

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/59427>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

VICTORIAN VALUES AND THE VICTORIAN THEATRE

Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
Department of Theatre Studies, University of Warwick

Michael Barrie Francis

March 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	1
Chapter I Morality, Respectability and Decorum	6
Chapter II Technological Innovation and the Revolution in Mobility	101
Chapter III Expansion Overseas	173
Notes: Introduction	272
Chapter I	273
Chapter II	299
Chapter III	309
Bibliography	328
Illustrations and maps	At end of volume

ABSTRACT

I

I contend that 'morality, respectability, and decorum', were Victorian values trumpeted particularly loudly in Birmingham because of the local dominance of Nonconformism. Nonconformists had materially delayed the granting of a licence to Birmingham's playhouse, and continued actively hostile to its existence. Their influence on the prevailing 'official' moral climate is apparent in the reluctance of the local magistracy to grant music hall licence applications. Theatre managers here, then, laboured under an added imperative to maintain tranquil, well-conducted houses, presenting wholesome fare, and with strong community links.

II

My contention is that the theatre embraced and, occasionally, stimulated technological innovation. I also argue that Birmingham industrialists played a crucial role in materially changing both the functioning and the appearance of playhouses and music halls.

That the revolution in mobility was the overriding factor in the contemporary mushrooming of playhouses and music halls is, I suggest, too apparent to be gainsaid. I focus closely on the transformation of Birmingham's transport links, both externally and within the town, and the readiness of local promoters and managers of theatres to exploit the new opportunities to attract audiences.

III

I suggest that if cultural imperialism operated more subtly than the political brand, imperialism it remained. The relationship with the fledgling United States displayed the classic characteristics of paternalism and condescension, not unmixed with arrogance, on the part of the metropolitan power, and a general deference, giving way to fits of resentment, pique, and sometimes open rebellion, on the part of the erstwhile colonials. Minstrelsy and the cult of the 'Wild West' represent the beginnings of a reversal of the hitherto one-way cultural traffic, mirroring changes in the transatlantic political balance. I argue that the advent of steam navigation was a key factor in the expanding and vibrant Anglo-American exchange, with Birmingham playing a full role in that exchange.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the help of the following: of my late brother and sister-in-law, Eddie and Lynda Francis, whose legacy made this undertaking possible; of my supervisor, Jim Davis, for guiding me through this study and sharing with me some of his deep knowledge and understanding of the Victorian theatre; of those who made helpful suggestions or provided valuable technical assistance in the production of this study: Ted Bottle, Gordon Coggan, Wendy Fox-Kirk, sr., Wendy Fox-Kirk, jr., Elizabeth Francis, B.K. Leahy, Shena Mason, R.J. Mundell, J.E.H. Peart, J.M. Walpole, David Wilmore, and former and current staff members of the Department of Archives and Heritage at Birmingham Central Library.

I declare that this thesis is my own work, and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

THESIS INTRODUCTION

The picture of themselves which the Victorians have handed down to us is of a people who valued morality and respectability, and, perhaps, valued the appearance of it as much as the reality. Perhaps the pursuit of the latter furthered the achievement of the former. They also valued the technological achievements and the revolution in mobility that they witnessed and substantially brought about. Not least did they value the imperial power, formal and informal, that they came to wield over vast tracts of the globe.

The intention of the following study is to take these three broad themes which, in the national consciousness, are synonymous with the Victorian age, and examine their applicability to the contemporary theatre, its practitioners, and its audiences. Any capacity to undertake such an investigation rests on the reading for a Bachelor's degree in History at Warwick, obtained when the University was still abuilding, and an innate if undisciplined attachment to things theatrical, fostered by an elder brother and sister. Such an attachment, to those who share it, will require no elaboration.

My special interest will lie in observing how a given theme operated at a particular or local level. To do so is to bring it under the microscope and note its workaday effects. Assessing the extent of those effects may lead me to either question or endorse an assumed potency.

The point that the Victorian theatre enjoyed a rich and varied theatrical life outside London is one that bears repeating. My own particular proofs of this will be drawn

chiefly from my home city (until 1889 a mere borough) of Birmingham, which, between 1774 and 1956, boasted one of the most handsome and well-appointed playhouses in the land, albeit one that more than once enjoyed the mixed blessing of rising from its own ashes.

If provincial towns shared the common characteristic of not being London, it did not follow that any one of them could be described as wholly 'typical'. I suggest that the random selection and scrutiny of any would be revealing of factors special or perhaps unique to that community. Certainly one does not have to look far below the surface of Victorian Birmingham to identify a society that was nonconformist not only in the religious sense, and I shall weigh the significance of such considerations in the conditioning of the local response to the opening and continuing presence of the town's first permanent theatre, and, later, to the arrival of the music halls. To place this in a slightly broader context, a brief look will be taken at the state of popular morality as evidenced in the correspondence columns of the local press of Birmingham's smaller but older sister city of Coventry, much more securely under the sway of the Established Church, and enjoying the status of a sometime bishopric.

When investigating the second chosen Victorian theme of technological advancement and the revolution in mobility, and the capacity of the contemporary theatre to respond to and even stimulate such innovations, the participation of 'the town of a thousand trades' will be subject to special scrutiny, and it is my hope that such investigation might be productive of evidence sufficient to mount a challenge to the longstanding paradox of William Murdock's discovery of gas lighting occurring less than

two miles from New Street, and the apparent absence of the town's theatre from any authoritative list of the earliest playhouses to benefit from the new illumination.

The exercise of imperialism for most of the Victorian period was a surprisingly subtle one. Power could be exerted over lands far and near, usually without the need of formal annexation. If the American colonies had secured their political independence from Britain, their citizens continued to accept the cultural sway of the Mother Country, who was graciously pleased to continue exercising it. Even when the young nation began to produce theatrical formulae of its own, they were quickly brought across the ocean for approval, and if Britain re-exported them -- as in the case of minstrelsy -- refined and polished, that was an added source of pride and satisfaction for the ex-colonials.

Imperialism, in all its forms, was both a stimulus to and a beneficiary of the advent of the ocean-going steamer. I propose to ascertain whether inter-continental sea travel was becoming sufficiently safe, fast and cheap to activate a significant increase in the transatlantic exchange of theatrical talent, and if so, whether it remained confined to a professional elite, shuttling between the established metropolitan centre of culture of London and the burgeoning new one of New York, or encompassed humbler practitioners, and whether all operated on a vastly enlarged transatlantic circuit that encompassed the still-industrializing English North and Midlands and the scattered towns of the American Middle- and Far-West whose isolation was ending in the wake of the transcontinental railroad. In this context Birmingham stands for provincial Britain, and the degree of its participation in the Anglo-American theatrical intercourse is taken as a rough measure of the involvement of other substantial towns. Notwithstanding, it should be recognized that Birmingham's approximately equidistant location from London and

the great transatlantic port and theatrical venue of Liverpool, where many American performers would have disembarked, without doubt gave it an 'edge' in competing for the expanding theatrical 'trade'. The town's own inherent importance as a magnet for these performers must have been very greatly enhanced by its convenience as a stopping-place *en-route* to the metropolis.

Two of the 'Victorian values' I discuss are based on premises underpinned by quantifiable proofs. There can be no dispute that the period witnessed dramatic developments in many fields of technology, and in the speed, convenience and accessibility of inland and transoceanic travel. That such innovations were 'valued' can be determined by the extent to which Victorians, on both sides of the Atlantic, utilized them. My task is to investigate the degree of effect and influence they bore on the theatre and its contemporary practitioners.

But I use 'value' as a noun as well as an active verb, and I note the warning of James Walvin, who insists that the very concept of Victorian values 'represents a particular, partial and debatable interpretation of nineteenth-century history'. [1] Even -- perhaps especially -- an unqualified use of the term 'Victorians' harbours inherent perils. The task of analysis and categorization has been undertaken by others. Matthew Sweet challenges the concept of the prevalence of male-dominated families, argues that libertarian ideas about gender equality, homosexuality, and 'recreational' drug-use circulated more freely than the present generation might suspect, and suggests that the seeds of '21st-century' phenomena such as high-powered advertising and the promotion of celebrity cults were firmly planted by the Victorians. [2] Jeremy

Paxman utilizes paintings to illuminate many aspects of the Victorian experience, including living and working conditions, gender and class roles, religious and moral attitudes, and tastes in the arts. [3] A.N. Wilson believes that people constitute the essential ingredient of history, and illustrates the diversity of Victorian society by presenting them in a remarkably wide-ranging series of situations. [4] All of these studies challenge the concept of Victorian ‘values’ as revived and promoted by a number of Thatcherite politicians in the 1980s. My use of the term relates largely to the Victorian minority who set or caught a public mood that is, one suspects, at least as recognizable to posterity as it was to participating contemporaries, and my remit is to consider to what extent contemporary theatre managements were challenged, influenced and inhibited by that mood. The Victorians I discuss are, by definition, to a greater or lesser degree participants in the world they inhabit, even when, like those self-appointed iconoclasts, the raucous galleryites of Birmingham’s Theatre Royal, they are actively rejecting that public mood.

Apart from contemporary local press reports, the chief sources for my research were the theatre playbill collections in the Archives Department of Birmingham Central Library, and the Victorian theatre’s ‘trade’ newspaper, the *Era*, which constitutes an incredibly rich and still underused resource, my frequent and longstanding browsings through which provided the germ of this study.

I MORALITY, RESPECTABILITY AND DECORUM

INTRODUCTION

To the disinterested observer it might have appeared that Victorian Birmingham was too preoccupied with being the 'Workshop of the World' and making money to be overmuch concerned with intellectual controversy or abstruse questions of morality. But this was far from being the case. Temperance, the teaching of religion in schools, and the theatre's right to exist were just three matters exercising the minds and emotions of local protagonists. Though it is the last that will chiefly concern us, a common denominator applies to all three, viz., the role of Nonconformism, and Nonconformists were strongly represented and influential in the town (Birmingham did not achieve city status until 1889), for reasons that will be reviewed later in this chapter. By definition, not all the beliefs of Nonconformists coincided, but in some matters there existed a sufficient consensus to suggest that their opinions had been spawned from a common intellectual seed-bed.

Though the early Church forbade the faithful from witnessing what it viewed as decadent and immoral survivals from paganism and bloodletting 'spectacles', while some of the Church Fathers had, individually, voiced strong anti-theatrical sentiments, and St. Augustine had composed a subtly-argued treatise to the same end, the Nonconformists' most recognizable antecedents were the Lollards. For them opposition to the drama was of a piece with their dislike of religious imagery - statues, paintings, ceremonial, liturgy. The Church encouraged and priests participated in the later

presentation of liturgical drama, and the miracle plays into which it had, by the later later Middle Ages, evolved. Episodes from the Bible story were thereby represented in a striking way to the people, and saintly lives exemplified. But for the Lollards this amounted to premeditated distraction, mediation, vanity, and a violation of the Commandment, 'Thou shalt not take the name of thy God in vain'. It clouded and confused the essential Christian message. It was a new, pernicious form of the theatricality that reached its apogee in the Mass itself.

Such and similar sentiments descended to the nineteenth-century Nonconformists through a long pedigree of native protagonists which included Stephen Gosson, John Rainolds, and William Prynne. None of these possessed a capacity for word-mincing, least of all Prynne, who comprehensively damned all stage presentations as 'sinfull, heathenish, lewde, ungodly Spectacles, and most pernicious Corruptions' . . . and branded 'the Profession of Play-poets, of Stage players; together with the penning, acting, and frequenting of Stage players', as 'unlawfull, infamous and misbeseeming Christians'. [1]

The antitheatrical forces achieved their most signal victory in 1642 with the closing down, by Act of Parliament, of all the London playhouses. Their restoration under Charles II proved to be relatively short-lived. In 1737 the cause of the erstwhile Puritans found supporters in the government of Sir Robert Walpole, whose sense of humour did not extend to a full appreciation of the personal taunts of satirical dramatists. Henceforth official recognition was accorded to the existence of only two patent theatres, and

arbitrary control over the content of plays was given to the Lord Chamberlain.

The Lord Chamberlain might have exercised control over what happened on the stage, but he had no powers to regulate what went on beyond the footlights. Continuing reports of manifestations of licentiousness and immorality, allegedly commonplace in auditoria, was another source of ammunition for the antitheatrical forces. Drawing on several contemporary sources, Ben Wilson has reconstructed what was seemingly an all-too-typical scene at Covent Garden during the Regency period. An actor of the status of John Philip Kemble struggles vainly to retain the attention of an audience which seems to find the uninhibited activities of aristocrats and their courtesans in the boxes more entertaining, and voices its appreciation accordingly, or, when opportunities arise - as they frequently do - emulates their example. Fights are commonplace, and the prospect of a full-blooded riot ever present. [2] Among Evangelical Protestants the conviction that theatres were dens of iniquity had long subsisted, but now they would experience a growing accretion of support from a middle class, for large numbers of whom theatre-visiting would, for a generation and perhaps longer, be stigmatized as an activity not to be indulged in by respectable citizens.

The rough hypothesis of this chapter utilizes the received wisdom that with the coming of the new Queen, her marriage to Prince Albert, and the establishment of a young royal family, a new moral rectitude set in which quickly exorcised the ghosts of George IV, Queen Caroline, and the Regency rakes, and thence percolated far down the existing social hierarchy. Before attempting to demonstrate what validity this scenario might, in the cultural sense, possess, it is as well to recognize its more obvious fault-

lines. Novels, for instance, in the hands of new exponents like Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott, had, by the turn of the nineteenth century, already largely ceased to be characterized by low-life themes and picaresque scoundrels, and where these did figure they were handled with suitable discretion. A proof of the rehabilitation of the genre is offered by certain of Jane Austen's own heroines, who no longer experience a sense of shame when discovered with a novel in their hands. Meanwhile, in the field of drama, three decades before Victoria's coronation, Thomas Bowdler, a notable harbinger of the new gentility, had published a new text of the works of Shakespeare, purged of its Elizabethan and Jacobean crudities, and pronounced eminently suitable for family reading.

Human history frequently demonstrates that eras characterized by libertarianism in its various forms are succeeded by periods of moral repression, and vice versa. Nor are such trends and their reactions necessarily determined on high by some 'know-better' elite, and handed down the social ladder for dutiful emulation. Looking towards the end of the period in question, there is ample evidence of a groundswell of popular forces beginning to loosen the restrictions of Victorian decorum and propriety well before the demise of the venerable Queen and the accession of a monarch perceived to be more relaxed about such matters. The adjective 'naughty' has been coupled with the last decade of the century not altogether for alliterative reasons. [3]

Recognizing at the outset, then, the limitations of my thesis, I seek evidence to substantiate the more modest claim that, although the Victorians did not initiate moves towards a stronger interpretation and practice of what was socially 'proper', their

era is characterized by trends that moved firmly and steadily in that direction. Although Gilbert and Sullivan's collaboration did not begin until the Queen's reign was more than half over, Gilbert's recollections of the comic operas that preceded theirs were that they were often

frankly improper; whereas the ladies' dresses suggested that the management had gone on the principle of doing a little and doing it well. We resolved . . . that our dialogue should be devoid of offence, and . . . [f]inally, we agreed that no lady of [our] company should be required to wear a dress that she could not wear with absolute propriety at a fancy dress ball . . . [4]

It is interesting that, in this case, such reforms had been effected, as it were, from within. The censoring powers had in practice sometimes been more tolerant of the content of musical presentations than of 'legitimate' ones, perhaps considering them a further step removed from reality - witness the strictures placed upon *La Dame aux Camelias*, which were largely removed when it underwent an operatic metamorphosis and emerged as *La Traviata*; if this had exemplified a certain leniency, that the blue pencil of the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays had not been overmuch employed anyway until the later 1860s seems to have been due not to any particular reluctance on holders of the office to exercise their powers. Rather, 'the paucity of moral censorship in the drama [of this period] seems to lie in the fact that few playwrights in England had the inclination or the temerity to offer their audiences morally exceptionable plays'. [5] That they did not do so says much about the

prevailing moral climate to which their works were peculiarly exposed.

An *Era* editorial, published in June, 1894, rejoices that moral rectitude has triumphed in all branches of the British performing arts, but deplores the indulgence shown to Parisian importations by the Reader of Plays, especially a recent production of Sardou and de Najac's *Divorçons*, 'one of the most openly indecent of French comedies'.

Nothing can be imagined more glaringly immodest than the last act of the piece, in which a man is shown dosing a woman with stimulants until she openly proposes to him to commit an act of infidelity to the individual who stands to her in the place of a husband. It is doubtful whether anything has ever been done on any modern stage as indecent as this . . .

The editor went on to declare:

We do these things differently in England, and we can manage to amuse ourselves pretty well over here without the obscenity which is one of the necessities of French existence. [6]

The editorial may, of course, have been motivated in part by resentment and jealousy of a successful foreign 'invasion' of the British theatre, just as post-World War II American musicals and variety performers in the West End and classical British actors on Broadway produced similar reactions by outshining the native product. But it is nevertheless interesting to find the journal, long considered as the voice of the

theatrical profession, and noted for its generally liberal-leaning reviews of controversial works, to be arguing for more, rather than less, censorship of the drama. The jingoistic touch in the last sentence is likewise revealing. One suspects that the great majority of contemporary readers would have shared the editor's assumption of the nation's tenure of the moral high ground. [7]

THE PROVINCIAL EXPERIENCE: COVENTRY

Though the Lord Chamberlain's writ ran throughout the country, direct enforcement of his rulings in areas remoter from London was more difficult than in the metropolis itself. Nevertheless, even here there were vigilant voices ready to make themselves heard when the occasion was judged to so demand. One illustration is offered in the columns of the *Coventry Herald*, which, on October 6, 1848, carried an advertisement announcing that at the Theatre Royal on October 9,

MADAME WARTON'S ORIGINAL WALHALLA ESTABLISHMENT,
 FROM LONDON, WILL MAKE THEIR FIRST APPEARANCE.

As the highlight of the programme, Madame Warton will appear in her original and heroic LADY GODIVA, as personated by her at the Ancient City Pageantry, on the 26th of June, amidst the acclamations of delighted thousands. [8]

The reaction was immediate. The same issue featured a long letter from 'Probity', begging to be allowed to call the attention of the public to the approaching exhibition.

One would have thought that the orgies every year enacted in connection with the Procession, would have sufficed to have given our City a fame which is anything but enviable; but, alas! does it not seem that the mind, once in love with evil, is ever and anon seeking objects for its gratification? Let not the unwary seeker after pleasure be beguiled by the approval accorded to the forthcoming presentation by a long list of distinguished patrons, and . . . the laudations of a popular press, [for neither are] guarantees for the morality of that which they commend. Let every lover of *genuine* morality tear away the garniture which is thus thrown around vice, and by which it is emboldened to walk abroad into society [and thus] carry us further and further from the paths of purity . . . Let me then exhort all who wish to raise rather than depress still further the moral character of our population, to set their faces like a flint against the approaching exhibition. Let them warn the young, counsel the ignorant, and seek by every possible means to render unpopular that which only needs the spell to be broken, so that every one may see its wickedness; and above all, let not any who would maintain a character for respectability sanction these things by their presence, or assist in giving them publicity. [9]

Arguably, the exhortations of ‘Probity’ gave considerable publicity to Madame Warton’s exhibition. The *Herald* extended its ‘Correspondence’ space, which was dominated by the subject for the next two weekly issues. On October 13 ‘Probity’ was taken severely to task by ‘Honesty’ (who identified himself as ‘both husband and father’), first for condemning the exhibition ‘*before that exhibition had been presented to*

the people of Coventry'. Further, if 'Probity' were to be consistent, he should demand that '*the model rooms* of our School of Design here . . . and those of the British Museum, National Gallery, and other public institutions, be *immediately swept of their best models*; and that many of *the most choice paintings* of the first masters in the world be forthwith *cancelled and obliterated* . . . and put *beyond the possibility of the gaze of the human eye*'. Madame Warton's exhibition was, in fact, 'one of *living statuary every, figure, although human, being fixed, and motionless*; and, therefore, divested of those stimulating impulses and emotions which often accompany the play-actor's performances'. 'Honesty' concluded by asserting that to witness the piece was 'perfectly compatible with pure morality'. [10]

The October 20 issue carried a further letter from 'Honesty', citing the 'support and approval awarded to it, by the numerous *families* who have visited . . . the *Tableaux Vivants*, as presented by Madame Warton and her talented company' as a proof of its 'perfectly unexceptionable character', and an entertainment, moreover, 'which must make a permanent and salutary impression upon many individuals out of those large audiences who have visited it; and of whom it is honourable to say, that their conduct has been marked by a degree of decorum, and an attentive demeanour, seldom seen within the walls of a Theatre'. [11]

'Honesty' was now joined in the lists by 'Fair Play', who believed that the attendance of 'persons of the strictest virtue, and most unblemished character' had amply vindicated the claims for the beauty and integrity of the exhibition. He urged 'Probity' to 'venture on a squint from the back of the gallery', and would 'guarantee

that he shall be both surprised and delighted, and that he shall come away with his morals not the least damaged'. [12]

By the later twentieth century, *laissez-faire* thinking in the Western world did not hold sway merely in the field of economics, but was profoundly affecting social and moral norms. If there is a logical link, it is not one that most Victorian Britons seemed prepared to make. Such exchanges as those discussed provide a clear demonstration that the theatres and newspapers were expected to observe standards which were regarded as 'responsible', and any perceived departure from the strict social norms would need to be convincingly vindicated - hence the elaborate justification of Madame Warton's exhibition. An indication that social norms were becoming progressively even stricter is provided by the Coventry Theatre Royal's 1855 presentation of *The Beggar's Opera*. It had been performed some seven years before at the same theatre, but for the new production it was deemed necessary that it should be 'divested as much as possible of all that was coarse and objectionable', as the *Herald* approvingly reported. [13]

BIRMINGHAM

Coventry offers a foretaste of a controversy that was to beset Birmingham in the late 1860s. By then, Stephens notes, 'it was becoming more and more difficult to discriminate between the merely indelicate and the immoral'. [14] But before considering what impact the presentation of plays like Boucicault's famously controversial *Formosa* had in Birmingham, and recognizing that the town, like its peers, had a growing middle class prompted by notions of gentility, it will be useful to take cognizance of factors

at work there which went well beyond considerations of decorum and respectability.

What made Birmingham arguably not unique, but certainly distinctive, among provincial towns, was the extent to which its moral climate was influenced by the Nonconformist churches.

Nonconformism had long been an important element in the religious and social fabric of Birmingham, stretching back at least as far as Puritan times, when Prince Rupert had seen fit to sack the town. When the Act of Uniformity requiring all practising clergy to accept the Prayer Book of Queen Elizabeth virtually in its entirety and to conform to the liturgy of the Church of England as then by law established was passed in 1662, one fifth of the clergy, nearly two thousand ministers refused to comply and were consequently deprived of their livings. The 'Five Mile' Act of 1665 forbade the ejected clergy to travel within five miles of any corporate city, town or borough where they had preached or held a living. Sir Winston Churchill comments: 'A large group of villages where modern Birmingham now stands happened to be more than five miles from any "City, Town Corporate or Borough". The non-conformity of the Midlands focused itself here, and can be seen to-day [1956] in high repute'. [15] Thus the town, virtually unregulated by ancient charters and with no entrenched Anglican establishment, became the resort of increasing numbers of ejected ministers 'who had found in the free air of Birmingham a congenial refuge from the persecuting royalists'. [16]

The Free churches, in alliance with the Evangelical wing of the Church of England, would spearhead opposition to the establishment of a permanent theatre in Birmingham, and in succeeding years would maintain their hostility. The town's first theatre, in Moor

Street, opened in 1740, but was forced to close twelve years later, in face of competition from a new, more commodious playhouse in King Street. Birmingham's first historian, William Hutton, purported to see the conflict between the Dissenters and supporters of the new theatre as a competition for audiences. In his sometimes eccentric prose he commented that in response to the King Street theatre's opening in 1752 '[t]he pulpits took the alarm, and in turn, roared after their customers . . . This declaration of war, fortunately happening at the latter end of the summer, the campaign was over, and the company retreated into winter quarters, without hostilities'. [17]

In 1764 the redundant Moor Street building passed into the keeping of the town's Methodists, who made it their Birmingham headquarters. John Wesley himself preached at its reopening on March 21st, and the symbolism of the occasion was not disregarded. 'Happy would it be', he told 'an exceedingly large congregation' 'if all the playhouses in the Kingdom were converted to so good an use.' [18] But a local versifier, John Freeth, saw only humour in the metamorphosis.

Where dancing and tumbling have many times been,
 And plays of all kinds by large audiences seen,
 These wicked diversions are not to be more,
 Poor Shakespeare is buffeted out of the door.

Behold, where the sons of good humour appear'd,
 The scenes are thrown down, and a pulpit is rear'd;
 The boxes on each side converted to pews,

And the pit all around nought but gravity shews.

The music's sweet sound which enliven'd the mind,

Is turn'd into that of a different kind;

No comic burletta or French rigadon,

But all join together, and chant a psalm tune. [19]

In August 1773, a group of interested parties meeting at the Swan Inn, an agreement resulted for the construction in New Street of a new theatre 'with proper Stage, Traps, Boxes, Galleries, Staircases, Seats ', etc. [20] Despite protests, building began and the new house opened for business in the following June.

On Monday last [reported *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*], the new Theatre in the Town was opened with the Comedy of 'As You Like It', and the Entertainment of 'Miss in her Teens;' [also] a Prologue . . . suitable to the Occasion

The different Parts in the Plays performed this Week have been well filled, and the Performers in general met with universal Approbation. [The scenes] are allowed to be as well executed as any in London. The Audience each Night has been brilliant and numerous, and the Theatre is built upon a most excellent Plan . . . and [is] supposed to be as good [as], if not the best House in England out of London. One Circumstance we are sorry to remark - that several of the Gentlemen that appeared in the Boxes were dressed in a very improper Manner for so conspicuous a Place, and it is recommended to them in future to pay more respect to the Ladies, by dressing themselves in a Manner suitable to the

Company, and as Gentlemen should, who appear in the Boxes. [21]

The instance of inappropriate dressing suggests an unsurprising sensitivity to manifestations of unsophistication in a place where cultural progress must for long lag behind the breakneck pace of industrial development. As late as 1797 an observer would comment that ‘Birmingham is not a place where a gentleman would chuse to make a residence. Its continual noise and smoke prevent it from being desirable in that respect’. [22] Notwithstanding, the noise and the smoke were evidence of an innovative, wealth-creating and growingly self-confident society which would attract and foster aspirational entrepreneurial and managerial classes. By the early 1780s, Birmingham’s first historian, William Hutton, records that ‘about thirty-six of the inhabitants keep carriages for their own use: and near fifty have country houses’. [23]

A well-appointed theatre with seat prices high enough to discourage the potentially unruly, where the local elite could foregather and, perhaps entertain out-of-town guests, had an obvious appeal for the upwardly-mobile, and transcended merely cultural considerations. Such factors played an important role in enlisting the active and continuing support for the establishment and maintenance of a theatre worthy of the town by Birmingham’s greatest contemporary entrepreneur, Matthew Boulton. In 1777, Boulton wrote to the Lord Chamberlain, the Earl of Dartmouth, urging his approval for the granting of letters patent and the title ‘Royal’ to the new playhouse. ‘Of late years, Birmingham hath been much visited by Persons of Fashion, and it is some inducement to prolong their stay when their evenings can be spent in a commodious airy Theatre.’ [24]

Local opposition was led and orchestrated by the Reverend John Parsons, the Evangelical Vicar of the Birmingham Parish Church of St. Martin. In *The Doctrine of Salvation*, based upon two sermons preached there in in 1770, he had railed against the indulgence of sinful pleasures. [25] Among such pleasures it became apparent that the Reverend Parsons included theatre-visiting. On February 15, 1777, Parsons wrote to the Earl of Dartmouth, expressing his confidence that his Lordship would view the application to license a theatre in Birmingham ‘in its proper light, and consider it as a thing which must be productive of idleness and dissipation’. He assured Dartmouth that ‘the greatest part of the inhabitants are very averse to such a measure and dread the licensing of a theatre as an evil which they would wish to prevent’, and begged his favour in opposing such a Bill. [26]

The petition for a licence, duly presented to the House of Commons that same year, contained promises designed to reassure and placate both Members and Nonconformist factions in Birmingham. The petitioners undertook that ‘no public diversion such as rope-dancing, tumbling, puppet-shows, &c which have lately been exhibited, and are greatly complained of, shall be permitted at the New Street Theatre’. [27]

The first reading of the Bill took place at the end of March, and attracted the support of Edmund Burke himself. Perhaps with an eye to assuaging Evangelical fears that a theatre was a standing inducement to commit the Seventh Deadly Sin, he asserted that ‘in the City where Iron and Steel were first wrought, of the various Means which Idleness will take for its amusement, in Truth I believe the Theatre is the most innocent’. Observing that Birmingham was ‘the great Toy-shop of Europe’ he asked the House to

consider if on that account it was not ‘the most proper Place in England to have a licensed Theatre’. [28] The House agreed that the second reading of the Bill should take place in the latter part of April.

An extract from Matthew Boulton’s letter to the Earl of Dartmouth, supporting the licence application, was quoted earlier, but the letter contained arguments other than the desirability of entertaining visiting ‘persons of fashion’ during the summer season at an appropriate venue. Boulton’s personal attachment to the theatre was genuine and well-substantiated.[29] Moreover, as a businessman his reputation was one of proven integrity. He now deplored the ‘many evils to apprentices and the lower class of people’ resulting from having two unlicensed theatres, ‘which, being more than the place can support, necessitates the losing party to have recourse to various stratagems for putting off their tickets’. (A particularly pernicious practice had been that to which some unscrupulous employers had resorted, of forcing workers to take part of their wages in theatre tickets.) Boulton argued that such practices would end when the town had but one *licensed* theatre, and ‘under the direction of twenty inhabitants of respectable character . . . All well regulated states have found it expedient to indulge the people with amusements of some kind or other.’ The local inhabitants were ‘more polite and civilized’ than formerly. A well-conducted theatre could ‘improve the morals, the manners or taste, of the people, and at the same time prevent them from relapsing into the barbarous amusements which prevailed in the last century’. Boulton then stressed some practical advantages

I have frequently given my designers, painters, and modellers, tickets to the play,

in order to improve them in those arts by which they are to live and gain reputation . . . Your lordship, I presume, will allow that it is impossible for a person to paint or model an attitude or a passion which he never saw so well expressed, nor can any such artist arrive at any degree of elegance without advantages of this sort. [30]

It is possible that some of Boulton's arguments had been canvassed in the town before he wrote to Dartmouth. In a second letter, dated February 24, Parsons attempted to forestall two of them, broadening his own objections beyond the strictly moral and principled to the practical and utilitarian. He addressed the question of ticket abuses.

These bad practices, say the friends to the intended scheme, will be prevented by a royal theatre. But in this, I think, they are mistaken. For if the mischiefs complained of, are not prevented by a greater power, how are they to be prevented by a less one? . . . [They] may at any time be removed by having recourse to those salutary laws, which were made for the correction of those and such like evils.

He was dismissive of the notion of a playhouse as a social venue for the genteel.

Some say, that the town of Birmingham is of such consequence, that it ought to have in it a place of public spectacle . . . But I presume, that it never can, or will be, considered, as a reason why Birmingham, contrary to the consent of the major

part of its inhabitants, should have a licensed theatre. [31]

On April 14, ‘the Gentlemen of Birmingham’ (the Reverend Parsons and other like-minded citizens), sent a letter to Lord Dartmouth, enclosing the results of a poll recently taken in the town, claiming that supporters of a licensed playhouse were ‘mostly interested proprietors . . . or persons nearly connected with them’. Once more, his Lordship’s aid was sought ‘to frustrate a thing, so big with mischief’. [32]

Of the 2449 rate-paying residents canvassed, 1468 were reported to be against the proposal for a licensed theatre, and only 124 in favour. The remaining 857 were either ‘neuter’ or ‘not at home when called upon’. [33] A majority of some twelve to one for the opponents appeared to provide strong evidence of the unpopularity of the proposal, an unpopularity earlier attested to by Dr. John Ash, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Hospital, who had written thus to Dartmouth on April 3:

The first rumour of the petition being presented, threw the town into the greatest confusion and hurry, and every man seemed ready to take up his pen to write his name against it. The free spirit of this place showed a total aversion, in general, to a patent playhouse. [34]

The skill of Parsons and his allies in articulating their objections, marshalling the forces of opposition, and conducting a poll which appeared to confirm that they were giving voice to a popular consensus is noteworthy. That it was an influential and probably decisive factor in ensuring the defeat of the Bill on its second reading on April

28 is demonstrable from a study of the proceedings of the ensuing debate, which were reported in some detail by the *Gazette*.

Luminaries like Fox and Wilkes lent their considerable oratorical skills in support of Burke and his advocacy of a licensed theatre for Birmingham. Fox was sceptical of the claims of the petitioners as to how representative of local feeling the poll they had conducted really was. Wilkes declared himself 'strenuous for the Bill'. But Sir William Bagot, who had spoken at some length at the first reading, was very receptive to the memorialists, asking 'why, when the Sense of the Inhabitants was so clearly against a licensed Theatre, should the House force one upon them?'. John Fownes Luttrell was equally convinced. He would oppose the Bill 'as it was evidently repugnant to . . . the Inhabitants of Birmingham'. He was 'guided entirely by the Evidence given at the Bar, from which it was evident that a Majority of the most Respectable Inhabitants were against a licensed Theatre, or indeed any Theatre at all'. [35] At the division, 18 Members voted in support of the Bill, while 69 opposed it.

Thus the best efforts of Matthew Boulton and Edmund Burke were defeated, and not until October, 1807, would a 'Docket of licence under his Majesty's sign manual subscribed by the Attorney General for Matthew Boulton and others to establish a theatre in Birmingham' be issued. [36]

Meanwhile, the Evangelical forces in the town had scored another triumph over their perceived enemy. It had become apparent that Birmingham could not provide sufficient patronage to maintain two large theatres, and the playhouse in King Street finally closed its doors in 1779. The following year the building was bought by the Countess of

Huntingdon, who, while herself adhering to the Church of England, was sympathetic to those 'Methodist' clergy who had been expelled from their incumbencies for their Evangelistic views. Consequently, in 1761 she had opened what would be the first of a number of chapels up and down the country, for the installation of such dissenting clergymen. The redundant playhouse became one such, and its transformation awoke loud echoes of the fate of the Moor Street theatre sixteen years earlier. In 1780, when local Evangelicals boasted of the 'conversion' of the King Street building, they were investing the word with much more than its apparent meaning. Hutton's comments were penned within a couple of years of the event.

Methodism still trod upon the heels of the players, for, in 1780, the spirit of the stage drooping, the itinerant preacher took possession of the Theatre in King Street. [37]

Meanwhile, hostility to the very presence of a theatre - albeit unlicensed - continued unabated. Opposition took the form of notices in the local press and sermons from Evangelical pulpits. Sometimes it took violent forms, notably the several attacks by arsonists. In August, 1791, they were successful, and the building was completely destroyed. The culprits were never apprehended, and there has been no evidence to link them with any Dissenting sect. Suffice it to say that many Evangelicals, acting according to the dictates of their consciences, contributed to a climate of hostility which at worst threatened the existence of the town's theatre, and at best forced it habitually to defend and justify the nature of the fare it presented to the public. A rebuilt theatre was opened in New Street in 1794. [38]

As might be supposed, the granting of letters patent to Birmingham's Theatre Royal in 1807 did nothing to mitigate the hostility of local Evangelically-minded churchmen, whose opposition was now focused upon deterring prospective audiences. Managers were vilified. Robert William Elliston, his biographer writes, 'was subject during this season at Birmingham to furious attacks from the pulpits of certain preachers'.

Dubbing one unnamed antagonist 'the John Knox of stage reformers', he continues:

Not content with merely preaching against the fancied evil tendency of stage plays, the Birmingham orator assaulted our hero in the public streets, and on one occasion even threatened him with violence. [39]

The Royal fell victim to another fire in January, 1820, this time apparently accidental. The portico survived, but the auditorium was burned out. Rebuilding was completed within seven months, and the new house would survive until replaced by an enlarged modern building in 1904. By now the town's leading preacher, and one with a growing national reputation, John Angell James, was long established at the Carr's Lane Meeting House. He had arrived there in 1805, and would continue as Minister until his death in 1859. Two sermons preached there in the summer of 1824, and published the same year under the title, *The Scoffer Admonished*, incorporate his sentiments on the subject of the theatre. His main charge was that mockery of religion ran 'through more or less the whole of dramatic representation, plays are . . . performed, with the obvious design of bringing all scriptural piety into contempt. The theatre is the very seat of the scornful'. Although he includes a footnote, assuring readers that it was by no means the

author's intention 'to affirm that all who frequent the theatre are . . . vicious persons; far be it from him to prefer an accusation so extensive and unfounded as this', the severity and range of James's castigations leave little room for compromise. The theatre was 'that resort of the vicious, and seminary of vice; that broad and flowery avenue to the bottomless pit'.

Here a young man finds no hindrances to sin . . . but on the contrary, every thing to inflame his passions, to excite his criminal desires, and to gratify his appetites for vice. The language, the music, the company, are all adapted to a sensual taste, and calculated to demoralize the mind. Multitudes of once comparatively innocent and happy youth, have to date their ruin . . . from that hour when their feet first trod the polluted precincts of a theatre. [40]

Though the general response of Theatre Royal managements to such tirades was to emphasize the wholesome nature of their programmes, Alfred Bunn, who had become manager in 1819, confronted them head on. In *Bell's Life in London*, for August 15, 1824, it was reported :

A sort of theatrical warfare has sprung up in Birmingham between Mr. Bunn, the proprietor of the theatre in that town, and the Rev. J. A. James, of Carrs Lane Meeting House. The latter has, both from the pulpit and with his pen denounced as 'heretical and damnable' all theatrical performances, and has attacked in no very measured terms the promoters and advocates of such amusements. Mr. Bunn, who

has been personally alluded to, has defended himself and his calling in an ably-written pamphlet, in which he has given the Parson some wholesome contagion. But he has taken a more signal revenge, for he has introduced on his boards the Comedy of the ‘Hypocrite,’ with admirable effect, and so much has this been relished by the enlightened part of the hardware population, that it was repeated with unprecedented success on Thursday last . . . [41]

Making free with Bickerstaffe’s comedy, Bunn had, in the characters of Dr. Cantwell and Mawworm, unmercifully caricatured and parodied both James and his adherents. If the Royal’s own advertisement is to be believed, reports of the production’s success were not exaggerated. It claimed that ‘no representation for years has so strongly influenced the public’, and that the ‘House last Thursday, immediately on the opening of the doors, filled to an overflow in every direction . . .’ [42]

If Bunn had gone to war with local Evangelical forces, his example appears not to have been followed by succeeding managers, who sometimes seem to have outdone Bowdler in their efforts to placate the Nonconformists by excising all suggestions of impropriety from their presentations. Cunningham found that ‘[t]he acting copies of the Theatre Royal have whole pages slashed for the sake of one or two lines’. [43]

By the mid-1860s certain sects exercised a dominance in Birmingham that transcended their mere numerical strength, by virtue of the adherence of certain influential families, for example Quakers (the Cadburys, Lloyds), and Unitarians (the Chamberlains, Nettlefolds). (Between 1840 and 1880, in fact, Unitarians virtually monopolized the

mayoralty of the town.) While the importance of such families was underpinned by a powerful commercial base, there were voices whose influence rested simply upon the Christian Gospel, and an extraordinary power to transmit its Message, as they perceived it, in their crowded chapels. When all these forces combined, a well-nigh irresistible alliance resulted. Though Anglicanism had some prominent adherents, notably the Dixon and the Ryland families, the Church of England lacked self-confidence.

It had been overshadowed by Dissent for half a century. In the period from 1865 Dale, Dawson and Crosskey [three of the leading Nonconformist ministers] maintained a high profile through the Civic Gospel, while their supporters provided the inspiration for Birmingham's borough council. [44]

The 'Civic Gospel' involved the energetic application of perceived Christian principles to the town's administration, with an emphasis on social reform and popular involvement. The result - so the evidence suggests - was that Birmingham enjoyed a prolonged period of highly efficient government, became a model for other municipalities, and in 1890 was extolled by one American commentator as 'the best governed city in the World'. [45] One indication both of the administration's power and its character was its prolonged hindrance of the application of an important provision of Forster's 1870 Education Act, viz. the establishment of church schools -- a clause which, like enforcing religious instruction in state schools, had fired fierce Nonconformist opposition.

In their attitudes towards the theatre, levels of hostility varied among the four most

influential sects. While the philosophy of the Unitarians tended towards the non-dogmatic and non-judgmental, Quakers were at this time considered to be not well-disposed towards the drama, although the chocolate firm of Cadburys would subsequently build a handsome concert hall adjacent to its Bournville factory and actively encourage employees' participation in theatrical presentations. [46]

The Congregationalists were perceived to be in the vanguard of opposition. From his Carr's Lane pulpit, Robert Dale, so intimately identified with his adopted city that he was known nationally as 'Dale of Birmingham', spoke to and for his burgeoning congregations.

That for the last two hundred years there should have been a stern and deep antagonism to dramatic representations among earnestly religious people, need excite no surprise. The plays which were acted before Charles II and the aristocracy of the Restoration, and which retained their popularity for many a long year after the last of the Stuarts had become an exile, are a sufficient explanation of the horror with which, at least in evangelical families, the stage has been universally regarded.

But some distant prospect of the theatre's redemption was retained in view.

[For those who wish to elevate public morality the question is not whether theatrical presentations shall or shall not continue] for while men continue to be what God has made them, the passion for drama will be inextinguishable - but

whether [the drama] shall be separated and cleansed from the associations which now make the theatre the haunt of vice and the very centre of all the corruption that curses and disgraces great cities. [Be that as it may] we have to take things as they stand. It is not our duty to send our sons and daughters into a region of moral evil, with the hope that in the course of a generation or two their presence will cause the evil to disappear. [And though the company of parents or guardians may shield them from harmful contact, if children thus protected attend,] hundreds and thousands more will go who have no parental shelter, and whose purse keeps them in the gallery or the pit. Are those young men and women exposed to no perils? Moreover, if report does not greatly deceive me, there are still plays acted on the English stage whose moral tendencies can hardly be approved by a sensitive conscience. [It may be that such plays would disappear] if the better class of society patronized the drama in larger numbers. [Meanwhile] I do not choose to recommend my friends to sit down to a table where they are likely to find poisoned dishes, with the hope that by-and-by their influence will lead to the production of better fare.

Dale's implied assumption that the gallery and the pit form the nuclei of immorality, and his ambiguous reference to 'the better class of society' betray a bias - perhaps unconscious - that he shared with at least one contemporary, the Reverend J.C. Miller, whose views will be considered later; viz., that the lower social orders were peculiarly prone to moral corruption. Dale then considered another aspect of the theatre.

How does it happen that actors and actresses have so often been persons of questionable character? [This is not to say that many members of their profession have remained] untainted by the perils and excitements which beset the actor's life. [But] [s]hould we honour with such warmth of admiration those who do not fall, if experience had not proved how hard it is to stand?

Dale concludes:

What the theatre may be in the next century, or the century after that, we cannot tell . . . It may then be found that a profession which appears to be singularly perilous to those who enter it, has been perilous only from the circumstances with which it has been accidentally connected, and that the neighbourhood of a theatre may be as decent and respectable as the neighbourhood of a church. Meanwhile, it is at least safer to deny ourselves the pleasant excitement which the stage, and the stage alone, can give, rather than incur the responsibility of encouraging the evils which have so long been associated with its fascinations. [47]

For Dale, then, there remained a possibility -- hardly more than theoretical -- that at some distant time the theatre might have reformed itself; that the fare offered on stage might be predictably wholesome, the atmosphere in auditoria conducive to the expectations of God-fearing folk, the vicinity of a playhouse free from notoriety, and, not least, that the profession of acting should have relinquished its dubious reputation.

The attitude of the Baptists towards the drama appeared to be the most

uncompromising of all, and for them the stance taken by the most popular preacher of the day set a potent example.

The influence of Charles Haddon Spurgeon might be measured not only by the size of the congregations who attended morning and evening each Sunday for some thirty years at his London Tabernacle, but also by the mass circulation of his published sermons. His biographer reported that by 1920 (nearly three decades after his death) ‘[c]onsiderably more than a hundred million of the weekly sermons [had] been sold and they have been reproduced in numberless other ways’.[48] Some hint of Spurgeon’s attitude towards the theatre might be gleaned from his views upon church music. He reportedly had ‘a rooted objection to instrumental music in the worship of God . . . He also disliked choirs and he detested anthems’.[49] In fact, we do not need to speculate about his views on the theatre. ‘I am decidedly of the opinion’, he wrote to a correspondent, ‘that the stage is the enemy of good morals and religion.’ [50] The editor of his autobiography was to write: ‘Mr. Spurgeon’s opinions concerning professing Christians going to the theatre are well known. Perhaps his most notable utterance upon that subject was evoked by the attendance of a large number of clergymen and ministers at a special performance in the Shaftesbury Theatre. Shortly afterwards, in a sermon at the Tabernacle, he said’:

The Christian Church of the present day has played the harlot beyond any church in any other day. There are no amusements too vile for her. Her pastors have filled a theatre of late; and by their applause, have set their mark of approval upon the labours of play-actors. To this point have we come at last, a degradation which was

never reached even in Rome's darkest hour; -- and if you do not love Christ enough to be indignant about it, the Lord have mercy upon you!

Borrowing the odd literary quotation is about as far as Spurgeon was prepared to go along this road. When seeking illustrations for his sermons, 'he would ransack the stores of . . . literature, profane as well as sacred, not objecting to a phrase or sentiment because it came from Shakespeare . . . ' [51]

The minister's Birmingham credentials were impressive. At the Autumnal Session of the Baptist Union held there in 1876 '[t]he crush to hear Spurgeon was terrific'. [52] In the previous decade he had undertaken a tour of major provincial towns. '[A]t Birmingham crowds of 6,000 gathered; the secretary who dispensed the tickets had so many applications that his door-bell was broken.' [53]

The career of George Dawson demonstrates that there were Nonconformists who held broader, more tolerant views of the theatre, and at the same time points up the rigidity of the contemporary Baptist position. Dawson was a powerful, theologically self-taught preacher, whose Birmingham ministry began at the Mount Zion Baptist chapel in 1844. But three years later, his views being considered too unorthodox, the Baptist governing body requested his departure, and his career continued with no particular affiliation to any sect. Today he is celebrated as the main inspiration and sponsor of the Birmingham Shakespeare Library. His attitude towards the acting profession was enunciated in one of his sermons, when he told his congregation that he knew

of no calling which might not be a noble calling. Take the actor, setting forth so

vividly the eternal tragedy and comedy of life. If the acting be good, it is both a charming pastime and an elevating amusement; and he too, so oft despised, shall take up his place amongst the true followers of Christ. I can give and get greetings from these poor players far more cordial sometimes than from many people I meet with off the stage, and who would never think of entering a theatre. [54]

'FORMOSA'

In the light of such local hostility to the theatre, the reception accorded to Dion Boucicault's play, *Formosa*, when it was produced for the first time in Birmingham in November, 1869, is of heightened interest. It should be recalled that the *Illustrated London News* had (on August 14) carried a review praising the new work following its opening in the capital. The reviewer had concluded by calling it 'a rather favourable example of a modern drama on an equivocal subject'. [55] However, on August 28, John Heraud, one of the same periodical's most influential journalists, famously and savagely attacked the play, and the eponymous heroine's successful evasion of her just desserts. [56]

Had Formosa remarried at home she might have married her parents' potboy, or, at worst, the neighbouring cheesemonger's apprentice; but now a gentleman of fortune and high breeding humbly sues for the distinction of being her husband, and -- gladly receives the fallen woman to his bosom. And this is the lesson that the humble daughters of the land are to receive from this flagitious drama - namely,

that by boldly accepting such a career they may turn their beauty and accomplishments to account, and win, as married women, an enviable position in society.[57]

Formosa opened at Birmingham's Theatre Royal on November 29, 1869. Its opening was tellingly ignored by *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, which normally gave generous coverage to the theatre's presentations. (Its theatre correspondent had written at some length of the production that preceded *Formosa* and would do so of the pantomime that followed it.) On the other hand, the correspondent of the *Birmingham Daily Post*, which journal enjoyed a positively liberal reputation, devoted a full broadside column to his review, and that he was free from any prejudice or intimidation was immediately apparent. 'Give a dog a bad name', he began, 'and we all know what dire consequences will ensue . . . Certainly no drama of recent date bears such a very evil reputation as the one produced here for the first time in Birmingham, on Monday night'. Notwithstanding,

[It] is our impression that *Formosa* enjoyed its bad reputation upon inadequate, if not absolutely false pretences. There is really no danger in it to faith or morals apart from the breach of decorum and good taste involved in the introduction of a class of female where mention is tabooed in decent society, there is nothing in the piece to outrage the moral senses or incite to vicious courses. Much of the life depicted is doubtless debased and repulsive, but neither the language nor the scenes which illustrate it, are calculated to shock the most sensitive modesty . . . Any ordinary burlesque is more prolific in vicious allurements and sensual

provocations, as well as in disregard of decency. The author, it is true, makes rather too light of the sin of great cities and treats it too much as a recognised and inevitable infirmity, shall we say? is a trifle too liberal to notorious sinners in the matter of worldly advantages, and altogether too lenient in chastising them in the day of reckoning; but a considerable latitude in these matters has always been allowed the stage, and Mr. Boucicault is not the man to forego any of the dramatist's ordinary privileges. If his moral code, however, were much worse than it is, there is not much danger of contagion from such extravagant 'airy nothings' as those . . . in *Formosa* . . . [Leigh Hunt's maxim] that the morality of the drama cannot affect that of the world, because of the obviously fictitious and unreal nature of the puppets who practise it, may fairly be urged in extenuation. None of the characters in *Formosa* are likely to be mistaken for real personages.

The reviewer then goes on to praise individual performances and a generally 'highly creditable' production. The play was 'unquestionably ingenious in construction, spirited and characteristic in dialogue, and strong in 'situation'.' Though the correspondent did not consider it very original in ideas, 'it is at all events novel in form'. [58] This generally favourable judgment would be loudly echoed in the *Era*, which reported on December 5 that the Birmingham production of 'Mr. Boucicault's drama . . . has been represented this week with the most unequivocal success'. Praise was bestowed on all the leading performers. 'The scenery . . . is capitally painted, and the applause throughout continuous . . .' [59]

But for those who either criticized or pointedly ignored the presentation, production standards and the question of how sensitively its theme was treated were irrelevant. For them there were aspects of life and society which should never be considered as fit and proper subjects for the drama. The *Post*'s correspondent had in fact acknowledged 'the breach of good taste involved in the introduction of a class of female where mention is tabooed in good society', and gone on to admit that '[m]uch of the life depicted is doubtless debased and repulsive'. Many, upon reading this, would read no further. [60]

Formosa ran for three weeks, apparently with 'great success' until it was obliged to make way for rehearsals for the Royal's by now traditional Christmas pantomime. [61] As an interesting footnote, mention might be made of the comments of Dr. John A. Langford, a contemporary local historian of some repute. '[In] 1869', he would recall, "Mr. Boucicault's disreputable drama *Formosa* was produced for the first time on Nov. 29th. We rejoice to add that it was not successful here, and was withdrawn after twelve performances'. [62] It seems fitting to utilize here the formula applied so convincingly by Jim Davis to W. Macqueen Pope, and to judge that it will be more illuminating to treat Dr. Langford not as a commentator on the contemporary scene, but as a participant in it. [63]

AUDIENCE BEHAVIOUR AND MISBEHAVIOUR

On October 8, 1838 -- the year that saw Queen Victoria's coronation and Birmingham's elevation to borough status -- the *Gazette* carried the following report:

A disgraceful riot took place at the Theatre in this town, on Monday night last. It appears that a dispute had arisen between the Manager and Signor Hervio Nano [famed as the 'Gnome Fly'], with reference to a pecuniary demand of the latter in a settlement which took place on Saturday. Hervio Nano at the time when his presence was required for his part on the stage was seated in one of the boxes of the Theatre, and on being applied to, refused to take his part unless a settlement was made to his satisfaction. The Stage Manager explained that there was no claim existing on the part of the complainant, as a full settlement had been made with Mr. Yates of the Adelphi, to whose company the Signor was attached. An attempt was then made to remove Nano forcibly from the box.

This action seems to have provoked displays of sympathy for the performer from pit and gallery.

[I]n the scuffle he was passed over into the pit and on to the stage, and in the course of the struggle was aided by some of the audience. After another attempt on the part of the Manager to proceed with a different piece, Signor Nano addressed the audience, and being so advised, proceeded to the green-room, soon after which a scuffle was heard on the stage, and Nano having raised the curtain, was seen struggling with several persons.

For some gods and pittites the opportunities for creating mayhem were becoming well-nigh irresistible.

A rush was made by some of the audience from the pit and boxes, but to no avail, as the subject of sympathy did not re-appear. Hereupon the occupants of the gallery, having given notice of their intention to those assembled in the pit to clear away, began to tear up the benches of the gallery, and to throw them into the pit, breaking the chandeliers and whatever came in the way of the missiles, the havoc and confusion continuing until the lights were extinguished. [64]

Raucous behaviour, particularly that emanating from the gallery, had long been a persistent feature of Theatre Royal audiences. Reid cautions us to remember that gallery disturbances made good copy and the Birmingham press's eagerness to report them might have given an exaggerated impression of the extent of the problem. [65] On the other hand, the gallery admission price at the Royal was, from its opening, set at one shilling and so continued for many years -- high enough, it was hoped and intended, to deter irresponsible elements and pre-empt riotous behaviour, and economic considerations suggest that it would have been in part successful. Had it been lower, the opportunities for creating mayhem -- and, presumably, its incidence -- would have been even greater. These points having been made, it must be said that, although disturbances were characteristic of other theatres in other towns, that they should be particularly evident in early nineteenth-century Birmingham is not surprising given its mushrooming and sometimes volatile population, its economic diversity, and its large, as yet, unassimilated elements. Moreover, the Birmingham manual worker operated within a context of small factories and workshops, a situation that tended to breed an atmos-

phere of informality and familiarity between master and worker. The very diversity of trades in itself provided a hedge against the vagaries of international commerce, and in prosperous times there was a steady demand -- even competition -- for skilled workers, whose wage-bargaining position might well be enhanced by the implied threat to move to a rival firm. Furthermore, as the costs of establishing an independent business were not necessarily prohibitive, mobility was often vertical as well as horizontal. In virtually all these respects the Birmingham wage-earner differed starkly from his counterparts in the textile industries of the North, characterized by already large and still expanding factories, armies of strictly-disciplined workers, and a yawning gulf between capital and labour. That, when visiting the theatre, he might flout his considerable independence by chiding pen-pushing patrons in the pit and mocking the idle rich in the boxes, while loudly exercising his own right to enjoy himself as he thought fit, may cause us little surprise. Notwithstanding, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that audience misbehaviour was a fact of contemporary life for playhouses up and down the land, and was activated for a variety of reasons. [66] If in Birmingham we interpret it as a manifestation of a spirit of independence honed in the workplace, it seems equally tenable to suppose that similar conduct in industrial Lancashire might have resulted from the quite opposite conditions obtaining there; and that armies of textile workers would, at the sound of the factory whistle, roar out of the cotton mills to storm the theatre galleries, there to exploit an opportunity to indulge in a rumbustious celebration of this brief release from the grinding strictures of their working day.

Judging the behaviour of nineteenth-century audiences from a twenty-first century perspective is a difficult undertaking, since perceptions of what might or might not be

acceptable are subject to change within a broader social context; e.g., if there was a strong possibility of being assaulted and robbed on the way to or from a theatre, gallery hooligans might be regarded merely as a source of irritation. Instances are cited in this chapter which suggest that audience misbehaviour might have been worse in Birmingham than in most provincial towns. That it was an abiding concern for local managers, whilst indicating that standards of nineteenth-century 'acceptability' were under threat, also reminds us that managers felt the breath of the town's Nonconformists on their necks, constantly imparting an added urgency to the need to create and maintain tranquil houses.

In 1788 the Theatre Royal's management had found it necessary to promise the payment of a reward of one guinea for information leading to the conviction of miscreants who had thrown missiles on to the stage and into the pit. [67] Two years later the offer of a reward was renewed 'to any Person who will discover the Ruffians who have thrown, or shall hereafter throw, Bottles, Plates, Apples &c. at the Actors and upon the Stage, during and after the Performances'. The hope was expressed that 'everyone who is Witness of such daring insult to the Public, will lend their Assistance in bringing those Offenders to Justice, who commit such wanton Outrages against that Peace and Order which is necessary to be observed in all places of Public Amusement'. [68]

During the management of the senior William M'Cready* something resembling a

*The senior M'Cready spelt his name thus. His son, William Charles, favoured 'Macready'. I have accorded with their respective practices.

'name and shame' policy seems to have been tried, though with what success is unclear.

Early in August, 1805, the following notice accompanied the theatre's playbill.

Theatre, Birmingham

Whereas I, James Chandler, on Monday evening last during the Performance at the Theatre in Birmingham, threw a drinking Cup or Pot, with Liquor in, from the Gallery of the said Theatre into the Pit, to the great Danger of those sitting there to see the Performance, for which Mr M'Cready, as Manager of the Theatre, hath very properly and justly commenced a Prosecution against me, but has very handsomely promised to forgive me, upon my making a public Acknowledgment of the Offence, binding Sureties for my future good Behaviour, and paying all Expences [sic.], Now I do hereby humbly thank Mr M'Cready for his lenity toward me, and do ask Pardon of him and the Public and do promise never to offend again.

