the drama, especially Shakespeare, was raised again. The Earl of Glengall argued against the bill on the grounds that only the Patent theatres were refined enough and big enough to do Shakespeare justice, and he also claimed that it was unfair to change the

⁸⁹ Hansard, "Regulation of Theatres," House of Commons, August 4, 1843, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1843/aug/04/regulation-of-theatres>

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Hansard, "Regulation of Theatres," House of Lords, August 11, 1843, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1843/aug/11/regulation-of-theatres#S3V0071P0_18430811_HOL_16

Patent system.⁹² Some were in favor of sidestepping the Shakespeare issue altogether, however, by legally separating it from other legitimate drama.

In the bill, there was a Shakespeare prohibition clause that would eliminate the monopoly on all legitimate drama excluding Shakespeare, leaving Shakespeare's plays to the Theatres Royal. In light of the concerns that restricting Shakespeare could lead to a cease in its production, even a temporary one, Lord Campbell stated that if the Shakespeare prohibition clause were left in, he "hoped there would be a clause compelling the patent theatres to act Shakespeare."⁹³ While ultimately this bill was accepted without a clause prohibiting or forcing Shakespeare in particular, the inclusion of Shakespeare in the discussion demonstrates belief that he was the National Dramatist and that his works were important to English society.

The act as ultimately passed actually imposed more definite restrictions on the production of plays, but it did so in a more equitable manner than had been the case in the Patent years. The act stated that "it shall not be lawful for any Person to have or keep any House or other Place of public Resort in *Great Britain*, for the public Performance of Stage Plays, without Authority by virtue of Letters Patent from Her Majesty, Her Heirs and Successors, or Predecessors, or without License from the Lord Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household for the Time being, or from the Justices of the Peace."⁹⁴ While this change in law may seem insignificant, the definition of the phrase "stage play" made the term "legitimate drama" obsolete. The act defined a stage play as "every Tragedy, Comedy, Farce, Opera, Burletta, Interlude, Melodrama, Pantomime, or other Entertainment of the

⁹² Hansard, "Regulation of Theatres," House of Lords, August 11, 1843.

⁹³ Hansard, "Regulation of the Theatres," House of Lords, August 11, 1843.

⁹⁴ "An Act for regulating Theatres," in *The Statutes of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland: 6&7 Victoria. 1843*, (London: Her Majesty's Printers, 1843) 429.

Stage, or any Part thereof.”⁹⁵ By removing the language of legitimacy, the act implicitly overturned a centuries-old cultural hierarchy. In addition to royal Patents, licenses from the Lord Chamberlain or a Justice of the Peace could now permit theatres to produce all genres of plays. Additionally, with the passage of the act, the Lord Chamberlain gained direct control over the censorship of every new play and any alterations to old plays.⁹⁶ This kind of controlled reform is a hallmark of Victorian approaches to improvement. For example, Victorians built public parks to improve cities but put fences on them, patrolled them, and locked them at night. In the same way, the Theatres Act created more opportunities to perform all types of stage plays, but it also ensured that these performances were regulated.

Historian John Russell Stephens argues that the pre-1843 theatre was actually a more popular institution than the theatre after the Theatres Regulations Act.⁹⁷ However, censorship of the theatre did exist before 1843. In a testimony to the Select Committee of 1832, George Colman, the “Examiner of all theatrical entertainments” in the Lord Chamberlain’s office believed that it was his duty “To take care that nothing should be introduced into plays which is profane or indecent, or morally or politically improper for the stage.”⁹⁸ The Examiner existed to ensure that performances adhered to Victorian notions of respectability.

In a sense, giving explicit powers of censorship of all stage plays to the Lord Chamberlain created an autocracy and was in direct opposition to liberal ideals about reforming English society. This oversimplifies the matter, however. The fact that all forms

⁹⁵ “An Act for regulating Theatres,” in *The Statutes of the United Kingdom*, 434.

⁹⁶ “An Act for regulating Theatres,” in *The Statutes of the United Kingdom*, 431.

⁹⁷ John Russell Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama 1824-1901*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 2.

⁹⁸ Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), 59.

of stage plays were now, legally, on the same level in terms of cultural hierarchy, and that the same was true of theatres, liberalized the art form in a controlled way. Autonomy in the theatre was dead, but so was the legally defined hierarchy. This ended a centuries-long monopoly on what was until 1843 known as legitimate drama. The artistic restrictions that the act imposed through the Lord Chamberlain also came with a greater degree of economic freedom.

A key argument in favor of the 1843 bill was a change of opinion on the part of the actors who worked at the Patent theatres and had opposed the changes proposed in 1832. The owners could charge more when leasing out the theatres based on the fact that the lessee would gain not only a theatre space but also a monopoly on legitimate drama. Actor-managers decided the legal monopoly was no longer worth the added cost. T. Duncombe, an MP, stated: “they all—managers, actors, and authors—concurred that the present state of the law was so conflicting and injurious in its operation, that they were induced to accept this bill.”⁹⁹ Ultimately, financial considerations turned actor-managers away from their support of the Patent system.

High Culture Drama in The Minor Theatres

The potential financial danger of making the theatre a respectable institution was not unique to Macready. Barry Sullivan and others risked fortunes in their attempts to produce drama that both revered Shakespeare and edified the public. In 1870, E.H. Malcolm wrote in *Sharpe's London Magazine*: “it costs an intelligent manager and an actor of genius the sacrifice of £8,000 or £10,000 in a brief season to attempt to restore in the public the

⁹⁹ Hansard, “Regulation of the Theatres,” House of Commons, August 4, 1843.

intellectual tastes for the drama it has apparently lost.”¹⁰⁰ Malcolm refers specifically to the losses of Barry Sullivan at the Holborn theatre. Malcolm’s lament, however, indicates a broader trend of “intellectual tastes for the drama” declining in favor of less wholesome theatre. Malcolm writes, “The closing of the Holborn, the departure to the provinces of its lessee, Mr. Barry Sullivan, the termination of his histrionic reign in the metropolis, leaves us to return from our search after the beautiful in dramatic art and renew our acquaintance with melo-drama, broad farce, and burlesque.”¹⁰¹ To critics like Malcolm, these performance traditions were dissatisfactory not only because they were unedifying to the public but also because they competed with high culture. Peter Bailey describes the rise of rational recreation in the mid nineteenth century as a product of Victorian attempts towards improvement and respectability. The idea behind rational recreation was that pastimes could be productive.¹⁰² Malcolm viewed the work presented by Sullivan as rational recreation because he believed it improved those who saw it. Nevertheless, Sullivan was not financially successful enough to continue in management. This is not to say that all of Sullivan’s work was unpopular or unprofitable. For a time, Sullivan was a dominant figure on the Australian stage, leasing the Theatre Royale, Melbourne, in 1863. He, like many other English actors, traveled Down Under in an attempt to develop a reputation and make money.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ E.H. Malcolm, “The Theatres &c,” *Sharpe’s London Magazine* (03 1870) 160.

¹⁰¹ Malcolm, 161.

¹⁰² Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

¹⁰³ Richard Foulkes, *Performing Shakespeare in the Age of Empire*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 103.

