

DRURY LANE ADDRESSES

by Byron and others
edited by Peter Cochran

This site presents ten separate texts (three by Byron), each illustrating, in different ways, Byron's relationship with the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.



Sheridan: two perspectives

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The Theatre Royal Drury Lane was one of the two patent or monopoly theatres of Byron's day (the other being Covent Garden), which were licensed to play "tragedy" and "comedy". Only at these two could Shakespeare be put on. They were in competition with at least eight other unofficial London theatres, where spoken dialogue was theoretically forbidden, and which therefore put on harlequinades, operettas, equestrian and other animal shows, pantomimes, clowns, aquatic events, and numerous other entertaining and popular hybrids.

The monopoly of the two huge patent theatres was resented as elitist and anachronistic by many people: Byron never refers to it, but takes it for granted. He assumes implicitly (against all the evidence he adduces elsewhere: see *English Bards* 560-85), that the patent theatres' monopoly is a guarantee of standards.

Both Covent Garden and Drury Lane were famous as haunts of vice. William Cobbett wrote, about Edward Ellice, who managed Drury Lane:

Mr Ellice ... was, for years, the Head Manager of a *filthy playhouse*, to which there belongs *three hundred common* prostitutes who have *free admission tickets*, in order that they may be there to entice young men to go thither! Is not this immoral? Is not this irreligious! Never have I, in all my life, or any one of my family entered that infamous playhouse, that shocking scene of debauchery and prostitution.¹

The public's resentment of the elitist nature of the theatre the establishment would prefer them to see was manifested in the Old Price Riots at Covent Garden in 1809 and 1810 (when Byron was out of the country). Here, while John Philip Kemble tried to act Shakespeare on the stage, sections of the audience dressed up and took over the auditorium, offering a more lively alternative theatre of their own, with songs, dances, and chants in which "Kemble" rhymed with "tremble".

Byron himself enjoyed the depravity which the façades of the two "polite" theatres covered. On February 27th 1808 he wrote to Hobhouse (with the intention of making him jealous):

... last night at the Opera Masquerade, we supped with seven whores, a *Bawd* and a *Ballet-Master*, in Madame Catalani's apartment behind the Scenes, (of course Catalani was *not* there ...)²

While indulging in the elitist lifestyle the two patent theatres offered, he upheld the concept of drama they stood for – which by our twenty-first century standards was hierarchical, formal, and inert. As far as Shakespeare was concerned, the ideas of William Poel and Harley Granville-Barker were decades ahead. For Covent Garden and Drury Lane, Shakespeare was an established dramatist, his tragedies were tragic and his comedies (done with proper restraint), comic. The Porter was never done in *Macbeth*, and the Gravediggers were truncated in *Hamlet*. Huge cuts were necessitated by the elaborate scenery and by the tragedian's taste – they included, in the case of Kemble, who acted at Covent Garden, the King's soliloquy in *Hamlet*, and the lines about murdering sleep from the Daggers Scene in *Macbeth*. Many interpolated scenes and speeches were included, by Cibber, Garrick, and James Thomson. The aim was to neutralise Shakespeare's multi-faceted quality and make him a respectable, patriotic writer.

The alternative theatres, with dance, movement, music, song, animals, and what speech the law would allow (often done as recitative), had much more life: but Byron rarely writes for it: success and popularity are not among his aims. Only the first, comical third act of *Manfred*, and the unfinished *Deformed Transformed* (with its visions, transformations, scenes of warfare, songs, jokes, and choruses), seem designed for the real alternative theatres, as opposed to the deadly theatre of Drury Lane and Covent Garden. But Byron never finished *The Deformed Transformed*.

As soon as Byron became famous in 1812, with *Childe Harold I and II*, the Whig oligarchs who ran Drury Lane decided they needed him on their side. He was joining a very distinguished tradition ...

1: Quoted Ingrams, *The Life and Adventures of William Cobbett*, p.170.

2: BLJ I 159: letter of February 27th 1808.

1: Alexander Pope: Epilogue to Rowe's *Jane Shore*, designed for Mrs Oldfield.³

Anne Oldfield (1683-1730), was the leading Drury Lane actress of her day. Despite having born two illegitimate children, she was buried in Westminster Abbey. When, having recovered from a fever in Greece, Byron wrote the following squib in a letter to Hobhouse,

Odious! in boards, 'twould any Bard provoke,
(Were the last words that dying Byron spoke).
No, let some charming cuts and frontispiece
Adorn my volume, and the sale increase;
One would not be unpublished when one's dead,
And, Hobhouse, let my works be bound in *Red*.⁴

... he was parodying Mrs Oldfield's last words as imagined by Pope in the *Epistle to Cobham*, 242-7:

“Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke,”
(Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke),
“No, let a charming Chintz, and Brussels lace
Wrap my cold limbs, and shade my lifeless face:
One would not, sure, be frightful when one's dead –
And – Betty – give this Cheek a little Red.”

What is remarkable about the Epilogue which Pope wrote for her is the laughter he expects to get from the ladies in the audience. He invites their empathetic chuckles at seeing a woman of doubtful reputation (Anne Oldfield), who has just played another woman of doubtful reputation (Jane Shore), speak a speech which implies all their reputations to be doubtful, uniting auditorium and stage, performers and spectators, into one charitable unit. This would not be possible in the Drury Lane of Byron's day, a century later.

Epilogue to *Jane Shore*

Prodigious this! the Frail one of our Play
From her own sex should mercy find today!
You might have held the pretty head aside,
Peep'd in your fans, been serious thus, and cry'd,
“The play may pass – but that strange creature, *Shore*, 5
I can't – indeed now – I so hate a whore –”
Just as a blockhead rubs his thoughtless skull,
And thanks his stars he was not born a fool;
So from a sister sinner you shall hear,
“How strangely you expose yourself, my dear!” 10
But let me die, all raillery apart,
Our sex are still forgiving at their heart;
And, did not wicked custom so contrive,
We'd be the best, good-natur'd things alive.
 There are, 'tis true, who tell another tale, 15
That virtuous ladies envy while they rail;
Such rage without, betrays the fire within;
In some close corner of the soul they sin;
Still hoarding up, most scandalously nice,
Amidst their virtues a reserve of vice. 20
The godly dame, who fleshly failings damns,
Scolds with her maid, or with her chaplain crams.

³: Jane Shore was the mistress of Edward IV.

⁴: Letter of September 25th 1810; BLJ II 15.

Would you enjoy soft nights and solid dinners?
 Faith, gallants, board with saints, and bed with sinners.

Well, if our author in the Wife offends, 25
 He has a Husband that will make amends;
 He draws him gentle, tender, and forgiving;
 And sure such kind good creatures may be living.
 In days of old, they pardon'd breach of vows,
 Stern *Cato's* self was no relentless spouse: 30
Plu – Plutarch, what's his name that writes his life?
 Tells us, that *Cato* dearly lov'd his wife:
 Yet if a friend, a night or so, should need her,
 He'd recommend her as a special breeder.
 To lend a wife, few here would scruple make; 35
 But, pray, which of you all would take her back?
 Though with the Stoick chief our stage may ring,
 The Stoick husband was the glorious thing.
 The man had courage, was a sage, 'tis true,
 And lov'd his country – but what's that to you? 40
 Those strange examples ne'er were made to fit ye,
 But the kind cuckold might instruct the City:
 There, many an honest man may copy *Cato*,
 Who ne'er saw naked Sword, or look'd in *Plato*.

