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Teaching Romanticism XXXVI: Romantic Melodrama

Posted on 22 December 2022

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As part of this ongoing series on Teaching Romanticism we will consider the ways in which we lecture on and discuss individual authors, whether during author-specific modules or broader period surveys. We thought it would be particularly useful to hear about which texts educators use and in what context, whether they place certain poems or prose works against those of other writers, or use contemporary or modern theoretical texts, or something else entirely. For this strand of blog posts we invite academics across the world to share their advice and tips on any aspect that interests them about teaching Romanticism. Many thanks to all of those who answered our call through NASSR-L, *The BARS Review* and elsewhere (lightly edited samples are reproduced below with permission of the authors). Please do feel free to contact us with proposals for future subjects. (The expanded general editorial team now comprises Daniel Cook, Sarah Burdett and Matthew Reznicek.) We will be considering a range of writers, canonical and non-canonical alike, in the coming months. This volume was edited by Sarah Burdett and Jonathan Hicks.

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Sarah Burdett (UCL) and Jonathan Hicks (University of Aberdeen): "Teaching Romantic Melodrama: Introduction"

This volume of Teaching Romanticism is dedicated to the memory of Professor Frederick Burwick, whose extensive and far-reaching work on Romantic melodrama has been invaluable to the development of scholarly enquiries and

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pedagogical innovations in the field. When invited to contribute an article to this volume back in 2020, Professor Burwick responded to our email with a message of acceptance wonderfully epitomising the motivation behind this pedagogical resource. The reply read:

"I would be delighted to contribute. For a dozen years I conducted a course on melodrama at UCLA. And I have long encouraged colleagues to include Romantic melodrama in their teaching. It was the dominant genre of the period, reaching the most extensive audiences".[1]

The comment spoke powerfully to the incentives underpinning the creation of this volume. It was precisely the peripheral attention granted to Romantic melodrama within mainstream university syllabi, and the ongoing need, foregrounded here by Burwick, to advocate the genre's inclusion within Romanticism modules, which planted the seeds for this project.

At the BARS digital conference for 2021, during a salon on British Romantic theatre, it was revealed that of twenty participants, all specialising in the field, only two had taught on modules with substantial strands devoted to British Romantic theatre, and only one had taught on a module allowing opportunities for the sustained study of British Romantic melodrama.[2] A quick glance at British university module catalogues indicates that the study of melodrama, within a British context at least, is predominantly reserved for studies of Victorian culture and beyond. And yet, as scholars including Burwick have emphasised, long before the reign of Victoria, melodrama had stolen a march on its tragic and comic rivals in terms of its accessibility and demand.[3]

While the origins of melodrama are notoriously complex, it is most commonly linked with France and the tumult of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. By the early 1800s the sensational genre was proliferating on European as well as British stages. Seminal studies exploring the genre's origins, form and reception have been accompanied in recent decades by a rich corpus of scholarship interrogating the political and cultural potency of the genre, by unpacking its idiosyncratic dealings with modern social categories including class, race, and gender.[4] A multimedia genre, combining text, music, and spectacular extravagance, melodrama has come to occupy significant space in explorations of Romanticism by scholars of literature, theatre, music, and visual culture.[5] A transnational genre, too, conglomerating a range of European theatrical traditions, melodrama invites us to grapple with Romantic conceptions of nationhood, cosmopolitanism, and otherness.[6] As such, the ground is well-laid for the study of melodrama to be incorporated with prominence into the teaching of Romantic period culture across university programmes hosted by a range of departments and faculties.

Testament to the rich malleability of melodrama within a teaching context, this volume comprises contributions from six scholars who have taught Romantic melodrama from a variety of national, disciplinary, and methodological perspectives. The articles address pedagogical approaches to the teaching of French, German, and British melodrama; with emphasis placed varyingly on music, performance history, and theatrical texts and contexts; and with a balance of theory-based and practice-led techniques. Together, these articles serve not only to vindicate the importance of melodrama in deepening students' understanding of Romantic-period culture, but they also illustrate the possibilities offered by the genre for creative and original learning experiences. By allowing students to experience the sensorial thrills and wide-scale social and cultural impact of this dynamic and exhilarating form, teachers can help foster an enthusiasm for Romanticism as a movement.

Notes

1 Email from Frederick Burwick, received 10 September 2020.

2 This salon was hosted by Sarah Burdett as part of the BARS Re-connections / Dis-connections conference, August 2021.

3 See for instance Frederick Burwick, *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Burwick, *Playing to the Crowd: London Popular Theatre, 1780–1830* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Michael Gamer has revealingly shown that between 1813 and 1823, of 589 new plays staged in London, 32 were comedies, 33 were tragedies, and 104 were melodramas. See Gamer, '"And the Explosion Immediately takes Place": Romantic Tragedy and the Ends of Melodrama', in *Romantic Dialectics: Culture, Gender, Theater: Essays in Honor of Lilla Maria Crisafulli*, ed. by Serena Baiesi and Stuart Curran (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018), 185.

4 See esp. Frank Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (London: Pennsylvania State UP, 1966); Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and The Mode of Excess* (London: Yale UP, 1976); Jeffrey N. Cox, "The Death of Tragedy; or, the Birth of Melodrama", in *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre's History*, ed. by Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 161-181; Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Jackie Bratton, "Romantic Melodrama", in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730-1830*, ed. by Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 115-128; Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000); Gamer, "Gothic Melodrama", in *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, ed. by Carolyn Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 31-46; Matthew Buckley, "Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity's Loss", *Theatre Journal* 61. 2 (May 2009), 175-190; Buckley, "The Formation of Melodrama", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. by David Francis Taylor and Julia Swindells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 457-474; Frederick Burwick, *British Drama of the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790–1820*, ed. by Katherine G. Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

5 This is testified by the list of publications included in the above note.

6 See esp. Diego Saglia, "Continental Trouble: The Nationality of Melodrama and the national Stage in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain", in *The Melodramatic Moment,* ed. by Hambridge and Hicks, 49-52; and Saglia, *European Literatures in Britain, 1815-1832: Romantic Translations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 148-85.

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Katherine Astbury (University of Warwick): "Teaching Pixerécourt"

René-Charles Guilbert de Pixerécourt (1773-1844) began writing plays during the French Revolution, with his first successful melodrama, *Victor ou l'enfant de la forêt* premiering in 1798. He wrote more than 90 melodramas which had over 30,000 performances between them in France, and adaptations of many of his plays were performed across Europe, in America, South Africa, and Australia. In lectures, I liken him to Andrew Lloyd Webber so that students can have a sense of just how important both he, and melodrama, were in the first half of the nineteenth century. I have to admit that it is not always an "easy sell" – characters often seem two-dimensional and the happy ending predictable but asking students to reflect on why the format was so successful, and why Pixerécourt was such a global hit, allows us to think about the distinctions between culture "of its time" and works that transcend their period, as well as the implications of the trauma of the Revolutionary decade.

I have included Pixerécourt melodramas on the syllabus of two very different modules. The first, entitled Drama and Melodrama, looks at the development of French theatre from the theorising of Diderot to the Romantic dramas of Victor Hugo. Melodrama plays a central part in the shift from an eighteenth-century aesthetic and an emphasis on declamation to a nineteenth-century focus on the visual and on stage effect. The second module is one on the French Revolution and the First Empire which looks at a range of material, from the Declaration of the rights of Man and anti-monarchy caricature prints, to speeches and Madame de Staël's essays opposing the Emperor. Particular attention is paid to the plays of the period as the cultural form most obviously affected by ideology and public opinion. Although Pixerécourt is not a common name on university reading lists, his plays dominated the theatrical world, not just in France but across the globe in the first part of the nineteenth century and studying them allows students to get a feel for the cultural context of the period as well as for how political and

social issues of the time were treated on stage. The political undercurrent to *L'Homme à trois visages*, for instance, is evident. The play, set in Venice, turns on a plot to overthrow the doge. It was first performed in October 1801 and dates from a period when opponents of Napoleon were frequently plotting to remove him. The introductions to the recent critical editions of Pixerécourt's plays published by Garnier (listed in the bibliography below) highlight the extent to which each play is closely bound to the socio-political context in which it was conceived, and this scholarly material is invaluable for helping students to situate the plays they are studying.