Sullivan himself was inspired to become an actor after seeing Macready perform Hamlet.¹⁰⁴ As such, it makes sense that Sullivan eventually became an actor in the same vein as Macready—celebrated for the refinement he brought to performances of Shakespeare. At the inaugural festival of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, which was the beginning of a nation-wide effort to institutionalize the veneration Shakespeare that continues to the present day, there were productions of *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet*, and *As You Like It*, as well as other festivities. Sullivan received top billing in all three productions. He portrayed Benedick and Hamlet, the leads in *Much Ado* and *Hamlet* respectively, while he played Jaques in *As You Like It*, a misanthropic supporting character. Despite the smaller part, Sullivan's name was listed first as the leader and most important member of the company.¹⁰⁵ Jaques is a more serious character than the love-struck Orlando or the clown Touchstone. As the leading male tragedian of the company, it makes sense that Sullivan would prefer the part of Jaques to that of Orlando, Touchstone, or even one of the Dukes.¹⁰⁶ This kind of casting choice was not new—Macready and other actor-managers often chose to play Jaques.

The Council of the Shakespeare Memorial specifically asked Sullivan to participate in the inaugural festival, held on Shakespeare's 315th birthday. Sullivan was thrilled by the opportunity. Charles Flower, the Chairman of the Memorial Council, stated, "I found him overflowing with energy and enthusiasm, ready to do anything that might serve the cause

¹⁰⁴ Barry O'Connor, 'Sullivan, (Thomas) Barry (1821–1891)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹⁰⁵ Playbill from Inaugural Festival of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, University of Bristol Theatre Archives.

¹⁰⁶ According to a table in Sillard, *Barry Sullivan and His Contemporaries* 251-257, Sullivan played Jaques on multiple occasions, though he did play Orlando and the Dukes at other times. Similarly, in addition to many performances as Hamlet, Sullivan played Rosencrantz, Claudius, and the Ghost of Hamlet's father.

we had at heart, putting every other consideration aside. He offered to play any part that might be allotted to him, if, by doing so, the entire performance would be more complete and worthy, his only desire being that of making the success a great one."¹⁰⁷ Sullivan's response to Flowers's invitation suggests that Sullivan prioritized the quality of art over his own celebrity status. To be sure, Flowers's account may not be wholly accurate or Sullivan may have expected to receive the best roles, but at least ostensibly, Sullivan believed that honoring Shakespeare was more important than using the festival to further his own career.

The Council, however, deemed that Sullivan was the best choice for the higher-profile roles. Sullivan himself was evidently pleased. Sullivan told Flowers that his performance as Hamlet at the festival was the three thousand and sixty-first time he played his favorite part and he claimed to Flower that it was the best performance he had given.¹⁰⁸

The festival was more than just a series of plays, however. The *New York Times* published an article on the event describing various facets of the celebration. In addition to simply inaugurating a theatre, the festival hailed the opening of "a temple dedicated to the Shakespearian muse."¹⁰⁹ It reported on this event largely because Americans felt in some way invested in it. The *Times* paraphrased one speaker at the festival, saying, "One of the greatest boasts of the people of the United States was that it was their privilege to talk the same language as the immortal bard. They had only to go to Shakespeare's house and look over the record of visitors, to see how many transatlantic travelers came to pay their devotion to the shrine."¹¹⁰ The religious language used by the *Times* is not accidental. The

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Robert M. Sillard, *Barry Sullivan and His Contemporaries: A Histrionic Record, Vol. II*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), accessed via books.google.com April 10, 2014, 219.

¹⁰⁸ Sillard, *Barry Sullivan and His Contemporaries*, 220.

¹⁰⁹ *New York Times*, May 8, 1879, *New York Times* online archive, accessed April 10, 2014.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

author of the article explicitly states: "The high principles taught by the drama fit it in every way to be considered on a level with the Church."¹¹¹ The *Times* treats Shakespeare like a sort of demigod, suggesting a wider American perception of him as such. A key point from the article is that it mentions several significant British actors, including the Kembles, the Keans, and Macready. Even in America, these performers were known as creators of high culture and were considered worthy of performing Shakespeare, who was so highly revered.

Conclusion

While performers such as Macready and Sullivan achieved great acclaim even after the repeals of the patent laws, they had commercial difficulties. Sullivan turned to tours of the provinces, America, and Australia to find his fortune. Macready eventually retired in England, still widely respected as a world-class actor. While they may not have been as financially successful as they would have liked, ultimately these actors cared more about the artistic integrity of their craft. Macready believed in producing the best acting possible, Sullivan prized respect of Shakespeare above all. For these performers, adhering to their artistic principles mattered more than any measure of financial gain.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Chapter 3: The Post-Patent Era

This chapter will explore the ways in which theatre management continued to reflect evolving ideals of improvement and reform. It begins with a discussion of the Select Committee of 1866 on theatre reform and then turns to two performers of Shakespeare who adapted successfully to the new theatrical environment: Charles Kean and Samuel Phelps. These men were actor-managers in formerly minor theatres and used the freedoms allowed by the Theatres Act of 1843 to present Shakespeare.

The Select Committee of 1866 primarily recommended a further widening of the legal restrictions on theatres—that of the terms of the Theatres Act of 1843 should apply to music halls as well, in addition to proposing more minor reforms of the licensing systems in London and the provinces. Just as the Select Committee of 1832 made its recommendations to end the patent system in the wake of the Reform Act of 1832, the 1866 Select Committee promoted theatre reforms within the context of the political crisis surrounding the Second Reform Bill. The Bill of 1866, which became an act in 1867, was a broadening of the reforms put into place in 1832. At the same time that Parliament considered the report of the Select Committee of 1866, it also considered including more people as full citizens. As in 1832, the Reform Bill passed and the recommendations of the Select Committee were set aside.

The ultimate refusal of Parliament to legitimize music halls the way other theatres were legitimized in 1843 shows that the cultural hierarchy did not disappear but rather adapted to reflect the changing times; Kean and Phelps were able to climb to the top of this hierarchy while still catering to popular audiences. Kean, the son of the great actor Edmund

Kean, became one of the preeminent performers of the mid to late nineteenth century, ultimately spending the end of his career touring the provinces to great financial success. Phelps, who had to work his way up without a famous name to help him, proved to be one of the most successful actor-managers of his time. He transformed the once-unfashionable Sadler's Wells theatre, ostensibly based on his philosophy that all theatergoers should have access to quality theatre and that Shakespeare should be presented the way the Bard wrote it. Jerry White notes that all classes could enjoy plays at the Princess's Theatre, which Kean managed, and that the working classes appreciated the Shakespeare productions at Sadler's Wells.¹¹² Both actor-managers produced quality Shakespeare for large audiences in a way that blurred the lines between popular and high culture performance.

While performers such as Kean and Phelps were known for their performances of Shakespeare for wider audiences, other genres of stage plays were important. Melodrama, which by this period was outside the realm of legitimate drama, was a prominent and entertaining performance tradition that was both well attended and culturally important.¹¹³ The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester would attend the West London Theatre, Tottenham Court Road, to see vaudeville.¹¹⁴ Outside the scope of stage plays as defined in the Theatres Act of 1843, however, were the performances given at music halls, the era's most popular form of entertainment.

The Select Committee of 1866

¹¹² White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, 275.

¹¹³ Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou, "Introduction," in *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre*, ed. Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou, (St. Martin's Press: New York, 1996), viii.

¹¹⁴ White, *London in the Nineteenth Century* 275.