As witness my Hand, this first Day of August, 1805

The mark of JAMES CHANDLER [69]

In 1813 the Royal's then manager, R.W. Elliston, instituted 'fashionable nights', an innovation that will be discussed more fully later in this chapter. It was an attempt - on the whole successful - to preserve at least one night of relative tranquillity for the genteel and appreciative.

But for the rest of the theatrical week reports of antisocial behaviour in the gallery

continue. In 1814 the management alleged that habitués were removing the ironwork. [70] In 1822 the locally-published *Theatrical Looker-On* described gallery patrons as ‘a gang of ruffians who infest the gallery only to create disorder’, complaining that ‘there is now no peace for quiet people’. [71]

But though the gallery was the traditional arena of misbehaviour, the conduct of the patrons of the boxes did not always accord with what might have been expected, given their supposed superior wealth and status. The *Gazette* correspondent’s censure of the inappropriate dress of ‘several of the Gentlemen in the Boxes’ at the Theatre Royal’s opening night in 1774 was noted earlier in this chapter. Prompted to some extent, no doubt, by an inverted snobbery, seasoned pittites came to consider box patrons as attending, not for the purpose of watching, much less appreciating, the performance, but for a variety of social reasons. There is some substance for their opinions. Around the turn of the twentieth century serious consideration was being given to the question of rebuilding the theatre. Cunningham comments: ‘It was now becoming clear that the [existing] buildings were obsolete. The Boxes were so designed that it was not possible to see the stage from many of them . . . ’ [72] It is apparent, then, that boxes and adjacent lobbies were conducive to the entertainment of those out-of-town ‘Persons of Fashion’ to whom Matthew Boulton had referred, and others, with little regard to what was happening on the stage. ‘Others’ would have included ladies of the town, whose attention naturally focused here with a view to locating the supposed monied patronage.

The young bucks of Birmingham attempted from time to time to out-shout the galleryites and pretend a familiarity with the actors. A correspondent, whose

commentaries will be considered more closely presently, noted:

We had our eye on about a dozen young fellows in the Boxes, who no doubt thought they were Bennett's friends for making a great noise . . . but they were greatly deceived and were we to see such conduct repeated we would set a mark upon them as would not be mistaken. [73]

When the box habitués did attend to the stage performance, their critical faculties were held to be not of the sharpest. 'The denizens of the most expensive seats may languidly wonder whether the play is good but the pit with spontaneous acumen has settled the point. So judged the editor of the *Theatrical Looker-On*, who considered the pit to have 'the most loyal most outspoken part of the house as far removed from chicken and champagne of the boxes as it is free from the unpleasantness of the gallery beer'. [74]

These were just two of many telling insights offered in the pages of a periodical whose life was all too brief, and whose editor for long successfully maintained his anonymity. [75] Its reviews and editorials are witty and perceptive, and the readers' letters were well chosen. The journalistic style is sophisticated, perhaps *too* sophisticated for some -- one correspondent telling the editor: '[Y]ou are a good deal too refined to suit the palate of the town'. [76] What we read confirms long-held suspicions of contemporary audience behaviour and underscores the intellectual and aspirational differences between patrons of the pit and their brethren in the gallery. The pit was the editor's arena of choice ('the Pit is our station, as it always should be of a real critic'), and from this vantage point his observations of fellow-spectators are even more revealing

than his comments upon what was happening on stage. [77]

We have heard the good folk around us in the Pit say -- ‘She don’t sing *Scot’s whae hae* so well as Vestris did, for what you like’. ‘I know that’, (says another) ‘I’ll hold you any money she sings all the other songs better, & is a better figure’. And so they go on, holding anything but their tongues, but to the point. [78]

A correspondent complains:

I was sitting in the Pit on Thursday last, with a new coat on, and a man in the gallery threw a rotten pear on my shoulder. I want to know how this is to be remedied.

Your’s [sic.] to command,

John Williams

P.S. I came all the way from Dudley.

The editor responds:

The only remedy we can recommend is to go back to Dudley, and to use Smith’s Scouring Drops. [79]

Both editor and pit-frequenting readers seem to have concluded that the best way to

bear with the trials and tribulations emanating from the gallery was to respond with a stoical tongue-in-cheek humour. The contemporary attachment to puns must be viewed by modern commentators as unfortunate, while the hilarity evidently provoked by repeated calls by readers for galleryites to send forth peals of applause instead of orange-peels remains a source of puzzlement to us. We might have more sympathy with the editor's subtly-disguised expressions of displeasure, as when, for instance, he concludes a review of *Tom and Jerry* with the following comment:

The house was much crowded, and our friends, 'the Gods,' quite in the humour to let us attend to no one but themselves. We like this. It shews a determined John Bull spirit, which will not condescend to think for a moment of the inconvenience it occasions to those who come to hear a play. [80]

But, as the performing season wore on, there are indications that the editor's humour -- and patience -- is being tested to its limits.

If every number of our publication is to contain fresh proofs of the total want of decency, decorum and good order, which continues to distinguish that unmanageable monster the Birmingham Gallery, the sooner we are spared the task of recording them the better, in sooth we begin to be quite weary of it. [81]

MANAGEMENT

Audience behaviour, militant Nonconformists, economics and programmes formed the chief preoccupations of the Theatre Royal's early managers. Three of them hold importance in a national context. William M'Cready took out a lease on the theatre in 1794, and in 1798 became its full-time manager, after severing his earlier acting connections with Covent Garden. These connections were of assistance in his bringing the likes of Sarah Siddons and John Philip Kemble to Birmingham, and his son, the soon-to-be famous William Charles Macready would make his stage debut there. Although spending a term in gaol for debt, M'Cready senior succeeded in making his theatre profitable.

The next notable manager was R.W. Elliston, who took over the theatre in 1813. Elliston seems to have possessed all the attributes of the fictional showman. His first biographer, George Raymond, emphasized such aspects of his personality, and his impressive acting talents, perhaps at the cost of putting on record his managerial abilities. This imbalance was redressed in Christopher Murray's 1975 study. Murray asserts that Elliston 'had a keen mind and was a born administrator', and offers proofs of his diplomatic handling of Edmund Kean and other actors. [82]

Elliston's first innovation and his most enduring legacy to Birmingham's theatre was his institution, in the early summer of 1813, of 'fashionable nights'. Fridays were thus designated, not uninfluenced by the fact that the spending power of gallery habitués tended to be on the wane towards the end of their working week, and their presence consequently diminished. The attendance of the 'best company' of Birmingham and

thereabouts was invited, and Elliston must have found the response gratifying, the *Gazette's* correspondent duly noting on June 14:

We think our Manager's hint of setting apart Friday as a fashionable night meets with the approval of our fellow townsmen, as we witnessed on that evening an unusual display of beauty and fashion, who by their cheering approbation of the performers, gave an additional spur to their exertions. [83]

The 'fashionable night' would prove, in fact, to be an enduring success, something of a tradition resulting. At least one of Boulton's aspirations for Birmingham's theatre was realized, and the town's successful and respectable classes availed themselves of the weekly opportunity to display their success and respectability. Writing in the later 1860s, J. A. Langford would testify that the 'tradition is still powerful enough to induce "those who are nothing if not fashionable" to reserve their visits for this select evening'. [84]

Elliston might, indeed, have bequeathed a further legacy to Birmingham. In 1814 he oversaw the renovation and beautification of the Royal. The improvements were much praised in the *Gazette*, but would be lost in the conflagration of 1820.

The attributes which Raymond celebrates must be recognized in any assessment of Elliston's contribution to the of Birmingham's theatrical life. Raymond records:

Frequently did he hazard undertakings with the public, where there was scarcely a

probability of keeping his word; and more than once has it been suspected he had advertised 'stars' for appearance, with which he had never entered into the slightest consultation . . . Elliston hesitated at no exploit, however wild, to fill his building for a single night. [85]

But he had an enviable talent for 'working' his Birmingham audiences, and his explanations for unfulfilled engagements, however implausible, were so droll that he managed to retain both their good humour and his own popularity with them. Elliston once advertised about the town 'in gigantic letters' the forthcoming appearance of 'The Bohemian' who was stated to be 'of unexampled Strength and Stature', had 'been received with favour and distinction in various Rhenish states', possessed the capacity to handle 'a huge stone, of near a ton weight' like a tennis-ball, and 'had actually felled an ox by a blow of his naked fist'. Sadly, the 'Bohemian' was 'begot of nothing but vain phantasy'. Elliston had simply made him up. Telling a capacity audience on the night of his promised appearance that the 'faithless foreigner' had deceived them all - he is not here', he then insisted that they should nevertheless see the stone that was to have been manipulated with such abandon. After which, '[g]ood humour, even confidence, seemed restored'. [86]

The fare which Elliston did succeed in presenting included performing dogs and horses, pantomime, 'spectacles', and melodrama. It was fare that achieved in general a large measure of success. But Elliston's management of Birmingham's Royal is characterized by inconsistency. He was for considerable periods an absentee manager, diverted by theatrical interests in other towns. Towards the end of his six-year reign he

seems to have become exasperated by the perceived capricious tastes, unsophistication or indifference of Birmingham's audiences and its society in general, commenting 'It is a disgusting town in its chattering & interferences . . . ' [87] Due to financial disputes, his leave-taking of the theatre committee was an embittered one.

Alfred Bunn succeeded Elliston as manager of the Theatre Royal. In his three-volume collection of reminiscences and observations, Bunn makes scant mention of his three-year reign at Birmingham. Perhaps this was because it lacked significance in a career that encompassed the management of Covent Garden and Drury Lane; perhaps it was because his career there was not notably auspicious. He was almost immediately faced with the disaster of the fire of January 1820, which destroyed the entire auditorium. But within seven months rebuilding was completed, and Bunn found himself in charge of a splendid new playhouse. Notwithstanding, Bunn contrived to make steady losses. At the expiry of his lease, despite being charged a generously low rent and attracting a number of celebrities to the theatre's boards, he was in debt to the committee to the tune of some five hundred pounds. Local patronage had been substantially lacking. In an effort to meet his liabilities Bunn resorted to the sale of his entire scenery, wardrobe and dramatic library, and the theatre's affairs were left in some disorder. [88]

In sum, these three notable managements had, in consequence of both internal and external factors, experienced only mixed or inconsistent success. But some important fingerposts had been set up. The nucleus of a stock company, engagement of 'celebrities', the experiment with pantomime, efforts to attract not merely the moneyed patronage, but to make the Royal, for at least one night of the theatrical week, congenial

to those who wished merely to witness a performance in relative tranquillity, all pointed along roads which might be followed more consistently and with profit at a later, perhaps more propitious, time.

Viewed in a broader context, the excesses of that autumn night in 1838 might, in fact, be seen as a culmination of, and perhaps, in part, a reaction to, a period when the fortunes of Birmingham's Theatre Royal had remained at a persistently low ebb. It had, in common with most playhouses up and down the land, suffered the detrimental effects of a prolonged post-war trade depression. But added to these were some self-inflicted tribulations. From 1826 a series of short-term lessees included three managers who were imprisoned for debt, and one who absconded with the takings from concerts by Paganini.

A short time before the 1838 riot a new management had, in fact, taken over the Royal, but had hardly found its feet by the night in question. Monro of Leicester was now in charge, but a more significant appointment was that of Mercer Simpson as stage manager. His responsibilities and influence seem to have grown quickly. He was officially appointed joint manager in 1840, and at the end of 1843 became sole lessee.

The close coincidence in time of their respective managements invites some comparison of Mercer Simpson's career at Birmingham's Theatre Royal with that of Samuel Phelps, whose rule at the Sadler's Wells Theatre from 1844 to 1862 was lauded and celebrated by Charles Dickens among others.

A more realistic assessment of Phelps's achievements at the Sadler's Wells Theatre has succeeded Davis and Emeljanow's analysis. [89] If Phelps really

did succeed in making his raucous gallery ‘as orderly as a lecture room’, Mercer Simpson’s aspirations and achievements seem to have been more modest. But both managements confronted the problem of rowdyism head on. Phelps’s personality was such that he reportedly descended upon and personally intimidated disturbers of his peace. While still functioning as joint managers, Mercer Simpson and Monro arranged for police to be in constant attendance in the gallery. In both theatres the need for such extra vigilance was no doubt partly prompted by substantial reductions in admission prices, not unexpected during a period of prolonged deflation. At Sadler’s Wells this had come about a few years before Phelps assumed the management, but the policy was maintained for the duration of his rule. [90] Birmingham’s Theatre Royal had set comparatively high prices from its inception, and the practice was heavily influenced by the wish to discourage undesirables. But now priorities had changed. Prices were approximately halved, and, notably, the cost of a gallery seat was reduced from one shilling to sixpence. Deflationary pressures were not the only reason. Simpson observed the popularity of the new music halls, calculated that they would bring steadily increasing competition for audiences, and responded accordingly.

Both managers sought to improve audiences’ behaviour by elevating their tastes, although Simpson did not seek to elevate them quite so high as did Phelps. His eighteen-year reign at Sadler’s Wells saw the production of ‘almost the entire Shakespeare canon, revivals of Jacobean and eighteenth-century plays, and acknowledged literary successes by contemporary nineteenth-century authors’. [91] At Birmingham good-quality burlesque and light opera continued, but there was no place for the ‘crude, boisterous, vulgar and suggestive’ curtain-raising farces of earlier days, and serious drama, notably

Shakespeare, took up a steadily-expanding share of the repertoire. [92] Shakespeare had, in fact, been generally well received here in all parts of the house since 1774, but now performance standards noticeably improved, and the theatre became a regular venue for many of the leading actors of the day, among whom William Charles Macready was a particular favourite. The interest of the local press in theatrical happenings increased. To perform his plays at Sadler's Wells Samuel Phelps undertook the assembly of a resident repertory company. Simpson did likewise. Stock companies had existed before at Sadler's Wells, but under Phelps new standards of performance were set and achieved. At Birmingham's Royal the move was an innovation. Under Simpson's guiding hand the careers of many promising young actors would develop, and from time to time they would have the invaluable experience of working with visiting celebrities.

Davis and Emeljanow refer to Richard Lee's emphasis on the importance of familiarity between an audience and what that audience has come to see. This familiarity in turn breeds an allegiance. [93] In Phelps's case it flowed especially from the periodic revival of successful and popular productions, which for patrons demonstrated stability. But such familiarity (= allegiance = stability) might equally be engendered from a growing acquaintance, renewed each week, with a resident company of actors. The Christmas pantomime inspired similar responses. It happened at the same time every year. It was anticipated with a growing excitement, which a prior knowledge of the story only enhanced. Its merits could be compared with the productions of other years, and a sprinkling of 'in' jokes concerning local politicians heightened a feeling of inclusivity. For many children it provided a magical introduction to the theatre, to be long and fondly remembered. Nor are these points contradicted by Davis and Emeljanow's assertion that

pantomime audiences 'were not necessarily staid or undemonstrative'. [94] Jim Davis's account of Boxing Day pantomime audiences of this period, even when at their most rumbustious, does not negate qualities of familiarity and allegiance, and self-regulation.[95] At Sadler's Wells Phelps inherited and enhanced a pantomime tradition. At Birmingham Simpson founded one. Beginning in 1840, the Theatre Royal pantomimes became, for thousands of Birmingham citizens, an indispensable part of the festive season. Their quality was praised consistently by both the local press and the *Era*, and they ran in an unbroken series until the closure of the theatre in 1956.

Contained within the building were the handsome Shakespeare Rooms. Rented out as a venue for functions, they served both to furnish a regular supplemental income, and to strengthen ties with the community. [96]

Audience behaviour, militant Nonconformists, economics and programmes were, I suggested earlier, the chief preoccupations of the early Theatre Royal managers. Mercer Simpson's special insight lay in perceiving the interdependence of these factors. By tackling rowdyism in the auditorium and presenting 'wholesome' entertainment he made his house a fit and proper place for the 'refined' classes, whose attendance in increasingly large numbers in turn provided the solution to the economics problem. By Mercer Simpson's reign social and cultural changes were rendering the Nonconformists less militant, and his theatre's reputation for respectability blunted the sharpest of their criticisms. Their fire was now increasingly concentrated on a perceived greater menace to good morals -- the music hall.

Like Phelps, in bringing efficiency and prosperity to his playhouse Simpson benefited

considerably from external demographic factors. Davis and Emeljanow point out that when Phelps moved to Sadler's Wells in 1844, 'he moved into an area where populations reflected both change and respectability'. [97] The census of 1841 gave the population of Birmingham as 178,000. During the next thirty years that figure would almost double.[98] Even more significant in the present context is the development of Edgbaston, a 2,500-acre suburb to the south and west which, via each of three trunk routes -- Hagley, Pershore, and Bristol roads -- thrust within a mile of the town centre. Some 85 per cent of the ancient parish of Edgbaston was held by the Calthorpe family, who had successfully preserved their holdings from Birmingham's mushroom industrial development and the scarred landscape that it left in its wake. By 1851, or about half-way through Mercer Simpson's reign at the Theatre Royal, there were 1,665 households in Edgbaston. Using measures such as rateable value and number of servants employed, some 42 per cent of these would be categorized as upper or upper-middle class. Edgbaston's rate of population growth matched that of the town. Members of most of Birmingham's 'leading families' -- in industry, politics, business, and the law -- lived here. Ranking below them were the town's better-heeled professionals. Fringing the suburb, as if to soften the cultural shock of passing from inner Edgbaston's verdant avenues to the scenes of ribbon industrial development that were the source of many of its inhabitants, stood rows of modest terrace houses fronted by neat gardens, typically the abodes of clerks, skilled artisans, and lock-up shop keepers. [99]

Mercer Simpson was thus presented with opportunities for attracting better audiences both quantitatively and qualitatively. The days when the Theatre Royal closed its doors for many months of the year were a receding memory. Notwithstanding the now

formidable competition for customers from the music halls, the Royal prospered. The quality and moral tone of Simpson's presentations meant that the theatre was well placed to claim a lion's share of Edgbaston's patronage.

One reason for the enshrinement of Samuel Phelps's reign at Sadler's Wells as a 'golden age' was the plummeting of management and production standards there soon after his departure. At Birmingham Mercer Simpson was succeeded, in 1864, by his son. Mercer Simpson junior, who broadly continued his father's policies and maintained the Theatre Royal's reputation. He did, however, disband the stock company, and made some structural alterations, but the supposed benefits of building a refreshment bar within the old box entrance were reconsidered when complaints were received that it was attracting females of dubious character. [100] That the gallery at the Theatre Royal maintained a rough and ready character and remained far removed from the 'lecture room' atmosphere reportedly brought by Samuel Phelps to that at Sadler's Wells is evidenced by the recollections of E. Lawrence Levy. Levy was a young schoolteacher who arrived in Birmingham in 1870, and became a regular theatre attender. His salary usually stretched to a seat in the pit, but when prices were increased for an expensive production, such as an opera, Levy resorted to the gallery. There was still a police presence in the theatre, and when the house was crowded an officer considered it part of his duty in enforcing order to ensure that patrons did not occupy more seating space than was strictly necessary, and 'when he knew where he dared to do it, did not hesitate to use his cane to urge on a closer contact between those already seated and those who wanted to get a seat . . . Those who enjoy the comparative comfort of the crowded house conditions

of today [1920]’, Levy would recall, ‘can have no idea of what the congestion of pit and gallery meant in ‘the brave days of old’. But nobody cared. Once in the house and seated, everyone patiently awaited the overture and the raising of the curtain.

Shakespeare was right: “The play’s the thing!” Discomforts didn’t count’. [101]

Conditions, then, appear to have undergone some improvement since the days of the *Theatrical Looker-On*, and the gallery, with all its ‘discomforts’, was yet a place from where a serious spectator might watch and appreciate the performance in comparative peace.

Notwithstanding, change was in the air, and in fact the days of the ‘old’ gallery were numbered. The ‘prices of admission’ for August 30, 1873, indicate a new, and what would become a permanent, designation. The ‘dress circle’ was instituted, and the charge of four shillings implied a clear social distinction between the old and the new. Admission to the gallery could still be had for sixpence, but the arena in which it had its being had severely contracted. It would be more than a decade before Mercer Simpson junior, still in charge at the Royal, would permanently segregate the pit. Here differentials were not quite so pronounced. A seat in the new ‘stalls’ usually cost three shillings, and the pit price remained at one shilling. [102]

MANAGERIAL PREOCCUPATIONS IN COVENTRY

Managerial preoccupation with the respectability and suitability of what they were offering to the public continued unabated in Birmingham and elsewhere. In 1856, the new manager of Coventry’s Theatre Royal, James Rodgers (who, ten years later,

would take up the reins at the Prince of Wales in Broad Street), had promised that his playhouse should 'be conducted on a scale of respectability that the most fastidious need not fear attending'. [103] In September, 1879, another Theatre Royal -- the newly-opened house at West Bromwich -- was licensed for the performance of plays. The management was at pains to assure their potential patrons that '[p]lays and entertainments of moral and social influence will be produced, and nothing will be neglected to deserve success and render the theatre a place of amusement where the most fastidious may visit with pleasure'. [104]

James Rodgers's promise of future respectability at Coventry was no doubt prompted by his encountering what seems to have been a far from peaceful auditorium. It reminds us that audience misbehaviour was by no means confined to Birmingham. Almost certainly it was replicated, to varying degrees, in every playhouse in the land. On at least two occasions in the mid-1850s the *Coventry Herald* censured the conduct of patrons, taking to task habitués of both the gallery and the boxes. At a performance of *Othello* in August, 1854, the behaviour of the gallery 'did little to the credit of Coventry. Desdemona was smothered with hootings and altercations going on. On Wednesday police preserved the peace' [105] Two summers later, in the boxes, 'Cigars were smoked, the talking [was] louder than the actors, and brandy and soda-water was handed to the centre-box as a fit and worthy example to the gods above. [106]

AUDIENCE BEHAVIOUR IN THE LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY

These instances, and most of the examples of audience misbehaviour considered in this

chapter almost always fall into one or more readily identifiable categories. Misbehaviour might be attributable to patrons treating the theatre as a kind of social club -- eating, drinking, gossiping, calling out to acquaintances they might espy in another row, pushing for better places - with little or no regard for spectators who wished merely to see and hear what was happening on stage. It might develop into something more positively anti-social, with, for example, habitués of the gallery tossing nut-shells and orange-peel at box patrons or into the pit. Such conduct was always prone to escalating into an altercation or a more serious disturbance. Rowdiness might also grow out of audience members' demonstrations of dissatisfaction with the fare they were being offered on stage. But, from about the early 1870s, misbehaviour of a quite different, and indeed sinister, order, was of increasing concern to managements, and the problem was seemingly particularly prevalent in Birmingham.

The Prince of Wales Theatre, Broad Street, a large and impressive structure with seating for some 3000, had opened in 1856 as a hall for the performance of classical music. The citizens of Birmingham failing to patronize it in sufficient numbers, it had undergone a rapid metamorphosis to become the 'Royal Music Hall and Operetta House'. In 1863, in honour of the royal wedding of that year, it became the 'Prince of Wales Operetta House', and, soon after and finally, the 'Prince of Wales Theatre'. Apart from its pantomimes, the nature of its programmes was generally different from that offered at the Theatre Royal. It specialized in burlesque and operetta. Reconstructed in 1876 it would become the Birmingham 'home' for the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, and the venue for George Edwardes's musical comedies.

In early April, 1873, the Prince of Wales's pantomime, 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star', ended a long and highly successful run. The last performance was attended by the correspondent of the *Gazette*, who, after lavishly praising the production and the members of the cast, reported:

The performance on Saturday night was, we regret to say, characterised by one of the most unseemly and disgraceful exhibitions ever witnessed in a theatre. The pantomime proceeded smoothly as usual, till Miss Elise Holt (*Tom Tucker*) made her appearance . . . when some of the 'gods' commenced hissing loudly, and manifested other signs of disapproval. It was evident that Miss Holt was the object of the gods' indignation, for no matter when, where, or how she appeared, or what she did, her endeavours to please were treated with the same indifference, and we may say insult. The sympathy of the audience in the other parts of the theatre was aroused by the indecent behaviour of the 'gods,' and the hissing was almost drowned for a minute or so by the burst of applause which they bestowed upon the lady who had been so 'unfortunate' as to lose the favour of the 'youths'. Later on, when Miss Holt was about to sing one of the songs allotted to her, she hesitated, and, before commencing, addressing the audience, said, 'I think I have the pull of those boys in the gallery, whom I have refused to pay'. The remark was greeted with tremendous applause mingled with violent hissing. Miss Holt found it impossible to pacify the 'boys in the gallery,' who hissed and groaned alternately whenever she appeared on the stage. In one of the scenes, when she was alone on the stage, a large cabbage was thrown to her from the gallery. This was the signal for another storm, applause coming from one side of the house, and

hisses from the other . . . It was clear that Miss Holt was considerably affected by the insults to which she was subjected, and she went through her part with no little difficulty . . .

The scene witnessed at the Prince of Wales Theatre is altogether unprecedented in the annals of our Birmingham theatres, and, we should think, in any theatre in the country. Three policemen were on duty in the gallery, and they succeeded in ejecting two or three of the disturbers, and administered corporal punishment to several others. Owing to the crowded state of the place, however, it was impossible for them to quell the uproar . . . [107]

The most significant feature of this disturbance, the one that distinguishes it from a random riot generated by troublemakers seeking sport in the victimization and harassment of one particular performer -- an activity not unknown at present-day football grounds -- is Miss Holt's reference to 'those boys in the gallery whom I have refused to pay'. The correspondent appears not to consider the full implications of the remark, and there is no record of a court hearing - at which underlying motives might have been uncovered - succeeding the summary justice administered by the police officers. Although an occasional item appeared in the local press, for a full and detailed account of what underlay the disruptions of that night and its presentation in a national context, we have to await the closing months of the next decade. Assuming the accuracy of the account, such happenings recurred quite regularly, and must have formed a running sore which continued to fester throughout much of the otherwise highly

successful period of management which Rodgers began in 1866.

On February 2, 1889, under the headline, **BLACKMAILING IN BIRMINGHAM**, the *Era* printed a report which almost filled one of its broadside columns.

Once more during a pantomime season in Birmingham a disgraceful blackmailing has occurred. For years past artists engaged in the Christmas productions here have been subjected to annoyance from the gallery boys. So long as they submitted . . . to the demands of these ruffians, actors and actresses were not more seriously molested; but a determination of more recent growth, to repulse the scoundrels has been attended in a few cases with disastrous results. The power of the gallery boys is said to have had its beginnings in the old stock company days. A well-known pantomimist was wont to encourage his admirers by affixing to the front rail of the gallery a showy silk handkerchief that was the reward of the first arrival. This opened up communications between the theatricals and their patrons in Olympus, and the result was a regularly organised clique. Its leader was known as the 'king of the gallery' . . . The existence of the gallery king and his following was not unknown to the management; and their tithe was taken in a quite formal manner. But the old gallery boys have given way to a new generation, whose excesses the retired 'king' speaks of not a little mournfully. They are a band of guerillas against whom the managements of the various theatres long since declared a truceless war of extermination. Year by year their conduct becomes more outrageous. A cabbage was once hurled violently at Miss Jenny Hill while on the stage, and the ruffians who more recently attempted

to steal her diamonds as she made her way from the stage-door to her carriage were doubtless were of the same fraternity as the gentlemen who flung this missile.

Miss Bessie Bonehill can tell a tale or two of the blackmailer, but the worst sufferer was Miss Millie Hylton, who was last year attacked in the street in the small hours of the morning, and left bleeding and unconscious. This year the gallery boys have plied their nefarious trade with much vigour. They have, so far as we have been able to learn, refrained from annoying the male performers, fearing, doubtless, that a well-merited hiding might be the result. But the ladies engaged in the various pantomimes . . . have been terribly annoyed by the importunities and threats of many sturdy ruffians . . . [An account of Marie Loftus's experiences, culminating in the police's apprehension of one of the offenders, follows. Summing up the situation, she concludes:] 'Birmingham is the worst place in England for [such] blackmail. I know no other town where the gallery boys look for pay'. [108]

We cannot, of course, discover, with any accuracy, how prevalent the problem had been, since the more successful the blackmailers were in intimidating their victims, the less evidence of their activities would have been apparent. It is, regrettably, part of a pattern of criminality that not infrequently manifested itself on the fringes of Birmingham's, theatre life, and which Rodgers himself had experienced and would record. [109] The worst such manifestation would occur in 1890. (See pages 88-89.)

After that, there is an encouraging diminution of press reports of such activity, mirrored by their relative absence in theatre memoirs. But while it persisted any association of Birmingham's places of entertainment with organized crime must have been an ongoing concern for managers, and the *Era's* exposure and crusade is to be commended.

CHANGING BEHAVIOUR

Notwithstanding, by the last decades of the Queen's reign theatres generally had become more tranquil places. The case of Birmingham has been subjected to particular scrutiny. That elements of a mushrooming population which, by report and observation, was characteristically diverse, volatile, heterogeneous, individualistic, and assertive, might, in a setting where apprehension and retribution might be chanced, be ready to give vent to well-lubricated feelings, and exercise a tyrannical dominion over their fellow-spectators, should not surprise us. No more so should the notion that this seed-bed of anti-social behaviour might occasionally produce shoots of a more positively criminal character. Many of Birmingham's social phenomena were common to the general Victorian urban experience, but they seem, perhaps, to have been reproduced on a larger scale here and to have interacted with a particular dynamism. It is tempting to assert that if the problem of audience misbehaviour could be largely overcome in Birmingham, it could be overcome anywhere.

The regularity of reminders to the public of the tasteful and wholesome nature of presentations is certainly evidence of a determination to bring about a more orderly house by attracting the 'better sort' of patrons, but, it might be appropriate to note here, it also

represented a response to moral pressures. As we have seen, when the management at Coventry's Theatre Royal was perceived by some citizens to be deviating from moral 'norms', it was pilloried in the correspondence columns of the local press. When *The Beggar's Opera* was presented in the mid-1850s, it was, pointedly, an expurgated version of the production staged a decade earlier. Within the contemporary English context Coventry was a much more 'typical' town -- socially, economically, and ecclesiastically -- than Birmingham, and may reasonably be supposed to have mirrored the prevailing moral climate fairly accurately. But for the managers of Birmingham's theatre the pressures were significantly greater. Historically, it had battled for its very existence, and then its legitimacy, against an Evangelical establishment, for whom the passing decades had brought a deepening entrenchment and a steady accretion of religious and political influence.

Recognizing, then, the special urgency of providing wholesome fare, the policy still represented only one plank, albeit a crucial one, in the raft of measures undertaken by determined and successful managements. At Birmingham's Theatre Royal the key to Mercer Simpson's proven achievements was the identification and co-ordination of appropriate policies, their firm implementation, and their maintenance, to a very considerable degree, by his son. These measures, as we have seen, included the policing of the gallery, and, later, its subdivision into differentially priced and designated areas, which segregated and isolated trouble-seekers. They also included the fostering of discerning, 'loyal', and family audiences by presenting high-quality repertory, visiting celebrities, and imaginatively-produced pantomime. If demography helped by settling large numbers of upwardly-mobile professionals within the catchment area, and

accessing an expanding carriage trade, so much the better.

The gradual diminution of press reports of audience misconduct points to the success of such developments, intended or fortuitous, but it is also reflective of changes in the behaviour of the larger community -- an improvement that might well be attributed to the effects of a series of Victorian reforms which, to an increasing degree, acknowledged the value and the dignity of the manual worker. By the early 1880s the fruits of Forster's 1870 Education Act were increasingly evident. In 1875 Disraeli's administration had put through the Artisans' Dwellings Act, providing for slum clearance programmes and laying down basic standards for newly-built workers' housing. (The Home Secretary, Richard Cross, who had piloted the legislation, had consulted closely with Joseph Chamberlain in the drafting of the Bill, and Chamberlain's own improvement schemes in Birmingham were facilitated by its provisions.) The 1884 franchise extension meant that the urban worker might now be courted for his vote, with perhaps a little more attention being paid to his grievances. With the promotion of the virtues of self-improvement and constructive leisure came the public libraries. Manchester was the first of the great towns to utilize the powers of Ewart's 1850 Free Libraries Act, but in 1860 Birmingham established a central reference library, a museum and art gallery, and the first four branches of what would become the most extensive public library system in the country. But there were more manifestations of the promises implicit in the 'Civic Gospel', notably the opening of public parks and municipal gardens, made possible in part by land gifts from the Calthorpe and Ryland families. Such opportunities for healthy recreation accorded well with the aspirations of men like Miller and Dale.

Quite independent of innovations by central or municipal government was the growth and organization of spectator sports which took place in the three decades between 1860 and 1890. Not, of course, a reform in itself, it may nevertheless be seen as a response to the winning of modest wage increases and of a few hours of paid leisure (usually Saturday afternoons). Boxing was regulated and placed on a legal footing. Aston Villa was founded in 1874; West Bromwich Albion in 1878. Both would be founder-members of the twelve-club Football League, formed in 1888. Rival attractions to the theatre were multiplying, and the terraces at Villa Park or the Hawthorns held some advantages over the Theatre Royal as an appropriate arena for continuous and uninhibited vocal expression. In the 1880s the newly-formed Warwickshire County Cricket Club located itself off the Pershore Road in Edgbaston, some two-and-a-half miles from the town centre. Mirroring the organization of professional sporting clubs was a multiplicity of amateur leagues for those who wished to be participants as well as spectators. Not least of the rival attractions were the music halls, which will be considered presently.

For a variety of unquantifiable imponderables, then, theatres had lost much of their raucous character. If a hard core of trouble-seekers remained, their comings and goings were necessarily dispersed over a broadening surface of activity. But to the extent that that reformation had been wrought by determined and enlightened managers, like the Mercer Simpsons and Rodgers, providing good and wholesome fare to audiences who, in their turn, recognized and appreciated the quality of what they were offered, due acknowledgment was made frequently in the pages of the local press and in the *Era*.

But perhaps the most remarkable tribute was delivered in October, 1883, from the

boards of the Prince of Wales itself, and it is the source of that tribute that makes it remarkable.

The stage has a voice to the people; and it will spend it faithfully, and they will hear it wisely; it shall be a voice which shall reveal the worlds of ideality and fancy amidst the hard setting of their prosaic lives; a voice which shall chide giddiness, and vice, and wrong; which shall proclaim the virtues of domestic life, and all the chivalries of social honour; whose satire shall be a sting and goad in folly's side; whose tongue shall cut down lightning upon idleness, and whose tones shall be like thunder to upbraid the wicked and the vile. It may teach the love of home, of wife, of child, and mirror on its glass the sweetness of the filial, parental, and fraternal bond; its sternest moral shall enroot the right, and its lightest fun shall sparkle with the innocent and the pure. It is not for the stage to make you what it would, but for you to make the stage what a noble people should choose for a diversion. [110]

These sentiments were voiced by the Reverend Arthur Mursell, minister since 1879 at the Mount Zion Baptist Chapel in Graham Street. It will be recalled that the Baptists had historically been at the forefront of those forces hostile to the very idea of a play-house in the town, and it would be eminently satisfying if the story of the Birmingham theatres' long struggle for acceptance and respectability could conclude on such a note of reconciliation and mutual accommodation. Mursell did not, of course, speak for all, or even, perhaps, a majority of his co-religionists. (Charles Haddon Spurgeon was still alive

and preaching at his London Tabernacle.) The best that we can say -- and it is something -- is that the preceding decades had seen a very gradual retreat from the state of confrontation that had characterized relations between chapel and stage in Birmingham until well into the nineteenth century, and that Mursell's address marked in some way a recognition, and even a celebration, of this. Langley describes Mursell as possessing kindly sympathy and large-heartedness . . . and by his lectures in public halls on Sunday afternoons he reached many thousands of men'. [111] His attitude towards the theatre was perhaps akin to that of George Dawson, but it was one that now seemed more harmonious with a better-educated, growingly cosmopolitan society, proudly declared to be run on liberal Christian principles. Dawson's views had been sufficiently at variance with the Baptist Church to prompt his early departure from it. His opinions on the theatre formed merely one of the range of differences occasioning the schism, but it is worth noting that Mursell's address seems to have triggered no storm of protest from his brethren, and his popularity continued undiminished for the remaining years of his Birmingham ministry.

THE LICENSING OF THE MUSIC HALLS

In the early 1860s Birmingham had been in the vanguard of towns lobbying the Home Secretary for magistrates to be empowered to grant or refuse licence applications for the holding of music or dancing in public houses, and to treat any publican conducting such activities in his establishment without being in possession of a currently valid music licence as being in breach of the law. Nationally, the temperance movement had gained

in strength and influence following the formation in 1853 of the United Kingdom Alliance for the Suppression of the Traffic in All Intoxicating Liquors. The Alliance sought to further its cause, not through conversion or persuasion of the wayward, but by direct State intervention. Birmingham, with its longstanding temperance tradition, was well placed to take the initiative, and had the enthusiastic support of the rising star in the town's political firmament, Joseph Chamberlain. Music-licensing powers were indeed secured by Birmingham's magistracy in 1861 through the Improvement Act. Applicants were required to comply with a number of stringent conditions, and, in practice, magistrates were given latitude to make a strict interpretation of those requirements. The coming into operation of such restrictive powers represented a victory for the temperance lobby, but what that lobby really sought was not merely the restriction of music and drinking establishments, but their elimination. Allied to them was a group which might not share its teetotal views, but was convinced of the moral dangers of mixing drinking with music and dancing. In sum, and to enter into the idiom in which they often expressed themselves, objectors contended that the gin palace would resort to the meretricious and seductive charms of music to lure the unwary, who would then fall easy prey to the demon drink and all the moral perils that lurked within its portals.

In the vanguard of such opposition was the Rev. Dr. John Cale Miller, Rector of St. Martin's since 1846. While Dr. Miller shared many of the principles of his Evangelical brethren, he also believed that the stability and tranquillity of the social order, which he accepted as hierarchical, would best be served by promoting the moral elevation of the labouring classes. He also favoured the provision of opportunities and facilities for

healthy and wholesome recreation . These objectives he sought to further principally through two organizations with which he was actively involved, the St. Martin's Working Men's Association, and the Public Recreation Society. [112] Miller was the most prominent member of a delegation presenting memorials at the Public Office in Birmingham on September 19, 1861. His representations to the licensing magistrates embraced his personal philosophy, and were duly reported in the *Gazette*.

Apart from the higher religious reasons that pressed particularly upon the clergy, they felt that these places were the seed plots of crime in the town, and so long as the scenes which now took place within their walls continued, all the efforts they could make to stem the torrent of crime were rendered to a great extent unavailing. He . . . had no wish nor intention in what he was doing to deprive the working classes of what might be termed as innocent recreation. They were no enemies to the recreation of the working classes; but if by the recreation of the working classes meant facilities to get drunk they were enemies to that . . . [113]

Almost a year later, in the issue of the *Gazette* for August 23, 1862, it was reported that, 'Mr. Day will make application for a music license at the annual licensing sessions on Friday next, and if the application is successful, the hall will be opened on Wednesday, September 17th'. [114] Day's 'Crystal Palace' was much in the news, and his determination to have music at his lavishly reconstructed hall had been no secret; hence the flood of correspondence -- mainly condemnatory -- which had already begun to appear in the columns of both the *Gazette* and the *Post* on

the whole question of music licences and the nature of the ‘concert-room amusements’ with which they were linked. ‘Lover of Music’ had entered the lists a week before. Prefacing his observations with the assurance that he had ‘no desire to enter into a prolonged discussion upon’ the subject of ‘the licensing of public houses for musical entertainment, and the effects produced upon the good order of the town and morals of its inhabitants’, he proceeded to do precisely that, and in his first sentence he encapsulated the essential objection of protesters. The publican, he asserted, who resorts ‘to the establishment of music at his house as an allurement to entice numbers to gather Therein’ is motivated by considerations of commercial self-interest. But, ‘[a]re there not other individuals besides the *poor unfortunate publican* deserving our consideration and respect? Where is the unhappy wife, grieving at the continual absence of her infatuated husband? or the heart-broken mother, drooping with sorrow and anguish occasioned by the sad career of a son who has drunk himself blind to all affection? or for a daughter just rpening into woman-hood, gradually descending into vice, misery, and shame? Of these, sir, there are not a few instances, even in this town.’ [115] Such sentiments were shared by ‘A Working Man’, who asked: ‘Do not the music licenses in connection with the gin-shop and the ale-house tend to lead the people away from the path of honesty and sobriety to the path of drunkenness and crime?’ Noting that few of the many licence applications made during the last year had been granted, he asserted that the visible effects had been salutary, ‘for if you walk along High Street and Dale End, the difference is seen at once, for previous to the time of granting licenses for music and dancing, no person could pass in comfort near the places where music, &c., was had, but since music and dancing has been prohibited, it has been very different. We can now

pass in comparative comfort'. [116]

One manifestation of the determination and energy of those opposing the granting of licences was the canvassing of neighbourhoods of proposed or existing concert rooms. The results were then cited in support of their case. Alfred F. Morgan, 'with two other gentlemen' had visited Park Street. 'In the course of the afternoon we made seventy-six applications, and obtained sixty-two signatures and only fourteen refusals. Eight of the parties who refused were ascertained to be interested more or less directly in the trade . . . The signatures were in many cases given with a promptness and heartiness . . . I was gratified to find not only that music and dancing in licensed houses and beer shops was objected to, but also that there was a considerable desire for the curtailment of the hours allowed for the sale of intoxicating drinks, especially on Sundays'. [117]

Francis King, a shopkeeper in Smallbrook Street, in the immediate neighbourhood of Day's establishment, reported the aggressive behaviour of a solitary drunk and used the incident to caricaturize and stigmatize supporters of his licence application. A petition had been placed on his counter for the signatures of protesters.

The results have been the signatures of some influential inhabitants, and the disgraceful scene to which I now allude. From about six o'clock till midnight, with a few intermissions, an Irishman came near my shop, and swearing with characteristic energy, warned both English and Irish not to go in, intimating that they would have their heads broken, &c . . . If these are the means resorted to for obtaining these licenses, let us judge what the real object contemplated may be. Is it the

comfort and elevation, morally and socially, of the working classes? Or is it the making of large sums out of the depravity and degradation of the people generally? [118]

The canvassers' claims of 155 signatures from residents of Smallbrook Street and 488 from Hill Street were hotly disputed by 'An Inhabitant of Smallbrook Street' and 'Free Action'. [119] Their comments imply that the memorialists made no distinction between gin-shop and concert hall. Apparently, many residents were favourably disposed towards establishments like Day's and Holder's. 'Free Action' observed that there were 'two public-houses in Weaman Street opposite each other: young boys and girls attend, and of course get no good. These places require suppression, as they outrage good order, but in the name of common sense let the *respectable* concert halls alone, for continual toil is a weary taskmaster without some recreation . . . [For] a man working till nine o'clock or half-past nine at night, I can see nothing immoral in the desire for a glass and a pipe, while listening to the charm of melody'. [120]

But 'Nosam' gave short shrift to such sentiments, and advised:

Let the working-classes patronise the concerts which are given at the Town Hall . . . and other places of the kind, where they will hear better music, and not run the danger of injuring their morals and debasing their characters. [121]

in a later letter the same correspondent appealed directly to the musically-minded artisan.

I would have the working-man purchase a musical instrument. [The wherewithal to do so could be obtained from his present expenditure on liquor.] Let him keep from the publicans, and he will have more than is requisite. [122]

An often bitter correspondence reached new heights of acrimony in a letter from W.H. Russell. Taking to task, in particular, 'Lover of Music', whose sentiments, quoted earlier, had been expressed in a markedly unrestrained fashion, he asked:

Has he at any time took [sic.] the trouble to watch the audience retiring from the only well-conducted concert hall [Holder's] we have as yet possessed in this town? And if he has, will he state what proportion the 'drunkards' bear to the same number issuing from the beer shops and tap, and even smoke rooms, of this same town? If not, I think he would act judiciously in not venturing to speak again on a question he does not understand. Now, sir, I will give you my experience. When the total abstinence pledge was first introduced in this town, I signed it on the first night, and faithfully kept it for nine years; at the same time I was constantly attending one of the popular places of worship, and I can assert, without any fear of contradiction, that I have seen and participated in more vice, after leaving both places, than I ever have done in the fifteen or sixteen years that have followed up to the present time. I do not make this assertion with any intention of scandalising either our teetotal or church and chapel-growing brethren, but merely to show them all the vice is not fostered and begotten in the establishments they so vehemently vilify. [123]

The dominant fact emerging from this correspondence is that a clear majority of contributors held a principled objection to the consumption of alcohol, and their condemnation of any establishment where it was easily available was logical. While an articulate minority made a distinction between the beer-shops and the ‘well-conducted concert hall’, the temperance lobby saw in their feared proliferation of music licences the a dangerous allurements to the weak and unwary to follow the path of the drunkard. It should also be recalled that Birmingham, enfranchised in 1832, had come to be regarded as a rock-solid stronghold of the Liberal Party. [124] When another correspondent, ‘Jacques’, expressed the hope that ‘the authorities will see the matter in a sensible light, and recollect that in granting licenses to properly built and constructed concert halls, they yet retain the power to close them on any licensing-day’, the seeming reasonableness of such a course might well have evoked a sympathetic response from a pragmatic Tory or an embryonic Socialist believing in the greatest good for the greatest number. [125] But for Liberals, there was an inherent conflict. Enshrined in their philosophy was the belief in the freedom of the individual. This implied the right of the individual to consume liquor when and where he chose to do so. Moreover, the individual should not only be liberated, he should be trusted - trusted to act with due consideration for other individuals. The dilemma was, of course, a national one, but in Birmingham, where Liberalism, Nonconformism and temperance were often intertwined, it was particularly acute. If the loyalty of interests whose support lay at the core of the Party was not to be alienated, it had to be responded to. In Birmingham, the town authorities’ policy was to adopt a strict licensing procedure. At national level, Gladstone’s first administration would, in 1874, propose a Licensing Bill which had the

effect of cementing an alliance between the brewers and the Conservative Party. Gladstone's government famously went down 'in a torrent of gin and beer'. It would take another four decades and the exigencies of a world war, before Liberals could legitimately subordinate their consciences to the overriding need for a sober work force and curtail the hours of permitted public drinking accordingly. Out of office after 1918, the party was spared a further such crisis of conscience. [126]

Day's application for a music licence for his Crystal Palace was considered at an adjourned meeting of the Mayor (Mr. H. Manton) and the licensing magistrates on August 29, 1862. No official records of the meeting have survived, but the *Post* reported the deliberations in some detail. Day was represented by John Suckling, who asserted that his client's establishment 'was one of the handsomest structures in the world, and a credit to the town of Birmingham'. Coming to the question of music, he asked whether it was not the case that his clerical opponents adopted 'the same means of attracting the public to their places of worship? . . . That they had music in places of worship was unquestionable . . .

But in addition to the objection of music, they were told that there was dancing connected with it. Why, dancing was as old as Adam. Did not David dance, and did not every one dance except that serious and quiet sect of people called Quakers? But as to anybody else, he ventured to say that there was not one man in one thousand who had not taken part in a polka. Then, was it music and dancing combined that they objected to? These were separately harmless, and surely the two together could not be bad? It struck him forcibly that the main

objection to these was the having of drink in connection with them. Why, what would this country be without bitter beer? Where would the volunteers of England be without their beer? They would positively die out from the face of the earth. He maintained that bitter beer was the staff and friend of this great manufacturing country. There was not a man who had not enjoyed it. Was it against bitter beer then that they had this opposition?

Having thus imputed a want of patriotism in his opponents, Mr. Suckling went on to question the validity of the memorials they had presented. 'He was surprised that gentlemen should seriously go round to school children asking their opinion upon this question - children whose opinions they would not ask on any other question. He was also surprised that gentlemen should go from lamp post to lamp post with those memorials for the purpose of having them signed, and he ventured to say that in the case of hundreds of these signatures the parties knew no more what they were signing for than "The man in the moon". He was astonished that this should be done by gentlemen professing to hold liberal opinions. Liberal, forsooth! . . . They had all seen the names of "Smith" and "Jones" at the bottom of those memorials, and he thought the manner in which they were got up was anything but creditable'. Harking back to one of Matthew Boulton's arguments in support of the Theatre Royal, he asserted that 'people would have amusement, if not in a proper - in an improper manner' . . . If he could convince the Bench 'that it was necessary to have harmless and moderate amusement for the people, but [that] it was desirable upon all grounds that this should be conducted in places of this description under the supervision of the police, he should gain one step in

the argument'. Then, asked Mr. Suckling, 'What about the 2,200 signatures which had been collected *in support* of the granting of that license[?] . They were . . . not from the Cave of Adullam or the Band of Hope' . . . but 'from Smallbrook Street . . . and all the public streets in the town', and included 'two Aldermen and ten Councillors'. Moreover, Mr. Day was resolved to follow the example of Mr. Holder, proprietor of Holder's Grand Concert Hall, noted for his generosity to local charities, 'and to contribute large sums to the hospitals. Was there one gentleman on the other side who would give a day's earnings to such objects?'. He then pointed out that Mr. Day had spent a considerable amount of money on beautifying his establishment and making it safe against fire hazards, in expectation of having music there, before the present Act was passed, and, as far as Mr. Day was concerned, that legislation now had a retrospective effect, threatening to involve him in considerable financial loss. Mr. Suckling then came to his concluding remarks, which were brief but very telling.

[U]nless the Magistrates were prepared to say that the law was to be a dead letter, and that they were to grant no licenses for music and dancing he held that his application must be granted. His client had complied with the requirements of the Act in every particular, and he held that he was entitled to have his license from the Magistrates of the liberal and enlightened town of Birmingham.

Mr. Day's application was further supported by Mr. J.W. Cutler, who said that he was there to represent the views of a majority of residents of Smallbrook Street, who believed that 'it would be a great benefit to the neighbourhood to have a concert room

there, and secondly because they believed that the granting of this license would be the means of great good to those' who otherwise 'would be found in the haunts of demoralisation'. He cited evidence which appeared to throw considerable doubt on the objectors' claim that a large number of Smallbrook Street residents had signed their memorial. Granting Mr. Day's application would not be 'like granting a license to an ordinary gin shop'; his establishment would be conducted in accordance with Parliamentary regulations. Moreover, the class of music which would be performed at Mr. Day's was a very high one, and his clients 'wished to have the pleasure of having it in their own neighbourhood. Then this was not a promiscuous dancing room, where people of both sexes danced and got intoxicating liquors. The dancing proposed was ordinary ballet dancing . . . of a very superior order'. Mr. Cutler then cited statistics in support of his contention that drunkenness and allied offences in Birmingham had increased rather than otherwise since music and dancing in public houses had been suppressed. He then made reference to a formal dinner recently held by the Retail Brewers at Aston Hall, where he witnessed 'a number of young ladies and gentlemen dancing to the music, and having some kind of drink and other things. Surely if they would have that at Aston, they might have a hall in Birmingham . . . He did not know that there was any great demoralisation going on there'. (This point was well made. Most of Aston at this time was subject to a separate magistracy, which may not, in any case, have had any jurisdiction over what was probably considered a private function. Nevertheless, the amenities available at Aston Hall on that occasion were essentially the same as those proposed at Day's and other drinking establishments, and which were now the subject of such fear and outrage. The Aston Hall dinner seems to have prompted no

kind of furore. The distinguishing factor was, of course, class. The preoccupation of men like Dr. Miller was that the labouring classes were peculiarly disposed to moral degeneracy.)

Mr. W. Morgan then spoke in opposition to the granting of a music licence for Mr. Day's establishment, which, he asserted, possessed a stage somewhat longer than that of the Theatre Royal, dressing-rooms, and was to feature an orchestra. It was not, then, merely a music hall that the Bench were being asked to license, but a theatre. With reference to the plea that Mr. Day had spent a considerable sum on the building, much of it prior to the passing of the recent legislation, 'he proceeded to say that there had been no fewer than 400 Acts of Parliament passed with regard to drinking', proof that 'the trade must be dangerous'. The argument that Mr. Day would be financially ruined if the licence should be refused was no reason to grant it. 'It was not the interests of Mr. Day but those of the public that had to be considered' . . . Mr. Morgan protested that 'he was not there to advocate the views of the teetotallers', nor 'to say that the people should be deprived of innocent amusement; but he did call upon the Bench to separate drinking from music and dancing, his clients being of opinion that the two in combination were most injurious to the morals of the people' . . . He repudiated 'the idea that the license should be granted because Mr. Day promised to give away money in aid of public charity, and because he had promised to give the proceeds of the first evening to funds of the Queen's Hospital' . . . and 'were his clients not to be heard because they did not give a day's earnings to the same object [?]'.

Mr. Powell, who 'also opposed on behalf of a number of inhabitants of Smallbrook

Street', endorsed the arguments of Mr. Morgan, asserted that Mr. Suckling's criticisms of the validity of the objectors' memorial 'would apply to the memorial presented by Mr. Suckling himself', and questioned the efficacy of the fire and safety precautions at Mr. Day's establishment.

The Mayor then enquired of the applicant 'whether he intended to conduct his house in a similar manner to [Holder's Concert Hall] in Coleshill Street', and Mr. Day confirmed that 'the general arrangements would be the same'. (Given the high reputation that Holder's enjoyed, this undertaking must have been reassuring to all but the principled objectors.) The Mayor asked if there were to be any theatrical performances. Mr. Day replied that there were to be no theatrical performances. 'There would be music and dancing and anything else worth seeing.' Mr. Suckling added that the hall 'would be conducted in the same way as the Alhambra, the Oxford, and other similar establishments in London'. As none of the other magistrates wished to question the applicant or his representative, they then retired. [127]

Day's had been just one - albeit the most celebrated - of the music licence applications submitted for consideration by the magistrates. Their decisions were awaited in an atmosphere of considerable tension; unsuccessful applicants would be obliged to wait a further twelve months before a further application could be considered. No Council records of the magistrates' deliberations remain, but that they were protracted for nearly two hours beyond the time appointed for their decisions to be announced, suggests that considerable debate took place. This impression is strengthened by the prefatory remarks made by the Mayor, after finally emerging from

the meeting to announce the bench's decision: 'I am sorry to say it is my duty to read over the following to whom licenses are granted for music - not that I am opposed to enjoyment, but I am opposed to theatrical amusements and intoxicating liquors being combined together in the same place . . . ' He then read out the names of James Day and seven other applicants.

The total number of new music licence applications submitted (including Day's) had been 132. Of these, just seven had been granted. In addition fifteen applicants had applied for the renewal of existing licences. These were proprietors of conventional public houses, whose musical ambitions are likely to have been modest. Only one was successful. It seems evident that the Birmingham magistrates were making a very strict interpretation of the 1861 Act. For at least some of the members of the bench, music and liquor constituted a toxic brew. The Act empowered the magistrates to outlaw it in the great majority of houses. But it was a double-edged weapon. We do not know what weight, if any, most of Mr. Suckling's eloquent arguments on behalf of his client carried with the bench. But when he made the strongly-supported assertion that Mr. Day had complied with the legal requirements in every particular, and was thereby entitled to have his licence, and, moreover, when he told the magistrates that unless 'they were prepared to say that the law was to be a dead letter, and that they were to grant no licenses for music and dancing . . . his application must be granted', he was making a well-nigh unanswerable argument. When the Mayor placed his principled objection on record he simultaneously implied his or any other magistrate's impotence to prevent the operation of the Act when its requirements had been met. Moreover, the licences they did grant might well come to be regarded as badges of legitimacy, seals of approval, which their

very rarity enhanced. [128]

BIRMINGHAM'S MUSIC HALLS

Despite the annual necessity of justifying their existence before the licensing magistrates, Birmingham's music halls, by the mid-1890s, formed a substantial and growing number. Pre-eminent among them were the Empire and the Gaiety, each of which had followed pretty faithfully the classic and now familiar road from tap-room to palace of varieties.

Henry Holder was a butcher, whose shop, at 89 Coleshill Street, Birmingham, stood next to the Rodney Inn, a public house of low reputation kept by a John Twist. Holder acquired the property around 1840 and rapidly set about transforming its appearance and its reputation. Within months part of the premises had been converted into a performance room. Of modest proportions (30 feet by 18 feet), it was furnished with a platform and a piano, and attracted performers from the clientele, and, increasingly, aspiring amateurs and semi-professionals from around the locality. Holder's endeavours met with considerable success. Already in possession of the properties at Nos. 88 and 89, he would soon acquire that at No. 90. Expansion began in earnest in 1846. On June 24 Holder invited some 150 of the town's leading citizens to an inaugural dinner, thereby ensuring excellent publicity for the grand opening of his new 'Rodney Inn Concert Rooms'.

