

**'THE GERMAN'S TALE' -
GERMAN HISTORY, ENGLISH DRAMA
AND THE POLITICS OF ADAPTATION**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the adaptation history of Harriet Lee's novella 'Kruitznier, or The German's Tale' (1801). Published in *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of novellas by Harriet Lee and her sister Sophia, 'Kruitznier' is now largely remembered as the source of Byron's tragedy *Werner* (1822). However, in addition to *Werner*, the story was incarnated as a closet drama (1802) by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, in collaboration with her sister Harriet, Countess of Bessborough; a stage play by Lee herself (1825), and a stage adaptation of *Werner* by William Charles Macready (1830).

The first chapter introduces *The Canterbury Tales* and its relationship to the radical debates of the late 1790s. The argument considers the radical associations of the German historical setting Lee uses in 'Kruitznier' and demonstrates that Lee employs a particularly politically charged historical context (the Thirty Years' War) to comment on her own time. I also consider Lee's approach to history and at the anti-aristocratic discourse in the novella, applying Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to her representation of social conduct and appearance.

In the second chapter I explore the many ways in which the Duchess of Devonshire was involved in the theatrical and literary world. A particular focus of this chapter is her early play *Zillia* (1782), which I discuss in connection to the political dimension of pedagogical drama for the education of the female elite. I also consider the relationship between *Zillia* and Devonshire's later theatrical projects and political agenda, and assess how her concept of a drama addressing intimate emotions anticipates Joanna Baillie's theory of 'closet drama', sketched in the 'Introductory Discourse' to her *Plays on the Passions* (1798). Additionally, I discuss the relationship between elite private theatricals and Romantic experimental drama.

The third chapter is devoted to *The Hungarian*, and the political dimension of Devonshire's theatrical activities in the 1790s and early 1800s. Thus, her epilogue for the first Drury Lane staging of Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* (1798) is part of a careful strategy to eliminate the radical associations of the play's German setting. Devonshire also appropriates Lee's radical novella in accordance with her own Whig politics. *The Hungarian* can be read as a pedagogical drama promoting the idea of an education of sensibility, which assigns to women the task of educating men in sympathy and politeness, and teaches them to combine military with civilian virtues. As becomes evident, Devonshire's dramas are themselves positioned on the margins between the privacy of the 'closet' and the public sphere.

In the fourth chapter I explore Byron's *Werner* in connection to his politics, his theatrical activities and his views on drama. I investigate how he appropriates the Thirty Years' War setting of Lee's novella for the context of post-Napoleonic Europe, particularly alluding to his opposition against the politics of Restoration and the Austrian occupation of Northern Italy. Simultaneously referring to the radical debates of the late 1790s and early 1800s and subtly modifying the anti-aristocratic elements of his source, *Werner* is an example of Byron's ambivalent political views. This ambivalence is also reflected in his complex relationship with the stage. His concept of 'mental theatre' has strong affinities to Baillie's idea of 'closet drama', but also to aristocratic elite theatricals. As in Devonshire's case, Byron's attempts to distance his plays from public performances and commercial playwriting are deeply informed by his aristocratic status.

The concluding chapter investigates Byron's subtle strategies of simultaneously praising and dismissing Lee's novella in his preface and comments to *Werner*, and Lee's own

attempt to reclaim her story by writing herself a dramatic adaptation, entitled *The Three Strangers*, which reinvents the story yet again as a melodrama with parodic elements. In this context, I also discuss William Charles Macready's acting version of *Werner* (1830), as well as the play's reception history and the debate on its authorship at the end of the nineteenth century.

My dissertation opens up perspectives on the strategic ways in which women writers used historical settings and literary adaptation to participate in political debates; on the relationship between experimental Romantic drama, pedagogical writing and aristocratic elite culture; and on the interactions between gender, genre, class and authorship.

ABBREVIATIONS

- BL British Library.
- BLJ* *Byron's Letters and Journals*, 12 vols., ed. Leslie A. Marchand. London: John Murray, 1973-82.
- BCMP* *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- BCPW* *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, 7 vols., ed. Jerome J. McGann et. al. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-1991.
- CH Castle Howard.
- PMLA* *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*.
- RR* *The Romantics Reviewed. Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers. Part B: Byron and Regency Society Poets*, 5 vols., ed. Donald H. Reiman. London, New York: Garland Publishing, 1972.