The Select Committee of 1866's recommendation to expand the reforms of 1843 to include music halls coincides with the a call for parliamentary reform and the expansion of the franchise. The 1867 Reform Act extended the right to vote to large numbers of respectable working-class men. William Gladstone, the future prime minister, believed that the habits of sections of the working class proved that they deserved the vote. Citing the fact that workingmen went to free libraries and used savings banks, Gladstone argued that Parliament was succeeding in its attempt "to make the working classes progressively fitter and fitter."¹¹⁵ By engaging in edifying activities, such as going to libraries, museums, or respectable theatres, some workingmen showed their desire to achieve respectability. Liberal MPs in favor of the bill concurred in Gladstone's assessment of working-class improvement and therefore supported cautious expansion of the suffrage to respectable working men.¹¹⁶

While there was confidence that certain members of the working class could be trusted, critics and politicians also deemed others undeserving of the vote. Particularly, those known as "roughs" carried the stigma of engaging in unrespectable activities. Arnold writes, "The rough has not yet quite found his groove and settled down to his work, and so he is just asserting his personal liberty a little, going where he likes, assembling where he likes, brawling as he likes, hustling as he likes."¹¹⁷ The social responsibility of engaging in work and rational recreation is, for Arnold, a key step in the prevention of anarchy. Arnold argues that some form of control was a necessary to protect society: "We have got a much

¹¹⁵ William Gladstone, "Gladstone on the Advance of the Working Class," in *Proceedings in Parliament* (London, 1866).

¹¹⁶ Keith McClelland, "Rational and Respectable Men," in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, ed. Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 282.

¹¹⁷ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*.

wanted principle, a principle of authority, to counteract the tendency to anarchy which seems to be threatening us.”¹¹⁸

The hesitation to extend the vote to a wider population came from fear of reforming too much and giving these roughs a voice in government. The events surrounding the Hyde Park “riots” in 1866 pointed to this danger. Essayist Thomas Carlyle wrote that the Second Reform Bill “pushes us at once into the Niagara Rapids: irresistibly propelled, with ever-increasing velocity, we shall now arrive; who knows how *soon!*”¹¹⁹ Carlyle warns of a slippery slope in which continued expansion of voting rights leads to full-fledged democracy with even the most unrespectable roughs getting the vote. He opposed all reform in voting. This connects to the question of music halls not only because the debates on the Reform Bill paralleled the inquiries of the Select Committee but also because music halls were open to all comers.

Music halls began at pubs and eventually transformed into performance venues. In 1866, London had thirty-three music halls that could seat on average 1,500 people.¹²⁰ Due to their public house origins and the fact that the audiences drank during performances, music halls were viewed with suspicion.¹²¹ This public house origin made music halls a decidedly popular performance tradition. Peter Bailey argues that a sense of friendship and community existed among managers of music halls and that they approached their audiences

¹¹⁸ Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Carlyle, “Shooting Niagara: And After?” (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867).

¹²⁰ Dave Russell, “Popular Entertainment, 1776-1895,” in Joseph Donohue ed. *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 2: 1660-1895*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 377.

¹²¹ Dagmar Höher, “The Composition of Music Hall Audiences 1850-1900,” in *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure*, Peter Bailey ed., (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986), 74.

with the same sense of community.¹²² This attitude of managers—who, unlike in the Theatres Royal, were not typically actor-managers—furthered the separation of music halls from legitimate drama.¹²³ The artistry of performance, while it could have been very good, was secondary to the community feel and the revelry. Performances consisted of turns, which were comedic routines and songs that often contained themes applicable to working class life. The audience was often familiar with the music because popular songs were published and sold as sheet music. In the same way that audiences could read Shakespeare at home and see it performed in theatres, they could experience songs from music halls in their home as well as in the halls.

Despite the fact that music halls did provide theatrical entertainment, they were not theatres proper. A few fundamental differences excluded the genre from the Theatres Act of 1843. First, music halls did not rise to prominence until after 1843. Second, the public house roots of music halls meant that they were not technically theatres and the style of the performance tradition did not qualify it as a stage play. The Select Committee on Theatrical Licenses and Regulations formed in 1866 recommended that music halls be governed the same way as regular theatres. The committee wrote, “the present system of double jurisdiction under which theatres are licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, and music halls, and other places of public entertainment, by the magistrates, is inconvenient and unsatisfactory.”¹²⁴ The committee recommended that all performances be placed under the Lord Chamberlain. The committee also affirmed the model of censorship put into place in

¹²² Peter Bailey, “A Community of Friends: Business and Good Fellowship in London Music Hall Management,” 33.

¹²³ While the actor-manager system did not govern music halls, there were stars such as Champaign Charlie in that performance tradition.

¹²⁴ “Report from the Select Committee on Theatrical Licenses and Regulations,” in *Reports from Committees* (Great Britain: Parliament House of Commons, 1866), iii.

1843: “That the censorship of plays has worked satisfactorily, and that it is not desirable that it should be discontinued. On the contrary, that it should be extended as far as practicable to the performances in music halls and other places of public entertainment.”¹²⁵ All together, this would extend the Act of 1843 and recognize music halls as performance venues like other theatres. While Parliament did not turn these recommendations into law, the fact that they were considered shows a widening of the Victorian understanding of theatre and performance.

This fits into a larger pattern of changing Victorian notions of what constituted theatre. These changes can be summed up in rhetorical shifts in the reports of select committees and acts of parliament. Before 1843, the inherently problematic term legitimate drama referred to some plays that fit a few vague definitions. In 1843, the Theatres Act dispensed with that term and adopted the term stage play instead. Parliament chose a more inclusive term—rather than defining some plays as legitimate and some as illegitimate and thus imposing a value judgment on artistic genres, they created a more inclusive term. The committee of 1866 advocated for an even broader legal definition by using the term “theatrical entertainments,” which included not only plays but also music hall performances. By trying to expand the laws governing theatre through inclusion of more genres under the Lord Chamberlain’s centralized control, the committee affirmed the changes of 1843 and attempted to take the spirit of the Theatres Act further.

Some of the arguments made in 1832, 1843, and the years between were repurposed for the discussion in 1866. As was the case earlier in the century, the notion of improvement came into play. When applied in 1866, the concept of improvement was used to support the

¹²⁵ “Report from the Select Committee on Theatrical Licenses and Regulations” 1866, iv.

expansion of theatre regulations and licensing to include music halls. Supporters of a change in legislation claimed that people attending music halls diverted them from less savory pastimes, such as drinking in taverns. Including music halls as legitimate theatre under the Lord Chamberlain's censorship would theoretically improve the quality of entertainment at those establishments, and, while there were measures of control in place, putting music halls under the scrutiny of the Lord Chamberlain was a certain way to make sure that they were controlled. Police commissioner George Chapple Norton, when asked if, in general, music halls could "improve [audience] conduct and their habits than otherwise" responded with one word: "Certainly." At the same time, some argued, allowing stage plays to be performed at music halls and making them more respectable could draw in more educated and well-behaved audiences. Not all shared this belief, however, and even some who saw the edifying potential of music halls took it with a grain of salt. Theatre agent H.J. Turner qualified that producing stage plays would only benefit the music hall audience "if the performances were good and well-conducted."