Here some six hundred patrons could be accommodated, and the focal piece was a fine organ built by Hills of London, and reportedly costing 600 guineas. Further expansion took place in 1857, and a much grander hall, 116 feet long, with an extensive horseshoe balcony, resulted. Its structure was possibly influenced by the big London halls like the

Canterbury and Weston's. Holder's determination to maintain a high reputation for his establishment was as strong as ever. Gentleman patrons were expected to wear top hats, and disregarding this expectation might well risk the embarrassment of being refused admission. Special seats were permanently reserved for the Mayor and other civic dignitaries. Now known as Holder's Grand Concert Hall, its presentations were regularly styled 'Harmonic Evenings'. A programme from the 1860s lists choral and instrumental renditions of works from *Zampa* and *Masaniello*, some tasteful ballads sung by Madame Alford (lyrics provided), interspersed with 'The Matthews Family in their Tight Rope Performance', and 'M. Henrique and his Highly-Trained Dogs and Monkeys'. [129] Holder retired in the late 1860s and sold out his interest. In 1886 Charles Barnard became lessee of what was now known as the Gaiety, and in 1897, still under his stewardship, the interior of the building underwent its ultimate and most elaborate alterations. The main entrance now featured a marble staircase, 72 feet wide, 'with mosaic floor, wrought-iron banisters, and a ceiling in the Jacobean style', giving access to the boxes, stalls and circle. The auditorium had a seating capacity of 3,500. Tilted chairs in the circle were of walnut, upholstered in red plush; the stalls seats were upholstered in old gold plush. Domed boxes stretched to a ceiling of elaborate plasterwork. A striking feature was the proscenium arch, measuring 34 feet by 32 feet, and designed in the Louis Quatorze style. The lounge bar was 'very effectively designed', and separate bars were provided 'for each part of the house'. It was further noted that entry 'to the other parts of the house is obtainable from a side doorway, so that the habitués of the stalls, &c, will not have to press cheek-by-jowl with the pittance and galleryite, an important consideration socially considered'. [130] A

noteworthy innovation of Barnard's was a temperance bar. Presently a 'Sacred Concert' would be presented on Sunday evenings. [131]

That the career of James Day had parallels with that of Henry Holder becomes evident when we track the development of what would become the Empire Palace of Varieties. Day kept a barber's shop in Hurst Street. In 1853 he acquired the White Swan, a public house at the corner of Hurst Street and Smallbrook Street. Here he installed a huge crystal ball which reflected itself in large distorted mirrors, and, no doubt with recollections of the recent Great Exhibition and its most tangible legacy still fresh, re-christened his newly-acquired establishment the 'Crystal Palace'. Here concerts of high and tasteful standards were staged with such success that Day built a new concert hall, somewhat larger than Holder's, and bigger even than Birmingham's Town Hall. A correspondent sent to inspect the new building 'unhesitatingly pronounce[d] it the most magnificent concert room in the kingdom . . . The most striking features on first entering . . . are its extreme height and elegant proportions, the roof swelling from the sides in a graceful curve, and unsupported by pillars . . . [T]he galleries are carried in a graceful sweep around the entire hall . . . The walls at the back of the galleries on each side are separated by pilasters into six panels, surmounted by moulded archivolta, the pilasters also being finished with elaborately moulded capitols in the Italian order. A moulded cornice of very chaste design is carried round the room'. Gas lighting would be provided by five cut-glass chandeliers. The benches had cushioned leather spring seats with padded backs, and tables were positioned to accord roughly with social status. In all, seating accommodation for some two thousand patrons was provided without fear of overcrowding. The stage was slightly larger than that at the Theatre

Royal, and in front of it there was accommodation for an eighteen-piece orchestra. Fourteen dressing-rooms were provided. [132] Again renamed -- now 'Day's Crystal Palace Concert Hall' -- a grand opening took place in the autumn of 1862, with the prior announcement that the evening's proceeds would be donated to the Queen's Hospital. Within six years yet another extensive refurbishment would take place.

A programme from the 1860s suggests that Day's establishment might well have outrivalled Holder's in refinement. The bill, to be sure, included a 'Comic Extravaganza', a 'Burlesque Entertainment', a 'Serio-Comic Song', and a 'Negro Entertainment', but the tone of the programme was set by contributions that included overtures from two grand operas, a selection from Gounod's *Faust*, a love ballad sung by Mrs. Saunders, and a 'New Grand Fairy *Divertissement* by 'The Wood Nymphs'. [133]

In 1893 Day's Palace was sold to Moss' Empires. It underwent substantial rebuilding to the design of Frank Matcham, before reopening in May, 1894, as the New Empire Palace of Varieties. The *Era*'s correspondent reported that 'there is not a seat in the whole of the building the occupant of which will not be able to see every inch of the Stage'. Consciously or unconsciously emulating Holder and Day, every effort was made to appeal to or even foster refined taste. The building boasted 'a very handsome façade in rich Italian renaissance'. The decoration of the auditorium was in similar style, while a large panel across the top of the proscenium bore the motto: ' " Bid me discourse and I will enchant thine ear" '. The account continues: 'The floor of the grand vestibule is inlaid with mosaic, and the carved polished mahogany entrance doors are exceedingly

handsome with their amber glass panels. The walls here are lined with panelled and moulded mahogany . . . ’ But inclusivity had its limits. Middle-class and aspiring middle-class patrons need not fear too close an intimacy with the *hoi polloi*. The ‘sloping pit’ was, reassuringly, ‘approached by a separate entrance’. [134]

MINOR HALLS AND ‘BLOOD TUBS’

But Birmingham had its less salubrious places of entertainment. The Metropole, situated about a mile north-west of the town centre, in an area characterized by small factories and workshops, typical of much of the local industrial landscape, opened in 1883. It would provide live entertainment for a comparatively short time before converting to a cinema in 1911, and its early history was ambivalent. Initially refused a theatre licence, it operated as a music hall under the name of the New Star Theatre of Varieties. In 1886 it underwent internal structural alterations before reopening as a playhouse. In both of its careers it achieved notoriety, its audiences’ treatment of performers being compared with that meted out at the Empire, Glasgow. For this reason, and for the particular popularity of the gorier melodramas it not infrequently staged, it was known popularly as the ‘Blood Tub’. Well into the 1960s oral accounts of goings on there freely circulated in the neighbourhood. Two members of the Melville theatrical family were, at different times, involved in its management, and the comments of the elder, Andrew, were recalled by Derek Salberg, the former owner-manager of Birmingham’s last ‘dynastic’ theatre, the Alexandra.

They [the audience] varied their playful habit of pelting the actors and the

orchestra by attempting to throw policemen from the gallery into the pit. Gangs filled the pit and vied with each other in making the most noise, whilst six or seven chuckers out struggled amongst a mass of cursing men and shrieking women.[135]

Perhaps the management's emphasis on the ready availability of cheap alcoholic beverages -- playbills read: 'Fully-Licensed Refreshment Rooms: Everything same price as outside' -- was helping to attract a clientele whose interest was not primarily theatrical. [136]

Another house which experienced several metamorphoses and changes of name and management was the Canterbury Tavern and Music Hall (as it became known in 1890). In 1896 it would be renamed the Coutts Theatre after its new owner, William Coutts, who strove hard to win for it an image of stability and respectability. He presented popular but wholesome dramas, held services on Sundays, and sought to establish links with the larger community through such endeavours as sponsoring summer outings for poor children. For a couple of years the policy achieved some success, but in 1900 the house closed, and twelve years later it became a cinema.

The scene of Coutts's later reforming endeavours had in fact, by 1890, become increasingly associated with acts of 'reckless rowdyism', and 'the shopkeepers in the vicinity of the Canterbury Music Hall' were 'living under a reign of terror' perpetrated by local 'slogging gangs'. 'Lawlessness and savagery' characterized 'these ruffianly hordes, whose thefts and assaults on inoffensive persons the local magistrates' seemed 'utterly unable to put down'. Typically armed with 'pieces of iron and handkerchiefs

with stones in the end, brickbats, and big clasp knives', their victims included policemen who were 'assaulted and beaten unmercifully'. Matters reached a tragic climax in April, and on the 19th the editor of the *Era* commented:

We, in London, occasionally have to complain of ill-behaviour and disorder at music halls, but our mild and moderate grievances pale into insignificance before those which have had to be endured by the respectable portion of patrons of variety entertainment in a certain town in the provinces. It is with the deepest concern that we allude to the murder of Mr Thomas Martin, the stage-manager of the Canterbury . . . , Birmingham, who died on Friday, the 4th inst. . . . from the effects of a cowardly and brutal assault committed upon him . . . by a number of roughs. It seems that a man named Beard came to the hall and asked an employee for some free passes to the entertainment. When these were refused Beard violently assaulted the employee. Mr Martin was called to quell the disturbance . . . [but] was set upon by Beard, another man named Rutter, and a woman named Mary Callis . . . The result of this brutal attack was the death of the victim two days afterwards . . . [137]

THE VARIETY PALACES

The opening of the New Empire, then, offered the sharpest possible contrast to the sometimes troubled and even tragic happenings at the city's lesser halls. Its introductory printed programme made clear the intention of the new owners, Moss' Empires, to maintain and even exceed the standards set by James Day, enshrining a promise that the

'Class of Entertainment will be as refined as it is excellent. A conspicuous feature will be the absence of all that can ever be construed as vulgarity'. [138] A reading of two playbills -- one issued shortly before the closure of Day's Crystal Palace, the other soon after its rebirth as the New Empire -- highlights some essential differences between the music halls and the variety theatres which were steadily replacing them. At Day's, admission to the best seats (the orchestra stalls), via the 'new entrance,' could be obtained for two shillings. Other seating categories included 'side stalls' and 'promenade'. [139] The latter did not feature in the list of admission prices to the New Empire, neither did Day's old designation, 'Floor 6d'. Henceforth, the perambulation of patrons, once admitted, would be circumscribed, and effectively restricted to intermission visits to the bars and cloakrooms, and departures for the exits. Even Day's 'excellently-conducted temple of amusement' had depended upon the consumption of alcohol in various forms for the greater part of its income, and for long the admission price had incorporated the cost of one or two drinks as well as entertainment. But at the New Empire, prices -- just as much as the separation of the bars from the auditorium -- suggest a determination to weaken the traditional association of the music halls and alcohol. Ostensibly, there was no difference now between the new variety palaces and the playhouses, other than the libational habits formed or fostered in the halls, which some patrons brought with them. The form of entertainment, of course, was different, but Birmingham's sober elements and their families could appreciate its excellent and refined character without the need to visit the bars, and in conditions of comfort, and even luxury, which were markedly superior to those of, say, the ageing Theatre Royal. It followed, then, that seat prices at the New Empire should be roughly comparable to those obtaining at the better provincial

theatres, and high enough to offset the supposed proportional diminution of drinks sales. The top price at the Empire (£1/11/6), in fact, exceeded that at the Theatre Royal. This was for a private box; other private boxes might be obtained there for a guinea, which was the single price for a similar facility at the Royal. There was some disparity in stall prices - 4/- at the Royal and 2/6 (reserved 3/-) at the Empire - but at both houses it was still possible to obtain seats in the pit and gallery at 1/- and 6d respectively. The wide range of admission prices, coupled with the provision of separate entrances, demonstrates an unashamed determination to compete for a share of the carriage trade, a lion's share of which the city's two premier theatre managements might long have considered to be theirs, almost by divine right. [140]

Seat prices at the New Empire also reflect sharp differences in admission costs to the 'top' variety houses and the lower halls. A contemporary advertisement for the Curzon Hall, centrally located in Suffolk Street, indicates just four prices for unspecified seating categories. Top price is 3/-, the lowest, 6d. [141]

A further interesting comparison with the New Empire is offered by the Bordesley Palace. The 'Imperial Theatre' at the time of the Empire's grand opening, it was added To Moss' Empires portfolio a few years later, 're-modelled, re-furnished and re-lit', and reopened as a variety theatre under its new name in August, 1903. Perhaps the categorizing of seating was viewed as having gone too far here and amounted to fragmentation. In any event the trend was reversed. Now the 'Amphitheatre and Gallery' were 'all made into One' and the seating 'richly upholstered'. It was further announced that the FORMER ORCHESTRA STALLS, PIT STALLS AND PIT ARE

ALL THROWN INTO ONE, FITTED WITH TIP-UP CHAIRS AND WILL BE CALLED ORCHESTRA STALLS. Considering that presentations would occasionally feature performers of the fame of Harry Houdini, prices seem remarkably low -- 3d, 6d, 1/- and 2/-, while a seat in a private box could be secured for 1/6. But Bordesley was an inner-city working or lower-middle class suburb, far removed, geographically and culturally, from the centre of things. The Palace seemed resigned to a permanent status of unfashionability, and its admission charges indicate little expectation of extending its appeal to Birmingham's smart set. [142]

If the leading music halls were becoming physically and economically indistinguishable from the legitimate theatres, demarcation lines were also blurred by a steadily expanding crossfertilization of talent. The programmes that we scanned earlier in this chapter show that, as early as the 1860s, both Day's and Holder's were presenting on their bills artists who had come to prominence on the classical concert platform or the operatic stage.[143] The managements of the Theatre Royal and the Prince of Wales were not less forthcoming in recruiting performers who had made their name on the halls. The Royal had presented its first pantomime in 1840. From the early 1870s the acknowledged excellence of their productions was rivalled by the presentations at the Prince of Wales. Both won consistent praise from the *Era* and the local press.

Many of the music hall artists discovered in this medium a means to enhance their careers and exploit unsuspected talents. Marie Loftus (mentioned earlier with reference to the Birmingham claquers) 'is alone a great attraction', commented the *Era*'s reviewer after seeing her in the Prince of Wales's 1888 pantomime of *Bluebeard*. [144]

She revealed considerable dramatic skills, and is now arguably celebrated more as a pantomime principal boy than as a music hall performer. Similar claims might be made for Harry Randall, one of the stars of the Royal's 1887 pantomime. Acknowledged to be one of the finest dames of his day, he was virtually installed at Drury Lane in that capacity. [145]

But pantomime plots could be made sufficiently flexible to allow for the replication of songs or routines with which an artist might have become popularly identified. *Goody Two Shoes*, the 1887 production in which Harry Randall made such a success, was considered to offer sufficient scope for co-star, Jenny Hill, to render two of her old 'standards' -- *How He Carries On*, and *'Arry*. [146]

Reviews suggest that the pantomime presentations of both theatres largely succeeded in pleasing their young spectators, for whom the productions were principally intended, while, at the same time, providing plenty of topical or 'in' jokes to keep the accompanying adults amused. One suspects that the comments of the *Era*'s reporter on the Royal's 1868 production of *Ali Baba* might be applied to most if not all of the Birmingham Victorian pantomimes: '[P]arents can laugh heartily over [the writer's] whimsicalities whilst contemplating the delight of their children over the same entertainment'. [147]

When it is remembered that the Birmingham pantomimes, in common with many of those produced at other theatres throughout the kingdom, regularly ran for some three months or more, a consequence of not inconsiderable significance is that growing numbers of music hall artists were now employed for a good quarter of their working

year in legitimate theatres. The long engagements perhaps moderated the ‘vagabond’ view of their profession. But there was a more profound implication. The notion that to see the likes of George Robey in pantomime at the Royal (he was there in 1899 as one of the *Babes in the Wood*), was perfectly proper, but, perhaps a few weeks later, to walk two or three hundred yards down the road to see him in variety at the Empire was somehow *improper*, held diminishing credibility.

That the presentation of pantomime was the business of the legitimate theatres and not the variety palaces remained the generally observed practice in Birmingham. At the turn of the new century pantomime was being produced at three important local venues - the Theatre Royal, the Prince of Wales, and the Grand in Corporation Street. At the Royal it had, over sixty years, become established as a local institution. At the Prince of Wales managements had strengthened local connections by regularly featuring choruses of children recruited from the town. The Grand had begun in 1883 by ‘outsourcing’ its pantomimes from Drury Lane, and was only beginning to put down local roots comparable to those of its older rivals when it was reinvented as a variety palace in 1907. Meanwhile, the Alexandra had, in 1901, opened its doors, and almost from its inception began building a pantomime tradition of its own, which survives to this day.

In the summer of 1900, notices appeared in the Birmingham press informing readers that the ‘Grand Opening’ of the Tivoli was to take place on August 20. It was in fact a reopening. It had begun life just nine months before as ‘The Tower of Varieties and Circus’ with an auditorium that could accommodate some 3,000 patrons and a circus

ring. It was soon apparent that the circus project was not a success, and the owners, James and Henry Draysey, lost no time in calling in their architect, F.W. Lloyd, who oversaw the building's reconstruction as a modern, 1,900-seat variety theatre. Its location was in Hurst Street, within shouting distance of the Empire, and for the foreseeable future Birmingham would boast three front-rank palaces of variety. The Tivoli would, in 1903, become the 'Hippodrome', and outlive its two rivals, as it continues to do, though it has long since ceased to present variety bills. The press advertisements for the August 20 'Grand Opening' included the brief, but what would prove to be, retrospectively, the highly significant statement: 'Two performances 7 and 9'. [148] A fortnight later the *Era*'s correspondent noted: 'The two-turns-a-night system has taken on in Birmingham, and crowded houses have been the rule since the opening night'. [149] The trail had been blazed, not, this time, by either of Birmingham's long pre-eminent variety houses, but by a perceived interloper, and the Gaiety and the Empire would be compelled to follow. The Empire took its time, but the Gaiety acted swiftly. On September 29 it announced: 'This week two performances are given here nightly'. [150] The format might not be adhered to every week, but it steadily became the norm, and when the Bordesley Palace prepared to open its doors as a twice-nightly variety theatre in August, 1903, it was merely following what was by then almost standard procedure.

For Dagmar Kift, the institution of twice-nightly performances was of great significance in containing audiences and controlling their behaviour.

Two performances an evening with officially fixed starting times meant that the auditoria had to be cleared at the end of each performance and

made ready for the next. This in turn meant that people were only allowed to stay on the premises for the purposes of entertainment. [151]

The development represented the ultimate significant step in the transformation of the Victorian music hall into the twentieth-century variety theatre.

THE SITUATION AT CLOSE-OF-CENTURY

Acknowledging that the general picture was muddied by recent or ongoing happenings at two of the town's lesser venues, the Canterbury and the Metropole, the histories of Birmingham's two leading halls, culminating in the state-of-the-art edifices of the Empire and the Gaiety, accord closely to the 'pothouse to palace of varieties' narrative, and provide a comforting endorsement of the Victorian belief in linear progress.

In a contribution to the *Era*, published just a few weeks after the opening of Birmingham's New Empire, 'a well-known music-hall manager' made the confident claim that '[t]he English music hall has come triumphantly through the ordeal of inspection'. Identifying himself as one who had railed against the pothouses of his youth, he went on to observe:

Gradually but surely [these establishments] made their entertainments a popular and wholesome form of amusement. The Canterbury, the Winchester, and Weston's led the way, and with excellent vocalism, combined with the efforts of such comedians as Sam Collins [and others] rapidly popularised variety

shows. [152]

If the Birmingham halls shared in this triumph, making their entertainments ‘a popular and wholesome form of amusement’ may have played an important part in the achievement, but it was by no means the full story. In Birmingham’s moral climate, where theatre managements felt a constant need to be vigilant with regard to the presentations that they offered to the public, the pressures upon the proprietors of the embryonic music halls, stigmatized through their establishments’ traditional association with the consumption of alcohol, from a powerful and entrenched Nonconformist/Temperance alliance were formidable indeed. Successful proprietors such as Holder and Day understood the strength of local feelings and responded sensitively. Indeed, evidence suggests that they shared conventional notions of propriety and that their actions were those of participants rather than respondents. [153]

Notwithstanding, proofs of their good intentions were demanded, and as well as the ‘refined’ character of their programmes, these can be seen in the insistence on the wearing of top hats, the holding of benefit evenings for local hospitals, observance of social differentials, provision of temperance bars, and the staging of sacred concerts on Sundays. Not least can they be seen in the very rapidity with which the transformation of their establishments was accomplished. As early as 1862 an appreciative correspondent had written to the *Gazette*:

I am fond of good music, and can hear it of a high class and *enjoy* it at
 [Holder’s] Concert Hall in Coleshill Street, where far from ‘youths and girls

revelling in drunkenness' . . . things are so well conducted that the most fastidious man, if he be likewise a reasonable being, cannot fail to acknowledge and admire the good order and respectability of the management. [154]

While, for the temperance lobby, no amount of good order and respectability could have disguised the fact that establishments like Holder's and Day's traded in a commodity whose debilitating effects on the morals of society was proven, the association of the music halls with liquor consumption became increasingly blurred when spectators no longer lounged at tables but were placed in regular rows of fixed seating in auditoria. Should they then wish for a gin or a beer they would be required to resort to one of the house bars during the interval. In this important regard the halls were no different from the playhouses. After World War I the conflict between tipplers and teetotallers had noticeably receded. In that very different post-war society the figure of the high-principled Victorian seemed hopelessly anachronistic. Perhaps, then, it was the coming of an era of indifference that best secured the future of a colourful but hitherto controversial institution.

II TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND THE REVOLUTION IN MOBILITY

INTRODUCTION: THE THEATRE, THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, AND THE BIRMINGHAM CONNECTION

To state that the Industrial Revolution, its pace quickening with the turn of the nineteenth century, and its logical and necessary extension into transport already materializing, profoundly affected the theatre and theatre-going, is merely to indulge in a truism. It would be difficult to discern any aspect of the nation's economic or social life which it did *not* profoundly affect. Any validity which the thesis of this chapter may claim will derive from an assessment of just how profound those effects were, and an investigation of the mechanisms and dynamics that brought about the transformation. Focusing, extensively but not exclusively, upon Birmingham and its Theatre Royal is particularly apt in this context. The playhouse's naissance synchronized closely with the birth of the Industrial Revolution. By the time the theatre opened its doors in 1774, its most prestigious local sponsor, Matthew Boulton, had begun negotiations with James Watt which would lead, in the following year, to the latter's moving from his native Scotland to Birmingham, and entering into formal partnership with the entrepreneur. The partnership was an eminently well-suited and mutually fruitful one. Watt's perception of steam power when observing a boiling kettle is one of the iconic narratives of industrial history. It was the harnessing of steam that powered the Industrial Revolution, and if Watt did not invent the steam engine he did much towards perfecting it. Boulton provided the necessary technical resources, financial backing, and marketing connections, and by the early 1780s, Watt succeeded in vastly extending the practical

application of steam by wedding it to a system of rotary motion. Watt's invention had germinated from a suggestion of another member of Boulton's team of young innovators, William Murdock. Murdock it would be who, in 1800, dramatically and successfully demonstrated his safe and efficient system of gas lighting by illuminating the company's works just north of the town centre. Murdock's innovation would become the British theatre's most visible legacy of the Industrial Age.

Boasting no river worthy of the name, Birmingham thrust itself on to the national stage by dint of its industry, and that very lack of a natural waterway, its clear emergence as the regional industrial capital, and its convenient location at the centre of England, were all factors that made the town the logical junction of the canal network. All these factors were writ larger by the time the railway came, and the laying of track was usually a simpler and cheaper business when it followed the course that the canal builders had carved through the landscape. The railway provided rapid links to the coast and to other towns. It linked suburbs to the town centre and to other suburbs and outlying villages, where its effect was to end isolation, and to boost and even create settlement.

Augmented later by mechanized municipal services it both answered and stimulated demands for ever greater mobility. Theatre and music hall managements found that potentially vast new audiences were now within their reach. And as Birmingham's population mushroomed, so did its houses of entertainment, an inner elite aspiring to rival London in the competition for luxury, size and comfort. The revolution in transport provides the key to this remarkable development, for which population growth and the liberalizing effects of the 1843 Theatres Act offer incomplete explanations. The first part of this chapter considers the nature of the revolution in mobility in Birmingham

and how it interacted with demographic factors to make possible developments that generated and sustained the new audiences. It is suggested that what it reveals offers a microcosmic glimpse of a national pattern.

THE REVOLUTION IN MOBILITY: THE PROFESSION

Readers of Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* will recall the journey to Portsmouth undertaken the morning following Nicholas's acceptance of the invitation to join the theatrical company of Mr. Vincent Crummles. He and Smike had encountered the manager after stopping at a roadside inn, 'yet twelve miles north of Portsmouth', whence they had walked from Godalming. They duly set out on 'a vehicle of unknown design, on which [Crummles] had bestowed the appellation of a four-wheeled phaeton', drawn by 'a strange four-legged animal . . . which he called a pony', with Nicholas and the manager occupying the front seat:

and the Master Crummleses and Smike being packed together behind, in company with a wicker basket defended from wet by a stout oilskin, in which were the broadswords, pistols, pigtails, nautical costumes, and other professional necessaries of the aforesaid young gentlemen .[1]

Dickens was writing this early in 1838, on the cusp of the railway age. As he wrote, it was likely that negotiations were already under way between the competing powers -- specifically the London and South Western and the Brighton lines -- to bring the steam

railway to Portsmouth. Compromises to take account of company rivalry, local opposition, and naval concerns were necessarily made, but by 1841 it was possible to travel the six miles or so from Fareham to Gosport (opposite Portsmouth Harbour) by train in twenty-five minutes for a sixpenny (third class) fare. It should be borne in mind that Nicholas and Smike seem to have encountered Crummles just off the route of the present A3 trunk road, a little to the south of Horndean. From here the distance to Fareham would have been about the same as that to Portsmouth, and would have offered little or no advantage to the Crummles party. But by 1847 the Brighton and Chichester line had thrust westward. Linking up to Fareham, *en route* it opened a new station at Havant which connected with a more central terminus at Portsmouth. Thereafter, in retracing that earlier journey, Mr. Crummles might have dispensed with his 'vehicle of unknown design', put his 'strange, four-legged animal' out to graze, and, engaging a carrier's cart at the roadside inn, conveyed his little company the four or so miles to Havant, whence they might all have travelled in the comparative comfort of a third class coach, with the wicker-basketful of costumes and properties safely accommodated in the goods van, enabling the party to arrive in some style at their destination in less than half-an-hour. On any week-day they would have had a choice of at least six trains. The line also ran a Sunday service, albeit less frequent, but nonetheless an important consideration for theatre folk. For Crummles, Nicholas and Smike the fare would have been no more than sixpence, while the 'Master Crummeles' might perhaps have been considered sufficiently diminutive to have the cost of their conveyance waived. [2]

In 1838 Vincent Crummles could be convincingly depicted as a strolling player, living and having his being in a world which, in essentials, had changed little over the centuries.

But if Dickens had written *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1848, Crummles could hardly have been presented as a contemporary figure, without being subjected to circumstantial changes which might have seriously undermined his attractiveness. In less than a decade he would have become a hopeless anachronism, an early casualty of the railway age.

For the young actor struggling to make a name, or even a living, life 'on the road' could be a harsh and testing experience. Turning from the fictional Vincent Crummles to the factual James Anderson, we learn of experiences which, while lacking the comic element of those of Crummles, underscore with equal clarity the nature of the life of the pre-railways itinerant actor. Anderson was nineteen in 1830 when he found himself 'compelled, through sheer necessity', to temporarily abandon the capital, and 'accept an engagement in the Nottingham circuit'.

With a heavy heart and empty pockets I took an outside seat on the coach, and arrived at my destination, parting with my last half-crown to the guard. He was a brute, reproaching me with meanness for not giving him more, and using insulting language.

The circuit was a far-flung one.

The towns we visited were Nottingham, Derby, East Retford, and Halifax. We were allowed a week for each journey, our luggage being carried at the manager's expense, as the salaries were paid all the while. The young and unmarried fellows,

like myself, always walked the journeys, and a glorious time we had of it. [3]

Back in London in 1832, Anderson and a fellow thespian received an offer from the manager of the Theatre Royal, Newcastle, whence the pair promptly set off ‘in an empty, ugly collier-ship bound for “county Newcassel,” on a fine September morning . . . ’ [4]

Such vitality and such enthusiasm for their art is admirable, and demonstrates that for many actors the stresses and hazards of travel ‘went with the job’ and were not allowed to impede their mobility. Nonetheless, we suspect that the keenness and energy displayed by young Anderson may not always have been quite so evident in his more senior contemporaries.

If the coaching recollections of Charles Mathews, junior, when he undertook the journey south from the Scottish Borders in January, 1826, predate his professional stage debut, they nonetheless provide a telling glimpse of long-distance travel in the pre-railways era.

On arriving at Selkirk from Abbotsford (five miles in a very unsociable sociable, made of cane with ‘interstices at the intersections’ to admit the wind) I was taken out half frozen and put by the inn fire till the mail came by.

When it arrived the only room available was ‘outside’. As Mathews, understandably, did not wish to spend the next night travelling on top of a mail coach in freezing weather, he declined the offer, and chose to await the ‘heavy coach’. Then:

Upon my asking in a faltering tone ‘was there room?’ the coachman told me . . . that he had ‘*two insides.*’ ‘This is the coach for me,’ thought I . . . so into one of them I got . . . Away we went as fast as the snow would let us, and as warm as could be (which was but cold enough). Keeping ourselves as snug as we could, I and three other ladies in the straw, we thought ourselves very lucky in only having to shift coaches four times before we reached Carlisle. None of them had been aired, I am sure, nor slept in for some time, but we were obliged to be our own warming-pans and keep our feet on the opposite seat against the pan. About two in the morning we reached Carlisle in a most deplorable condition, and were shown into rooms without fires, and, what is worse, without the capabilities for receiving any. I never felt the cold so intense in the whole of my life, and the other ladies said the same, though one of them owned that she had seen sixty winters, and had her head constantly covered with snow. The roofers were obliged to stop at Langholm and give it up, but the coachman and guard declared that as long as their insides were full they could go on very well. In the morning at four o’clock we were summoned from our [beds] into an iced coach and horses like the discovery ships. Away we went once more, the wheels cracking and cutting down the ice ruts with a sort of ice-sickle all the way.

Soon after Mathews began to feel faint, and was resuscitated by his travelling companions. Later:

Going out of Preston . . . we broke down and had a pleasant lounge of an hour

and a half out of the coach in the snow till the spring was repaired . . . We had nearly taken the chill off again, when at Ormskirk both doors were wrenched open at once, the wind seizing the opportunity of rushing through us all, and upon demanding what had happened, two little urchins shrieked out: ‘Do you want any Ormskirk gingerbread?’ We added some spice to their gingerbread, and managed to arrive at Liverpool by ten o’clock on Saturday night. [5]

Mathews also reminds us that the coming of the steam railway facilitated the transportation not only of actors, but of performing animals. ‘Cupid’ was, in fact, not a circus horse, but Mathews’s own private conveyance and much-loved companion. The need to convey both himself and his horse over a protracted distance posed a dilemma.

There were no comfortable railway horse-boxes in those days, and to transport a valuable horse two hundred miles was really a formidable and hazardous venture. At last I came to the determination to ride him down myself, and accomplished the feat in three days with perfect success. [6]

‘Cupid’ seems to have been in prime condition, and *en route* his master ministered personally to his needs, but in general the transportation of animals over long distances prior to the railway age must, almost inevitably, have been attended by extreme hardship and often cruelty.

Struggling to fulfil a pending engagement when it followed too swiftly upon the present one presented dilemmas for actors and managers alike. In his *Memoirs of Joseph*

Grimaldi, Charles Dickens records such an experience. In 1808, the great clown had been engaged to appear at the Birmingham Theatre Royal by the then manager, the senior M'Cready. Grimaldi had played three of the scheduled four nights to packed and reportedly ecstatic houses.

Just as he was going on the stage on this last evening, and had even taken up his 'properties' for that purpose, a note was put into his hands, which was dated that morning, and had just arrived from London, whence it had been despatched with all speed. He opened it immediately and read in the hand of an intimate friend

'Dear Joe,

'They have announced you to play tomorrow at Covent Garden; and as they know you have not returned from Birmingham, I fear it is done to injure you. Lose not a moment, but start immediately on receipt of this.'

He instantly ran to [Mr. M'Cready], and, showing him the letter, told him that although he was very sorry to disappoint his Birmingham friends, he could not stay to play.

"Not stop to play," echoed the manager, "why, my good fellow, they will pull the house down. You must stop to play, and post up to London afterwards. I'll take care that a chaise and four are waiting for you at the stage door, and that everything shall be ready for you to start the moment you have finished your business."

At twelve o'clock, minutes after concluding his performance, Grimaldi threw himself into the waiting chaise. The weather was tempestuous. His liberal bribes to the postboys, made in the hope of expediting his journey, were quickly expended on liquor, bringing them to a state which gravely impaired both their driving skills and their sense of direction. The consequence was that Grimaldi would finally reach Covent Garden, unrefreshed and unnourished, after spending nearly twenty hours on the road.

Hearing that the overture . . . was then playing, he . . . ran to his dressing-room, dressed for his part . . . and went on the stage the moment he got his cue. [7]

Transporting scenery must have been a particularly troublesome undertaking, and something to be avoided where other arrangements might be made. In an attempt to placate the Committee at the Birmingham Theatre Royal, who were demanding settlement of financial claims following his relinquishing of the management in 1819, R.W. Elliston offered his own scenery and some effects in partial fulfilment of the debt. The offer being declined, Elliston decided to arrange for the scenery's transportation from Birmingham and temporary storage at another playhouse in which he had an interest, at Leamington.

A day was appointed for the removal, and at considerable expense the flapping frameworks of castles and cut-woods, drawbridges and dungeons, were elevated into an open van to travel many miles across country. All went on tolerably well

for a time - slowly and surely; but it was “a raw and gusty day,” and the canvass [sic.] being set top-gallant high in the wind, threatened the safety of the vessel. Nor were these fears without foundation; for scarcely had the van proceeded two miles beyond a certain village, than a sudden squall took right aback the toppling pile, and fairly swept it from the vehicle into a neighbouring field. The whole stock appeared so comfortably bedded, that the driver made no effort to load his cart a second time, but drove quietly back to Birmingham to acquaint his master.

In the event, Elliston took no measures to retrieve his ‘flats’, and ‘absolutely took no further notice of the matter’, which perhaps suggests that he had somewhat exaggerated the value of these possessions in making his offer to the Committee.[8]

After reminding ourselves of the experiences of the likes of Mathews, Anderson, and Elliston, the blessings conferred upon the profession by the coming of the railways hardly require elucidation. But there were hidden benefits, for which managers must have been particularly thankful. George Frederick Cooke was not the first or the last member of that profession to acquire a reputation for a readiness to succumb to the temptations of alcohol, but by 1796 his fame as an actor was such that managements were prepared to take inordinate pains to ensure that he fulfilled the engagements he had undertaken. Plans to deliver him in a suitably sober state from Portsmouth to Manchester seem to have involved the collaboration of no fewer than three managements, but they were nonetheless thwarted by the temptations of the road.

Mr Maxwell [manager of the Portsmouth theatre] paid his passage by the mail To London, and sent him thither with just enough money to pay his expences [sic]. At London a friend of Banks and Ward [Manchester managers] was appointed to receive and forward him by mail to Manchester: but notwithstanding all their precautions, he did not reach his friends until after the time he had appointed. He stopped on the road between London and Manchester, for another taste of his beloved madness, while the managers had to disappoint a great concourse of people, who crowded the theatre to witness his return. [9]

The coming of train travel must have mitigated such management concerns. Some journeys were made by express, and where a change of train was necessary, the time involved was usually comparatively brief, so opportunities were necessarily curtailed. But human nature ensured that the new transport mode did not quite eliminate old habits, especially after the introduction of the buffet car.

AUDIENCES: ROAD TRANSPORT

‘About thirty-five of the inhabitants keep carriages for their own private use’, William Hutton, writing some eight years after the opening of Birmingham’s Theatre Royal, informs us, and, doubtless, such well-heeled citizens and their families, figured prominently among the ‘better sort’ of patronage that managements strove so hard to attract. [10]

Less fortunate citizens would have made their way to and from the playhouse in a

variety of ways. Walking was an obvious option, and was of necessity undertaken to an extent that would challenge the comprehension of later generations. Others, while not possessing a private conveyance, might own or have access to a horse or a humbler member of the equine family. The novels of Victorian writers like Dickens and Hardy, whose preoccupations tend often to lie with the poorer classes, furnish many examples of informal modes of travel. The miscellany of vehicles converging upon Birmingham must have afforded countless opportunities for the occasional traveller, whom we can easily imagine relaxing in a trundling hay-cart, squatting on a coal-barge, or seated on the tailboard of some market-bound wagon.

As regards public transportation around and about the town, Dent, commenting on the availability of hackney coaches, notes:

These useful vehicles did not find their way into Birmingham until a hundred years after their introduction into the metropolis . . . for there was but one in the town in 1775. But by the year 1819 they had increased to thirty. [11]

That hackneys were, indeed, becoming steadily more common is evidenced by the passing of regulations in succeeding years, restricting the locations where they might wait, and requiring them (in common with other vehicles) to keep to the left hand side of the road. [12] The regulations were extended and consolidated in 1803, when it was laid down that the number of licensed hackney coaches operating within four miles of the town should not exceed fifty. Typically four-wheeled, and drawn by two horses, coaches were required to be kept in a 'clean, strong, dry and warm' state, and be

sufficiently large to accommodate six persons conveniently. Drivers were legally required to accept a fare, and to travel any distance not exceeding four miles from the town centre. Fares were chargeable at fixed rates. One shilling was to be charged for a journey of up to a mile, plus sixpence for every subsequent half mile. Sixpence might likewise be charged for waiting time up to twenty minutes, or a shilling for waiting time not exceeding forty minutes. After midnight the foregoing rates were doubled. It is apparent that charges remained constant for a considerable number of years. [13]

The growing availability of hackney coaches in Birmingham can only have facilitated theatre-visiting. Viewed in a context where admission prices for most presentations to the gallery, pit and boxes were 1/-, 2/-, and 3/- respectively, and remained so for some seven decades, the cost of a journey in a hackney coach, especially when shared among a small party of four, five, or six friends or relatives, might not be considered onerous, although the doubling of fares when the duration of programmes (as they not infrequently did) stretched to midnight, might give pause for reflection.[14] From around 1810 the hackney coaches received growing competition in the form of a modified version of the French *cabriolet*. A two-wheeler, drawn by a single horse, it was lighter and faster than the hackney, but in consequence lacked some of the former's stability. Passengers sacrificed privacy in that the design required the driver to sit alongside them. They were compensated in this regard to some degree by the provision of a hood, which also offered some protection against inclement weather, but still suffered considerable exposure to cold weather, driving rain or snow, and the odd stone kicked up by a fast-moving horse. By 1830 there were about sixty such vehicles plying for hire in Birmingham. [15]

In the early 1830s, Joseph Hansom, an architect from York who would design Birmingham's Town Hall, began experimenting with a conveyance of his own design on the streets of Hinckley, roughly half-way between Coventry and Leicester. Hansom succeeded brilliantly in his purpose of designing a carriage that would incorporate the best features of the traditional hackney coach and the cabriolet. The enclosed cab was carried on two large wheels (the entrance was at the front), and drawn by a single horse. It featured one seat with room for two passengers, facing forward. The coachman drove from the rear, his waist level with the roof, over which the reins were trained. From here he could operate with a special lever, the folding door which allowed passengers to board or alight. Through a trap-door in the roof he could receive their instructions and collect his fare. A low centre of gravity produced stability and safety, yet the conveyance remained light, speedy, and remarkably manoeuvrable in urban traffic. During the course of its long life (it overlapped well into the era of the motor-car) it incorporated additional refinements, but remained in essence how Hansom had conceived it, and was deservedly known by his name. In the popular consciousness it remains a Victorian icon, and the conveyance of choice for courting couples. It made its first appearance on the streets of Birmingham in 1849, and in popularity steadily overhauled its rivals.

But burgeoning urbanization prompted demands for a popular or 'mass' transport system which would carry working- and middle-class folk across and around town cheaply and rapidly, and at predictable times. The horse omnibus had been tried out in Paris as early as the 1660s, but in the modern context (and historical sense) it arrived in Birmingham via London, where a highly successful service had been inaugurated by

George Shillibeer in 1829. In its issue for May 18, 1834, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* noted:

An omnibus commenced running for the first time in Birmingham, on Monday se'nnight. Its route is from the Swan, Snow-hill, through Smallbrook-street, and along the Bristol-road, to the first turnpike-gate. It performs four journeys to and fro in the course of the day. [16]

The service was inaugurated by a Mr. Smith, whose conveyance was drawn by two horses, and provided seating accommodation for twelve passengers (all inside). In addition to its four week-day return journeys, it operated three on Sundays. Between Snow Hill and Smallbrook Street, it took in Bull Street and Worcester Street. The turnpike gate, where its south-westerly route terminated, stood about a quarter of a mile from where the County Cricket Ground is now located. There was a flat fare of sixpence, passengers alighting where they wished. The omnibus was scheduled to begin the return run half an hour from its time of departure. [17]

Before the summer was out other operators had inaugurated three more services. Two of these ran west of the town centre along the Hagley Road, to the Plough and Harrow, Edgbaston, and the other north to Handsworth. Very soon services extended well beyond the environs of the town, and by 1837 destinations included Bromsgrove, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Worcester, Tamworth, Lichfield, Coventry, Stratford-upon-Avon, Leamington Spa, West Bromwich, Dudley, Wolverhampton, Aldridge, Solihull and Coleshill.

Though none of these service routes passed the doors of the Theatre Royal, any 'town centre' designation implied a maximum additional walk of a few hundred yards for patrons. It is true that these first omnibus services did not extend beyond the early evening, but at least the arrival of visitors had been facilitated, and any extra effort or expense might be reserved for the return journey.

The story of experiments in steam-propelled road vehicles in the early nineteenth century, of the catalogue of reasons why such conveyances did not lead to a new form of popular urban transport, and of Birmingham's role in that story, is one characterized by frustration and negativity. In recent years there have been reappraisals of the subject, and the essential practicability of the concept was famously and convincingly demonstrated on television by the late Fred Dibnah. Linked to the development of high-pressure steam, promising experiments were undertaken by William Murdock, but actively discouraged by Boulton and Watt. By the early 1830s viable steam carriages had been built in Birmingham by Dr. William Church and by the engineering firm of Heaton Brothers. There were proposals to operate local services, and also an ambitious plan to so link Birmingham to the capital. Although Parliament's backing was secured, the enterprise was aborted by the opposition of the burgeoning railway companies, and by the application of prohibitively high road tolls prompted by exaggerated fears of the maintenance costs that would result.

In the absence of this interesting innovation, public transport was left to develop fairly unspectacularly. The turnpike gate at Deritend had been removed in 1828; that at Five Ways in 1841, and, following Parliamentary legislation, most of the remaining tollgates

had disappeared by the early 1850s, facilitating and cheapening journeys for out-of-town travellers. The succeeding years saw a gradual expansion of omnibus services and an extension of their hours of operation. Sample fares and frequencies from a timetable of 1872 indicate a half-hourly service between the town centre and Bournbrook (close to where the University buildings now stand), costing 4d for passengers travelling inside, 3d for those travelling outside. The service to Handsworth operated at ten-minute intervals; inside passengers were charged 3d, and outside passengers 2d. [18] None of the town's omnibus journeys began later than 9.30 p.m. The same year, following Parliamentary legislation, horse-tramway services were inaugurated, in Birmingham, based on standard gauge (4ft 8½ in.) lines stretching, at their farthest extent, to West Bromwich, Tipton, and Dudley Port. [19] But horses were quickly overhauled by technology, and the last two decades of the century saw services operated by steam, battery, and cable. From the summer of 1890 a service of electric accumulator cars operated along the Bristol Road, as far as Selly Oak. Meanwhile, in 1884, there had been a development of marked interest for theatregoers. A report made by the town's Public Works Committee in October of that year referred to discussions concerning the renewal of the lease of the leading local transport operator, the Birmingham Tramways and Omnibus Company. As a result of those deliberations, pressure would be successfully applied to bring about a fare reduction from 3d to 2d for inside passengers, and - of particular significance - services would be extended, at no extra charge, to 11.00 p.m. [20]

The presence of but one playhouse in the town would not of itself have effected such a change, but by the mid-1880s Birmingham's nightlife was vibrant, with a

growing number of theatres and music halls competing for custom, and the availability of cheap transport for homeward-bound patrons was an extremely welcome, if belated, innovation for audiences and managements alike. In this same year the decision was taken to implement national policy to convert to a 3ft. 6in. gauge.

The town's regulation of the public transport system culminated in 1899 with the decision to seek Parliamentary approval for a full takeover by the Corporation. The municipalization of public facilities had a commendable history in Birmingham, and that of transport followed in the wake of the highly successful takeovers of water and gas. Royal Assent for the creation of a Corporation monopoly was not, in fact, secured until 1903, and consolidation was further hindered and delayed through outstanding leases and overlapping local authorities, but by 1912 it was possible to impose a standard maximum fare of twopence for all routes, and introduce a one penny maximum fare for children. [21] A policy of conversion to electric overhead traction was adopted in 1900. A short extension of the Bristol Road route, from Bournbrook to Selly Oak proper, followed in the next year. Soon new double-deck cars offered seating accommodation to '27 passengers inside and 33 outside', but the 'outside' designation was a hangover from past conditions, and standards of shelter and comfort for travellers seated upstairs were the same as for those downstairs. It would take more than two decades before the Bristol Road route reached its full potential and logical terminal, but when it did it became the longest and most picturesque of the city's tramways, linking up with Northfield, Longbridge, Rednal and Rubery, the two last and farthest of these villages then within a forty-odd minute journey of Birmingham city centre, most of the

eight-and-a-half mile route consisting of a verdant central reservation. [22]

RAILWAYS

Like the canals, the railways owed their existence to the need to transport heavy and bulky goods, unsuitable for transportation by road. But the comparative ease and rapidity with which railway track could be laid, and the speed which steam locomotives could attain enabled the new transportation, in every sense, to outstrip its rival. The rapid transportation of perishable foodstuffs, which now became possible, sustained those ever-expanding armies of urban workers that underpinned the Industrial Revolution, and of that Revolution the image of a steam train, powering through the landscape, remains the most potent and identifiable symbol.

The chief signposts in the astonishing story of steam locomotion may be briefly recalled. In 1804 Richard Trevithick produced the first practical steam-propelled locomotive. Ten years later George Stephenson produced his engine, *Blücher*, which successfully utilized flanged wheels, and proved capable of hauling thirty tons of coal uphill at 4 miles per hour. Parliament approved Stephenson's plans for the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1821. Though designed for the transportation of coal, the local price of which was reduced by more than a half after its completion, its opening in 1825 foreshadowed passenger traffic when accommodation was made to carry a number of visiting VIPs. In 1830 Stephenson achieved his most spectacular success to date with the completion of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. Wrought iron was successfully substituted for cast-iron in the construction of the track, and his 4ft 8½ in gauge would

eventually be adopted as the world standard. The decade that followed saw significant developments in freight and passenger lines. By the 1840s the pace of expansion had accelerated, accompanied by speculation that was not always well-founded.

Nevertheless, by 1850 6,600 miles of track had been laid; by 1860 10,000 miles; and by 1870 15,000 miles. In 1844 Gladstone's Railways Act made it obligatory for all companies to operate one train per day on each route, stopping at every station, and providing covered accommodation for third class passengers who would be conveyed at the rate of one penny per mile. (Hitherto they had usually been transported in open trucks.) Though, initially, some companies attempted to evade the provision by running the stipulated service in the middle of the night, a gradual realization of the great expansion in passenger traffic which might be brought about persuaded companies, led by the Midland Railway, to make the travelling conditions for third-class passengers as good as those enjoyed by travellers in second-class coaches, and to provide third class accommodation on all its trains. This, in turn, led to the abolition of the 'second class' category, but the retention of the 'third class' designation would remain as an anomaly, and a source of perplexity for foreigners. [23]

BIRMINGHAM AND THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY

Birmingham's proven and still rapidly-growing economic importance, coupled with its location close to the centre of England, made it a natural hub for the expanding railway network. Parliament's recognition of this was apparent in its authorization on May 6, 1833, of two routes. The Grand Junction Railway's line from the north would link the town with Liverpool and Manchester, though avoiding Wolverhampton. Its

Walsall stop at Bescot was far enough from the town centre to necessitate a coach service. The line was completed in 1837. It made one stop within the present city boundary, at Perry Barr, before reaching its unprepossessing temporary Birmingham terminus at Vauxhall. The London and Birmingham Railway was opened in the following year, its route embracing a connection at Coventry. It terminated at Curzon Street, where the GJR soon relocated. The building was an elegant one, but would soon prove to be hopelessly inadequate. The LBR and the GJR merged in 1846, to become the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), and the early years of the next decade would see its expanding passenger traffic transferred to the extensive new terminal of New Street. Meanwhile, Walsall had acquired, in 1846, a temporary terminal to the town centre, and in 1849 an impressive permanent station. The opening of a second major Birmingham terminal at Snow Hill by Brunel's Great Western Railway provided another link to the capital, and streamlined connections to the south-west.

A direct passenger link between Birmingham and Wolverhampton was finally established by the LNWR in 1852. By 1854 the GWR had pushed its Paddington line through to Wolverhampton from Birmingham, and there were now connections to Dudley, West Bromwich, Hockley, Winson Green and Handsworth. The LNWR had opened a station at Aston in 1854, and in 1862 it extended the line northwards to Sutton Coldfield, making a connection *en route* at Erdington, which would prove to be a key factor in the village's subsequent rapid expansion. One of the earliest trunk railways, the Birmingham and Gloucester (BGR), received Parliament's approval in 1836, and reached Birmingham at Camp Hill in 1841. Here it shared the LBR's line to the latter's terminus at Curzon Street. The BGR was important for several reasons, not least for the

engineering feat which enabled it to overcome the steep Lickey Ridge, near Bromsgrove. A system of banking engines -- soon to become known as the 'Lickey Bankers' -- was successfully devised to work the incline. When completed the line provided a valuable link for Birmingham manufacturers to the inland port of Gloucester, but even greater importance lay in its connection -- more than a decade before the inauguration of the Great Western -- of Birmingham and the rich and populous city of Bristol. Moreover, its approach route made connections at several towns and villages on the south-western fringes of Birmingham, including Droitwich, Bromsgrove, Barnt Green, King's Norton and Moseley. A loop line would be constructed in 1849 (by which time the BGR had merged with the Midland Railway), taking in Evesham and Redditch. The Midland Railway merger would lead, in the 1870s, to the project which created Birmingham's first purely suburban network. The inauguration of the Birmingham West Railway owed much to the perceived need to develop the under-populated villages on Birmingham's south-western fringe. For much of its route it would march with the Birmingham and Worcester Canal, with whose governing board a basis of mutual interest was established. It both incorporated and extended the adjacent section of the BGR, and stations built or developed included Longbridge, Northfield, King's Norton, Bournville, Selly Oak, King's Heath, Moseley, and -- a short walk from where the Hagley Road meets Broad Street -- Five Ways. The line terminated at New Street, via Granville Street.

THE THEATRE AND THE REVOLUTION IN MOBILITY: AN OVERVIEW

The development of mass transportation was a crucial element in the multiplication of theatres and music halls which got under way in the 1840s and accelerated during the

era of the Queen's jubilees. For managements the business of engaging artists was transformed; for performers there was a dramatic extension of employment opportunities; ageing artists could now undertake distant engagements they had long ceased to contemplate. Distance, it must have seemed, was annihilated. Prior to the opening of its line in 1838, the London and Birmingham Railway's envisaged time for the journey between its two main termini -- five hours and thirty-eight minutes, with stops -- was, as things transpired, unduly modest, but even this promised a comfortable halving of the twelve hours taken by the stage coaches. [24] Similarly, the catchment area for potential audiences was vastly extended, with Birmingham providing a potent example. Virtually all points of the town's compass had at least one rapid link with the centre, as did those villages yet to be formally annexed; likewise the hinterland districts, notably the populous towns of the Black Country.

For theatre-goers of limited means a longstanding requirement had been the availability of late-night cheap public transportation to facilitate the journey home at the conclusion of the evening's entertainment. As noted above, this was a need that the omnibus and tram services had effectively disregarded until the mid-1880s. It is of interest to discover that the railways were actively aware of such a need at least thirty years earlier. Indeed, by the late 1840s, it was possible for any Coventry resident visiting Birmingham's Theatre Royal to board a train at New Street Station at 12.15 p.m., and be back in his home town forty minutes later. Black Country visitors could similarly depart on a mail train at 12.36 p.m., be at Bescot (for Walsall) by 12.50, and reach Wolverhampton by 1.00. [25] The timing of these services may, of course, have been coincidental, the trains involved *en route* to more important venues.

Notwithstanding, the possibilities of directly exploiting the new transportation as a means of expanding his catchment area of patrons was not lost on an astute manager like Mercer Simpson. The playbill for March 27, 1851, carried the significant announcement:

South Staffordshire Railway, Walsall, Dudley Railway --

ON & AFTER THE 1st of April a SPECIAL TRAIN, for the accommodation of Parties visiting the Theatre, will leave Walsall, calling at Dudley, Wednesbury, Great Bridge, and West Bromwich, arriving in Birmingham at 20 minutes to 7, p.m, and returning at 3 minutes past 12. [26]

The new service seems to have been popular, and such notices continued to appear for productions deemed to have a particular appeal, notably pantomimes. The following year Snow Hill Station was opened, and between them Birmingham's two major central termini were soon running theatre 'specials' to Wolverhampton, Bilston, Handsworth, Aston and Perry Barr. [27]

But the advent of new transport facilities did not merely link outlying settlements to the Birmingham metropolis and its theatres and music halls. It provided both a reason and a means for those settlements to grow and prosper. In short, it heightened the population density of the outlying suburbs and villages, and in doing so presented theatre managements with vast new potential audiences.

Selly Oak provides one example of this demographic transformation. Some three-

and-a-half miles south-west of the centre of Birmingham, it had, by the middle of the nineteenth century, expanded little beyond the hamlet of the days of the Domesday Book. But from then its twin location on the Bristol Road (benefiting, almost since their inception, by omnibus and tram services) and the Birmingham and Worcester Canal, followed by the building (in 1876) by the Birmingham West Suburban Railway of a station adjacent to both, began to stir the interest of businessmen. The succeeding decades saw the establishment of soap, steel tube and bicycle factories, and a rapid expansion of workers' housing, both in Selly Oak proper and in its Bournbrook fringe, where the University would begin to relocate in 1909. But perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of transportation-initiated settlement is Bournville.

In 1878 the firm of George and Richard Cadbury purchased some fourteen-and-a-half rural acres, four miles south-west of Birmingham, whence they prepared to move their cocoa and chocolate factory from its town-centre location. The site was well-suited to provide a spacious, healthy and congenial working environment, but a score of other locations might have offered the same. This one had the overriding advantage of being adjacent to both the Birmingham and Worcester Canal and the newly-opened Birmingham West Railway. Following the opening of Cadbury's new factory in 1879, these two lines of communication would be intensively exploited. Extensive wharfside facilities would be developed, and six miles of railway sidings -- the Bournville Works Railway -- constructed. Not only was the reception of raw materials and shipment of finished products thus streamlined, but Cadbury's had negotiated successfully with the railway company to secure low fares for their workers, thus resolving any initial fears of a labour shortage. Before the end of 1879, their site, hitherto part of Bournbrook, had acquired its

new name of Bournville. In 1885, the first workers' cottages were built. Access to the A38 and A45 trunk roads was improved. In 1895, after the purchase of 330 acres to the north and west of the original site, plans were put in hand for the building of the model village. From 1900 the responsibility for supervising and administering the growing settlement was vested in the Bournville Village Trust. Initially plots, and then newly-built houses were made available on a 999-year leases at low mortgage rates to working men able to make a 50% deposit. Each dwelling possessed a large garden. The lessees were encouraged to grow their own vegetable produce; they would be provided with a growing range of sports and leisure amenities, and would not suffer the distracting presence of a public house. Stability, sobriety, respect for the law, a strong sense of family and of community, are all qualities which have become almost stereotypical of the English suburban middle class. If, by the close of the Victorian era, theatre-going had to an increasing extent become a middle-class pursuit, then Bournville, it would seem, offered a fertile ground for patronage. The work structure at Cadbury's offered ladders to promotion and educational opportunities. Wages compared favourably with those of many local employers, and the length of the working-day left reasonable time for leisure. The participation of employees in music and drama was actively encouraged (see Note 26, Chapter I), and it would seem probable that the sum of these policies worked not infrequently to foster and sustain a theatre-going habit.

But, for more than a century, one large and populous part of Birmingham effectively stood aloof from much of the development in popular transportation. The Calthorpe family had been assiduous in converting their two-and-a-half-thousand-acre estate into the tranquil and verdant suburb of Edgbaston, and stood ready to use their considerable

influence to preserve that tranquillity and verdancy. Construction of the Birmingham and Worcester canal was approved by Parliament in 1791, and several miles of the canal company's surveyed routes ran across Calthorpe land.

shareholder in the company. He also ensured that when the Bill was passing through Parliament clauses were inserted which prohibited the construction of any industrial buildings along its length through the parish and ensured that the towpath was on the opposite side of the canal to the hall and park. [28]

Such intransigence proved to be not confined to one generation of the Calthorpe family. Passage of the Harborne Railway Bill was secured by its promoters in 1866, but, due to the action of the Calthorpes, in alliance with the Gillott Estate, its implementation was successfully delayed for five years. Though obliged to release six acres of land near the Harborne edge of its landholdings, the now ennobled head of the Calthorpe family was able to ensure that this stretch of the canal would feature high green embankments rather than extended viaducts -- perceived to be unsightly -- while bridges would be reinforced by by 'invisible' inner girders. An envisaged direct link with the Worcester, Cheltenham and Gloucester route was successfully vetoed. [29]

It seemed that the Calthorpes might make reluctant concessions on the fringes of their estate, but not in its heartland.

Since trams were perceived as working-class form of transport, the [upper-class] residents of Edgbaston did not welcome the development. There was considerable

opposition to the prospect of trams along the Hagley Road with its prestigious mansions and both Lord Calthorpe and Neville Chamberlain, the local MP, were amongst those in opposition claiming they would detract from the suburb's tranquil solitude, and reduce property values. [30]

Trams were thus successfully banned from the thoroughfare until 1913, when their introduction was made possible only after Birmingham Corporation had been obliged to seek special Parliamentary legislation to acquire the necessary authority to thwart opposition. The subsequent degree of patronage of the service suggests that the views of the Calthorpes did not coincide with those of all their estate's residents. Meanwhile, the commuting clerks of Edgbaston's less fashionable and farthest-flung neighbourhoods must have found their horse-omnibus journeys to and from the city centre growingly irksome, and hardly an inducement to theatre-visiting.