INTRODUCTION

In the last year of the century, the cultural journal *The Nineteenth Century* published an article which made a curious claim. According to its author Frederick Leveson Gower, Byron's tragedy *Werner* (1822)¹ had been written not by Byron himself, but by Leveson Gower's own grandmother, the famous Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806).² Leveson Gower's statement seemed particularly surprising and absurd because *Werner*, although almost never acted today, was one of the most popular stage plays of the century, and by far Byron's most successful work at the box office. The Duchess of Devonshire, on the other hand, then mainly famous as a 'society queen' of the Georgian era, was not known to have written any plays at all, and the two anonymous epistolary novels she had published at a young age had long been forgotten. The fact that the claim was taken seriously at all reflects a common critical bias against Byron's tragedy. His most successful work stage play, *Werner* is also his only dramatic adaptation of a popular work of contemporary prose fiction: Harriet Lee's novella 'Kruitznor, or The German's Tale' (1801), published in *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories Harriet Lee wrote together with her sister Sophia.³

Although it was soon refuted by Byron's editor E. H. Coleridge⁴, Leveson Gower's claim turned out to have been not altogether unfounded. As Devonshire's sister Harriet, Countess of Bessborough (1761-1821) reported in a letter to her lover Granville Leveson Gower (Frederick's father), in 1802 the two sisters did indeed compose a dramatic adaptation

¹ George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works* (hereafter referred to as *BCPW*) 7 vols., ed. Jerome J. McGann et. al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-1991), vol. 6 (1991), pp. 383-510.

² Frederick Leveson Gower, 'Did Byron Write *Werner*?', *Nineteenth Century* 46 (1899), pp. 243-250.

³ Harriet Lee, 'Kruitznor, or the German's Tale', in Harriet and Sophia Lee, *The Canterbury Tales*, 5 vols. (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1797-1805), vol. 4 (1801), pp. 1-368.

⁴ George Gordon, Lord Byron, *The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 7 vols. (London: John Murray, 1898-1904), vol. 5 (1901), pp. 329-333.

of Lee's novella.⁵ The play was long thought to have been lost, so that for a long time it could not be said whether there was any truth in Frederick Leveson Gower's surprising claim. However, in 2003, a manuscript of Devonshire's 'Kruitzner' adaptation, entitled *The Hungarian*, was unearthed by Professor Donald Bewley in the Huntington Library in California.⁶ While this drama differs considerably from Byron's version, there are parallels which suggest that he indeed was acquainted with their play.

A case study about adaptation and theatrical appropriation in English Romantic Literature, and its political and cultural aspects and dimensions, my thesis is intended to explore the complex adaptation history of Harriet Lee's 'Kruitzner, or The German's Tale'. Although now largely remembered as the source of Byron's tragedy, as will become evident, the novella is an interesting and innovative work in its own right, as is *The Canterbury Tales* collection as a whole. My dissertation traces the story of Frederick von Siegendorf, the protagonist of Lee's 'German's Tale', following it through its various incarnations from her original story, Devonshire's *Hungarian*, Byron's first draft and completed tragedy, Lee's own later dramatic adaptation *The Three Strangers* (1825)⁷, to William Charles Macready's popular stage version of Byron's tragedy (1830).⁸ In the course of this reception history, my study will also explore the Duchess of Devonshire's earlier literary career, in particular her pedagogical drama *Zillia* (1782)⁹, which is significant for understanding Devonshire's position as a female aristocratic writer.

Whereas earlier discussions of Byron's *Werner* have often centered around issues of plagiarism and originality, my thesis applies the concept of cultural and literary appropriation developed, among others, by Roger Chartier. As Chartier argues in *Cultural History*, 'appropriation really concerns a social history of the various interpretations, brought back to

⁵ Letter from Harriet, Countess of Bessborough, to Granville Leveson Gower, February 1802, in Lord Granville Leveson Gower, *Private Correspondence, 1781-1821*, 2 vols., ed. Castalia Countess Granville (London: John Murray, 1916), vol. 1, p. 332.