If, after all, you think it a disgrace, 45
 That *Edward's* miss thus perks it in your face;
 To see a piece of failing flesh and blood,
 In all the rest so impudently good;
 Faith, let the modest matrons of the town
 Come here in crowds, and stare the strumpet down. 50

2: Samuel Johnson: *Prologue Spoken by Mr. Garrick at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury-Lane, 1747*

In his *Life*, Boswell describes the genesis of Johnson's *Prologue* thus:

This year [1747] his old pupil and friend, David Garrick, having become joint patentee and manager of Drury-Lane theatre, Johnson honoured his opening of it with a Prologue, which for just and manly dramatick criticism, on the whole range of the English stage, as well as for poetical excellence, is unrivalled. Like the celebrated Epilogue to the *Distressed Mother*, it was, during the season, often called for by the audience. The most striking and brilliant passages of it have been so often repeated, that it would be superfluous to point them out.

I print it here with the Byronic pieces, not just because Johnson's estimates of Ben Jonson and the Restoration comic writers have so signally failed the test of time (the recent RSC revival of *Sejanus* enables me to say so with still greater confidence), but because, despite the moral aspiration of its conclusion, Johnson concedes that theatrical success is finally decided, not by literary pundits like himself (and, later, by Byron and the Drury Lane Committee), but by the paying public ("The Stage but echoes back the publick Voice") and that what the public want, not what critics want, holds sway ("... we that live to please, must please to live"). It's a concession that none of the rest of the pieces make. For Byron and his different associates, the aim of managers is to improve public taste: for Johnson (whom Byron admired), their aim is to accommodate it.

When Learning's Triumph o'er her barb'rous Foes
 First rear'd the Stage, immortal SHAKESPEAR rose;
 Each Change of many-colour'd Life he drew,
 Exhausted Worlds, and then imagin'd new:
 Existence saw him spurn her bounded Reign, 5
 And panting Time toil'd after him in vain:
 His pow'rful Strokes presiding Truth impress'd,
 And unresisted Passion storm'd the Breast.
 Then JOHNSON⁵ came, instructed from the School,
 To please in Method, and invent by Rule; 10
 His studious Patience, and laborious Art,
 By regular Approach essay'd the Heart;
 Cold Approbation gave the ling'ring Bays,
 For those who durst not censure, scarce could praise.
 A Mortal born he met the general Doom, 15
 But left, like *Egypt's* Kings, a lasting Tomb.
 The Wits of Charles⁶ found easier Ways to Fame,
 Nor wish'd for JOHNSON'S art, or SHAKESPEAR'S flame,
 Themselves they studied, as they felt, they writ,
 Intrigue was Plot, Obscenity was Wit. 20
 Vice always found a sympathetick Friend;
 They pleas'd their Age, and did not aim to mend.
 Yet Bards like these aspir'd to lasting Praise,
 And proudly hop'd to pimp in future Days.
 Their Cause was gen'ral, their Supports were strong, 25

5: Conventional mis-spelling for Ben Jonson.

6: The Restoration comic writers: Wycherley, Congreve, and so on.

Their Slaves were willing, and their Reign was long;
Till Shame regain'd the Post that Sense betray'd,
And Virtue call'd Oblivion to her Aid.

Then crush'd by Rules, and weaken'd as refin'd,
For Years the Pow'r of Tragedy declin'd; 30
From Bard, to Bard, the frigid Caution crept,
Till Declamation roar'd, while Passion slept.
Yet still did Virtue deign the Stage to tread,
Philosophy remain'd, though Nature fled.
But forc'd at length her ancient Reign to quit, 35
She saw great *Faustus*⁷ lay the ghost of wit:
Exulting Folly hail'd the joyful Day,
And Pantomime, and Song, confirm'd her Sway.

But who the coming Changes can presage,
And mark the future Periods of the Stage? – 40
Perhaps if Skill could distant Times explore,
New *Behns*,⁸ new *Durfey's*,⁹ yet remain in store.
Perhaps, where *Lear* has rav'd, and *Hamlet* died,
On flying Cars new Sorcerers may ride.
Perhaps, for who can guess th' Effects of Chance? 45
Here *Hunt* may box, or *Mahomet* may dance.¹⁰

Hard is his Lot, that here by Fortune plac'd,
Must watch the wild Vicissitudes of Taste;
With ev'ry Meteor of Caprice must play,
And chase the new-blown Bubbles of the Day. 50
Ah! let not Censure term our Fate our Choice,
The Stage but echoes back the publick Voice.
The Drama's Laws the Drama's Patrons give,
For we that live to please, must please to live.

Then prompt no more the Follies you decry, 55
As Tyrants doom their Tools of Guilt to die;
'Tis yours this Night to bid the Reign commence
Of rescu'd Nature, and reviving Sense;
To chase the Charms of Sound, the Pomp of Show,
For useful Mirth, and salutary Woe; 60
Bid scenic Virtue form the rising Age,
And Truth diffuse her Radiance from the Stage.

7: Johnson has a low opinion of Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*.

8: Aphra Behn (1640-89), writer of novels and, plays such as *Abdelazar, or the Moor's Revenge*.

9: Thomas d'Urfey (1653-1723), comic dramatist.

10: Johnson refers to pugilistic displays and "Oriental" pantomimes, unsuitable for the legitimate stage but perforce played there because they brought the crowds in..

3: Byron: Address, spoken at the opening of Drury-Lane Theatre, Saturday, October 20, 1812

This Address is not Byron's unassisted work. Its origin is to be found in the relationship between the poet and Lord Holland, leader of the Whigs in the House of Lords, upon Byron's becoming famous after the publication, in March 1812, of *Childe Harold* Cantos I and II.

The relationship between the two barons started in earnest when the Drury Lane Committee rejected every entry they'd received in the competition for a Address for the opening of the new Drury Lane Theatre in 1812 (the old building, for which Johnson had written his *Prologue*, was destroyed by fire in 1809). In desperation, Holland, a member of the Committee, turned to Byron for one. Byron had previously satirized Holland (and his wife), in *English Bards*, but Holland's tone is not that of one who harbours a grudge for previous insults:

Holland House Sept' 21 [1812]

My Dear Lord – If the sound of your excellent verses rung in my ears even before I read those who were “responsive” to the advertisement & who I assure you answered it in the same strain, how much more must I long for them after wading through the trash which it was allotted me to peruse – I must & indeed am authorized by the committee to speak to you confidentially on the subject – The fact is we have found none of nearly 100 competitors that will do – Some have a little merit but none are even *good* enough to be spoken much less do they write good verse with a happy selection of topicks – In this difficulty I own have been vain and foolhardy enough to undertake to apply for your friendship to extricate us – To tell you that the verses which you shewed me or that any which you have made or may make must be better than anything we have rejected would be no great compliment & I can assure you that I can with equal sincerity say that those you shewed me especially the striking & poetical description of the fire would be received with universal applause – & calculated to silence by their merits alone the cavils even of disappointed bards at our criticism – You are in fact the only person who can extricate us from our difficulties – you can do so by the excellence of your verses & even if it were possible to find a tolerable prologue elsewhere we should not escape censure without a poetical name great as your own to justify us – Pray let me entreat you in the name of Drury Lane & her committee of Thalia & Melpomene to take pity on us – There is no objection to the compliment to M^{rs} Siddons or the slap at the Young Roscius – I own notwithstanding all his faults moral & political I am such an admirer of Genius that I should like to see a couplet in compliment to Sheridan – He *was* you know our manager & so was *Garrick* – the first actor & first comic writer of the Country have managed Drury Lane – I write in a desperate hurry & in a noise Yrs ever V[assa]¹¹ Holland¹¹

As Lyndon Johnson might have put it, it was obviously better to have Byron on the inside of the tent pissing out, than on the outside pissing in. A detailed correspondence sprang up between the two about many of the lines and sentiments in Byron's commission.