If the liberalizing 1843 Theatres Act facilitated the opening of new playhouses and music halls in and around Birmingham, the scale and acceleration of the expansion which followed is explicable by the contemporary developments in public mobility with which it was at once strikingly interwoven. The transport revolution brought direct benefits to theatres in providing more rapid and cheaper links with neighbouring towns and cities and facilitating travel between the town centre and suburbs, thus greatly expanding the potential catchment area for audiences; but it also conferred indirect benefits. Profound demographic changes were wrought. The transportation of goods in bulk cheapened those products and increased consumer demand; as a consequence existing factories

expanded, and new ones were built, creating multiple employment opportunities. The modern industrial conurbation resulted. While the new transportation was expanding the catchment area, it was simultaneously intensifying the population density within it, transforming formerly sleepy hamlets into industrial villages. Thus the wider net that theatre managers were enabled to cast was also a deeper one. Withal, the more frequent engagement of London celebrities was facilitated, and from the inception of the steamship-driven transatlantic theatrical 'trade', Birmingham became a regular venue for American performers.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION: LIGHTING

If the revolution in mobility was the most significant external phenomenon to affect theatres, within the playhouses the most striking transformation would occur in lighting. Although the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed some modest improvements in the illumination of playhouses, all theatrical precincts -- stages, auditoria, stairs and entrances -- continued to be dependent on two sources of light: candles and oil-lamps, often in combination. Any advances during this period were due as much to a reworking of existing facilities as to any technical innovation. Thus, Garrick, benefiting from his Continental sojourn, popularized the use of footlights and made the illumination of his stage at Drury Lane more effective by shifting and dividing its source from directly above it to the back of the proscenium and further into the auditorium.

The mid-century saw the addition of spermaceti, a waxy substance derived from sperm-whales, to the existing sources for the manufacture of candles -- tallow and

beeswax. Tallow is a white fat obtained from both vegetables (notably cacao), and animals -- cows, horses, and especially sheep. But a distinctly more important innovation was the introduction of the Argand lamp. It was invented by the Swiss chemist, Amie Argand, in 1780, who patented it in England four years later, where it perhaps more generally became known as the 'patent' lamp. It was a distinct improvement on the type then existing, which commonly featured a short vertical rope wick. Argand devised a circular wick, and claimed that his lamp was

so constructed as to produce neither smoak [sic.] nor smell and to give considerably more light than any lamp hitherto known, by converting the smoak into flame, by causing a current of air to pass through the inside of air on the outside of the wick by means of a chimney. [31]

If it was an exaggeration to assert that the Argand lamp gave off no smoke, it certainly produced markedly less than its predecessors. It was more economical of oil, and the fitting of a chimney resulted in a more concentrated flame, engendering a brighter and more constant light. Its life would extend into the era of gas lighting to which use it was found to be conveniently adaptable.

Notwithstanding, the deficiencies of the existing lighting system remained numerous, and all-too-evident to contemporary playgoers. The Argand lamp coexisted with its smokier predecessor for many years. When the lamp oil used was derived from fish it gave off an unpleasant odour, ascending to the nostrils of box patrons and galleryites alike. Where the large chandelier was retained it continued to impede the view of patrons

upstairs, and hot candle-fat might drop on to the heads of both actors and spectators. Furthermore, the lights of candles were prone to sputter, flare and flicker, and the ongoing work of wick-trimming fell to the 'snuffers', who thereby further extended the variety of distractions that beset every playhouse presentation.. Aside from this, the task of lighting hundreds of lamps and candles prior to the evening's entertainment, and of extinguishing them at its conclusion, must have been an awesomely labour-intensive one. The *Covent Garden Journal* informs us that in 1810 the theatre was consuming 270 candles nightly, while nearly 600 patent (Argand) lamps were fitted in its various precincts. [32]

That Birmingham's theatre suffered from problems common to every playhouse in the land is evident from the minutes of a meeting of the Proprietors on September 20, 1809, when it was proposed that

[t]he House be lighted with spermaceti Oil & spermaceti or Wax Candles, that used at present being considered injurious to the Painting. [33]

(Hitherto it had been customary to use tallow candles, a visit from the likes of Sarah Siddons or Master Betty customarily being necessary to prompt an announcement: of wax illumination.) That there was room for further improvement transpires from a meeting held some two-and-a-half years later at which the manager was in attendance.

Mr M'Cready . . . proposed an improvement in lighting the theatre with patent lamps, the expence [sic.] of which was calculated at about £33 & which Mr

M'Cready undertakes to do at his expence [sic.] on being allowed by the proprietors £25. The Eight Lamps proposed by Mr M'Cready to be in the front part of the Theatre over the stage Boxes . . . [34]

Such measures would undoubtedly have helped the situation. But in this important regard, playhouses would soon begin to share in the benefits brought by the Industrial Revolution.

ILLUMINATION BY GAS

Given that William Murdock had, by 1797, succeeded in developing a relatively safe and efficient method of gas lighting, had so illuminated his houses in Birmingham and Cornwall; had, in 1802, presented a spectacular gas lighting display to the Birmingham public to celebrate the signing of the Peace of Amiens in 1802, and, by 1805, had illuminated a Lancashire cotton mill; given also that his senior partner, Matthew Boulton, was a shareholder of the Birmingham Theatre Royal and an active and enthusiastic member of its board of trustees, it is tempting to indulge in the speculation that the town's playhouse was the first in the world to witness experiments in the latest innovation from the Soho works. Such a speculation gains further substance when we recall the state of existing theatre illumination, fraught with all the shortcomings enumerated above, the effects of which Boulton would have been well aware and to an extent shared with fellow spectators on his frequent playhouse visits. It seems not improbable that the mention of such experiences to Murdock would have prompted a

positive response in a mind such as his. But in the absence of local documentation it is left to five London theatres -- the Olympic, the East London, the Lyceum, Drury Lane, and Covent Garden; and the Philadelphia playhouse, the Chestnut Street Theater, to dispute the honour. The last-named became a victim of its own innovation when it burned down in 1820. Meanwhile, in 1817, the Belvidere Theater in Baltimore had introduced the new system. Arguments over whether the validity of claims to primacy rest on partial or full provision (i.e., stage, auditorium, and exterior) continue. In Paris, the innovation was introduced at the Opera House in August, 1821. New York theatre-goers had to wait until the early summer of 1825 when the new system was installed at two playhouses in succeeding months -- more than a year after it had made its appearance in New Orleans.

In their respective accounts of Birmingham's Theatre Royal, neither Pemberton or Rhodes makes any reference to an early introduction of gas lighting there. Cunningham, in his somewhat fuller history of the playhouse, notes briefly that the 'Birmingham Gaslight Company was formed in 1819, and probably the first main was laid in New Street in 1820, so the Theatre was able to have its auditorium illuminated in the most up-to-date manner'. [35] He provides no direct evidence for this assertion, and probably the apparent lack of documentation accounts for the failure of both Terence Rees and Frederick Penzel to accord any mention to Birmingham's theatre in their respective accounts of the first playhouses to utilize the new lighting system. To be sure, both give full credit to the pioneering discoveries of William Murdock, but neither investigate the existence of a possible link between the applications of his findings and the presence of a major playhouse in his adopted town, regardless of any intercession by Matthew Boulton.

Rees, rather, suggests that theatres at Greenock and Gloucester, in early 1829 and late 1830 respectively, were the first British playhouses outside London to introduce the new system. [36] Penzel utilizes and cites information in the *Oxford Companion to the Theatre* (1967 edn.) which states:

In the provinces, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Manchester appear to have led the way in the adoption of gas-lighting, the first in May 1818, the second in December of the same year, the third in December 1819. Gas was in use by 1820 for the auditorium of the Exeter Theatre. [37]

In fact, proof that Birmingham's Theatre Royal had installed gas lighting by May, 1819, and strong circumstantial evidence that the rebuilt playhouse was likewise supplied upon its opening in August, 1820, is to be found in the Archives and Heritage Department of Birmingham Central Library, viz.:

AN AGREEMENT made this 24th day of June 1819 between Birmingham Gas Light and Coke Company and Alfred Bunn [lessee and manager of the Theatre Royal] of New Street in Birmingham . . . [wherein] the . . . Company, agree to supply, and the said Alfred Bunn agree to take Gas Light for the supply of his Premises . . . [38]

Indeed the gas supply had predated by at least a month the written agreement. On the back of three playbills advertising the performances for May 24, 27, and 28, 1819,

respectively, which were to open the new season, we read:

The Public is most respectfully informed, that during the short Space of seven Weeks this Establishment has undergone the following general alterations:

The Audience Part of the House Has been entirely re-painted, gilded, and decorated in the most costly Style -- the Orchestra newly arranged and enlarged -- two Tiers of Private Boxes . . . have been fitted up in the most commodious and handsome Manner -- and the Whole will be lighted with A SUPERB CENTRAL GAS CHANDELIER (Executed on an entirely new and original Plan by Messrs. JONES and BARKER of this Town.)

. . . [T]he Whole of the STAGE, LOBBIES, PASSAGES, &c. are LIGHTED WITH GAS . . . [39]

Similarly worded notices were published in the *Gazette* on May 17 and 25. The three preceding issues carried a less detailed announcement, but broadly to the same end, by Alfred Bunn. [40]

Although it is not specifically recorded in the minutes of the Theatre Trustees, who continued to be preoccupied with their dispute with the late manager, Elliston, or in the Birmingham press, logic dictates that as lighting had been installed in the late building, the opportunity would have been taken to do so before the reportedly magnificent new edifice was completed some six months after the fire of January,

1820. [41] The very modernity of that building provides one strong reason. Another is the involvement of a manager who had or aspired to have fingers in several theatrical

pies, was certainly not provincial in the pejorative sense, and, in this regard at least, would naturally have endeavoured to apply London criteria to his Birmingham playhouse, where, moreover, there was already established an ongoing practice of emulating metropolitan styles and innovations. A strong economic imperative alone would have provided a disincentive to any thoughts of cancelling the agreement already made with the gas company. Aside from any cancellation charges, conversion to gas from candles or oil could be expected to achieve cuts in running costs of over 50 per cent. [42]

But perhaps the most compelling reason for the Royal's renewal of the gas lighting contract it had made in June, 1819, is that had it not done so it would have been in grave danger of falling behind the times, not in a world or even, perhaps, in a national context, but certainly in a Birmingham, and a New Street one. The town corporation had finalized terms with the gas company in the summer of 1818 for the provision of street lighting and the laying of main pipes. Early completion dates were insisted upon. The company's remit was to proceed with the work of installation in certain designated central streets, but to be prepared to extend their operations to adjacent thoroughfares. Work seems to have proceeded apace, and in fact to have got under way before the publication of terms. The rapid expansion of operations indicates that local businesses were strongly receptive to the innovation. New Street extends for barely a third of a mile, but by the date of Bunn's agreement with the company, nineteen of its businesses had already contracted for the provision of gas. Messrs John Hart had done so as early as May, 1818, and further orders would quickly follow. One distinguished neighbour, the Free School (King Edward's foundation), signed up on the same date as the theatre. [43]

It is demonstrable that gas illumination was in operation at the Royal in May 1821.

The back of the agreement form lists details of metered consumption from that date (the start of the performing season). [44] This in itself is a further indication that installation, or reinstallation, had coincided with the opening of the new building the year before, since it seems extremely unlikely that it resulted from some afterthought involving the virtually immediate replacement of an expensive up-and-running conventional system. Amidst all the praise showered upon the new structure by the *Gazette's* correspondent for the magnificence of its architecture and the richness of its design, special plaudits had been accorded to the theatre's illumination.

On entering the House, the eye will be attracted by a brilliancy of light and ornaments of the most splendid appearance . . . Over each column protrudes a burnished gold bracket, supporting a rich cut-glass chandelier; and the burner of each light is encircled in a globe, distributing it to great effect. [45]

There is also a new emphasis on ventilation provision, a need which the heat and congestion generated by early gas installations would have made urgent.

Under the door of each box in the dress circle will be perceived an iron plate, perfected for the purpose of admitting warm and cold air through every part of the Theatre, and various communications have been left in order to give it full effect. By the erection of this machine, on which no expence [sic.] has been spared, a circulation of 4,000 cubic feet of air is thrown into the house; and the whole is kept in constant operation by means of a cylindrical turn-cap, erected on

the roof of the Theatre, access to which is obtained by numerous ventilators introduced in the ceiling of the gallery outer circle. [46]

If the *Gazette's* readers were not reminded that gas fuelled the new lighting system, it is likely that no reminder was considered necessary. On the streets of Birmingham, in a remarkably short time, an innovation had become a commonplace. Given the nature of the Theatre Royal's immediate urban context, any novelty would have existed in a resort to wax candles and oil.

STAGE LIGHTING EFFECTS

'The gas is visible, and the gas-man invisible', approvingly noted the Birmingham Royal's *Theatrical Looker-On* at a performance in May, 1823. [47] The banishment of the intrusive 'snuffers' must indeed have been appreciated by audiences, but that was not the only blessing that could now be enjoyed. Although its full potential was not realized immediately, the new lighting system, aided by the facility of having one central operator in control at his 'gas table', offered to stage managers exciting possibilities for achieving spectacular and illusory effects, and those effects were wrought the more telling by the operator's very remoteness from the stage action. Dramatic effect could be heightened by brightening or dimming areas of the stage, or illuminating a particular actor.

The most celebrated by-product of the invention of the gas-burner was limelight. It was invented by Thomas Drummond, who demonstrated its practical application in 1826. Its original purpose was to aid the surveyor and mapmaker in pinpointing sites at great

distances.

But the technology of focusing an enriched jet of burning gas upon a piece of lime quickly became public through theatre, and in the angled brilliant beam of light striking the stage from high to one side, offered the engraver and illustrator a potent and enduring image of theatre and performance. [48]

Notwithstanding, theatre managements were slow to exploit the innovation. William Charles Macready, son of the former manager of the Birmingham Theatre Royal, and himself then manager of Covent Garden, tried it out for the 1837-38 pantomime. Technically successful, it was not further pursued by Macready for reasons of frugality. It was used, again successfully, at the Marylebone Theatre in 1847, and at Drury Lane in the early 1850s. Though the use of limelight gradually increased during the next quarter of a century, it was left to Henry Irving, after assuming management of the Lyceum in 1878, to fully exploit and refine the facility, and in so doing to greatly extend its popularity.

By his own testimony, virtually all of Irving's experiments in stage lighting were witnessed by his secretary and early biographer, Bram Stoker. For Stoker, 'the history of the Lyceum Theatre during Henry Irving's management -- from 1878 to 1898 -- is the history of modern stage lighting', and in 1911 he penned a monograph, detailing the actor's methods and achievements in the medium. [49]

Irving initially oversaw a costly extension and updating of the theatre's gas facilities.

He then utilized the facility of central control of the lighting to implement a long-cherished scheme -- the darkening of the auditorium during the performance. Such a policy represented a striking departure from traditional practice, which was to keep the auditorium well illuminated throughout the play.

The new order of things was a revelation to the public. Of course, when the curtain came down the lights went up and *vice versa*. In the practical working of the scheme it was found possible to open new ways of effect. In fact, darkness was found to be, when under control, as important a factor in effects as light. [50]

Irving also utilized darkness to achieve 'invisible' scene changes, training the scene-shifters to work without light, and wearing black clothing and soft-soled shoes.

Before considering Irving's artistic achievements in stage lighting, Stoker reminds us that hitherto there had been little attempt to produce fine gradations of light, shade and colour, and in general, the 'stage could be fairly well reduced to one dominating colour, but that was all'. Irving's experiments, before long, provided a solution. 'He had transparent lacquers applied to the glasses of the limelights . . . and thus produced effects of colour both of intensity and delicacy up to then unknown'. [51]

Irving's second important innovation was to facilitate the focusing of light and colour on different areas of the stage.

[I]t was formerly usual to have the footlights extending in unbroken line from side

to side of the proscenium arch. Now he had this line -- which contained several rows of lamps of different colours -- broken up into sections. Thus any combination of colour could be easily made by use of the lighting table in the 'Prompt' . . . With, then, a properly organised series of sections -- both with regard to amount of light and colour of it at disposal -- a greater variety of light was given to a scene. Also, as it is advisable to centre effects on a stage, it became an easy matter to throw any special part of the stage into greater prominence - in fact, to 'vignette' that part of the stage picture which at the moment was of the larger importance. [52]

As Christopher Baugh reminds us, '[A] common comment on Irving's stage pictures was that they resembled the composition of easel paintings being brought to life in the theatre'. [53] All that Stoker writes confirms this.

Irving also began to produce and alter effects of the combination of coloured lights - to use the media of coloured lights as a painter uses his palette. [54]

By the time Irving had assumed the management of the Lyceum his pre-eminence among England's tragedians was established. His arrival there aroused great interest within the profession, and his managerial innovations would impress and influence many of his peers. His tenure began in September of 1878, and it was not until December 30 that his first offering -- a new production of *Hamlet* -- was staged. But by early March his work had become the central theme of a lecture on 'The Art Decoration of the Stage'

delivered to the Fine Arts Society by Walter J. Allen, and duly reported in the *Era*.

Mr. Allen gave a minute description of some of the scenes in *Hamlet* at the Lyceum, and eulogised the refined taste displayed by Mr. Irving and the scenic artist as furnishing one of the best examples to be witnessed at the present day of the right method of art decoration as applied to the stage. The lectures considered that in this representation the principle was carried just far enough to heighten and increase the interest of the language and the acting without interfering with it. [55]

Though the art and science of stage lighting would be greatly enhanced through the experimentation of Gordon Craig, Adolphe Appia, and others, it remains true that much of the innovative work noted by Stoker would steadily become commonplace theatre practice, albeit transmitted by electricity, a medium to which Irving would become only reluctantly and partially converted.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY STAGE-LIGHTING PRACTICES IN BIRMINGHAM

A perusal of some of the prompt books used at the Birmingham Theatre Royal provides interesting examples of how an enterprising provincial playhouse was exploring and extending the availability of lighting effects.

The drama, *The Iron Chest*, presented in Birmingham for the first time in 1825, featured a variety of chilling effects. [56] ‘An Ancient Burying-Ground’ where ‘Lightenings [sic.] glare between the Tombs’ offered the gas-man an early opportunity to demonstrate his skills and resources. By 1850 coloured lighting was in use, but the

production of *The Prophet* of that year, seems to have been heavily dependent on green illumination. [57] A prompt copy from 1863 of *The Dead Guest* (considered again later for the manner in which it introduced an apparition) demonstrates the degree to which dramatists and stage managers were effectively in collaboration to achieve ever more startling effects. In the final scene a distant roll of thunder precedes the instruction -- 'Signal to Gas Man to open on Basta'. The character in question has, in fact by then been reduced to a corpse, and the 'Gas man' duly activates lighting from the back of the stage to comply with the directions: 'Storm clears away; the moon bursts forth, the rays of the moon falling on the floating body of Basta'. [58]

L'Assommoir,* first produced in 1879, had the distinction of being presented at three Birmingham theatres under three different titles in three consecutive weeks between late September and mid-October of that year. At the Theatre Royal it was billed as 'D.T., or, Lost by Drink', and the playbills made special mention of the 'Gas Devices and Illuminations' to be employed. The prompt copy again illustrates a popular convention of introducing lighting from the back. Directions for the opening scene state: 'Lodging of Gervaise. Door in flat. Window L. Limelight shining through it out to stage'. Later the requirement is for: 'Enclosed street to back of stage. House and shops. R & L all illuminated. Lamps alight'. [59]

A prompt copy for Caine and Barrett's *Ben-My-Chree*, set in rural Ireland, and produced at the Royal, first in 1892, and on several occasions in immediately subsequent years, illustrates at once how alert both authors and stage managers had become to

**Assommoir* is a French slang term for drinking den.

opportunities for creating dramatic lighting effects, and the diverse and sophisticated ways in which, by the last decade of the century, such effects might be employed. Act I, Scene 1 is preceded by the written instructions: 'Gas full up.' 'White limes flood Stage.' The action of the play is regularly punctuated by such directions as: 'First check to Gas'; 'White Limes instead of Yellow'; 'Limes change to Red'; '2nd check to Gas'; 'Turn off Limes'; 'Green glasses slowly up'; 'Shut off Red Limes'; 'Lights up behind Cloth'; '3rd check to Gas'; 'Salmon Lime through the window'; 'Lights for Transparency'. When 'the Bishop' makes his entries he is usually suffused in white lime, presumably as being most suggestive of sanctity, while the following scene, where Dan espies his intended sweetheart, Mona, at her bedroom window, seems likely to have spurred a near-frenzy of activity at the gas-table.

DAN. Ah, there's a light in her window. Is that her shadow on the blind?

(MONA draws blind.)

DAN. Turn your face a little more this way.

MONA. This way? So that I may see the moonlight?

DAN. So that the moonlight can see you. -- ah -- how bright and happy you look.

MONA. Why, and so I am - I mean, and so I would be.

DAN. As I see you, Mona, the firelight within and the moonlight without seem

to be fighting which shall have you. The moon has the lily of your face and the fire the roses of your hair.

When the bishop pronounces a sentence of banishment upon Dan, the victim's cries of 'Accursed! Accursed! Alone! Alone!' are made all the more heart-rending by the accompanying visual effect of 'Lightening' [sic.], now allied to the audible one of 'Thunder' (simulated by rolling iron balls down a sloping wooden trough). [60]

Prompt book notations offer interesting insights into how theatres were achieving their increasingly spectacular lighting effects. But we can only make informed guesses at how, for example, the 'Temple of Brilliants in the Realms of Refulgent Light' was created and the 'Sudden Appearance of the Geni of the Brilliant Star' effected in the Christmas programme of 1851-52, or how a 'Glow-Worm Dell' was simulated for the pantomime of 1857-58. [61]

That the taste for spectacular lighting effects had permeated even the higher artistic realms is apparent when the infant Carl Rosa Opera Company arrived in Birmingham in April, 1888. Its repertoire included Meyerbeer's *Robert the Devil* (*Robert le Diable*), a work which offered such promisingly atmospheric scenes as 'The Rocks of St. Irene' and 'Ruins of the Cloisters of Rosalie', matters receiving the attention of a Mr. Parsons, who seemingly travelled with the company, and was accordingly credited on its playbills with having responsibility for 'Limelight Effects and Gas Arrangements'. [62]

PANTOMIME, SPECTACLE AND TECHNOLOGY

By mid-century the almost limitless subject scope and potentially prolonged runs that pantomime offered had made it the chief medium for theatrical spectacle, and, typically, it would continue to be the beneficiary of managers' growing investments in time, money, and preparation. At Birmingham, the pantomime tradition had been firmly re-established at the Royal by the elder Mercer Simpson. By the latter decades of the century, presentations were not uncommonly running well into April. Taking into account the customary summer break -- usually of from four to six weeks -- it will be seen that pantomime occupied a significant proportion of the performing year. Each new presentation seemed to bring ever-generous plaudits from the *Era* and the local press.

Great as have been Mr. Simpson's previous Pantomime successes, and impossible as it appeared to excel the splendid production of last year's memorable Christmas piece, the present season's Pantomime is undoubtedly superior to anything that has been seen in Birmingham . . . This speaks volumes for the perfect arrangements of the manager. [63]

[I]t may be safely stated that this year's annual . . . may more than favourably compare with those which in the past have secured for the Royal deserved popularity. [64]

The traditions of the Theatre Royal are of the highest . . . *Cinderella* is a pantomime to be seen again and again. [65]

‘One magnificent production outshone by another’, summed up the *Gazette*’s correspondent. [66]

For Michael Booth, pantomime, to an even greater extent than melodrama, was a creature of technology.

The very existence of new materials, new stage machinery, and new methods of lighting impelled them into a dramatic structure which in part existed to display the ingenuity of machinist, gasman, head carpenter, costume designer, and stage manager. [67]

But with time the chronology of cause and effect, of demand and response, became increasingly difficult to disentangle. Drury Lane was pre-eminent both in pantomime and in technology, with its ever rising production requirements applying growing pressure to the frontiers of innovation. Between 1898 and 1902 the management installed electric and hydraulic machinery and divided the stage into six sections.

Two of these latter, each measuring 40ft by 7 ft, are to be raised and lowered electrically, so that they can be sent up to any height above the stage or down into its lowest depths by merely pressing a button. [68]

In 1931, with the theatre’s pantomime tradition almost at an end, these innovations would be famously and comprehensively utilized for Noël Coward’s *Cavalcade*.

By then it seems to have been possible to raise or lower all six stage sections. [69]

SCENERY

The stage facilities at Birmingham's rebuilt Theatre Royal were probably as good as those at any contemporary playhouse in England. Among the improvements which had accompanied the installation of gas lighting in May, 1819, it was announced that '[t]he STAGE has been completely fitted up with NEW MACHINERY, and a STOCK of the MOST SPLENDID SCENERY'. [70] Though some of these facilities might have been lost in the fire of January, 1820, it seems improbable that the opening of the new building in the following summer witnessed a regression of the modest reforms they represented. Scenic shortcomings were usually attributable to the nature of the human involvement. Writing on June 3, 1822, the *Theatrical Looker-On* had issued a public lamentation to the manager:

Pray . . . how long are we to see the dirty fingers of your scene-shifters pushing them along the grooves, frequently without being able to move them in time? [71]

Clearly, this was one problem that had been carried over from the old building to the new. On January 24, 1814, the Proprietors had resolved 'that estimates be obtained of working the scenery by Tabs instead of Rolers [sic.]', but the resolution seems to have come to nought. [72] Matters seemingly improved whilst John Brunton, who was acting manager during Elliston's absence, was in charge of the scenic arrangements. In May, 1815, he wrote to Elliston informing him that he had made alterations to the stage

grooves, thus facilitating scene changes, where it had formerly required four men to shift one pair of flats, 'and that very imperfectly done'. [73]

The inherent shortcomings of the sliding flats might well have been accentuated by incompetent scene-shifters. But flats did have some good points, which probably explains the persistence of their use until the latter part of Victoria's reign. Each flat constituted half of a scene, and would be pushed out from one of the wings along one of a set of grooves running across the stage. (Corresponding grooves to hold the top of the flats were provided by projecting arms under the fly galleries.) At mid-stage the sliding flat would meet its complementary half, being pushed from the opposite wing, and the two scenic pieces would be secured from behind. As, typically, there would exist a series of grooves, a variety of scene-changes might be effected, with the flats for the new scene already in place when those for the preceding one were pushed back, and so forth. Similarly, the more elaborate three-dimensional or 'set' scene, could be shielded from public view whilst being made ready. Moreover, that the business of scene-shifting was being conducted less obtrusively at Birmingham's Theatre Royal under the management of the Mercer Simpsons, is evident from the absence of criticism on the subject in reviews in the local press and in the *Era*. Whilst such factors might have delayed the practice's demise, its inherently intrusive character ran counter to growing contemporary notions of 'naturalism', that the happenings on stage constituted a separate world that the audience should bear witness to but not participate in, and that its belief in the existence of that world should be fostered in every possible way. Irving at the Lyceum set a potent example in abandoning the flat for the drop scene, and other managements followed. Two illustrations reproduced from a collection of lantern-slides made in 1901, shortly

before the demolition of the Birmingham Royal's 1820 building, and offering a series of fascinating 'behind the scenes' views, indicate that the theatre was then utilizing both flats and drops. One shows the area between the stage and the stairs running up to the actors' dressing-rooms; a stock of flats is placed in readiness to be run on stage as soon as they may be needed. A second illustration presents a rare view of a fly gallery and shows a series of vertical ropes in place to operate the hanging scenery. [74] The use of drop scenes had been facilitated by the removal by Mercer Simpson, jr., of the room above the stage and of two vertical supports. The latter, along with the columns in the auditorium, were replaced by iron girders in the roof.

But such improvements were outshone by the scenic facilities built into Birmingham's Grand Theatre, opened on November 14, 1883, which had clearly impressed the *Era's* reporter.

The "flies," reaching to the roof, are so high as to do away with the necessity of rolling up any of the scenery, all of which, if it has not to go into the "cellar," is carried into the flies by means of pulleys. The cellar is of great depth, and will admit of any set scene being put up and brought at once upon the stage -- the entire floor of the latter being removable if required -- thus obviating "waits".
[75]

In fact, the substitution of 'flats' for 'drops' seems to have constituted a fairly rapid process in the years straddling the turn of the century. Stoker, writing in 1911, implies that they belong firmly in the past, when he tells us that 'a stage is divided for working purposes by measured distances which are the continuance of the old 'grooves' by which

the 'flats' in old days used to be pushed out or drawn of '. [76]

AQUADRAMA

The vogue for sensational water effects on stage comfortably predated Victoria's reign, and subsisted for its duration. Shipwrecks and waterfalls constituted the most popular enactments, and both would gain in authenticity from the availability of growingly sophisticated lighting effects. One simple means of depicting a shipwreck was to line the stage with cardboard waves, and have a couple of scene-shifters push and effectively rock the vessel from the trap below. That Birmingham's Theatre Royal had, at least by 1815, eschewed such methods, is apparent from its acquisition of a water-tank. Whether this initiative was due to Elliston's efficient and active assistant manager, John Brunton, whom Elliston had left in charge during one of his frequent absences in London, is not clear. A troupe of performing dogs had been engaged for the forthcoming pantomime, and Brunton, seeking to take full advantage of their visit, secured Elliston's agreement to include on the bill two popular canine dramas. One of these, *Caravan*, had acquired particular fame when it was presented at Drury Lane in 1803. Its undoubted star was Carlo the dog, who each night would earn the thunderous plaudits of the audience as he sprang to the rescue of a drowning child. [77] In the last scene, 'a most beautiful and picturesque View of a River and Cascade of real Water' is called for. 'The Dog leaps from a stupendous Precipice into the River, and preserves the Life of the Child Julio'. [78] The stage directions seem to have been carried out faithfully at Drury Lane, but the arrangements authorized by Elliston for the Birmingham production were notably more modest, and consequently provoked a strong reaction from Brunton. He wrote

Elliston a disparaging account of matters as they now stood.

The Scene is the painted Still Water, a Child is thrown behind a Rock & caught by a Man (which must be seen by the Audience), it is then drawn across the Stage on a truck as if in the act of swimming, the Dog then jumps *over* the painted Water, & is drawn back across the Stage standing on the truck with the Child hanging about his Loins -- there is no deception in it it is palpably evident how it is done as the dog is motionless on the Truck without the least appearance of swimming. [79]

Elliston was convinced. Real water was authorized, and the acquisition of the tank may have been a direct result of Brunton's letter. The example of Sadler's Wells, which had boasted such a facility for more than a decade, could also have been influential. 'Nautical spectacle in the famous tank at Sadler's Wells displayed naval battles between fully rigged model ships for some years after 1804.' [80]

The ensuing years would see the Royal's water-tank fulfilling varied aquatic roles. In 1816 it was transformed into a frozen river. A steamboat founders, and its passengers fall overboard. Their timely rescue is effected by 'a large Fish . . . with a Car attached'. [81] In June, 1822, to simulate a storm-tossed sea, the stage was flooded. The desired effect was to be attained by agitating the water from below by means of concealed machinery. But this would prove to be another occasion when the stage-hands were not equal to their task, and the result unconvincing.

This was a water scene which, by the disgraceful bungling of the Scene-shifters,

might truly be styled “WATER PARTED from the sea”, for between every wave we were favoured with a full view of the machinery used for working the water. [82]

The attainment and maintenance of truly professional standards in this and other aspects of production had to await the era of the Mercer Simpsons, which began in 1840. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s profoundly influential anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, was published in serial form between June, 1851, and April, 1852, and several stage versions rapidly followed. The Birmingham Royal presented the drama on three occasions in 1853. The most dramatic episode in the novel is the escape from slavery of Eliza. What occasions it is the imminent sale of her child. The slaveowners pursue her to the Kentucky shore, whence, clinging to her child, she takes desperate flight across the half-frozen Ohio River, using the ice-floes as stepping-stones to freedom. The re-enactment of the scene on stage presented a considerable challenge to producers, but one that, if successfully met, would boost both their reputation and their box-office takings. The well-informed contemporary local historian, Dr. John Langford, a close observer of theatrical happenings, tells us that the Royal’s original presentation, produced on March 21, 1853, ‘had been months in preparation’, and would run ‘for more than thirty Nights’. [83] The management’s efforts were rewarded with a rave notice in the *Gazette*, whose correspondent declared that ‘no piece was ever put upon the stage in a more creditable manner’. Though the limitations of space precluded a special comment on the staging of Eliza’s escape, it seems safe to assume that this was effective in the light of the critic’s general praise for the scenic achievements. ‘Some of the “set” scenes are marvels of artistic taste and ingenious construction’. [84] Water effects were also

frequently demanded for pantomime presentations such as *Robinson Crusoe* or *Sinbad the Sailor*. The 1876-77 production required a shipwreck, a sea serpent, and a spectacular waterfall. Again, the Royal's production team seem to have risen to the occasion, and the scenery was pronounced 'very gorgeous', and 'remarkably pretty and effective'. [85]

On April 7, 1894, it was announced in the *Era* that the 'new Tower at Blackpool . . . will be opened to the public at Whitsuntide'. Reaching a height of 520 feet, its many features would include 'a circle of varieties which is built on the same principle as the Nouveau Cirque in Paris -- that is, with a hydraulic floor that can be submerged in a few Minutes'. The Blackpool Tower would open with 'a water show and a new water Ballet', with specially written music. It was anticipated that 'the show will be the biggest thing of its kind ever seen in the north'. [86] If the Theatre Royal's water-tank had represented, on its maiden appearance, the cutting edge of stage aquatechnology, things had now demonstrably moved on. [87]

GHOSTS AND APPARITIONS

The business of introducing ghosts into dramas was something that had long exercised the ingenuity of stage managers, and a procedure that was not to be regarded lightly. Phantoms figured fairly frequently in melodramas, of course, but the roll-call of more distinguished spirits included Julius Caesar, Banquo, and Hamlet's father. Ghosts customarily made their entrances from the wings or -- usually more dramatically -- through the traps. Around mid-century the ubiquitous 'roller-top desk' principle was

adapted for productions of the Alexandre Dumas novel, *The Corsican Brothers*. Dubbed consequently the ‘Corsican trap’ it operated by the horizontal positioning of a strip of canvas, to which had been glued wooden slats. An aperture would be cut to correspond with the trap-door through which the apparition of the dead twin brother would rise. The spirit could then be drawn or ‘rolled’ from stage-left to stage-right, or vice versa, to great effect.

An invention which combined a judicious use of light, plate glass, and some simple stage apparatus, to create a striking optical illusion known as ‘Professor Pepper’s Ghost’, was the result of the combined efforts of Henry Dircks, a civil engineer, and John Henry Pepper, a lecturer in chemistry at the Royal Polytechnic Institute, London. [88] Pepper had an abiding interest in the art of optical illusion, and was given to practising it in his public lectures. In what was to become a highly celebrated illusion, the audience is presented with a striking transparent ghostly image which rises from below the stage or glides in from the wings to superimpose itself on the backdrop in company with the live actors. The image is an angled reflection, strongly illuminated, of a performer standing off or below stage. Patented in February, 1863, the innovation soon caught the attention of Mercer Simpson, manager of the Birmingham Theatre Royal, who was quick to realize its potential appeal to his audiences. The play which opened his autumn season of that year was especially commissioned as an appropriate showcase for the phantom, and accordingly well trailed. The playbills announced that

. . . an entirely New Drama, written expressly for this Theatre . . . and entitled the “DEAD GUEST” . . . will be produced. This Drama has been written with a

view of introducing in the most effective form,

PROFESSOR PEPPER'S PATENT GHOST

N.B. -- The entire Right of Professor Pepper's Ghost (for Birmingham) has been vested in Mr. Simpson and cannot *legally* be represented at any other Establishment. [89]

Simpson's preparations seem to have been well rewarded, the *Gazette* reporting that on the opening night patrons had 'attended in goodly numbers'. [90]

The patent Ghost having achieved a great success, not only in London but in Paris, where they are popularly supposed to do these things better than in this country, a good deal of interest was taken in the performances . . .

The audience had been left in no doubt of the phantom's earlier demise.

The murderer pours poison into the cup of wine he offers [his victim], who drinks it and immediately falls down dead. [The body is subsequently thrown into a river.] [91]

While giving the production a generally favourable review, the *Gazette's* correspondent has reservations about its star attraction.

[U]nfortunately, the most important of the performers could not be said to behave

satisfactorily. The Great Ghost itself did not walk so well as had been hoped, and, in consequence, did not create much sympathy. There was a stiffness about his (or its) movements, a want of full development of the lower extremities, and a general uneasiness of appearance, all of which conduced to the conclusion that he was not accustomed to the stage of the Theatre Royal. But it could hardly have been expected that the ghost would work perfectly on the first night, and those who see it later will see it to much more advantage than did those present at the opening performance. [92]

The correspondent's closing comment is likely to have been an accurate one. Mercer Simpson was an energetic and painstaking manager, who would assuredly have acted promptly and appropriately to eradicate his phantom's defects. A further proof of that is that if Pepper's Ghost had suffered a well-publicized and repeated setback so early in its career, that career might well have stalled, instead of blossoming as it did. Though refinements have been made to the innovation, its principle has in essence been maintained, and the phantom has been utilized by both Alfred Hitchcock (in *Blackmail* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*), and Disney Incorporated -- notably in the 'Haunted Mansion' re-creation featured at Disneyland and at Disney World, both in Florida and Tokyo. In recent 'living' exhibitions it has undergone manifestations as, among others, Shane Warne and Sir Alex Ferguson.

CHANGES IN THE AUDITORIUM

Change was in the air, in front as well as behind the footlights. An important develop-

ment which took place in theatre auditoria, one which was becoming increasingly widespread in the last decade of the century and well on the way to becoming the norm before the end of the Edwardian era, was the installation of tip-up seats. The development generally receives little attention from chroniclers, but it was one which brought benefits to managements and audiences alike. The facility of raising a seat meant that less space was required between rows to allow the passage of patrons. A greater density of seating capacity then became possible. For managements, this might offset the loss of the ability to ‘pack’ customers into increasingly diminishing seating space along benches. It also accorded well with policies of designating and demarcating seating as a means of achieving more orderly auditoria, while the reservation of seats and their ‘keeping’ or ‘minding’ became a less hazardous undertaking for patrons.

The earliest recorded patent for the facility is that taken out by Henry Chandler and Amis Hempson in August, 1860. [93] From the early 1870s design variations average more than one a year. That taken out by Albert Reuben Dean in March, 1894, is noteworthy not least because the inventor was the head of the company that had rapidly become the pre-eminent supplier of theatrical furnishings, curtains and carpets. [94] A.R. Dean & Co. occupied elegant showrooms in Birmingham’s new shopping boulevard in Corporation Street. The merchandise and the service offered to their customers was reputedly of the highest quality. [95] Though probably viewed by local shoppers as principally suppliers of domestic furnishings, they explored and expanded a lucrative theatrical market, and in the latter part of 1898 or early 1899 they opened an office and showroom at 3 Jermyn Street, in London’s West End. Their prominent advertisements start to appear regularly in the *Era* from the later 1890s, asserting that

they ‘furnish and decorate more theatres than all the rest of the trade put together’. [96] Their nationwide customers included Drury Lane, whose recarpeting they appear to have undertaken.[97] They were well-placed to market their managing director’s own 1894 invention, numbers of which were presumably included among the 12,232 tip-up ‘chairs’ which one of their advertisements stated they had sold in 1897. [98] But they were by no means averse to marketing other designs, and in 1899, for example, they were strongly promoting a new version by J.C. Dalman. [99] It is apparent that the proliferation of the new seating in theatres and music halls that took place in the two decades which straddled the twentieth century owed much to their marketing endeavours. A comment on their mushrooming importance in furnishing theatres is provided in the account of the opening of Birmingham’s Grand Theatre in 1883, when they supplied the ‘folding seats’ in the upper circle, while J.S. Lyon of London provided those in the dress circle.[100] In 1894 they were responsible for the entire seating and upholstery of the town’s New Empire Theatre. [101] By 1904 the advertising space was being taken in the *Era* to make the remarkable claim that

A.R. DEAN SEAT NINE OUT OF TEN THEATRES AND MUSIC HALLS
IN GREAT BRITAIN . [102]

Another important supplier of theatrical needs was the brassfounding firm of Edwin Showell and Sons, situated some three-and-half miles south-west of central Birmingham close to where the Pershore Road climbs out of Stirchley and into Cotteridge. Established in 1830, Showell’s were the acknowledged leaders in their field, and largely

responsible for the ubiquitous brass fixtures so characteristic of Victorian theatres and music halls. Their more visible products would have included gallery rails, sconces, mirrors and door handles, but they were also responsible for a miscellany of artefacts that included cloak hooks, speaking tubes, skylight openers and theatre-box latches. [103] In the practical, if not in the artistic sense, it is difficult to avoid according to these two Birmingham companies a lion's share of the credit for the appearance which the auditoria of theatres and music halls had typically assumed before the close of the nineteenth century.

ELECTRICITY

The opening on October 10, 1881, of the new Savoy Theatre -- built by Richard D'Oyly Carte as a permanent home for the Gilbert and Sullivan operas -- would be celebrated less for the richness of the house's décor and for the splendid new production of *Patience*, than for D'Oyly Carte's address to the audience and his dramatic smashing of an electric lamp, followed by his display of the muslin which had been wrapped around it, intact and unburnt.

In the prospectus he had earlier published, D'Oyly Carte informed his patrons:

I have been convinced that electric light in some form is the light of the future for use in theatres . . . There are several good incandescent lamps, but I finally decided to adopt that of Mr J.W. Swan, the well-known inventor of Newcastle-on-Tyne . . . About 1,200 lights are used, and the power to generate a sufficient

current for these is obtained from large steam-engines, giving about 120 horse-power, placed on some open land near the theatre. The new light is not only used in the audience part of the theatre, but on the stage, for footlights, side and top lights, etc. and (not of the least importance for the comfort of the performers) in the dressing-rooms -- in fact, in every part of the house. This is the first time that it has been attempted to light any public building entirely by electricity. [104]

At the same time D'Oyly Carte took the opportunity to remind playgoers of the conditions they had been enduring.

The greatest drawbacks to the enjoyment of the theatrical performances are, undoubtedly, the foul air and heat which pervade all theatres. As everyone knows, each gas-burner consumes as much oxygen as many people, and causes great heat besides. [105]

(How grateful for such minor irritations had audiences been only half a century before!) D'Oyly Carte now triumphantly assured his audience that the incandescent lamps consumed *no* oxygen and caused no perceptible heat. [106]

The significance of the innovation was fully appreciated by the *Era*'s correspondent, who called the opening 'a memorable event in theatrical annals' and predicted that the new 'method of lighting will probably become universal ere long', while the temperate conditions in auditoria produced by the electric system must result in increased attendances. [107]

But gaslight would not exit all that quickly from theatre auditoria. In his prospectus D'Oyly Carte had assured his patrons that gas was to be retained as an option in his new theatre. For some years the precaution would likewise be adopted in other playhouses installing electricity -- reminiscent of the first steamships retaining sail. Moreover, the gas industry itself was not standing still. A Birmingham Theatre Royal playbill for December 1, 1879, boasts that 'The Theatre is now lighted by the much approved Fisher's Duplex Gas Burner system'. [108] When Birmingham's Grand Theatre opened in November, 1883, the *Era's* correspondent reported that

the gas arrangements are of a special and novel kind. The system adopted is that [now introduced] into the Alhambra. It includes pilot and flash arrangements by which the whole house can be lighted at the same moment, and the stage placed in full or semi-darkness by the simple turning of a key. [109]

The gas mantle, which encapsulated a jet of gas flame in a membraneous hood to produce an incandescent light, was invented in 1885.

There was also an artistic reaction to the introduction of electric lighting. If it can be described as a rearguard movement, Henry Irving was its chief protagonist. The *Era* correspondent who, after attending the opening of D'Oyly Carte's Savoy Theatre, had forecast that electric lighting in theatres would at no very distant date become the norm, had also considered an important implication of the adoption of the new system, which had not yet received appropriate attention. This was the profound change in technique which would be required of scenic artists.

Artists who paint for the stage are compelled to make large allowances for the effect of gaslight upon their scenes . . . we may anticipate . . . more truthful representations of natural effects than were possible before. [110]

The early electric incandescent lamps, with as yet no satisfactory method of dimming, did indeed bathe the stage in a stark, garish light, giving the scenery an appearance of crudity and artificiality.

As Bram Stoker records, for Irving, design, colour, groupings, lighting, music, were all of a piece, and treating them thus he had arguably wrought a new art form. He used light subtly and selectively, and furthered the 'other world' concept of the stage by darkening the auditorium. Moreover, he had refined limelight to enhance the facial expressions so characteristic of his acting technique. Thus Irving proceeded circumspectly, for many years making only isolated or limited use of the new lighting facility. In his *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*, Stoker recalls a visit to Kansas City during the North American tour of 1899-1900.

At that time limelight for purposes of stage effect had been largely superseded by electric light, which was beginning to be properly harnessed for the purpose. It was much easier to work and cheaper, as every theatre had its own plant. Irving, however, preferred the limelight or colour light, which gives softer and more varied effects, and as it was not possible to get the necessary gas-tanks in many places we took with us a whole railway wagon-load of them. These would be brought to the theatre with the other paraphernalia. [In order to make room for

them] we had to leave some of the less perishable goods on the sidewalk.[111]

Irving's preparations in all things theatrical were invariably meticulous and elaborate, But Stoker's account here underscores the actor's particular preoccupation with lighting effects, a preoccupation which was pursued unheeding of the speculation to which it might give rise. On the occasion of this particular visit, a rumour began to circulate that Irving was, in fact, a dying man, and the tanks which always accompanied him on his travels contained oxygen, necessary to keep him alive.

If Irving's attitude towards the new power source was cautious, it was one shared by Ellen Terry, who, in her *Memoirs*, records her preference for gaslight's 'thick softness with the lovely specks and motes in it, so like *natural* light, which gave illusion to many a scene'. [112]

Notwithstanding, the benefits of electricity in theatres, not least in the enhanced comfort brought to audiences, were too apparent to be indefinitely gainsaid, and, indeed, Irving himself would help to pioneer its satisfactory adaptation to stage requirements.

By the mid-1890s electricity was becoming 'standard' in theatres and music halls. Reporting on the substantially rebuilt New Empire in Birmingham, the *Era* correspondent noted on May 5, 1894, that the whole building is illuminated by electricity, and over the proscenium a group of finely modelled cupids hold loops of the electric light'. [113] Just a few miles away, at the new Theatre Royal, Aston, it was reported a week later:

[T]he lighting of the general interior of the building will be supplied by five

electroliers, the central one bearing twenty-four lights. Entirely new electrical machinery has been laid down, and this provides not only the illumination for the front and inside of the theatre but will be utilised on stage instead of limelight. [114]

In New Street the Theatre Royal had, by 1885, electrified its footlights from the power of an internal generator, but it was the expansion of external cable grids in the next decade that enabled the playhouse to proudly describe itself, on its programme for June 14, 1897, and for many months after, as

THE COOLEST THEATRE IN THE PROVINCES. ENTIRELY LIT BY
ELECTRICITY. [15]

The following year the *Era* published an editorial entitled, ‘Scene-Shifting by Electricity’. It was prompted by the ongoing innovations introduced by Edwin Sachs at Drury Lane. (See above.) The successful completion of this ‘striking novelty’, the editor considered, would be so remarkable and influential that

the adoption of electricity as the maid-of-all-work of every up-to-date theatre will be only a question of time. Light, ventilation, and scene-shifting will be done by this strong, handy, and easily transmitted agent, which is evidently destined to be the best friend of the theatrical manager of the future. [116]

But there were instances of the new source of energy having a more direct influence on the fare being offered on stage, as the *Era* reported on April 7, 1894.

A new electric dance . . . has been invented by a young lady at Kew, but whether the public will be Kew-rious to see it or not is quite another thing. Ever since poor Harriet Lanri introduced electric ornaments in her hair and on her corsage the new light has been a popular accompaniment to Terpsichorean effect both at the theatre and at the variety resort.; and our readers will remember the effect of it in *Iolanthe* at the Savoy. The lady of Kew will have the stage laid with a large number of metal discs, and the heels of the lady's shoes . . . are to be shod with copper, so that the electric current is to be established at every contact with the discs. Something very like the new invention formed the groundwork of Miss Marie Leyton's Dance, which was so popular at the Tivoli a year or so since that it was christened the Tivolliene. [117]

THE 'THEATREPHONE'

An interesting example of how some London managements were exploiting new technologies is provided in an *Era* report of December 12, 1881.

The United Telephone Company . . . had fitted up transmitters some ten feet above the stage of the Comedy Theatre and had carried their wires to a room in the [Bristol Hotel, Burlington-gardens], where a number of receivers were placed in readiness for the use of the ladies and gentlemen invited to be present to test the the results of an extraordinary and certainly a very interesting experiment . . . [S]ome thirty or forty individuals . . . holding an ebony instrument to each ear [were] listening very eagerly [to a performance of the operetta, *The Mascotte*].

The experiment . . . may be said to have been attended with the most gratifying success. [118]

In January, 1892, a similar demonstration was held at the Birmingham and Midland Institute. A concert involving musicians dispersed among several towns in the Black Country and the Potteries was successfully synchronized to create the effect that the performance was being given under the same roof. [119]

Seven months before the Birmingham demonstration there appeared a further article on what had meanwhile been christened the 'Theatrephone'. Gilbert and Sullivan, it was recalled, had been enabled, 'by means of private wires' to listen in to performances of their operas at the Savoy Theatre. But now it was reported from Paris that the facility had been made available to the general public there - in hotels, restaurants or cafes - and by inserting a coin it was possible to be connected to any one of a number of theatres and listen to part or all of a performance of a current stage drama.

The *Era*'s correspondent was generally dismissive, seeing no real future for the innovation and insisting that

the drama cannot be conveyed along a wire. The art of acting is composite, and accessories add so much to the effect of the mere spoken language that listening at a funnel becomes, once the thing has once been proved possible and repetition has robbed the experience of its interest, even irksome and irritating . . . [I]t is the combined use of eye and ear which make a dramatic performance so fascinating. [120]

The article reminds us of a largely forgotten, albeit unconscious, precursor of radio drama, a new art form which, when introduced a little over three decades later, would quickly and comprehensively confound this correspondent's comments and predictions. His want of foresight should not be too readily condemned. Given the mould in which much of the contemporary theatre was cast, it was not the most propitious era for such an innovation. Later in the same decade, Max Beerbohm, one of the many critics of the vogue for spectacular theatre, commented: 'Our public cares not at all for the sound of words, and will not tolerate poetry on the stage unless it gets also gorgeous and solid scenery . . .' [121]

MOVING PICTURES

The welcome given by a number of music halls to one particular innovation, may, in later years, have come to be regretted. In the *Era* issue for July 24, 1897, the Middlesex, in Drury Lane, advertised a 'Lighting Programme: The Marvellous Vitamotographic with a Special New Series of Pictures, including Scenes from the Jubilee Procession'. [122]

For Baugh the new medium might legitimately be regarded by contemporaries as simply a scenographic aid, and, within a theatrical context, a highly satisfactory means of presenting a dramatic happening -- classically, a train crash -- without the resort to cumbersome machinery. [123] But its wider possibilities were quickly realized, and the coincidence of a series of important national and imperial events - the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899, the Queen's funeral in 1901, and King Edward's coronation procession in 1902 -- provided favourable opportunities to display

and publicize the wonders of what was more commonly becoming called the bioscope. The public's appetite for actually witnessing events rather than merely reading about them was steadily nourished and satisfied. If a cameraman had not been on hand to film British soldiers disembarking from a troopship at Cape Town, or to similarly record a troop of cavalry galloping across the veldt, it was not unheard of to stage a re-enactment. It is a matter of conjecture as to whether the participants were the first paid screen actors. Warwick Films quickly established itself as a leading distributor, and began to promote its products regularly in the *Era*. Its most eye-catching advertisement shows the entrance of a music hall with several 'house full' signs displayed. A disappointed patron is being turned away by the commissionaire, who appeals to a contented-looking, cigar-smoking manager.

Patron: - Full? Why up the street they are doing nothing and yet have a similar show! How do you account for it?

Manager: - Warwick Films, my dear Sir, and the Bioscope. [124]

Within a decade and a half into the new century, motion pictures, after becoming an increasingly popular novelty on many bills, would have supplanted the music hall as the chief medium of mass entertainment.

In its issue for October 8, 1881, the *Era* looked forward to the opening of the Crystal Palace Electric Exhibition in December.

Nearly all the systems of electric lighting will be represented . . . so that manufacturers, Theatrical managers, and others who are thinking of applying electric lighting to their factories . . . Theatres, &c., will . . . have an opportunity . . . of judging for themselves which will suit their local circumstances best. In addition to the many and various systems of electric lights, Mr Edison will have a complete exhibit of his numerous inventions. Telephones in their various forms will be strongly represented. Faure's and De Meriten's secondary batteries, and many other scientific exhibits will be seen; and the Managers hope to make this exhibition . . . the most important [of its kind] . . . that has ever taken place in England . . . [125]

The article speaks for and of a profession that was alert to and stood ready to embrace the innovations that science and technology offered. The theatre's technological march had kept in step with the Industrial Revolution, had matched and perhaps forced its quickening pace as the Victorian era reached its close, its often novel requirements, for performers and patrons alike, testing the ingenuity of innovators and inventors. And for these the remuneration that the theatres and music halls returned was generous indeed. Their products were displayed in the most public of shop windows. Could gas or electric lighting be anywhere better exhibited than from the crystal chandeliers that graced the walls and ceilings of auditoria up and down the land? Could electricity have possibly received a more potent and reassuring introduction to the wider world than that accorded it at the Savoy by Richard D'Oyly Carte? And is it not inconceivable that limelight would have assumed its magical associations, or even entered the popular vocabulary at

all had it remained restricted to the function for which it was invented? It is arguably rare that mutual advantage has been so intimately intertwined.

THE BIRMINGHAM CONTRIBUTION

It is apparent that Birmingham's contribution to theatre technology on both sides of the footlights was an immense one. Murdock's invention of a safe and efficient mode of gas-lighting, honed in the Handsworth workshops of Boulton and Watt, remained, for two or more generations, the key innovation, providing the source of illumination for stages and auditoria throughout the world for most of the century. And before the close of that century the Birmingham firms of Ewin Showell and A.R. Dean were transforming the very 'look' of theatre interiors and bringing new standards of comfort and luxury to patrons patrons. Withal, the town's playhouse and music hall managers provided a potent demonstration to other municipalities of how the new urban transportation might be utilized to ferry many more patrons to and from a consequently prospering and expanding nucleus of theatres.

III EXPANSION OVERSEAS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is in some respects an extension of the preceding one. But now the 'revolution in mobility' is extending beyond our shores. A 'chicken-and-egg' debate on the extent to which the coming of steam navigation was a response or a spur to imperialism need not concern us here. A primary purpose of this chapter is to consider the nature of the technical innovations and the stimulus it gave to trans-oceanic traffic, and in particular to the cultural intercourse of the two most populous English-speaking nations. Diaries, memoirs, and press reports have been utilized to convey some sense of what performers were undertaking when they took passage across the Atlantic, of the improvements in speed and reliability heralded by the steamers, of the rising standards of comfort, and even luxury, resulting from the growingly competitive traffic trade; of the minimization, but not quite elimination, of the hazards and perils of the sea. Speed, size and competition produced steadily lower fares, a crucial factor not only in greatly increasing the numbers of ocean-going performers, but in transforming them, to a very considerable extent, from migrants to commuters.

Viewing this phenomenon, where appropriate, within a Birmingham context will, it is hoped, provide the opportunity to observe its workings at close quarters, while at the same time demonstrating how pervasive was the larger movement. Monitoring, where possible, signs of the beginnings and growth of what would become a massive Anglo-American intercultural phenomenon is, I suggest, a worthwhile exercise, and

equally worthwhile is determining whether the provincial playhouses were bystanders to that phenomenon or actively engaged in it. The Birmingham Theatre Royal playbill collection in the Archives Department of the city's Central Library is virtually complete from 1791. I have tooth-combed the collection from that year until 1820 for American references. Their near-absence for the first twenty-five years contrasts dramatically with what would be a rapid burgeoning from the early 1840s, and the coincidence of that transformation with the inauguration of scheduled transatlantic steamer services is too apparent to be gainsaid. John Langford's decade-by-decade chronicles of 'Birmingham Amusements' include not only a near-comprehensive record of programmes presented at the Theatre Royal, but notes of important presentations at concert halls and other venues. From this source I have identified and extrapolated entries for visiting American performers or for British performers recently returned from or about to visit America, with the purpose of building up a picture of the extent of transatlantic theatrical traffic, and comparing its volume in the years preceding and following the establishment of regular steamship services. I focus briefly on some of these performers in order to show how the course of their careers might have been affected by the coming of steam navigation. The same source is utilized for a further purpose. Langford's records include very early manifestations of two important genres, the 'Wild West' and blackface minstrelsy. Each represented a reversal of the hitherto one-way cultural traffic, and consequently merits special consideration. I take these two 1840s presentations as a starting point to look back to the gestation of the phenomena and forward to their several metamorphoses. Explaining their remarkable and enduring popularity necessitates consideration of the preoccupations and prejudices of the society

which gave them birth and of that which embraced them with such enthusiasm. A relatively simple analysis serves for the 'Wild West', but minstrelsy -- the presentation of comedy and songs by 'blacked-up' white performers -- is more complex and has engaged the attention of several prominent analysts, leading to much thoughtful research.. There is a general consensus that the later participation of African-Americans in the idiom, imitating a sometimes crude caricature of themselves, was a worthwhile if degrading experience because it effected an entrée to the national and, indeed, international stage. I pay particular attention to the songs of three composers closely associated with minstrelsy, and consider the significance of the works of Stephen Foster and Leslie Stuart in reflecting and promoting a notably gentler, more sympathetic persona, than the heavy stereotype frequently presented in the songs of Dan Emmett. In America minstrelsy carried racial implications that had little or no application on this side of the Atlantic. Here, I suggest, comparable needs for superiority were fed by class prejudice, with the dropped aitches and social *faux pas* of the aspiring common man provoking predictable laughter from middle-class theatre audiences. Indeed, in Britain, minstrelsy itself was quickly identified as 'wholesome' by the 'refined' classes, and accordingly adopted as their own. The notably well-costumed and -orchestrated shows which emerged, and which came to characterize English minstrelsy were carefully tailored to bourgeois tastes. Although the coincidence in time has received little comment, both the minstrels and the middle classes entered the music halls in the early 1880s, only when the halls were passing quite rigorous respectability tests, and beginning to turn themselves into variety palaces. The two most notable practitioners of English minstrelsy of the succeeding years exemplify this trend. Graduates of the troupe

shows, they were solo performers, who exuded sentiment, grace and charm, rather than knockabout humour. The idiom might be said to be effecting reform from within.