⁶ Huntington Library, The Kemble-Devonshire Collection, MS K-D 571.

⁷ Harriet Lee, *The Three Strangers. A Play in Five Acts* (London: Longman etc., 1826).

⁸ George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Werner. A Tragedy. A Facsimile of the acting version of 1830 by William Charles Macready*, ed. Marvin Spevack (München: Fink, 1970).

⁹ Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, *Zillia*, Chatsworth MSS, 5th Duke Group, MS 411.

their fundamental determinants (which are social, institutional and cultural), and lodged in the specific practices that produce them'.¹⁰ Thus, rather than measuring the extent to which *Werner* or *The Hungarian* can be seen as an original productions, I look at the way in which stories and texts, as they are adapted and appropriated in different genres and/or historical or social contexts, change their meaning, and their social and political connotations. Recognizing, to quote Chartier, 'that minds are not disincarnated'¹¹, my study will put particular emphasis on the complex ways in which Byron's and Devonshire's Lee adaptations relate to their respective social positions and political affiliations.

As I intend to show, the fact that Lee's novella, a text informed by the 'Jacobin' radicalism of the 1790s, was adapted by two very different members of the English aristocracy, both celebrities and icons of their own times, is more than an incidental curiosity. A discussion of Byron's engagement with both 'Kruitznor' and *The Hungarian* is interesting in connection to his political views and their interaction with his approach to professional playwriting. Although Byron and Devonshire had very different political agendas, their adaptations use similar strategies to reinterpret and appropriate Lee's radical and anti-aristocratic discourse according to their own political positions and values.¹²

The case of the Duchess of Devonshire will be considered here in detail. As will become evident, her theatrical activities illustrate the complex connections between political, literary and pedagogical activities by elite women. My discussion is informed by recent developments in historiography and cultural studies, that emphasize the crucial roles such women, although they could hold no formal political position, occupied in public networks.¹³

¹⁰ See e. g. Roger Chartier, *Cultural History. Between Practices and Representations*. Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹² For a discussion of dramatic adaptations and the ways in which they engage with the political and social issues discussed in their source texts see also Philip Cox, *Reading Adaptations: Novels and Verse Narratives on the Stage, 1790-1840* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 1-21; pp. 163-168. While Cox's focus is on 'popular' stage adaptations, my own study explores the implications of dramatic adaptations in a context of elite culture.

¹³ See also Amanda Vickery, 'Introduction', in Amanda Vickery (ed.), *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 1-55, here: p. 3; Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde and Fashionable Life in Eighteenth-Century London, 1688-1800* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2003), esp. pp. 22-62.

Thus, although my study explores Devonshire's particular position as a female aristocratic playwright and politician, it places her in the context of late eighteenth-century political and literary networks rather than pointing out her exceptionality.

My dissertation is also informed by, to quote Amanda Vickery, 'an ongoing "rethinking of the political"' and continuing debate on the relationship between the private and public spheres in the eighteenth century.¹⁴ As scholars such as Vickery and Elizabeth Eger have pointed out, since the 1990s, recent scholarship, gender studies in particular, have responded to, and further developed, Jürgen Habermas's concept of the emergence of a dichotomy between a 'public' and a 'private' sphere in the course of the eighteenth century, with the 'private' being coded as feminine and the 'public' as masculine.¹⁵ Rather than emphasizing the separation of the private and public and of feminine and masculine spaces, scholars have explored the complex ways in which both spheres were interconnected, and in which women, in different capacities, participated in public life. As Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona Ó Gallchoir and Penny Warburton, writing on literary women, point out, an approach that 'emphasises the role of women as producers of culture [which] also explores their relationship to the public gaze [...] inevitably challenges any theoretical or interpretative model of the period which constructs the public and private as mutually exclusive categories'.¹⁶

As will become evident, Devonshire's example illustrates the wide zone of transition between the public and private, which the Duchess deliberately used to find an acceptable position as a writer, as well as the strategies women used to negotiate between the private and public spheres.

¹⁴ The concept of the private and public spheres in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is indebted to the definition in Vickery, 'Introduction', esp. p. 3; Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona Ó Gallchoir, Penny Warburton, 'Introduction: women, writing and representation', in Elizabeth Eger et al. (eds.), *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1-23.