When asked directly if he thought that licensing music halls to perform "a comedy or a respectable play" would improve those who attended such performances, playwright and satirist J. Stirling Coyne responded, "I do not think that you could bring up an audience where there was smoking, eating, and drinking going on to the intellectual standard of the drama." Even Norton acknowledged that the presence of eating and drinking during productions of legitimate drama, a term that he used, could undermine the art.¹²⁶

Ultimately, it was this uncertainty that prevented the recommendations of the committee from becoming law. In an 1875 debate in the House of Lords, the Marquess of Hertford, the

¹²⁶ "Report from the Select Committee on Theatrical Licenses and Regulations" 1866, 53, 185, 212.

Lord Chamberlain, stated that “Owing to the difficulties of detail, no action was taken upon that Report.”¹²⁷ Music halls remained outside the realm of legitimate, licensed theatre for a variety of reasons, but the presence of food, drink, and smoking was a central issue. The Victorians believed that eating and drinking were not appropriate behavior in theatres during productions of respectable plays. Nevertheless, the systems of regulation put into practice in 1843 worked, and despite the hesitancy of some actor managers to support those reforms in the early century, there were those who were able to thrive in the new system.

Kean, The Princess's, and the Provinces

At the starts of their careers, Charles Kean and Samuel Phelps aspired to be actors in the same vein as Macready. Despite the pretention toward other actors displayed throughout Macready's journal, to a large extent he was a theatrical mentor to actors such as Kean and Phelps. Kean saw Macready perform and even used his prompt books and designs when staging some productions.¹²⁸ Both men acted with Macready, and John Coleman, Phelps's friend and biographer, asserts that Macready and Phelps had a great deal of respect for each other.¹²⁹ Despite common influences, however, Kean and Phelps had different critical standards. Kean attempted to produce historically accurate theatre by making choices regarding scenery and costumes that were consistent with the period of a play. Phelps, on the other hand, was more concerned with elevation of the text of a drama, producing Shakespeare that was textually, not necessarily historically, accurate. As managers of up-and-coming theatres, actors of acclaim nearing that of Macready, and

¹²⁷ Minutes from House of Lords, Friday 5th March, 1875, “Hansard's Parliamentary Debates,” (London: Cornelius Buck 1875), 1280.

¹²⁸ Pool, *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, 25.

¹²⁹ John Coleman, *Memoirs of Samuel Phelps*, (London: Remington, 1904), 209.

producers of different kinds of Shakespeare for similar audiences, Kean and Phelps were natural rivals.

From birth, however, Kean had one advantage over Phelps: his name. His father Edmund Kean achieved great fame early in the century acting at the Drury Lane. Despite the family's Irish background, Charles attended Eton until his father lost money in 1827 and he had to leave the school. With few prospects, Charles Kean turned to the stage and got a contract at the Drury Lane. Despite his father's fame, Charles failed to earn good reviews and relegated himself to the provinces, where he developed his craft across England before moving back to the London stage on the heels of provincial success. Upon his return to London in 1837, Kean demanded £50 a night from Alfred Bunn at the Drury Lane, turning down an offer from Macready at the Covent Garden. Kean became one of Macready's primary rivals, positioned to take his place as the preeminent actor in London despite the fact that Kean approached acting differently than Macready.¹³⁰ Henry Morley, a professor of English literature at University College, London, and a theatre critic who kept a journal of his play-going in the mid-19th century, describes Kean's performance style in an 1858 melodramatic performance of *Louis XI* with Kean portraying the title character: "His Louis XI is a striking picture, painted no doubt in the bold way which accepts none but the brightest colours of the prism, after the manner of the old illuminators, but none the less striking for that. It is in such characters that Mr. Kean excels, and he mingles with the presentment of this one a quaint, half-humorous sense of the grotesque that greatly

¹³⁰ M. Glen Wilson, 'Kean, Charles John (1811–1868)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15203, accessed 25 Oct 2013].

heightens its effect.”¹³¹ This spectacle-based acting is a striking contrast to Macready’s more introspective approach.

Kean eventually became the manager of the Princess’s Theatre where he dedicated himself to performing historically accurate productions. In this endeavor, Kean took on great financial risk. At the cheapest, productions in the late part of the century probably cost at least £2,000, and money often had to be borrowed, putting managers in risk of debts they could not pay off if the production failed. Kean’s productions were on the larger end of the scale, involving around 550 actors, carpenters, gasmen, and other theatre practitioners. While wages for most actors were not particularly high (anywhere from 15s to £5 a week, depending on the venue and the size of the part), the costs added up with no guarantee of a profit.¹³² By the end of his management, Kean realized that touring the provinces as a celebrity leading man was less risky, even if his London productions were able to bring in audiences.

For some productions, Kean edited scripts of Shakespearian texts, adding and subtracting bits and pieces as he saw fit. He sometimes included copious footnotes and introductions to the script. These edited scripts were published, making Kean’s artistic vision for a production and his larger theatrical philosophies clear to readers. In an introduction to an 1859 production of *Henry V*, Kean wrote, “*Accuracy*, not *show*, has been my object; and where the two coalesce, it is because the one is inseparable from the other.”¹³³ *Henry V* is one of Shakespeare’s history plays, so historical accuracy makes sense

¹³¹ Henry Morley, *Journal of a London Playgoer*, (London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited 1891), 172.

¹³² Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 393.

¹³³ Kean, “Shakespeare’s Play of *King Henry the Fifth* Arranged for Representation at the Princess’s Theatre” 1859.

in that context, particularly given the sense of English pride associated with *Henry V* and its glorification of Henry's St. Crispin's Day victory. Other history plays received the same treatment. Morley lauded Kean's 1852 production of *King John*, particularly his "devotion of care and study as well as a lavish expenditure of scenic resource which is entitled to the highest praise."¹³⁴ While Kean's productions were often incredibly costly, they earned him much praise that was his own. Despite his famous father, Kean carved out a niche for himself with these ambitious and detailed productions.

Kean did not only produce Shakespeare's history plays with this attention to detail, however. Kean treated tragedies and comedies similarly. In an introduction to an edited script for an 1859 production of *The Merchant of Venice*, Kean highlighted the monumental efforts he undertook for the scenery of the piece: "In the production of *The Merchant of Venice* it has been my object to combine with the poet's art a faithful representation of the picturesque city; to render it again palpable to the traveler who actually gazed upon the seat of its departed glory; and, at the same time, to exhibit to the student, who has never visited this once '—pleasant place of all festivity, / The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy.'¹³⁵ Kean attempted to produce a historically accurate *Merchant* by using paintings as research for costume design and representing Venetian landmarks on stage. Kean viewed these production efforts as an artistic duty to those who had seen Venice and as an educational tool for those who had not. By providing an accurate depiction of Venice, Kean created an artificial cultural experience that had the same ability to edify the public as visiting a museum, making Kean's productions a part of a larger desire for improvement. Morley

¹³⁴ Morley, *Journal of a London Playgoer*, 30.

¹³⁵ Kean, "Shakespeare's Play of the *Merchant of Venice* Arranged for Representation at the Princess's Theatre" 1858, Project Gutenberg.

greatly liked the production, commenting that the scenery conveyed “the whole idea of Venice” and that Shakespeare himself would have been happy with the production.¹³⁶ In his introduction to a prompt book for an 1859 production of *Hamlet* at the Princess’s Theatre, Kean relates his dramaturgical research about Hamlet, detailing the history of the story and using textual evidence to place Shakespeare’s telling of it in the tenth or eleventh centuries, a period he conveyed with costumes.¹³⁷ This kind of well-planned approach to theatrical production characterized Kean’s tenure at the Princess’s.