One of the reasons this context is so important is that there is no continuous performance tradition of early nineteenth-century French melodrama. This can make it difficult for students to get a sense of staging. Melodrama was very much about spectacle, with extravagant sets, costumes, plots, and music to heighten emotion. Having staged a Pixerécourt melodrama as part of an AHRC-funded project, I try to encourage the students to go beyond the written word by exploring how music functioned in the text, using recorded extracts of surviving scores to think about externalising emotion to music. Capes, hats and illustrations of poses from contemporary acting manuals help too of course! In particular, I try to get students to move beyond thinking of tableaux as immobile because the music creates a dynamic translation of characters' emotions into a series of gestures and movements. The significance of non-verbal spaces in the text thus becomes clear and students see the play text in a new light. Students can also watch a dress rehearsal of the Pixerécourt-inspired performance on which I worked in 2017 (see the bibliography below for the link), originally written and staged in 1810 by French prisoners of war at Portchester Castle (the venue, also, for its revival).This allows them to get a feel for the genre, including, crucially, the importance of comic characters and scenes, an element of Pixerécourtian melodrama that is often underplayed, but which is central to his success with audiences at the boulevard theatres in Paris where the plays were first performed. In class, we focus on the end of act 1 where the heroine is abducted as an example of music structuring silent action, but also on the villain's moral dilemma externalised to music earlier in the first act.

A key resource I use in both of the modules mentioned above is the University of Warwick's Marandet collection of French plays contains almost 200 French melodramas as part of its collection of Revolutionary, Empire and Restoration theatre. These plays have all been digitised and are key word searchable which offers great scope for students to use them for research projects. Students are able to curate their own list of plays to focus on and choose areas of interest, often those that intersect with other aspects of their degree, such as the English Gothic (a common source of melodrama plots). Another of the Library's collections, the Hall Collection of prompt books allows for comparison between the French and British melodrama tradition.

Including Pixerécourt on modules thus opens up exciting avenues for the students to explore: the interplay of play text and the non-verbal in staging, the history of the emotions, adaptation (many of his melodramas are adapted from novels and most are then adapted in translation to fit other national contexts), the commercialisation of nineteenth-century theatre and the interplay of high and low culture, the importance of socio-political context, and questions around gender and identity (especially national identity), trauma, loss and resilience.

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https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/marandet/

Frederick Burwick (UCLA): "Teaching Romantic Melodrama: Performance and Production"

Because students, by and large, seem ready to champion the cause of an underdog and to sympathize with resistance to authority, Romantic melodrama possesses inherent pedagogical attractions. As Jane Moody taught us in *Illegitimate Theatre, 1770-1840*, melodrama gained popularity in London's illegitimate theatres precisely because it conformed to the restrictions of the Licensing Act without abandoning counter-cultural trends.[1] The Licensing Act of 1737 was designed to control and censor any ridicule, adverse speech or negative representation in the theatre of church or government. The Anglican Church was protected, not the Catholic Church, whose predatory monks prowled gothic melodrama uncensored by the Licensing Act. As Michael Gamer explained in "Gothic Melodrama", the eighteenth-century Gothic novel gave rise to the mode of melodrama that preceded the burgeoning of unlicensed theatres after the turn of the century.[2] From 1783 to 1803 several of James Boaden's melodramas were produced during the Haymarket summer seasons. Though not identified as melodramas at the time, M. G. Lewis's *The Castle Spectre* (Drury Lane, 14 Dec 1798) and Miles Andrews's *Mysteries of the Castle* (Covent Garden, 31 Jan 1795) influenced the Gothic melodrama throughout the ensuing century.

In introducing students to a study of melodrama, I explain first how illegitimacy arose under the Licensing Act of 1737. With absolute statutory powers to censor all plays, the Lord Chamberlain and his Examiner of Plays granted the privilege of performing spoken drama only to the patent houses in London. During the ensuing century, only Covent Garden and Drury Lane were licensed, plus a summer license granted to Haymarket. The unlicensed theatres, originally restricted to pantomime and song, gradually bargained for an increased measure of dialogue in ratio to musical entertainment and pantomime performance.[3] Following its rise to prominence in Revolutionary France, melodrama (melody drama, originally hyphenated as melo-drama) became a favoured genre in the unlicensed theatres of London because it filled a need for more fully developed dramatic pieces. Denied the right to present the spoken drama of traditional tragedy and comedy, the playwrights for the unlicensed theatres relied on considerable innovation in performance. As a genre incorporating song and pantomime, the melodrama typically included a comic subplot and was structured in three acts (as opposed to the five-act structure of traditional comedy and tragedy). Although Thomas Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery* (1802, from Pixerécourt, *Cœlina, ou, l'enfant du mystère*) was the first in England to be designated as melodrama, there was ample precedent for the interaction of text and music in the form of ballad opera, comic opera, and the German *Singspiel* in three acts, which had already been adapted throughout the previous twenty years. The emergence of melodrama enabled theatres to restructure the established forms of drama with reliance on song and a modest intervention of dialogue. In the unlicensed theatres, the portion of dialogue was gradually increased during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Whether the form lapsed into comic burlesque or turned to the fright tactics of the

Gothic, it provided playwrights with a new genre that was remarkably adaptable, dramatically effective, and acceptable within the constraints of censorship.

Charles Lamb's two essays on Robert Elliston give students insight into the theatre and acting of this time.[4] A few additional anecdotes reveal Elliston as a pugnacious manager of the illegitimate theatres, who made a show of upholding the rights of his loyal audience. Informing his public of current battles, Elliston's playbills would include notice of an objection by the Examiner, or an injunction raised by Drury Lane or Covent Garden with charges of "stealing" material from their performances. Alongside a review of the theatre history of the period, an awareness of Elliston's battle strategies and the cultural struggles represented in the melodrama provide students with a foundation for considering how they might approach a modern reproduction. The first goal is to understand the kind of performance we are trying to replicate.

Having access to a theatre on campus at UCLA has made it possible, in our case, to teach full performance and production. Practicing period acting styles enables potential players to mimic the manners and gestures of the Georgian stage.[5] Even when the classroom was the only venue, I still had the space for students to provide a script-in-hand walk-through of a scene. As part of Zoom instruction this past year, I could still have students prepare monologue performances (excerpt a passage of 20 lines, explain its function in intrigue or plot, tell how the passage reveals character, mood or passion). For a course in performance and production, I enrolled approximately 20 students for costuming, set design, musicians (keyboard, viola, violin, flute), as well as actors. Auditions and casting were conducted before Winter break. Rehearsals began in January. Performances in early March included three evenings and two matinees on campus, plus two or three guest performances at nearby colleges. Among these attempts at period performance, I'll refer to three of the plays taught in the classroom and enacted on stage: Elizabeth Inchbald's *Such Things Are* (1787) and her *Animal Magnetism* (1788), and Isaac Pocock's *The Miller and his Men* (1813).

