

WOMEN IN BRITISH
ROMANTIC THEATRE

Drama, Performance, and Society, 1790–1840

EDITED BY

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CHAPTER I

*Baillie, Siddons, Larpent: gender, power, and politics
in the theatre of Romanticism*

Jeffrey N. Cox

I

While we have come a long way from the days when the canon of Romantic writers was restricted to six male poets and when the drama of the early nineteenth century was completely ignored, we are still lacking anything like an adequate account of the place of women in the drama and theatre of what we refer to as the Romantic period. Given the work of scholars such as Anne Mellor, Stuart Curran, Marlon Ross, Nanora Sweet, Jerome McGann, Paula Feldman, and Susan Wolfson, it has become impossible to conceive of a Romanticism that does not take into account Charlotte Smith or Mary Robinson or Felicia Hemans.¹ We also now have a strong sense of the importance of the drama to the period, thanks to the efforts of scholars such as Catherine Burroughs, Julie Carlson, Joseph Donohue, Terence Alan Hoagwood, Marjean Purinton, Alan Richardson, Michael Simpson, and Daniel Watkins.² We still, however, have little sense of the actual power women held in the theatre and drama of the day, with the scholarly work on women writers of the period focusing on the lyric and the novel along with the production of journals and travel writing and the scholarship on the drama retaining for the most part a focus on the male canon, with only Joanna Baillie – the subject of a fine study by Burroughs, of a forthcoming volume of essays edited by Thomas Crochunis and Janice Patten, and of a number of important essays – earning a place alongside Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley. Even when the presence of women in the theatre is acknowledged, their power is in some manner denied or displaced. For example, Ellen Donkin in *Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London 1776–1829* finally wants to argue that “playwriting was an intrinsically dangerous form for women” and that women playwrights gained power only through

men with the “power to confer legitimacy . . . predicated on the power to take it away.”³ Again, Carlson’s important *In the Theatre of Romanticism* explores the process whereby the theatre of the period was “feminized,” but it does so in order to analyze the reaction of male writers to this process. The power to control the theatre and the discourse about the theatre remains, in these accounts, firmly in male hands.

Despite much good work, we continue, it seems to me, to be unable to conceive of women writers at this time as possessing significant aesthetic, cultural, and institutional power. As Margaret J. M. Ezell has argued in *Writing Women’s Literary History*, traditional literary histories simply ignored women as insignificant, while revisionist, even feminist histories have – in creating a developmental model of women’s writing that wants to celebrate women’s cultural achievements in the Victorian and modern periods – also found early women writers to be either silenced or severely constrained by systems of patriarchal control.⁴ Where earlier histories simply did not believe that women possessed cultural power, feminist histories have remained rather suspicious of women who acquired power in earlier historical moments that are seen as uniformly dominated by the patriarchy. Suspicions run particularly high when women wield this power for ends we find less than desirable; such women may continue to be marginalized, or they may be rediscovered as somehow contributing to a feminist tradition. To put it bluntly, powerful conservative women pose a particular problem to both traditional and revisionist literary histories, as can be seen perhaps in the cases of Hannah More and Felicia Hemans, who were largely ignored in earlier histories and who must be somehow recouped as oppositional writers – despite their strongly conservative cultural presence – by more recent accounts. We will have a full picture of the drama and theatre of the period only when we come to recognize that women did possess considerable power in the theatre of Romanticism; but, as I turn to the troubled negotiations between three women and the power of the printed page, of the theatrical stage, and of the institutions surrounding the production of the drama, I will argue that this power – while its very existence is perhaps in itself liberatory when read in relation to gender politics – was most often exercised within the theatre of Romanticism, that is on the actual stage, in support of a conservative ideology, so that finally it is possible to see men engaged with the drama and theatre

of the day – Byron, Kean, Shelley, or Hunt – as offering, beyond their troubled and at times troubling views on gender issues, a more radical vision in (and of) the theatre than their female counterparts.

II

That there were many women involved in the drama and the theatre of the day is beyond doubt. If we consult David D. Mann and Susan Garland Mann's *Women Playwrights in England, Ireland, and Scotland 1660–1823*, we find more than ninety women writing dramas between 1789, one conventional starting-date for the Romantic period, and 1823.⁵ These women had varying success in reaching the stage and the page, with about a third of these writers having their plays both published and performed, a third having them only published, and a third seeing them staged but not printed. In 1792, for example, six women saw plays staged (with Hannah Brand having two plays performed at Drury Lane), and another five published unacted plays (Mann and Mann, p. 411). Of course, such numbers do not include plays – such as two by Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire – that exist only in manuscript and which may have been circulated among friends or performed in private theatricals. With most of these women writing several plays and with Joanna Baillie writing twenty-six and Jane Scott around fifty, there is a large body of dramatic work written by women.

While we are used to recognizing that key male figures of the period tried their hands at the drama, with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Southey, Byron, Keats, Shelley, and Hunt all attempting at least one play, we are perhaps not so aware of what a distinguished list of women writers turned to the drama: Joanna Baillie, Maria Edgeworth, Felicia Hemans, Mary Shelley, Ann Yearsley, Elizabeth Inchbald, Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan), Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Fanny Burney, Mary Russell Mitford, Hannah Cowley, Hannah More, and both Harriet and Sophia Lee. We need to remember that a woman writing plays at the dawn of the nineteenth century wrote within a long and established tradition of women's drama that went back through More – whose *Percy* (first presented at Covent Garden, 10 December 1777) was the most successful new tragedy of the later eighteenth century – and Cowley – one of the best comic writers of the 1780s – to such writers as Charlotte Lennox (1729?–1804), Frances Sheridan (1724–66), Eliza

Haywood (1693–1756), Catherine Trotter Cockburn (1679–1749), Susanna Centlivre (1669–1723), Mary Pix (1666–1709), Mary Delarivière Manley (1663–1724), and Aphra Behn (1640–89).

Women dramatists of the Romantic period wrote everything from traditional tragedies and five-act comedies to operas, interludes, farces, and melodramas. Quite a few of these plays were publishing successes, with, for example, Hannah More's *Sacred Dramas* achieving eighteen editions between 1782 and 1815. The works of women playwrights found a place on stages from Dublin, Edinburgh, Bath, and Norwich to London, including the major patent theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden. We find both figures such as the aristocratic Elizabeth Berkeley Craven, Margravine of Anspach, who wrote primarily for the wildly popular and apparently quite extraordinary private theatre she managed at Brandenburg House during the last two decades of the eighteenth century, and others such as Elizabeth Inchbald who made her living through the public patent theatres as an actress, author, and editor of an important drama series. While Donkin has shown how the percentage of plays by women remained at around only 10 percent of the total repertoire produced (and it had remained at that level up until the time she wrote her book),⁶ it is worth noting that women such as Baillie and Inchbald, Mitford, and Hemans, had better luck in getting their plays produced than did Wordsworth, Shelley, or Keats; the women writers fare badly only when they are compared with male writers – such as the Dibdins or the two Colmans – who year-in and year-out supplied entertainments for the London theatres, often ones under their control. Of the major male writers of the period, only Coleridge had a clear success with *Remorse* (1813); even the wildly popular Byron, who had direct ties to the management of Drury Lane, saw only one of his plays, *Marino Faliero*, produced during his lifetime, and it was a failure on stage. In fact, given that few new plays, particularly new tragedies and five-act comedies, entered the repertoire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and given that a large amount of time in the repertoire was devoted to Christmas pantomimes, oratorios, and Shakespeare, it is quite striking how many of these women actually did manage to reach the stage.