Often, these productions were also large spectacles. Kean’s 1857 production of *Richard II* was, according to Morley, “perhaps, the most elaborate and costly spectacle that Mr. Charles Kean has yet to set upon the stage, and the splendours are all unimpeachable...It is full of passages that have floated out of their place in the drama to live in the minds of the people; the number of what are called “Beauties of Shakespeare” in the play is great; it contains also what ought to be one of the best acting-characters.”¹³⁸ While Morley enjoyed the production, noting that Kean staged *Richard II* wonderfully, he believed that Kean’s cutting of scenes sometimes hurt the production.¹³⁹ Despite the fact that Kean sometimes put spectacle over respect for Shakespeare’s text, Kean admired Shakespeare. He wrote very passionately about theatre, specifically Shakespeare, and assigned a place of cultural importance to the stage in his introductions to edited scripts:

If the stage is to be considered and upheld as an institution from which instructive and intellectual enjoyment may be derived, it is to Shakespeare we must look as the principal teacher, to inculcate its most valuable lessons. It is, therefore, a cause of self-gratulation, that I have on many occasions been able to present some of the

¹³⁶ Morley, *Journal of a London Playgoer*, 174.

¹³⁷ Kean, “Shakespeare’s Tragedy of *Hamlet* Arranged for Representation at the Royal Princess’s Theatre” 1859, Project Gutenberg.

¹³⁸ Morley, *Journal of a London Playgoer*, 141.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 143.

works of the greatest dramatic genius the world has known, to more of my countrymen than have ever witnessed them within the same space of time; and let me hope it will not be deemed presumptuous to record the pride I feel at having been so fortunate a medium between our national poet and the people of England.¹⁴⁰

Kean wrote about Shakespeare with great ardor and presented his own role as an actor and producer as a sort of public service. The quotation above came near the end of Kean's tenure as manager of the Princess's. Even nearer the end of his time at the Princess's, in an introduction to a prompt book for *Henry V*, Kean asserted:

While endeavouring, to the best of my ability and judgment, to uphold the interests of the drama in its most exalted form, I may conscientiously assert, that I have been animated by no selfish or commercial spirit. An enthusiast in the art to which my life has been devoted, I have always entertained a deeply-rooted conviction that the plan I have pursued for many seasons, might, in due time, under fostering care, render the Stage productive of much benefit to society at large.¹⁴¹

To a certain extent, Kean's claim that he was motivated by a desire to elevate and honor drama seems genuine. Despite this clear love of Shakespeare and the theatre and his protestations that he was not commercially minded, however, Kean did emphasize the commercial side of the theatre. Considering the financial aspects of keeping a theatre open is in no way giving up on artistic principles. The two existed side-by-side in many cases, notably that of Phelps. Kean, when he could no longer produce theatre to the level that he wanted to, moved out of management. In the same introduction in which Kean claims that he had "no selfish or commercial spirit," he explained how the losses he incurred as the manager of the Princess's were no longer worth continuing his association with the theatre. Kean explained his reasons for stepping away from the Princess's Theatre:

¹⁴⁰ Kean, "Shakespeare's Play of the *Merchant of Venice* Arranged for Representation at the Princess's Theatre" 1858.

¹⁴¹ Kean, "Shakespeare's Play of *King Henry the Fifth* Arranged for Representation at the Princess's Theatre" 1859.

Wonderful as have been the yearly receipts, yet the vast sums expended—sums, I have every reason to believe, not to be paralleled in any theatre of the same capability throughout the world—make it advisable that I should now retire from the self-imposed responsibility of management, involving such a perilous outlay; and the more especially, as a building so restricted in size as the Princess's, renders any adequate return utterly hopeless.¹⁴²

While Kean was pleased with the work his theatre produced, and no doubt exhausted by it, ultimately the fact that he could not take on the financial burden any longer has no bearing on his artistic commitment. Kean confirmed that monetary concerns influenced his decision to leave the Princess's the day he stepped down. J.W. Cole in *The Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean, FSA* (1859) quotes Kean's farewell speech after the final performance of his career as manager of the Princess's Theatre on August 29, 1859: "But to carry out this system of pictorial illustration, the cost has been enormous, far too great for the limited arena in which it was incurred."¹⁴³ The "system of pictorial illustration" represents his commitment to, and almost obsession with, producing historically accurate work. Though it characterized Kean's career as a manager, it ultimately made it unsustainable. For Kean, commercial considerations were more important than he publically admitted.

After moving away from managing the Princess's, Kean toured the provinces. His correspondence reveals even more concern with money. Writing letters to James Rogers, the manager of his tour of the Midlands, Kean expressed concern about the commercial side of his tour. In 1867, Kean wrote, "Had I been aware that there would have been any opposition to the usual scale at which I play elsewhere, & more especially considering it will be my 'farewell', I would not have engaged to visit that city at all. I have never acted

¹⁴² Kean, "Shakespeare's Play of *King Henry the Fifth* Arranged for Representation at the Princess's Theatre" 1859.

¹⁴³ Kean, "Charles Kean's Principles, 1850-9" in Russell Jackson, ed. *Victorian Theatre*. New York: New Amsterdam (1989) 260.

successful engagement anywhere to low prices.”¹⁴⁴ Perhaps this claim grew out of a developing belief that his performances were simply worth more, or perhaps it came from a belief that audience behavior or theatre conditions were better when prices were higher. To be sure Kean had to make enough money to pay his troupe and keep them on the road, but his concern pertains to the business of running a theatre as well as his personal pride at being able to command high admissions prices. Kean continued to tour, abroad and in the provinces, until he had a heart attack in 1867 and died several months later.

Phelps and Sadler’s Wells

Phelps got his start on the stage in Devon after seeing Macready, Edmund Kean, and other stars of the Victorian stage during a trip to London. In 1837, Phelps signed a contract with Macready to perform at the Covent Garden. While there, Macready withheld opportunities from Phelps out of fear of being overtaken by the younger actor.¹⁴⁵ The older actor’s refusal to give Phelps good roles frustrated Phelps. In a letter to his friend Mr. Latimer, Phelps wrote, “Macready is using me infamously...During the last month I have acted only once a week—Macduff on the Monday nights, and on one occasion Rob Roy. He has made several attempts to force me into subordinate parts, which I have resisted...The only alternative Macready will allow me is entering into a bond *not to act in London during the present Covent Garden season*, or to fulfill my engagement with him.”¹⁴⁶ Eventually, Phelps broke free of Macready’s hold. He moved between companies and even acted in supporting roles to Charles Kean before he decided to go into management.

¹⁴⁴ Kean, Letter to James Rogers, 18 May 1867, in Russell Jackson, ed. *Victorian Theatre*. New York: New Amsterdam (1989) 118.

¹⁴⁵ J. P. Wearing, ‘Phelps, Samuel (1804–1878)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22092>, accessed 25 Oct 2013].

¹⁴⁶ Phelps, Letter to Mr. Latimer, in Coleman, *Memoirs of Samuel Phelps* 167.