Never before or afterwards did Byron submit a piece to such detailed scrutiny and suggestion as he did the *Address, Spoken at the Opening of Drury-lane Theatre*, a robust, professional, yet utterly conventional poem, devoid of any original Byronic touches – aptly, as it's supposed to give voice to an entire organization. The correspondence between Holland and Byron lasts from September 10th to October

¹¹: B.L.Add.Mss.51639 ff18-20 (deletions removed).

15th 1812; it takes up sixteen letters on his part,¹² and eleven on Holland's.¹³ He sends Holland five drafts, and Holland, or Holland's scribe, makes four more. He offers Holland alternatives from which to choose, changes words and lines at Holland's suggestion (Holland at one point, carried away, submits a list of comments sixteen sides in length), and he yields, too, as the saga unfolds, to comments from Sir Samuel Whitbread, Sheridan, and Lord Lansdowne. A desire to atone for *English Bards*, and to express gratitude at the Hollands' magnanimity and hospitality, may be inferred from the amount of work Byron does. He had little difficulty creating a good impression, for Holland seems to have been well under the Byronic spell. The excellence of their rapport may be seen in these words of Holland, in letters of September 28th and October 20th:

My dear Lord – / I am delighted with your diligence – & anxious to rival it [–] Mine is an easier & less glorious task that of finding fault but with so goodhumoured an author as yourself not an unpleasant one –¹⁴

[I] have derived so much pleasure from our correspondence that I could wish you no worse than to write a poem every fortnight & for me to try to pull [it] to pieces – I have however been employed ever since the opening of D[ru]¹⁵ Lane with your verses for I have read over & over again your Curse of Minerva – The beginning of which is I think the finest you ever wrote & many parts of which is I think the finest thing you ever wrote & many parts of which are full of biting satire & powerful poetry –¹⁵

His approach in “pulling [Byron] to pieces” may be seen in what he writes on September 29th:

... I own I have thought over that word *Wave* till I don't like it – I think it & so does Sheridan inadmissible with any word but *fiery* – If the real substantive is to be hid in the adjective it must be in his own adjective & not in another person's ...¹⁶

Byron proves his readiness to write to order, with such things as:

I have cudgelled my brains with the greatest willingness – & only wish I had more time to have done better. – You will find a sort of clap-trap laudatory couplet altered for the quiet of the Committee & I have added towards the end, the couplet you were pleased to like.¹⁷

Embarrassing lines which he cut at the Committee's insistence include such things as

Nay, lower still, the Drama yet deplores
That late she deigned to crawl upon all-fours.
When Richard roars in Bosworth for a horse,
If you command, the steed must come in course.
If you decree, the Stage must condescend
To soothe the sickly taste we dare not mend ...¹⁸

12: BLJ III 191-224.

13: The entire correspondence is at B.L.Add.Mss.51639 ff.13-116.

14: B.L.Add.Mss. 51639 f.64.

15: B.L.Add.Mss. 51639 f.119.

16: B.L.Add.Mss. 51639 f.71.

17: BLJ II 220.

18: BLJ II 212n.

The Address was spoken by Robert Elliston on October 12th.

**Address, spoken at the opening of Drury-Lane Theatre, Saturday, October 20,
1812**

IN one dread night¹⁹ our city saw, and sighed,
 Bowed to the dust, the Drama's tower of pride;
 In one short hour beheld the blazing fane,
 Apollo sink, and Shakespeare cease to reign.
 Ye who beheld, (oh! sight admired and mourned, 5
 Whose radiance mocked the ruin it adorned!)
 Through clouds of fire the massy fragments riven,
 Like Israel's pillar,²⁰ chase the night from heaven;
 Saw the long column of revolving flames
 Shake its red shadow o'er the startled Thames, 10
 While thousands, thronged around the burning dome,
 Shrank back appalled, and trembled for their home,
 As glared the volumed blaze, and ghastly shone
 The skies, with lightnings awful as their own,
 Till blackening ashes and the lonely wall 15
 Usurped the Muse's realm, and marked her fall;
 Say – shall this new, nor less aspiring pile,
 Reared where once rose the mightiest in our isle,
 Know the same favour which the former knew,
 A shrine for Shakespeare – worthy him and *you*? 20
 Yes – it shall be – the magic of that name
 Defies the scythe of time, the torch of flame;
 On the same spot still consecrates the scene,
 And bids the Drama *be* where she hath *been*:
 This fabric's birth attests the potent spell 25
 Indulge our honest pride, and say, *How well!*
 As soars this fane to emulate the last,
 Oh! might we draw our omens from the past,
 Some hour propitious to our prayers may boast
 Names such as hallow still the dome we lost. 30
 On Drury first your Siddons'²¹ thrilling art
 O'erwhelmed the gentlest, stormed the sternest heart.
 On Drury, Garrick's²² latest laurels grew;
 Here your last tears retiring Roscius²³ drew,
 Sighed his last thanks, and wept his last adieu: 35
 But still for living wit the wreaths may bloom,
 That only waste their odours o'er the tomb.
 Such Drury claimed and claims – nor you refuse
 One tribute to revive his slumbering muse;
 With garlands deck your own Menander's²⁴ head, 40
 Nor hoard your honours idly for the dead!
 Dear are the days which made our annals bright,
 Ere Garrick fled, or Brinsley²⁵ ceased to write.

19: The Theatre Royal Drury Lane burned down on February 24th 1809.

20: See Exodus 13: 21.

21: Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), major tragic actress; sister of John Philip Kemble.

22: David Garrick (1717-79), greatest actor of the eighteenth century; friend of Dr Johnson. Ran Drury Lane.

23: Roscius (134-62 BC), Roman actor; see Hamlet, II ii 387 app.

24: Menander (343-291 BC), Greek comic writer.

Heirs to their labours, like all high-born heirs,
 Vain of our ancestry as they of theirs; 45
 While thus Remembrance borrows Banquo's glass
 To claim the sceptred shadows as they pass,
 And we the mirror hold, where imaged shine
 Immortal names, emblazoned on our line,
 Pause – ere their feebler offspring you condemn, 50
 So Reflect how hard the task to rival them!
 Friends of the stage! to whom both Players and Plays
 Must sue alike for pardon or for praise,
 Whose judging voice and eye alone direct
 The boundless power to cherish or reject; 55
 If e'er Frivolity has led to fame,
 And made us blush that you forbore to blame –
 If e'er the sinking stage could condescend
 To soothe the sickly taste it dare not mend –
 All past reproach may present scenes refute, 60
 And censure, wisely loud, be justly mute!
 Oh! since your fiat stamps the Drama's laws,
 Forbear to mock us with misplaced applause;
 So Pride shall doubly nerve the actor's powers, 65
 And Reason's voice be echoed back by ours!
 This greeting o'er – the ancient rule obeyed,
 The Drama's homage by her herald paid
 Receive our *welcome* too – whose every tone
 Springs from our hearts, and fain would win your own.
 The curtain rises – may our stage unfold 70
 Scenes not unworthy Drury's days of old!
 Britons our judges, Nature for our guide,
 Still may *we* please – long, long may *you* preside.