At the center of this impressive gathering of women dramatists was Joanna Baillie; Elizabeth Inchbald may have had more success on stage, Jane Scott may have controlled a theatre, and Hannah

More may have sold more volumes, but Baillie was the most respected playwright, male or female, of the Romantic era. While Baillie has now, with Burroughs's book and other scholarly commentary, achieved something like canonical status, it is still important to stress her literary and cultural power in the face of Donkin's impressive argument that she was finally a failure and that she failed because of gender oppression.⁷ The author of more than twenty-five plays, a large body of verse, and a tract on the New Testament, Baillie during her lifetime was regarded as a key figure in what we see as the age of Wordsworth and Byron. Her first volume of *A Series of Plays: in which it is attempted to delineate the stronger passions of the mind each passion being the subject of a tragedy and a comedy* (usually referred to as the *Plays on the Passions*) went through five editions in the first six years following its publication in 1798; there were more than twenty-five reviews, many more than there were of volumes by Keats or Shelley. Seven of her plays were staged during her lifetime, the most important of them – *De Monfort* – being seen in London, Bath, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Philadelphia, and New York⁸ and attracting the acting skills of, first, Kemble and Siddons and later of Kean; while *De Monfort* is often seen as a failure for Kemble, it ran for eight nights during its initial run – a more than respectable run for a new tragedy at the time – and it continued in Kemble's repertoire, being offered even in his farewell tour in 1817. Her "Introductory Discourse" to the first volume of the *Plays on the Passions* has often been compared to Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads*; as Catherine Burroughs has shown, it is perhaps the most distinguished piece of a large body of women's theatre theory penned during the period.⁹ In 1851, the year of her death, Baillie issued *The Dramatic and Poetic Works of Joanna Baillie, Complete in One Volume*, her "great monster book," as she called it, running to more than 800 pages.¹⁰

While Donkin emphasizes the negative reviews of Baillie's work – and particularly those by the *Edinburgh Review*'s Francis Jeffrey – Baillie for the most part received favorable notices, though there were certainly questions raised about her decision to devote plays to individual passions. For example, the *Poetical Register* for 1804 offered this praise: "Among the modern writers of Tragedy the most honourable place must indubitably be awarded to Miss Baillie." The *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* (January 1818) argued that she ranks as a dramatist behind only Shakespeare. Scott agreed,

praising her in *Marmion* as “the bold enchantress” who when (in the first volume of the *Plays on the Passions*) she chants of “Montfort’s [*sic*] hate and Basil’s love” convinces the swans of Avon that “their own Shakespeare lived again” (“Introduction to Canto Third,” lines 103, 107–10). Byron found her to be “our only dramatist since Otway and Southerne.”¹¹ She also received the praise of women, with Anna Laetitia Barbauld, for example, saluting her in *England in Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812) as “loved Joanna” through whose power we can see “The tragic Muse resume her just controul” (lines 101, 109). Mary Russell Mitford, herself a successful dramatist, found Baillie possessing what we, adapting Keats, might see as a Shakespearean “negative capability,” arguing that Baillie’s tragedies “have a boldness and grasp of mind, a firmness of hand, and resonance of cadence, that scarcely seem within the reach of a female writer; while the tenderness and sweetness of her heroines – the grace of the love-scenes – and the trembling outgushings of sensibility, as in *Orra* (1812), for instance, in the fine tragedy on ‘Fear’ – would seem exclusively feminine, if we did not know that a true dramatist – as Shakespeare or Fletcher – has the wonderful power of throwing himself, mind and body, into the character that he portrays.”¹² Elizabeth Inchbald, in the comments included with *De Monfort* in her series *The British Theatre* (1808), argues that “Amongst the many female writers of this and other nations, how few have arrived at the elevated character of a woman of genius! The authoress of ‘De Monfort’ received that rare distinction, upon this her first publication” (vol. xxiv: 3). By the time Baillie’s last volume of plays was published in 1836, after a long hiatus in her playwriting activity, her reputation was such that *Fraser’s Magazine* (13: 236) would gush, “Had we heard that a MS. play of Shakespeare’s, or an early, but missing novel of Scott’s, had been discovered, and was already in the press, the information could not have been more welcome”; even her old nemesis the *Edinburgh Review* now spoke of her as a “highly gifted authoress” (119 [April 1836]: 336). *Blackwood’s* (16 [1824]: 162), hardly a feminist enclave, would offer “our tribute of admiration to one, who, in point of genius, is inferior to no individual on the rolls of modern celebrity,” placing Baillie beyond even Wordsworth or Byron.

Baillie, then, possessed considerable cultural power during her day. While part of this power is aesthetic or textual – people were made to think by her plays, they were moved by them, and they

wondered at the beauty and simplicity of her verse – it is, of course, also social and institutional – that is, her power was dependent upon the social circulation of her texts, upon the historical contexts in which they appeared. What is interesting about Baillie is that her cultural power does not arise – as does that of the women we have found most important during the period such as Mary Wollstonecraft or even Mary Shelley – from a marginalized position.

Praised by major writers of the day, promoted in the theatre by Kemble and Siddons, Scott, Byron, and Kean, connected through family and friendships with many of the most important figures in literature, science, and politics, Baillie stood firmly within a series of cultural and social elites. Her father had risen to be Professor of Divinity at the University of Glasgow. When he died, Baillie's maternal uncle, the famous anatomist William Hunter, took care of the family, including overseeing the training of her brother Matthew, who also pursued medicine after receiving a fellowship at Balliol College, Oxford. In 1791 Matthew married Sophia Denman, sister of Lord Chief Justice Denman. Through her aunt, Mrs. Hunter, Baillie was introduced into a number of key literary and social circles in London, meeting Samuel Rogers, the Barbaulds, William Sotheby, and Henry Mackenzie, among others. She came to know Wordsworth, with whom she discussed politics in 1812, agreeing with him that the press should be condemned for creating dissension and lamenting the “utter extinction of all love for the royal family, and the very slight attachment remaining to the constitution itself.”¹³ One of her deepest friendships was with Sir Walter Scott, who admired her and supported her throughout his life. Baillie was also a key figure in a number of female circles, being close to Barbauld, Lucy Aikin, Mary Berry, Maria Edgeworth, and Harriet Martineau; she supported dramatic efforts by other women writers, including Felicia Hemans, Barbarina Wilmot, whose *Ina* was staged at Drury Lane in 1815, and the young Catherine Moody Gore, who became a key playwright in the 1830s. It comes as no surprise that when Baillie wished to put together an anthology of poetry – her *Collection of Poems, chiefly manuscript, and from living authors* (1823) published to benefit a friend – she was able to secure pieces from such friends and acquaintances as Scott, Wordsworth, Southey, Rogers, Hemans, Barbauld, Anna Maria Porter, Mrs. Grant of Langan, and Mrs. John Hunter and to acquire a long subscription list that begins with the royal family.