Eugene Stratton and G.H. Elliott were extremely distant relatives of Jim Crow.

CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

Imperialism was the grandest theme of the Victorian age, but its practice was not confined to the territories -- vast as they were -- that were governed directly or indirectly from London. [1] The American Revolution had had its sympathizers in Great Britain, but wounded national pride and resentment at an alliance of fellow-subjects with the old enemy across the Channel would take time to heal. If Americans had thrown off British rule, the instinct of the Mother Country was not to treat them as foreigners -- showing an arrogant aspect when indiscriminating commanders of her patrolling warships impressed American merchant sailors into His Majesty's Service, approving when the ex-colonials enshrined England's Common Law and language in their constitution. The end of the Revolutionary War saw America's early restoration as a large and fast-growing market for British industry. For the duration of the coming century it would continue to be the biggest single outlet for British migrants and capital. To cultural imperialism, although something which prompted ambivalent and occasionally violent reactions, the young nation would be long in thrall.

The acting profession came late to empire-building, and for long may not have realized that it was in the business of it at all. For the Puritan, Presbyterian, Quaker and, latterly, Methodist settlers of the American colonies, the theatre was symptomatic of the

decadence and immorality which they had left behind, and hostility to the arrival of any of its exponents was to be expected. The first professional acting troupe to cross the Atlantic, the London Company of Comedians, managed by Lewis Hallam, with the assistance of his wife and family, arrived in Virginia in 1752. Its landfall, resulting from either choice or chance, was fortunate. The colony's Anglican origins and sentiment bred relatively relaxed attitudes towards matters theatrical. Slowly the company established itself and extended its sphere of activity to South Carolina, and as far north as New York and New England. It built temporary playhouses where no suitable venues existed, and can be credited with laying foundations for an American theatrical tradition upon which later generations might build.

THE SEEDS AND FIRST GREEN SHOOTS OF TRANSATLANTICISM

Contrasting sharply with what by the middle of the nineteenth century had become a widespread British fascination with transatlantic themes and performing styles, North American references are all but absent from the early decades of the Birmingham Theatre Royal playbill collection, virtually complete from the early 1790s. The first, dated June 22, 1796, is to a presentation of 'The Grand Ballet Spectacle BLUE BEARD', which featured 'New Dresses, after the Manner of the Catabaws [sic.]'; also, 'a WAR HOOP, Preparations for Battle, &c And Extraordinary Method of Lying in Ambush'. [2] (The Catawba occupied land on the border between North and South Carolina. As they had sided with the colonists in the late war, it would have been convenient and popular to cast them in a villainous role.) A puzzling reference is to an item included on the bill of fare for August 4, 1803, viz.

After The Merchant of Venice A New local comic song, called The Mammoth, or American Skeleton and Bonaparte [performed] By Mr. Cherry [The announcement is repeated on August 10, but 'American Skeleton' is dropped.] [3]

Though it seems unlikely that any copies of this composition have survived, the date of the performance suggests a possible connection with the Louisiana Purchase. Earlier that year, Napoleon had offered to sell to the American Government, now under the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson, all the lands west of the Alleghenies which France held or claimed. Negotiations had begun in April, and would be successfully concluded by the year's end. As a consequence the territory of the United States would double in size. If this episode had in fact inspired the advertised rendition, it is unlikely that an American association with Bonaparte would have received a favourable interpretation in any work intended for popular British consumption. No further American references appear in the Theatre Royal playbills until 1813.

Hostilities would break out once more in 1812, fired by American resentment at Britain's enforcement of its embargo of French ports. Royal Navy patrols were stopping and searching American vessels for suspected contraband, and impressing crew members. Elements in the United States administration also harboured territorial ambitions in Canada. The war, which the British had regarded as an unwelcome distraction from their real business of vanquishing Napoleon, was brought to a close at the end of 1814. The way was then cleared for a gradual but marked improvement in Anglo-American relations, furthered and exemplified by men like Washington Irving, who, at the end of hostilities, travelled to Liverpool in furtherance of his brother's business interests. He

later moved to Birmingham to stay with his sister and brother-in-law, Henry Van Wart, who resided just north-west of the town centre. Van Wart had become prosperous by shipping locally manufactured goods to America, and had become a naturalized British subject. Irving would write *Rip Van Winkle* during his prolonged Birmingham stay, and find in Aston Hall the inspiration for 'Bracebridge Hall', the setting for his descriptions of an English Christmas. It is extremely likely that the sociable Irving, of literary and artistic bent, and the Van Warts not infrequently attended the 'fashionable nights' instituted by R.W. Elliston at the town's Theatre Royal, and continued by his successors. [4] Irving would spend much of the succeeding two decades -- including three years as secretary to the United States minister in London -- in this country. His writings included sympathetic observations of English life and society and commanded a rapidly growing American and British readership. He would forge deep and lasting friendships, first with Sir Walter Scott, who facilitated his publication in Britain, and, later, with Dickens. Irving, in a real sense, both symbolized and typified a movement -- perhaps not always a conscious one -- to resume, value and strengthen the old sociocultural ties between the Old World and the New.

Shortly before the beginning of Irving's sojourn in Birmingham, the town was actively involved in the forging of a significant Anglo-American theatrical link. The first positive reference to an actor visiting Birmingham's Theatre Royal from the United States is to John Howard Payne, which appears on a playbill of July, 1813, viz:

MR. PAYNE, the young Gentleman who has acquired so much Celebrity in

America, and which Celebrity has been recently established by his Success on the Boards of the Theatre Royal, Drury lane, is engaged to perform here for TWO NIGHTS; his first Appearance will be on Thursday next, when will be presented the celebrated Tragedy of *Adelgitha*. [5] [6]

In this Payne took on the role of Lothair. His second engagement was for *Lovers' Vows*. The *Gazette* duly commented:

Mr. Payne made his appearance on Thursday and Friday, in the characters of Lothair in *Adelgitha* and Frederick in *Lovers' Vows*. Neither of these characters seemed calculated to display his talents to advantage; but in those scenes which furnished him with the opportunity, he displayed a justness of conception and a warmth of feeling which called forth considerable approbation. [7]

Payne's stay was extended. There is a question mark over other parts he might have undertaken due to the prior recruitment to Elliston's company of another 'Mr. Payne', the playbill cast lists making no distinction between the two. However, it seems likely that it was the American who appeared as Romeo on August 4 (he had played the part successfully in London shortly before), and certain that he was the 'Mr. Payne' who made his final appearance with the company as *Hamlet* on August 5. [8] (His namesake continued to the end of the season.) The *Gazette* carried no review of his performances.

In May, 1818, Payne would make a second visit to Birmingham -- 'His First Appearance these Five Years'. He was now billed as 'the American Roscius', and

would fulfil two engagements -- to play *Hamlet*, and his old role as Young Norval in *Douglas*. [9] The *Gazette* made no comment on his performances. Notwithstanding, a year later it was unstinting in its praise for Payne's play, *Brutus*, and the lavish staging it was receiving at the Royal.

Since the first announcement of this splendid piece, the almost undivided energies of the management have been devoted to its preparation -- no expence [sic.] of machinery, decoration, or costume, has been spared -- and we look forward to it with a degree of anticipation surpassing any thing of the kind within remembrance. [10]

The *Gazette*'s high expectations seem to have been realized. On June 28 it had 'great pleasure in congratulating our Manager on the production of *Brutus*'. [11] In fact, *Brutus* quickly became a popular and recurring choice for presentation by managements throughout the country. It enjoyed regular revivals at Birmingham. Edmund Kean scored a considerable success in the title role, and, late in his career, would present his portrayal in the town. [12]

During this post-Waterloo period, Birmingham's Theatre Royal made a further notable connection with the New World. In midsummer, 1817, it was announced that

Mr. Junius Brutus Booth is engaged at this theatre, and will make his first appearance on Wednesday, 16th July, in the Character of the Duke of Gloucester in the Tragedy of KING RICHARD THE THIRD. [13]

A second announcement quickly followed, stating that Booth's Birmingham appearance had been postponed until 21st July. He had been 'kept at Covent Garden because of the unprecedented attraction of [his] performance'. [14] The explanation was probably not greatly exaggerated. In London, Booth had made a veritable triumph as Richard, and his portrayal of the role in Birmingham was reportedly 'greeted with the most enthusiastic applause', with 'repeated acclamations' at the fall of the curtain, and successful demands for a repeat performance on the following evening. [15] In 1821 Booth would leave for the United States, and spend most of the remainder of his life and career there. [16]

FROM SAIL TO STEAM

By the time George Frederick Cooke, the first top-ranking member of the British acting profession to embark upon a working visit to the New World, took ship from Liverpool on October 4, 1810, trans-oceanic travel had become a significantly less hazardous undertaking than it had been a half-century earlier.

In navigation the most notable development of the period was John Harrison's chronometer. Invented in 1759, but not officially adopted -- following a long series of trials -- until 1773, it provided the first reliable method of calculating longitude. [17] Meanwhile, the addition of fore and aft tri-sails to the traditional three-masted square-rigged vessel, permitted closer tacking to the wind, improved performance and manoeuvrability, and encouraged the construction of larger hulls. But the sum of these improvements had not, by the turn of the nineteenth century, produced the capacity to

predict with any great accuracy the duration of a transatlantic voyage. Typically this would take between sixteen and twenty-eight days, but there could be wild variations. Vessels might be delayed by adverse or contrary winds, by the absence of winds, by fog, rainstorms, or snowstorms. As late as 1837 the packet *Diamond* took some hundred days to reach New York from Liverpool, with seventeen steerage passengers dying of starvation.

George Frederick Cooke's passage to New York was a prolonged one, taking just over six weeks. But his biographer, Dunlap, writing just five years after the event, tells us little of the weather or sea conditions, concentrating instead upon Cooke's reaction, when awakening from an initial period of sickness, to the discovery that the ship's entire store of alcoholic beverages had been consumed while he slept. [18]

If, by the time of Cooke's voyage in 1810, the steam age had not yet dawned on the Atlantic, nor yet on the English Channel, signs of great things to come were apparent to those who recognized them. As early as 1786 William Symington had patented a marine engine, and in 1803 had launched the first steamboat, the *Charlotte Dundas*, on the Forth and Clyde Canal. Nine years later, Henry Bell's *Comet* triumphantly steamed out of the same waterway and down the Leith coast, a venture that, by 1818, would lead to the establishment of steamboat services across both the Irish Sea and the English Channel. Meanwhile, the fledgling United States had also witnessed notable developments in steam navigation. In 1807 the longstanding experiments of Robert Fulton were crowned with considerable success when the *Clermont*, which he and Robert Livingston had designed, inaugurated a steamboat service between New York

City and the state capital, Albany, completing the 300-mile journey in thirty-two hours. Achievements such as this laid the seed-bed for other American initiatives, most importantly the 1819 crossing from Georgia to Liverpool of the *Savannah*, a steamer to be sure, but incapable of carrying the huge quantities of fuel needed to drive her paddle-wheel for the entire voyage. Hence the facility was incorporated of hoisting this on deck in favourable winds, and resorting to sail. It would take another fourteen years before the Atlantic was crossed entirely by steam. This landmark was achieved by the Canadian-built *Royal William*, which completed the voyage from Quebec to London in twenty days, with coaling stops at Pictou and Cowes.

Meanwhile, Cooke's example had been followed in 1820 by Edmund Kean, and, two years later, by the comedian, Charles Mathews. Mathews enjoyed 'a most delightful passage of thirty-five days', but the 1826 crossing of William Charles Macready, son of the erstwhile manager of Birmingham's Theatre Royal, who, sixteen years earlier, had had made his stage debut there, was less fortunate.

Our passage was a rough one, but before the application of steam, was considered a good one, being made in twenty-six days, during most of which we were confined to our berths by the tempestuous weather, so that there was little opportunity for observation; one day differing from another in the degree of rolling and tossing that we had to endure from the time we passed Cape Clear to our reaching the Narrows, the entrance to the beautiful bay of New York. [19]

In 1818 the Black Ball Line of New York had inaugurated a transatlantic service to Liverpool. The line effectively pioneered a scheduled service, offering sailings once a month, and later twice a month, in both directions, and led the way in providing much-improved standards of accommodation for saloon-class passengers. For a price of about 35 guineas, the likes of Kean or Macready would have occupied cabins with bedding, been brought hot water for morning washing and shaving, and provided with food and wine for the duration of the voyage. On August 1, 1832, a young actress of growing celebrity, Fanny Kemble, boarded one of the company's four packets, the *Pacific*, and wrote an interestingly detailed record of the voyage. She gives a graphic account of the crossing at its most turbulent.

Came to bed. But oh! not to sleep -- mercy, what a night! The wind blowing like mad, the sea rolling, the ship pitching, bouncing, shuddering, and reeling, like a thing possessed . . . At about eight o'clock, a tremendous sea took the ship in the waist, and rushing over the deck, banged against our skylight, and bounced into our cabin. [20]

Such hazards might be endured in any vessel, but for saloon-class passengers sailing on the Black Ball Line there were compensations, not least the ample provision of fresh eggs, milk, bacon and poultry. The vessel was fitted with pens for a whole range of livestock.

I could not help being amused at hearing the cocks crowing, and the cow lowing, and

geese and ducks gabbling, as though we were in the midst of a farm-yard . . . [21]

Humbler members of Fanny's profession seeking fame or fortune across the Atlantic would have had to settle for steerage (lower deck) accommodation, increasingly available as shipping companies responded to the growing North American migrant trade. The fare would be between £3 and £6 per adult, with a further £2 or so needed for the purchase of food and provisions during the voyage. Accommodation for passengers' belongings and furniture would customarily be included in the cost of passage, as would a moderate fresh water ration and cooking facilities in the form of a communal stove.

Before the end of the 1830s several lines were operating transatlantic steam services, but by 1839 a dominant power, Cunard, had arisen. The company's founder, Canadian-born Samuel Cunard had been an investor in the *Royal William*. He received a government contract and large subsidy to carry the mails between the United Kingdom and North America. Cunard commissioned the building of four vessels of a closely similar design (the last of these was ready for launching in January, 1841), and in July, 1840, inaugurated the first weekly transatlantic service. While transportation of the mails remained Cunard's priority and the economic basis of his operation, his vessels could accommodate 225 tons of cargo and 115 (saloon class only) passengers. Designated the *Britannia* class, and designed with three masts and full rigging, their captains had orders to proceed under sail when conditions were favourable, with a view to conserving fuel. Passenger accommodation and facilities did not aspire to luxury. Charles Dickens, journeying to America in early January, 1842, was a famous early passenger, and commented that the state-room allocated to him and his wife,

. . . deducting the two berths, one above the other, than which nothing smaller for sleeping in was ever made except coffins, it was no bigger than one of those hackney cabriolets which have the door behind, and shoot their fares out, like sacks of coal upon the pavement. [22]

But if Cunard's service was, in today's terminology, a strictly 'no frills' one, it produced what he intended -- predictability and reliability. Though little speedier than a sailing-ship helped by favourable winds, its record for punctuality was sound, and even Dickens's vessel, buffeted by unusually turbulent January storms, arrived at Halifax, Nova Scotia, on schedule, after seventeen days at sea. The company's policies seem to have been fruitful. Between 1840 and 1845 the number of saloon-class passengers crossing the Atlantic by steam rather than sail rose by some fifty per cent, and of these a lion's share was claimed by Cunard.

A very different approach characterized the visionary and innovator, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who, even before the completion of his Great Western Railway, had come to view transatlantic steam travel as a natural extension to it. Brunel had developed a theory that a larger vessel would proportionately use less fuel per tonnage than a smaller one, and the steamship, he designed, the *Great Western*, was, at 236 feet, with its wooden hull reinforced with iron, the longest ship yet built. It survived a fire on its maiden voyage in 1838, and, until 1846, provided a regular steam service between Bristol and New York.

The British and American Steam Navigation Company's similarly large ambitions

were to end in early tragedy. Its flagship, the *President*, launched in 1840, was more than twice the size of Cunard's *Britannia* class vessels, and claimed to set new standards of comfort for the 154 passengers it could accommodate. But the liner quickly gained a reputation for poor performance and sluggish times. On March 11, 1841, it left New York for Liverpool, overladen with cargo and rendered top-heavy by the fitting of a third deck which its engines laboured to carry and caused the vessel to roll excessively. On an undetermined date the vessel sank with the loss of all 136 passengers and the entire crew. Among the passengers had been the Irish actor, Tyrone Power, celebrated both in the British Isles and America, and his death was a salutary reminder to his peers that the coming of steam had not banished the perils of ocean travel. As a consequence of the tragedy the ship owners liquidated their company.

Though the shock to the theatrical profession at this tragic loss of one of its own was great, there is little to suggest that the circumstances of the tragedy brought a pause to the quickening transatlantic intercourse of its members. Possibly initial apprehensions faded with an acceptance that conditions which gave rise to the disaster would not be repeated.

THE STEAMSHIPS AND THE THEATRICAL PROFESSION

When William Charles Macready took the steamer to America in September, 1843, seventeen years had elapsed since his only preceding visit, and he would have been able to compare appreciatively its conditions with those he had endured under sail. He crossed the Atlantic again six years later. James Anderson made two of a career total of

six visits during this decade, the duration of the second approaching two years. In 1845 Edwin Forrest arrived from America to undertake a British tour. But the vibrancy of the theatrical transatlantic traffic is perhaps best illustrated in the increasing comings and goings of less exalted practitioners. John Langford's *Modern Birmingham and its Institutions* includes a week-by-week chronicle of presentations at the Theatre Royal, and notes of major programmes at the Town Hall and other central venues. A careful extrapolation from his records, substantiated by an occasional reference to playbills, proves illuminating. We see that in October, 1842, in the first of several visits (his next would be in October, 1844) George Catlin presented 'his North American Indians in their native costumes, in a series of *tableaux vivants*'. Three months later 'Mr. Buckstone and Mrs. Fitzwilliam' were making their first appearance in Birmingham 'since their return from America'. In October the Royal played host to 'the celebrated American vocalists, Sweeney and Brower'. In June, 1844, the theatre proudly presented Mr. C. Freeman, 'The American Giant'. The following February Mr R. W. Pelham, 'the Delineator of African or Slave Life in America' came, and before the end of his engagement would be joined by E.R. (Ned) Harper, the American singer/dancer and banjoist. In April, 1845, 'Mr. [James Henry] Hackett, the American Comedian' presented his portrayal of Falstaff. In August Mr. H. Phillips performed 'some new American songs, giving introductory explanations'. Mr. Phillips informed his audience 'that Birmingham had been the scene of his last public appearance before his departure for the New World, and he had selected that town for his first appearance after his return'. The 'African Roscius' (Ira Aldridge) who had left America to pursue a distinguished career in England, portrayed *Othello* and several other parts in November, and would come again in April,

1846.. Transatlantic entertainment could be enjoyed at the Town Hall in March, 1846, when the ‘American Vocalists, the Hutchinson Family’ made an appearance. A month later the Royal was playing host to J. Hudson, ‘the American Tragedian’, whose programme included an appearance in *The Iron Chest*. The renowned General Tom Thumb arrived at the theatre early in 1847, and would return in the spring of 1849. Later in 1847 Fanny Kemble, billed as ‘Mrs. Butler’ although now separated from her Georgia plantationer husband (their divorce would be finalized in 1849), appeared as ‘Julia’ in *The Hunchback*. In February, 1848, ‘Mr. Cowle’ appeared in *Othello* for one night, and in March the billing ‘the American tragedian’ was again employed, this time anonymously. [23] The great Macready returned in July, 1848, to the theatre his father had once managed and where he himself had served something of an apprenticeship. The visit was billed as being prior to an American tour, and Macready would visit Birmingham again almost a year later, soon after his return to England. The month following Macready’s post-American visit, Charles William Couldock, whose credits included the playing of Macduff to Macready’s *Macbeth*, made several appearances prior to his own departure to America, where he would, in fact, spend most of his remaining career. The celebrated American-African dancer, ‘Boz’s Juba’, with Gilbert W. Pell and his Ethiopian Serenaders paid a highly popular visit just before Christmas, 1848. The close of the decade coincided with the opening of a highly-praised pantomime, whose title, *The Golden Regions of California*, underscores a growing popular preoccupation with America. [24]

The above summary (perhaps not exhaustive, since it would hardly be possible to obtain a *curriculum vitae* of every minor performer) of engagements at one provincial

playhouse in this significant decade, strongly suggests a correlation between an intensification of Anglo-American theatrical traffic and the availability of speedier and more comfortable transatlantic travel introduced by the steamers. In sum, between late 1842, when steamship travel may be said to have proved and established itself, and the end of 1849, Birmingham played host to twelve major, or relatively so, American performers, plus the Hutchinson family, paying a total of seventeen visits, while the appearances of five native players were billed as having recently returned from the New World or as about to embark thereto. This represented a quite dramatic change from the preceding decade (1832-1842) when Dr. Langford's diary of events contained only one transatlantic reference, the visit of Master Mangeon, 'the celebrated American Young Roscius' in September, 1833. [25]

A closer examination of the entertainments chronicled by Dr. Langford reveals a little more of the dynamics of the burgeoning transatlantic traffic in theatrical talent. New Yorker James Henry Hackett (born 1800) had made his professional acting debut in his home city in 1826, and would become one of the first members of his profession to commute frequently across the Atlantic. His first such visit took place as early as 1827, when he appeared at Covent Garden. He became celebrated for the playing of a range of eccentric characters, and followed Charles Mathews in presenting to the British public some 'stock' American types. This greatly boosted his popularity here, while his portrayal of Falstaff was regarded on both sides of the Atlantic as one of the finest of his day.

The character of 'Tom Thumb', whose 1847 and 1849 visits are recorded by

Langford, was not, of course new to Birmingham or British audiences generally. His origins can be traced in English folklore and fairy tales, and stage incarnations were frequent and popular. One such was a presentation of *Tom Thumb the Great* at the Birmingham Theatre Royal in February, 1809, when the portrayal of ‘the Little Hero with a Mighty Soul’ was entrusted to a Miss L. Fleming. [26] But his best-publicized and most lucrative career lay some three decades in the future. The ‘Tom Thumb’ who so impressed Birmingham audiences in the 1840s was the infant, Charles Stratton, ‘discovered’ and promoted by P.T.Barnum. By the time of his first visit to the town he had already achieved international celebrity, and had entertained and been befriended by Queen Victoria. [27]

A few months after making his 1848 Birmingham appearances, favourably noted by Langford, Charles William Couldock (born 1815) effectively emigrated to America. He would spend several seasons as a leading player at the Walnut Street Theater, Philadelphia, and on tour with Charlotte Cushman. He later joined Laura Keene’s company, and in 1858 scored a notable success as Abel Murcot in the New York premiere of *Our American Cousin*, the production in which his friend and sometime professional colleague, E.A. Sothern, featured as Lord Dundreary. (See below.) Couldock was at his best in parts leaning towards the tragic. He performed the title role in the first New York production of Boucicault’s *Louis XI*, again co-starring Sothern, to much critical praise.

If Dr. Langford’s diary of theatrical happenings is revealing of a lively local participation in a burgeoning Anglo-American cultural exchange, the Theatre Royal

provided a further and more intimate connection with the quickening oceanic traffic. One of the reforms undertaken by the first Mercer Simpson after he assumed management in the early 1840s was the founding of a permanent stock company, with an insistence on high production and acting standards. Towards the end of that decade a young, ambitious actor, scarcely out of his teens and performing under the name of Douglas Stewart, obtained his first short professional engagement with Gilmer's company in Jersey. His friend and biographer, T.E. Pemberton, notes that a short time after, Stewart had drifted to Wolverhampton where 'an event occurred which mapped out his career'.

The Mons. Gilmer of the Jersey days, who . . . was closely connected with the fortunes of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, was about to take a benefit [there], and hearing that his struggling and ambitious young friend was in the neighbourhood, goodnaturedly offered him the opportunity of appearing before a larger and more critical audience than had hitherto come his way. Stewart jumped at the chance, and accordingly appeared on the boards of the old Birmingham Theatre as Frank Friskley in the well-known farce entitled *Boots at the Swan*. [Mercer Simpson was impressed by his performance. Stewart was offered] an engagement and became a member of the company at 30s a week. [28]

In 1852 Stewart was in Liverpool, temporarily on loan by Simpson to another management. Perhaps the proximity of ocean-going steamers was the decisive factor in persuading the young actor to test his talents in the New World. In any event, 'he

accepted an offer that was made to him to try his luck in America'. [29] He arrived in Boston in the autumn of that year, and soon after it was reported in the local press that preparations for the opening of the new National Theater had almost been completed by the lessee, Joseph Leonard.

Among his company is Mr. Douglas Stewart, a late importation; he is said to be 'about' as a delineator of 'fast' and eccentric character. [30]

The opening production was *The Heir at Law*. Stewart's billing proclaimed him to be 'from the Theatre Royal, Birmingham', and noted that this was 'his first appearance in America'. [31] The *Boston Daily Atlas* praised the quality of the company that had been assembled, and reported on November 1 that

Mr. Stewart is to play the leading light comedy parts, and makes his first appearance this evening in the arduous and difficult character of Dr. Pangloss. He also plays John Dobbs in the afterpiece. [32]

The same journal noted on November 3:

The company . . . have already taken a firm hold on the public heart, and are winning fame for themselves . . . and for their manager. We have never seen [this] good old comedy . . . better sustained throughout. [33]

If the *Atlas*'s response had been encouraging, the general one was less so. The twenty-three-year-old's appearance probably belied the mature characters he was being called upon to play. He seems to have made a precipitate departure from the National and accepted an engagement at a reduced salary to play juvenile parts, with somewhat greater success, at the city's Howard Athenaeum. Moving to New York, he was soon gaining hard experience with P.T. Barnum, appearing twice nightly at his American Museum Theatre. A more congenial (one suspects) engagement ensued when he joined the company of Wallack's Theatre, where, in 1850 he earned considerable attention playing Armand in *Camille*. Here, in November, 1856, James Anderson, on tour from England, encountered him. Anderson was to repeat one of his London successes, *Cloud and Sunshine*, at Wallack's, making 'a decided hit'.

Mr. Anderson records that he was greatly aided by the admirable acting of the gentleman who represented the Marquis de Marcilly. 'He played the part like a finished gentleman of the time of the Regency, and fought his duel like an accomplished swordsman. [34]

While in New York Stewart reverted to his own name of Edward Askew (or 'E.A') Sothern, and became associated with the theatrical company of another British exile, Laura Keane, who offered him a role very different from that of Armand -- that of Lord Dundreary, an aristocratic, extravagantly bewhiskered fop, in a new play by Tom Taylor, *Our American Cousin*, which opened in October, 1858. Sothern quickly became bored with his part, which he found small and limiting, and so began to slip in his own

jokes and add some stage business. This was extremely well received by audiences, and he was thereby encouraged to further extend his part. So successful was he that the role became the most memorable in the play, and was the major reason for its achieving a highly successful run. ‘Sothern’s genius . . . had . . . clothed those dry bones with flesh and blood, and galvanised them into a wonderful semblance of the oddest and funniest humanity’. [35] A London production at the Haymarket followed, with Sothern returning to England to repeat his role with similar success in a run of 496 performances. Sothern would divide the remainder of his career between Britain and the United States, with tours of the Empire and Europe. He maintained his ties with Birmingham, and tried to ensure that any play with which he toured in England would open there. He arranged for his son, who was to die in early youth, to receive acting experience at the Royal. W.S. Gilbert wrote three plays for him, although, in the event, he appeared in none of them.

Sothern’s portrayal of Lord Dundreary was widely copied, and became the probable archetype and antecedent of the bemonocled, half-witted English aristocrat, whom Hollywood producers would later enthusiastically adopt and present to an even wider public.

THE DECLINE OF THE PADDLE-STEAMERS

Although paddle-driven steamers had transformed Atlantic travel, they had drawbacks. Wheels were vulnerable to clogging by debris or ice in winter, and blades might get damaged or broken in rough seas. The principle of screw propulsion was brought to

fruition by an Englishman, Francis Pettit Smith, and a Swede, John Ericsson. In the 1830s each independently succeeded in propelling small vessels by means of blades twisted in corkscrew fashion and attached below the water line to a horizontal shaft extending from the stern and powered by an internal steam engine. In September, 1837, Smith persuaded the Admiralty of the feasibility of screw propulsion, and within two years his 125-foot, 237-ton schooner, the *Archimedes*, based on this principle, had successfully completed her maiden voyage. The *Archimedes* impressed Brunel, and strongly influenced his design of the *Great Britain*. Another profound influence was John Laird's *Rainbow*, designed with an iron hull, and now successfully engaged on cross-Channel service.

Built at Great Western's dockyards at Bristol, and launched in 1843, two years before its final fitting-out, the *Great Britain* was revolutionary in design, structure, and capacity. At 322 feet, it was half as long again as any vessel then afloat. Excluding the spar, its two upper decks provided accommodation for 360 passengers, while the lower deck was equipped to carry the required 1,200 tons of fuel, plus 1,200 tons of cargo. Apart from its size, the most striking characteristic of Brunel's conception was the combination of an iron hull with two great propeller engines. The vessel contained some 1,500 tons of iron; moreover the traditional hemp rigging (steam-powered vessels would continue to carry sail for at least fifty years) was now replaced by iron cable. The coming of the Iron Age in shipping gave Britain's dockyards the capacity to recapture the primacy in shipbuilding from the United States and keep it for a hundred years. Wood was cheap and plentiful in America. In Britain timber was comparatively scarce and

growingly expensive, but iron ore could be produced economically in almost limitless quantities. [36]

Although expensive delays in its construction and, later, a captain's navigational error would abort the *Great Britain's* achievement of commercial viability, its inherent technical innovations convinced most subsequent designers of the superiority of screw propulsion, and heralded the demise of the ocean-going paddle-steamer. The machinery for screw propulsion was smaller both in weight and capacity; moreover, the bulky paddle-boxes were now eliminated. These factors, while aiding manoeuvrability, made possible considerable savings in fuel, and freed up space for cargo and passengers. Furthermore, while the depth of submersion of a paddle-wheel varies with the weight and distribution of the cargo and the movement of the waves, a propeller remains fully submerged at all times, operating at full and constant efficiency. For shipowners, this practical demonstration of the advantages of screw propulsion, combined with its relative cheapness, were persuasive. On its maiden Atlantic voyage, the *Great Britain* set a new record by completing the crossing to New York in fourteen days and twenty-one hours. In this incorporation of speed, innovatory technology and design, coupled with the opulence of its sixty-four staterooms, we can clearly recognize the *Great Britain* as the antecedent of the great ocean liners of the modern era.

The succeeding years saw growing competition among the Atlantic shipping lines, and, spurred by the prize of the Blue Riband, remarkable reductions in the time required to complete the crossing. The White Star Line had been founded at Liverpool in 1845, and had busied itself largely with the running of clippers to Australia. But in 1871 it

became a formidable competitor for the Atlantic passenger trade. In that year Harland and Wolff of Belfast delivered the first of what would become a long series of distinctive liners. The *Oceanic* was 420 in length, and weighed 3,707 tons. Two sets of four-cylinder compound engines fed by twelve boilers. Below decks its design owed much to the styles of interior decoration favoured in the principal London hotels, and there was a generous allocation of passenger space. The years 1874 and 1875 saw the arrival of two sister ships, the *Britannic* and the *Germanic*. Achieving a speed of over 16 knots (two knots faster than the *Oceanic*), these liners reduced the crossing time from Liverpool to New York to a little under seven-and-a-half days.

It was in the *Britannic* that Henry Irving chose to sail when his Lyceum company undertook its epoch-making tour of the United States and Canada in 1883. The cultural aspects of that visit will be considered elsewhere. It is the logistics and practicalities of the undertaking that concern us here. With the exception of Irving and Ellen Terry, and their two pet terriers, the remainder of the company travelled in the *City of Rome*. Launched only two years before, the latter vessel was something of a colossus. Constructed of iron throughout, 560 feet long and with an 8144 tonnage, it had been built by the Barrow Steam Ship Company and sold to the Inman Line, but within a year had been bought back, its speed improved from 16 to over 18 knots, and thence operated by Barrow's passenger wing, the Anchor Line. It could accommodate in excess of 1,300 passengers, including 271 first class and 250 second class. Prior to the *City of Rome's* embarkation for New York, a number of distinguished visitors came aboard to convey their good wishes to the company. Among them was the *Era's* correspondent, who was obviously impressed by the new standards of design and comfort about to be

experienced by the Lyceum players. He reported that the vessel

evoked unqualified admiration in view of her yacht-like lines, her . . . trim appearance, and her immense size, yet perfect proportions; and this irresistible admiration was changed to a feeling of perfect wonderment on the part of the voyagers and visitors when, stepping on board and inspecting the noble vessel, they found what was literally a floating palace. [37]

The responsibility for organizing the operation fell to Irving's secretary, business manager, confidant, speech-writer, and general factotum, Bram Stoker, work for which the Dubliner displayed both relish and a talent bordering on genius. No theatrical venture on this scale had been conceived before. Stoker's initial task was to shepherd aboard the entire acting company, plus technicians, carpenters, dressers, baggage-men, wardrobe-keepers, and wigmakers, in all some hundred personnel. Moreover, the scheduled repertoire of twelve plays required a huge stock of scenery, costumes, and several tons of equipment -- not least that for lighting, about which Irving was meticulous. [38] Upon arrival in New York, Stoker would oversee its safe delivery, and, following the company's initial four-week season, ensure that all personnel and baggage were safely installed in the caravan of some seven cars which undertook subsequent train journeys to Toronto, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, five smaller New England towns, and Brooklyn, then administratively separate from New York City. The company's tour concluded with a second four-week stay in New York.

The Lyceum visit, artistically and commercially, was highly successful, and the company was honoured by the great and good of America. Cultural relations, at personal and national levels, were cemented. In Philadelphia

the city's Clover Club gave [Irving] Edwin Forrest's silver watch, symbolizing the death of old rivalries and a joining together of the British and American stage. [39]

The itinerary had been scheduled by the American impresario, Henry Abbey, but the tour was ill-planned, entailing unnecessary return visits and criss-cross travelling; what's more, Abbey charged \$150,000 for his trouble. [40] Stoker determined that for any future American tours (there would, in fact, be seven more) he would assume sole responsibility for itinerary arrangements.

The Lyceum tour was not the first American visit by a British theatrical company. Members of the D'Oyly Carte company, notably, had crossed the ocean the previous year, but the planning of that visit had much to do with asserting Carte's performing rights of *The Mikado*, and forestalling American piracy. The departure was a deliberately low-key one. Whatever the commercial reasons for Irving's undertaking, there is great symbolism in the venture. This temporary transmigration of England's most prestigious theatre company, headed by the nation's two greatest actors, might be seen as the culmination -- indeed, its elevation to a new dimension -- of a process begun seventy-odd years before by George Frederick Cooke. The sharing of the very best of what its

theatre had to offer with a new English-speaking nation that was fast achieving parity with the old, seemed a right, proper and natural thing, and the scale and practicality of that undertaking, made possible by the capacity and speed of the new steam liners, likewise betokened the theatre's readiness to wed itself to the new transoceanic technology. The potency of Irving's pioneering example was demonstrated further when, with the Lyceum's seven subsequent American visits, the 'pioneering' character so quickly became a commonplace one.

CLOSE-OF-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS IN OCEAN TRAVEL

Reminiscing in 1881 about his first crossing of the Atlantic thirty-seven years earlier, James Anderson recalled that the voyage from Liverpool via Halifax to Boston, where he had disembarked, took fourteen days and cost £60. 'Now', he commented, 'one may do it for half the cost and in half the time'. [41]

Though both factors were variable, the observation was substantially true. Reductions in fares had been made possible through cheaper fuel costs and a much greater passenger capacity, while ongoing technological advances had achieved typical crossing times of only fractionally more than seven days. The trend towards yet bigger and faster liners, with a growing emphasis on luxury, would continue for the rest of the century and well into the next, but before the century turned, the virtual duopoly enjoyed for so long by British and American shipping lines would be effectively challenged.

In the autumn of 1886 Bram Stoker sailed on the *Etruria*, to make arrangements for the Lyceum company's third North American tour. The Cunarder had captured the Blue

Riband only a year before, completing the westbound crossing in six days, five-and-a-half hours. The liner's interior décor and furnishings faithfully and luxuriously replicated the heavy and ornate fashions of the day, and the sociable Stoker would have appreciated the opportunities for reconnoitring in the gentlemen's smoke room, the music room, and the well-appointed dining saloon. But competition for the North Atlantic passenger trade was intensifying. In the late 1880s two giants, the British-built but American-owned sister liners, the *City of New York* and the *City of Paris* entered the service of the Inman Company. Of virtually identical specifications, each vessel was of some 10,500 tonnage, 560 feet long, and with accommodation for 1,740 passengers (540 first class). Running hot and cold water, electric lighting and ventilation were featured, with a massive dome allowing natural light into the dining saloon. In May, 1889, the *City of Paris* broke the six-day 'barrier' for a westbound crossing by fifty-three minutes. In response, Cunard commissioned the building of two rival liners, the *Campania* and the *Lucania*. Both entered service in 1893. Again, of identical design, each could accommodate 2,000 passengers; 600 in a saloon class of an opulence that aspired to outshine all competition. Of nearly 13000 tonnage, and the first liners to be driven by two propellers, each held the Blue Riband, the *Campania* in 1893, and the *Lucania* in 1894. In 1901 they became the first ocean-going ships to be fitted with wireless.

But for the Lyceum company's seventh and penultimate visit to America in 1899, Irving was to settle for a vessel of more modest performance. Though in size and speed the *Marquette* posed no threat to the giant carriers, for Irving it had its virtues. Notwithstanding the unusually turbulent passage, he appreciated that this voyage 'was a

much less expensive proceeding than travelling by the mail-boats', and he enjoyed the ship's 'homely fare and steadfastness'. [42]

The last years of the nineteenth century are characterized by the rise of a powerful new competitor for transatlantic passenger traffic. In 1897 Germany launched the world's first four-funnelled liner, the *Kaiser Friedrich der Grosse*, which succeeded in outpacing Cunard's two giant carriers and, in the following year, securing the Blue Riband. It would take Britain almost a decade to recapture it. White Star's response was to place luxury and comfort ahead of speed. Its second *Oceanic* boasted an *art nouveau* dining room decorated in white and gold and crowned by a central glass dome. Access to music-rooms, a well-stocked library, and a gentlemen's smoking room was extended to second- as well as first-class passengers, and greater attention was paid to conditions in steerage accommodation. Meanwhile, Germany clung tenaciously to the Blue Riband, with two more of her carriers, the *Kaiser Wilhelm I* and the *Deutschland* vying for the honour until 1907, when, first the *Lusitania*, and then the *Mauretania* would ensure that Cunard would reign supreme over the Atlantic for more than two decades.

Victoria's reign had begun in the era of sailing ships. It had witnessed the arrival, the heyday, and the decline of the Atlantic paddle-steamers. In 1838 it had taken the steamer, *Sirius*, over eighteen-and-a-half days to complete the voyage. At the century's close the crossing typically took a mere five-and-a-half days. Moreover, the competition for transatlantic passenger traffic and the advent of the fuel-saving giant carriers had brought about striking reductions in passenger fares. James Anderson's first class

passage had reportedly cost him £60 in 1844. The price probably included some optional benefits. By the mid-1860s he might have secured a similar berth for about £22 - £25. Second-class accommodation would cost £18, and third-class for £16. A place in steerage might be had for some six pounds, five shillings. Fare reductions thenceforward tended to focus on the burgeoning emigrant traffic and the 'middling class' of tourist. By the last decade of the Queen's reign the comforts of second-class accommodation were available for as little as £8, while the still harsh but improving steerage conditions -- now with food included -- could be experienced for less than £5. [43]

THE WILD WEST

In retrospect the most remarkable theatrical consequence of transatlantic steam travel would be seen in the introduction to British audiences of two distinctly American genres. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of those 1840s presentations extrapolated from the records of Dr. Langford is the identification of early manifestations of two aspects of American mythology that would, in succeeding decades, fasten themselves securely upon the British popular consciousness -- the Wild West and the Romantic South. The former's beginnings may be traced to the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, whose publication began in the 1820s and were widely read in the British Isles. In *The Last of the Mohicans* Cooper provided all the ingredients of the more modern 'western' which would require little later 'tweaking': the basic scenario with its essential conflict between native inhabitants and would-be settlers; the 'noble savage'; most important of all, the frontiersman -- valiant, resourceful, self-reliant, possessed of instinctive integrity, and

espousing simple values.[44] The literary tradition would be continued by Bret Harte. Late in the century the cult may be said to have been fully defined by the wild west circus shows of Buffalo Bill, by which time, in possession of all of its identifiable features, it was ready to be globally marketed by Hollywood.

On October 22, 1842, George Catlin introduced to Birmingham audiences

‘his North American Indians’ . . . ‘given in *tableaux vivants* and groups’, and ‘setting forth in a vivid and striking manner, their most interesting modes in their dances, councils, war treaties, religious ceremonies, and games; with their various songs and their frightful war whoop’. [45]

In the promotion of the cult of the Wild West, Catlin (born 1796) seems an improbable precursor of Buffalo Bill. The ‘noble savage’ was one element of that cult, and, indeed, had been celebrated in Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, but was generally presented as a minority figure. Catlin’s high regard for the native American had reportedly been engendered during his Pennsylvania childhood when he was befriended by a member of the Oneida tribe, and further nurtured by the sight of a delegation of tribesmen, dressed in full regalia, travelling through Philadelphia. By 1830 Catlin had abandoned an embryonic legal career to develop his largely self-taught skills as a painter. In that year he secured an appointment to accompany General William Clark on a diplomatic mission up the Mississippi River. The post was significant. Following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, Clark had partnered Meriwether Lewis in the exploration of these western territories that had overnight doubled the size of the United States. Establishing

trading relations with the indigenous peoples was part of their congressional remit. The expedition would also lead to the acquisition of the Oregon Territory, giving the young nation access to the Pacific ocean. Aware that the quickening tide of white migration would soon engulf forever 'the noble races of red men who are now spread over those trackless forests and boundless prairies' way of life that had prevailed for centuries, Catlin dedicated himself to the rescue

not of their lives or of their race (for they are doomed and must perish), but to the rescue of their looks and their modes, at which the acquisitive world may hurl their poison and every besom of distraction, and trample them down and crush them to death; yet, phoenix-like, they may rise from the 'stain on a painter's palette', and live once again on canvass [sic.], and stand forth for centuries to come, the living monuments of a noble race. For this purpose, I have designed to visit every tribe of Indians on the Continent . . . [in order to procure] portraits of distinguished Indians, of both sexes in each tribe, painted in their national costume; accompanied with pictures of their villages, domestic habits, games, mysteries, religious ceremonies, &c. with anecdotes, traditions, and history of their respective nations . . . If I should live to accomplish my design, the result of my labours will doubtless be interesting to future ages, who will have little left from which to judge of the original inhabitants of this simple race of beings. They require but a few years of the march of civilization and death to deprive them of all their native customs and character. [46]

With Clark's help, and aided by letters of introduction to Indian agents and fort commanders, Catlin would, between 1830 and 1836, undertake five expeditions from his base of operations at St. Louis, visiting some fifty tribes. He also embarked on a 2,000-mile journey up the Missouri River, to its remotest reaches, visiting the Pawnee, Cheyenne and Blackfeet, and other tribes as yet far removed from eastern settlement. From these expeditions, and subsequent visits to Florida and to the Great Lakes, Catlin had, by 1837, assembled a collection of over five hundred paintings and numerous artefacts. His frontier experiences would provide the material for the publication of his *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians*, but meanwhile he took his pictures and artefacts -- his 'Indian Gallery' -- back east, and presented them in a series of exhibitions, with accompanying lectures, in New York and the other leading seaboard cities. They met with considerable success, but did not lead to his wished-for purchase of the paintings by Congress. Disappointed, Catlin embarked for England, where, exhibiting his collection at the Egyptian Hall in London, he quickly acquired celebrity status. He published at his own expense *Letters and Notes*. Sales were good, but, printed in two volumes and accompanied by expensively-produced engravings this proved a costly venture, and with audiences at his exhibition beginning to tail off, Catlin decided to take his 'gallery' on a tour of the provinces. Henceforth, his exhibition began to assume a downmarket character, partaking more of the nature of a small-time circus or a prolonged vaudeville presentation.

Catlin's 1842 Birmingham staging was not at the Theatre Royal but the vacated chapel in King Street. Later on, Catlin would recruit a number of authentic native North Americans, but at Birmingham it appears that cockney actors hired in Liverpool were

performing the required war dances and giving voice to the ‘frightful whoops’. [47]

Notwithstanding, Catlin’s presentation seems to have been well received by Birmingham’s patrons, and he and his ‘exhibition’ would return to the town for subsequent visits. A local appetite for the American West seems to have been whetted. In February, 1844, the ‘celebrated Indian Chief JOCKOSOT was welcomed to the Theatre Royal, where he was to ‘go through his DESCRIPTIVE EVOLUTIONS, arrayed in his Native Costume, of a rich and unique description’. [48]

If the Birmingham public had occasional reminders of the American West in plays like *Cocknies of California* and *Wep-To-No-Mah! The Indian Mail Carrier*, it was left to Colonel William Cody, or, as he was infinitely better known, ‘Buffalo Bill’, to complete the definition begun by Fenimore Cooper and Catlin. [49] [50] Cody’s credentials for popularizing the American West were impeccable. In his younger days he had been trapper, stagecoach-driver, Indian scout, and wagon-master. In the years immediately following the Civil War he had secured contracts to supply the U.S. Army and Kansas Pacific Railroad workers with buffalo meat. A modern moral tribunal might deliver a harsher judgment on the ruthless efficiency with which Cody, an ace marksman, went about his task, and his part in bringing the American prairie buffalo to near-extinction. By 1870 his exploits had been celebrated and enhanced in dime novels, and he had acquired near-legendary status and the name which would soon become familiar throughout and beyond the English-speaking world.

The origins of Buffalo Bill’s ‘Wild West’ (it was not formally advertised as the ‘Wild West *Show*’) may be seen in the earlier presentations of touring showmen like

'Texas' Jack Omohundro, a friend of Cody's and with whom he had toured in *Scouts of the Prairie*, a show which also briefly featured Wild Bill Hickok. Soon after, Cody began to assemble and take on tour his own show. One appreciative spectator was Mark Twain, who instantly identified it as a rare native product, and, moreover, one which was readily exportable. In 1883 he wrote to Cody:

It is often said on the other side of the water that none of the exhibitions which we send to England are purely and distinctly American. If you will take the Wild West show over there you can remove that reproach. [51]

If Cody awaited a suitable opportunity to implement Mark Twain's advice, no better one presented itself than the occasion of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, when her subjects would doubtless be in a celebratory mood.

Under the heading, 'The "Wild West" Show', the *Era's* issue for April 16, 1887, carried the following report.

The State of Nebraska steamship, specially chartered . . . arrived at Gravesend on Thursday afternoon . . . She brings many exhibits, including a number of works of art . . . 97 Indians, 100 scouts and cowboys (making 230 people, including camp attendants), 166 broncho [sic.] horses, 20 mules, 4 donkeys, 26 bull buffaloes, besides cows and calves, 4 deer, and some antelope and elk. The Hon. Mr. Cody, "Buffalo Bill," came to town on Thursday night, but the "company" stayed on board . . . [52] . . .

The *Era*'s reporter might also have mentioned some other cargo, including '[o]ver 60 tents, 300 saddles, hundreds of guns and an arsenal of ammunition, 12 covered wagons plus the old Deadwood stage coach' [53]

The show opened at the Olympia, Earl's Court, and quickly caught the imagination of Londoners high and low. Distinguished admiring visitors included William Gladstone, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Sarah Bernhardt and John Bright. The Prince of Wales was an early spectator, and, enthusiastically reporting its attractions to the Queen, persuaded her to consent to a command performance. When the impracticality of attempting to accommodate such a spectacle in the grounds of Windsor Castle, she agreed to come to Earl's Court. This took place on May 11. The Queen was so impressed that, instead of leaving after one hour, she stayed for the entire programme, which ran over time. She then commanded that Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, and other members of the company, including a number of Native American women and their babies to be presented to her. She also set a precedent for a British sovereign in formally honouring the American flag. The 'Wild West' received the rare honour of staging a second command performance, to take place on June 20. This was attended by numerous royal personages, including the King of the Belgians, the Austrian Archduke Rudolph, and the future Kaiser Friedrich II of Germany. The highlight was the appearance of Buffalo Bill driving the Deadwood coach containing the Prince of Wales and four European monarchs. The Prince, with whom Cody had struck up a friendly rapport, later presented him with a diamond tie-pin. [54]

In terms of the prestige, popularity, and the profits which accrued to Cody, this London visit outshone all the previous successes of his 'Wild West'. It would be

understandable if Cody missed the heady life of London society, when, at the conclusion of its season, he took his show to the provinces.

Minus 'Little Sure-Shot' Annie Oakley and husband Frank Butler, who preferred the attractions of Paris, the 'Wild West' arrived in Birmingham, or, more precisely, in Aston, on November 4. The *Gazette's* reporter commented:

Whether the cowboys will relish the change from Kensington to Aston is a moot point. The heroes of a hundred dining rooms, if we are to believe everything that has been written concerning their society conquests in London, will not find such pleasant attentions thrown at their feet in the provinces. [55]

The company was to give its first performance on the meadow in the Lower Grounds. The intention had been to bivouac on adjacent open land, but the onset of inclement weather prompted a change of plan. Accommodation was arranged within the handsome Jacobean mansion of Aston Hall. Formerly the ancestral home of the Holte family, it had passed into the ownership of the City of Birmingham. Its entrance hall and galleries were now utilized for the accommodation of cowboys, native American families, Mexican gauchos, their tents and typees. Placed on a dais offering a supervisory overview was the distinctive tent of Buffalo Bill himself. A nearby skating rink was converted into temporary stables for the horses and mules, while the other animals were accommodated in specially constructed corrals. A large mess tent was erected adjacent to the kitchen.

Apart from the absence of Annie Oakley (understudied by the diminutive Johnnie Baker, the 'Cowboy Kid'), what was presented to Birmingham audiences seems to have

deviated little from that seen in London. Aside from the sharpshooting and lassoing demonstrations, highlights included an Indian attack on a settler's homestead and on the Deadwood stagecoach, minus the regal passengers carried at Olympia, both of which re-enactments ended with the timely arrival of rescuing cowboys. The Pony Express raced round the arena, and a wagon train was drawn up in a circle by westward-bound settlers to help repel the whooping warpainted redmen.

Despite some initial competition for spectators from the local football clubs, and perhaps a local reluctance to approve something merely because London had done so, the Birmingham crowds became growingly appreciative of the spectacle on offer. The *Gazette* reporter's considered the show 'a mixture of circus, menagerie and melodrama' but 'so good that it can stand all the banter applied to the Orator, and all the mirth provoked by the splendid superlatives in the programme'. [56]

If Cody had, with conspicuous success, implemented Mark Twain's suggestion to present the British with an entertainment that was 'purely and distinctly American', the 'Wild West' was not free of contemporary critics, while its retrospective ones would become growingly numerous. The condemnation of William Brasmer, writing in 1977, is uncompromising. 'Truly it is difficult today to view the Wild West Exhibition with detachment'. For many present-day observers the promotion of 'its stereotype of the American Indian and its blatant disregard for his life and property, is viewed as cultural genocide', while the 'glorification of slaughter of Indians and buffalo' is the subject of modern disgust. [57]

The slaughter of wild animals was, of course, celebrated in both of those societies where Cody's show was most popular. The rationale was that man, in successfully pitting himself against a bigger, often more cunning, and almost always mightier, quarry, demonstrated courage, manliness and intrepidity of spirit. In consequence, body parts, 'bagged' on 'big game hunts' to the remoter regions of Africa and India, decorated scores of English ancestral halls. Theodore Roosevelt, who became U.S. President on the assassination of McKinley in 1901, was famously addicted to the 'sport'. That said, in the case of buffalo, the claim that they were usually slaughtered for consumption seems a flimsy excuse for bringing a population of some forty million in 1850 to the brink of extinction by 1890.

The Native Americans were almost incidental to Cody's narrative, and it might be said that within its framework nothing personal was held against them. They were there to throw into high relief the dogged endurance, valour and self-reliance of the Yankee settlers and frontiersmen. Cody's scenario required villains, and the Indians were the obvious choice to fill that role. Moreover, feathered head-dresses, war-paint, and the odd totem-pole were colourful and exotic contributions to the show.

But criticism of the Wild West Exhibition might also be of a quite different order. Cody's 'Diamond Jubilee' English visit had brought him undreamt-of profits and made him the toast of the British establishment. In the intervening years, dating from the time of John Howard Payne, a steady stream of American actors had crossed the Atlantic, seeking the approval of the nation that had spawned Kean, Macready, and Irving. Some had succeeded. Much of the latent prejudice against American players and

the assumption of their inferiority had been surmounted. But none had come near to achieving the acclaim of Buffalo Bill. A frustrated, anonymous transatlantic observer was moved to ruefully express his sentiments in verse.

Our plays put the Londoners all in a rage,
 They howled our comedians off of the stage;
 Our daintiest actresses met with a groan,
 They let our tragedians severely alone,
 But Art is triumphant. The city so vast
 Bows down to American genius at last! [58]

If George Catlin had been a reluctant showman, Buffalo Bill was an enthusiastic one. His 'Wild West' was conceived and executed on a scale and in a style to provoke the envy of Barnum himself. And if Fenimore Cooper had provided the basic structure of the modern 'western', Cody supplied all its corroborative detail. His spectacular re-enactments constituted the ready-made set-pieces, the eagerly-awaited clichés of the Hollywood epic. He had also entrenched the notion of the 'good' cowboys and the 'bad' Indians. In fairness, Cody seems to have presided over a fairly untroubled intercourse among the disparate races that made up his show, and his relations with the likes of Sitting Bull, who had starred in the show in America, his son, Red Shirt, who toured in Britain, and other Native Americans, were typically cordial and based on mutual respect. [59] But if he shared many of Catlin's values regarding the dignity of the red man and the place he should occupy in America, Cody would not let those values get in the way of a good show. His overwhelmingly white audiences identified with the

cowboy, so in Cody's staged contests, it was invariably the Indian who was vanquished or put to flight. In return for their wages and considerate treatment, his native American players acquiesced and accepted their assigned role. It was a stereotype whose life Hollywood would prolong for sixty years. [60]

THE 'ROMANTIC SOUTH': THE COMING OF THE MINSTREL SHOW

The names of Pelham and Harper and Sweeney and Brower are significant entries in the roll-call of entertainments presented in Birmingham in the 1840s. Each played a prominent role in the genesis and popularization of an idiom that would come to dominate American popular entertainment until the turn of the next century, and bid fair to do likewise in Great Britain.

In terms of quality and popularity, the minstrel show would achieve full fruition some years later when it benefited from the presentational talents of E. P. Christy and the interpolation of the melodies of Stephen Foster. But the genesis of the medium can be clearly dated from the first weeks of 1843. The musical, vocal, and comic forms which came to characterize it had indeed been utilized in part by a few individual entertainers, upon whom I shall focus presently, but now there was a fusion of all these elements, and they were presented by, or more properly, within, the context of a troupe of players. The concept grew out of an informal exchange of ideas which developed from an accidental coming together in New York of four versatile and mutually-acquainted exponents of popular entertainment, Dan Emmett, Bill Whitlock, Frank Brower, and R. W. (Dick) Pelham. Emmett was later to secure enduring fame as the composer of the

song, 'Dixie', which, after the outbreak of the Civil War, would be adopted -- much to the Ohioan's dismay -- as the battle hymn of the Confederacy.