Phelps was in negotiations late in 1843 to take over the English Opera House.¹⁴⁷ After his other negotiations fell through, Phelps found an opportunity to manage a theatre with actress Mary Amelia Warner when the Sadler's Wells became available. Sadler's Wells was a theatre in Islington with a capacity of 2,500 audience members.¹⁴⁸ Prior to Phelps's management of Sadler's Wells, it was a thoroughly disreputable theatre. Charles Dickens and R.E. Horne described Sadler's Wells before Phelps took it over: "Seven or eight years ago, this theatre was in the condition of being entirely delivered over to as ruffianly an audience as London could shake together. Without, the theatre by night was like the worst of the worst kind of fair in the worst kind of town. Within, it was a bear-garden, resounding with foul language, oaths, cat-call shrieks, yells, blasphemy, obscenity—a truly diabolical clamour."¹⁴⁹ Despite the utterly unsavory nature of the Sadler's Wells, or perhaps because of it, Samuel Phelps chose it as the location for the presentation of Shakespeare's original text.

Under Phelps, the Sadler's Wells was a place where theatre practitioners held the language of Shakespeare in high regard. During the first few weeks of Phelps's management, however, the low language of the audience made this a difficult task. Dickens and Horne write, "The outrageous language was unchecked; and while that lasted, any effectual purification of the audience, and establishment of decency was impossible."¹⁵⁰ Phelps challenged the vulgarity head-on. He printed signs and flyers with the text of an Act of Parliament with a clause banning the use of foul language in public places and made sure that all his patrons were aware that he intended to enforce the law. Dickens and Horne

¹⁴⁷ Theatrical Observer, January 1, 1844, accessed through ProQuest.

¹⁴⁸ Wearing, 'Phelps, Samuel (1804–1878)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹⁴⁹ Charles Dickens and R.E. Horne, in Russell Jackson, ed. *Victorian Theatre*. New York: New Amsterdam (1989) 29-30.

¹⁵⁰ Dickens and Horne, 32.

recounted the lengths to which Phelps went to make sure the law was upheld: “On several occasions Mr. Phelps stopped the play to have an offender removed – on other occasions went into the gallery, with a cloak over his theatrical dress, to point out some offender...on all occasions kept his purpose, and his inflexible determination steadily to carry it out before the vagabonds with whom he had to deal – on no occasions showed them fear or favour.”¹⁵¹ Eventually, the language stopped and the audience began to behave properly. On a small scale, Phelps improved the audiences at his theatre. On a larger scale, though, he enacted a reform that had wider implications. Phelps asserted that rowdy behavior had no place in a theatre that produced high culture. He linked high culture to respectable behavior, not a class status.

By early June, Phelps and his co-managers had begun to turn the theatre around. The *Theatrical Observer* noted, “This theatre, under the able management of Mrs. Warner [an actress and one of Phelps’s partners], has been honoured by crowded and highly respectable audiences, who have been delighted with the superior performances provided for their entertainment by the new manageress.”¹⁵² In just a month, Phelps tamed the audience of the Sadler’s Wells. He turned it into a respected theatrical institution that capitalized on its high audience capacity. In its write-up of Sadler’s Wells in a July 1844, the *Theatrical Observer* reported, “This theatre has been exceedingly well attended during the past week.”¹⁵³ Not only did the Sadler’s Wells become a place where Phelps presented elevated Shakespeare, but also it became popular. Jerry White notes that the working class audience was familiar with Shakespeare. Thus, the playwright and journalist George Sims stated, “If an actor

¹⁵¹ Dickens and Horne, 32.

¹⁵² *Theatrical Observer*, June 3, 1844, accessed through ProQuest.

¹⁵³ *Theatrical Observer*, July 29 1844, accessed through ProQuest.

forgot his lines there was always an amateur prompter in the pit or gallery to give him the missing words.”¹⁵⁴ This working class audience had an appreciation for Shakespeare, being familiar with him through periodicals, parodies, or possibly performances at the Patent theatres. Phelps saw a potential market in Islington and brought highbrow Shakespeare to a part of London that other managers might have written off as too unrefined to appreciate high culture.

In addition to being knowledgeable, the audiences for these crowded productions were typically well behaved. Morley viewed the audience’s attentiveness as a sign that Phelps’s plays affected positive change in the community. He writes, “The aspect and behavior of the pit and gallery at Sadler’s Wells during the performances of one of Shakespeare’s plays cannot fail to impress most strongly every visitor who is unaccustomed to the place. There sit our working-classes in a happy crowd...It is hard to say how much men who have had few advantages of education must in their minds and characters be strengthened and refined when they are made accustomed to this kind of entertainment.”¹⁵⁵ To a large extent, these productions were edifying for the public because they served as a source of education about Shakespeare’s works.

In addition to being faithful to Shakespeare’s text, Phelps sought to present a wide variety of Shakespeare’s plays. Poole notes that plays such as *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Measure for Measure* were seldom performed, “always excepting at the admirable Sadler’s Wells under Phelps.”¹⁵⁶ Just because Phelps adhered to Shakespeare’s text, however, does not mean that he avoided making production choices—quite the opposite. Contrasting to

¹⁵⁴ White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, 275.

¹⁵⁵ Morley, *Journal of a London Playgoer*, 138.

¹⁵⁶ Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, 22.

the more literal productions mounted by Kean, productions by Phelps at the Sadler's Wells were sometimes stylized to better represent the spirit of Shakespeare's text. Morley lauded Phelps's production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1853, a stylized production that incorporated elements such as a curtain made of green gauze to create a misty, otherworldly effect and an exaggerated moon.¹⁵⁷ By contrast, Morley was less thrilled with a production of *Midsummer* at the Princess's Theatre in 1856 that attempted to rely on spectacle in a way that did not fit with Shakespeare's text.¹⁵⁸

By the time Phelps decided to leave the Sadler's Wells and lease it to another manager, Robert Edgar, it was one of the most respected theatres in London. The notice announcing the sale of the theatre estimated profit for the new lessee, referring to the Sadler's Wells as "the highly popular establishment and favourite resort of the public known as the Theatre Royal, Sadler's Wells...in a densely-populated and respectable neighbourhood, not exposed to competition, in the full zenith of its fame and success"¹⁵⁹ This claim stands in stark contrast to Dickens's assessment of the Sadler's Wells at the time that Phelps took over. Phelps proved that location and reputation were not the only factors in creating successful theatre. By improving the Sadler's Wells, Phelps was able to capitalize on a desire for high culture among a popular audience.

Conclusion

Kean and Phelps took different approaches to theatre, but both of their careers served the cause of public edification. Kean combined a commercial approach to theatre management with a dedication to a specific artistic principle (historical accuracy). Phelps's

¹⁵⁷ Morley, *Journal of a London Playgoer*, 57.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 135.

¹⁵⁹ "Sadler's Wells for sale, 1862" in Russell Jackson, ed. *Victorian Theatre*. New York: New Amsterdam (1989) 262.

approach to Shakespeare edified the public, making quality Shakespeare more readily available. Kean helped improve Victorian society through the educational value of his productions, while Phelps improved theatrical conditions and behaviors. Phelps's friend and biographer John Coleman claimed that Phelps won this rivalry, citing Kean's retirement from management before Phelps's as a sign of the victory. While Coleman's account of Phelps is far from unbiased, he does make an interesting observation about the rivalry between these two performers. Coleman writes, "Unlike other civil wars, this noble contest was more for the good of the commonwealth than for the benefit of the combatants."¹⁶⁰ Whatever rivalries existed between Kean and Phelps, in the end they served the same cause, whether intentionally or not. Kean and Phelps both made Shakespeare more readily available and relevant to their audiences. Competition between the two simply meant that they had to become better theatre practitioners and managers in order to stay in the contest. In that way, the ultimate winner in the rivalry between Kean and Phelps was the English public.