Or if one tolerable page appears
 In folly's volume, 'tis the actor's leaf, 25
 Who dries his own by drawing others' tears,
 And raising present mirth, makes glad his future years.

IV.

Albeit how like young Betty²⁸ doth he flee!
 Light as the mote that daunceth in the beam,
 He liveth only to man's present woe, 30
 His life a flash, his memory a dream,
 Oblivious down he drops in Lethe's stream:
 Yet what are they, the learned and the great?
 Awhile of longer wonderment the theme!
 Who shall presume to prophecy their date, 35
 Where nought is certain save th' uncertainty of fate?

V.

This goodly pile upheav'd by Wyatt's²⁹ toil,
 Perchance than Holland's³⁰ edifice more fleet,
 Again red Lemnos'³¹ artisan may spoil;
 The fire alarm and midnight drum may beat, 40
 And all be strew'd ysmoking at your feet.
 Start ye? Perchance Death's angel may be sent
 Ere from the flaming temple ye retreat,
 And ye who met on revel idlesse bent,
 May find in pleasure's fane your grave and monument. 45

VI.

Your debts mount high – ye plunge in deeper waste,
 The tradesman calls – no warning voice ye hear;
 The plaintiff sues – to public shews ye haste;
 The bailiff threats – ye feel no idle fear;
 Who can arrest your prodigal career? 50
 Who can keep down the levity of youth?
 What sound can startle age's stubborn ear?
 Who can redeem from wretchedness and ruth
 Men true to falsehood's voice, false to the voice of truth.

VII.

To thee, blest saint!³² who doff'd thy skin to make 55
 The Smithfield³³ rabble leap from theirs with joy,
 We dedicate the pile – arise! awake!
 Knock down the muses, wit and sense destroy,
 Clear our new stage from reason's dull alloy,
 Charm hobbling age, and tickle capering youth 60
 With cleaver, marrow-bone. and Tunbridge toy;
 While, vibrating in unbelieving tooth,
 Harps twang in Drury's walls, and make her boards a booth.

28: Betty – William Henry West Betty (1791-1874), child acting phenomenon. His reign was short.

29: Benjamin Dean Wyatt (1775-1850?) architect who designed the new Drury Lane Theatre.

30: Henry Holland (1746-1806) architect of the previous Drury Lane.

31: *Lemnos' red architect*: Mulciber, architect of Pandemonium in Milton's *Hell*: see *Paradise Lost*, I 730-51.

32: St. Bartholomew (he was flayed alive, and gave his name to Bartholomew Fair).

33: Bartholomew Fair was held in Smithfield meat-market. See Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, VII 649-95.

VIII.

For what is Hamlet, but a hair in March?
 And what is Brutus, but a croaking owl? 65
 And what is Rolla?³⁴ Cupid steep'd in starch,
 Orlando's helmet in Augustine's cowl.³⁵
 Shakespear, how, true thine adage, "fair is foul;"³⁶
 To him whose soul is with fruition fraught,
 The song of Braham³⁷ is an Irish howl, 70
 Thinking is but an idle waste of thought,
 And nought is every thing, and every thing is nought.

IX.

Sons of Parnassus! whom I view above,³⁸
 Not laurel crown'd, but clad in rusty black,
 Not spurring Pegasus through Tempe's grove, 75
 But pacing Grub-street on a jaded hack,
 What reams of foolscap, while your brains ye rack,
 Ye mar to make again! for sure, ere long,
 Condemn'd to tread the bard's time-sanction'd track,
 Ye all shall join the bailiff-haunted throng, 80
 And reproduce in rags the rags ye blot in song.

X.

So fares the follower in the Muses' train,
 He toils to starve, and only lives in death;
 We slight him till our patronage is vain,
 Then round his skeleton a garland wreath, 85
 And o'er his bones an empty requiem breathe –
 Oh! with what tragic horror would he start,
 (Could he be conjur'd from the grave beneath)
 To find the stage again a Thespian cart,
 And elephants and colts down trample Shakespear's art? 90

34: *Rolla: Rolla, or the Virgin of the Sun* (aka *Pizarro. The Spaniards in Peru*) was a tragedy by Kotzebue, set among the Incas.

35: *Orlando's helmet in Augustine's cowl*: the line implies the religiose / erotic sentimentality of *Rolla*.

36: *Macbeth*, I i, penultimate line.

37: *Braham*: John Braham (1774-1856), famous tenor; colleague of Isaac Nathan.

38: Parodies *CHP* I st.60: Oh, thou Parnassus! whom I now survey,
 Not in the phrenzy of a dreamer's eye,
 Not in the fabled landscape of a lay,
 But soaring snow-clad through thy native sky 615
 In the wild pomp of mountain majesty!
 What marvel if I thus essay to sing?
 The humblest of thy pilgrims passing by
 Would gladly woo thine Echoes with his string, 619
 Though from thy heights no more one Muse will wave her wing.

XI.

Hence, pedant Nature! with thy Grecian rules,
 Centaurs (not fabulous) those rules efface;
 Back, sister muses, to your native schools;
 Here booted rooms³⁹ usurp Apollo's place,
 Hoofs shame the boards that Garrick used to grace; 95
 The play of limbs succeeds the play of wit;
 Man yields the drama to the Houynim⁴⁰ race,
 His prompter spurs, his licenser the bit,
 The stage a stable-yard, a jockey club the pit.

XII.

Is it for these ye rear this proud abode? 100
 Is it for these your superstition seeks
 To build a temple worthy of a god,
 To laud a monkey, or to worship leeks?
 Then be the stage, to recompense your freaks,
 A motley chaos; jumbling age and ranks, 105
 Where Punch, the *lignum vitæ* Roscius,⁴¹ squeaks,
 And Wisdom weeps, and Folly plays his pranks,
 And moody Madness laughs, and hugs the chain he clanks.

39: ... *booted rooms*: jockeys' dressing-rooms.

40: ... *the Houynim race*: refers to the Houyhnhnms, the intelligent horses in *Gulliver's Travels*.

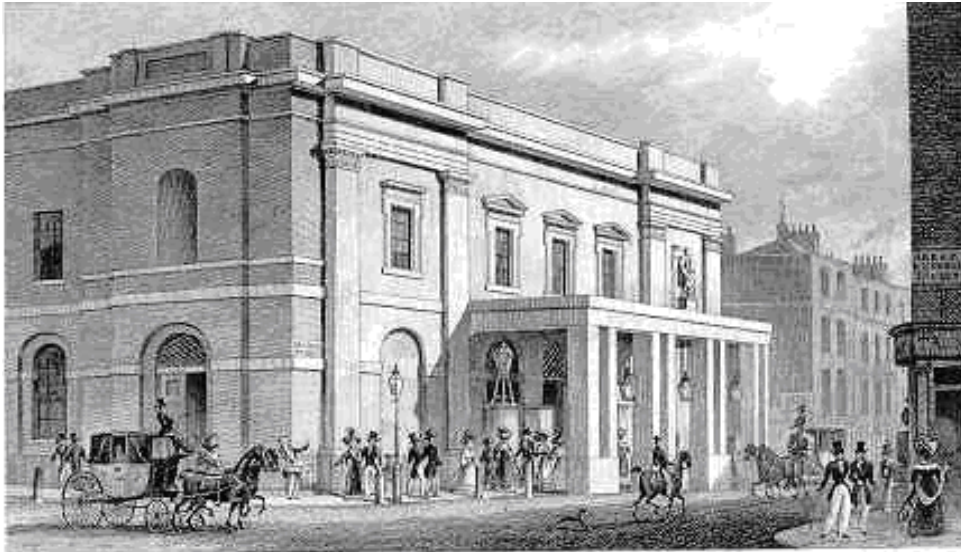
41: ... *the lignum vitæ* Roscius: implies Punch to be an actor on the end of a stick. *Lignum vitae* is one of the hardest of all woods.