¹⁵ For Habermas's concept, originally dating from 1962, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1989).

¹⁶ Eger et al., 'Introduction', p. 3.

The opening chapter introduces *The Canterbury Tales*, and looks at the collection's political dimension. I briefly discuss the radical associations of the German historical setting Lee uses in 'Kruitzner', before showing how Lee employs a particularly politically charged historical background (the Thirty Years' War) to comment on her own time. I also consider Lee's approach to history and the anti-aristocratic discourse in the novella, applying Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to her representation of social conduct and appearance. *Habitus*, according to Bourdieu's sociological definition which I apply here to literary and cultural studies, signifies a pattern of social conduct, taste and behaviour and system of values that identifies a person (and, applying a wider definition, possibly also a literary character) as a member of a distinctive social group. Crucially, for Bourdieu, a person's *habitus* is acquired in childhood and youth both through formal education and the imitation of other members of the social group in which that person moves.¹⁷ 'Political' is used in the widest possible sense of the word, meaning party politics as well as any discourse concerning matters of the social order, no matter whether related to gender, issues of citizenship or social hierarchies.¹⁸ The term 'radicalism', for the purpose of my thesis, refers to British radical discourse of the 1790s and early nineteenth century, during and in the aftermath of the French Revolution, which criticised and questioned the existing political and social order and the power distribution connected with it, as well as institutions like the monarchy, the church and aristocratic privilege.¹⁹ As my study will show, while certain literary topics and backgrounds were particularly associated with radical discourse, authors opposed to radical politics deliberately adapted and appropriated works that used such topics or addressed radical ideas, in order to purge them of their potentially subversive associations.

¹⁷ For Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* see e. g. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), *passim*. See also Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory: Critical Investigations* (London: Sage, 1997); Derek Robbins, *The Work of Pierre Bourdieu: Recognizing Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

¹⁸ See e. g. Vickery, 'Introduction', pp. 1-55, esp. pp. 4-6.

¹⁹ For a general introduction see H. T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution, 1789-1815* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985, repr. 1988). See also Ian Small, 'Introduction: The French Revolution and British Culture', in Ceri Crossley and Ian Small (eds.), *The French Revolution and British Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. ix-xviii.

This thesis, then, has two main themes, which are interrelated in several ways: the adaptation history of 'Kruitznier' and aristocratic theatrical authorship and its connection with experimental Romantic drama.

Chapter 2 of my thesis, the first of two chapters devoted to Devonshire, discusses the Duchess's earlier involvement with the theatre to set the stage for the broader theatrical and cultural background of the subsequent 'Kruitznier' adaptations. I will explore Devonshire's theatrical activities and investigate the reasons why she left her plays unpublished. Particular focus is on her early play *Zillia* (1782), which I discuss in connection to the political dimension of pedagogical drama for the education of the female elite. I also consider the relation between *Zillia* and Devonshire's later theatrical projects and political agenda, and assess how her concept of a drama addressing intimate emotions anticipates Joanna Baillie's theory of 'closet drama', sketched in the 'Introductory Discourse' to her *Plays on the Passions* (1798).²⁰ Additionally, I briefly look at the relation between elite private theatricals and Romantic experimental drama.

The third chapter is devoted to *The Hungarian*, and the political dimension of Devonshire's theatrical activities in the 1790s and early 1800s. Thus, Devonshire's epilogue for the first Drury Lane staging of Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* (1798) is part of a careful strategy to eliminate the radical associations of the play's German setting. She also appropriates Lee's radical novella in accordance with her own Whig politics. While the collaboration between Devonshire and her sister, the Countess of Bessborough, is addressed in my discussion, the play itself will primarily be interpreted as Devonshire's production. In contrast to her sister, Bessborough is otherwise not known to have composed literary works: the surviving manuscript credits Devonshire alone, and Bessborough herself conceded that the play had mainly been written by her sister. As I will demonstrate, *The Hungarian* can be read

²⁰ The term 'closet drama' is here used in the sense applied by Catherine Burroughs, signifying a drama about the 'closet', i. e. about intimate, 'closeted' feelings, rather than a drama that has remained, or is intended to remain, unperformed. See Catherine B. Burroughs, *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), esp. pp. 86-91.