A small piece of textual history provides a sense of Baillie's cultural

position. When Kemble came to perform Baillie's *De Monfort* (1798), he altered the text himself, changes reflected in the licensing manuscript sent to the Examiner of Plays, John Larpent.¹⁴ This manuscript also contains the unpublished prologue and epilogue to the play: the first was written by Francis North, himself a playwright, a patron of the drama, and, as the fourth Earl of Guilford, a key contributor to the rebuilding of Covent Garden after it burned down in 1808; the epilogue came from the hand of the Duchess of Devonshire, one of the rulers of the social world who wrote some interesting verse and left two plays in manuscript. When we read contemporary accounts of the staging of Baillie's play, they describe certain scenes as being performed differently than they are recorded in either Larpent's licensing manuscript or the first edition of 1798. We find the correct passages, however, in another manuscript,¹⁵ this one copied out by the poet Thomas Campbell – already famous for his *Pleasures of Hope* – and given to Sarah Siddons, who has inscribed it, “this manuscript is invaluable,” and who has added various notes of her own; Donkin suggests Siddons used this manuscript when offering private readings of the play for both fund-raisers and social gatherings. The text of *De Monfort* fully considered, then, is not just an aesthetic object but a record of the powerful people who supported her work: the text bears the traces of the theatrical, literary, and social circles in which Baillie and her work circulated.¹⁶

Given that we tend to accept the Romantic ideology of the poet as outsider and then apply it with a vengeance to female authors, we have difficulty in seeing a figure such as Baillie as vital to a tradition of women's writing. Baillie can appear to have become what Mary Poovey has called the “proper lady,”¹⁷ shaped and stunted by male authority. When Wordsworth says of her, “If I had to present any one to a foreigner as a model of an English gentlewoman, it would be Joanna Baillie,”¹⁸ or again when we are told “her manners are those of a well-bred woman. She has none of the unpleasant airs too common to literary ladies,”¹⁹ we wonder whether we are not dealing with a woman who has allowed herself to be co-opted by the roles provided by a patriarchal order. Such an estimate would, I feel, be unfair. Marjean Purinton and Anne Mellor,²⁰ among others, have shown how Baillie can be read as questioning women's roles. She certainly refused the standard role of a wife and mother, remaining single and in the company of women all of her life; as we have seen, she was very much a part of a network of women writers.

We need to be a little more careful in placing a figure such as Baillie in relation to cultural, social, and ideological debates. Baillie comes out fairly well from our point of view when we examine her representation of gender issues (or when we note that she takes up the issue of slavery in *Rayner* [1804]), but this does not by any means make her as radical as was, say, Wollstonecraft. There is finally something troubling in our insistence on reading and judging women writers primarily in relation to gender issues. Thus, we need to see that, while Baillie may not have been trapped by gendered roles, while in her works she may have queried these roles, she was certainly an ally of ugly reactionary social and political forces, and her works could be praised and used by these forces. We need to remember her ties to the arch-Tory Sir Walter Scott, with whom she seems to have shared political views, perhaps embodied in her gift to him of a gold ring containing hairs taken from the head of Charles I and inscribed “Remember”: this recollection of a king beheaded by revolutionary forces is less, I think, a sign of some shared Romanticized Jacobinism than of a common anti-Jacobinism, also seen when she connected with Wordsworth by condemning the press and praising George III. When we note, as I have done, that Scott praised Baillie in one of the prologues to *Marmion*, we also have to remember that one function of these verse prefaces was to summon up and to support the world of Tory culture and power.²¹ When she collected poems for her 1823 volume, she sought them from conservatives Scott, Wordsworth, and Southey, not from her one-time Hampstead neighbors Hunt and Keats, part of the circle of radical London writers; the lack of connection between Baillie and the leader of the literary left, Hunt – even though they lived quite near one another and seemed to have known everyone else, including a number of mutual friends – strikes me as particularly telling. Baillie’s poem on the death of Scott includes what was seen by Lucy Aikin as a gratuitous attack on another radical poet, Byron, as Scott is found uniting the nation, both “The crowned monarch and the simple hind,” while Byron is criticized for using “perverse skill” to display “Wild, maniac, selfish fiends to be admired, / As heroes with sublimest ardour fired.”²²

Of course, part of Baillie’s project in this poem is to establish Scott (and perhaps indirectly herself) as the truly great writer of Scottish descent, rather than Byron. We can get a sense of how troubling the deployment of Baillie’s cultural power can be if we turn briefly to her play most connected with Scotland, *The Family Legend* (1810),

which she called her “Highland Play” (*Works*, p. 480) and which treats the struggles between the Campbells and the Macleans and the legend of “the lady rock.” The story behind the play was, Baillie tells us, recommended to her by Mrs. Damer in 1805 (*Works*, p. 479), but the inspiration may have come from an 1808 visit Baillie made with her sister to Scotland, as they traveled from the Western Highlands, to Glasgow and Edinburgh and into the northern Highlands before returning through the Lake District.²³ Shortly before her visit, one of the worst and most brutal of the Highland Clearances – during which the land was deliberately cleared of people to make room for Cheviot sheep – began in Sutherland, provoking dissent and ultimately riots (the Kildonan and Assynt riots of 1813).²⁴ Baillie traveled through a countryside – her native land – torn by conflict, but it was the scenery, not the social upheaval, that seems to have registered with her, as the Falls of Moness, not the collapse of Highland culture, moved her to tears.