Where Hope reviving, re-expands her wings;
 Where generous joy exults – where duteous ardour springs.
 Oft on these boards we've proved – No, not these boards –
 Th'exalting sanction your applause affords;
 Warm'd with the fond remembrance, every nerve
 We'll strain, the future honour to deserve:
 Give the great work our earnest, strenuous hand,
 And (since new tenements new brooms demand)
 Rich novelty explore; all merit prize,
 And court the living talents as they rise:
 Th'illustrious dead revere – yet hope to show,
 That modern bards with ancient genius glow.
Sense we'll consult e'en in our farce and fun,
 And without *steeds* our *patent stage* shall run;
 Self-actuated whirl – nor you deny,
 While you're transported, that you gaily fly;
 Like Milton's chariot, that it lives – it feels –
 And races from the spirit in the wheels.
 If mighty things with small we may compare,
 This spirit drives Britannia's conquering car, 35
 Burns in her ranks – and kindles every Tar.
 NELSON displayed its power upon the main,
 And WELLINGTON exhibits it in Spain;
 Another MARLBOROUGH points to Blenheim's story,
 And with its lustre, blends his kindred glory. 40
 In Arms and Science long our Isle hath shone,
 And SHAKESPEARE – wondrous SHAKESPEARE – rear'd a throne
 For British Poesy – whose powers inspire
 The British pencil, and the British lyre.
 Her we invoke! – her sister Arts implore: 45
 Their smiles beseech whose charms yourselves adore,
 These if we win, the Graces too we gain, –
 Their dear, belov'd, inseparable train;
 Three who their witching arts from Cupid stole,
 And Three acknowledged sovereigns of the soul; 50
 Harmonious throng! with nature blending art;
 Divine Sestetto! warbling to the heart:
 For Poesy shall here sustain the upper part.
 Thus lifted, gloriously we'll sweep along,
 Shine in our music, scenery and song; 55
 Shine in our farce, masque, opera and play,
 And prove old Drury has not had her day.
 Nay more – so stretch the wing, the world shall cry,
 Old Drury never, never soared so high!
 “But hold,” you'll say, “this self complacent boast; 60
 Easy to reckon thus without your host.”
 True, true – that lowers at once our mounting pride;
 'Tis yours alone our merit to decide;
 'Tis ours to look to you – you hold the prize
 That bids our great, our best ambition rise. 65
 A double blessing⁴³ your rewards impart,
 Each good provide, and elevate the heart,
 Our twofold feeling owns its twofold cause:

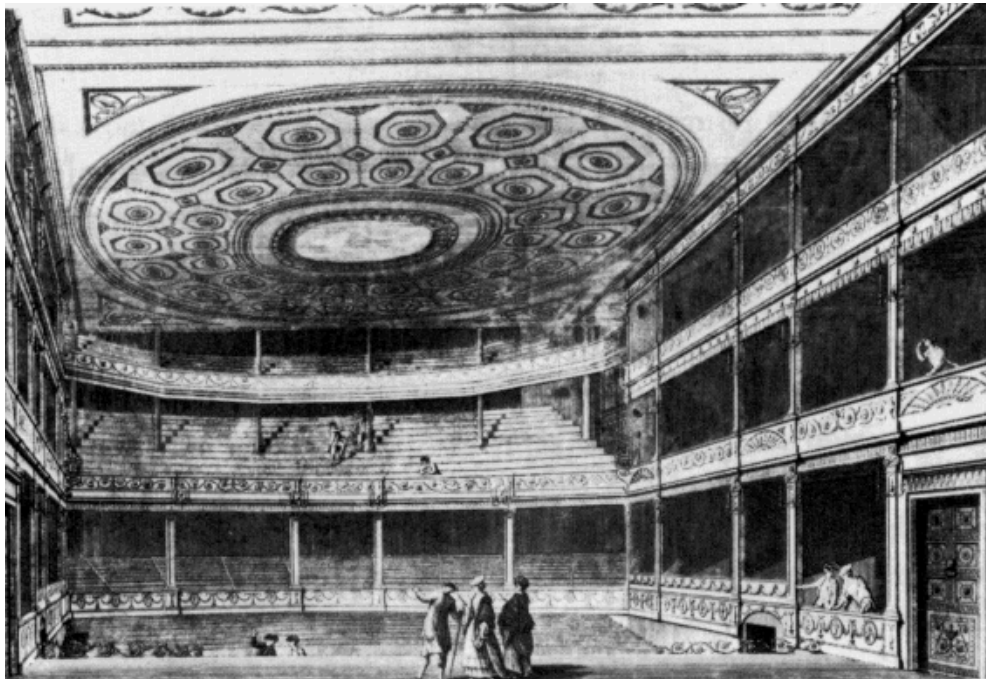
43: *Hamlet*, I iii 53: *A double blessing is a double grace ...*

Your bounty's comfort – rapture, your applause;
When in your fostering beam you bid us live,
You give the means of life, and gild the means you give.

70



Theatre Royal, Drury Lane: exterior



Theatre Royal, Drury Lane: interior

6: Byron: *Paranetical Address, by Dr. Plagiary*

Byron, having been parodied himself by the Smiths, in turn satirised Busby in this piece, which uses numerous phrases, both taken directly and adapted, from the rejected address of Busby sr. in a kind of collage-commentary. It can't be understood without close attention to Busby's original. Byron was to use the technique of quoting the actual words of the subject satirised, in their original metre, in, for example, the last stanza of *Don Juan* I.

This Address doesn't advance the argument about theatre very far.

Paranetical Address, by Dr. Plagiary

Half stolen, with acknowledgements,⁴⁴ to be spoken in an inarticulate voice by Master —— at the opening of the next new theatre. [Stolen parts marked with the inverted commas of quotation – thus “—”.]

“When energizing objects men pursue,”
 Then Lord knows what is writ by Lord knows who.
 “A modest Monologue you here survey,”
 Hissed from the theatre the “other day;”
 As if Sir FRETFUL⁴⁵ wrote “the slumberous” verse, 5
 And gave his son “the rubbish” to rehearse.
 “Yet at the thing you'd never be amazed,”
 Knew you the rumpus which the Author raised;
 “Nor even here your smiles would be repress,”
 Knew you these lines – the badness of the best, 10
 “Flame! fire! and flame!!” (words borrowed from LUCRETIVS);⁴⁶
 “Dread Metaphors which open wounds” like issues!
 “And sleeping pangs awake – and – but away” –
 (Confound me if I know what next to say).
 “Lo hope reviving re-expands her wings,” 15
 And Master G—— recites what Dr. Busby sings!”
 If mighty things with small we may compare,”
 (Translated from the Grammar for the fair!)
 Dramatic “Spirit drives a conquering car,”
 And burned poor Moscow like a tub of “tar”. 20
 “This spirit WELLINGTON has shewn in Spain,”
 To furnish Melodrames for Drury-lane;
 “Another MARLBOROUGH points to Blenheim's story,”
 And GEORGE and I will dramatise it for ye.