as a pedagogical drama promoting the idea of an education in sensibility, which assigns to women the task of educating men in sympathy and politeness, and teaches them to combine military with civilian virtues. Devonshire's dramas are themselves positioned on the margins between the privacy of the 'closet' and the public sphere. The degree of knowledge her acquaintances had about her writing clearly depended on their level of intimacy with her, and thus suggest different layers of publicity rather than a Habermasian dichotomy. Represented by the Duchess as amateur exercises, her works still had a potential for publication, and for her participation in public debates on pedagogy and the role of aristocratic women. By avoiding trespassing into the unambiguously public sphere as a writer, she aimed to make her works acceptable within her social circles without offending the codes of her class and thereby scrutinising her social standing and political influence.

In the fourth chapter I explore Byron's *Werner* in connection to his politics, his theatrical activities and his views on drama. I investigate how he appropriates the Thirty Years' War setting of Lee's novella in the context of post-Napoleonic Europe, particularly alluding to his opposition against the politics of Restoration and the Austrian occupation of Northern Italy. Simultaneously referring to the radical debates of the late 1790s and early 1800s and subtly modifying the anti-aristocratic elements of his source, *Werner* is an example of Byron's ambivalent political views. This ambivalence is also reflected in his complex relationship with the stage. As I will discuss, his concept of 'mental theatre' has strong affinities to Baillie's idea of 'closet drama', but also to aristocratic elite theatricals. The performative aspect of aristocratic sociability is also discussed in chapter 4. As will become evident, an assessment of Devonshire's involvement with public theatre, patronage, elite private theatricals, and Bailliean closet drama is illuminating in respect to Byron's own attempts to distance his plays from public performances and his concept of 'mental theatre'. A discussion of Devonshire also throws new light on Byron's attitude towards the stage, and will show the class-based dimension of his supposed 'stage fright' and anti-theatricality.

The concluding chapter investigates Byron's subtle strategies of simultaneously praising and dismissing Lee's novella in his preface to *Werner*, and Lee's own attempt to reclaim her story by writing her own dramatic adaptation, entitled *The Three Strangers*, which reinvents the story yet again as a melodrama with parodic elements. In this context, I also briefly look at William Charles Macready's acting version of *Werner* (1830), as well as the reception history of the play and the debate on its authorship at the end of the nineteenth century.

My dissertation will open up a variety of perspectives on the strategic ways in which women writers used historical settings and literary adaptation to participate in political debates; on the relationship between experimental Romantic drama, pedagogical writing and aristocratic elite culture; and on the interactions between gender, genre, class and authorship.

CHAPTER 1

**‘MISTAKEN FOR A PERSONAL GIFT’ -
HARRIET LEE, ‘KRUITZNER’,
ARISTOCRACY AND THE THIRTY YEARS’ WAR**

1

I am glad that *you* like ‘Werner’ and care very little who may or may not like it - [...] – The Story ‘the German’s tale’ from which I took it [ha]d a strange effect upon me when I read it as a boy – and it has haunted me ever since - from some singular conformity between it & my ideas.¹

Thus, Byron commented in a letter to his half-sister Augusta Leigh shortly after the publication of his last completed drama, the tragedy *Werner* (1822). The story he refers to here is the novella ‘Kruitzner, or The German’s Tale’ (1801) by the novelist and playwright Harriet Lee (1757-1851) published in the collection *The Canterbury Tales*, which she wrote with her sister Sophia.² In his preface to *Werner*, Byron expresses his praise in similar words: ‘When I was young (about fourteen, I think) I first read this tale, which made a deep impression upon me; and may, indeed, be said to contain the germ of much I have since written.’³ In conversation with Thomas Medwin, he was even more explicit about his

¹ Letter to Augusta Leigh on 12 December 1822, in George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Byron’s Letters and Journals* (hereafter referred to as *BLJ*), 12 vols., ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London: John Murray, 1973-82), 9, p. 55.

² Harriet and Sophia Lee, *The Canterbury Tales*, 5 vols. (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1797-1805).