In 1810, when economic woes – falling wages and bankruptcies brought about by Napoleon’s and England’s trade policies – added to Scotland’s other problems, *The Family Legend* was staged in Edinburgh.²⁵ We again see in this performance Baillie’s status as a consummate insider. The production was arranged and supervised by Scott, who also supplied the prologue. The epilogue was written by Scotland’s “Man of Feeling,” Henry Mackenzie, as Scott wanted to be sure that the evening would be “entirely of Scotch manufacture” in order to offer “every chance of succeeding before a national audience.”²⁶ Still, fearing that audience, Scott and Henry Siddons – son of Sarah Siddons and recently named manager of the Edinburgh theatre – altered the play; for example, “Knowing the strong feelings of pride and clanship which had existed amongst Highlanders,” Scott substituted fictitious clan names.²⁷ However, Scott was not always so sensitive to the feelings of Highlanders; in order to supplement a scene in which troops gathered, “I got,” he told the author, “my brother John’s Highland recruiting party to join the action”²⁸ – that is, he put on stage one of the groups of men who, since the passage of the extremely unpopular Scottish Militia Act of 1797, had been used to coerce the Highland poor into the army, with (as one historian puts it) “the great Highland landlords” working “to break the monopoly of the German flesh-brokers” by raising regiment after regiment.²⁹

Whatever Baillie’s intentions (though she certainly never disputed

Scott's efforts), Scott claimed that the production of the play was designed to inspire national pride. At the very least, the narrower pride of the Edinburgh establishment was aroused. As one reviewer said, "Applause was conferred almost entirely to those parts in which high compliments were paid to the Scotch; the inhabitants of Edinburgh entirely forgot that there was nothing more ludicrous than that people should applaud praise given to themselves" (*Correspondent*, 12 March 1810); looking back on the production in 1851, the *Dublin University Magazine* noted, "The Edinburgh public were pleased and flattered by a national story."³⁰ Perhaps the most obvious flattery came in Mackensie's epilogue, where present-day Scotland was praised in comparison not only to its "ruder" past when "Our moody lords . . . drove men's herds, and burnt their houses" but also to France with its "free code" of sexual morality and even to England which, Mackensie fears, is sometimes misled by France in matters sexual and political. Scotland, however, it is hoped "May long this current of the times withstand; / . . . here, in purity and honour bred, / Shall love and duty wreath the nuptial bed." Hearing these lines, in which Scotland is seen as the bastion of traditional social, political, and family values, one might almost forget that the play one has just watched is about a Scots husband who wrongfully accuses his wife and leaves her to perish upon an exposed rock. The audience, praising itself for leaving behind a rude past when houses were burned and herds were driven away, could forget that they lived in a time when houses were burned and *people* were driven away to make room for herds of sheep. This "Highland Play" allowed its audience to delight in a myth of the Highlands while ignoring the destruction of the actual Highlands that they and the government they supported were undertaking. Whatever the power of the play's text, in context it was put to the service of the Edinburgh Tories, and that finally means that any nationalism evoked here be directed to the United Kingdom and against England's enemy, revolutionary France:³¹

Here, where "Rome's eagles found unvanquish'd foes,"
The Gallic vulture fearlessly oppose,
Chase from this favour'd isle, with baffled wing,
Bless'd in its good old laws, old manners, and old King.³²

Such a speech stands as the antithesis to a poem such as Shelley's "England in 1819," with its radical turn against "Golden and

sanguine laws which tempt and slay” and “An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king” (lines 10, 1).

If we are tempted to see Mackensie and Scott distorting Baillie’s message, we need only turn to the final speech of *The Family Legend* where the Earl of Argyll – the head of a family that, by Baillie’s day, was known for its pro-union efforts (even fighting on the side of the English at Culloden) – decries “that men / In blood so near, in country, and in valour, / Should spend in petty broils their manly strength, / That might, united for the public weal, / On foreign foes such noble service do!”; he looks forward to the time when the Highlanders will be “marshall’d forth / To meet in foreign climes their country’s foes,” when these often feared and even hated Highlanders will march through English cities, and crowds will praise “our hardy brothers of the north” as defenders of the “rights and freedom of our native land” (v, iv; *Works*, p. 507). The struggles of Scotland’s past between Highlander clans, the struggles of the preceding century between Jacobite Scotland and Hanoverian England, the current tensions between the Highlands and England with its Tory Scottish supporters must all be put aside to battle the “foreign” threat, revolutionary France. Nor were such appeals without force, since out of a population of 300,000 Highlanders it is estimated 74,000 fought in the wars against France.³³ With this and other plays serving such ideological ends, Baillie could be praised by the *Quarterly Review* (co-founded by Scott) and be used by *Blackwood’s* (16 [August 1824]) as it attacked England’s “internal enemies” – Baillie’s radical Hampstead neighbors of the Cockney School. It is not surprising that the one dissenting note in the general praise for Baillie came from Francis Jeffrey, editor of the liberal *Edinburgh Review* and the lawyer in 1812 for Scots weavers seeking protection against massive wage reductions during the economic collapse of the day.

III

Baillie called her “our tragic queen” whose “sovereign sway was o’er the human mind; / And in the triumph of that witching hour, / Thy lofty bearing well became thy power.”³⁴ If Baillie can represent the power of women on the page, no one better represented that power on the stage than Sarah Siddons. Siddons was the premier actress in a period of great actresses. Theatregoers could see Jane Powell, who

often played in supporting roles to Mrs. Siddons but who was also compared with her as an actress of “heavy” parts; Elizabeth Farren, known for her portrayal of “fine ladies,” who left the stage to become the Countess of Derby, after being the Count’s mistress for many years; Dorothy Jordan, perhaps the greatest comedienne of the day and the long-time mistress of the Duke of Clarence; Eliza O’Neill, who in the second decade of the nineteenth century was seen by many as Mrs. Siddons’s successor; Mary Robinson, who of course later became a major writer, but who first as Perdita bewitched the Prince of Wales, her Florizel; and many others – the great singer Angelica Catalani who figured in the “Old Price” riots, Anna Maria Crouch, Fanny Kemble, Elizabeth Inchbald, Harriett Litchfield . . .³⁵ Even among this illustrious company, however, Mrs. Siddons stood out. While the years during which she acted are usually named for her brother as the “Kemble Era” when people practiced the “Kemble religion,” an era that is seen as giving way to the “Age of Kean,” it would be more accurate to call the entire period the “Siddons Epoch,” for it is she who signaled a change in acting styles while holding on to a huge audience. Leigh Hunt, in a review taking up the acting skills of Kemble, Elliston, and Young in *Macbeth*, turns from the major male actors of the day to proclaim, “There is but one great tragedian living, and that is Mrs. Siddons.”³⁶ Hazlitt put it even more simply: “She was Tragedy personified.”³⁷

Siddons had enormous power on stage, as the “Siddonsmania” that raged in late eighteenth-century England attests. Hazlitt said of her, “Power was seated on her brow, passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine.”³⁸ Her biographer, the playwright James Boaden, recalls that watching her, the audience “knew all the luxury of grief; but the nerves of many a gentle being gave way before the intensity of such appeals, and fainting fits long and frequently alarmed the decorum of the house.”³⁹ John Waldie, who left us ninety-three journal volumes detailing his experiences in the theatre, repeatedly went to see Mrs. Siddons, always commenting that he “never was so affected” (19 January 1799), that the ways she acts “exceeds all description” (4 July 1799), that she “surpassed in acting all that I have yet seen” (6 July 1799); like Boaden, he notes that members of the audience had to be carried from the theatre after collapsing under the strain of watching Siddons act (5 July 1799).⁴⁰ Even the Examiner of Plays’ wife, Anna Margaretta Larpent, who

claimed in her journal that “Acting revolts in women against female Delicacy” (12 March 1790), went to see Sarah Siddons as Lady Randolph in Home’s *Douglas* and was overwhelmed by her (24 April 1792).⁴¹ Having unmatched power on stage – “No tragic actress ever had such absolute dominion over audience,” as one admirer tellingly put it⁴² – Sarah Siddons was the “Queen of the stage” or, as Baillie put it, the “Tragic Queen.”