¹⁶⁰ Coleman, *Memoirs of Samuel Phelps* 230.

Epilogue

The debates around the state of the London theatre did not end with the 1875 debate in the House of Lords. They continued in parliament and in periodicals for the next century. At the same time, the theatre continued to evolve. A significant change that occurred was the decline of the actor-manager system and the rise of the modern-day concept of a director. An 1890 edition of *Fortnightly Review* featured two pieces presented together displaying the contrasting opinions of Herbert Beerbohm Tree, an actor-manager, and Oswald Crawfurd, a journalist. Tree's piece is a response to a previously-published article by Crawfurd blaming actor-managers for a decline in drama; Tree argues "that the drama is today as vital a factor in the life of the nation as it has been in any period of our history... Whether that popularity is due to its inherent healthiness or to the degradation of public taste to which managers have stooped to pander, is a debatable question."¹⁶¹ Tree attacks Crawfurd's assertion that the actor-manager system was a cause of the decline in drama. To do so, he lists several dozen "of the most prominent managers" including the Davenant, Keans, the Kembles, Macready, and Shakespeare himself.¹⁶² He categorizes these managers into actors and non-actors, with nearly four times more Actors listed than non-actors.¹⁶³ Tree excludes the managers of burlesque theatres and argues that almost

¹⁶¹ Herbert Beerbohm Tree and Oswald Crawfurd. "The London Stage." *Fortnightly Review*, May 1865-June 1934 47, no. 282 (06, 1890): 922-936, 922.

¹⁶² It is not wholly correct to say that Shakespeare was a manager. While he was an important part of the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men) as an actor, their resident playwright, and a shareholder, he was not an actor-manager in the Victorian understanding of the term. Crawfurd makes a note of this in his rebuttal.

¹⁶³ Tree and Crawfurd, "The London Stage," 926.

exclusively actors produced the best theatre in England.¹⁶⁴ Crawford's reply to Tree more directly blames centuries of actor-managers monopolizing the stage for their own interests as the cause of a decline in the theatre that "has denied good plays to the public and good pay to the player."¹⁶⁵ While Crawford wrote nearly a half-century after the Theatres' Regulation Act of 1843, the state of the English stage remained an important issue in the minds of Victorians.

In the present day, there are few actor-managers at major London theatres.¹⁶⁶ The eventual shift away from the actor-manager system coincided with the rise of realism, specifically the work of Constantin Stanislavski, who championed an ensemble-based approach to acting rather than the star system that allowed actor-managers to thrive and afforded them celebrity status. Decades later, the inception of an official National Theatre in 1963, on the South Bank of the Thames rather than in the West End, created an opportunity for state-funded theatre that allowed producers to be less concerned with ticket sales.

Five years after the foundation of the National, the Theatres Act of 1968 removed much of the censorship powers given to the Lord Chamberlain in 1843. After centuries of debate, the theatre was finally a free institution. As for the Theatres Royal, the Covent Garden became the Royal Opera House in 1892. The Drury Lane is still in operation as a theatre, but it is seldom host to the legitimate dramas that it used to monopolize.

¹⁶⁴ Tree and Crawford, "The London Stage," 927.

¹⁶⁵ Tree and Crawford, "The London Stage," 935.

¹⁶⁶ Most have non-actor artistic directors or host productions produced separately from the theatre itself. Kevin Spacey, the artistic director of the Old Vic, is one of the few exceptions to this rule.

Conclusion

The nineteenth century desire to reform the theatres was a product of a Victorian desire for improvement. Self-improvement, societal improvement, and artistic improvement were the goals of many actor-managers and politicians. The O.P. riots, the Select Committees, and the Theatres Act of 1843 show a broad-based desire for theatrical reform in the same vein as other attempts to improve society. While not always direct, these reforms ultimately strengthened the London theatre. These reforms were born out of broader Victorian ideals of improvement, and those who supported them believed that through new legislation they could not only improve the institution of theatre but also edify society as a whole.

Through the period, actor-managers had to adapt to new theatrical climates. The early century saw the final heyday of the Patent years. Because of their commitment to high culture, the Kembles were able to dominate the London stage. The Patent monopoly on legitimate drama helped them achieve and maintain celebrity status. When Macready and Sullivan attempted to pattern themselves after John Philip Kemble, they were less successful in their attempt. Despite Macready's fame and his devotion to producing the highest quality drama, the crumbling monopoly led to his difficulties as a manager. In the later century, when Kean and Phelps embraced the notion that theatre could simultaneously be popular and edify society, they found success.

After 1843, the freer market of theatre in London allowed for competition between theatres. This forced actor-managers to place a larger emphasis on bringing in patrons. By removing restrictions on drama, Parliament indirectly forced theatres to produce better

productions if they wished to continue operating. The strides taken by the Sadler's Wells, the Princess's, and other formerly minor theatres show that, in at least one way, the Victorians were successful in their attempt to improve the theatre. The change in audience behavior that occurred mid-century was another form of improvement in the eyes of Victorians. Macready expelling prostitutes from his theatre and Phelps silencing rowdy audience members made the theatre a more respectable institution. By improving the theatre, actor-managers were able to strike a balance between producing high culture and entertaining the public.

Primary Sources

- “An Act for regulating Theatres.” In *The Statutes of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland: 6&7 Victoria. 1843*. London: Her Majesty’s Printers, 1843.
- Aldridge, Ira. *Memoir and Theatrical Career of Ira Aldridge, The African Roscius*. London: Onwhyn.
- Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. 1875. Accessed from Project Gutenberg, released July 2003.
- Brenan, John Churchill. “Burlesque,” *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading* (02, 1864): 81-86, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/docview/4800136?accountid=14816>, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Carlyle, Thomas. “Shooting Niagara: And After?” (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867).
- Coleman, John. *Memoirs of Samuel Phelps*. London: Remington, 1904.
- “Covent Garden.” (1833). *The Athenaeum*, (285), 235-236. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/docview/9435901?accountid=14816>, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Dickens, Charles and R.H. Horne. “Article on the transformation of the Sadler’s Wells, 1851” in *Victorian Theatre*, edited by Russell Jackson 29-30.
- Gladstone, William. “Gladstone on the Advance of the Working Class.” In *Proceedings in Parliament*. London, 1866.
- Kean, Charles. “Charles Kean’s Principles, 1850-9” in *Victorian Theatre*, edited by Russell Jackson, New York: New Amsterdam, 1989.
- Kean, Charles. “Shakespeare’s Play of *King Henry the Fifth* Arranged for Representation at the Princess’s Theatre.” 1859. Project Gutenberg, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Kean, Charles. “Shakespeare’s Play of the *Merchant of Venice* Arranged for Representation at the Princess’s Theatre.” 1858. Project Gutenberg, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Kean, Charles. “Shakespeare’s Tragedy of *Hamlet* Arranged for Representation at the Royal Princess’s Theatre.” 1859. Project Gutenberg, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Kean, Charles. “Letter to James Rogers, 18 May 1867,” in *Victorian Theatre* edited by Russell Jackson. New York: New Amsterdam, 1989.

Macready, William Charles. *The Journal of William Charles Macready 1832-1851*. Edited by J.C. Trewin. Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale, IL, 2009.