³ Preface to *Werner*, *BCPW* 6, p. 384.

admiration for Lee's novella, placing it on a par with the stories of his favourite contemporary writer Walter Scott.⁴ Given these statements, which he made towards the end of his literary career, the comparatively little attention Lee has received in Byron studies seems surprising. An exploration of 'Kruitzner', as will become evident in the course of my study, is not just relevant in connection to *Werner*, but opens up perspectives on Byron's political agenda, the genesis of the Byronic Hero and his entire literary oeuvre.

In this chapter I assess how Lee's Tale exemplifies the political dimension of 'German drama' and the use of a Continental historical background (the Thirty Years' War) in the late 1790s and early 1800s. Additionally, I also briefly look at the experimental character of the Lees' *Canterbury Tales* as a literary project. Now largely remembered as the source text for Byron's play, Lee's novella was very successful and popular in its own time, as was the series in its entirety. All five volumes of *The Canterbury Tales* were favourably reviewed in the press, and 'Kruitzner' was singled out as particularly praiseworthy in at least one review of the collection's fourth volume.⁵ The story's popularity is also reflected in its complex adaptation history. In the early nineteenth century, it was incarnated in virtually all genres associated with 'German drama' (a term used both for translations from the German and original English plays set in Germany). In addition to Byron's adaptation, it was adapted as a 'closet drama' by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (*The Hungarian*, 1802)⁶, a sentimental stage play by Lee herself entitled *The Three Strangers* (1825)⁷, and an immensely popular

⁴ Byron to Thomas Medwin, 20 January 1822, after the completion of *Werner*, in Ernest J. Lovell (ed.), *Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 258. The significance of quotation and the way it relates to the passage from the preface to *Werner* quoted above are discussed further in chapter 5.

⁵ *The European Magazine* 41 (1802), p. 201, quoted from <http://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/cw3/ContribPage.cfm?Contrib=192> (21 April 2008). A collection of contemporary reviews of *The Canterbury Tales*, supplied by Julie Shaffer, can be accessed online at <http://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/cw3/AuthorPage.cfm?Author=HL> and <http://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/cw3/AuthorPage.cfm?Author=SL2> (21 April 2008).

⁶ See Peter Cochran, 'Harriet Lee's *The German's Tale*, *The Hungarian*, by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and Byron's *Werner*', *Keats Shelley Journal* (2004), pp. 175-187, repr. online: http://www.internationalbyronsociety.org/pdf_files/werner_duchess.pdf, pp. 1-9 (30 July 2006).

⁷ Harriet Lee, *The Three Strangers. A Play in Five Acts* (London: Longman etc., 1826).

acting version of *Werner* by William Charles Macready⁸, one of the epoch's most successful actors and directors. Tellingly, as late as 1830, Macready not only knew Lee's novella, but thought it superior to Byron's dramatic adaptation (see chapter 5).

Both Harriet and Sophia Lee were successful and critically acknowledged novelists and playwrights⁹, whose works were translated into French and German. The daughters of an actress and an actor turned theatrical manager, they grew up in a literary and theatrical world.¹⁰ In addition to their careers as writers, for several years Harriet and Sophia made their living as headmistresses of a boarding school for girls in Bath (1780-1803), which they ran together with their sisters Charlotte and Anna.¹¹ Recent work on revising the Romantic canon has brought a growing interest in the Lee sisters, particularly in Harriet's complex epistolary domestic novel *The Errors of Innocence* (published anonymously in 1786), her Gothic drama *The Mysterious Marriage, or The Heirship of Roselva* (1798)¹² as well as in Sophia's drama

⁸ George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Werner. A Tragedy. A Facsimile of the acting version of 1830 by William Charles Macready* (hereafter referred to as Byron and Macready, *Acting Version*), ed. with an introduction by Marvin Spevack (München: Fink, 1970).

⁹ *The Canterbury Tales IV* was favourably reviewed in *The European Magazine* 41 (1802), p. 201, *The British Critic* 21 (1803), p. 92, and *The Critical Review* 38 (1802), p. 331 f.

¹⁰ Their father John Lee adapted several of Shakespeare's plays for performance. His acting version of *Macbeth* was performed at the Edinburgh Theatre and published in 1753 (Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest. A History of the Gothic Novel* (London: Fortune Press, [1938]), p. 164).