Proud as she was of her "bold enterprise" and "bold execution" in *Such Things Are*, Inchbald nevertheless confessed that, had she been more experienced as an author, she would not have dared such an improbable mixture of the serious and the farcical. Her mixed mode had neither the thematic integration of tragicomedy, nor had it yet acquired the musical modulation of "melodrama." Nevertheless, it gave student performers opportunity to explore the Gothic terrors of scenes in dark prison cells, and to rescue a fair damsel, soon to become a frequent event of melodrama.[6] Without that justifying genre, she dared to mix Twineall's "despicable reputation … with the highly honourable one of Howard."[7] An important contribution to the social reform characteristic of the age, *Such Things Are* represented the prison reformer, John Howard, in the character Haswell. Further, the notorious charges of corruption against Warren Hastings, governor of Bengal, is reflected in the tyranny of the Sultan. Visiting the prisons of Sumatra, Haswell exposes the maltreatment of the falsely accused captives. Having rescued Arabella, beloved by the Sultan, Haswell is able to persuade the Sultan to revise his laws and adopt humanitarian conditions.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge introduced the mesmerising eye in his *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel,* and further pondered its powers in his essay in *The Friend*.[8] This recurrent Romantic trope is richly deployed in the attempts at mental manipulation in Inchbald's *Animal Magnetism.* The same trope persisted throughout the ensuing century, still inducing spells in the melodramatic staging of Svengali's powers in the adaptation of George Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894). Pretensions of mind-altering influences are enacted in the psychic coaxing and hoaxing of Inchbald's *Animal Magnetism.* As an essential element in the affective aims of the melodrama, Inchbald made room for song and dance. A cue for a musical interlude occurs at the end of Act II, when the Marquis, pretending to dancing madness under a mesmeric spell, holds hands with his "lovely

shepherdess" and her guardian. The music was interpolated, with suitable songs borrowed from James Kenney's *Sweethearts and Wives* and *The Alcaid*.[9] Because public response to the concept of "animal magnetism" had altered in the intervening years, Inchbald revised the original 1788 version for the performance in 1806 – which was our performance script. Discussing the nature and motives of her revisions gave us further insight into her purposes.

Pocock's *The Miller and his Men* (1813) maintained its success in London for twenty years. That success was due in part to the conflagration of the finale, but more importantly to the score by Henry Bishop, which provided not simply the occasional song but also passages of instrumental music that coordinated with stage action.[10] It held immediate interest as a melodramatic exposé of the usurpation of the village mill as a secret centre for a band of smugglers, who are destroyed in the concluding explosion of the mill. Early audiences would have associated that conclusion with the Luddite riots against the ruthless exploitation of workers in the mills, mines, and factories. The UCLA Fire Marshall would not allow Pocock's fiery conclusion. We resorted instead to a traditional "claptrap": before the curtain rises, the stage manager appears before the audience with a large sign inscribed "KA-BOOM"; after they rehearse shouting, the manager tells them that his reappearance with the sign will be their cue to shout with gusto. The hinged flats depicting the mill are folded to reveal charred ruins painted on their backsides. Red and yellow "flame" lights flicker. No explosion. Instead, the spectators delivered their explosive line to everyone's satisfaction.

Students reported that performing a play gave them a far deeper comprehension than simply reading it as a text. They also acquired a better sense of how a live performance works, how it effects the audience and generates emotional response. Because we had the opportunity for several performances, they also noted differences in their own delivery and differences in each audience. Even in acknowledging the inability to replicate a melodramatic performance of two centuries ago, we nevertheless enriched our understanding of the genre and the period.

Notes

[1] Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10-47.

[2] See Michael Gamer, "Gothic Melodrama," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama*, ed. by Carolyn Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 31-46.

[3] Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, 16-17 and 80-84.

[4] Charles Lamb, "To the Shade of Elliston" and "Ellistoniana," in *The Complete Works and Letters of Charles Lamb* (New York: Modern Library, 1935), 153-158.

[5] Frederick Burwick, "Georgian Theories of the Actor," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre, 1737-1832*, ed. by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 177-191.

6 Diane Long Hoeveler. *Gothic Riffs: Secularizing the Uncanny in the European Imaginary, 1780–1820* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010), 74-102.

[7] Elizabeth Inchbald, "Remarks, *Such Things Are*," *The British Theatre; with Biographical and Critical Remarks*. 25 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808; 2nd ed. 1811), 23:2-6.

[8] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Essay VIII, On the Communication of Truth," *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol 4 (part 1), *The Friend*, ed. by Barbara E. Rooke (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 58-66 (59).

[9] "Romantic-Era Songs": https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/douglass/music/album-animal.html

[10] "Romantic-Era Songs": https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/douglass/music/album-miller.html

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Animal Magnetism on the Romantic-Era Songs site: https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/douglass/music/album-animal.html

The Miller and His Men on the Romantic-Era Songs site: https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/douglass/music/album-miller.html

Gilli Bush-Bailey (University of London, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama): "Natural Gestures"

My first encounter with the excitement and challenges of teaching Romantic melodrama was due more to my first career as a professional actress and script-reader than to my scholarly familiarity with the nineteenth-century stage. Jacky Bratton had created and taught her undergraduate course "Popular Performance: Melodrama" for students in the previous academic year, 1996/97.[1] The following year I was recruited to co-teach the ten-week course, mixing practical and desk-based approaches to introduce the complex political and cultural landscape of Romanticism as it was represented through melodramas performed in nineteenth-century British theatre.[2] Jacky's approach juxtaposed the more alien historically-distant plays with the more familiar mode of popular twentieth century film.[3] She had found that students responded with surprising enthusiasm to the comparisons, engaging easily with modern expressions of Romantic ideas on the relationship between humanity and nature, innocence and guilt, justice and restitution. They happily embraced the fantastic Romantic backdrops, beset with mountain robbers, wicked Lords and innocent heroines, relishing the clarity of the melodramatic moral narrative which then inspired their own creative practice.

The interpretive ideas came easily, the difficulty came in student efforts to capture the physical language of Romantic melodrama: its gestural expression and staged movement; the interdependence with music (melo); and the central importance of the stage picture. To add to these creative challenges, Jacky proposed to introduce our class of 1997/98 to an unpublished play by the prolific writer and actress/manager Jane Scott. *Camilla The Amazon* (1817) was a full-throated Romantic melodrama in which Scott also played the titular heroine in her theatre, the Sans Pareil on London's Strand. The only (often obscure) stage directions and notes were those written by Scott in the copy submitted for a performance licence.[4] Jacky's first transcription of the play revealed just how much direction and stage business was added to published texts *after* performance, in other words after the performers had created the staged action.[5] My role was to use my professional experience as an actress to approach the script from the perspective of the performer, to unravel the intricacies of the plot and help students develop approaches to the performance practice of gestural language. We looked at acting manuals, such as Henry Siddons's *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* (1822) but the gestures were static and frozen. We used music, neutral mask and dance but failed to find gesture between the illustrated poses Siddons provided.[6] The voyage of discovery made with the students over the course of the term was a milestone in my determination to develop processes and protocols for practical explorations of historically distant plays, particularly where the apparent 'literary' value of the text is far from obvious. This early experience also lit the touchpaper of my passion for the work of Romantic theatre stagecraft, its intensity and emotional power. Understanding the play text as a blueprint for performance is familiar to contemporary theatre practice, less easily recognised is that historically-distant play texts may also offer a skeleton script, upon which the performers build the arc of the narrative action, interweaving with music and gesture as it does in the often opaque nineteenth-century performance texts of Romantic melodrama.

Using playbills as a key textual resource enabled us to realise that a central character in *Camilla the Amazon* was mute.[7] The silenced mute role appears often and, as in Jane Scott's play, was usually performed by a dancer. The next steps in developing access to gestural language in my teaching practice came from learning, with a specially formed company of professional dancers and actors gathered together for an intensive four-week workshop.[8] The specific gestural language of dance (taught to us by dance historian Gianndrea Poesio[9]) working with music and text to produce the meta-language of melodramatic expression, introduced levels of freedom of expression in the performers. Some felt physically released from the restrictions of 'naturalist' actor-training, linking more viscerally and powerfully with physical theatre performance as we recognise it today. Seeing performers (student and professional) making connections between our contemporary experience of immersive performance and approaches of nineteenth-century performance practice, if even only for a moment, is illuminating. Where full scores for melodramas exist, the music acts as the key to unlocking movement, text and gestural language in these long forgotten popular entertainments. Bringing together the intensity of music with textual and gestural energy in theatre takes time, but fully repays the effort in realising the emotive and affective power of melodrama.[10]

The more surprising element to emerge from teaching melodrama in and through performance is the place of laughter. In the first class and rehearsal sessions laughter is barely suppressed at the apparent excesses of melodrama but once the empty assumptions about the paucity of melodramatic acting, the 'ham' has been dispensed with, students and more seasoned professionals find a new delight in laughter. As a release, a steam-letting of the dramatic tension, comedy has a crucial part in the complex, cross hatched interplay of Romantic melodrama. The 'natural' innocence of the ubiquitous comic character working as counterpoint to the high dramatic stakes of the heroine, their simple ambition in contrast to the ignoble ambition of the villain. Laughter is welcome and expected as part of the melodramatic affective arc.