 “In arts and Sciences our Isle hath shone,” 25
 (This deep discovery is mine alone).
 “Oh! British Poesy, whose powers inspire”
 My verse – or I'm a fool – and Fame's a liar),

44: “Will you have the goodness to get this parody of a peculiar kind (for all the first lines are *Busby's* entire) inserted in several of the papers *correctly* & copied *correctly* (my hand) is difficult) particularly the M[orning] Chronicle. – Tell Mr. Perry I forgive him all he has said & may say against *my address*, but he will allow me to deal with the Doctor, ‘*Audi alterem partem*’ & not *betray* me” – B. to Murray, October 17[?] 1812 (BLJ II 227-8).

45: Refers to Sir Fretful Plagiary, the humbug playwright in Act I of Sheridan's *The Critic*.

46: Busby had published a much-mocked translation of Lucretius. Lady Oxford had agreed to subscribe, but had, on seeing a specimen, withdrawn her name (BLJ III 210-11). “The Doctor's classical translation was thus noticed in one of the newspapers of the day, in the column of births:– ‘Yesterday, at his house in Queen Anne-street, Dr. Busby of a still-born Lucretius’.”

“These we invoke – your Sister Arts implore,”
 With “smiles”, and “lyres”, and “pencils”, and much more. 30
 “These if we win, the Graces too we gain;”
Disgraces too! “inseparable train!”
 “Three who have stolen their witching airs from Cupid,”
 (You all know what I mean unless you’re stupid);
 “Harmonious throng”, that I have kept *in petto*,⁴⁷ 35
 Now to produce in a “divine *Sestetto*!!”⁴⁸
 “While Poesy,” with these delightful doxies,
 “Sustains her part” in all the “upper” boxes!
 “Thus lifted gloriously you’ll soar along,”
 Borne in the vast balloon of Busby’s song; 40
 “Shine in your farce, masque, scenery and play,”
 (For this last line GEORGE had a holiday).
 “Old Drury never, never soared so high,”
 So says the Manager, and so say I;
 “But hold, you say, this self complacent boast,” 45
 Is this the Poem which the public lost?
 “True – true – that lowers at once our mounting pride;”
 But lo! the Papers print what you deride.
 “’Tis ours to look on *you* – *you* hold the prize,”
 ’Tis *twenty guineas*, as they advertise! 50
 “A *double* blessing your rewards impart,”
 I wish I had them then with all my heart.
 “Our *twofold* feeling *owns* its twofold cause,”
 My son and I both beg for your applause,
 “When in your fostering beams you bid us live”, 55
 My next subscription list shall say how much you give!!

47: “in petto” – “in my chest”.

48: “Sestetto” – vocal sextet.

7: G.F.Busby: *Unalogue*

This is the piece which Busby's son tried to recite before he was thrown out of the theatre. It is often asserted (Lansdowne, Simpson), that part of the effort of Holland, Whitbread, Kinnaird, Byron and their associates was the establishment of a National Theatre at Drury Lane, to educate the public taste and provide a home for the best of Old British Drama and a showcase for the new: productions such as Sotheby's *Ivan* and Maturin's *Bertram* were, it is said, put on to this end. The cant of Busby jr. shows what self-deception such a scheme would have entailed, and would have had discouraging effect on the Management Committee had they seen their own aspirations so caricatured.

UNALOGUE

BY G.F.BUSBY, ESQ.⁴⁹

Ye social energies that link mankind
 In golden bands – as potent as refin'd!
 That bid the precious tear of pity start,
 Exalt the genius, purify the heart,
 Thrill with fine touch the chords of Campbell's lyre;⁵⁰ 5
 Nerve Valour's arm, and Wisdom's self inspire;
 Guide Albion's force beyond the Southern main,
 And plead so mightily for injur'd Spain,⁵¹
 Point each diviner impulse of the soul,
 And work in individual for the whole – 10
 Now be your power exerted – *Here* confest –
 Move in a British cause the British breast,
 And hail your grandest triumph and your best;
 They come! they come! above, below, around,
 Soft voices breathe, and sweet responses sound: 15
 Consenting murmurs melodize the air,
 Thrill through my ravish'd breast, and echo there!
 Britons, your candid audience we beseech –
 List to a Briton's plain, but honest speech:
 No Actor now laboriously essays 20
 To rouse your passions, and extort your praise:
 No mimic anguish bids your eyes o'erflow,
 No mimic raptures teach your breasts to glow:
 Such arts we scorn, superior ends demand
 Superior means, and *these* we now command; 25
 Keep Truth, keep Nature, full within our view –
 And once do justice to ourselves, and – you.⁵²
 Too long hath Native Genius been obscur'd,
 French *froth* and German *rant* too long endur'd;
 Too long, a vicious appetite to pamper, 30
 Britain's Thalia⁵³ suffer'd Farce to cramp her.
 Divine MELPOMENE⁵⁴ a transient ray
 Beam'd – in *Alfonso*⁵⁵ beam'd – and past away.

49: *The Genuine Rejected Addresses*, and so on, pp.31-2.

50: *Campbell's Lyre*: the poetry of Thomas Campbell (1777-1844); he wrote no plays.

51: At the time of the *Addresses* (1812), Spain was occupied by Napoleonic France.

52: This paragraph implies that Busby's theatre has no need of actors.

53: Thalia is the Muse of comedy

54: Melpomene is the Muse of Tragedy.

Then giddy Harlequin and senseless Clown,
 Rush'd forth; and bore all opposition down – 35
 Rush'd grinning Pantaloon, and motley Fool,
 Drove Sense away, and sway'd with mad mis-rule:
 Burlesque and Melo-Drame usurp'd the Stage,
 And wild monstrosity was all the rage!

Against these rude invaders now we make 40
 A firm decisive hand for Britain's sake –
 For Britain's sake – for shall the land that gave
 A SHAKSPEARE birth, become the Drama's grave?
 No! by his sacred manes now we swear,
 (And call on *you* the patriot task to share) 45
 To root these rank abuses from our scene,
 And show the world what England's stage hath been;
 To bid *contemporary* genius shine,
 Cast off his shroud, and reign by *right divine*:
 Dare in *his* cause and *your's* stand forth *alone*, 50
 Mingle his sacred interests with our own,
Here fight his battle, and *here* fix his throne!
 Thus, if with our's your breasts shall sympathize,
 Shall other SHAKSPEARES, OTWAYS, CONGREVES rise;
 Nature and Truth resume their ravish'd sway, 50
 And Wit, exulting, hail the new-born day.
 26, QUEEN Ann-street West,
 Cavendish-square.



Siddons and Kean

8: Byron: Epilogue to *The Merchant of Venice* Intended for a Private Theatrical

This was written in January 1815, the first month of Byron's marriage. No other record exists of the "Private Theatricals", either planned or carried out.