¹¹ There is no full-length biography on either of the Lee sisters. For biographical information see e. g. April Alliston's introduction to her edition of *The Recess* ('Introduction', in Sophia Lee, *The Recess. A Tale of Other Times*, ed. April Alliston (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), pp. xxiii-xxxviii; pp. xlv-xlvi); Devendra P. Varma's introduction to his facsimile edition of the same novel ('Introduction', in Sophia Lee, *or A Tale of Other Times*, ed. Devendra P. Varma, 3 vols. (New York: Arno Press, McGrath Publishing, 1972), vol. 1, pp. vii-xlvi); John Franceschina, 'Introduction' to Harriet Lee's *The Mysterious Marriage*, in John Franceschina (ed.), *Sisters of Gore. Seven Gothic Melodramas by British Women, 1790-1843* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 65-70. For general information on the Lee sisters see also Douglass H. Thomson, 'Sophia Lee', in Douglass H. Thomson, Jack G. Voller and Frederick S. Frank (eds.), *Gothic Writers. A Critical and Bibliographical Guide* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 241-247; Janet Jones, 'Sophia and Harriet Lee', in Janet Todd (ed.), *Dictionary of British Women Writers* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 406 f.; Katharine Rogers, 'Harriet Lee' and 'Sophia Lee', in Janet Todd (ed.), *A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers, 1600-1800* (London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 64-67.

¹² Harriet Lee, *The Errors of Innocence*, 5 vols. (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1786 (published anonymously)); *The Mysterious Marriage, or The Heirship of Roselva*, in Franceschina (ed.), *Sisters of Gore*, pp. 63-120. See Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist. From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford, New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 123-127; Jane Spencer, *Minor women novelists and their presentation of a feminine ideal, 1744-1800; with special reference to Sarah Fielding, Charlotte Lennox, Frances Brooke, Elizabeth Griffith, Harriet Lee, Clara Reeve, Charlotte Smith, Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane West* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1982), pp. 183-209. For the play's reception see Greg Kucich, 'Reviewing Women in British Romantic Theatre', in Catherine B. Burroughs (ed.), *Women in British Romantic Theatre. Drama, Performance and Society, 1790-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 48-76, here: p. 50, 52 f, 55, 70 f; Emma J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762 - 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 145.

The Chapter of Accidents (1780) and her historical novel *The Recess, or A Tale of Other Times* (1783-1785).¹³ The renaissance of critical interest in the Lees was probably initiated in 1986 by Dale Spender's influential feminist account of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women writers, *Mothers of the Novel*.¹⁴ However, both Harriet and Sophia Lee had already been discussed and appreciated by scholars such as Clara Whitmore, Helene Richter, James Foster, Ernest Albert Baker, Montague Summers and B. G. MacCarthy earlier in the twentieth century.¹⁵ Although, following Spender's study, a selection of some stories, including 'Kruitznar', was published in 1989¹⁶, to my knowledge, hitherto there have been no detailed studies devoted to *The Canterbury Tales*, arguably the Lees' most innovative and complex work.

¹³ See e.g. Spencer, *Woman Novelist*, pp. 195-201; Heather Lobban-Viravong, 'Bastard Heirs: The Dream of Legitimacy in Sophia Lee's *The Recess: Or, a Tale of Other Times*', *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 29 (2007), pp. 204-219; Anne H. Stevens, 'Sophia Lee's Illegitimate History', *Eighteenth-Century Novel*, 3 (2003), pp. 263-291; Douglass H. Thomson, 'Sophia Lee', in Douglass H. Thomson, Jack G. Voller, Frederick S. Frank (eds.), *Gothic Writers. A Critical and Bibliographical Guide* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing, 2002), pp. 241-247; Emma J. Clery, *Women's Gothic. From Clara Reeve to Mary Shelley* (Horndon, Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004), pp. 37-50; April Alliston, 'Of Haunted Highlands: Mapping a Geography of Gender in the Margins of Europe', in Gregory Maertz (ed.) *Cultural Interactions in the Romantic Age* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 55-78; Megan Lynn Isaac, 'Sophia Lee and the Gothic of Female Community', *Studies in the Novel* 28:2 (1996), pp. 200-218; Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, "'Ev'ry Lost Relation": Historical Fictions and Sentimental Incidents in Sophia Lee's *The Recess*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 7:2 (1995), pp. 165-184; Ellen Donkin, *Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London, 1776-1829* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 77-109.