As I write this, I am now many years from teaching Romantic melodrama but current stories—the crisis of climate change, fear for the natural world, demands for racial and gender equity, the loss of innocence and resistance to all kinds of despotism—lead me to consider just how relevant the renewed interest in teaching Romantic melodrama might be, and just how powerfully it might speak to theatre students, professional practitioners and audiences today.

Notes

[1] Jacky Bratton was then head of the Department of Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway University of London and had published extensively on melodrama across media notably: Bratton, Jim Cook and Christine Gledhill, eds., *Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen* (London: BFI, 1994).

[2] Standard plays, such as Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* (1823), the most successful stage adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Colin Henry Hazlewood's 1863 stage adaptation of Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862).

[3] Students were particularly interested by the juxtaposition of nineteenth-century plays with twentieth-century films, such as *The Wind* (1928), an epic silent movie starring Lilian Gish as the heroine in the alien landscape of the untamed 'West', fighting the forces of nature and man, or Ridley Scott's *Alien* series in which Sigourney Weaver's heroine takes on every kind of villain in the imagined landscapes of space.

[4] All plays were submitted to the Lord Chamberlain's office for a public performance licence. Scott's theatre the Sans Pareil was limited to producing burletta or melodrama and of her thirty or more plays only one, *The Old Oak Chest* (1816), was published. The remainder exist only in manuscript as part of the Larpent Collection of Lord Chamberlain's plays held by the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. *Camilla the Amazon* was first transcribed by Jacky Bratton and a later version with notes was published in *Nineteenth Century Theatre*, 27.2 (1999).

[5] Published plays by Dicks and later French's, include character and cast lists, costume and scenery description as well as stage direction and often music cues.

[6] An account of this process and the invaluable contribution of the students can be found in "The Management of Laughter: Jane Scott's *Camilla the Amazon* in 1998," in *Women in British Romantic Theatre*, ed. by Catherine Burroughs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 178-204.

[7] The Adelphi Theatre Calendar provides extensive information about plays and performances at the theatre formerly known as the Sans Pareil. https://www.umass.edu/AdelphiTheatreCalendar/#icons

[8] Funded by the AHRB "Innovations Award", the workshop brought professional practitioners and academic experts together to work on more of Jane Scott's plays. The findings were presented in a special edition of *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film*, 29.2 (2002). The accompanying video material of the workshop process, and the performance to an invited audience, can be found here: https://doi.org/10.17637/rh.5594500.v1

[9] Extracts from one of Giannandrea Poesio's workshops with the company can be found via the video link above at 47.45.

[10] I was delighted to be invited to bring a small group of professional actor trainers from Central to take part in a practical research project undertaken at King's College London (2014) bringing music with text and action for both French and English versions of Guilbert de Pixerécourt's *La Forteresse du Danube* (1805). See Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks for the development and evidence of this approach in *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790-1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

Bibliography and Further Reading

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2018.

Workshop video material for Jane Scott project:
https://doi.org/10.17637/rh.5594500.v1

Austin Glatthorn (University of Southampton): "Ideas on Teaching German Romantic Melodrama"

A textbook example of German Romantic melodrama in the classroom goes like
this:

The Wolf's Glen Scene [from *Der Freischütz* (1821) by Carl Maria von Weber
(1786–1826)], during which the seven bullets are cast, incorporates elements of
the **melodrama**, a genre of musical theater that combined spoken dialogue with
background music. Melodramas had been popular in France and in German-
speaking areas since the 1770s, and scenes in melodrama had appeared in
operas by Mozart, Beethoven, and others. Speaking his lines over continuous
orchestral music, Caspar first invokes Samiel. Then, as he casts each bullet, with
Max cowering beside him, Caspar counts *one*, *two*, *three*, and so on, while the
mountains echo each count. For each casting, Weber paints a different picture
of the terrifying dark forest. Throughout, he ingeniously exploits the resources
of the orchestra: timpani, trombones, clarinets, and horns in the foreground,
often against string tremolos. Diminished and augmented intervals and daring
chromaticism depict evil, and an offstage chorus reinforces the shadowy and
supernational elements of the plot.[1]

This excerpt informs students that melodrama was a type of music theatre that
mixed spoken dialogue and music, was popular in Europe from the late
eighteenth century, and had been employed in operas by canonic composers.
Students then watch or listen to this scene and observe how the staging and
music heighten this dramatic moment to portray the supernatural. Granted,
there is a lot of terrain to cover in survey courses, but this text's treatment of
melodrama is so brief that it raises more questions than it answers. If
melodrama was a popular genre of music theatre in France and Germany in the
fifty years before the appearance of *Der Freischütz*, for instance, then what
characterized these earlier works? What is meant by 'scenes in melodrama' if
melodrama itself was a genre? Why does this excerpt—and indeed the textbook
as a whole—only describe melodrama's relationship to opera? How is Weber's
music for this melodramatic scene different from other operatic scenes that
employ similar techniques to portray the supernatural, notably the second act
finale of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787) that students may have encountered in
earlier chapters? The textbook leaves such questions unanswered. Indeed, the
paragraph reproduced here and the c.15 minutes of music Weber composed for
this scene represent the extent to which melodrama is typically discussed in
modules surveying Western Art Music in the years around 1800.

This may be in part because German Romantic melodrama is difficult to define succinctly. Jacqueline Waeber summed it up nicely by defining melodrama as (1) a dramatic genre; (2) a technique that alternates spoken text and gesture with instrumental music (thus 'scenes in melodrama'); and (3) an aesthetic of emotional excess.[2] Studies like hers that examine early German melodramas often focus on *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Medea* (both 1775) by Georg Benda (1722–1795) and which involve the cognitive deterioration of forsaken female protagonists.[3] In so doing, they illustrate how such works on mythological subjects represent a dramatic genre that alternated music, gesture, and monologue so as to evoke a sense of the supernatural and sublime. It was melodrama's peculiar combination of *Tempesta* music, pantomime, and *Sturm und Drang* text that separated the genre from operas and operatic moments that also express the sublime. Yet as I have argued elsewhere, Benda's archetypal melodramas do not represent the diversity of German melodramas that appeared across Central Europe in the years around 1800.[4] Although almost all melodramas of the period impart a sense of the sublime, they often included song alongside instrumental music and spoken text, were dialogic rather than monologic, and were set on a variety of subjects ranging from mythology and Classical history to the contemporary world.

It is in part the diversity of German melodrama c.1800 that makes it tricky to fit into syllabi, and the paucity of suitable teaching resources makes it particularly difficult to teach—there are few translations, critical editions, and recordings suitable for the classroom. Yet despite these potential drawbacks, German Romantic melodrama has much to offer. There are at least three main areas that it can contribute to in modules exploring European music and theatre of the period. These areas align roughly with Waeber's definition of melodrama: 1) melodrama as operatic reform (dramatic genre); 2) melodrama's music-gesture-text interface (technique); and 3) melodrama as an aesthetic and generic nexus (aesthetic).

First is melodrama as operatic reform. Much attention is placed on the mid-eighteenth-century reform operas of Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787) that sought to strip back the virtuosic vocal performances that critics argued obscured the drama. Many of the same critiques led to the creation of the first melodrama, *Pygmalion* (1762/1770) by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778).[5] Along similar lines to Gluck, who wanted to restore meaning to the operatic voice by making arias more comprehensible, Rousseau sought to restore primacy to the voice in *Pygmalion* by separating text from music entirely. *Pygmalion* would go on to have an especially lively reception in Central Europe, where it circulated in German-language versions, played a part in the creation of Benda's melodramas, and resulted in the appearance of hundreds of other melodramas. Tracing the emergence of melodrama as operatic reform helps students to understand the transfer and circulation of the ideas and culture of music theatre throughout Europe c.1760.