Hard is the life of those who live to please.⁵⁶
 What Player, or Poet, ever tastes of ease –
 Still doomed to suffer from the sneer or frown,
 The fools who roar, the mags who write them down?
 Say – to the best what bright rewards remain? 5
 An hour of glory – earned by years of pain.
 If such the lot of all in every age
 Who pen the scene, or stalk along the stage,
 And Garrick could not on his brightest day
 Send all that saw in smiles or tears away, 10
 What shall this more presumptuous aim excuse
 Who thus untaught – unstudied – woo the Muse,
 Who dare to strut an hour⁵⁷ to Shakespeare's strain
 With steps that never trod in Drury Lane?
 With voices never pitched on loftier boards 15
 Than those our humbler hope to please affords?
 Yet if to charm away the evening hour
 With all the wish to please – if not the power;
 If Shakespeare seem – though this admits a doubt –
 A treat, at least substantial as a *trout*; 20
 And these his characters howe'er pourtrayed,
 Less motley than our aim in Masquerade;
 If (though the "base comparison"⁵⁸ provoke)
 His wit almost eclipse a Dandy's joke,
 And each "conceit" Marlowe or Johnson shows 25
 May sparkle scarce less brilliant than a Beau's;
 Or should these solemn thoughts of loftier mien
 Where deeper passions shudder o'er the scene
 Through all our errors strike upon the heart,
 And Nature force you to forget our Art; 30
 Oh then confer on us the only Fame
 That harmless Pleasure asks in Friendship's name:
 Say you are pleased – and Shylock shall forget
 His bloodless knife, and foe's uncanceled debt,
 And Portia in her gentler triumph feel 35
 Less proud but not less grateful than O'Neill.⁵⁹

56: Echoes Johnson's *Prologue Spoken by Mr. Garrick at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury-Lane* (above), l.54: ... *we that live to please, must please to live.*

57: Echoes *Macbeth*, V v 24-7: *Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more ...*

58: Hal to Falstaff, *Henry IV I II iv 242 app:* ... *when thou hast tired thyself with base comparisons, hear me out.*

59: Eliza O'Neill, leading Drury Lane actress.

9: John Cam Hobhouse: Prologue to Charles Maturin's *Bertram*

Hobhouse wrote this prologue on Wednesday May 1st 1816, having been commissioned by Douglas Kinnaird. His diary for that date reads,

Occupied about a prologue for Drury Lane's new tragedy. Took six lines from Prologue to *Duke of Milan* – wrote it, according to Douglas Kinnaird's desire, in *forma pauperis*, and compared the new actress, Miss Somerville, to a sunflower!!!

He finished it and sent it off the next day.

Miss Somerville was to create the part of Maturin's heroine Imogine. See BLJ V 82 for Byron's insistence that she and only she deliver his *Monody on the Death of Sheridan*. In the event Kinnaird auditioned her, and decided she couldn't (see last item below).

Bertram or the Castle of St. Aldobrand, by Charles Maturin (1782-1824), was mounted on Byron's recommendation, and ran twenty-two consecutive nights – a great success. Hobhouse didn't tell Byron he had written the Prologue. His letter to Byron of May 26th 1816 (*Byron's Bulldog* 221-3), seems to attribute the prologue to a "Mr Upton", evidently a *nom-de-plume*, though there was an author called William Upton, referred to at BLJ VI 27n. Murray printed seven editions of *Bertram* in the first year. How impressed Byron was by the piece (see BLJ IV 336) may be judged by the name of the protagonist's hideaway:

... Count Bertram,
Whose vessel had from Manfredonia's coast
Been traced towards this realm ... (IV i)

On Manfredonia's wild and wooded shore
His desperate followers awed the regions round ... (IV i)

Hobhouse's account of the first night shows his involvement in the backstage life of Drury Lane. He writes,

Thursday May 9th 1816: Dined with Ellice, and went to his box to *Bertram*, in great fright. My Prologue did famously. Those in our box said, "If all does as well – 'twill do!" Well, the new actress [*Miss Somerville*] did decently, but whined dreadfully. I ran down to tell Kean to tell Miss Smith [*Kean's usual leading lady*] of this. Three acts got off nobly, and Kean's *Bertram* was divine – the fourth act laboured, but the fifth recovered. It was what they call complete success. The poetry indeed is very fine – it was thought to be Byron's, and these lines ...

Through black misfortune's gloom condemned to cope
With baffled effort and with blighted hope [*from Hobhouse's Prologue*]

... were thought to belong to him, and made a great shout. Lord Grey came into our box, and said the play, and Kean, were abominable. What does he mean? <supped> We saw Kean in the green room – he [*was*] discontented. Told me the play was written for the heroine [*that is, the heroine had the dominant role*]. Rae [*Alexander Rae, another Drury Lane star*] told me my lines were beautiful, and I like a fool persuaded myself to allow them to put my name to the Prologue. Murray publishes, and gives £350, ergo, charges 4s 6d, and they mangled my lines and I had some work in the first edition.

Supped with Mrs Hodges and heard bawdy talked by a Mrs Forbes ... Mrs Hodges is a pleasant woman [*Mrs Forbes and Mrs Hodges were actresses at Drury Lane*].

The premiere of *Bertram* was followed by the launch of a book still more famous:

Friday May 10th 1816: Murray's shop crowded for *Bertram*. Yesterday Caroline Lamb published a novel, *Glenarvon*; the hero is a monster and meant for Byron, the Princess of Madagascar Lady Holland – *The New Atalantis* over again. I called on the <bitch>, and was asked whether any harm had been done by her book.

Prologue to Charles Maturin's *Bertram*

Taught by your judgment, by your favour led,
 The grateful Stage restored her mighty dead.
 But not, when wits of ages past revive,
 Should living genius therefore cease to thrive.
 No! the same liberal zeal that fondly tries 5
 To save the Poet, though the mortal dies,
 Impartial welcomes each illustrious birth,
 And justly crowns contemporary worth.
 This night a Bard, who yet, alas! has known
 Of conscious merit but the pangs alone; 10
 Through dark misfortune's gleam condemned to cope
 With baffled effort and with blighted hope,
 Still dares to think one friendly voice shall cheer
 His sinking soul, and thinks to hail it – here!
 Fanned by the breath of praise, his spark of fame 15
 Still, still may glow, and burst into a flame.
 Nor yet let British candour mock the toil
 That rear'd the laurel on our sister soil;
 That soil to Fancy's gay luxuriance kind,
 That soil which teems with each aspiring mind, 20
 Rich in the fruits of glory's ripening sun –
 Nurse of the brave – the land of WELLINGTON.⁶⁰
 Here, too, this night – another candidate,
 Aspires to please; and trembles for her fate;⁶¹ –
 And, as the flower whose ever-constant gaze 25
 Turns to her Sun and woos the genial blaze,
 To those kind eyes our blushing suppliant bends,
 And courts the light that beams from smiling friends;
 Oh! calm the conflict of her hopes and fears,
 Nor stain her cheek with more than mimic tears. 30
 Since, then, alike each bold adventure sues
 The votary, and the handmaid of the Muse,
 Think that the same neglect – the same regard,
 Must sink, or save, the actress, and the bard.

60: Hobhouse, no friend to Wellington, bends a principle to get a huge roar of patriotic applause.

61: Miss Somerville.

10: Byron: Monody on the death of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan spoken at Drury-Lane Theatre

[Also edited on this website in *Poems of Byron's early Exile*]

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816: see illustrations at the top of this document), is one of the greatest comic playwrights in English. His plays *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* are constantly revived, and managements are only inhibited from mounting *The Critic* because of the size of its cast. He was also an important Whig politician and a brilliant orator, a theatrical impresario, wit, drunk, and arch-fornicator. A man who lived dangerously on principle. Not unlike Byron, who knew him well, was very fond of him, and often got drunk in his company.