The new format was given a tryout by the four at the Chatham Theater, New York, on January 31, 1843, followed by a more formal presentation at the Bowery Amphitheater on February 6. The announcement placed in the local press and published that morning provides a fairly full and accurate description of the entertainment on offer. It heralded the

First night of the novel, grotesque, original, and surprisingly melodious Ethiopian band, entitled the Virginia Minstrels, being an exclusive musical entertainment combining the banjo, violin, bone castanets, and tambourine, and entirely exempt from the vulgarities and other objectionable features which have hitherto characterized negro extravaganzas. [61]

The combination of song, dance, and comic repartee, performed in colourful ragamuffin costume by black-faced entertainers, proved highly popular with audiences, and within weeks of their New York debut the Virginia Minstrels were persuaded that a tour of Great Britain could prove a lucrative undertaking.* The troupe arrived in England towards the end of May. Generally, the new idiom was well received by audiences and critics, the *Times* correspondent considering that '[t]he performance in itself has great merit, and is characteristic and peculiar'. He recommended it to those 'who want an

* The format whereby the repartee would be confined to an interlocutor and two 'end' or 'corner' men had yet to evolve.

evening's relaxation, a hearty laugh and matter for speculation how certain strange feats are performed'. [62]

But the tour seems to have experienced managerial problems, and financial expectations diminished. By mid-July the troupe had broken up, its members going their separate ways. Pelham would settle in England, marry, and henceforth generally work solo. His final professional engagement would be in Birmingham in 1856. But, truncated though their visit may have been, the Virginia Minstrels had created a lasting impression, Emmett's biographer noting that 'they had at least successfully transplanted the characteristically American minstrel band and show, refreshing in their primitive hilarity, to the jaded atmosphere of Europe'. [63]

Soon after the troupe's break-up, its bones virtuoso, Frank Brower, had joined the celebrated banjoist, Joe Sweeney, then appearing in Scotland. On October 2, the *Gazette* announced the appearance of 'the celebrated American melodists' among the 'several attractive novelties' on the Birmingham Royal's bill of fare for the coming week. [64] Interestingly, Hans Nathan cites a playbill of the Victoria Rooms, Hull) of October 21 which announces a performance of 'the Virginia Minstrels' but does not list the participants, and refers likewise to one in Birmingham on October 23. Nathan suggests that the troupe may have included Brower, as well as Dan Emmett, who was still in England. If the Birmingham date was indeed fulfilled it would have constituted the first full minstrel show to be seen in the town. If it did come about it was seemingly a late-booked one-night stand. There is no reference to such a performance in the playbills or in the local press. [65]

Richard Pelham had been the tambourine player for the Virginia Minstrels, but he had also had opportunities to display singing, and especially dancing, talents. In November, 1843, he undertook what would prove a highly successful engagement at Sadler's Wells. He then toured under the billing of 'the far-flung delineator of the AFRICAN or SLAVE RACE of AMERICA', and arrived at Birmingham's Theatre Royal in the second week of February, 1844, the advertisements noting that on this, his first appearance in the town, he would perform 'his original and much admired Songs, "WHAR DID YOU CUM FRUM", and "LUCY LONG"'. [66] On February 19 it was announced that Pelham was to be joined by 'Mr. E. R. Harper, the American Comedian', for the presentation of THE STAGE STRUCK NIGGER; and CLAR DE KITCHEN. [67]

HARBINGERS OF MINSTRELSY: CHARLES MATHEWS

If Pelham's 'delineation' of the American black had been honed by his experience with the Virginia Minstrels, the broad characteristics which he displayed were probably not entirely new to Birmingham audiences. Some two decades earlier the senior Charles Mathews had made a prolonged visit to the United States. Ever watchful for new characters to add to his comic gallery, he had been delighted with the manners and speech of African-Americans, and wrote enthusiastically to a friend, 'I shall be rich in black fun. I have studied their broken English carefully. It is pronounced the real thing, even by the Yankees'. He had identified in a black Methodist preacher a particularly rich vein of humour which he was impatient to exploit. Mathews categorized

such as 'black gentry', from whom he had culled 'scraps of songs, and malaprops' that he could 'bring into play'. He included in his letter a copy (probably parodied) of one of the preacher's sermons - 'a specimen from life'. 'It is a pity that I dare not touch upon a preacher, I know its danger'. But notwithstanding a circumspection regarding religious models, it is clear that Mathews plans to transcribe the manner and spirit in which the sermon is couched to secular themes.

My wordy bredren, it a no use to come to de meetum-house to ear de most
 hellygant orashuns if a no put a de cent into de plate; de spiritable man cannot
 get a on widout de temporalities . . . [68]

Mathews also encloses the words of a newly-discovered song.

Oh! love is like de pepper-corn;
 It make me act so cute.
 It make de bosoms feel so warm,
 And eye shine like new boot!
 I meet Miss Phillis tudder day
 In berry pensive mood;
 She almost cry her eyes away
 For Pomp's ingratitude.
 O lubby brushing maid, said I,
 What makes look so sad?

Ah! Scip, de booteous virgin cry,
 I feel most debblish bad!
 For Pomp he stole my heart away,
 Me taught him berry good,
 But he no lub me now he say!
 Chah! What ingratitude! [69]

By the time Mathews returned to England in the autumn of 1823 he had accumulated a considerable collection of material, culled from his observations of both black and white Americans. He utilized it for a new entertainment which he presented at the English Opera House, under the title *A Trip to America*. The programme also featured a particularly well received song, *Opossum up a Gum Tree*. Advertised as ‘a real negro melody’, its lyrics were largely provided by Mathews. [70]

A Trip to America seems to have pleased audiences and critics alike, and following the conclusion of a highly successful London season Mathews took his show on the road. [71] It reached Birmingham in August, 1825. On his appearance, Mathews ‘was most enthusiastically greeted by one of the fullest and most fashionable houses the season has yet produced’, and one well pleased by his presentation. [72]

The stage caricaturization of the African-American will be considered more fully presently, but Mathews’s part in its promotion was, for several reasons, special, and it is appropriate to note it here. Mathews had transformed himself from a minor to a major actor, then the star of his own one-man variety shows, during the course of which he

would assume the speech and manners of a score or more heterogeneous characters flung into a situation of uncomfortable intimacy in, typically, a passenger boat or a boarding-house. The fame and success he enjoyed on both sides of the Atlantic was due to acute powers of observation, and an innate ability to recreate for his audiences the characters he 'collected' on his travels. Jane Goodall suggests that, however satirically the infinite variety of types were presented, they remained recognizable, but in impersonating black Americans, Mathews's 'anchor in social observation seems to have come loose'.

No doubt Mathews captured patterns of diction, intonation and gesture with the accuracy for which he was so celebrated, but the physical and psychological demands of working across racial difference may have skewed his technique towards the kinds of physical extravagance he professed to despise. Since the extravagances could be defended as an accurate reflection of the excesses of the other, he could take a freer licence and his audiences were clearly ready to endorse it . . . Mathews's work became an enduring influence in minstrelsy, where grotesque character was passed off as accurate imitation., as if the distance between these two modes was no longer perceptible when it came to cross-racial delineation. [73]

As the black proportion of the British population was, at this time, tiny, and his audiences here would have had little or no contact with people of African or Caribbean origin, Mathews might well have been tempted to exploit their ignorance and exceed the normal bounds of credibility. Coupled with Jane Goodall's observation might be the simple truth that exaggeration inheres in mimicry. If the objective is humour, as,

arguably, is almost always the case, it is the first weapon in the practitioner's armoury. Practised across a racial divide, and this one in particular, there is a danger of its resulting in something well beyond satire.

T. D. RICE AND 'JUMPING JIM CROW'

In 1836 a yet more potent image of the African-American was introduced to British audiences. 'Jumping Jim Crow' was the creation of T.D. Rice, an American actor and comedian, born into a poor neighbourhood on New York's lower East Side in 1808. With a blackened face, and dressed in the ragged apparel of a plantation worker, Crow projected a persona that Rice seems to have conjured from the characteristics of two African-Americans he had observed on his travels, one a crippled stable-hand, the other a steamship porter. While the first was physically handicapped, the other was mentally so. Both features were represented in Jim Crow, in his distorted, seemingly erratic dance, and his uninhibited sentiments expressed in a Negro vernacular that managed to encompass both wit and witlessness. Wily but likeable, Crow customarily introduced himself in song, in words such as:

Come, listen, all you gals and boys, I'm just from Tuckyhoe;

I'm gwine to sing a little song, my name's Jim Crow.

Chorus: Wheel about and turn about;

Eb'ry time I wheel about, I jump Jim Crow. [74]

The 'Jim Crow' phenomenon had been trailed in the British press, albeit incidentally,

at least as early as January, 1833. On the 18th *The Times* reported ‘an account of a ludicrous scene’, which had recently taken place at a theatre in New York’s Bowery district.

Booth played Richard the Third, and the house was crammed to such an extent that an avalanche of spectators broke from the pit, and covered the orchestra and the greatest part of the stage . . . The battle of Bosworth-field capped the climax . . . and when the fight between Richard and Richmond came on, they made a ring round the combatants to see fair play, and kept them at it for nearly a quarter of an hour . . . This was all done in perfect good humour, and with no intention to make a row . . . When Mr. Rice came on to sing his celebrated song of “Jim Crow,” they not only made him repeat it some 20 times, but hemmed him in so that he actually had no room to perform the little dancing or turning about appertaining to the song . . . [75]

The effect produced by Jim Crow’s arrival in London, three years later, and his appearance at the Adelphi, seems to have been nothing short of sensational. A contemporary account, cited by Hazel Waters, best describes it.

Rice in due course arrived in England, and from that moment the *crowing* mania spread like wildfire; the king and queen, and all the ministers, danced like mad to it; the butcher sung it as he stuck his mutton, and the baker had a *batch* of it as he drew the rolls; and briefly be it spoken, the great globe itself was for a time lost in

one clear delightful transport of Jim Crowism . . . [76]

But potent as Jim Crow's widely-imitated persona was, his reign would not be forever undisputed. The citified 'Zip Coon' arrived. In the parlance of a later day he presented a distinctly 'cool' image. His optional appellation was 'Dandy Jim', a name that had inspired or been borrowed from another Dan Emmett song, *Dandy Jim from Caroline*. His trademark was an elegant blue long-tailed coat, and the rest of his wardrobe would typically include a silk hat, tight pantaloons, a frilled shirt, and a floral waistcoat. He toyed foppishly with a lorgnette as he strutted across the stage, talking or singing of his modish appearance and his fatal fascination for the opposite sex. Emmett's song provided him with a signature tune and a suitable outlet for his sentiments.

I've often heard it ob late,
 Dat sout Carolina am de state;
 Den my old Massa told me, O,
 I'm de best lookin nigg in de county O;
 I looked in de glass an found it so
 Jis what Massa told me O. [77]

The 1830s saw the emergence of the black-faced banjo-player. The frenetic movements of Jim Crow were ill-suited to instrumental self-accompaniment, but his urban cousin was more adaptable, and increasingly sported and played a banjo. Though its origins lie in Africa, in the American context, it was, in its earliest form, a home-made

instrument fashioned by slaves from a gourd and strung with horse-hair. Joe Sweeney, during his Virginia boyhood, heard it played by plantation slaves, and by early manhood had become a virtuoso of the instrument. He sang and displayed his instrumental skills to resounding success, pioneering and popularizing a new variety of blackface entertainment that would be widely imitated and become an essential ingredient of minstrelsy. Banjo accompaniment eased and probably stimulated the transition from individual to group performance.

THE 'JIM CROW' PERSONA: IMITATING THE IMITATORS

Before proceeding, it is well to pause and reflect a little more deeply upon the image and character of Jim Crow which Rice and the growing number of imitators were consciously or unconsciously presenting. The obvious point to make is that both image and character were, from the start, flawed or distorted. The mental and physical defects of Rice's two models were exaggerated in order to achieve comedic effect, while at the same time subsuming or conditioning -- most importantly -- *controlling*, the 'legitimate' constituent of that image -- the dance. We have two notable accounts of what the genuine article might have been like. Fanny Kemble describes how slaves on her husband's Georgia plantation entertained visitors in January, 1839.

I have seen Jim Crow -- the veritable James: all the contortions, and springs, and flings, and kicks, and capers you have been beguiled into accepting as indicative of him are spurious, faint, feeble, impotent in a word, pale Northern reproductions of that ineffable black conception.

It is impossible to describe the things these people did with their bodies, and, above all, with their faces, the whites of their eyes, and the whites of their teeth, and certain outlines which either naturally and by the grace of heaven, or by the practice of some peculiar artistic dexterity, they bring into prominent and most ludicrous display. [78]

In *American Notes*, a record of his travels and experiences in the United States in 1842, Charles Dickens recounts a visit to a low-life entertainment den in the Five Points district of New York's lower East Side. Here he encounters 'a lively young negro, who is the wit of the assembly, and the greatest dancer known'.

Single shuffle, double shuffle, cut and cross-cut; snapping his fingers, rolling his eyes, turning in his knees, presenting the backs of his legs in front, spinning about on his toes and heels like nothing but the man's fingers on the tambourine; dancing with two left legs, two right legs, two wooden legs, two wire legs, two spring legs -- all sorts of legs and no legs -- what is that to him? And in what walk of life, or dance of life, does man ever get such stimulating applause as thunders about him, when, having danced his partner off his feet, and himself too, he finishes by leaping gloriously on the bar-counter, and calling for something to drink, with the chuckle of a million of counterfeit Jim Crows, in one inimitable sound. [79]

The Five Points neighbourhood included large numbers of Irish immigrants, who seem to have intermingled easily with the black population, and the dance Dickens witnessed almost certainly incorporated Irish folk styles, as well as African and black American ones. The performer, by subsequent popular report -- which Dickens never contradicted -- was William Henry Lane, who, as 'Master Juba', would soon acquire renown in both the United States and Great Britain.

The childhood of a poor black in early nineteenth-century New York is, almost by definition, difficult to chronicle, but Juba seems to have been between fourteen and seventeen years of age when Dickens encountered him. Around this time he was a sometime employee of P.T. Barnum, who reportedly on occasions had him made up as a (white) blackface performer and featured him in shows at New York's Vauxhall Gardens. Juba also found himself participating in dancing contests promoted by Barnum. [80] A popular feature of Juba's performances were his impersonations of contemporary dancers like Richard Pelham and Frank Brower.[81] Between 1844 and 1847 Juba's fame grew rapidly as he toured America with several minstrel troupes. In 1848 he arrived in England with Pell's Ethiopian Serenaders. G.W. Pell was the brother of Richard Pelham, and the company had toured Great Britain two years earlier, its well-dressed presentations witnessing a sensitivity and responsiveness to English tastes. Its new recruit now rapidly became the talk of theatrical London. 'The performances of this young man are far above the common performances of the mountebanks who give imitations of American and Negro character', commented one observer. [82] Juba's instinctive mastery of harmony and rhythm deeply impressed the correspondent of the *Illustrated London News*. 'Juba is a musician as well as a dancer. To him, the intricate

management of the nigger tambourine is confined, and from it he produces marvellous melodies.’ [83] But British reviewers were hard put to elaborate upon Dickens’s original description of Juba’s dancing. After confirming that it was ‘all in character, all in keeping, and all in exquisite time’, a report published in the *Birmingham Journal* a few days before the troupe’s visit to the town simply concluded: ‘It is certainly original, and unlike anything we have seen before’. [84]

On December 18 it was announced in the *Gazette* that

Pell’s talented company of Ethiopian Serenaders will appear for the first time in Birmingham this evening. Boz’s Juba, whose performances are represented universally by the metropolitan and provincial presses to be of the most extraordinary and pleasing description, accompanies the troupe. [85]

The new dancing sensation was indeed being billed as ‘Boz’s Juba’ on his British tour. An association with the world’s most popular novelist would predictably be exploited in that novelist’s homeland. But the most striking feature of the Theatre Royal playbill is the prominence accorded to Juba. The size and boldness of the billing, and the several repetitions of his name, clearly indicate that the other members of the company, including Pell himself, are subordinate players. To be sure, the classical African-American actor, Ira Aldridge, might have been so presented, but the accordance of such an honour to a black performer in a musical entertainment was unprecedented on the British stage. The special character of the performance is pointed up by a printed request from Pell that ‘the

Audience would withhold their Applause until the end of Master Juba's Dances; by doing so they will hear the exact time he keeps with his EXTRAORDINARY STEPS'. [86] Moreover, it is probable that Juba, aside from his solo performances, functioned as a fully integrated member of the company, performing duets as well as solos. A highlight seems to have been *Lucy Long*. Written some years before by Dan Emmett, this seems to have become a staple number for minstrel shows and had been featured by Richard Pelham on his February, 1844, Birmingham visit. The playbill tells us that Juba performed it as a comedy duet with Pell. Johnson's researches reveal that Juba customarily danced his part in female attire while Pell wooed him in song. It was, indeed, heavy parody, and by participating in it Juba helped to sustain a longstanding African-American stereotype. Other parts might also require him to 'black up'. [87]

In the event, the expectations of Birmingham's theatregoers seem to have been fully realized, the *Gazette* reporting:

Pell's company of Ethiopian Serenaders attracted very numerous audiences last week, and their performances, especially those of Boz's Juba, were greeted with the most rapturous applause. [88]

If Juba had, to a considerable extent, pandered to white racial prejudices, he had also revealed himself as a strikingly original performer. His own career suggested a comet blazing across the firmament. By 1852 or 1853 he was dead, burned out by hyperactivity and poor nutrition. But he had bequeathed a rich, if at first grudgingly acknowledged, legacy. He is now credited with pioneering tap-dancing, and presaging early

twentieth-century dance crazes like the 'turkey-trot' and the 'Charleston', and having an important influence on the evolution of jazz. Moreover, he had succeeded in opening a door, through which other black artists might aspire to follow, not directly, for black-face minstrelsy remained a virtual white preserve into which only Juba's unique talent had secured him admittance; but from the mid-1850s African-American minstrel troupes began to be formed, and following the end of the Civil War gained an acknowledged place in the entertainment spectrum. Black performers were graduating from the streets and saloons and achieving 'their first large-scale entrance into American show business'.

But since they inherited the white-created stereotypes and could make only minor modifications in them, black minstrelsy in effect added credibility to these images by making it seem that Negroes actually behaved like minstrelsy's black caricatures. This negative aspect of their shows was balanced, perhaps even outweighed, by the fact that black people had their first chance to become entertainers, which not only gave many Negroes a rare opportunity for mobility but also eventually put blacks in a position to modify and then correct these stereotypes. [89]

Allied to this concept is the important insight that Ostendorf offers.

[I]n minstrelsy popular American popular culture opened itself to the massive influence and influx of black American culture, however travestied the first items may have been. Without the social corset of minstrelsy certain

traditions of black oral tradition which were smuggled into America via that stage and which we value today for their intrinsic beauty, would not have survived the restrictive cultural climate of nineteenth century America. [90]

‘[A]ll the best talent of that generation came down the same drain’, asserted W.C. Handy. ‘The composers, the singers, the musicians, the speakers, the stage performers - the minstrel show got them all’. Minstrelsy was indeed the ladder which Handy, Bessie Smith, Bert Williams, and many other African-American artists would mount to permanent fame. [91]

If black Americans had served a hard apprenticeship in blackface minstrelsy, imitating the imitators imitating their stereotyped selves, they had thereby gained an entrée to the stage. Moreover it was in minstrelsy that

banjo tunes with complex rhythms, that had no European antecedents and showed strong evidence of African polyrhythms, emerged . . . in the 1840s. These few dozen syncopated banjo tunes may have been the first evidence of the evolution of American jazz from the interaction of European melodies with African rhythms. [92]

Perhaps it was their hard-won experience in the arena of public entertainment that would give African-Americans the self-confidence to culturally ‘control’ jazz as they had never aspired to control minstrelsy. They continued the masters and primary innovators of the medium, and the majority of its greatest exponents.

MINSTRELSY AND WHITE AMERICA

Aside from its colour, spectacle, comedy, and tuneful songs -- factors which should not be underrated -- a variety of reasons have been suggested in explanation of the primacy which minstrelsy occupied in American entertainment from its inception until the closing years of the nineteenth century. Toll makes the important assertion that minstrelsy was the 'common man's culture', a manifestation of cultural democracy that was a natural and logical extension to the political and economic populism that characterized the new nation and marked it off from elitist Europe.[93] Saxton has identified an 'underground' element, where, behind the black mask of minstrelsy, whites could indulge a degree of permissiveness which would not have been countenanced on the legitimate stage. [94] Similarly, Ostendorf contends: 'In minstrelsy Americans could be as uncivilized, barbaric and irrational as they pleased and then pass the buck to blacks'. [95] Jane Goodall's perception is a similar one, but that minstrelsy is commonly performed within a troupe is, for her, of added significance, and speaks of 'the potency of group psychology', which loosens inhibitions. Applying a Freudian concept, she perceives minstrelsy as permitting a shedding of the layers of sophistication which civilization has imposed and facilitating a return to a primitive (= happier) state. [96]

Perhaps the overriding reason for the generation and maintenance of the medium's popularity was the reassuring image it presented of African-Americans. At the time of its naissance many whites felt a need for such reassurance. Large-scale slave rebellions had occurred in South Carolina (1822) and Virginia (1831). To the fear and unease that such

insurrections engendered was added the unarticulated guilt that frustrated attempts to rationalize and justify oppression and bondage in a land that had constitutionally enshrined belief in the freedom and equality of all men. The blackfaced buffoon presented on stage reassured white audiences on all these counts. He was happy-go-lucky and carefree because his master -- as presumably masters typically were -- was kind and considerate, and had assumed responsibility for his wellbeing. Far from being ill-disposed towards his white auditors, he was artlessly gregarious and eager to gain their good opinion of his talents. To suggest that such as he should have a say in the governing of the country was risible. Zip Coon had a special mission of reassurance for his white auditors. His ability to range at large in an urbanized environment suggested a manumitted or emancipated Negro, and such were viewed with varying degrees of apprehension, and typically had prompted the enactment of ordinances to restrict social and vocational mobility. [97] Zip Coon's implied claims to street wisdom made him an equal beneficiary of white ridicule.

But there was another aspect of minstrelsy which should not go unremarked upon. The only participant in the entertainment with any appearance of authority was the interlocutor, and he, customarily, did not 'black up'. Whether or not this was a conscious attempt to demonstrate white superiority need not concern us here. The important point is that the interlocutor often functioned as a 'feed' for the end men, whose rejoinders frequently pricked his verbose pomposity. It was and remains a popular comedic device, where the supposedly wise are the unknowing subjects of the apparently unintended ridicule of the ignorant. But given this particular context, its practice could be regarded as racially subversive, indeed *was* so regarded. Sarah Meer's study of the 'anti-*Uncle*

Tom' literature that succeeded Mrs. Stowe's book reveals a telling absence of the 'knowing' stage African-American in the re-creations of minstrelsy that are frequently featured. [98]

MINSTRELSY'S GROWING REFINEMENT: CHRISTY, FOSTER, AND ENGLISH INFLUENCES

On July 2, 1862, Birmingham's Theatre Royal announced the forthcoming visit of

THE CELEBRATED AND ORIGINAL CHRISTY'S MINSTRELS [99]

E. P. Christy (born 1815) shared some of the characteristics of P. T. Barnum's aggressive and flamboyant style of showmanship. Prior to opening in any town his troupe visited, Christy would typically lead it in colourful and musical procession from the railroad station to the theatre. If such a parade took place on this Birmingham visit, Christy was not present to lead it. He had retired, the wealthy owner of several theatres, in 1854, and beset by financial fears arising from the upheaval of the American Civil War, exacerbated by mental instability, had committed suicide in New York on May 22, less than two months before the Birmingham presentation. Although Christy's claims to have conceived the idea of the minstrel show were spurious, the format into which it evolved owed much to him, and he also brought to it a degree of polish and refinement it had generally lacked, which succeeding presenters would build upon, and without which it is unlikely to have enjoyed its subsequent remarkable longevity. That the troupe visiting

Birmingham on this occasion was in fact 'original' as advertised is questionable. Following Christy's retirement there had been a splintering of his company into two or more troupes, their respected claims of originality usually being based on the presence of one or two members who had performed with Christy. This determination to maintain and proclaim an association is evidence that the showman's influence on the medium was a strong and continuing one. Although the simple-minded but raucous plantation hand retained his place for the moment, he was somewhat less raucous and, in song, might be quite affecting when expressing profounder sentiments than he had hitherto espoused. The basic concept of banjo, fiddle, tambourine and bones/castanets was by now well established, with an interlocutor 'feeding' two bantering 'end' or 'corner' (as they were known in Britain) men, but there might be a replication of instruments. Gentle harmonies and sentimental ballads were now increasingly featured, and orchestras providing finely-scored arrangements might be incorporated into what tended to become an extending format. The field-hands might find themselves taken indoors, dressed in cutaway coats and striped pantaloons, or even transformed into bewigged, frock-coated, and buckle-shoed flunkies. Such innovations, suggests Michael Pickering, were particularly characteristic of minstrelsy in Britain, and may be seen as a response to contemporary English middle-class tastes and norms, while J. S. Bratton stresses the medium's acceptability as family entertainment to 'respectable' elements of the middle and lower-middle class who would continue to shun the music halls as long as they retained a reputation for notoriety. [100] [101] Harry Reynolds's association with minstrel shows, both as a performer and a presenter, dated from the later Victorian period, and his memories extended to the establishment of St. James's Hall in London as the 'home' of

British minstrelsy in 1859. Its programmes seem to have been consciously wholesome from the start. Gradually,

a most desirable type of patron was attracted to the St. James's Hall. It was quite an ordinary experience to observe a dozen clergymen at one time enjoying the minstrels' entertainment; so naturally their flocks followed. It was said that this was the only entertainment Catholic priests were allowed to attend. [102]

For showmen like Christy, if refinement was good business, then refinement he would provide in plenty. In doing so he had been singularly fortunate in his 'discovery' of Stephen Foster.[103] Christy's relationship with the young Foster (born 1826), a reluctant book-keeper until he found fame, seems to have been both paternalistic and exploitive. When Christy 'took up' the young composer, he secured the right to introduce Foster's songs on stage, and must be accorded credit for instigating the popularity that many of them continue to enjoy. 'Oh! Susanna' (1848), and 'De Camptown Races' (1850) were two of the earliest published compositions, and are in the happy, nonsensical vein of the 'Jim Crow' songs, albeit of a notably superior quality, and achieved early success. But Foster was determined to explore deeper, more contemplative themes within an African-American context, and by the late spring of 1852 was able to write thus to Christy:

As I have intimated to you, I had the intention of omitting my name on any Ethiopian songs, owing to the prejudice against them by some, which might injure

my reputation as a writer of another style of music, but I find that by my efforts I have done a great deal to build up a taste for the Ethiopian songs among refined people by making the words suitable to their taste, instead of the truly and really offensive words which belong to some songs of that order. Therefore I have concluded to reinstate my name on my songs and to pursue the Ethiopian business without fear or shame and lend all my energies to making the business live, at the same time that I will wish to establish my name as the best Ethiopian songwriter . . . [104]

Foster's earlier dissociation from the *genre*, his letter seems to imply, was motivated by both aesthetic and altruistic considerations, the validity of which his own works had subsequently helped to diminish.

But the growing popularity of Foster's songs was not being confined to the 'refined' classes, and in certain quarters his aspirations might, indeed, have been considered dangerously radical. In 1839 Fanny Kemble had noted in her Georgia journal:

I have heard that many of the masters and overseers on these plantations prohibit melancholy tunes or words, and encourage nothing but cheerful music and senseless words, deprecating the effect of sadder strains upon the slaves, whose peculiar sensibility might be expected to make them especially excitable by any songs of a plaintive character, and having any reference to their peculiar hardships. [105]

The autumn of 1851 had seen the publication of ‘Old Folks at Home’ (later more usually known as ‘Swanee River’), whose sentiments are obviously those of an exiled slave, ‘longing for de ol’ plantation, and for de old folks at home’, and in 1853 Christy would introduce ‘My Old Kentucky Home’. Foster probably began working on this soon after writing that letter to Christy, and it seems likely that fear of provoking controversy was a major reason for the wholesale discarding of Foster’s original lyrics. These were clearly inspired by the recent publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and early drafts of the composition bear the title ‘Poor Uncle Tom, Good Night’. As Howard convincingly argues, even the published version offers only a thinly disguised analogy of the narrative of the book.[106] The lyrics track the main themes of Tom’s tragedy. They begin by describing an idyllic setting (the Shelby plantation in Kentucky) where,

’Tis summer [and] the darkies are gay,
The corn top’s ripe, and the meadow’s in the bloom,
And the birds make music all the day.

But then

Hard times comes a-knocking at the door. [107]

The kindly Shelby’s accumulation of debts obliges him to sell some of his slaves, including Uncle Tom and Eliza’s child, Harry -- a favourite of Shelby’s, whom he has

affectionately dubbed 'Jim Crow' -- to the parvenu slave-trader, Haley. (Tom acquiesces, but Eliza succeeds in escaping with her child.) Tom is bought by a considerate master, but on his premature death is sold 'down the river' to the brutal Legree, who tries to break his spirit by breaking his body with toil and beatings. A sense of the inevitability of Tom's final fate, to which he is resigned, grows. 'Spin it out as long as they can, they can't help my dying some time!' he exclaims, 'and after that, they can't do no more. I'm clar! I'm set!' [108] In a now little-sung stanza, similar sentiments are given voice.

The head must bow and the back will have to bend,
 Wherever the darkey [sic.] may go.
 A few more days, and the trouble all will end
 In the field where the sugar-canes grow.

Legree, finding that Tom has aided the escape of two slave-women, beats him unmercifully. As Tom lies dying, Shelby's son, George (the former 'young mas'r') arrives, and the final stanza of the song may be interpreted as Tom's last message to his wife.

Weep no more, my lady,
 O weep no more today.
 We will sing one song for the old Kentucky home,
 For my old Kentucky home far away. [109]

Both Howard and Walters suggest that the change of title and lyrics from the original *Poor Uncle Tom, Good Night* was prompted either by feelings of family loyalty -- the Fosters had a longstanding affiliation to the Democratic Party, and Abolition was a cause with which its opponents were closely identified -- or a wish to change a particular theme to a universal one; to represent, in Walters's bland phrase, 'the longing for home of human beings everywhere'. [110] (If Foster's intention was indeed simply to follow in the tradition of John Howard Payne's 'Home Sweet Home', his departure from the African-American vernacular might be regarded as evidence of that.) [111] Whatever validity these theories carry, it does not exclude a further possible explanation. The publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had raised a storm of controversy in the South.

There it was reviled in editorials and slashed by critics. The author's name was anathema. Schoolchildren were called upon to take an oath never to open it. In the agitation for its suppression, a Mobile bookseller was hounded by vigilantes and a visiting Englishman was run out of town for lending a copy to a young woman. [112]

By linking his composition so intimately to Mrs. Stowe's book, Foster was arguably courting a similar Southern ignominy for his song, and running the risk of ostracism for the rest of his works. If Foster had not been aware of such dangers, it stretches credulity that the shrewd Christy and the composer's equally shrewd publishers, Firth and Pond, would have been similarly oblivious.

Howard concludes that Foster 'brought artistry and sincerity to a medium that before

his entry had reeked of the alley and the barroom'. [113] Writing from an English perspective, S. Theodore Felstead doubted 'whether minstrelsy would ever have taken such a hold on the public, either here or in America, if it had not been for the genius of Foster'. [114] Outweighing all such testimonials is that of the influential African-American abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, who, in a lecture to the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society, named three 'Ethiopian songs' -- two of them by Foster -- as having the capacity to 'awaken the sympathies for the slave, in which Anti-Slavery principles take root, grow up, and flourish'. [115] Such sentiments were broadly endorsed in the judgment of a contemporary, writing less than four years after Foster's death, who considered that the presentation of perceived negro characteristics in the minstrelsy of the mid-1840s displayed a woeful lack of subtlety.

Slang phrases and crude jests, all odds and ends of vulgar sentiment, without regard to the idiosyncrasies of the negro, were caught up, jumbled together into rhyme, and rendered into the lingo presumed to be genuine . . . The wit of the performance was made to consist in quibble and equivocate, and in the misuse of language. [116]

In contrast, the verses of Foster

are distinguished by a naïveté characteristic and appropriate, but consistent at the same time with common sense. Enough of the Negro dialect is retained to preserve distinction, but not to offend. The sentiment is given in plain phrase and

under homely illustration, but it is a sentiment nevertheless . . .

If Mr. Foster's art embodied no higher idea than the vulgar notion of the negro as a man-monkey -- a thing of tricks and antics -- a funny specimen of superior gorilla - then it might have proved a tolerably catch-penny affair, and commanded an admiration of boys among various growths until its novelty wore off. But the art in his hands teemed with a nobler significance. It dealt, in its simplicity, with universal sympathies, and taught us all to feel with the slaves the lowly joys and sorrows it celebrates. [117]

Such a change was underscored by the covers of song sheets of minstrel music from which the gesticulating 'black ragamuffins' were rapidly disappearing to make way for a line of elegantly attired Ethiopian choristers, or a cabin set in its pastoral idyll somewhere on the banks of the Mississippi. Such were increasingly finding their way into English drawing-rooms.

If Stephen Foster had, in rewriting the lyrics of 'Old Folks at Home', considered discretion to be the better part of valour, that does not negate the possibility that the growingly sentimental nature of his Southern ballads was influenced by the themes of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Sarah Meer sees evidence of a lively interaction between Stowe's book, Foster's songs, and trends in minstrelsy after the book's publication, asserting that the 'increasing sentimentality of the minstrel show chimed with the mood of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'. She also identifies certain scenes in the book as thinly-disguised re-enactments of some of minstrelsy's set-pieces. Topsy's observations and rejoinders to

the prim, pious and unworldly Miss Ophelia hint that she is perhaps not as disingenuous as she might appear, and their exchanges mirror the interlocutor -- 'end-man' relationship. [118] Similarly, when Shelby's knowing slave, Sam, delivers a 'stump-speech' in imitation of the politicians' orations he has witnessed, the parody is disguised by a beguiling innocence. [119] In such ways did Stowe endeavour to make [her] antislavery message palatable for the cautious and scarcely noticeable for the indifferent'. [120] But if she owed debts to minstrelsy, minstrelsy did not scruple to call them in, on occasions mercilessly lampooning her book in comic song and patter. Stephen Foster's songs -- notably 'Old Folks at Home' -- could be perverted so that its lament was voiced by an ex-slave, 'liberated' by fanatical abolitionists, shipped north and there abandoned to a strange and hostile environment. Conversely, producers of 'sympathetic' stage versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were not slow to appreciate that the insertion of an appropriately sentimental piece of Foster's music into a scene could considerably heighten its emotional impact. Indeed, 'Foster's songs were employed so consistently in [stage] *Uncle Toms*, that they could be called a central pillar of *Tom* mania'. It was a reality that Stowe came both to recognize and appreciate when she herself penned a version in which Tom gives voice to a Foster song. [121]

ENGLISH MINSTRELSY: LATER DEVELOPMENTS

When, in *The Mikado*, Koko, the Lord High Executioner, recites his list of 'society offenders . . . who never would be missed', he includes 'the nigger serenader and the others of his race'. The line is offensive to our ears, and has justifiably been rewritten. But in the context of 1885 it refers only to the black-faced minstrel and his fellow-

performers. What primarily interests us is the testimony it provides to the ubiquity of the phenomenon, and to its familiarity to Victorian middle-class audiences, for it is their foibles that Gilbert is ridiculing. (One suspects that most habitués of the gallery would not be unduly perturbed should they encounter a 'lady from the provinces who dresses like a guy, and who doesn't think she dances but would rather like to try', and would give short shrift to having peppermint puffed in their faces.) In fact, English minstrelsy probably reached the peak of its popularity in the 1880s, and then embarked on a gradual decline.[122] There were signs of a reversal of an earlier trend, with some minstrels striking out on their own. An important observation to be made here, albeit one generally neglected by chroniclers, is that this relocation of a traditionally wholesome form of entertainment to the music halls provided both an acknowledgment of the latter's notably 'reformed' character, and a contribution to it.

The Haverly Minstrels, noted for their large-scale presentations, big casts and lavish stage settings, arrived in Britain in 1880. In their ranks was a youthful Eugene Stratton, from upstate New York. When, after a highly successful visit, the company returned to America, Stratton stayed on, transferring to the Moore and Burgess Minstrels at the St. James's Hall. Then, after a time spent further honing his talents, he took the decision to work solo. A feature of his act was a soft shoe dance or 'shuffle', of which he would become the acknowledged master, allied to a voice which, while possessing limited range and little resonance, was able to extract and convey the full meaning of the songs he sang.

W. MacQueen Pope (born 1888), who attended the music halls from an early age and would have seen all the stars of his day, ranked Stratton among the greatest. His repertoire included material which, to contemporary ears, sounds avowedly racist, and

Michael Pickering cites his song *The Whistling Coon* as endorsing a derisory physical and mental concept. [123] But a balance needs to be restored here. The great majority of Stratton's songs did not promote such an image. He also sang songs that celebrated a nobility of spirit in the face of adversity. Although Macqueen Pope's account of Stratton's performance of the song, 'I May be Crazy' suggests, by today's standards, an over-liberal use of sentiment, its affecting nature was still potent in his memory. [124] The song was written by Leslie Stuart (born 1864), one of many that sprang from an association that enhanced the careers of both men. Stuart's catalogue of compositions is an extensive and varied one, ranging from the patriotic march, *Soldiers of the Queen*, to the score for the musical comedy, *Floradora*, which featured the charming sextet, 'Tell Me, Pretty Maiden', and which enjoyed successful runs both in London and New York. He wrote many songs for Stratton of which the most memorable were 'Little Dolly Daydream' and 'The Lily of Laguna', perfectly suited to Stratton's dancing and delivery.

The career of G. H. Elliott is often coupled with that of Stratton. Born in Rochdale in 1882, he was taken to America as a child, and performed on stage as an actor and singer, joining the Primrose West Minstrels at the age of nine. He returned to England in his late teens and went on the halls as a solo act, achieving top billing within a few years. To describe him as a 'blackface' entertainer is not strictly correct. There was nothing of the caricature in his makeup. He displayed a 'natural' brown complexion, and was accordingly distinguished as 'the chocolate-coloured coon'. The *Era's* correspondent reported that, while growing up in America, 'he began to literally live the life of a real coon, getting the while an intimate knowledge of their individualities and making a

complete study of them and their peculiarities'. [125] Elliott's singing voice was superior to Stratton's, he could also yodel, and, though lacking his senior's instinctive dancing skills, moved gracefully around the stage. Pickering contends that the

humour of minstrelsy burlesque . . . hinged crucially on the incongruity of blackface impersonations, as did the whole effect of 'coon' love songs, which in varying degrees comically subverted the tone and content of the Victorian love ballad, not only by treating the theme of romance with a flippant lightheartedness, but also by using the coon buffoon caricature to ironically send up a mawkish sentimentalism. [125]

Pickering asserts that G. H. Elliott was a practitioner of such arts, but the contention seems to be based on the unjustified assumption -- perhaps prompted by his sobriquet -- that Elliott's stage persona was a 'coon buffoon caricature', an assumption that conflicts with a contemporary judgment that 'he invests the genus coon with a handsome, elegant, and quite debonair style and manner'. [126] His songs were, in fact, typically sentimental and melodic, sometimes gently humorous, and good enough to stand the test of time. He popularized songs by the African-American songwriter, James Bland -- notably 'O 'Dem Golden Slippers' -- and Stuart's 'The Lily of Laguna' came to be associated with him as closely as it had been with Stratton.

Taken together, the careers of Stratton, Stuart, and Elliott are significant for several reasons. They were practitioners of a medium of entertainment that had originated in the New World and been successfully transplanted in the Old, the first, indeed, to run

counter to the hitherto one-way cultural traffic, and their very participation was testimony to the regard in which the idiom was held here. Demonstrably, the alien plant had not only taken firm root, it was pushing up native shoots. The hallmarks of the personae which Stratton and Elliott in general presented and which Stuart in part articulated or inspired were grace, elegance, sentiment and a gentle humour - qualities far removed from the crudities promulgated by Jim Crow. Typically the themes of their songs concerned imminent journeys, to reunite with sweethearts or to return to the beloved homestead. If they lacked the deeper feeling of some of Foster's compositions they also lacked their sadness. One obvious ground for this optimism was the removal of the shadow of slavery which had occurred at the end of Foster's life. If the personae displayed by Stratton and Elliott were, characteristically, free spirits, their freedom and mobility were things to be prized and celebrated. Audiences were attracted by their optimism and charm, and, more significantly, identified and sympathized with the sentiments and aspirations they expressed as they could never have done with those of Jim Crow. If the gradualist notion of human progress is favoured it might be argued that minstrelsy's presentation of a more 'human' image marked an important and necessary stage on the road to its eventual demise.

MINSTRELSY, RACE AND CLASS IN BRITAIN

Aside from its purely theatrical qualities, virtually none of the social considerations underlying and explaining its popularity in the United States applied when minstrelsy came to Great Britain. To begin with, here it was not quite the *common* man's culture.

The word had an added connotation in England, and the medium was favoured by the middle and lower middle classes for its perceived wholesome character. To expand upon an earlier statement, the refinements which it underwent were not so much in response to English tastes, but to English bourgeois ones. Similarly, Saxton's suggestion that the mask of minstrelsy provided an American outlet for the taboo held little validity here, firstly because the idiom's bourgeois patronage would not countenance such liberties, and secondly because of the prevalence of other outlets for such material. [127]

In England, as J.S. Bratton, asserts:

Anything an audience wanted to hear talked about was sure to be on offer somewhere . . . What the American urban worker got from the minstrel show his English counterpart could get in a music hall or saloon theatre. [128]

The proportion of blacks in the British population was tiny and actually diminishing during most of the Victorian era, and the ambivalent emotions about an African presence which so plagued the American national psyche was absent from English society. Minstrelsy was thus taken at its (black) face value, and appreciated accordingly. The sight of a blackface minstrel serenading a white cockney girl, something which might have provoked a riot in some American states, seemingly failed to raise a disapproving eyebrow among Birmingham audiences when featured in E.W. Mackney's show at the town's Music Hall in May, 1840. [129] Another British manager, Sam Hague, pioneered 'integrated' minstrel shows -- integrated to the extent that black and blackface troupes appeared on the same bill, albeit separately. All African-American minstrel troupes were likewise popular in England, notably the Haverly Coloured Minstrels who, arriving

in the summer of 1881, embarked on a highly successful year-long tour of the British Isles. The warmth with which such black performers were received, like the great popularity of the *Uncle Tom* dramatizations, was not unmixed with a certain smug, if unconscious, hypocrisy. The visit of the (white) Hutchinson Family Singers to Birmingham in March, 1846, duly recorded by Dr Langford, was one stage on a tour which lasted almost a year. The troupe were professed Abolitionists, and included in their repertoire songs of avowedly anti-slavery sentiments - sentiments that were customarily enthusiastically applauded by British audiences. But perhaps this assumption of a moral superiority was a little premature. When the Hutchinsons arrived in this country a few months earlier, only a dozen years had elapsed since the ending of slavery in the British Empire. This said, the perception of a more relaxed racial climate is underscored by the significant number of African-American performers, popular and classical, who would make their careers and homes here.

In fact, the preoccupations of the British establishment focused upon class rather than race. If Americans worried about slave conspiracies and rebellions, on this side of the Atlantic the French Revolution had cast a long shadow of apprehension which had prompted the enactment of pre-emptive restrictions and retarded social reform. Typically, the British worker now functioned in an urban context rather than an isolated rural one, and the fear of riots was a major concern for governments and town authorities. 1848 was the 'Year of Revolutions' in Europe, and though it was reflected in England only by the presentation of a Chartists' petition, unease was nonetheless refuelled. The coming of train travel sometimes promoted an unwonted intimacy between the classes, which

had led the *Saturday Review*, speaking to and for a large swathe of middle-class opinion, to enter the growing debate on the proposed extension of the suffrage, asserting that the working man would receive the vote ‘when . . . he is a well-educated, independent, thriving, moderately-worked, sweet-smelling creature’, and, by implication, not before. [130] If the theatre had a function in pouring oil on perceptively troubled waters, given that most dramatists came from the upper or middle classes it is not surprising that their proletarian characters typically exuded reassurance to British audiences as bountifully as did blackface minstrels to American ones. If Zip Coon’s attempts at sophistication could be milked for maximum laughs, so could those of English society’s *nouveaux riches*. In a 1905 editorial headed ‘Parvenu Plays’, the *Era* noted past and ongoing such instances, took to task the likes of Tom Taylor and T.W. Robertson for indulging in the practice, and added a moral.

Take, for instance, TOM TAYLOR and DUBOURG’s *New Men and Old Acres*. What did the bill say? “Bunter, a wealthy manufacturer.” That was quite sufficient! . . . We know at once the kind of man Bunter . . . would be. He would leave out his H’s, he would be grossly familiar, and he would be servilely snobbish. Coming nearer to our day, we arrive at one of ROBERTSON’s dramas - *M.P.* Here again, the idea contained in the phrase, “How dare you have money?” cropped up. The guilty person in this case was called Isaac Skoone. The amusing part of it was that, with all their affectations, the aristocratic people in these plays outdid the alleged vulgarian in vulgarity. Vavasour, sr., in *New Men and Old Acres*, sneered at Bunter brutally because he

couldn't understand a hack Latin quotation, and someone described Skoone to his face as a "ready-made -- I mean, self-made man . . ." [131]

Perhaps the parallel may be carried further. In terms of popular entertainment, working-class Britain had taken charge of its own destiny, and black America, through jazz, was on the way to doing so. The great majority of the exemplars of the music hall were sprung from the lower social orders, but in their songs and monologues they revealed themselves as perceptive, aware, witty, philosophical, and sufficiently self-confident to be jocularly indulgent and even patronizing towards their social 'betters'.

OTHER 'GENRES'

The very different careers of two Victorians made special and significant contributions to the transatlantic theatrical cross-fertilization process. In 1868 Lydia Thompson arrived in the United States from England, where she had been enjoying a popular if controversial career as an innovator of burlesque dancing. Though she had come to introduce English burlesque to America, her legacy to the audiences of her adopted country would be the creation of a distinctively American form.

Dion Boucicault, Irish-born and English-educated, was securely established as a leading writer of melodramas for the London stage when in 1853 he New York, where he would successfully spend the next seven years, and return for subsequent sojourns. *The Poor of New York*, written for American audiences, was produced there, and later translated to the English stage as *The Streets of London*. Perhaps his finest work, *The Shaugraun*, in which Boucicault also acted, was presented at Wallack's Theater in

November, 1874. Its theme, sympathetic to the Irish Fenian cause, was a popular one in New York, with its burgeoning post-Irish Famine population, but it enjoyed equal success when produced in London a few months later.

THE EROSION OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

The consummation of American independence affected little the cultural relationship of the former colonies with the Mother Country. The burgeoning cross-trafficking of talent, and sometimes genius, was productive of a tangle of motives, reactions and emotions. In the main, the relationship continued on the British side parental and patronizing, on the American deferential and even subservient, with occasional teenage-like outbursts. The visit of George Frederick Cooke in 1812 was, for Americans, of immense significance. The cultural metropolis had sent a signal that it recognized that their mushrooming towns and cities were spawning growingly sophisticated societies, and were becoming fit to be treated similarly to the provincial centres of Great Britain, but the American press read even more into the visit. The arrival of Cooke, extolled the *Mirror of Taste*,

marks not only the most brilliant era in the stage history of the United States, but holds forth to the old world incontestible [sic.] proof of the unexampled advancement of this young country in taste, refinement and literature, as well as in opulence and prosperity. [132]

Cooke's most recent biographer, Don Wilmeth writes that, among crowds, 'excitement and near insanity . . . characterized the entire tour'. Such devotion remained proof

against the unconcealed contempt in which Cooke appeared to hold America, its inhabitants and its institutions. When told that the President, James Madison, was looking forward to seeing him act, Cooke reportedly exclaimed that he would 'be damned if I play before . . . the contemptible King of the Yankee Doodles!' [133]

Perhaps Cooke had used up America's stock of unalloyed adulation. Edmund Kean did not receive the same indulgence. By stalking off stage at a seasonally thinly-filled playhouse in Boston, he rendered further performances in the town all but impossible. American resentment at perceived British pretensions to superiority exploded in 1845. Implicit claims that America could produce actors fit to occupy a stage with their British mentors were seemingly ridiculed when in that year reports reached New York that English audiences had hissed the American tragedian, Edwin Forrest. Forrest had made a successful tour of Great Britain in 1836 and returned there early in 1845. On both occasions he had received kind encouragement from William Charles Macready. On his second visit Forrest scored a marked success as *Virgilius*, a role played with distinction by both Macready and Kean, and other parts were similarly well received. But when he attempted *Macbeth* he overstretched his abilities. Physically, vocally, and stylistically he seems to have been unsuited to the role, and his audience registered its disapproval. Forrest conceived the irrational and unfounded notion that Macready, consumed with professional jealousy, had instigated the hostile reception. A few weeks later Forrest visited the Edinburgh theatre where Macready was playing Hamlet, and, standing up in his private box, volubly hissed the English actor. The act evoked hostility in the national press and undermined the generally high standing he had hitherto enjoyed with British

audiences. In letters to the press Forrest sought to vindicate his action, but the petulant manner in which he couched his arguments, if anything, retarded his case. [134] The Astor Place riots provided a sharp reminder of American sensitivities, but the pattern had only been jagged, not sundered. The episode did not alter the fundamental nature of the transatlantic relationship. The advent of oceanic steam navigation in the early 1840s significantly increased the traffic in both directions. Recalling John Howard Payne's first ground-breaking visit to England in 1814, we sense that a sea-change in the nature of subsequent visitations is under way. To be sure, like Payne, American performers come to obtain and return with a seal of approval from the land that is the very fount of their art and profession and which will forever stand them in good stead with their peers back home, but the motivation now seems to be partaking more of the practical and less of the ethereal. There seems to be a greater awareness of resultant career benefits. Protracted stays are the exception, and there is now the beginning of something almost routine about their comings and goings. Some mundane considerations are likewise influencing the calculations of British performers. While there continues to be an element of regality surrounding the American visits of the greatest practitioners, aspiring actors might be tempted to seek career-enhancement openings in a land that is famously one of opportunity, and where, moreover, the kudos of English experience and an accompanying accent might be bankable assets. The advance publicity given to Douglas Stewart (E.A. Sothern) before his appearance in Boston implied that he had enjoyed a greater prominence at Birmingham's Theatre Royal than was the case.

The prospect of pecuniary gain activated movement in both directions, and among all ranks of performers. In 1822 Charles Mathews had been lured to America by the promise

of 'secured engagements amounting to £20,000', while Macready's second (1843) Atlantic voyage, had been undertaken in part by the 'prospect of reward, perhaps the means of recovering all I have lost and adding to my gains'. (135) Fanny Kemble 'hated the very thought of America' but the need of money to improve the assailed family fortunes, and financing the best treatment for her father's failing health, persuaded her to set sail for New York in 1832. [136] The Virginia Minstrels took their new act across the Atlantic on April, 1843, but after an artistically successful but truncated tour found they 'had done considerably less in Great Britain than amassing a fortune, as they perhaps had hoped for'. [137] On the other hand, the remuneration which Buffalo Bill secured from his 1887 British 'Wild West', far exceeded his expectations. The profit motive seems to have figured strongly in James Anderson's six visits to America. Throughout his career his earnings and expenditure were carefully computed and recorded. His first tour concluded in June, 1845. Before he took passage home, Mr. Anderson 'walked down to Wall Street and bought a bill of exchange on Baring Brothers for £5000,' reserving enough, and more than he required for the homeward journey. 'No mean reward for little more than ten months' labour on the boards'. [138]

The birth of blackface minstrelsy, and even more importantly, its successful exportation to Britain, is of the greatest significance. Hitherto, America's theatrical cultural forms had been imported wholesale from the mother country, but now the tide was beginning to be turned. Perhaps the ultimate testimony to the genre's immense and prolonged popularity throughout the British Isles was given when it was imitated, refined, and, sometimes, re-exported to its homeland.

Intriguingly, the beginnings of a reversal of this procedure of imitation, re-invention and re-exportation can be identified with the arrival in London of the complete American company of *The Belle of New York* in April, 1898. George Edwardes had famously ‘invented’ musical comedy with the staging of *In Town* in 1892, and had been evolving the format in subsequent shows at his Gaiety Theatre. *The Belle of New York* bore signs of Edwardes’s influence, but

Londoners hadn’t ever seen a show quite like this and performers quite like these before and they were taken by storm. They loved all the boisterous high spirits of the piece, they loved the lusty chorines and their energetic dancing, they loved the unfamiliar American character types portrayed by the show’s comedians. [139]

If, among some New York impresarios, habits of deference to British institutions subsisted, *The Belle of New York* was an early portent of the direction in which America would steer musical comedy when it all but took over the medium for the half-century or so following the First World War. [140]

URBANIZATION AND THE TRANSATLANTIC VICTORIAN THEATRE

The coming of the ocean-going steamers in the early 1840s substantially but not entirely explains the burgeoning transatlantic theatrical trade generated in the Victorian era.

Referring briefly to the preceding chapter, it will be useful to remind ourselves that, as theatres’ need for audiences defines them as essentially an urban phenomenon, and that

in 1837 (the year of the Queen's accession) there were five provincial towns or cities in England and Wales with a population of more than 100,000, and by 1891 there were 23; during the same period the population of London doubled from some 1,900,000 to almost four and a quarter million. [141]. With wages often stretching to a weekly visit to a place of public entertainment, and a liberalizing Theatres Act on the Statute Book, the 1840s saw the start of a multiplication of playhouses and music halls which would hardly slacken until well into the next century. One obvious consequence was a great expansion of the market for the performing profession in all its forms.

The United States reproduced a remarkably similar pattern of urbanization growth. In 1800 only about 180,000 persons lived in urban settlements of 10,000 or more. By 1860 some 4.6 million did so. In the latter year only eight cities other than New York, mainly in the north-east, had populations exceeding 100,000; by 1900 there were 38. [142]

This is not to say that, in either country, a six-figure population was a prerequisite for the provision of a theatre. One north-of-England town provides a striking example of how rapidly the opening of playhouses and music halls followed urban settlement. Barrow-in-Furness, a medieval hamlet with a coastal location at the tip of the Furness peninsula in what was then a north-western enclave of Lancashire could boast, as late as 1843, no more than 32 dwellings and two public houses. [143] But around mid-century the commercial exploitation of local iron and hematite deposits was facilitated by the opening of the Furness Railway (1846). A steel-smelting works was established, followed later by a growingly important civil and naval shipbuilding industry. A large-scale immigration of workers resulted. The 1851 population of 4,684 almost quintupled

during the next decade; by 1871 it was over 40,000, and had topped 58,000 ten years later; by the end of the Queen's reign it numbered some 67,000. [144] By January, 1868, its population of around 35,000 was supporting a playhouse - the Theatre Royal - and the Alexandra Music Hall; in March, 1875, in addition to the Theatre Royal, the *Era* listed the Royal Amphitheatre, the Royal Star (music hall), and the Alhambra (playhouse). Listings for later years include the Royalty Theatre and Opera House, and the Empire (variety theatre). Around the turn of the century Barrow also acquired a Hippodrome. Meanwhile the Town Hall also functioned from time to time as an entertainment venue. (Sam Hague, a notably active participant in the Anglo-American theatrical scene, presented his Minstrels there in March, 1891.) [145] Barrow's dynamic theatrical activity is all the more remarkable given the town's relative isolation from any of the great northern conurbations, from which managers might have looked for patronage.

In American small towns (almost by definition much more isolated than their British counterparts), the opening of theatres and vaudeville houses was retarded less by the availability of potential audiences than by the practical difficulties of attracting performers. For very many such towns the situation was transformed by the coming of the railroad. Between 1850 and 1900 almost 250,000 miles of track was laid. [146]

Meanwhile the city of New York had likewise seen remarkable growth. Its 1840 population of just under a third of a million tripled within the next thirty years, topped one-and-a-half million by 1890, and in the century's last decade more than doubled again to nearly three-and-a-half million. [147] By the turn of the century it was indisputably America's pre-eminent city, a metropolitan centre of culture to rival London, and the

Mecca for the country's theatrical profession.

The great expansion of the transatlantic market for theatrical talent led, on both sides of the ocean, to more thought being given to organizing and systematizing the profession of acting. It would become increasingly unacceptable merely to learn 'on the job'. Drama training schools were founded, and competition to enter the best ones -- for example, the American Academy of Dramatic Arts (founded 1884), and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (1904) -- would in time become intense.

TRANSATLANTIC THEATRICAL TRENDS IN THE BROADER VICTORIAN CONTEXT.

The ultimate object of this chapter, and indeed of this thesis, is to investigate how the movements and trends of the greater world were reproduced in the theatrical experience, and in this instance -- the matter of the Anglo-American relationship -- the parallels are striking. By the close of the Victorian era Americans were more numerous than the inhabitants of the British Isles; the economic power of the United States was close to matching that of Great Britain, and the young nation was now leading in the field of industrial innovation; dependence on the former Mother Country for 'quality' goods was substantially diminished, and a quickening flow of American manufactured products -- notably labour-saving machinery and devices -- was penetrating British markets. And concurrent with this accretion of commercial power had been the

building of a second great metropolitan centre of English-speaking culture. If American habits of deference to English classical actors still lingered, as they do to this day, parity in vaudeville* and musical comedy was being achieved, and distinctively native brands of entertainment, like minstrelsy and wild west shows, had been successfully exported. Minstrelsy had, indeed, received the accolade of emulation and been re-exported. If America had not yet produced classical actors to compare with British exemplars, the New York musical theatre, in the hands of impresarios like Charles Frohman and Tony Pastor, was hardly inferior to its London counterpart, and soon would be lifted to new heights of spectacle and glamour by Florenz Ziegfeld, now at the threshold of his career. Matching the accelerating transatlantic interchange of produce and manufactures had been the quickening traffic of theatrical performers, now bequeathed a vast new arena to ply their trade. American actors had traditionally sought the imprimatur conferred by success in Britain. But now, increasing numbers of aspiring performers in both countries were coming to regard their careers as wanting unless and until they had carved out a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic.

Given the natural advantages of the United States over Great Britain -- its size, resources, and capacity to sustain a burgeoning population -- its growing economic dominance was inevitable. Cultural factors cannot be weighed and quantified in the same way as economic ones. Notwithstanding, scale was likewise a factor in America's

* American vaudeville was less class-based than English music hall, resembling more the 'variety' formula which succeeded it.

theatrical naissane and growth. The nation was heir not just to the traditions of the British Isles, but eventually to a multitude of national and ethnic cultures, whose constituents might be separately preserved or stirred into an identifiably 'American' distillation.

*ANGLO-AMERICAN CROSS-CULTURIZATION IN THE WIDER IMPERIAL
CONTEXT*

Over half a century ago Robinson and Gallagher published their seminal study which convincingly demonstrated that the Victorians were, in fact, reluctant imperialists.

British leaders strongly preferred influence to political possessions as a means to national prosperity and world power. For one thing, the merchant and manufacturer could usually overcome all competitors, given an open market; for another, the Treasury normally had little money to spare for more colonial activities. [148]

Budgetary considerations also influenced decisions to grant self-government to white settlements once their capacity to undertake it had been satisfactorily demonstrated.