Julie Carlson has argued that Siddons’s centrality to the theatre of the day came to suggest that the stage was a feminized realm that needed to be resisted by male writers who thus took Shakespeare and their own plays into the closet.⁴³ However, as the regal language surrounding Siddons suggests, there may have been other reasons for a Hazlitt in his criticism or a Shelley in his plays to resist Siddons. She could, for example, be placed in much the same political company as Baillie, with whom she was friends. We could note that, at the time of the Old Price Riots, when her brother John Philip Kemble opened the rebuilt Covent Garden to protests over higher prices and new boxes, she and her brother were attacked for their aristocratic connections.⁴⁴ A Gillray engraving, *Theatrical Mendicants, relieved*, from 15 January 1808 shows Mrs. Siddons and her brothers Charles and Philip begging at the door of the Duke of Northumberland who gives them a gift of £10,000; Siddons carries a bag overflowing with donations from various other nobles. (We might also remember in this context that Siddons had, for a long time, fought the public impression that she was personally stingy, “Lady Sarah Save-all” as she was sometimes called. She had to weather several outbreaks of popular disapproval and explain herself to her audiences.) Michael Simpson has shown how Kemble came to be seen as a “patrician” or “regal” actor as opposed to the “plebeian” and “radical” Edmund Kean, with this contrast taking on decidedly political overtones.⁴⁵ Kemble was attacked during the Old Price Riots as “King John” and the “King of the Stage” by members of the audience who would also join in political demonstrations with signs calling for “Reform” and “No King.” The queenly Mrs. Siddons could be seen taking on a political valence very similar to that of her brother. The support for Kemble and Siddons by the Tory press was noted by their opponents during the Old Price Riots, and the Kemble family was seen as generally in sympathy with Pitt and the Tories despite their early and long-term theatrical ties to Sheridan (and we might note here, again, the ties between the Tory

Scott and Mrs. Siddons's son Henry in Edinburgh that not only resulted in the production of Baillie's *Family Legend* but also provided a northern outpost for the work of the Kemble clan).

It is not surprising that Siddons, as "queen" of the London stage, would have sympathies with a real queen: when Covent Garden burned down, Siddons wrote to a friend that her greatest loss was a "piece of lace which had been a toilette of the poor Queen of France."⁴⁶ Siddons might have played the part of the Marie Antoinette of conservative imaginings, had the Examiner of Plays, John Larpent, allowed any play – even a conservative one – about the French Revolution to reach the stage.⁴⁷ After all, as Christopher Reid has shown, Burke created his famous image of the French Queen with Mrs. Siddons in mind.⁴⁸ According to Burke, Marie Antoinette was to be seen as an innocent wife and mother, set upon by a raging mob, and Siddons was most renowned for her portrayals of abandoned and wronged wives, such as the long-suffering Belvidera in Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*, the unjustly accused Lady Randolph in Home's *Douglas*, Calista who is betrothed against her will in Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, and Mrs. Beverly, the abused wife of a gambler, in Moore's *The Gamester*. As these parts suggest, Siddons's women are generally passive, offering emotional reaction rather than action. She even played Lady Macbeth not as an "unsexed" harpy but, as her notes to the play indicate, as a woman "most captivating to the other sex, – fair, feminine, nay perhaps even fragile – . . . captivating in feminine loveliness."⁴⁹ Lady Macbeth here does not control her husband through force of will, superior intellect, or sheer ruthlessness but by becoming a passive sex object, captivating but captive to the male gaze. Siddons's power on stage seems to come from embodying women whose power is passive, or, to put it another way, her power seems to arise with her ability to portray women whose sexual power is evident but contained. Where Julie Carlson sees male Romantic writers working to contain the female power of Siddons, I would argue that Siddons herself already embodied an attempt to neutralize women's sexual power. It is, perhaps, worth noting that in an era of famous theatrical mistresses – I have already mentioned Eliza Farren, Dora Jordan, and "Perdita" Robinson – Mrs. Siddons fought to maintain an image of strict sexual morality, even during the confused Galindo affair when she came under attack for alleged sexual impropriety. While we often assume that women who entered the theatre at the time were

necessarily eroticized, Mrs. Siddons found her power in rejecting a sexualized identity. As Paula Backscheider argues, Siddons resisted “confinement in the ‘symbolic space’ reserved for women,” that of “love interest.”⁵⁰ If Burke worked to convert Marie Antoinette – accused of adultery, lesbianism, and incest – into a beauty “full of life, and splendor, and joy” and embodying “lofty sentiments” and the “dignity of a Roman matron,” if he wanted to depict the Queen of France accused of being a modern Lady Macbeth manipulating her husband as a dutiful wife and mother who, when Versailles is attacked, “escaped to seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband,”⁵¹ then Siddons wanted to convert the actress as sexual suspect, to use Kristina Straub’s phrase,⁵² into a dauntingly moral Queen Mother, and she wanted to offer on stage women whose power came not through their own actions but through provoking action from desiring men. The only acts left to women – too virtuous to be stained by positive deeds – were suffering and dying. Of course, audiences found these images of virtue in distress powerfully affecting, as indicated again by the “many accidents of persons falling into fits” reported by the theatrical diarist John Genest about Siddons’s performances.⁵³ Siddons’s power as a woman on stage, ironically, arose from depicting women as lacking the power to act, and the sign of that power was her ability to overwhelm – to render passive, unconscious – her audience, and particularly the women in it. Whatever we finally determine about Siddons’s own views on the distribution of political power, whatever we feel about the male reaction to her power on the stage, we have to see that her theatrical power was won through rendering women, on stage and off, passive.