Melodrama's second area of contribution to the survey classroom involves its peculiar interface of music, gesture, and text. Studies of early German melodrama including *Ariadne auf Naxos* often define the genre as an unrelenting alternation of monologic declamation and instrumental music. Yet just as there were different approaches to operatic reform, so too were there varied approaches to melodrama itself. Some composers of German melodrama set the text entirely to music in recitative and aria. *Polyxena* (1775) by Anton Schweitzer (1735–1787)[6] is an early example of this type of melodrama, while *Sulmalle* (1802)[7] by Bernhard Anselm Weber (1764–1821) is a later example. Others responded by including vocal music and dialogue. Particularly good examples of this type of melodrama include *Sophonisbe* (1776)[8] by Christian Gottlob Neefe (1748–1798) and *Dirna* (1809) by E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776–1822). Others still mixed extended monologues and short(er) dialogue with instrumental music, song, recitative, and choruses. *Zelmor und Ermide* (c.1779)[9] by Anton Zimmermann (1741–1781) is an excellent example of this type of melodrama, as it assigns types of music to the distinct emotions portrayed on

stage. By allowing students to investigate this experimental period in the presentation of theatrical music, text, and gesture, they can begin to understand more clearly how melodramatic moments were increasingly included in other genres of music theatre, including opera.

The third area to which German Romantic melodrama could make a worthwhile contribution is as a generic and aesthetic nexus. The previous paragraph suggests that those who created German-language melodrama c.1800 saw it, at least in part, as an experimental space. They considered melodrama a potential response to criticisms levelled at opera and distinct national traditions and sought to combine the best features of Italian and French opera with melodrama to create something distinct for German stages. Melodrama had clear advantages over more traditional forms of music theatre. It embraced music, a favourite amongst theatregoers, and helped audiences understand the onstage action without a printed libretto or prior knowledge of the plot, as it was mostly spoken. Melodrama was also much cheaper to produce, since it often had smaller casts and fewer sets by comparison to operatic genres, making it ideal for the many theatre companies travelling throughout Central Europe. Almost all German-language theatregoers of the period came across melodrama, and it played an important role in how they thought about the music theatre they encountered. The doctrine of mimesis was among the most prevalent aesthetic notions of the eighteenth century, through which composers sought to express emotions to listeners by tone-painting. At about the same time that opera's virtuoso singers prompted reform, tone-painting was also increasingly called into question. Critics argued that composers should only express the leading emotion(s) and not every individual sentiment conveyed on stage. The dominant emotion was what contemporaries considered the music's 'character'.[10] Whereas tone-panting sought to communicate objective emotions and natural phenomena through musical mimesis, characteristic music relied on audiences to establish meaning in what they heard. Composers of melodrama employed tone-painting to represent the roaring of wild animals that threatened the protagonist or the storms that were brought to life through stagecraft, for example. But melodramatic music simultaneously allowed audiences to construct their own meaning in what they heard and saw in the theatre, as music was detached from text. So while some audiences might conceive such examples as a physical representation of wild animals or a raging storm, others might recognize it as a sonic projection of something terrible that the protagonist has identified in their monologue, the same character's psychological reaction to that terror, and their own sublime horror at what they are witnessing on stage. The point is that—unlike tone-painting that placed the burden on the composer to communicate certain emotions to the listener— melodrama as characteristic music shifted the hermeneutic responsibility to the theatregoer themselves. In this way, German Romantic melodrama was a product of, and played an important part in, shifting aesthetic priorities c.1800.

I would like to provide some suggestions as to how to teach the points I outlined above. Students can explore melodrama as operatic reform by reading, listening and watching, and discussing. Instructors can, for instance, present critiques of opera as raised in *Essay on the Opera* (1755) by Francesco Algarotti (1712–1764) and have students compare and contrast how Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Rousseau's *Pygmalion* address these concerns.[11] To investigate the intersections of music, text, and gesture in melodrama, students can listen, read, and perform. Recordings of Benda's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Medea*, and *Pygmalion* are available, including clips of productions on YouTube, and students should listen to these melodramas. The paucity of recordings of other melodramas presents an opportunity for students to try performing themselves. In *Sophonisbe*, for instance, there are a few portions of the text that move between alternating with instrumental music and sections that are meant to be spoken in time over the instrumental music. Students can workshop this 'spoken aria' to investigate the relationship between this music and text and how this section might have been performed.[12] Exploring such topics as melodrama, generic hybridity, and aesthetics could be based on reading, listening, watching, and in-class

discussion and debate. Students, for example, could watch melodramatic moments in such operas as *Der Freischütz* or Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Then the class can trace back melodrama's history to consider how it progressed from an autonomous genre to a technique that appeared in sections of operas where composers sought especially to project the supernatural and the sublime. Zimmermann's *Zelmor und Ermide* is an excellent primary source that can be used to investigate how composers employed melodrama, aria, recitative, and chorus to express specific emotions in a mixed-genre work.

Including discussion of melodramatic gesture is particularly tricky, given the aforementioned lack of videos of staged German melodramas. But the melodrama *Lenardo und Blandine* (1779) by Peter von Winter (1754–1825) offers interesting possibilities.[13] Alongside his text, Joseph Franz von Goez (1754–1818) published a set of 160 engravings illustrating gesture and body movement in 1783. Some consider this the first graphic novel, which records in great detail how the melodrama was presented on stage word for word and gesture for gesture.[14] It thus provides opportunities to investigate the negotiation of melodramatic music, text, and gesture and how different types of media can narrate a given plot. First students should begin, for example, by reading *Lenardo und Blandine* (or at least a thorough summary). Alternatively, a portion of the class could look at only the engravings, while the rest read the text only. They then summarize their interpretation(s) of the plot and come together to discuss and compare what they made of the melodrama's action through either images or text alone. Next, students can read and discuss Thomas Betzwieser's essay 'Compositional Gestures: Music and Movement in *Lenardo und Blandine* (1779)', which considers more closely how music and gesture interact in the work.[15] Then students (or groups) can match selected images to portions of the text to which they believe it corresponds (I am grateful to Barbara Babić for sharing this exercise with me). After discussing their decisions, students can try matching musical excerpts to portions of the text. Eventually, they can try and match the gesture, music, and text. The final step would be to discuss the decisions as a class, reveal how Winter and Goez set the moments that the students had considered, and conclude with discussion.

Although there are practical matters that limit the extent to which modules exploring music and theatre c.1800 can incorporate German Romantic melodrama, such works can be included in meaningful ways. To be sure, the genre has much more to offer than the Wolf's Glen Scene alone. My ideas here offer just a few suggestions as to how German melodramas around the year 1800 might be usefully employed in class. There are indeed other ways of involving German melodrama and many other specific melodramas that can be included. Melodrama can supplement exploration of canonic figures and topics by tracing how the melodramatic technique later found its way into symphonic music and the *Lied*. The genre made enduring contributions to the development of later nineteenth-century opera, including the emergence of the 'melodramatic' as an aesthetic category. Alongside modules exploring music and theatre history, c.1800, melodrama can make important contributions to courses tracing the origins of early music for film and television owing to how its music underscored (mostly) spoken text.[16] The tendency of German melodrama to focus on the plight of a protagonist, and examples that concern such sensitive topics as the slave trade (like *Inkle und Yariko*) make discussion of the genre an obvious place to include under-represented groups and topics in the classroom. As instructors seek to embrace more diverse music and musicians in their teaching, melodrama offers new possibilities to demonstrate the complexities of the musico-theatrical world c.1800, how it was brought to life on stage, and why it matters today.

Notes

[1] J. Peter Burkholder et al, *A History of Western Music*, tenth edition (New York: Norton, 2019), 664–665, emphasis in original.

[2] Jacqueline Waeber, *En Musique dans le texte: Le mélodrame, de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris: Van Dieren, 2005), 9.

[3] On the melodramatic female protagonist, see for example, David Charlton, "Storms, Sacrifices: The "Melodrama Model" in Opera," in *French Opera 1730– 1830: Meaning and Media* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 1–61.