The validity of the Robinson-Gallagher thesis is demonstrated regularly. Until the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny in 1857, British governments had been content to see the sub-continent 'run' -- for most practical purposes -- by the East India Company. Only

in its aftermath did the company lose its administrative powers, and more formal governmental structures put into operation. As late as 1906 Joseph Chamberlain's proposals to organize the Empire into a customs union were sacrificed on the altar of Free Trade, and the Liberals returned in a landslide election. It was only with changing International conditions, principally the rise in the political and industrial importance of other powers, and, notably, the experience of world war, that moves towards a more formal imperial structure gathered force. [149] If, as I suggested early in this chapter, the acting profession did indeed come late to the business of empire-building, its members were not alone in doing so. It is the informal brand of imperialism, so clearly identified by Robinson and Gallagher, that Victorian Britain's cultural/theatrical relationship with the United States closely mirrors.

POSTSCRIPT: THE 'OFFICIAL' EMPIRE

If the transformation in the speed and volume of transatlantic traffic was the most potent manifestation of steam-powered navigation, its advent dramatically improved the Mother Country's links with those farther-flung British settlements in South Africa and the Antipodes. On May 2, 1869, the intrepid James Anderson embarked in the mail steamer, *Atrato*, for Australia. He had earlier booked passage on the *Great Britain*, but a delay in its departure, which would have necessitated the cancellation of an appearance Anderson had contracted to make in Melbourne, prompted a change of plan. The route was by way of the West Indies, Panama, and New Zealand, and involved some uncomfortable overland journeys, as well as sea travel. The 16,000-mile journey took

67 days and cost Anderson £105. The voyage had indeed proved a speedier option to waiting for the *Great Britain*, but he afterwards observed that a passage in a clipper ship, with fair winds, could have been made in the same time, and at half the cost. [150]

The theatrical history of the major areas of British settlement in Canada, South Africa, and Australasia mirrors to a more limited extent the broad trends traceable in the United States. Perhaps Canada was less preoccupied with acquiring a cultural autonomy within the Empire than preserving a distinctiveness from its southern neighbour. If, before the close of the Victorian age, the United States was aspiring to national adulthood by exporting its own cultural brands back to the Mother Country, that remained a yet distant prospect for the fledgling Dominions. Perhaps Australia's very Britishness hampered the growth of a native *genre*. The effect of the eminent ambassadors of the theatrical metropolitan capitals of London and New York would prove a suffocating one, spurring emulation rather than originality. For her aspiring actors, advancement lay in the eradication of the native accent and early departure for one of those cities. Meanwhile, the country might take pride in a growing and seemingly inexplicable capacity to produce divas, and could compensate for any feelings of cultural inferiority by regularly demonstrating a superiority on the sports field. If the Dominions presented scenarios that were a long way from being fully acted out, the chosen Anglo-American model, while providing strong evidence that cultural imperialism operates with little or no regard for formal demarcations, had displayed, by the close of the Victorian era, a range of interactive trends and crosscurrents in which the former junior partner was rapidly becoming a full and equal participant.

The growing number of American performers, the frequent adoption of American themes, the apparently bankable references to British artists returning from the United States or about to depart thereto, are striking features of Birmingham playbills from the early 1840s. The town's early and vibrant involvement in the booming theatrical cross-traffic is testimony to the pervasiveness of the phenomenon. If the advent of the steamship goes far in accounting for that phenomenon, inland rail links and urbanization were essential components in its manifestation. Among those American references, the billing of unfamiliar or forgotten names tells us that the transoceanic theatrical 'trade' involved not only the great and famous, but the unglamorous clowns, hoofers, and jugglers -- evidence that transatlantic tours were becoming viable and practical options for the profession's rank-and-file.

In producing and successfully exporting two distinctively 'home-grown' entertainments -- minstrelsy, and the 'wild west' show -- America gave evidence of a growing cultural maturity. The gestation and evolution of minstrelsy, its many and often hidden ramifications, have been considered, and account taken of scholars' interpretations of the *genre*. The eventual involvement of African-Americans, and what that involvement led to, is of demonstrable significance. In minstrelsy and jazz we can decipher the seeds of a linguistic and rhythmic vocabulary that has become the *lingua franca* of modern 'pop' culture. Press reviews tell us that minstrel shows were as warmly received in Birmingham as they were in the rest of the country. They also speak of the popularity of British practitioners, who were refining and often re-exporting the American product. I suggest that audience reaction to minstrel shows speaks much of

racial and social attitudes in the United States and Britain.

I have tried to remain aware that the nineteenth-century Anglo-American theatrical intercourse operated within a growingly significant relationship where the importance of political, economic, social and diplomatic factors were increasingly acknowledged. I have suggested that the theatrical relationship in many aspects faithfully mirrored that discernible in the broader context.

CONCLUSION

Victorian Birmingham's theatres and music halls provide an appropriate focus for the major themes of this study. The town in which they had their being was justifiably dubbed 'the workshop of the world', and varying degrees of interaction with it might be expected. As the number of houses multiplied, press reports of openings and reopenings indicate keen competition among managements to exploit new technology. Moreover, the returns for industry were considerable. The special requirements of the new houses stimulated innovation in lighting, interior decoration and architecture, and seating, and, in turn, offered spectacular showcases for their display. Well before the century's close, Birmingham audiences were ensconced in well-lit, well-heated theatrical palaces, and, thanks to the introduction of the cantilever and banishment of the pillars, enjoying uninterrupted views of the stage performance.

The involvement of Birmingham's theatres with the contemporaneous revolution in transport is equally marked and vibrant. Opportunities for opening new houses following the liberalizing 1843 Theatres Act were greatly facilitated by the extending provision of transport services between town and suburbs, which, in turn, were attracting residents to hitherto semi-rural hamlets, and thus both enlarging and intensifying managements' catchment area.

Geography, as well as its mushrooming population and industrial importance, guaranteed Birmingham a focal role in the expanding national railway network. Links to the populous Black country towns helped to fill auditoria, and a determination to exploit those links to the full is seen in Mercer Simpson's introduction

of theatre excursion services in 1851. Meanwhile, by the later 1840s, the railways had established rapid connections between the town centres of Birmingham and Coventry, with a 40-minute train journey conveniently scheduled to carry visitors to and from evening performances.

For Birmingham's theatre managements, the primary significance of longer-distance rail connections lay in the greater facility it brought for engaging performers from widespread sources. London-based artists, especially the more senior ones, could be more easily and regularly enticed from the metropolis now that the hazards and inconvenience of stagecoach travel had been exchanged for a rapid journey in a comfortable train carriage. Birmingham's location at the heart of the railway network, and its good fortune to find itself roughly equidistant from London and Liverpool, the port of embarkation and disembarkation for so many performers, added to its own inherent importance, made it an obvious and regular venue for artists travelling from and to North America via the expanding steamship services.

That Victorian Birmingham's theatre patrons 'valued' contemporary achievements in technology and transportation is demonstrated in the most practical way by their attendance in seemingly ever greater numbers at the town's mushrooming number of playhouses and music halls. But a battle of values -- the kind that partakes of ethics and principle and conscience -- had been waging there since the appearance of the first playhouse. Such a contest was replicated to varying degrees in most if not all Victorian towns. In Coventry, where Anglicanism was dominant, controversy was sparked when an erstwhile Lady Godiva arrived to take the stage. But in

Birmingham the conflict assumed larger proportions. Among the Nonconformist sects and the evangelical wing of the Church of England inherent hostility towards the theatre was harboured, and in Birmingham Nonconformism, for certain sociohistorical reasons, was extraordinarily powerful and influential. From the pulpits of their crowded chapels preachers thundered against the godlessness of the playhouses and the immorality that was purveyed from their stages and fostered in their auditoria, the latter charge, at least, being substantiated by graphic London examples. Their sermons awoke echoes around the town, and Nonconformist influence was such that the granting of a licence to the New Street theatre, opened in 1774, was delayed for three-and-a-half decades. The response of managements was generally defensive, stressing the wholesome nature of the fare they were offering, attempting to price out the *hoi polloi*, and raising the social tone by instituting 'fashionable nights'. Alfred Bunn's declaration of war upon the preachers was not emulated, and the policy of conciliation was resumed after his departure. Although certain Nonconformist elements remained irreconcilable, as the century moved on the climate of hostility was becoming notably less marked. In part this is due to an expanding middle and lower middle class, whose social norms tended to accord with those of the Queen and her Consort, who, while restoring a high moral tone to the court, frequently commanded theatrical performances at Windsor Castle. It was to precisely this section of society that Mercer Simpson, who took over the Theatre Royal's management in the early 1840s, sought primarily to please, and by the implementation of a wide range of policies, including the maintenance of a well-ordered auditorium, the presentation of finely-mounted and tasteful entertainments, and the acquisition of a family patronage,

he succeeded, and such policies were continued well beyond the turn of the next century. Notwithstanding, vigilance was exercised, and the controversy engendered by perceived deviations, such as presentations of *The Beggar's Opera* and *Formosa*, might create sufficient opposition, in the form of public denunciation and press boycotts, to force curtailment.

If a large and growing section of the Birmingham public were responding favourably to Mercer Simpson's managerial policies at the Royal, that the town retained a large and influential conscience-driven constituency is evident from the controversy surrounding another by-product of the 1843 Act, the application for music hall licences. The provision of musical entertainment was viewed by them as no more than a device to lure the innocent and unsuspecting to pauperize and debilitate themselves by falling prey to the demon drink, and stringent efforts were made to mobilize public opinion against the opening of halls. The correspondence columns of the Birmingham press provide plenty of evidence of a strong temperance lobby, mirrored in governing circles. The reports of the proceedings surrounding James Day's licence application are notably revealing, as is the tiny proportion of successful applications by other halls. It is evident that the magistrates were making the strictest possible interpretation of the law governing the matter, and the few successful applications were granted with much reluctance.

The road to respectability undertaken by the halls -- from drinking dens to variety palaces -- reflects the journey followed by the Theatre Royal. Before the close of the century, their association with the consumption of alcohol was hardly closer than that of the playhouses.

But the ever-present imperative for theatre and music hall managers to habitually emphasize the inherent wholesomeness of their presentations remained, and the imperative speaks loudly of the society within which the managements functioned. Their audiences and critics were, to a very great extent, 'calling the shots'. It was the middle and lower-middle classes who were perceived as providing the greatest and most stable source of income, and *their* notions of morality, respectability and decorum which must be promoted and celebrated. Moreover, the middle class was extending in Birmingham, from its upper echelons in Edgbaston to the lower but aspiring elements in the workshops, and to the hardworking beneficiaries of the social policies of Cadburys at Bournville.

There is evidence that 'bourgeois' values were gaining currency as Victoria's reign wore on, and if by the 1890s there were signs of a more relaxed and less restricted social life, this by no means signaled a moral breakdown. Few English plays required the serious attention of the Reader; in Coventry an 1840s presentation of *The Beggar's Opera* was deemed, in the 1850s, to need sanitization; in 1894 the *Era* exulted in the triumph of moral rectitude in playhouse and music hall. Even in Birmingham, the 'war', for all but a diminishing number of irreconcilables was virtually over. The *casus bellum* had ceased to exist. The theatre and music hall managers cannot be separated from the city in which they worked and resided, and from which they drew their audiences. They were participants in the Victorian *bourgeois* society, sharers in its precepts, and upholders of its values. They would have seconded and warmly echoed the sentiments of the *Era*.

NOTES

THESIS INTRODUCTION

1. James Walvin, *Victorian Values* (London: André Deutsch, 1987), p. 3.
2. Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).
3. Jeremy Paxman, *The Victorians: Britain through the paintings of the age* (London: BBC Books, 2009).
4. A. N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003).

NOTES: I MORALITY, RESPECTABILITY AND DECORUM:

1. This passage is taken from the inordinately lengthy title page of William Prynne's *Histriomastix* (1633). It is reprinted in full in Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 83 - 84.
2. See Ben Wilson, *Decency and Disorder: the Age of Cant, 1789-1837* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), pp. 198 - 201.
3. The more obvious signs of less decorous behaviour included a fashion for brighter clothes among the young of both sexes (viz., the rash of coloured blazers and straw boaters), which followed a widely-observed convention for sober apparel according with the Queen's prolonged period of mourning for Prince Albert; the advent of the bicycle, adopted by many women as well as men, which conferred a certain feeling of freedom and independence, extended horizons, and promoted greater social intercourse; not least in the popularization of cheerful tunes pouring out of the music halls (now entering on a 'golden age'), and the new musical comedies - reflected in a rapid growth of sales of sheet music and parlour pianos. The 1850 Factory Act had incorporated statutory holidays; the Bank Holiday had been instituted in 1871, and the gradual advent of the five-and-a-half-day working week was common by the mid-1880s. A modest but steady increase in the purchasing power of wages gave many the wherewithal to indulge these new opportunities for leisure. The organization and growing popularity of spectator sports is considered in page 67 of this chapter. Further, the railway companies were awakening to the possibilities of a new 'mass market' and were offering

holiday excursions to seaside resorts where entertainment was receiving a greater priority than refinement. Blackpool's iconic tower was built in 1894. If we regard music hall songs as providing a fairly accurate commentary on the experiences and preoccupations of the working classes, the publication and popularity of 'I Do Like to be beside the Seaside' in the following decade is significant.

The fruits of the 1870 Education Act were seen in a growing appetite for literature catering for enjoyment rather than moral elevation. Periodicals and magazines catering for the perceived tastes of a variety of population groups were arriving at the station bookstalls, and a cheerful and colourful manifestation of the phenomenon was the appearance of children's comics, where a brief gestation period which saw the arrival *Ally Sloper* in 1884, *Comic Cuts* in 1890, and *Chips* in 1896, resulted in a format which would be recognizable to today's *Beano* readers.

4. Leslie Baily, *The Gilbert and Sullivan Book* (London: Spring Books, 1966, p. 414; first publ. London: Cassell, 1952, rev. ed. 1956), p. 414. When considering the importance of the role of the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan in helping to make the theatre a fit and proper place for the Victorian middle classes to visit, it is interesting to recall that Gilbert's own stage career began with the writing, for payment of £30, of a burlesque on *The Elixir of Love*, entitled *Dulcamara*, or, *The Little Duck and the Great Quack*. This was produced in London in December, 1866, and was followed by *La Vivandiere*. Gilbert seems to have been content to bide his time and conform to the contemporary conventions of burlesque. This course was to earn the later approval of Harley Granville Barker, who, in a notably perceptive article, 'Exit - Planche', published in the *London Mercury* in 1932,

wrote of these early stage pieces:

The interesting thing is that they are cut quite to conventional patterns, that the jingling dialogue is as poor, the puns as execrable as -- and often worse than -- was usual; and that there are even passages in sufficiently bad taste. The authentic Gilbert is there, nevertheless. There are two ways of developing original genius in an art. The one, and doubtless nobler, is to absorb its principles in secret and deny all expression to them till genius is full fledged. For some reason or other, however, this seldom works out well. The other plan is to serve your apprenticeship as you would to carpentering or house painting, carrying out your orders with quickness and despatch, and making the momentary best of them, such as they are. Then, when you are master of your trade, write masterpieces -- if you can! This was Shakespeare's dramatic plan, and (comparisons apart) it was Gilbert's too Cited in Baily, *ibid.*, pp. 72 – 73.

But Gilbert's enforced flirtation with 'bad taste' seems to have been mercifully brief. By Christmas, 1867, he had fulfilled a commission from E.T. Smith to write a pantomime for the Lyceum. The production received high praise from the *Era's* correspondent, and, although Gilbert does not receive personal mention, he must have drawn satisfaction and perhaps a little reflected glory from comments such as:

Burlesque has nearly beaten Pantomime out of the field, but expression and intelligent action will always command the respect and admiration of the intelligent few, if the million of a coarser taste, may fail to recognise this rare description of talent. *Era*, January 19, 1868, p. 10, col. 2.

5. In the case of *La Traviata*, this leniency was shown despite strong protests from church leaders. For a fuller discussion of contemporary religious and royal reaction, see Vera Bradsby Lawrence, *Strong on Music: the New York music scene in the days of George Templeton Strong*, vol. 3: *Reverberations, 1850 – 1856* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), pp. 712-713; J.R. Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama, 1824-1901* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 79.
6. *Era*, June 16, 1894, p. 15, col. 3.
7. American deference to British classically-trained actors has remained constant and continues to be evident not least in their ‘poaching’ for Hollywood films and , television dramas. The post-World War II London invasion of the American musical was a remarkable one. In the vanguard were the shows of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, which, beginning with *Oklahoma!* in April, 1947, occupied the stage of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, for nine years. They were packed with tuneful melodies, as were the contemporary offerings of Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Frank Loesser, and the young Lerner and Loewe. Of Britain’s composers, only Ivor Novello sustained unbroken his pre-war success, but was to die early in 1951. Nearly all of Noël Coward’s best melodies were written in the 1920s and 1930s. Vivian Ellis enjoyed a tremendous success with *Bless the Bride*, but other offerings did not attain quite the same popularity. The American musicals indicated a conscious effort to integrate the songs more closely with the dialogue and dramatic action, thus developing the narrative more naturally. Added to this was a transatlantic zest, cheer and vitality, which could not fail to appeal to a war-weary nation still enduring the privations of rationing and shortages.

The Report of the Select Committee on Theatres and Places of Entertainment, which was appointed in March, 1892, and reported three months later, is of some relevant interest. Among its finding and recommendations, it considered

that the censorship of plays has worked satisfactorily, and that it is not desirable that it should be discontinued; on the contrary, that it should be extended as far as practicable to the performances in music halls and other places of entertainment. Great Britain. Parliamentary Reports. Select Committee on Theatres and Places of Entertainment, 1892. *Report*. p. 7. (London: H.M.S.O., 1892).

It was recommended that the number of sketches in a music hall programme should be no more than three; that (by the above implication) content should be regulated, and that the duration of each sketch should be no longer than forty minutes. The *Era*'s editorial on June 11 commented at length on the Committee's deliberations, made 'after hearing the evidence which has been fully reported from time to time in our Columns'. It expressed general satisfaction with the Report, considering that it offered 'a compromise which it would be unreasonable not to accept'.

Obviously judging that a sympathetic hearing had been accorded to representations made in its columns, the journal's approval is a strong indication that it was voicing the sentiments of a majority of the profession. The editorial may be interpreted as evidence that the norms of the profession were at one with those of the larger community. It also suggested an anxiety that that profession's quiescence was necessary if the theatre's hard-won image of growing

- respectability was not to be put at risk. *Era*, June 11, 1892, p.13, cols. 2 - 3.
8. *Coventry Herald*, October 6, 1848, p. 1, col. 2.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 4, col. 4.
 10. *Ibid.*, October 13, 1848, p. 4, col. 4.
 11. *Ibid.*, October 20, 1848, p. 4, col. 4.
 12. *Ibid.*
 13. *Ibid.*, November 9, 1855. Cited in Bottle, Ted, *Coventry's Forgotten Theatre* (Westbury: Badger Press, 2004), p. 74.
 14. Stephens, *Censorship of English Drama*, p. 86.
 15. Winston S. Churchill, *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. Vol. 2: *The New World* (London: Cassell, 1956), pp. 270-271.
 16. Robert K. Dent, *The Making of Birmingham: being a history of the rise and and growth of the Midland metropolis* (Birmingham: J.L. Allday, 1894), p. 50.
 17. William Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*; with a new introduction by Christopher R. Elrington (EastArdsley: C.P. Publishing, 1976, [rpt.] ; first published 1783), p.126.
 18. Cited in Conrad Gill, *History of Birmingham*, vol.1: *Manor and Borough* (Oxford University Press, 1952), p . 79.
 19. Cited in Dent, *The Making of Modern Birmingham: being a history of the rise and growth of the Midland metropolis* (Birmingham: Allday, 1894), p. 124.
 20. Cited in John E. Cunningham, *Theatre Royal: the history of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1950), p. 20.

21. *Gazette*, June 27, 1774, p. 3, col. 1.
22. [Anon.] *A Brief History of Birmingham*, ([n.p.], 1794), p. 4.
23. Hutton, *History of Birmingham*, p. 130*. [* = irregular pagination.]
24. Great Britain. Parliamentary Reports. Historical MSS Commission, 15th Report, MSS of the Earl of Dartmouth, p. 235.
25. John Parsons, *The Doctrine of Salvation* (Birmingham: Luckman and Lessor, 1770), p. 10.
26. MSS of the Earl of Dartmouth, p. 232.
27. *Gazette*, February 17, 1777, p. 3, col. 2.
28. *Ibid.* March 31, 1777, p. 3, col. 2.
29. For examples of Boulton's attachment to the theatre both in Birmingham and elsewhere, see Shena Mason, *The Hardware Man's Daughter: Matthew Boulton and his 'dear girl'* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2005), pp. 29-30, 46, 98, 114.
30. MSS of the Earl of Dartmouth, pp. 234-235.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 232
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 235-236.
35. *Gazette*, p. 3, cols 2 – 3.
36. [Theatre Royal, Birmingham. Docket of Licence.] MS in Matthew Boulton Collection, Birmingham Central Library.
37. Hutton, *History of Birmingham*, p.121.

38. Among rumours circulating as to the identity of the culprits was one associating the incendiaries with participants in the Priestley Riots. Reacting to events in France, the rioters proclaimed their support of the Crown and Established Church, and attacked the houses of some well-known Dissenters. The theory ran that, as the Methodists had taken over two former playhouses, the Theatre Royal must likewise be associated with Methodists. Such a theory thus confirms the identity of the destroyers of the theatre as conservative rather than Dissenting forces.
39. George Raymond, *The Life and Enterprises of Robert William Elliston, Comedian* (London: Routledge, 1857), p. 249.
40. John Angell James, *The Scoffer Admonished: Two Sermons Preached at Carr's Lane Meeting House, 1794*. [Birmingham], 1794. p. 16.
41. *Bell's Life in London*, August 15, 1824,
42. *Gazette*, August 16, 1824, p. 3, col. 6. *The Hypocrite* was based on Moliere's comedy, *Tartuffe*, which had aroused controversy when first produced in 1664, and been banned by the Archbishop of Paris. In Bickerstaffe's version, *Tartuffe*, the pious fraud, is transformed into the equally hypocritical Methodist preacher, Mawworm. Bunn leaves his *audience* in no possible doubt that Mawworm is in reality a very thinly disguised John Angell James, not the least proof being his associations with Carr's Lane, which the manager causes him to proclaim.
43. Cunningham, *Theatre Royal*, p. 64.
44. Terry Slater, *A Century of Celebrating Christ: the Diocese of Birmingham*,

1905-2005 (Chichester: Phillimore, 2005), p.45.

45. Asa Briggs uses this quotation as the title of Chapter 4 in Volume 2 of his *History of Birmingham*, vol. 2. It was borrowed from the title of an article by J. Ralph, which appeared in the June, 1890, issue of *Harper's Monthly Magazine*.
46. Among the prominent Birmingham Unitarian family, the Kenricks, there certainly seems to have been a guiltless enjoyment of theatregoing, dancing, and (at least moderate) gambling. Rebecca, enjoying a sojourn in Whitchurch in 1791 writes thus to her husband at the family's home in St. Paul's Square:
- [O]n Monday we drank tea at Mrs. Eddow's and played at pope joan for a penny a dozen. [Later at the assembly room:] Fatigued as I was I could not resist the pleasure of going down two dances with Mr. Churton.
- Six years earlier, the youthful Timothy Kenrick, on a possibly first visit to the capital, had written: '[M]y first object after I came to London was to see Mrs. Siddons act, and I had the pleasure to see her in a very interesting character'. Mrs. W. Byng Kenrick, *Chronicles of a Nonconformist Family: the Kenricks of Wynne Hall, Exeter, and Birmingham* (Birmingham: Cornish, 1932), pp. 53, 60-61.

Employees' participation in music and drama was actively encouraged at Cadburys soon after the building of its 'factory in a garden' at Bournville in the 1880s, and professional performances were also sponsored. Open-air masques were presented in summer. Following the opening of Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 1913, John Drinkwater, who worked in close association with Sir

Barry Jackson, the theatre's founder, became actively involved in the presentation of drama at Bournville. In 1927 the Concert Hall was built, with modern stage facilities, dressing-rooms, a fine organ, and seating for over a thousand. Here drama and light opera was regularly presented by workers, and 'dinner-hour concerts', offering the opportunity to hear serious music, also became a regular feature.

47. R.W. Dale, *Week-Day Sermons* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895), pp. 204-209.
48. W.Y. Fullerton, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: a biography*. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920), p. 213.
49. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Autobiography, compiled from his diary, letters and records by his wife and his private secretary*, 4 vols (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897-99) p. 260. Readers of Anthony Trollope might be struck by the similarity of the sentiments espoused but more subtly expressed by Mr. Slope in his introductory sermon at Barchester Cathedral in the 1857 novel, *Barchester Towers*.

The words of our morning service, how beautiful, how apposite, how intelligible they were, when read with simple and distinct decorum! But how much of the meaning of the words was lost when they were produced with all the meretricious charms of melody. Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers* (London:Everyman's Library, 1992, p. 51; first published 1857).

Trollope makes a direct mention of Spurgeon in *The Small House at Allington*, published in serial form between 1862 and 1864, through the mouth of the failed

painter, Mr. Lupex.

. . . I never got a chance when I was young. If I could have got any big fellow, a star, you know, to let me paint his portrait when I was your age, -- such a one, let us say, as your friend Sir Raffle -- . . . Or Lord Derby, or Mr. Spurgeon. You know what I mean. If I'd got such a chance as that when I was young, I should never have been doing jobs of scene-painting at so much a square yard.

Anthony Trollope, *The Small House at Allington* (London: Everyman's Library, 1997, p. 576; first published in serial form 1862-64).

Suggestions that Spurgeon supplied one constituent of Mr. Slope's creation would be speculative, but the second passage indicates Trollope's awareness of his status in contemporary society, Lupex's mention of him in the same context as Lord Derby, who had served once as Prime Minister and would take office again in 1866, pointing to a fame enjoyed by few, perhaps, non-royal personages.

50. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*, pp. 136-137.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
52. Arthur S. Langley, *Birmingham Baptists Past and Present*. (London: Kingsgate Press, 1939), p. 243.
53. Fullerton, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, p. 124.
54. George Dawson, *Authentic Gospel: Sermons*. London: Kegan Paul, 1881), p. 105.
55. *Illustrated London News*, August 14, 1869, p. 167.
56. This account follows the chronology of events in Stephens, *Censorship of English Drama*, pp. 86 - 87. Antipathy towards sinful characters not receiving their just

desserts was a longstanding one, and can be coupled with that harboured towards the character of the charming or likeable rogue (e.g., Macheath in *The Beggar's Opera*). As Barish reminds us, such antipathy predates Christian thought. Plato's antitheatrical writings are extensive. His injunction in the *Laws* (662 b-c): 'I would inflict the heaviest penalties on anyone in the land who should dare to say that there are bad men who lead pleasant lives, or that the profitable and gainful is one thing, and the just another', might well have received a warm response from nineteenth-century Nonconformists. (Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, p. 20.) (The popularity of the *genre* of the attractive villain continues to thrive, of course, not least in Australian television soap opera.)

57. *Illustrated London News*, August 28, 1869, p. 215.
58. *Post*, December 1, 1869, p. 8, col. 3.
59. *Era*, December 5, 1869, p. 11, cols 2 – 3.
60. There is evidence that, by the last decade of the reign, distinctions were being made between dramas where such women received an appropriate comeuppance ('Mrs. Tanqueray') and where they did not ('Mrs. Warren'). Unlike Pinero's work, Shaw's play was refused a licence, and a public performance in its original form, was not permitted until 1926. But a popular view that such themes were simply 'unsuitable' for public consumption continued. A more recent example of the strength of such a view was the considerable controversy aroused by the 1960 film, *Never Take Sweets from a Stranger*, which tackled the subject of child abuse, and which one reviewer considered an 'extremely audacious film for its time'.

Radio Times Guide to Films, ed. Kilmeny Fane-Saunders, 4th ed. (London: BBC Worldwide, 2004) p. 861, col. 3.

61. *Post*, December 11, 1869, p. 1, col. 1.
62. Cited in R. Crompton Rhodes, *The Theatre Royal, Birmingham: a short history, 1774 -1924* (Birmingham: Moody, 1924), p. 31. Langford's disgust and the *Post*'s silence provide a striking endorsement of Ellen Donkin's assertion that the legitimization of women's entrée to the stage after the Restoration was a conditional one, the requirement being that they should conform to men's preconceived notions of how they should appear and behave.

The woman in representation functions as object to the [male] subject gaze, [thereby reinforcing] an old set of power relations even as it *appeared* to give women a new place in representation. Ellen Donkin, 'Mrs. Siddons Looks Back in Anger: feminist historiography for eighteenth-century British theatre', in Janielle G. and Joseph R. Reinelt *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992), pp. 276-290.

Dr. Langford was likewise castigating of women minstrels, and duly notes the 'one occasion, which we rejoice to say was the only one, [when] a corps of female Ethiopians . . . performed in the Town Hall'. John Alfred Langford, *Modern Birmingham and its Institutions: a chronology of local events from 1841 to 1871*, 2 vols (Birmingham: Osborne, 1873), vol. 1, p. 172.

The situation would not materially change until late in the century. Meanwhile, male expectations of conformity extended beyond the footlights. On February 5, 1860, in a long article headed 'The DEMORALIZATION OF THE DRAMA', the

Era's vehement condemnation was visited upon the 'double dealing and radically vicious' . . . 'custom, which . . . has become a practice in every theatre in London'.

The practice referred to was that of actresses retaining their maiden names after marriage. *Era*, February 5, 1860, p. 9, cols 3-4.

63. Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, "'Wistful Remembrances": the historiographical problem of Macqueen-Popery', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 4 (November 2001), p. 304.
64. *Gazette*, October 8, 1838, p. 3, col. 2.
65. Douglas A. Reid, 'Popular Theatre in Victorian Birmingham', in David Bradby, et al., ed., *Performance and Politics in Popular Drama: aspects of popular entertainment in theatre, film and television 1800 – 1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 74.
66. See p. 59 for instances of theatre misbehaviour in Coventry. The degree of mayhem perpetrated at the Glasgow Empire has passed into folklore, and up until the time of its closure in the 1960s maintained its reputation as the 'graveyard of English comedians'. Many provincial theatres and music halls 'enjoyed' a reputation as unruly houses, but many accounts belong to the realm of oral history. However, it is a matter of historical record that misbehaviour culminated in serious riots at one such -- the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, in 1820 and 1824. Disturbances at Bristol's Theatre Royal seem to have been fairly consistent. On at least one occasion in the 1860s Fenian activity seems to have been the cause. During the same decade a 'commonplace excuse for the failure of the Box audience to support . . . better class productions was that they were deterred by the behaviour

of the gallery . . . “which is a regular nuisance to the respectable and paying portion of the audience”’. Macready himself was not exempt from such behaviour. In 1847, ‘during his performance as Lear, a party of young officers in one of the stage boxes smuggled in their black terrier and tried to make it bark at Macready in his best scenes. Complaints about smoking and throwing away live matches continued, and so did occasional rowdyism; one galleryite threw a bottle into the Pit and injured a lady’s arm, and “strange to say, although Mr. Artaud, the stage manager, immediately came forward and offered a reward of £5 for the apprehension of the unmanly ruffian, the delinquent was allowed to escape”’. Cited in Kathleen Barker, *The Theatre Royal, Bristol: two centuries of stage history* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1974), p. 166; “A.H.F.” in *Western Daily Press*, March 18, 1863, cited in Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 155; *Bristol Gazette*, November 11, 1852, cited in Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127.

67. *Gazette*, August 25, 1788, p. 3, col. 3.
68. *Ibid.*, August 2, 1790, p. 3, col. 4.
69. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. Playbill Collection, [early August, 1805].
70. A culprit appears to have been apprehended, and another public apology obtained. Theatre Royal, Birmingham, *Playbills*, August 1, 1814.
71. *Theatrical Looker-On*, October 21, 1822, p. 87.
72. Cunningham, *Theatre Royal: the history of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1950), p. 37.
73. *Theatrical Looker-On*, October 28, 1822, p. 93.
74. *Ibid.*

75. Pemberton identifies him as ‘Mr. C. R. Cope, a member of the family that through succeeding generations has taken interest in the intellectual and artistic sides of Birmingham life’. (T. Edgar Pemberton, *Theatre Royal, Birmingham* (Birmingham: Cornish, 1901), p. 22.)
76. *Theatrical Looker-On*, June 10, 1822, p. 10.
77. *Ibid.*, October 21, 1822, p. 90.
78. *Ibid.*, July 15, 1822, p. 31. *Theatrical Looker-On*’s sentiments regarding the character of the pit and its patrons are warmly echoed some sixty-five years later in an *Era* editorial. The demise of both pit and gallery was then hastening, but the question of the possible restoration of the pit at London’s Haymarket Theatre had arisen, and prompted the following observations

It is a mistake to suppose that the distinctive character of the pit can be maintained after its *locale* is removed to another part of the house. Like plants which lose their best qualities when set in uncongenial soil, the pit cannot with impunity be banished to another region of the auditorium. There is an ill-at-ease, *parvenu* air about these elevated pits which must strike every playgoer who visits the theatres at which they exist. The balance of taste seems somehow to have been destroyed. The audience is no longer a “representative” one. There is a want of heartiness, a lack of freedom of action about the denizens of these transported pits. They have not that confidence in themselves, that courage of their opinions which distinguishes the ground-floor pitees. All this cannot but re-act upon the performers, the performance, and the enjoyment of the remainder of the audience . . . Take but the pit

away, and discord and dulness [sic.] immediately follow . . . *Era*, June 18, 1887, p. 10, c. 3-4.

79. *Ibid.* September 9, 1822, p. 64.

80. *Ibid.*, June 3, 1822, p. 6. The reference by ‘Looker-On’ to ‘a determined John Bull spirit’ in the gallery may not have been entirely cynical - witness Ben Wilson’s assessment of early nineteenth-century audiences.

Contemtuuous of authority, quick to repay a perceived insult, defensive of their pleasures, inventive, amusing and eccentric, those who joined the crowds at the theatre believed they were the representatives of John Bull, the true custodians of the national character . . . Their ranks were made up of people who prized their individuality, laughed at conformity and expressed themselves with plain words. Or, at least that’s the point they were eager to press home. The swagger of the crowds . . . remains impressive two hundred years later.

Wilson, *Decency and Disorder*, p. 211.

81. *Theatrical Looker-On*, October 28, 1822, p. 91.

82. Christopher Murray, *Robert William Elliston, Manager*. (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1975), pp. 4, 144. Alfred Bunn contended that Elliston knew as much of the stage, ‘its capabilities, and its necessities, as any man that ever crossed it . . . He was delightful as a man, mercurial as a comedian, and amazingly pushy as a manager.’ Bunn, Alfred, *The Stage, Both before and behind the Curtain*, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1840), vol. 1, p. 19. Charles Lamb famously said of him: ‘Wherever Elliston walked, sate, or stood still, there was the theatre’. Cited in Cunningham, *Theatre Royal*, p. 28; Murray,

Robert William Elliston, p. 4.

83. *Gazette*, May 24, 1813, p. 3, col. 2; June 14, 1813, p. 3, col. 2.
84. Langford, *A Century of Birmingham Life, or, a chronicle of local events from 1741 to 1841*, comp. and ed. John Alfred Langford, 2 vols (Birmingham: Osborne Marshall; London: Simpkin, 1868), p. 378.
85. George Raymond, *The Life and Enterprises of Robert William Elliston, Comedian*. (London: Routledge, 1857), p. 239.
86. *Ibid.*, pp. 239-241.
87. Murray, *Robert William Elliston*, p. 79.
88. Among his peers Bunn seems to have enjoyed little popularity. William Charles Macready had been at school with him, and probably knew him as well as anyone. His opinion of him, unflattering as it was, must then carry weight. A diary entry in 1835 notes that he ‘was, is, and will be a beast to the last days of his disgusting existence’. William Charles Macready, *The Journal of William Charles Macready, 1832-1851*, abr. and ed. J.C. Trewin (London: Longmans, 1967), p. 48. Later, Macready writes: ‘Mr. Bunn is such a blackguard, and so out of the pale of respectability, that I have resolved to have no more dealings with him’. Cited in J.C. Trewin, *Mr. Macready: a Nineteenth-Century Tragedian and his Theatre* (London: Harrap, [1955]), p. 97. Bunn was, in general, well aware of such opinions of him, and wrote the following rejoinder: ‘[W]ith abundant knowledge of the private histories of all I had to deal with, I should take an opportunity of paying back the unblushing falsehoods, and countless calumnies, many of them have from time to time heaped upon me’. [Nonetheless,

he refrains from doing so.] Bunn, *The Stage*, vol. 1, p. v.

89. Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience: London theatregoing 1840-1880* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), pp. 97 - 136.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
91. *Ibid.*, p.108.
92. Cunningham, *Theatre Royal*, p. 46.
93. Davis and Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience*, p. 119.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
95. Jim Davis, 'Boxing Day', in Tracy Davis and Peter Holland, ed, *The Performing Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 13 - 31.
96. Mercer Simpson was not the first manager to exploit this asset. The *Gazette* issue for August 9, 1824 reported:

The Shakespeare Rooms are daily filled with company to view the representation of *Belthasar's Feast*, and the fine painting of *Joshua* by Mr. Martin. The extraordinary combination of talent displayed in these splendid performances excites universal admiration, and justly entitles them to the patronage of the public. *Gazette*, August 9, 1824), p. 5, col. 2.
97. Davis and Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience*, p. 113.
98. Census Returns 1841- 1891 in Microform: directory of local holdings in Great Britain.
99. D. Cannadine, *Lords and Landlords: the aristocracy of the towns, 1774-1967*; part 2: *The Calthorpes and Birmingham* (Leicester: Leicester University Press), p. 82.

100. Cunningham, *Theatre Royal*, p. 35.
101. E. Lawrence Levy, *Birmingham Theatrical Reminiscences: Jubilee recollections* (Birmingham: Hammond, [1920]), p. 4.
102. Theatre Royal, Birmingham, Programme Collection. Ted Bottle writes of early experiments in the demarcation and upgrading of pit accommodation at Coventry's Theatre Royal. It seems not unlikely that such developments at some other theatres followed a broadly similar course.

Sims Reeves, the celebrated tenor, visited Coventry several times during the 1850s. Box tickets for his musical evening on 4th November 1853, were in such demand that the management abolished the 'pit' and annexed the ground floor accommodation to the respectable dress circle, calling the new area 'stalls' and taking the opportunity to increase the prices at the same time. The normal seating of 200 people on wooden benches was reduced to 144 reserved cushioned seats and, to prevent confusion, they were numbered. Pit benches were never numbered . . . Entrance to the new stalls (the old pit) on this occasion, was through the dress circle of boxes. Since the pit floor rose almost to box level it would have been a simple matter to remove a front panel and create a gateway with a few short steps to connect the two . . . It was more usual, later in the century, to bisect the ground floor into stalls at the front with chairs, and the pit behind with benches, and to separate the two with a wooden barrier. The ratio of stalls/pit accommodation could be varied by . . . moving the barrier either forwards or backwards . . . Bottle, *Coventry's Forgotten Theatre*, pp. 67 - 68.

103. *Coventry Herald*, October 11, 1856. Coventry History Newspaper Cuttings Collection, History Centre, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry.
104. *West Bromwich Echo*, September 6, 1879. Cited in Bennett, W.B., *West Bromwich Theatre Royal* ([n.p.] Published by author, [n.d.]), p.16.
105. *Coventry Herald*, March 31, 1854. Cited in Bottle, *Coventry's Forgotten Theatre*, p. 71.
106. *Ibid.*, August 8, 1856. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 77.
107. *Newspaper Cuttings relating to Birmingham. Local Sketches (Miscellaneous)*, vol. 1, 1863 – 73, p. 132. Birmingham Central Library.
108. *Era*, February 2, 1889, p. 11, col. 5.
109. Adcock notes that the Prince of Wales had been purchased in 1866 by Rodgers ‘who, unable to take up his duties here, had leased it for a while to a woman calling herself Mrs. Macready . . . [She] . . . became so attached to the theatre, she was disinclined to give it up’. Rodgers recorded his own account of what occurred when he attempted to take possession.

I went down to the theatre . . . and found the stage door guarded by the husband of Mrs. Macready and a gang of the very vilest Birmingham roughs, armed with cudgels, and in some cases with axes. I made a rush at them, covering my face with my arms, forced my way through, got at the principal, exclaiming ‘You scoundrel!’ and pummelled him about the face as hard as I could. The rest, seeing that their leader was getting the worst of it, bolted in all directions, and I was left in sole possession and able at last to enter on my property. [C.S. Adcock], *Fifty Years' Memoirs of the Prince of Wales*,

Birmingham (Birmingham, [n.p.], 1911), p. 8.

110. Arthur Mursell, 'The Stage, the Pulpit, and the People.' An address delivered in the Prince of Wales Theatre, Birmingham, on Hospital Sunday, October 28th 1883, in aid of the General Hospital (Birmingham: Houghton, 1883).
111. Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, pp. 37 - 38.
112. For a discussion of Miller's philosophy and work, see Douglas A. Reid, *Labour, Leisure and Politics in Birmingham, ca. 1800-1875*. [Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1985], pp. 102 - 113.
113. *Gazette*, September 1, 1861, p. 6, col. 4.
114. *Ibid.*, August 23, 1862, p. 6, col. 6.
115. *Ibid.*, August 16, 1862, p. 5, col. 5.
116. *Ibid.*, August 5, 1862, p. 5, col. 5.
117. *Miscellaneous Newspaper Cuttings relating to Birmingham c1860 - 65*, p. 8.
118. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
120. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 14
122. *Post*, August 20, 1862, p. 3, col. 1.
123. *Ibid.*, August 29, 1862, p. 3, col. 1.
124. By the 1860s Birmingham Liberals had constructed an outstandingly efficient party machine, essential to the passage and implementation of the reforms associated with the 'Civic Gospel'. After the franchise extension of 1867 Birmingham was allocated three Members of Parliament, all the seats being won

by Liberals, and with large majorities. Asa Briggs records:

So great was the extent of the triumph that in the autumn of 1868, Birmingham Liberals were circulating to many of their friends and opponents a black-edged card announcing that the mortal remains of 'OLD TORYISM' would be consigned to their last resting-place on Tuesday, 17 November. 'A man that is born a Tory hath but a short time to live, and is full of Humbug: he springeth up like a fungus, and withereth like a cauliflower; and is seen no more . . . ' Asa Briggs, *History of Birmingham*, vol. 2: *Borough and City 1865-1938* (London: O.U.P., 1952), p. 167.

125. *Miscellaneous Newspaper Cuttings relating to Birmingham*, p. 9.
126. These observations were made before the 2010 General Election and the consequent participation of the Liberal Democrats in the Coalition Government. At least during the first six months of the administration the question of temperance in music halls or elsewhere has not proved to be an overriding priority.
127. *Post*, August 30, 1862, p. 3, cols 2 - 3.
128. *Miscellaneous Newspaper Cuttings relating to Birmingham*, p. 26.
129. Holder's Grand Concert Hall. Programme [1867]. Birmingham Central Library, access no. 507183.
130. *Era*, November 6, 1897, p. 18, col. 4.
131. The Gaiety, Birmingham, Playbill Collection, Birmingham Central Library.
132. *Miscellaneous Newspaper cuttings relating to Birmingham*, pp. 3 - 4.
133. Day's Crystal Palace Concert Hall. Programme [186?], Birmingham Central Library, access no. 260536.

134. *Era*, May 5, 1894, p. 16, col. 3.
135. Derek Salberg, *Ring Down the Curtain: a Fascinating Record of Birmingham Theatres and Contemporary Life through Three Centuries* (Luton: Cortney Publications, 1980), p. 185.
136. *Birmingham Amusements*, May 14, 1894.
137. *Era*, April 19, 1890, p. 13, col. 3.
138. *Birmingham Amusements*, May 7, 1894.
139. *Ibid.*, September 25, 1893. The promenade, as the name suggests, was an open area, usually at the rear of the seating accommodation, where patrons might reconnoitre with friends and acquaintances. It was a venue not infrequently favoured by ladies of the town, and its elimination from music halls might thus be regarded, in part, as another attempt to sunder alleged associations with immorality. In the case of Birmingham's New Empire, the change was particularly well-timed, as events in London, would soon show. The Empire Theatre of Varieties in Leicester Square, managed at this time by George Edwardes, had been designed in the French Renaissance style and opened a decade earlier. Luxurious and fashionable, it boasted two promenades. Both were extensive, but

Far more prominent, and more compelling of attention, was the second-tier promenade. Here, along an 'ample space' approached directly from the 'strikingly beautiful' entrance hall and vestibule by way of the grand staircase, some three hundred persons could stand, or walk up and down, with 'an entirely uninterrupted view of the stage'. Cited in Joseph Donohue, *Fantasies of Empire: the Empire Theatre and the Licensing*

Crisis of 1894 (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), p. 41. Cited remarks taken from the Empire, Leicester Square, programme for April 17, 1894.

In October, the Empire's 'routine' licence renewal application would be challenged by Mrs. Ormiston Chant and colleagues from the National Vigilance Association, whose charges that the promenade was a venue for regular and extensive soliciting were upheld by the Theatres and Music Halls Committee of the London County Council. As a consequence Edwardes was forced to close the promenade, and it was later converted to a seating area. Controversy - often bitter - surrounded the episode. (See *ibid.* for a full discussion.) The Birmingham Empire's decision to dispense with a promenade may thus have pre-empted its being overtaken by a similar scandal.

140. *Birmingham Amusements*, June 11, June 25, 1894.

141. *Ibid.*, March 12, 1894.

142. *Ibid.*, August 3, 1903.

143. An important inducement was the high fees and salaries which the leading halls were able to offer to opera singers, and also to actors thereby tempted to develop musical talents. (See *Miscellaneous Newspaper Cuttings relating to Birmingham c1860 - 65*, p. 2.)

144. *Era*, January 12, 1889, p. 15, c. 1.

145. The *Era*'s correspondent reported that Randall had returned 'to the scene of his first triumph achieved two years ago'. (*Ibid.*, December 31, 1887.)

146. *Ibid.*

147. *Ibid.*, January 3, 1869, p. 11, col. 1.

148. *Mail*, August 8, 1900, p. 1, col. 1.
149. *Era*, September 1, 1900, p. 20, col. 1.
150. *Mail*, September 29, 1900. p. 1, col. 1.
151. Dagmar Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 68.
152. *Era*, June 2, 1894.
153. One measure of the esteem in which Day was held by his peers was their commissioning and presentation of his portrait. The unveiling ceremony took place on January 12, 1872. See *Birmingham Biographies*, vol. 1, part 1, 1872 - 1875. Birmingham Central Library.
154. *Miscellaneous Newspaper Cuttings relating to Birmingham c.1860 - 1865*, p. 20.

NOTES: II TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND THE
REVOLUTION IN MOBILITY

1. Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 2 vols ([London]: Heron, 1968), vol.1, p. 346.
2. H.P. White, *A Regional History of the Railways*, 4th ed., vol. 2, *Southern England* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982), pp. 99-100, 109, 119, 126, 184; *Bradshaw's Monthly Railway Guide*, September, 1844, February 1849.
3. James R. Anderson, *An Actor's Life*. (London: Walter Scott, 1902), pp. 33-34.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 46
5. Charles Mathews, *The Life of Charles Mathews, chiefly autobiographical*, ed. Charles Dickens, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1879), vol. 1, pp. 237-239.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
7. Dickens, *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, ed. by "Boz", a new edition with notes and additions by Charles Whitehead. (London: Routledge, 1853; p. 190; first publ. 1838). In a footnote to his revised version of the same work, Richard Findlater suggests that Grimaldi had received earlier notice of the engagement offer. However, this is unlikely to have affected M'Cready's response and the consequences attendant upon the journey to London. (Charles Dickens, *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, revised version, ed. Richard Findlater London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1968), p. 190)
8. George Raymond, *The Life and Enterprises of Robert William Elliston, Comedian* (London: Routledge, 1857), pp. 255-56.
9. W. Dunlap, *Memoirs of George Frederick Cooke, Esq., Late of the Theatre Royal*,

- Covent Garden*. 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1813), vol. 1, p. 72.
10. William Hutton, *An History of Birmingham*, with a new introduction by Christopher R. Elrington. (East Ardsley: C.P. Publishing, 1976; first publ. 1783), p. 130* (irregular pagination).
 11. Robert K. Dent, *Old and New Birmingham*, 3 vols (East Ardsley: E.P. Publishing, 1972-73; first published in instalments 1878-80), vol. 2, p. 348.
 12. Birmingham. Street Commissioners. *Minutes of Meeting, July 20, 1801*
 13. *Ibid.* *Bye-laws, Rules and Orders for Licensing, March 25, 1803*
 14. The price of a gallery seat was, in fact, halved from one shilling to sixpence soon after Mercer Simpson's assumption of full management in 1844. (See p. 54.)
 15. Alec G. Jenson, *Birmingham Transport: a History of Public Road Transport in The Birmingham Area*. ([Birmingham]: Birmingham Transport Historical Group, 1978), p. 11.
 16. *Bell's Life in London*, May 18, 1834, p. 2, col. 4.
 17. Jenson, *Birmingham Transport*, p. 28.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
 20. Birmingham. Public Works Committee. *Report, October, 1884*.
 21. Fares increased during the First World War and its aftermath, but reductions took place in the later 1920s. 'The final reduction came in 1931 when a 5d maximum workmen's return fare was instituted. The workmen's return fare thus became the same as the ordinary single over the 5d stage, affording on the Rednal route 16 ½ miles of travel - probably Birmingham's cheapest ever tram fare'. P.L.Hardy

- and P. Jaques, *A Short Review of Birmingham Corporation Tramways* (Reading: H.J. Publications), p. 43.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
 23. This reform did not occur until 1872.
 24. Rex Christiansen, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain*, vol. 7: *The West Midlands* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973), p. 17.
 25. *Bradshaw's Monthly Railway Guide*, February 1849.
 26. Theatre Royal, Birmingham, Playbill Collection, March 27, 1851.
 27. See, for example, playbills for June 13, 1856, January 2, 1861, February 24, 1862.
Such information begins to disappear from playbills after the early 1860s, possibly because normal services were operating anyway at these approximate times. (*Ibid.*)
 28. Terry Slater, *Edgbaston: a history* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2007), p. 69.
 29. Donald Smith and Derek Harrison, *Harborne Express*. (Studley: Brewin Books, 1995), p. 5.
 30. Slater, *Edgbaston*, p. 73.
 31. Great Britain. Patent Office. Patent no.1,425.
 32. Cited in Terence Rees, *Theatre Lighting in the Age of Gas* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1978), p. 57.
 33. Theatre Royal, Birmingham, Proprietors. *Minutes of Meeting*, September 20, 1809.
 34. *Ibid.*, March 28, 1812.
 35. John E. Cunningham, *Theatre Royal: the history of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham*. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1950), p. 30.
 36. Rees, *Theatre Lighting in the Age of Gas*, pp. 16 - 17.

37. *Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 1967, rpt. 1972), pp. 564 – 65. In the 4th edition, published in 1983, it is merely stated that '[A]ll the major cities of Britain had gas supplies by 1825'.
Oxford Companion to the Theatre, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 4th edn 1983), p. 488.
38. Birmingham Corporation. Gas Committee. *Gaslight Agreements 1819-20*, p. 370
39. Printed on back of playbills advertising programme for May 24, 27 and 28, 1819.
Theatre Royal, Birmingham. Playbill Collection, Birmingham Central Library.
40. *Gazette*, April 26, p. 3, col. 6; May 3, p. 3, col. 6; May 10, p. 3, col. 6; May 17, p. 3, col. 6; May 24, p. 3, col. 6, 1819.
41. The *Gazette*'s report of the burning of the theatre mentions several ways in which the fire may have originated, but there is no suggestion that it was caused by a gas fault.
Gazette, January 10, 1820, p. 3, cols 1-2.
42. Frederick Penzel, *Theatre Lighting before Electricity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), p. 31; Rees, *Theatre Lighting in the Age of Gas*, p. 16.
43. Birmingham Corporation. Gas Committee. *Gaslight Agreements, 1819-20*, p. 376.
44. See handwritten notes on back of Birmingham Corporation. Gas Committee.
Gaslight Agreements 1819-20, p. 370.
45. *Gazette*, August 7, 1820, p. 3, col. 2.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Theatrical Looker-On*, May 19, 1823.
48. Christopher Baugh, *Theatre, Performance and Technology: the Development of Scenography in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005),

- p. 3.
49. Bram Stoker, 'Irving and Stage Lighting', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, vol. 70 (May, 1911), pp. 903-912.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 907.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 910.
 52. *Ibid.*, pp. 910-11.
 53. Baugh, *Theatre, Performance and Technology*, p. 25.
 54. Stoker, 'Irving and Stage Lighting', p. 911.
 55. *Era*, March 9, 1879, p. 6, c. 2.
 56. *The Iron Chest*, Theatre Royal, Birmingham, Prompt Books Collection, Birmingham Central Library.
 57. *The Prophet*, *ibid.*
 58. *The Dead Guest*, *ibid.*
 59. *L'Assommoir*, *ibid.*
 60. *Ben-My-Chree*, *ibid.*; Southern, Richard, *The Victorian Theatre: a pictorial survey* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1970), p. 62
 61. Theatre Royal, Birmingham, Programme Collection, Birmingham Central Library, January 28, 1852; January 11-12, 1858.
 62. *Ibid.*, April 5, 1888; *Robert le Diable*, by Meyerbeer, had its first production at the Paris Opera in 1831. It was staged at Drury Lane the following year.
 63. *Era*, January 3, 1869, p.11, c.1.
 64. *Ibid.*, January 3, 1885, p.14, c.1.
 65. *Ibid.*, December 31, 1898, p.16, c.1.

66. *Gazette*, December 12, 1876, p. 5, c. 2.
67. Michael Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 64.
68. *Era*, October 8, 1898, p. 17, c. 2-3
69. Sheridan Morley, *A Talent to Amuse: a Biography of Noël Coward* (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 156.
70. Printed on back of playbills advertising programme for May 24, 27 and 28, 1819.
71. *Theatrical Looker-On*, June 3, 1822, p. 7.
72. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. Proprietors. *Minutes*, January 24, 1814.
73. Brunton to Elliston, May 18, 1815. Collection of letters from John Brunton and John Ashley to R.W.Elliston, May - July, 1815, Hoblitzelle Theatre Arts Library, University of Texas at Austin.; cited in Murray, Christopher, *Robert William Elliston, Manager* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1975), p. 74. Brunton was to leave the Theatre Royal approximately a year later.
74. Warwickshire Photographic Survey. (WPS B11) Theatre Royal, Birmingham. Lantern slide collection, Birmingham Central Library. Several of these are reproduced in Baird, Patrick, *Birmingham Theatres and Entertainment* (Stroud: Tempus, 2008), and Southern, *Victorian Theatre*. The views referred to appear in pp. 58 and 62 of the latter.
75. *Era*, November 17, 1883, p. 4, c.1
76. Stoker, 'Irving and Stage Lighting', p. 905
77. The actress, Mrs. Jordan, was appearing frequently at Drury Lane around this time, and witnessed at least one of Carlo's performances. Her early biographer, James

Boaden, writes:

The maternal feelings of the house had never been before at so high a *pressure*; the boiler was almost bursting -- for here was really danger -- real water, a real dog, a real splash . . . (James Boaden, *The Life of Mrs. Jordan, including Original Correspondence*, 2 vols. (London: Edward Bull, 1831), vol. 2, p. 157; reprinted in Stone, Sharon, ed. *Women's Theatrical Memoirs*, 3 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002).

78. *Caravan*, Prompt Books collection, Birmingham Central Library.
79. Brunton to Elliston, [May?] 1815, *op. cit.*
80. Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, p. 63.
81. *Harlequin Horner*, Prompt Books collection, Birmingham Central Library.
82. *Theatrical Looker-On*, June 17, 1822, p. 13.
83. John Alfred Langford, *A Century of Birmingham Life, or, a chronicle of local events from 1741 to 1841*, comp. and ed. John Alfred Langford, 2 vols (Birmingham: Osborne Marshall; London: Simpkin, 1868), vol. 1, p. 496.
84. *Gazette*, April 4, 1853, p. 3, c. 2.
85. *Ibid.*, December 27, 1876, p. 5, c. 2-3.
86. *Era*, April 7, 1894, p. 17, c. 2.
87. Notwithstanding, in 1886 the Standard, in London's East End, had installed a huge water-tank, which was used in succeeding years for a variety of sensational aquadramatic effects. See Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, pp. 68-69.
88. Great Britain. Patent Office. Patent no. 326, February 5, 1863: Terence Rees and David Wilmore, ed., *British Theatrical Patents 1801-1900* (London: Society

- for Theatre Research), pp. 9-10.
89. Theatre Royal, Birmingham, *Playbills*, September 14, 1863.
 90. *Gazette*, September 15, 1863, p. 4, c. 6.
 91. *Ibid.*
 92. *Ibid.*
 93. Great Britain. Patent Office. Patent no. 2080; August 29, 1860; Rees and Wilmore, ed., *British Theatrical Patents*, p. 7.
 94. *Ibid.*, Patent no. 4407; March 2, 1894; Rees and Wilmore, ed., *ibid.*, p. 108
 95. A.R. Dean & Co., *Catalogue* [c1907].
 96. *Era*, March 4, 1899, p. 8, c. 2.
 97. *Ibid.*, April 22, 1899, p. 7, c. 4-5.
 98. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1898, p. 8, c. 3 .
 99. *Ibid.*, April 22, 1899, p. 7, c. 4-5; Great Britain. Patent Office. Patent no. 3072, February 11, 1899; Rees and Wilmore, ed., *British Theatrical Patents*, p. 142.
 100. *Era*, November 17, 1883, p. 4, c.1.
 101. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1894, p. 16, c. 4.
 102. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1904, p. 3, c. 4-5.
 103. Edwin Showell & Sons, *Catalogue* [c1911].
 104. Cited in Leslie Baily, *The Gilbert and Sullivan Book* (London: Spring Books, 1966, pp. 214-215; first publ. London: Cassell, 1952, rev. ed. 1956).
 105. *Ibid.*
 106. *Ibid.*
 107. *Era*, October 15, 1881, p. 7, c. 2.

108. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. *Playbills*, December 1, 1879.
109. *Era*, November 14, 1883, p. 4., c.1.
110. *Era*, October 15, 1881, p. 7, c. 2.
111. Bram Stoker, *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1906), pp. 302-03.
112. Ellen Terry, *Ellen Terry's Memoirs*, ed. Edith Craig and Christopher St. John. (London: Gollancz, 1933), p. 134.
113. *Era*, May 5, 1894, p. 16, c. 4.
114. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1894, p. 11, c. 1.
115. Theatre Royal, Birmingham, *Programmes*, June 14, 1897, *et seq.*
116. *Era*, October 8, 1898, p. 17, c. 2-3.
117. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1894, p. 17, c. 2.
118. *Ibid.*, December 24, 1881, p. 7, c. 4.
119. *Ibid.*, June 6, 1891, p. 18, c. 1-2.
120. This demonstration is referred to by Ted Bottle, who has described another 'broadcast' in which Coventry's Empire Theatre (formerly the Theatre Royal) participated in August, 1893. Bottle, Ted, *Coventry's Forgotten Theatre* (Westbury: Badger Press, 2004), pp. 1-2.
120. Cited in Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, pp. 2-3.
121. *Era*, July 24, 1897, p.14, c. 3.
122. Baugh, *Theatre, Performance and Technology*, pp. 31-32.
123. *Era*, May 10, 1902, p. 33, c. 1-2.

124. *Ibid.*, October 8, 1881, p. 3, c. 4.

NOTES: III EXPANSION OVERSEAS

1. Two matters are touched upon here -- the formality and the consciousness of Empire, and they will be considered more fully later in the chapter. Disraeli was foremost in the promotion of the grandeur and romance of empire. The 1876 Act proclaiming Victoria as Empress of India typifies his attitude. Much else remained mere aspiration due to the diversion of his attention to European matters. For a résumé of the Empire's entry into popular culture, see John M. Macenzie, 'The Popular Culture of Empire in Britain', in Judith M. Brown, and William Roger Louis, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), vol. 4, pp.212-231.
2. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. Playbill Collection, June 22, 1796.
3. *Ibid.*, August 4, 10, 1803.
4. Irving's biographer notes that during his years of residence in England 'he found recreation almost daily, in painting, music, and the drama', and that 'he stole off for days at Birmingham, or to London for brave evenings at the theater'. Stanley T. Williams, *The Life of Washington Irving*, 2 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935), Note 42, p. 420; p. 151. Irving was a friend of the young American actor, John Howard Payne. Though he was not resident in Birmingham at the time of Payne's first visit to the Theatre Royal in 1813, it is quite likely that he was when the actor returned to appear again at the town's playhouse five years later. In that case it seems highly probable that Irving would have witnessed one or both of the roles Payne then played. (See pp.187-188.)
5. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. *Playbills*, July 9, 1813.

6. John Howard Payne was born in 1791, probably in New York City. Demonstrating a reportedly precocious talent, at the age of seventeen he made his professional stage debut in the title role of *Young Norval*, appearing in Boston, New York, and then on tour, gaining both critical acclaim and commercial success. When George Frederick Cooke visited New York, Payne played with him in *King Lear* at the Park Theatre. He was 'taken up' by the great English actor, who encouraged him to further his career across the Atlantic. Payne sailed for England in February, 1813. As hostilities had broken out between Britain and the United States the year before, the authorities detained him at Liverpool for two weeks pending an examination of his travel documents. He made his London stage debut in June as Norval in *The Tragedy of Douglas*, and was warmly received by audiences at both Drury Lane and Covent Garden. His London sojourn also included a successful appearance as Romeo. Engagements at Birmingham, Liverpool, and other provincial towns followed. Payne also tried his hand at writing, and utilized his linguistic skills to translate French plays for production in London. (In 1820 the latter talent proved of timely convenience in providing him with sufficient remuneration to extract him from the debtors' prison whence his natural extravagance and a commercially unsuccessful spell of theatrical management had landed him.) In fact, from about 1818 writing seems to have steadily eclipsed his acting interests. In that year he had written *Brutus, or, The Fall of Tarquin*, a play with which Edwin Booth would become closely associated. In 1823 he worked with Charles Kemble on a new play which, with music by Sir Henry Bishop, was transformed into the opera, *Clari, or, The Maid of Milan*. The score included Payne's poem, 'Home, Sweet Home'.

Wedded to Bishop's music, the ballad became an immediate and enduring success. Payne's originally projected English visit of one year had extended to almost twenty when he finally returned to America in 1832. Here his activities would begin to range well beyond theatrical matters, principally his lobbying to prevent the enforced western resettlement of the Cherokee from their homelands in the south-east of the country. In 1842 President Tyler appointed him United States Consul to Tunisia, and Payne would die there ten years later. Though his acting career was brief, his place in theatrical history as the first American to achieve importance on the British stage is secure.

7. *Gazette*, July 26, 1813, p. 3, c. 2.
8. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. *Playbills*, August 4, 5, 1813.
9. *Ibid.*, May 27, 1818.
10. *Gazette*, June 14, 1819, p. 3, c. 2.
11. *Ibid.*, June 28, 1819, p. 3, c. 2.
12. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. *Playbills*, August 2, 1831.
13. *Ibid.*, [early July], 1817.
14. *Ibid.*, [mid-July], 1817.
15. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1817.
16. Booth was twenty-one at the time of his Birmingham appearance. Four years later he would abandon his wife and surviving child, and elope to the United States with a flower girl named Mary Ann Holmes. With her he would father ten more children, including Edwin, who would become an actor of considerable distinction, and John Wilkes, who, likewise an actor, would, in 1865, assassinate the American President,

Abraham Lincoln, at Ford's Theater, Washington, D.C. John Brutus would gain great celebrity in the United States, but would also acquire a reputation for alcohol-induced instability. He returned to make two successful tours of his homeland in 1825-26 and 1836-37. He died in 1852.

17. P.J. Marshall, ed. *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2: *The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 560-561.
18. William Dunlap, *The Life of George Frederick Cooke (Late of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden)*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1815), vol. 2, p. 171.
19. Mathews, Mrs., *Memoirs of Charles Mathews, Comedian, by Mrs. Mathews*, 4 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1838), vol. 3, p. 302; Macready, William Charles. *Macready's Reminiscences and Selections from his Diaries and Letters* (London: Macmillan, 1875), p. 236.
20. Fanny Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*. (London: Longman, 1863), pp. 119-120.
21. Fanny Kemble, *The American Journals*, comp. and ed. Elizabeth Mavor. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), p. 15, August 20, 1832.
Ibid., pp. 11-12, August 2, 1832 .
22. Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (London: Heron, 1967, p. 4; first publ. 1842).
23. 'Mr. Cowle' was possibly Joseph Cowell (1792-1863), the English actor and manager, who would settle in the United States.
24. John Alfred Langford, *Modern Birmingham and Its Institutions: a chronicle of local events from 1841 to 1871*, 2 vols (Birmingham: Osborne, 1873), vol. 1, pp. 136 - 172.

25. John Alfred Langford, *A Century of Birmingham Life: or, a chronicle of local events, from 1741 to 1841*, comp. and ed. by John Alfred Langford, 2 vols (Birmingham: E.C. Osborne, 1868), vol. 2, p. 603.
26. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. *Playbills*, January 13, 1809.
27. Charles Stratton was born in Connecticut in 1838. Although growing normally for the first six months of his life, when his height was twenty-five inches and his weight fifteen pounds, the child then ceased to grow. Towards the end of 1842 the showman, P.T. Barnum, decided to investigate the phenomenon. Connecticut was likewise his home state and he could claim a distant kinship to the boy's father. Barnum persuaded the parents to allow him to exhibit the infant at his American Museum in New York, thus providing a novel contrast to the group of giants currently on show there. The boy proved an enormous draw, and the shrewd Barnum decided to capitalize on his investment. He gave him lessons in singing, dancing and mimicry - for which the boy showed considerable aptitude - dubbed him 'Tom Thumb', and conferred the rank of 'General' upon the child. Calculating that a 25-inches-high eleven-year-old child would be considered even more remarkable than a five-year-old one, he marketed him accordingly, and embarked upon a highly successful tour of America. Then, at the beginning of 1844, Barnum, his protégé, and the boy's parents crossed the Atlantic. London audiences flocked to see a true infant phenomenon. At Buckingham Palace, the Queen's warm reception of Tom Thumb, and his stalwart defence against an alleged attack by one of her pet poodles, provided publicity opportunities which Barnum would milk for years to come. Interestingly, the two Birmingham dates fell during a period when the boy's

growth had resumed, and again stopped. He added four more inches to his twenty-five. There would be two further such increases. At the time of his death at the age of forty-eight, he had reached the height of forty inches.

28. T. Edgar Pemberton, *A Memoir of Edward Askew Sothorn*. (London: Richard Bentley, 1890), pp. 9 – 10.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 10 – 11.
30. Harvard Theatre Collection. *Clippings*, 14, Sothorn, E.A.
31. *Ibid.*, National Theater, Boston. *Playbill*, November 1, 1852 (13499, call. no. TCS71, Sothorn, E.A.)
32. *Boston Daily Atlas*, November 1, 1852, p. 2.
33. *Ibid.*, November 3, 1852, p. 2.
34. James R. Anderson, *An Actor's Life* (London: Walter Scott, 1902), p. 258 .
35. *Newspaper Cuttings, Birmingham Biography*, vol. 1, pt. 2, 1875 - 1880, p. 26, Birmingham Central Library.
36. Milton Briggs and Percy Jordan, *Economic History of England*. 8th ed. (London: University Tutorial Press, 1958), pp. 293, 295.
37. *Era*, October 13, 1883, p. 5, c.1.
38. See chapter on 'Mobility and Technological Innovation', p. 173, in this thesis.
39. Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker: a biography of the author of 'Dracula'*. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996), p. 164. See also p. 266 in this chapter.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
41. Anderson, *An Actor's Life*, p. 121.
42. Austin Brereton, *The Life of Henry Irving*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green,

- 1908), vol. 2, p. 283.
43. The Ships List. *Cunard/White Star Shipping List*: Online version.
 44. In Uncas and his father, Chingachgook, Cooper creates two 'noble savages'.
 45. Langford, *Modern Birmingham and its Institutions from 1841 to 1871*, vol. 1, p. 144.
 46. George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the North American Indians: in one volume*, edited and with an introduction by Michael Macdonald Mooney. (New York: Clarkson N. Porter, 1975), p. 91.
 47. *Ibid.*, pp. 63 - 64.
 48. *Gazette*, February 5, 1844, p. 3, c. 8.
 49. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. *Playbills*, May 2, 1849.
 50. Theatre Royal, Birmingham. Programme Collection (Birmingham Central Library), August 14, 1893.
 51. Mark Twain to William F. Cody, [September? 1884]. Cited in Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), pp. 330-331.
 52. *Era*, April 16, 1887, p. 7, c.5.
 53. Alan Gallop, *Buffalo Bill's British Wild West* Stroud: Sutton, 2001, p. 39.
 54. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-129; *Era*, June 25, 1887, p. 8, col. 1..
 55. *Gazette*, November 4, 1887, p.5, c. 1.
 56. *Ibid.*, November 8, 1887, p. 5, c. 1.
 57. W. Brasmer, 'The Wild West Exhibition and the Drama of Civilization' in David Mayer and Kenneth Richards, ed. *Western Popular Theatre: the proceedings of a symposium sponsored by the Manchester University Department of Drama*

(London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 133, 153.

58. Cited in Louis B. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), p. 283.
59. Tracy Davis disputes this. In the 1870s Cody had been actively involved in military persecutions of the Sioux. 'Cody and Sitting Bull's camaraderie was erroneous, for their interests remained diametrically opposed. Audiences recognized this by booing Sitting Bull's entrances.' Moreover, Annie Oakley's proud response to Sitting Bull's gesture of adopting her peacefully and renaming her Wetana Cicilia (Little Sure Shot) 'subverts the existing white mythos' and 'allied her with a cultural villain'. Davis suggests that this 'had a bearing on Oakley's act when, as in the 1895-6 seasons, it followed a scenario involving natives' attack on a settlers' cabin, a massacre, fight and rescue of white female hostages'. It provided a dramatic illustration of how Oakley was at variance with the 'Wild West' show's maintenance of hegemonic ideology in its representation of gender and race.
- Tracy C. Davis, 'Annie Oakley and her Husband of No Importance', in Janielle G. and Joseph R. Reinelt, *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 299-312.
60. The first 'western' film is acknowledged to be *The Great Train Robbery*, written, produced and directed by Edwin S. Porter, and made in 1903, well before Cody had concluded his 'Wild West' tours. It predated the location of the American film industry in Hollywood, and was, in fact, made in New Jersey. (See Richard Griffith and Arthur Mayer, *The Movies: the sixty-year story of the world of Hollywood and its effect on America. From pre-nickelodeon days to the present*

- (New York: Bonanza, 1957), p. 10.
61. *New York Herald*, February 6, 1843. Cited in Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Negro Minstrelsy*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962, rpt. 1977), p. 118.
 62. *The Times*, June 26, 1843, p. 4, c. 1.
 63. Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, p. 138.
 64. *Gazette*, October 2, 1843, p. 3, c. 2.
 65. Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, p. 139.
 66. *Gazette*, February 12, 1844, p. 3, c. 8.
 67. *Ibid.*, February 19, 1844, p. 3, c. 8. The music and lyrics of 'Clare [with an 'e'] de Kitchen' are reprinted on page 164 of Nathan, *Dan Emmett*. The song dates from the early 1830s. See also W.J. Lhamon, jr., ed. *Jim Crow, American: Selected Songs and Plays*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 2009), pp. 36 - 38; 164.
 68. Mathews, Mrs., *Memoirs of Charles Mathews, Comedian*, vol. 3, p. 390.
 69. *Ibid.*, pp. 391 – 392.
 70. *Ibid.*, p. 442; See also Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, pp. 46 – 47.
 71. See *The Times*, March 26, 1824, p. 3, c. 4.
 72. *Gazette*, August 22, 1825, p. 3, c. 1 and 6.
 73. Jane R. Goodall, *Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 123.
 74. For the origins of this song and lyric variations, see Lhamon, *Jim Crow, American: selected songs and plays*, pp. 2 - 36; 161.
 75. *The Times*, January 18, 1833, p. 5, c. 6.

76. 'John Benjamin Dunn, the English Jim Crow' in *Actors by Daylight or Pencillings in the Pit* 42 (December 15, 1838), p. 331. Cited in Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 98.
77. Reprinted in Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, pp. 324-325.
78. Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*, pp. 119-120.
79. Dickens, *American Notes*, pp. 107-108.
80. Charles Day, 'Fun in Black', in Bean, Annemarie, et al, eds. *Inside the Minstrel Mask: readings in nineteenth-century blackface minstrelsy*. (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), pp. 47-49.
81. Marian Hannah Winter, 'Juba and American Minstrelsy', in *Ibid.*, p. 226.
82. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 231.
83. *Illustrated London News*, August 5, 1848, p. 77.
84. *Birmingham Journal*, December 16, 1848, p. 5, c. 3.
85. *Gazette*, December 18, 1848, p. 3, c. 2.
86. Theatre Royal, Birmingham, *Playbills*, December 21, 1848. Earlier, in 1845, Juba had gained the rare, perhaps unique, honour of top billing in the United States. See Winter. 'Juba and American Minstrelsy', p. 226.
87. Stephen Johnson, "Juba's Dance": An Assessment of Newly Acquired Information on the Juba Project [2003]. Originally published in *Proceedings of the 26th Annual Conference of the Society of Dance History Scholars*, p. 2. [Online version accessed February 25, 2008.] Sarah Meer identifies 'Lucy Long' as one of the 'often vicious blackface songs . . . where the singers lusted after women described not only as unattractive but specifically as unattractive because of racial

characteristics . . . For these transvestite “wenches”, the incongruity of white men dressed as black women was often the focus of the joke’. (Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: slavery, minstrelsy and Transatlantic culture in the 1850s*. (Athens, [GA] and London: University of Georgia Press, 2005), p. 37. Presumably the intention was to exploit the ‘joke’ even further through the added layer of incongruity provided by Juba’s impersonation.

88. *Gazette*, December 25, 1848, p. 3, c. 3.
89. Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: the minstrel show in nineteenth-century America*. London: Oxford University Press, 1974, rpt. 1977), pp. 195-196.
90. Berndt Ostendorf, *Black Literature in White America*. (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), p. 77.
91. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 85.
92. Toll, *Blacking Up*, p. 43. For a short discussion of minstrelsy influences upon jazz, see Ostendorf, *Black Literature in White America*, pp. 85 - 90.
93. Toll, *Blacking Up*, pp. 3 - 4.
94. Alexander Saxton, ‘Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology’, *American Quarterly*, vol. 28 (1975), p. 4.
95. Ostendorf, *Black Literature in White America*, p. 80.
96. Goodall, *Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin*, pp. 139 - 140.
97. Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: the Free Negro in the Antebellum South*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981; rpt. of New York: Pantheon, 1974), pp.166 - 168.
98. Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania*, pp. 87 - 88.

99. *Gazette*, July 2, 1862, p. 5, c.1. (The presentation opened on July 7.)
100. Michael Pickering, 'White Skin, Black Masks: "Nigger" minstrelsy in Victorian England', in J.S. Bratton, ed. *Music Hall Performance and Style* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), p. 83.
101. J.S. Bratton, 'English Ethiopians: British audiences and blackface acts, 1835 - 1865', *Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 11 (1981), pp. 127-142.
102. Harry Reynolds, *Minstrel Memories: the Story of Burnt Cork Minstrels in Great Britain from 1836 to 1927*. (London: Ashton Rivers, [1928]), p. 104.
Tracy Davis cites an interesting contemporary comment that the moral approval of minstrelsy demonstrated 'the close connexion that exists between Puritanism and extreme frivolity'. ('Nigger Minstrelsy', *Saturday Review* (June 2, 1861), pp. 477-478; cited by Tracy C. Davis, 'Christy's Minstrels (1857-61) [Pre-publication Typescript], p. 20.
103. During his Pittsburgh childhood Foster listened to the songs and chants of African-American slaves as they laboured on cargo boats sailing up the Ohio River, and was sometimes taken by a family servant to church services, where the zealous and sung devotions of the black congregation deeply impressed him. A few years later, his brief counting-house career in Cincinnati exposed him to further Southern influences. Allied to these experiences was a natural and rapidly developed musical talent, and an affection for all forms of theatre, not least for the growingly popular 'coon' songs which he had taken to performing as a child.
104. Stephen Foster to E. P. Christie, May 25, 1852. Cited in John Tasker Howard,

- Stephen Foster, America's First Troubadour*. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1962), p. 196.
105. Cited in Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, p. 153.
106. Howard, *Stephen Foster, America's First Troubadour*, pp. 176-177.
107. Stephen Collins Foster, *Stephen Foster Song Book. Original Sheet Music of 40 Songs by Stephen Foster*. Selected, and with Introduction and Notes, by Richard Jackson (New York: Dover), 1974.
108. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; with an Introduction and Appreciation by Kenneth Allsop. ([London]: Heron, [c1968]), p. 352.
109. Foster, *Stephen Foster Song Book*.
110. Howard, *Stephen Foster, America's First Troubadour*, p. 177; Raymond Walters, *Stephen Foster: Youth's Golden Gleam, a sketch of his life and background in Cincinnati*. (Princeton, NJ: Cincinnati University Press, 1936), pp. 57 – 58.
111. Foster used the vernacular in 'Old Folks at Home (1851), but not in 'My Old Kentucky Home' (1853). (*Stephen Foster Song Book*.)
112. Kenneth Allsop, Introduction to Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pp. xviii - xix.
113. Howard, *Stephen Foster, America's Troubadour*, p. 120.
114. S. Theodore Felstead *Stars Who Made the Halls: a hundred years of English humour, harmony and hilarity*. (London: Werner Laurie, 1946), p. 57.
115. Frederick Douglass, 'The Anti-Slavery Movement'. A Lecture by Frederick Douglass before the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 23, 1855, p. 2; cited in Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania*, p. 71. The two

Foster songs cited were 'My Old Kentucky Home' and 'Uncle Ned'.

116. Robert P. Nevin, 'Stephen C. Foster and Negro Minstrelsy', *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 20 (November 1867), p.. 611.
117. *Ibid.*, pp. 614, 616.
118. Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania*, pp. 12, 37.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
120. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
122. Two notable revivals of British minstrelsy were the presentations of the Kentucky Minstrels, who probably reached the height of their popularity on radio during World War II, and of George Mitchell's Black and White Minstrels, who achieved great success both on television and stage from the late 1950s for some two decades.
123. Pickering, 'White Skin, Black Masks', p. 85.
124. It 'was about a negro horse thief, on the run for his life with the pursuers on his very heels, who yet must needs let his over-whelming love halt him to make a last desperate appeal' to the girl who has spurned him. In despair he calls outside her cabin for her to bid him goodbye, but he calls in vain, and the delay will cost him his life.

The hopeless dance of abandon which followed was a very miracle, all the more grim for its silence. It ended with the posse, pistols in hand, dragging him away, as he wrenched himself round in their grasp to give one last despairing glance of dumb, stricken grief at the house of his loved one and

throw out his arms in a mute appeal . . . Great actors have played scenes less skilfully and with less art than this music hall artist showed. (W. Macqueen Pope, *The Melodies Linger On: the story of music hall*. (London: W.H. Allen, [1950]), pp. 410, 413 – 414).

.Michael Pickering reports at second hand that a recording of Stratton's rendition of this song does not display the pathos of Macqueen Pope's account, and concludes that time had impaired the writer's recollections. I have a copy of this recording in my own collection, and am in agreement about the mood of the delivery. However, it seems hardly fair to compare a stage performance with all the facilities it would afford in freedom of movement -- and Stratton was primarily a dancer -- timing, colour, costume and supporting players, with the restricted conditions of a pre-electronic recording studio. (See Michael Pickering, *Blackface Minstrelsy in Britain*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2008, p. 135.)

125. Pickering, 'White Skin, Black Masks', p. 79

126. *Ibid.*

127. Saxton, 'Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology, in *American Quarterly*, vol. 28 (1975), p. 4.

128. Bratton, 'English Ethiopians', p. 127.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 141. James Anderson had received an extremely hostile reception when playing Othello in New Orleans. (Anderson, *An Actor's Life*, p. 128.)

130. *Saturday Review*, vol. 18, (January 16 1864), p. 722. Cited in Lorimer, Douglas A. *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-*

- nineteenth Century*. ([Leicester]: Leicester U.P., 1978), pp. 101-102.
131. *Era*, May 20, 1905, p. 17, c. 1.
132. *The Mirror of Taste and the Dramatic Censor*, 2, No. 5 (November, 1810), pp. 371-372; cited in Don B. Wilmeth, *George Frederick Cooke: Machiavel of the Stage*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), pp. 258-259.
133. Wilmeth, *George Frederick Cooke*, pp. 259-260.
134. Forrest reveals himself at his most irrational in a letter published in the *Public Ledger* on November 22, 1848. It is reproduced in Richard Moody, *The Astor Place Riot* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1958), pp. 76-77.
135. Mathews, Mrs. *Memoirs of Charles Mathews, Comedian*, vol. 2, p. 82; William Charles Macready, *The Diaries of William Charles Macready 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1912), vol. 2, p. 198.
136. Kemble, *Records of a Girlhood*, vol. 2, p. 22.
137. Nathan, *Dan Emmett*, p. 138.
138. Anderson, *An Actor's Life*, p. 131.
139. Kurt Ganzl *Musicals: the complete illustrated story of the world's most popular live entertainment* (London: Carlton 1995; rpt. 2004), p. 85.
140. One of New York's leading impresarios, Charles Frohman, remained unconvinced that Americans could write musical comedies, and garnered the material for his New York productions during his frequent sojourns in London. On one such visit he met the twenty-year-old Jerome Kern, who was seeking his fortune in London and had joined a stable of young songwriters working for George Edwardes. Frohman was impressed with Kern's music, and, assuming that the young man was

British, took his talent as a further endorsement of his belief in the inherent superiority of the London musical stage. Kern did not disenchant him. Frohman persuaded the young songwriter to come and work for him in America, and they crossed the Atlantic together. It was only when they walked down the gangplank and Kern began to be greeted by old acquaintances that the impresario became aware of the subterfuge, if such it was. He reacted with fury, but the impracticality of dispensing with Kern's services after a 3,000-mile ocean voyage and the young man's obvious talent persuaded him otherwise. Notwithstanding, serious doubt remains whether Frohman would ever have engaged those services if he had been aware of Kern's non-Britishness, and his failure to do so might have had profound consequences for the American musical theatre. (Michael Freedland, *Jerome Kern: a Biography*. London: Robson, 1978, rpt. 1985, pp. 21-22.)

Frohman's deference to a perceived English superiority, and the necessity on Kern's part of an implied acquiescence as a precondition to the furtherance of his career is revealing. The episode provides an interesting instance of the lingering potency of cultural imperialism.

141. Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990, p. 59; first publ. London: Odhams Press, 1963).
142. *American Heritage Pictorial Atlas of United States History*. ed. Hilde Heun Kagan (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 174.
143. Barrow-in-Furness. Borough Council. *Map of Barrow-in-Furness*, 1843. [Online reprint.]

144. Census Returns in Microform 1841 - 1891: directory of local holdings in Great Britain; Great Britain. *Census*, 1901.
145. *The Era*, January 12, 1868, p. 12, c. 3; March 3, 1875, p. 7, c. 1; May 14, 1898, p. 22, c. 4; March 3, 1902, p. 8, c. 2; March 28, 1891, p.16, c. 4.
146. Kagan, *America Heritage Pictorial Atlas of United States History*, p. 255.
147. United States. Census Bureau. *Population. New York City*, 1840, 1870, 1890, 1900.
148. Ronald E. Robinson, and John A. Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: the official mind of imperialism*. 2nd ed., with Alice Denny (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978, p. 8; first publ. 1961).
149. The failure of Joseph Chamberlain to carry his Imperial Tariff Reform programme is indeed a striking endorsement of Robinson and Gallagher's thesis. Until the First World War the country remained wedded to Free Trade. The experience of that war prompted numerous initiatives designed to achieve a greater formalization, consciousness and popularization of Empire. These included the staging of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924, the passage of the Statute of Westminster defining Dominion status in 1926, the founding of the Empire Marketing Board in the same year, and the creation of the Imperial Trade Preference System in 1932. The dissemination of British culture and values acquired a higher profile with the founding of the British Council in 1934, and with the BBC's Empire broadcasts. The King's Christmas Day message broadcasts began in 1932.
150. Anderson, *An Actor's Life*, p. 286. Dawson suggests that at this time, in fact, a

first class steamer passage to Australia was available for £10/10/-, and a second class one for £6/6- . (Dawson, *The Liner*, p. 32.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [Adcock, C.S.]: *Fifty Years' Memoirs of the Prince of Wales, Birmingham*
(Birmingham, [n.p]: 1911).
- Allsop, Kenneth, Introduction to Stowe, Harriet Beecher, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* [London]:
Heron, [c1968], pp. xiii – xx; first published in serial form 1851-52.
- The American Heritage Pictorial Atlas of United States History*, ed. Hilde Heun Kagan
(New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).
- Anderson, James R., *An Actor's Life* (London: Walter Scott, 1902).
- [Anon.] *A Brief History of Birmingham* ([n.p.] ,1797).
- Baird, Patrick, *Birmingham Theatres and Entertainment* (Stroud: Tempus, 2008).
- Baily, Leslie *The Gilbert and Sullivan Book* (London: Spring Books, 1966; first
publ. London: Cassell, 1952, rev. ed. 1956).
- Barish, Jonas *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Los Angeles: University of California
Press, 1981).
- Barker, Kathleen *The Theatre Royal, Bristol: two centuries of stage history* (London:
Society for Theatre Research, 1974).
- Barrow-in-Furness. Borough Council, *Map of Barrow-in-Furness 1843*, [online reprint].
- Baugh, Christopher, *Theatre, Performance and Technology: the development of
scenography in the twentieth century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- Belford, Barbara, *Bram Stoker: a biography of the author of 'Dracula'* (London:
Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996).
- Bennett, W.B. *West Bromwich Theatre Royal* ([n.p.] Published by author, [n.d.]).

- Berlin, Ira, *Slaves without Masters: the free Negro in the antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981; first publ. New York: Pantheon, 1974).
- Birmingham. Corporation. Gas Committee, *Gaslight Agreements, 1819-20*.
- Birmingham. Public Works Committee, *Report, October 1884*.
- Birmingham. Street Commissioners. *Bye-laws, Rules and Orders for Licensing, March 25, 1803*.
- Birmingham. Street Commissioners. *Minutes of Meeting, July 20, 1801*.
- Boaden, James, *The Life of Mrs. Jordan, including Original Correspondence*, 2 vols (London: Edward Bull, 1831; reprinted in Stone, Sharon, ed., *Women's Theatrical Memoirs*, 3 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007).
- Booth, Michael R., *Victorian Spectacular Theatre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).
- Bottle, Ted, *Coventry's Forgotten Theatre: the Theatre Royal and Empire* (Westbury: Badger Press, 2004).
- Boynton, John, *The London and Birmingham Railway between Birmingham and Coventry* ([Kidderminster]: Mid England Books, [c1998]).
- Brasmer, W. , 'The Wild West Exhibition and the Drama of Civilization', in Mayer, David, and Richards, Kenneth, *Western Popular Theatre: the proceedings of a symposium sponsored by the Manchester University Department of Drama* (London: Methuen, 1977).
- Bratton, J.S., 'English Ethiopians: British audiences and black-face acts, 1835 – 1865', In *Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 11 (1981), pp. 127-142.
- Brereton, Austin, *The Life of Henry Irving*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1908).

- Briggs, Asa, *History of Birmingham*, vol. 2: Borough and city 1865 - 1938 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952).
- Briggs, Asa, *Victorian Cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990; first publ. London: Odhams Press, 1963).
- Briggs, Asa *Victorian People: a reassessment of persons and themes 1851-67*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970, rpt. 1972; first publ. 1955).
- Briggs, Milton, and Jordan, Percy, *Economic History of England*, 8th ed. (London: University Tutorial Press, 1958).
- Brown, Jared *The Theatre in America during the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- Brown, Judith M., and Louis, William Roger, ed. *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4: *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Bunn, Alfred, *The Stage, both before and behind the Curtain*, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1840). .
- Cannadine, D. *Lords and Landlords: the aristocracy of the towns 1774 – 1967, part 2: the Calthorpes and Birmingham* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1980).
- Catlin, George, *Letters and Notes on the North American Indians; in one volume*, ed. and intro. Michael Macdonald Mooney (New York: Clarkson N. Porter, 1975).
- Census Returns 1841-1891 in Microform: Directory to Local Holdings in Great Britain.
- Christiansen, Rex, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain*, vol. 7: *The West Midlands* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973).
- Churchill, Winston S., *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, vol. 2: *The New*

- World* (London: Cassell, 1956).
- Churchill, Winston S., *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, vol. 4: *The Great Democracies* (London: Cassell, 1958).
- Cunningham, John E. *Theatre Royal: the history of the Theatre Royal, Birmingham* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1950).
- Dale, R.W., *Week-Day Sermons* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1895).
- Davis, Jim, and Emeljanow, Victor, *Reflecting the Audience: London theatregoing 1840-1880* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001).
- Davis, Jim, and Emeljanow, Victor, ‘“Wistful Remembrances”: the historical problem of Macqueen-Popery’, *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Nov. 2001), p. 304.
- Davis, Tracy C., ‘Annie Oakley and her Ideal Husband of No Importance’, in Reinelt, Janelle G. and Joseph R., *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992, pp. 299-312).
- Davis, Tracy C., ‘*Christy’s Minstrels 1857-61*’ [Pre-publication typescript.]
- Davis, Tracy C. *The Economics of the British Stage 1800-1914* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2007)
- Davis, Tracy C., and Holland, Peter, ed. *The Performing Century: nineteenth-century theatre’s history* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
- Dawson, George, *Authentic Gospel Sermons* (London: Kegan Paul, 1881).
- Dawson, Philip, *The Liner: retrospective and renaissance* (London: Conway Maritime, 2005).
- Day, Charles ‘Fun in Black’, in Bean, Annemarie, et al, ed., *Inside the Minstrel Mask: readings in blackface minstrelsy* (Hanover [NH]: Wesleyan University Press, 1996,

pp. 46-50.

Day's Crystal Palace Concert Hall Programme [186?], Birmingham Central Library
(access. no. 260536).

Dean, A.R., & Co., *Catalogue* [c1907].

Dent, Robert K., *The Making of Birmingham: being a history of the rise and growth of the Midland metropolis* (Birmingham: J. L. Allday, 1894).

Dickens, Charles, *American Notes* (London: Heron, 1967; first publ. 1842).

Dickens, Charles, *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, edited by "Boz"; a new edition with notes and additions by Charles Whitehead (London: Routledge, 1853; first publ. 1838).

Dickens, Charles, *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, revised version, ed. Richard Findlater (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1968).

Dickens, Charles, *Nicholas Nickleby*, 2 vols ([London]: Heron, 1968; first publ. in serial form 1838-1839).

Dickens, Charles, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (London: Heron, 1967, 2 vols; first publ. in serial form 1841-1842).

Dippie, Brian W., *Catlin and his Contemporaries: the politics of patronage* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

Donohue, Joseph *Fantasies of Empire: the Empire Theatre and the licensing crisis of 1894* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005).

Douglass, Frederick, 'The Anti-Slavery Movement': a lecture by Frederick Douglass before the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society. *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, March 23, 1855, p. 2.

- Dunlap, W., *Memoirs of George Frederick Cooke, Esq., Late of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1813).
- Elliston, R.W. Collection of letters from John Brunton and John Ashley to R.W. Elliston, May – July 1815, Hoblitzelle Theatre Arts Library, University of Texas at Austin.
- Felstead, S. Theodore, *Stars who Made the Halls: a hundred years of English humour, harmony and hilarity* (London: Werner Laurie, 1946).
- Foster, Stephen Collins, *Stephen Foster Song Book: original sheet music of 40 songs by Stephen Collins Foster*, selected, with intro. and notes, by Richard Jackson [rpt.] (New York: Dover, 1974).
- Foulkes, Richard, *Church and Stage in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Freedland, Michael, *Jerome Kern: a biography* (London: Robson, 1978, rpt.1985).
- Fullerton, W.Y. *Charles Haddon Spurgeon: a biography* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1920).
- Gaiety Theatre, Birmingham, Playbill Collection, Birmingham Central Library.
- Gallop, Alan, *Buffalo Bill's British Wild West* (Stroud: Sutton, 2001).
- Ganzl, Kurt, *Lydia Thompson: queen of burlesque* (London: Routledge, 2002).
- Ganzl, Kurt, *Musicals: the complete illustrated story of the world's most popular live entertainment* (London: Carlton, 1995, rpt. 2004).
- Gill, Conrad *History of Birmingham*, vol. 1: Manor and Borough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).
- Goodall, Jane R., *Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin: out of the natural order* (London: Routledge, 2002).

Great Britain. Census, 1901.

Great Britain. Ordnance Survey Office, *Birmingham and District 1910* (Consett: Alan Godfrey reprint, 2004).

Great Britain. Ordnance Survey Office, *Central Birmingham 1902-11* (Consett: Alan Godfrey reprint, 1989, rpt. 2008).

Great Britain. Parliamentary Reports. Select Committee on Theatres and Places of Entertainment., 1892. *Report* (London: H.M.S.O., 1892).

Great Britain. Patent Office, *Patent nos. 326 ; 1425; 2080; 3072; 4407* .

Griffith, Richard, and Mayer, Arthur, *The Movies: the sixty-year story of the world of Hollywood and its effect on America; from pre-nickelodeon days to the present* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1957).

Hardy, P.L., and Jaques, P., *A Short History of Birmingham Corporation Tramways* (Reading: H.J. Publications, 1971).

Harvard Theatre Collection. *Clippings*, 14, Sothern, E.A.

Harvard Theatre Library, Website.

Holder's Grand Concert Hall Programme [1867], Birmingham Central Library (access. no. 507183).

Howard, John Tasker, *Stephen Foster, America's Troubadour* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1962).

Hutton, William, *An History of Birmingham*, with a new introduction by Christopher . Elrington (East Ardsley: C.P. Publishing, 1976; first published 1783).

'John Benjamin Dunn, the English Jim Crow', in *Actors by Daylight or Pencilings in the Pit*, 42 (December 15 1838), p. 331.

Johnson, Stephen, 'Juba's Dance': an assessment of newly acquired information on the Juba Project. [2003]. Originally published in *Proceedings of the 26th Annual Conference of the Society of Dance History Scholars*. Online version accessed February 25, 2008.

Kemble, Fanny, *The American Journals*, comp. and ed. Elizabeth Mayor (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990).

Kemble, Fanny *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-39* (London: Longmans, Green, 1863).

Kemble, Fanny, *Records of a Girlhood*, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1879).

Kenrick, Mrs. W. Byng, *Chronicles of a Nonconformist Family: the Kenricks of Wynne Hall, Exeter and Birmingham* (Birmingham: Cornish, 1932).

Kift, Dagmar *The Victorian Music Hall: culture, class and conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Langford, John Alfred, *A Century of Birmingham Life, or, a chronicle of local events from 1741 to 1841*, comp. and ed. John Alfred Langford, 2 vols (Birmingham: Osborne Marshall; London: Simpkin, 1868).

Langford, John Alfred, *Modern Birmingham and its Institutions: a chronicle of local events from 1841 to 1871*, 2 vols (Birmingham: Osborne, 1873).

Langley, Arthur S., *Birmingham Baptists Past and Present* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1939).

Lawrence, Vera Bradsky, *Strong on Music: the New York music scene in the days of*

- George Templeton Strong*. Vol. 3: *Reverberations, 1850-1856* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
- Levy, E. Lawrence, *Birmingham Theatrical Reminiscences: Jubilee recollections* (Birmingham: Hammond, [1920]).
- Lhamon, W.J., *Jim Crow, American: Selected songs and plays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
- Lorimer, Douglas A., *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English attitudes to the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century* [Leicester]: Leicester University Press, 1978).
- Macready, William Charles, *The Diaries of William Charles Macready 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols (London:Chapman and Hall, 1912).
- Macready, William Charles, *The Journal of William Charles Macready, 1832-1851*, abr. and ed. J.C. Trewin. (London: Longmans, 1967).
- Macready, William Charles, *Macready's Reminiscences and Selections from his Diaries and Letters* (London: Macmillan, 1875).
- Marshall, P.J., ed. *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2: *The Eighteenth Century*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- Mason, Shena, *The Hardware Man's Daughter: Matthew Boulton and his 'dear girl'* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2005).
- Mason, Shena, *Matthew Boulton: selling what the world needs* (New Haven [CT] and London: Birmingham City Council in association with Yale University Press, 2009).
- Mathews, Charles [sr], *Memoirs of Charles Mathews, Comedian*, ed. Mrs. Mathews, 4 vols (London: Bentley, 1838).

Mathews , Charles [jr.], *The Life of Charles Mathews: chiefly autobiographical*, ed.

Charles Dickens, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1879).

Matthew Boulton Collection, Birmingham Central Library.

McCormick, John, *Dion Boucicault: theatre in focus* (Cambridge: ChadwyckHealey, 1987).

Meer, Sarah, *Uncle tom Mania: slavery, minstrelsy and transatlantic culture in the 1850s* (Athens [GA] and London: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

Moody, Richard, *The Astor Place Riot* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958).

Morley, Sheridan, *A Talent to Amuse: a biography of Noël Coward* (London: Heinemann, 1969).

Murray, Christopher, *Robert William Elliston, Manager* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1975).

Mursell, Arthur ‘The Stage, the Pulpit, and the People.’ An address delivered in the Prince of Wales Theatre, Birmingham, on Hospital Sunday, October 28th 1883, in aid of the General Hospital (Birmingham: Houghton, 1883).

Nathan, Hans, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962, rpt. 1977).

National Theater, Boston, Playbill, November 1 1852, Harvard Theatre Collection (13499, call. no. TCS71 Sothern, E.A.).

Nevin, Robert P., ‘Stephen Foster and Negro Minstrelsy’, in *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 20 (November), 1967, pp. 608-616.

‘Ocean Liners of the Past: The White Star Triple Screw Atlantic Liners *Olympic* and *Titanic*’ (Wellingborough: Patrick Stephen, 1970, rpt. 1988). [Articles originally

- published in *The Shipbuilder*, vol. 6 (midsummer) 1911, special number 'The White Star Line'; epilogue by John Maxtone-Graham.]
- Ostendorf, Berndt *Black Literature in White America* (Brighton: Harvester, 1982).
- Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, rpt. 1972).
- Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).
- Parsons, John, *The Doctrine of Salvation* (Birmingham: Luckman and Lessor, 1770).
- Paxman, Jeremy *The Victorians: Britain through the paintings of the age* (London: BBC Books, 2009).
- Pemberton, T. Edgar, *A Memoir of Edward Askew Sothorn* (London: Richard Bentley, 1890).
- Pemberton, T. Edgar, *Theatre Royal, Birmingham* (Birmingham: Cornish, 1901).
- Penzel, Frederick, *Theatre Lighting before Electricity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1979).
- Pickering, Michael, *Blackface Minstrelsy in Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008).
- Pickering, Michael, 'White Skin, Black Masks: "Nigger minstrelsy in Victorian England', in Bratton, J.S., ed., *Music Hall Performance and Style*, pp. 70-91 (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).
- Pope, W. Macqueen, *The Melodies Linger On: the story of music hall* (London: W.H. Allen, [1950]).
- Radio Times Guide to Films*, ed. Kilmeny Fane-Saunders, 4th ed. (London: BBC Worldwide, 2004).

- Raymond, George, *The Life and Enterprises of Robert William Elliston, Comedian* (London: Routledge, 1857).
- Rees, Terence, *Theatre Lighting in the Age of Gas* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1978).
- Rees, Terence, and Wilmore, David, *British Theatrical Patents 1801 - 1900* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1996).
- Reid, Douglas A., *Labour, Leisure and Politics in Birmingham, ca. 1800 - 1875* [Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1985].
- Reid, Douglas A., 'Popular Theatre in Birmingham', in Bradby, David, *Performance and Politics in Popular Dram: aspects of popular entertainment in theatre, film and television 1800-1976*, pp. 65-89. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
- Reynolds, Harry, *Minstrel Memories: the story of burnt cork in Great Britain from 1836 to 1927* London: Ashton Rivers, [1928].
- Rhodes, R. Crompton, *The Theatre Royal, Birmingham: a short history, 1774 - 1924* (Birmingham: Moody, 1924).
- Robinson, Ronald E., and Gallagher, John A., *Africa and the Victorians: the official mind of imperialism*, 2nd ed., with Alice Denny (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978; first publ. 1961).
- Rogers, T.B., *A Century of Progress: Bournville 1831 - 1931* [Birmingham: Cadburys, c1931].
- Russell, Don, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960).
- Salberg, Derek, *Ring Down the Curtain: a fascinating record of Birmingham theatres*

and contemporary life through three centuries (London: Cortney, 1980).

Saxton, Alexander, 'Blackface Minstrelsy and Jacksonian Ideology', *American Quarterly*, vol. 28 (1975), pp. 3 - 28.

The Ships List. Cunard / White Star Shipping List [online version].

Showell, Edwin, & Sons, *Catalogue* [Birmingham]: Edwin Showell & Sons, [c1911].

Skipp, Victor, *The Making of Victorian Birmingham* (Studley: Brewin, 1983, rpt. 1996).

Slater, Terry, *A Century of Celebrating Christ: the Diocese of Birmingham, 1905-2005* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2005).

Slater, Terry, *Edgbaston: a history* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2002).

Smith, Donald, and Harrison, Derek, *The Harborne Express* (Studley: Brewin Books, 1995).

Southern, Richard, *The Victorian Theatre: a pictorial survey* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1970).

Spurgeon, Charles Haddon, *Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Autobiography*, compiled from his diary, letters and records by his wife and his private secretary, 4 vols (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897-1899).

Stephens, J.R., *The Censorship of English Drama 1824-1901* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

Stoker, Bram, 'Irving and Stage Lighting', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, vol. 70 (May 1911), pp. 903 - 912.

Stoker, Bram *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving*, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1906).

- Stowe, Harriet Beecher, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with an introduction and appreciation by Kenneth Allsop [London]: Heron, [c1968]; first publ. in serial form 1851-52.
- Sweet, Matthew, *Inventing the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).
- Terry, Ellen, *Ellen Terry's Memoirs*, ed. Edith Craig and Christopher St. John (London: Gollancz, 1933).
- Theatre Royal, Birmingham, [Docket of Licence, 1807]; MS in Matthew Boulton Collection, Birmingham Central Library.
- Theatre Royal, Birmingham, Playbill Collection, Birmingham Central Library.
- Theatre Royal, Birmingham, Programme Collection, Birmingham Central Library.
- Theatre Royal, Birmingham, Prompt Books Collection, *The Iron Chest; The Prophet; The Dead Guest; Ben-My-Chree; Caravan*.
- Theatre Royal, Birmingham, Proprietors, *Minutes of Meetings*, Birmingham Central Library.
- Toll, Robert C., *Blacking Up: the minstrel show in nineteenth-century America* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974, rpt. 1977).
- Trewin, J.C. *Mr. Macready: a nineteenth-century tragedian and his theatre* (London:Harrap, [1955]).
- Turner, Keith, *Birmingham Transport* (Stroud: Birmingham City Council. Department of Leisure and Community Services / Tempus, 1998).
- Unites States. Census Bureau. Population, New York City 1840, 1870, 1890, 1900.
- Walters, Raymond, *Stephen Foster, Youth's Golden Gleam: a sketch of his life and background in Cincinnati 1846 - 1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936).
- Walvin, James *Victorian Values* (London: André Deutsch, 1987).

- Warren, Louis B., *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).
- Warwickshire Photographic Survey (WPS B11) [Lantern slide collection], Birmingham Central Library.
- Waters, Hazel, *Racism on the Victorian Stage: representation of slavery and the black character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- White, H.P., *Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, vol. 2: Southern England*, 4th ed. (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982).
- Williams, Iolo, *The Firm of Cadbury* (London: Constable, 1931).
- Williams, Stanley T. *The Life of Washington Irving*, 2 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935).
- Wilmeth, Don B., *George Frederick Cooke: Machiavel of the stage* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980).
- Wilson, A.N. *The Victorians* (London: Arrow Books, 2003).
- Wilson, Ben, *Decency and Disorder: the age of cant 1789-1837* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007).
- Winter, Marian Hannah, 'Juba and American Minstrelsy', in Bean, Annemarie, et al, ed. *Inside the Minstrel Mask: readings in nineteenth-century blackface minstrelsy* (Hanover NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996, pp. 223-241; originally publ. in *Dance Index*, vol. 6, no. 2 (February 1947), pp. 28-47).

JOURNALS, ETC.

Actors by Daylight or Pencilings in the Pit

Aris's Birmingham Gazette (and title variations) N.B.: To avoid confusion, '*Gazette*' is used throughout.

Bell's Life in London

Birmingham Amusements and Souvenir of the Stage

Birmingham Biography, Birmingham Central Library

Birmingham Daily Mail

Birmingham Daily Post (and title variations) N.B.: To avoid confusion, '*Post*' is used throughout.:

Birmingham Journal

Boston Daily Atlas

Bradshaw's Monthly Railway Guide

Coventry Herald

Coventry History [Newspaper cuttings], History Centre, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry

Era

Illustrated London News

Local Notes 1861 - 91 [Newspaper cuttings], Birmingham Central Library

Local Notes and Queries 1869 - 72 [Cuttings extracted from *Birmingham Daily Post*], Birmingham Central Library

Local Sketches [Newspaper cuttings, etc.], Birmingham Central Library

Mirror of Taste and the Dramatic Censor

Miscellaneous Newspaper Cuttings relating to Birmingham, Birmingham Central Library

New Theatre Quarterly

New York Herald

Nineteenth Century Theatre Research

Pearson and Rolleston's Directory

Saturday Review

Theatrical Looker-On

Thomson and Wrightson's Directory

The Times

West Bromwich Echo

Ref. p. 86



DAYS CRYSTAL PALACE CONCERT HALL
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE QUEEN'S HOSPITAL.

The Performances will commence with "GOD SAVE THE QUEEN" BY THE WHOLE STRENGTH OF THE CHORUS.

THE OPENING ADDRESS will be spoken by Mr. ROBERT NICHOL.

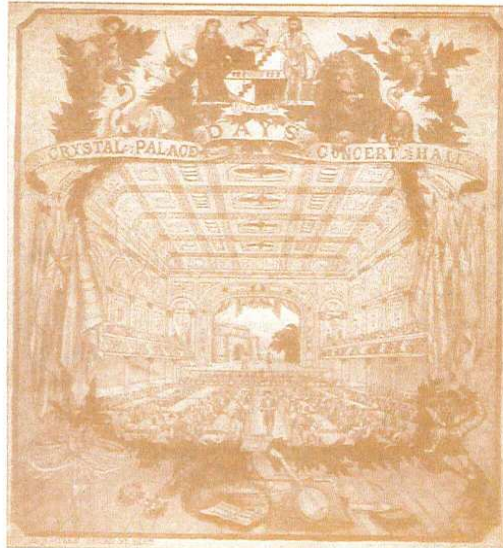
OVERTURE—"WILHELM THE FIRST"	ROSSINI.
BALLAD	MR. WYDDEHAM CLARK
COMIC SONG	MR. J. BLANCHARD
SONG	MR. VERNON RIDGEY
BALLAD	MISS E. PEARCE
SERIO-COMIC SONG	MRS. J. F. BRILLY
SONG	MR. L. SAUNDERS

THE BRAUTHEVEL AND EMORY,
BY W. TELDEN, ESQ., WILL BE ENACTED AT HALF PAST SEVEN.

PAS COMIQUE	MR. EOLENO MARSH
GRAND SELECTION FROM "LA SONNAMBELLA"	
THE VERVES	Messes. HARTY & FRENCH
BALLAD	MR. WYDDEHAM CLARK
SONG	MRS. D. SAUNDERS
THE CHARMED HOUSTON	M. SILFESTER
COMIC SONG	MR. J. BLANCHARD
SERIO-COMIC SONG	MRS. J. F. BRILLY

BALETT DIVERTISSEMENT.
BY THE MISSES GUNMISS, AND THE CORPS DE BALLETS.

Musical Director Mr. G. WILSON. Pianist Mr. E. H. CALVERT.



Ref. p. 135

of *Some*
Coke Company and

AN AGREEMENT made this *24th* Day
18 *79* between the Birmingham Gas Light and

Alfred Bunn
of *New Street*

in Birmingham.—First, that the said Birmingham Gas Light Com-
pany, agree to supply, and the said *Alfred Bunn*
agree to take Gas Light for the supply of his Premises
of the number, description and prices following.

No.	Description of Burner.	Time of Use.	Price.	Payments as under.
<i>50</i>	<i>Butter wings</i>	<i>Burning from 6 o'clock to 12 o'clock for nights</i>		Lady Day.
<i>48</i>	<i>No 1</i>			Midsummer.
<i>1</i>	<i>No 2</i>			Michaelmas.
<i>1</i>	<i>Street</i>			Christmas.

AND SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING
Rules and Regulations.

Persons may commence the Light during any part of the Quarter, and the Com-
pany will expect payment from that time to the end of the said Quarter, in order
that their Rents may all fall due at the same time.

The Payments for the Light to be made Quarterly as above stated, and in case
default shall be made in Payment of the Rent for the space of one Month (after appli-
cation by the Company's collector) the Collateral Pipes which supply the Gas will
be liable to be cut off from the Premises of the Persons making default.

That this Contract shall be in force for one whole year; and Notice to be given
to the Company previous to its termination, in Case the Party wishes to discontinue
or make any alteration: and if any Person shall use the Gas for a longer Period of
Time than above stated, the same to be paid for in the proportion at the times afore-
said, and notice to be given previous to such increase of burning.

The Company expect that persons using the Gas will be careful to regulate the
flame to the height of not exceeding four inches, and that in all cases Glasses are ex-
pected to be used, and the Company recommend straight or cylindrical ones.

Signed on behalf of the Company.

Alfred Bunn

Ref. p. 136

Theatre Royal, Birmingham.

THE Public is most respectfully informed, that during the short Space of seven Weeks this Establishment has undergone the following general Alterations:—

The Audience Part of the House

Has been entirely re-painted, gilded, and decorated in the most costly Style—the Orchestra newly arranged and enlarged—two Tiers of Private Boxes (originally Dressing Rooms) have been fitted up in the most commodious and handsome Manner—and the Whole will be lighted with

A Superb Central Gas Chandelier,

(Executed on an entirely new and original Plan by Messrs. JONES and BARKER, of this Town.)

The STAGE has been completely fitted up with NEW MACHINERY, and a STOCK of the MOST SPLENDID SCENERY, which has been heightened two Feet and a Half to perfect the Scite of the Stage, and particularly to relieve the great Inconvenience experienced in the Gallery—in Addition to which, NEW DRESSES, DECORATIONS, PROPERTIES, &c. &c. of every Description, have been furnished, and the Whole of the STAGE, LOBBIES, PASSAGES, &c. are LIGHTED WITH GAS—and every Exertion which the confined Time would admit of has been made to consult the Taste and Accommodation of the Public, and to establish that high Dramatic Character which the Inhabitants of this great Town have a Right to expect in the Management of their Theatre.

In the Course of the Play and Farce, the following, among other

NEW SCENERY,

WILL BE EXHIBITED:

Grand Drop Scene—The TEMPLE of SHAKS-PEARE	Painted by Orme.
	(from the King's Theatre, Opera House)
Scene 1. A STREET SCENE	Painted by Orme.
Scene 2. A SALOON	Westmacott
Scene 3. A CHAMBER	Westmacott
Scene 4. A DRAWING ROOM	Orme.
Scene 5. A PARLOUR	Finlay.
Scene 6. A WOOD SCENE	{ Orme, Hyde, and Westmacott.
Scene 7. INSIDE OF AN INN	Finlay.

The DECORATIONS of the THEATRE principally by WESTMACOTT

(See the other Side)

Ref. p. 138

Statement of Meter at Theatre Street
 May 19th at 2.500 feet

Month	Day	Reading	Rate	Charge	Balance	Month	Day	Reading	Rate	Charge	Balance
Jan	20	18.700				July	14	127.800			
Feb		2.500				"	6	112.000			
Mar		16.200				Sept	14	14.800			
Apr		10.500	12 1/2	10 6 3		Sept	14	300			
May	2	33.900				Sept	21	141.700			
June	20	18.700				"	14	127.500			
July	4	300				Sept	21	139.000			
Aug	2	15.200				Sept	29	160.100			
Sept	4	15.500	12 1/2	9 13 7		Sept	21	141.700			
Oct	9	48.300				Sept	21	18.400			
Nov	2	33.900				Sept	25	3.75			
Dec		14.400				Sept	25	18.775	12 1/2	11 14 8 1/2	
Jan	4	300				Aug	4	173.900			
Feb		14.700	12 1/2	9 3 9		Sept	29	100.100			
Mar	17	08.000				Sept	2	13.800			
Apr		48.300				Sept	14	300			
May		20.300				Sept	14	14.100	12 1/2	8 10 3	
June	6	450				Aug	11	189.500			
July		20.750	12 1/2	12 19 4 1/2		"	4	173.900			
Aug	23	03.200				Sept	14	15.000			
Sept	17	08.600				Sept	14	700			
Oct		14.600				Sept	14	18.900			
Nov		300				Aug	18	205.800			
Dec		14.900	12 1/2	9 0 3		"	11	189.500			
Jan	29	98.100				Sept	14	10.300			
Feb		23.83.200				Sept	14	300			
Mar		149.00				Sept	14	16.000	12 1/2	10 7	
Apr		15.200	12 1/2	9 10		Aug	25	219.700			
May	6	113.000				"	18	205.800			
June	27	98.100				Sept	14	139.000			
July		14.900				Sept	14	300			
Aug		15.100	12 1/2	9 10		Sept	14	14.700			
Sept	1	230.800				Sept	1	230.800			
Oct	27	219.700				Aug	25	219.700			
Nov		11.500				Sept	3	225			
Dec		11.325	12 1/2	7 1 7		Sept	3	11.325	12 1/2	7 1 7	
Jan	8	244.000				Sept	8	244.000			
Feb	2	239.800				Sept	14	300			
Mar		18.200				Sept	14	13.500			
Apr		258.100				Sept	14	300			
May		8.244.000				Sept	14	14.700			
June		14.400				Sept	14	300			
July		22.275.200				Sept	14	14.700			
Aug		15.258.400				Sept	14	300			
Sept		15.800				Sept	14	14.700			
Oct		172.50				Sept	14	300			
Nov		29.3400				Sept	14	14.700			
Dec		22.275.200				Sept	14	300			
Jan		18.200				Sept	14	14.700			
Feb		450				Sept	14	300			
Mar		78.050				Sept	14	14.700			
Apr		311.300				Sept	14	300			
May		293.400				Sept	14	14.700			
June		17.900				Sept	14	300			
July		450				Sept	14	14.700			
Aug		18.300				Sept	14	300			
Sept		19.323.200				Sept	14	14.700			
Oct		311.300				Sept	14	300			
Nov		119.00				Sept	14	14.700			
Dec		12.200				Sept	14	300			
Jan		17.312.000				Sept	14	14.700			
Feb		17.323.200				Sept	14	300			
Mar		188.00				Sept	14	14.700			
Apr		450				Sept	14	300			
May		19.25.00				Sept	14	14.700			
June		27.355.200				Sept	14	300			
July		22.342.000				Sept	14	14.700			
Aug		13.200				Sept	14	300			
Sept		13.500				Sept	14	14.700			