IV

There is no doubting that women acquired power during the Romantic period as dramatists and actresses. While they would seem to have less institutional power, here too women had more of a presence than we might assume. Catherine Burroughs in *Closet Stages* has reminded us of the efforts of women as theorists of the theatre, as they took on a role often thought occupied by men. Jacky Bratton has shown how, beyond the well-known instance of Elizabeth Vestris’s role as a theatrical manager, we find Jane Scott managing the Sans Pareil (later the Adelphi) and putting on many of her own plays.⁵⁴ Adrienne Scullion tells us that in the Scotland left behind by

Joanna Baillie and theatrically colonized by Sarah Siddons's son, Henry Siddons, women held important managerial roles, from Sarah Ward, manager of the first regular theatre in Edinburgh, through Jessie Jackson, "prominent in operating the Edinburgh Theatre Royal in the first decade of the nineteenth century," to Harriet Murray (Mrs. Henry Siddons), joint lessee of the theatre with her husband and then her brother, W. H. Murray.⁵⁵ In London, women may not have had comparable roles in the patent theatres, but they did have considerable control over private theatricals and even private theatres. Of the one and a half dozen or so sites for private theatricals noted by Allardyce Nicoll, about one-third seem to have been run by women.⁵⁶ For example, Elizabeth Farren conducted the amateur performances put on by the Duke of Richmond at his Whitehall residence in the 1780s. I have already mentioned Elizabeth Berkeley Craven, Margravine of Anspach, who oversaw the private performances at her Brandenburg House, where she was dramatist, composer, actress, and director. Mary Champion de Crespigny ran a theatre at Camberwell in the 1790s where Mariana Starke, for example, saw several of her plays performed. Women could, of course, also be found in the wardrobe room and in the orchestra pit, organizing dances and composing music; they were very much present in the theatre. To take one more example: Elizabeth Inchbald, as playwright and actress and as a successful negotiator for herself with several theatre managers, had enough clout to arbitrate Kemble's share in Covent Garden, and she also had considerable institutional power as the editor of Longman's important series, *The British Theatre* (1806–08).

The woman who had the most institutional power, however, was neither an actress nor a dramatist nor a member of any theatrical house. She was Anna Margareta Larpent, the wife of John Larpent, the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays from 1778 to 1824.⁵⁷ It was to Larpent that theatres had to send their plays to be licensed before they could be performed, the stage being subject to prior censorship, unlike the press.

Anna Margareta Porter became Larpent's second wife on 25 April 1782. She was the daughter of a diplomat, Sir James Porter, and through her family's connections came to meet such key figures as Johnson and Pitt. Larpent (1741–1824) was the son of a chief clerk of the Foreign Office, and he himself rose in the Foreign Office to become a waiter in ordinary to the Lord Chamberlain and a groom

of the privy chamber of George III. While there is little known about the couple from external sources, sixteen volumes of Mrs. Larpent's daily journals are held at the Huntington Library (HM 31201). They reveal her to be very much engaged by the drama. While she often preferred sermons, and she also made a serious study of the French Revolution, she was an avid reader of plays, consuming seventy in the eight years prior to her marriage;⁵⁸ she continued to read a large number of plays, as indicated, for example, by a note for April of 1799 to acquire a copy of Baillie's *Plays on the Passions* as a book she must read. She was a frequent theatregoer, enjoying performances by Mrs. Siddons, as we have seen, and by other major stage figures of the day. She attended the patent theatres – seeing Siddons at Drury Lane (24 April 1792), for example, or viewing Inchbald's adaptation of Kotzebue as *Lovers' Vows* (11 January 1799) and Thomas Morton's *Speed the Plough* (3 April 1800) at Covent Garden – and she also witnessed private theatricals such as those offered by Mrs. Crespigny at Camberwell, where she saw Mariana Starke's (now lost) *The British Orphan* (7 April 1790).

Anna Larpent also seems to have been directly involved in the work of her husband as Examiner of Plays. Mr. Larpent adopted the habit of bringing home to read the manuscripts submitted to him for licensing; he also kept all the manuscripts at his home rather than in his office. Many evenings, we are told, Mr. Larpent “read aloud a MSS,” with other family members taking turns at giving voice to these new plays as well. These readings often occur on the day of or the day before Larpent signs the license, so we can assume he consulted his wife on his decisions.⁵⁹ She often records in her journal her reactions to plays, as when they read “de Montfort [*sic*] a new Tragedy being one of those written as a Series on the passions which is altering for the Stage. The language is very poetic the character forced. The Scene Shd. have been in Italy. The terrific is I think too disgusting for representation” (3 April 1800). We know she was involved in her husband's work, for she read and judged herself all of the Italian operas submitted. There is a manuscript of a drama, “The Virgin of the Sun,”⁶⁰ which is marked “Approved AML,” an indication that she at times acted as examiner of English plays as well. There is evidence that as Mr. Larpent grew older, and particularly at times when he was ill, Mrs. Larpent took over his duties. Moreover, the comments in her journal often supply the justification for the suppression of a play, a justification her husband

(unlike, say, his counterpart in Paris) was not required to give. For example, in her notes on Edmund John Eyre's *Death of the Queen of France; or, The Maid of Normandy* (1794), we find some explanation of why this play, which offers a sympathetic, Burkean portrait of Marie Antoinette, was twice denied a license by a government at war with France: she writes, it is as "devoid of poetry & judgment as it can be & highly improper just now were it otherwise" (14 April 1794), as she offers a political justification for the play's suppression beyond its aesthetic defects. Again, she also argues that Richard Cumberland's *Richard the Second* should be suppressed because, as she puts it, "it appears extremely unfit for representation at a time" – we are in December of 1792 – when "ye Country is full of Alarm" since the "Story [is] of Wat Tyler the killing of the Tax Gatherer & very ill judged" (8 December 1792). As was noted earlier, the office of the Examiner of Plays worked to keep off the stage any reference to the "alarms" of the day, both those in France and those closer to home. Mrs. Larpent agreed with her husband that, during the age of democratic revolutions, politics had to be kept off the stage: as one censored author said of the theatre under Larpent's control, "In that paradise . . . politics [is] the forbidden fruit, lest the people's eyes should be opened and they become as gods knowing good and evil."⁶¹ The examiner following Larpent, the playwright George Colman the Younger, explained to the Select Committee examining the laws affecting dramatic literature in 1832 that the examiner should ban "anything that may be so allusive to the times as to be applied to the existing moment, and which is likely to be inflammatory."⁶² Bulwer-Lytton describes the result of such censorship: "To see our modern plays, you would imagine there were no politicians among us."⁶³ Mrs. Larpent, in concert with her husband, used her power to insure that the theatre did not unleash within a crowded theatre the powerful political ideas and ideals of the French Revolution.