Latterly when found drunk one night in the kennel and asked his name by the Watchman he answered – “Wilberforce” – ⁶²

In December 1813 Byron told the company at Holland House:

Whatever Sheridan has done or has chosen to do has been, *par excellence*, always the *best* of its kind. He has written the *best* comedy (*School for Scandal*) the *best* drama (in my mind, far before that St. Giles's lampoon, the *Beggar's Opera*), the best farce – (the *Critic* – it is only too good for a farce), and the best Address (*Monologue on Garrick*), and, to crown all, delivered the very best Oration (the famous *Begum Speech*) ever conceived or heard in this country.⁶³

Sheridan burst into tears on being told about Byron's words. He died, friendless and broke, early in 1816, and Byron was persuaded by Douglas Kinnaird to write a eulogy on him, which was recited at Drury Lane. By this time Byron was in Switzerland, and this poem is one of the first fruits of his exile. The boldness and originality of the piece contrasts with the conventional tameness of the 1812 Drury Lane Address.

The identification between the doomed Sheridan and the doomed Byron is clear. The Monody was a success. Kinnaird wrote to Byron,

Pall Mall Sep^r 13. 1816

My dear Byron,

Murray is to send you (frank'd to our Minister) some copies of the Monody – It goes off excellently – It is the source of monies to us, & reputation to yourself – you protested against M^{rs} Davison – Miss Somerville *could* not do it – I tried her at it – Kean had engagements in the country – On the whole M^{rs} D. speaks it better than we c^d have found any one else to do it – It will be spoken about 8 times – as often as we can play Sheridan's plays to tolerable houses –⁶⁴

62: BLJ IX 15.

63: BLJ III 239.

64: John Murray Archive / National Library of Scotland.

**Monody on the death of the Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan
spoken at Drury-Lane Theatre**

WHEN the last sunshine of expiring day
 In summer's twilight weeps itself away,
 Who hath not felt the softness of the hour
 Sink on the heart, as dew along the flower?
 With a pure feeling which absorbs and awes 5
 While Nature makes that melancholy pause,
 Her breathing moment on the bridge where Time
 Of light and darkness forms an arch sublime,
 Who hath not shared that calm, so still and deep,
 The voiceless thought which would not speak but weep, 10
 A holy concord – and a bright regret,
 A glorious sympathy with suns that set?
 'Tis not harsh sorrow – but a tenderer woe,
 Nameless, but dear to gentle hearts below,
 Felt without bitterness – but full and clear, 15
 A sweet dejection – a transparent tear
 Unmixed with worldly grief or selfish stain,
 Shed without shame – and secret without pain.
 Even as the tenderness that hour instils
 When Summer's day declines along the hills, 20
 So feels the fulness of our heart and eyes
 When all of Genius which can perish dies.
 A mighty Spirit is eclipsed – a Power
 Hath passed from day to darkness – to whose hour
 Of light no likeness is bequeathed – no name, 25
 Focus at once of all the rays of Fame!⁶⁵
 The flash of Wit – the bright Intelligence,
 The beam of Song – the blaze of Eloquence,
 Set with their Sun – but still have left behind
 The enduring produce of immortal Mind; 30
 Fruits of a genial morn, and glorious noon,
 A deathless part of him who died too soon.⁶⁶
 But small that portion of the wondrous whole,
 These sparkling segments of that circling soul,
 Which all embraced – and lightened over all, 35
 To cheer – to pierce – to please – or to appal.
 From the charmed council to the festive board,
 Of human feelings the unbounded lord;
 In whose acclaim the loftiest voices vied,
 The praised – the proud – who made his praise their pride: * 40
 When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
 Arose to Heaven in her appeal from man,
 His was the thunder, his the avenging rod,
 The wrath – the delegated voice of God!⁶⁷
 Which shook the nations through his lips – and blazed 45
 Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised.
 And here, oh! here, where yet all young and warm,
 The gay creations of his spirit charm,

⁶⁵: Contrast *Churchill's Grave*, last line.

⁶⁶: Sheridan was sixty-five when he died.

⁶⁷: B. refers to Sheridan's Begum speech at the trial of Warren Hastings, given in the Commons in June 1788.

The matchless dialogue – the deathless wit,
 Which knew not what it was to intermit; 50
 The glowing portraits, fresh from life, that bring
 Home to our hearts the truth from which they spring;
 These wondrous beings of his Fancy, wrought
 To fulness by the fiat of his thought,
 Here in their first abode you still may meet, 55
 Bright with the hues of his Promethean heat;⁶⁸
 A halo of the light of other days,
 Which still the splendour of its orb betrays.⁶⁹

* See Fox, Burke, and Pitt's eulogy on Mr. Sheridan's speech on the charges exhibited against Mr. Hastings in the House of Commons. Mr. Pitt entreated the House to adjourn, to give time for a calmer consideration of the question than could then occur after the immediate effect of that oration.

But should there be to whom the fatal blight
 Of failing Wisdom yields a base delight, 60
 Men who exult when minds of heavenly tone
 Jar in the music which was born their own,
 Still let them pause – Ah! little do they know
 That what to them seemed Vice might be but Woe.
 Hard is his fate on whom the public gaze 65
 Is fixed for ever to detract or praise;
 Repose denies her requiem to his name,
 And Folly loves the martyrdom of Fame.
 The secret enemy whose sleepless eye
 Stands sentinel – accuser – judge – and spy, 70
 The foe – the fool – the jealous – and the vain,
 The envious who but breathe in others' pain,
 Behold the host! delighting to deprave,
 Who track the steps of Glory to the grave,
 Watch every fault that daring Genius owes 75
 Half to the ardour which its birth bestows,
 Distort the troth, accumulate the lie,
 And pile the Pyramid of Calumny!
 These are his portion – but if joined to these
 Gaunt Poverty should league with deep Disease, 80
 If the high Spirit must forget to soar,
 And stoop to strive with Misery at the door,
 To soothe Indignity – and face to face
 Meet sordid Rage – and wrestle with Disgrace,
 To find in Hope but the renewed caress, 85
 The serpent-fold of further Faithlessness –
 If such may be the Ills which men assail,
 What marvel if at last the mightiest fail?
 Breasts to whom all the strength of feeling given
 Bear hearts electric-charged with fire from Heaven, 90
 Black with the rude collision inly torn,
 By clouds surrounded, and on whirlwinds borne,
 Driven o'er the lowering Atmosphere that nurst

⁶⁸: *Othello*, V ii 12-13: *I know not where is that Promethean heat / That can thy light relume.*

⁶⁹: B.'s idiom prevents him doing justice to Sheridan's genius for comedy and satire; one cannot be solemn about funny things and survive.

Thoughts which have turned to thunder – scorch – and burst.
 But far from us and from our mimic scene 95
 Such things should be – if such have ever been
 Ours be the gentler wish, the kinder task,
 To give the tribute Glory need not ask,
 To mourn the vanished beam – and add our mite
 Of praise in payment of a long delight. 100
 Ye Orators! whom yet our councils yield,
 Mourn for the veteran Hero of your field!
 The worthy rival of the wondrous *Three!* *
 Whose words were sparks of Immortality!
 Ye Bards! to whom the Drama's muse is dear, 105
 He was your Master – emulate him *here!*
 Ye men of wit and social eloquence!
 He was your Brother – bear his ashes hence!
 While Powers of Mind almost of boundless range,
 Complete in kind, as various in their change, 110
 While Eloquence – Wit – Poesy – and Mirth,
 That humbler Harmonist of care on Earth,
 Survive within our souls – while lives our sense
 Of pride in Merit's proud pre-eminence,
 Long shall we seek his likeness – long in vain, 115
 And turn to all of him which may remain,
 Sighing that Nature formed but one such man,
 And broke the die – in moulding Sheridan!

* Fox – Pitt – Burke.⁷⁰

70: Sheridan's rival orators Charles James Fox, William Pitt, and Edmund Burke.