Malcolm, E.H. "The Theatres, &c." *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading* (03, 1870): 160-162.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/docview/4808469?accountid=14816>, accessed April 10, 2014.

"Memoir of Charles Kemble, (of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.)." *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes, 1825-1826 3*, (08, 1825): 14.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/docview/7908084?accountid=14816>, accessed April 10, 2014.

Memoirs of Mr. John P. Kemble. Theatrical Inquisitor, and Monthly Mirror. Feb. 1813-June 1819; Jun 1814; 4, British Periodicals.

Morley, Henry. *Journal of a London Playgoer*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Limited, 1891.

New York *Times*, May 8, 1879. Accessed through the New York *Times* online archive, April 10, 2014.

Parliamentary Debates on Drama and Dramatic Literature (31 May), London (1832), Primary Sources on Copyright (1450-1900), eds L. Bently & M. Kretschmer, www.copyrighthistory.org, University of Birmingham Library: Hansard, 3rd Series, vol.13.

Phelps, Samuel. "Letter to Mr. Latimer," in *The Memoirs of Samuel Phelps*, edited by John Coleman. London: Remington, 1904.

Philo-Dramaticus. "A Letter To Charles Kemble, Esq. and R. W. Elliston, Esq. On the Present State of the Stage." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 17, no. 101 (06, 1825): 727-731.

<http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/docview/6542722?accountid=14816>, accessed April 10, 2014.

Piggott, Charles. *A political dictionary: explaining the true meaning of words...* New York: Thomas Greenleaf, 1796.

Playbill from Inaugural Festival of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, University of Bristol Theatre Archives.

"Sadler's Wells for sale, 1862" in Russell Jackson, ed. *Victorian Theatre*. New York: New Amsterdam (1989) 262.

Select Committee Report: Dramatic Literature, London (1832), Primary Sources on Copyright (1450-1900), eds L. Bently & M. Kretschmer, www.copyrighthistory.org.

ProQuest: Parliamentary Papers (1831-32) Paper No. 679, VII:1, accessed February 18, 2014.

Shattuck, Charles H. *Mr. Macready Produces As You Like It; A Prompt-Book Study*. Urbana, IL: Beta Phi Mu 1962.

Theatrical Observer. January 1, 1844. Accessed through ProQuest, April 10, 2014.

Theatrical Observer. July 29 1844. Accessed through ProQuest, April 10, 2014.

Theatrical Observer. June 3, 1844. Accessed through ProQuest, April 10, 2014.

These Were Actors: Extracts from a Newspaper Cutting Book 1811-1833. Selected and Annotated by James Agate. London: Hutchinson and Co., Ltd.

"Thoughts on the Present State and Moral Effect of the Drama," *Theatrical Inquisitor, and Monthly Mirror, Feb. 1813-June 1819*, 3, 200. November 1813. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/docview/6139655?accountid=14816>, accessed April 10, 2014.

Tree, Herbert Beerbohm and Oswald Crawford. "The London Stage." *Fortnightly Review*, May 1865-June 1934 47, no. 282 (06, 1890): 922-936. <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/docview/2434340?accountid=14816>, accessed April 10, 2014.

Secondary Sources

- Backscheider, Paula R. *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Baer, Marc. *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Bailey, Peter. *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.
- Bailey, Peter. "‘Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up’ Towards a Role of Analysis of Mid-Victorian Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability." *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Spring, 1979). Accessed at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3787265>, April 10, 2014.
- Baker, Michael. *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*. Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978.
- Bate, Jonathan. *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Booth, Michael. *Theatre in the Victorian Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Briggs, Asa. *The Age of Improvement: 1783-1867*. London: Longmans, Green and Co LTD, 1959.
- Briggs, Asa. "The Language of ‘Class’ in Early Nineteenth-Century England." In Asa Briggs, *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs Volume I: Words, Numbers, Places, People*. Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1985.
- Davis, Tracy C. *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Epstein, James. *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Accessed at http://books.google.com/books?id=_RDRUz0BbfAC&dq=the+surrender+of+trinidad+melodrama&source=gbs_navlinks_s, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Foulkes, Richard. "Macready, William Charles (1793–1873)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Online edition Jan 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17741>, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Foulkes, Richard. *Performing Shakespeare in the Age of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

- Hadley, Elaine. *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- Hays, Michael, and Anastasia Nikolopoulou. "Introduction," in *Melodrama: The Cultural Emergence of a Genre*, ed. Michael Hays and Anastasia Nikolopoulou. St. Martin's Press: New York, 1996.
- Holder, Heidi J. "Aldridge, Ira Frederick (1807?–1867)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Online edition Jan 2008.
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/49697>, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Hoppen, K. Theodore. *The Mid-Victorian Generation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Joyce, Patrick. *Democratic Subjects: The self and the social in nineteenth-century England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Kelly, Linda. *The Kemble Era: John Philip Kemble, Sarah Siddons and the London Stage*. New York: Random House. 1980.
- Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow Lowbrow*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).
- McClelland, Keith. "Rational and Respectable Men." In *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*. Edited by Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Moody, Jane. *Illegitimate Theatre In London, 1770-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Newey, Katherine. "Shakespeare and the Wars of the Playbills." In *Victorian Shakespeare: Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2003).
- O'Connor, Barry. "Sullivan, (Thomas) Barry (1821–1891)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004.
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26773>.
- Pool, Adrian. *Shakespeare and the Victorians*. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004.
- Prince, Kathryn. *Shakespeare in the Victorian Periodicals*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Russell, Dave. "Popular Entertainment, 1776-1895." In Joseph Donohue ed. *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 2: 1660-1895*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

- Rowell, George. *The Victorian Theatre, 1792-1914: A Survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Schoch, Richard W. "Theatre and mid-Victorian society, 1851-1870," in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, Joseph Donohue, ed. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521650687> (331), accessed April 10, 2014.
- Shaughnessy, Robert. "Siddons, Sarah (1755–1831)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Online edition May 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25516>, accessed 3 Dec 2013.
- Sillard, Robert M. *Barry Sullivan and His Contemporaries: A Histrionic Record, Vol. II*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901. Accessed via books.google.com, April 10, 2014.
- Stephens, John Russell. *The Censorship of English Drama 1824-1901*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Stephens, John Russell. "Kemble, Charles (1775–1854)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Online edition Jan 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15316>, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Thompson, Edward Palmer. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1963. http://books.google.com/books?id=12aLyk-kacIC&pg=PA807&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q=%22calling%20the%20tunes%22&f=false, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Thomson, Peter. "Kean, Edmund (1787–1833)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Online edition Jan 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15204>, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Thomson, Peter. "Kemble, John Philip (1757–1823)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Online edition Jan 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15322>, accessed April 10, 2014.
- Wearing, J.P. "Phelps, Samuel (1804–1878)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Online edition May 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22092>, accessed April 10, 2014.
- White, Jerry. *London in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Random House, 2007.
- Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Accessed at

http://books.google.com/books?id=KnNWD9EYCGgC&vq=culture&source=gs_navlinks_s, accessed April 10, 2014.

Wilson, Glen M. "Kean, Charles John (1811-1868)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press. 2004. Online edition January 2008.
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15203>, accessed 25 Oct 2013.

Woo, Celestine. *Studies In Shakespeare, Volume 16: Romantic Actors and Bardolatry: Performing Shakespeare from Garrick to Kean*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008.