Claire Miller Colombo, in the first full essay on Mrs. Larpent, has argued that Mrs. Larpent's diary-writing, while in some sense informed by the institution of censorship in which her husband was so central, was still potentially subversive.⁶⁴ It seems to me, however, that Mrs. Larpent's institutional power, which might in itself be potentially subversive of a male-dominated enterprise such as the theatre, was in fact used to censor opportunities for dramatic subversion. Convinced that "Acting revolts in women against female

Delicacy” (12 March 1790) and concerned in her comments on the French Revolution about power being granted to women, Mrs. Larpent – like a Phyllis Schlafly of the Romantic era – wielded a power she would have denied to other women.

It is fitting that this woman who was concerned about both the immorality of acting and the dangers of revolutionary dramas should hold some of the government’s power over the theatre in the era of Siddons and Baillie. Baillie, Siddons, and Larpent were all engaged in complex, discomfoting negotiations with social and cultural power. We need to recognize the power these women won through these negotiations – the state power exercised by Anna Larpent, the emotional and sexual power Sarah Siddons deployed on stage, the textual power earned by Joanna Baillie on the page. As these figures stand for a much larger body of women engaged in the theatre, it will not do to continue to deny the powerful place women held in the theatre of the Romantic period. I could, of course, have selected a different gathering of women – say, Mary Shelley, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Jane Scott – and given a different sense of the political valence of women’s theatrical and dramatic power. However, in identifying and even celebrating the fact of this power, we should not forget that all power arises within particular literary, cultural, institutional, social, and cultural contexts and that these contexts insured that the power wielded by women – just like that wielded by men – could be used for good or ill.

NOTES

- 1 The bibliography here is too long to list, but I note some highlights: Stuart Curran, “Romantic Poetry: The ‘I’ Altered,” *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne Mellor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 185–207; *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era: An Anthology*, ed. Paula Feldman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford University Press, 1996); Anne Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1993); Marlon Ross, *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women’s Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 1989).
- 2 See, for example, Catherine Burroughs, *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women Writers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Julie Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Stuart Curran, *Shelley’s “The Cenci”: Scorpions Ringed with Fire* (Princeton University Press, 1970); Joseph Donohue, *Dramatic Character in*

- the *English Romantic Age* (Princeton University Press, 1970); Terence Hoagwood and Daniel Watkins, ed., *British Romantic Drama: Historical and Critical Essays* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1998); Marjean Purinton, *Romantic Ideology Unmasked: The Mentally Constructed Tyrannies in Dramas of William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and Joanna Baillie* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994); Alan Richardson, *A Mental Theater: Poetic Drama and Consciousness in the Romantic Age* (Penn State University Press, 1988); Michael Simpson, *Closet Performances: Political Exhibition and Prohibition in the Dramas of Byron and Shelley* (Stanford University Press, 1998); and Daniel P. Watkins, *A Materialist Critique of English Romantic Drama* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993).
- 3 Ellen Donkin, *Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London 1776–1829* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 184. For a good account of the role of women in the theatre later in the century, see Tracy Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991).
 - 4 Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
 - 5 David Mann and Susan Mann, with Camille Garnier, *Women Playwrights in England, Ireland, and Scotland 1660–1823* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). This important scholarly tool allows us to see for the first time the volume of dramatic work by women of the period. We could add to it a few other women playwrights, including Mary Shelley, whose *Midas* (1820) and *Proserpine* (1820) were written during these dates but not published until later, or Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, whose works remained in manuscript. See also David D. Mann, "Checklist of Female Dramatists, 1660–1823," *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research* 5 (1990), pp. 30–62. Allardyce Nicoll's handlists of plays included in *A History of English Drama, 1660–1900*, 3rd edn, 6 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1952–59) are a valuable resource.
 - 6 Donkin, *Getting into the Act*, pp. 185–89.
 - 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 159–83. However, Donkin's argument suggests how far one can go to create a scenario in which women are oppressed and solely on gender grounds. Wondering why Sheridan, in control of Drury Lane, did not back Baillie's efforts, Donkin, in a note (219, n. 22), states, "I have weighed the possibility that Sheridan might have taken offense at Joanna Baillie's politics or even her brother's, but Baillie's brother, Dr. Matthew Baillie, was routinely in attendance on the King, so it seems unlikely, given Sheridan's long standing as a Tory, that this would have been the case." The assumption here is that Baillie's politics might trouble a conservative, but that she had enough cover through her brother to disarm the "Tory" [*sic*] Sheridan. Isn't it possible that Sheridan, given the fact of his longstanding support of Whig causes, found the conservative Baillie troubling not because she was a woman

but because she was allied with a reactionary literary culture that we might identify through Scott and *Blackwood's*, both supporters of Baillie? As the negative reaction to Baillie of the Whig *Edinburgh Review*, which has puzzled or angered commentators, suggests, she was seen as allied with the right.

- 8 Information on performances is gathered in Margaret S. Carhart, *The Life and Work of Joanna Baillie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), pp. 109–65.
- 9 Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, esp. pp. 74–109, 169–71.
- 10 Quoted in Martha Somerville, *Personal Recollections from Early Life to Old Age of Mary Somerville* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1874), p. 265.
- 11 Byron, letter to Annabella Milbanke, 6 September 1813, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie Marchand, vol. III (London: John Murray, 1974), p. 109.
- 12 Mitford, *Recollections of a Literary Life* (New York: Harper, 1852), p. 152.
- 13 Henry Crabb Robinson's account, recorded in William Knight, *Life of Wordsworth* (1889) and quoted in Carhart, *Joanna Baillie*, p. 37.
- 14 Larpent Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, LA 1287.
- 15 Huntington MS 32693, dated 29 March 1802, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- 16 See Donkin, *Getting into the Act*, p. 166. I have tried to recover some of the play's textual history in my edition of *De Monfort* included in Cox, *Seven Gothic Dramas 1789–1825* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), pp. 231–314.
- 17 Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (University of Chicago Press, 1984). For a nuanced placing of Baillie within gender and imperialist ideologies, see Amanda Gilroy, "From Here to Alterity: The Geography of Femininity in the Poetry of Joanna Baillie," in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 143–57.
- 18 Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler (London: Fields, Osgood, 1869), I: 248.
- 19 *Ibid.* Even Mitford, in *Recollections*, says Baillie is "the very pattern of what a literary lady should be – quiet, unpretending, generous, kind, admirable in her writings, excellent in her life" (p. 152).
- 20 Marjean Purinton, "The Sexual Politics of *The Election*: French Feminism and the Scottish Playwright Joanna Baillie," *Intertexts* 2.2 (1998): 119–30; Anne K. Mellor, "Joanna Baillie and the Counter-Public Sphere," *Studies in Romanticism* 33 (Winter 1994): 559–67. See also Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, esp. pp. 110–17. I have argued that *De Monfort* and *Orra* can be seen as offering a critique of women's roles: *Seven Gothic Dramas*, pp. 52–57.
- 21 David Hewitt, "Scott's Art and Politics," in *Sir Walter Scott: The Long-*