[4] Austin Glatthorn, *Music Theatre and the Holy Roman Empire: The German Musical Stage at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 170–217.

[5] Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Horace Coignet, *Pygmalion, Scène lyrique*, ed. by Jacqueline Waeber (Geneva: Éditions Université-Conservatoire de musique Genève, 1997); and Jacqueline Waeber, "Rousseau's Pygmalion and the Limits of (Operatic) Expression," in *Rousseau on Stage: Playwright, Musician, Spectator*, ed. by Maria Gullstam and Michael O'Dea (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2017), 103–115.

[6] Friedrich Justin Bertuch, *Polyxena: Ein lyrisches Monodrama* (Hamburg: Freystatzky and Rabe, 1794), available from the Library of Congress at https://www.loc.gov/resource/musschatz.16427.0/? sp=3&r=-0.07,-0.051,1.111,0.996,0; and Anton Schweizter, *Polyxena: Ein Lyrisches Monodrama* (Weimar: Industrie Comptoirs, 1793). This music is available online from the British Library through IMSLP at https://ks.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/5/5f/IMSLP669366-PMLP1074203- schweitzer_F.28.a._Polyxena-_ein_lyrisches_Monodrama_von_F._J._Bertuch.pdf

[7] Carl Herklots, *Sulmalle: Lyrisches Duodrama mit Chöhren* (Berlin, 1802), available online from the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin at https://bildsuche.digitale- sammlungen.de/index.html? c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00054339&pimage=00001&v=100&nav=&l=en; and Bernhard Anselm Weber, *Sulmalla: Lÿrisches Melodrama* (manuscript, c.1810). This score is available from the same source at https://digital.staatsbibliothek- berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN781340225&DMDID=DMDLOG_0011

[8] August Gottlieb Meißner, *Sophonisbe: Ein musikalisch Drama mit historischem Prolog und Chören* (Leipzig: Dyk, 1776) available online at https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/_/eJMjXo3dhmYC?hl=en&gbpv=0; and Christian Gottlob Neefe, *Sophonisbe: Ein Monodrama* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1788). Available from the Badische Landesbibliothek online through IMSLP at https://ks4.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/e/e9/IMSLP551389-PMLP889606- Neefe_Sophonisbe_-_Don_MusMs_1420.pdf

[9] Johann Carl Wezel, *Zelmor und Ermide: Ein musikalisches Schauspiel* (Leipzig: Dyk, 1779) accessible at https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Zelmor_und_Ermide/FK0Gm23ZsqgC? hl=en&gbpv=0; and Anton Zimmermann, *Melodram: Zelmor und Ermide*. The manuscript is available from the Badische Landesbibliothek at https://digital.blb- karlsruhe.de/blbihd/content/titleinfo/5350999

[10] On "characteristic music," see Matthew Pritchard, "'The Moral Background of the Work of Art': 'Character' in German Musical Aesthetics, 1780–1850," *Eighteenth-Century Music* 9:1 (2012): 63–80.

[11] An early English translation of Alagrotti's treatise from 1768 is available from the Library of Congress at https://www.loc.gov/resource/muspre1800.100300/? sp=1

[12] Depending on the level and capabilities of the students, the digital versions of the manuscript may suffice, or instructors may have to do some prep work to make the materials more accessible to students. For this particular class session, I prepared a translation of the original German and an edition of the music in notation software, which I would be happy to share.

[13] Peter von Winter, *Lenardo und Blandine*, edited by Thomas Bauman (New York: Garland, 1986).

[14] Joseph Franz von Goez, *Lenardo und Blandine: Ein Meloram* (Augsburg, 1785) accessible online through the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München at https://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0005/bsb00056859/images/; see also https://konkykru.com/e.goez.1783.lenardo.und.blandine.1.html

[15] Thomas Betzwieser, "Compositional Gestures: Music and Movement in *Lendardo und Blandine* (1779)," in *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790–1820*, ed. by Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 2018), 95–115. The exact order of this activity can be altered, of course.

[16] See, for example, Michael V. Pisani, *Music for the Melodramatic Theatre in Nineteenth-Century London & New York* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014); and Jacqueline Waeber, "The Voice-Over as Melodramatic Voice," in *Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama*, ed by Sarah Hibberd (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 215–235.

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Diego Saglia (Università di Parma, Italy): "Teaching James Robinson Planché's *The Vampire; or, the Bride of the Isles*"

Before turning to consider some approaches to teaching Planché's *The Vampire; or, the Bride of the Isles* (1820), I wish to start by observing, more generally, that its usefulness in the classroom (both physical and virtual) lies in its versatility. Romantic-period melodrama is most likely taught within two main types of course – courses on Romantic theatre or even melodrama *tout court*; and

courses that consider melodrama as part of a wider array of Romantic-period or even long nineteenth-century forms, genres or themes – spectacularity and theatricality, the Gothic, or adaptations and remediations of fiction, for instance (the latter possibly the commoner of the two). A signal advantage of a play such as Planché's *The Vampire* is that it fits both formats, and in what follows I examine some of the features that make it so amenable, suggesting ways of integrating them into our teaching practices.

The origins of the play are fascinating in themselves, so I always find it useful (and effective) to begin by introducing students to this narrative. Context is worth establishing, even if the key facts may be well-known already. The first work of fiction entirely centred on the figure of a blood-sucker (that is also its titular figure) was the short story *The Vampyre* by John William Polidori, personal doctor to Lord Byron during the journey across Europe he undertook after the scandal following the separation from his wife in 1816. As with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Polidori's story issued from the highly productive environment of Villa Diodati, on Lake Geneva, in the summer of 1816, and was eventually published in the London *New Monthly Magazine* in 1819, where it was unscrupulously announced as "A Tale by Lord Byron" with a view to increasing sales. Things take a "melodramatic" turn from this point, as the tale crossed the Channel, became hugely popular in France, and provided the bare bones for a stage adaptation that was an overnight success. Collaboratively written by Charles Nodier, Carmouche and Jouffroy d'Abban, *Le Vampire* opened at the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre, on the Parisian Boulevard Saint-Martin, on 13 June 1820. The sensational success of this *mélo-drame* generated a veritable vampire-mania in the French capital, with numerous imitations and parodies both on stage and in print. The fact that it moved the setting to Scotland contributed to this popularity, as the country, its traditions and atmospheres had become fashionable thanks to Walter Scott's novels. News of the French play reached Britain, and the playwright James Robinson Planché quickly produced an adaptation that was first performed at the English Opera House on 9 August 1820.

As this brief summary intimates, from a teaching perspective Planché's *Vampire* has the distinct advantage of being connected with some outstanding moments, figures, and phenomena in early nineteenth-century culture: the Villa Diodati circle and the "year without a summer"; Byron and Byromania; the twin birth of the Frankenstein and vampirical mythologies; or the interrelations between the London and Paris theatrical worlds. Because of its roots in Polidori's tale, it has a markedly literary tenor; yet, in addition, its non-textual and non-verbal aspects are evidenced by nineteenth-century illustrations and some extant musical scores. Moreover, *The Vampire* holds an important place in the history of technical advancements in stagecraft, while also testifying to some major changes in the impact of technology on physical movements on stage and the representation of male and female bodies. Since Planché's melodrama became as popular as its Parisian antecedent, the contemporary press published a large number of notices and reviews, which can be employed for discussions of its reception and influence. Finally, the play has the not inconsiderable advantage of being available in a recent edition, originally published in 1986 by Cambridge University Press and still obtainable through print-on-demand.