- Forgotten Melody*, ed. Alan Bold (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), pp. 44–52.
- 22 Baillie, *The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Joanna Baillie* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1851), p. 793. Lucy Aikin, *Memoirs, Miscellanies, and Letters of the Late Lucy Aikin*, ed. Philip Le Breton (London: Longman, Green 1864), quoted in Carhart, *Joanna Baillie*, p. 40.
- 23 C. J. Hamilton, *Women Writers: Their Works and Ways*, First Series (London: Ward, Lock, & Bowden, 1892), p. 124; S. Tytler and J. L. Watson, *Songstresses of Scotland* (London: Strahan, 1871), II: 239. 2 vols.
- 24 See Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances: Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions 1746–1886* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 284–315.
- 25 The production is recounted in James C. Dibdin, *The Annals of the Edinburgh Stage* (Edinburgh: Richard Cameron, 1888), pp. 261–62, and Sir Walter Scott, letters to Joanna Baillie, 13 June 1809, 15 August 1809, 13 October 1809, 27 October 1809, 22 January 1810, 30 January 1810, 31 January 1810, 6 February 1810, 20 February 1810, *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson (London: Constable & Co., 1932–36), II: 196–97, 217–21, 253–55, 257–60, 287–89, 290–92, 293–94, 295–96, 300–04. A good account of the play is found in Adrienne Scullion, “Some Women of the Nineteenth-Century Scottish Theatre: Joanna Baillie, Frances Wright, and Helen MacGregor,” in *History of Scottish Women’s Writing*, ed. Gifford and McMillan, pp. 161–65.
- 26 Scott, letter to Lady Abercorn, 21 January 1810, *Letters*, II: 286.
- 27 Scott, letter to Baillie, 13 October 1809, *Letters*, II: 253–54.
- 28 Scott, letter to Baillie, 30 January 1810, *Letters*, II: 292.
- 29 William Ferguson, *Scotland: 1689 to the Present* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968), p. 263.
- 30 Quoted in Carhart, *Joanna Baillie*, p. 147.
- 31 My argument here owes a debt to the fine account of the efforts of Scott and other Edinburgh Tories to negotiate the tensions between a Scottish national identity and membership in the United Kingdom offered by Charles Snodgrass, “Narrating Nations, Negotiating Borders: The Scottish Romantic Novel in Blackwood’s Circle,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Texas A&M University, Spring, 1999. See also Scullion, “Some Women,” pp. 164–65.
- 32 Mackensie, “Epilogue,” in Baillie, *Works*, p. 508.
- 33 John Roach Young, “Highland Regiments,” in *Britain in the Hanoverian Age 1714–1837*, ed. Gerald Newman *et al.* (New York: Garland, 1997), p. 329. See also Frederick Watson, *The Story of the Highland Regiments, 1725–1925* (London: A. & C. Black, 1925).
- 34 Baillie, “To Mrs. Siddons,” in *Works*, p. 829.
- 35 An interesting account of “Representing the Female Actor: Celebrity Narratives, Women’s Theories of Acting, and Social Theaters” can be found in Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, pp. 27–73.

- 36 Hunt, "Mr. Young's Merits Considered," *Examiner*, 15 January 1809: 45.
- 37 Hazlitt, *Complete Works*, ed. P. P. Howe (London, Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1930-34), v: 312.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons Interspersed with anecdotes of authors and actors* (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), p. 195.
- 40 John Waldie, "Journals and Letters of John Waldie of Hendersyde Park, Kelso, Scotland," Special Collections, University of California at Los Angeles, iv, 169/8.
- 41 Larpent, "The Diary of Anna Margareta Larpent," 16 vols., Huntington Library, San Marino, California, HM 31201. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
- 42 William Pitt, Lord Lennox, *Plays, Players, and Playhouses at Home and Abroad, with Anecdotes of the Drama and the Stage* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1881), I: 211.
- 43 Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism*, pp. 162-75.
- 44 See Marc Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
- 45 Simpson, *Closet Performances*, pp. 63-64.
- 46 Roger Manvell, *Sarah Siddons: Portrait of an Actress* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 292.
- 47 Jeffrey Cox, "Ideology and Genre in the British Antirevolutionary Drama in the 1790s," *ELH* 58 (1992): 579-610.
- 48 Christopher Reid, "Burke's Tragic Muse: Sarah Siddons and the 'Feminization' of the *Reflections*," in *Burke and the French Revolution: Bicentennial Essays*, ed. Steven Blakemore (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 1-27. See also Frans De Bruyn, *The Literary Genres of Edmund Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 188, where he sees Burke portraying Marie Antoinette as a tragic heroine from eighteenth-century sentimental tragedy.
- 49 Quoted in Thomas Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1834), II: 11-12.
- 50 Paula Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 214.
- 51 Burke, *Works and Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1852), IV: 212, 209.
- 52 Kristina Straub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton University Press, 1992).
- 53 John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage: from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830* (Bath: H. E. Carrington, 1832), 10 vols. Genest was another Siddons admirer, calling her "the first actress who had ever trod the English stage - in Tragedy she may be fairly considered an equal to Garrick" (VIII: 301).

- 54 In addition to the essay on Jane Scott by J. S. Bratton in this volume, see Bratton's "Miss Scott and Miss Macauley: 'Genius Comes in All Disguises,'" *Theatre Survey* 37 (May 1996): 59–74 and "Jane Scott the Writer/Manager" in *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 77–98.
- 55 Scullion, "Some Women," p. 175 n.2.
- 56 Nicoll, *History of English Drama*, 3: 20–21.
- 57 On John Larpent, see L. W. Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama 1737–1824* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1976), esp. pp. 34–45; Frank Power and Frank Palmer, *Censorship in England* (1913, rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), pp. 155–64; John Johnston, *The Lord Chamberlain's Blue Pencil* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), pp. 46–47.
- 58 Conolly, *Censorship*, p. 38.
- 59 The dates of the readings can be ascertained from Mrs. Larpent's diary; the dates of the licenses can be found both in the manuscripts for individual plays held in the Huntington Library's Larpent collection and in the "List of Plays Licensed by John Larpent, 1801–1824 in 2 vols" (HM 19926) where he records by date titles, actions, and fees.
- 60 Larpent Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, LA 1868.
- 61 "Postscript," *Helvetic Liberty, An Opera in Three Acts by a Kentish Bowman* (London: Wayland, 1792), p. vi.
- 62 Colman, testimony, *Report from the Select Committee Appointed to inquire into the laws Affecting Dramatic Literature* (1832), Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers, Stage and Theatre, vol. 1 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968): 66.
- 63 Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *England and the English*, ed. Standish Meacham (University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 306.
- 64 Claire Miller Colombo, "'This Pen of Mine Will Say Too Much': Public Performance in the Journals of Anna Larpent," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38 (Fall/Winter 1996): 285–301.