Among the features that make Planché's play especially relevant to the teaching of Romantic-era melodrama is its innovative embodiment of the vampire. From Lord Ruthven's startling entrance in the 'introductory vision' to his final demise, the blood-sucker is a monumentally physical presence. A teaching-oriented examination of this presence could start from the description of Lord Ruthven in Polidori's tale before moving on to Planché's stage vampire. A comparison between them can highlight different ways of conjuring up the vampirical body and bring to the fore the more materially connoted traits of its stage incarnation. Relatedly, students can be invited to concentrate on the proxemics implied by the role of Lord Ruthven, that is the facial expressions and body movements inscribed in the playtext. This focus on the character's body

language can expand the discussion about ways of 'personating' the vampire on stage and their implications, as well as leading to a more general examination of the characteristics of melodramatic acting. In particular, the students' attention can be drawn to the fact that, in the 'introductory vision', as the vampire threatens to attack the sleeping figure of his designated victim, Lady Margaret, his physical presence is marked with sexual connotations from the outset. But, at the same time, he is presented as the manifestation of a timeless spirit of evil called Cromal. This contrast offers another useful point of discussion about the play's construction of the vampire as a liminal figure, located between the material and the immaterial, the solidly physical and the evanescent.[1]

This focus on the play's titular character can open the way to introducing students to one of the star performers of Romantic-period melodramas, Thomas Potter Cooke, who played Ruthven in the opening run. A former sailor famous for the athletic qualities he brought to his stage roles, this enormously popular actor contributed to making Planché's vampire a sensation. There is ample scope for students to carry out individual web searches – that can then be shared and discussed in class – on Cooke's career, the roles he created, or his popularity in Britain and abroad (thus stressing the inter- and transnational nature of melodrama). These searches may also produce a gallery of portraits of Cooke in his many roles on stage, but also as a fashionable young man (as in the 1825 mezzotint by Samuel W. Reynolds, National Portrait Gallery D34096), or as a venerable elderly gentleman (he died in 1864 at the age of 78). In particular, it may be interesting to compare visual testimonies of Cooke in the role of the vampire with accounts of his performances as Frankenstein's Creature in Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* (1823) and, later, illustrations of his performances of the same role in the French adaptation of Peake's text by Jean-Toussaint Merle and Antoine-Nicolas Béraud as *Le Monstre et le magicien* (1826). The National Portrait Gallery online collection is an excellent first port of call for these visual materials.

Work on melodramatic personation and performance can then lead to an examination of the play in terms of stagecraft. *The Vampire* has an important place in the development of new stage technology through its association with the revolutionary invention of the 'vampire trap'. Placed in the stage floor, where it blended with the surrounding scenery, this contraption consisted of two flaps supported by a slide that enabled actors to walk across it during the performance; but, when stage hands removed the slide, the actor walking on it vanished suddenly "like a spirit through a solid".[2] The arresting impact of this new technology on audiences was enormous and, for us today, to a large extent irretrievable – yet it is important to find ways of getting students to appreciate it, for instance through the comments in contemporary reviews and other reports. Indeed, an analysis of the trap is a great way of introducing them to technical advances in stagecraft, their increasing sophistication, and the professional skills required of Romantic-era theatre crews. In the process, we may recover some of the sense of wonder and awe, and the thrill of an exciting theatrical experience, as enjoyed by early nineteenth-century spectators. Then, from a more advanced viewpoint, examining how the trap works alerts us to the play's development of a form of technologically assisted proxemics – that is, the fact that the actor's body performed also with the aid of machinery that enabled it effectively to personate the character's spectral nature (and, in this fashion, we return to the question of Planché's liminal, material/immaterial, stage vampire).

As with other melodramas for which we still have musical scores and arrangements, Planché's *Vampire* also allows for a discussion of the role of incidental music as the distinctive peculiarity of the genre. The music for it was composed by Joseph Binns Hart (1794-1844), though unfortunately the only extant portion of it seems to be a piano score complete with dialogue cues but without any orchestration. Ryan D. Whittington has exhaustively examined this piece and the other clues about music that can be garnered from the playtext (we know, for instance, that performances featured numerous Scottish folk songs), and his work offers invaluable information and useful pointers to

organize class activities on this aspect of the play (especially if we do not have a musicological background).

Moreover, referencing the Scottish tunes and songs in the play can serve not only to expand discussions about the exotic features of vampirism, but also as a way of broaching the question of the exoticism of melodrama as a genre that was both homegrown and foreign. In other words, the Scottishness of Planché's *Vampire*, originally introduced by Nodier and his co-authors, offers an opportunity to examine the transnational nature of Romantic-period melodrama and, more broadly, that of British theatre in this period, for instance by examining the variety of materials imported from France in the 1820s, the public's insatiable appetite for these foreign products, and the commentators' widespread hostility to them.[3]

Finally, Planché's *Vampire* is also a helpful text within courses dedicated to Romantic-period theatre and its connections with the Victorian stage, since it continued to be performed for decades as part of a repertoire of popular entertainments. Besides focusing on its later nineteenth-century reception, however, we may also link it to, and compare it with, Dion Boucicault's *The Vampire, a Phantasm in Three Dramas* (London, Princess Theatre, 14 June 1852), later revised and renamed *The Phantom* (Philadelphia 1856; New York, Wallack's Lyceum, 1857; London, Theatre Royal, New Adelphi, 28 August 1861). Presenting a wide range of melodramatic traits, Boucicault's play was once again based on a French source – *Le Vampire* by Alexandre Dumas *père* and Auguste Maquet (Paris, Ambigu-Comique, 20 December 1851), which reworked elements from *Le Vampire* by Nodier, Carmouche and Jouffroy d'Abban.

A clear instance of dramatic history repeating itself, this exemplary case shows that we constantly need to attend to the forms of translating, adapting, revising and recycling that inform Romantic-period melodrama. Within this complex of textual-performative processes, vampirical melodramas, like their undead protagonists, continued to rear their heads on the nineteenth-century stage, offering us now countless possibilities for an exploration of the interconnections between the stage and the page, the visual and the verbal, technology and the body, as well as national and foreign theatrical traditions.

Notes

[1] On this contrast in Romantic-period Gothic drama and theatre, see Diego Saglia, "Staging Gothic Flesh: Material and Spectral Bodies in Romantic-Period Theatre," in *The Romantic Stage: A Many-Sided Mirror*, ed. by Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Fabio Liberto (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2014), 163-84.

[2] Richard Southern, "Trickwork on the English Stage," in *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, ed. by Phyllis Hartnoll (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 958. See also Alfred Emmett, "The Vampire Trap," *Theatre Notebook* 34 (1980): 128-9.

[3] See Diego Saglia, "Continental Trouble: The Nationality of Melodrama and the National Stage in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain," in *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790-1820*, ed. by Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 43-58; and *European Literatures in Britain, 1815-1832: Romantic Translations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 148-85.

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Clare Siviter (University of Bristol): "Teaching Proto-Melodrama in a Modern Languages Context: The Case of *Misanthropie et repentir* during the French Revolution"

This article focuses on teaching the proto-melodrama, *Misanthropie et repentir* (performed 1798, published 1799), a French 'translation' of August von Kotzebue's *Menschenhass und Reue* (1788), by Bursay, and arranged for the French stage by the actress Julie Molé.[1] *Misanthropie et repentir* is the fifth and final text on my module 'Revolution, Theatre, and the Public Sphere, 1789-1799' for final-year undergraduates in the French Department at the University of Bristol. This module, which is taught over twelve weeks, traces how the French who experienced the Revolution engaged with political and social debates through the largest entertainment forum of the period: theatre. The course examines these texts alongside prints, government orders, and reception material. The module's other primary theatrical texts, besides *Misanthropie et repentir*, are often more readily associated with the political side of the Revolution: Marie-Joseph Chénier's *Charles IX* (1789), about the king's decision to allow the St Bartholomew Day's massacre in 1572; Olympe de Gouge's *Mirabeau*

aux Champs-Elysées (1791), to commemorate the death of the famous Revolutionary politician that year; Jean-Louis Laya's *L'Ami des lois* (1793), about the mistaken guilt of a former aristocrat; and Charles-Pierre Ducancel's *L'Intérieur des comités révolutionnaires* (1795), a satire of the incompetence of the Terror's officials, which we study in both the 1795 and 1797 performance contexts.

The choice of *Misanthropie et repentir* as the final text was led by my research. I was keen to include a play with melodramatic tropes as I had been part of the AHRC 'Theatre of the Napoleonic Era' project at the University of Warwick, where we had frequently worked on melodrama.[2] As a dyslexic, I found the explicit role of gesture in the play text opened up another way of understanding the plays at hand. When designing this course, I was in the process of working on a critical edition of *Misanthropie et repentir* as part of the SITHERE ('Succès importants du théâtre révolutionnaire') project, based at the Université Clermont Auvergne (France).[3] *Misanthropie et repentir* struck me as an excellent example of a proto-melodramatic play from the late Directory period that allowed us to interrogate 'political' theatre of the Revolution, to build on recent scholarship on trauma and sentimentalism, to consider generic evolution and the role of acting styles, and to investigate the circulation of plays during a period of war.

Misanthropie et repentir is set in the German countryside around the estate of the Count Walberg and revolves around the revelation of two secrets. Madame Miller (actually Eulalie) is charming, charitable, but mysterious, and living in a self-imposed exile from society after having deserted her husband and two children to run off with the former's best friend. A second character, 'l'inconnu' ('the stranger') is forced to enter into society when he bravely saves the count from the river after a bridge collapsed. The two lost souls recognise each other as estranged husband and wife. Both have taken on new identities to hide their former status as the baron and baroness of Mello. With much anguish, they consent to separate, but then their children arrive from a local village, where they were being brought up. After a final adieu, Mello cries 'Eulalie, embrace your husband' and the family is reunited in a poignant tableau. This final scene moved audiences to tears and prints of it circulated across Europe. Although *Misanthropie et repentir* is not strictly a melodrama, it exhibits the tropes of vice versus virtue, exaggerated gestural acting, and extensive European success that we find in several melodramas of the late 1790s and early 1800s.[4]

After an initial interactive lecture covering the major historical events of the Directory and an introduction to Kotzebue as a playwright with a European success, we have three seminars dedicated to studying *Misanthropie et repentir* in detail. The aim of the first seminar is to discuss theoretical approaches to studying a play such as *Misanthropie et repentir* within the context of France but also its European circulation. In groups, the students prepare a presentation for the seminar on one of the set theoretical readings. These include Michel Espagne's approach to the concept of *transfert culturel*;[5] an excerpt of Katherine Astbury's monograph on trauma and Revolutionary literature;[6] and an extract of Cecilia Feilla's work on sentimental theatre.[7] After this, we discuss André Lefevere's concept of rewriting, where works are constrained by 'the dominant concept of what literature should (be allowed to) be – its poetics – and of what society should (be allowed to) be – ideology'.[8]

After developing a theoretical toolkit with which to address *Misanthropie et repentir*, we discuss the prefaces to two English editions and look at the character list in the original German alongside those of translations into English, French, Italian, and Spanish.[9] Although such a comparative exercise potentially presents a linguistic hurdle, most of the students on this course study French with another language, allowing them to draw on their skills elsewhere in their degree, or the foreign language elements are sufficiently simple to translate with an online dictionary. Drawing on the theoretical toolkit, we debate why some elements stay the same between the translations, why others change, and why

the prefaces express so much anxiety around the topics of marriage, divorce, and the family.

Having spent the first two sessions investigating the larger context of *Misanthropie et repentir*, we then drill down into the French play itself. After a quick act-by-act review of the play using a 'fiche de lecture',[10] we turn our attentions to the fifth act, especially scenes 10-12, which contain the highly-emotive confrontation, separation, and then embrace between Mello and Eulalie (she gives him a letter admitting her crime and allowing him to remarry, which Mello tears up; she refuses to take her jewels, apart from one ring, which Mello gave to her after the birth of their son; she asks for news of their children; they go to leave each other; the children appear; the family reunites). The ensuing discussion centres around three questions: What made these scenes so emotional for audiences? What do these scenes tell us about contemporary approaches to family, marriage, and divorce? How can we as twenty-first-century researchers understand the codified behaviour of act V? We then use the three paragraphs of stage directions for the final embrace and the prints from the play to debate what these images tell us about the role of gesture. Finally, we turn our attentions to the play's reception, especially the reviews in *L'Esprit des journaux français et étrangers* and *Le Magasin encyclopédique*.[11] Our discussions concentrate on the questions of what these reviews tell us about contemporary approaches to translation; what critics' views on the major differences between French and German theatre were; and how audiences reacted to these performances. Establishing a theoretical toolkit, using close textual analysis, and looking at reception documents together allows the students to develop the skills that they require for their final assessments whilst gaining a greater appreciation about the different ways in which we can study theatre.

I said earlier that my teaching of *Misanthropie et repentir* was informed by my research but it in turn influenced it. Annelies Andries and I won a BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant on 'Theatre on the Move, 1750-1850' that allowed us to hold academic and 'practice as research' workshops comparing different translations of *Menschenhass und Reue* in 2019.[12] This research allowed us to identify further translations in Dutch, Swedish, and Russian, as well as to examine the evolution of melodramatic gesture. In turn, I will incorporate these news translations into some of my MA level teaching on a comparative literatures and cultures programme.

Notes

[1] August von Kotzebue, *Misanthropie et repentir, drame en cinq actes et en prose du théâtre allemande de Kotz-büe,* trans. by Bursay, arranged by Julie Molé (Paris: Libraire au Théâtre du Vaudeville, an VII [1798-1799]).

[2] AHRC 'Theatre of the Napoleonic Era' project led by Katherine Astbury at the University of Warwick, 2013-2017, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/research/french/currentprojects/napoleonictheatre. I completed my PhD (2013-2016) as part of this project. The project included a workshop on comparing Pixérecourt's *La Forteresse du Danube* (1805) with its English translation, *The Fortress* by Hook (1807), and the conference 'Melodramatic Moment, 1790-1820', organised by Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks, which later led to the publication Katherine Hambridge and Jonathan Hicks, eds., *The Melodramatic Moment: Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790-1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

[3] Project SITHERE: 'Succès importants du théâtre révolutionnaire', led by Françoise Le Borgne at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme de Clermont Ferrand, http://www.msh-clermont.fr/content/sithere.

[4] For a discussion of the place of Kotzebue's sentimental dramas in relation to both the English Gothic and post-Revolutionary French melodrama, see Matthew Buckley, "Early English Melodrama" in *The Cambridge Companion to*

English Melodrama, edited by Carolyn Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 13-30 (14).

[5] Michel Espagne, "La Notion du transfert culturel," *Revue Sciences/Lettres*, 1 (2013), available at https://journals.openedition.org/rsl/219.

[6] Katherine Astbury, *Narrative Responses to the Trauma of the French Revolution* (London: Legenda, 2012), 1-16.

[7] Cecilia Feilla, *The Sentimental Theater of the French Revolution* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 1-18.

[8] André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of the Literary Frame* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), 14.

[9] August von Kotzebue, *Menschenhaß und Reue* (Berlin: Himburg, 1790); August von Kotzebue, *The Stranger: A Comedy* (London: C. Dilly, 1798); August von Kotzebue, *The Stranger, or Misanthropy and Repentance*, trans. by George Papendick (London: Wingrave, 1798); August von Kotzebue, *Misantropía y arrepentimiento*, trans. by Dionisio Solis (Madrid: Da Sancha, 1800); August von Kotzebue, *Misantropia e pentimento*, trans. by Guiseppe Bernardoni (Venice: A. Rossa, 1804).

[10] This is a technique I learned from Françoise Le Borgne and consists of creating a table with a box for each scene of the play to summarise the action. This is a helpful tool to make sure the students have a thorough understanding of the play and is useful for their revision and assignments.

[11] *L'Esprit des journaux français et étrangers*, 28:5 (February 1799), 207-12 and *Le Magasin encyclopédique*, 4:5 (1798-1799), 262-65, both available at: http://theatre1789-1815.e-monsite.com/pages/pieces-gens-et-lieux/les-pieces/m/misantropie-et-repentir.html

[12] https://theatreonthemove.wordpress.com.

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Project SITHERE: 'Succès importants du théâtre révolutionnaire', led by Françoise Le Borgne at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme de Clermont Ferrand: http://www.msh-clermont.fr/content/sithere.

Theatre on the Move in Times of Conflict (1750-1850) project: https://theatreonthemove.wordpress.com.

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