¹⁴ Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel. 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen* (London: Pandora, 1986). *The Canterbury Tales* are introduced on pp. 232-234.

¹⁵ Clara Whitmore, *Women's Work in English Fiction. From the Restoration to the Mid-Victorian Period* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Knickerbocker Press, 1910), pp. 105-110; Helene Richter, *Geschichte der englischen Romantik*, 2 vols. (Halle: Niemeyer, 1911-1916), vol. 1, pp. 271-277; James R. Foster, 'The Abbé Prévost and the English Novel', *PMLA* 42:2 (1927), pp. 443-464, here: pp. 452-459; Ernest Albert Baker, *A History of the English Novel*, 11 vols., (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1924-1936), vol. 5, pp. 181-186; Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest. A History of the Gothic Novel* (London: Fortune Press, [1938]), pp. 164-169; B. G. MacCarthy, *The Female Pen. Women Writers and Novelists 1621-1818* (New York: New York University Press, 1994 (orig. pub. 1946-1947)), pp. 380-390.

¹⁶ Harriet and Sophia Lee, *The Canterbury Tales*, introduced by Harriett Gilbert (London: Pandora Press, 1989). The volume has a critical introduction but no annotations.

The series was initiated by Harriet Lee, who published the first volume in 1797, which was followed by four volumes published between 1798 and 1805.¹⁷ The *Tales* are an interesting and very ambitious literary project. As the title suggests, Lee's concept is modelled on Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Lee's introduction in the first volume (iii-xxiii) sets up a frame story in which a group of travellers from different origins and professions gets stuck in an Inn at Canterbury in a snow storm (xi). They decide to pass their time by telling each other stories (xi-xiii). Like Chaucer's collection, the *Tales* explore different social classes and types as well as the range of human emotions and behaviour, thus constituting a sort of *comédie humaine*. The *Tales* are set in different European countries and historical epochs, ranging from the Middle Ages to Lee's own time, with several stories focusing on contemporary events. Thus, the French Revolution, the abolition of aristocratic rule in France, and noble French *émigrés* figure both in 'The Frenchman's Tale' (vol. IV, 369-490)¹⁸ and 'The Scotsman's Tale' (vol. I, 191-329). The collection's key themes, linking Harriet's stories (central to 'Kruitzner' in particular), but also featuring in Sophia's two contributions, are issues of war, social change, exile and displacement. In obvious allusion to the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars of the Lees' own time, *The Canterbury Tales* form a prismatic, complex portrait of a Europe torn by the effects and after-effects of war and social upheaval. An immensely innovative project of thematically connected stories, they probably inspired *The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer* (1801-1802), a story collection by the novelist Charlotte Smith (1749-1806), which is concerned with similar issues and has arguably received more critical attention.¹⁹ Significantly, the Lees' exiles come from diverse strata of society, have different

¹⁷ Vols. 1 (1797), 4 (1801) and 5 (1805) by Harriet Lee, vol. 2 (1798) by Sophia Lee, vol. 3 (1799) by Harriet and Sophia Lee.

¹⁸ Also published independently as *Constantia de Valmont. A Novel* in the United States shortly after its original publication (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1799).

¹⁹ Charlotte Smith, *The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer. Continued Narratives of Various Description*, 5 vols. (London: Low, 1800-1802).

political backgrounds and are exiled for a variety of reasons, both social and political. Despite the *Tales*' use of radical discourse and their anti-aristocratic strain (particularly evident in 'Kruitznier', as is discussed below), like Smith's similar project²⁰, they express a generalised sympathy for victims of war, persecution and oppression, independent from their individual political loyalties.

Harriet Lee's use of the Chaucerian frame is itself charged with political connotations. For late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century intellectuals, the poet was strongly associated with the generation of the 'English' nation as well as with the country's liberal tradition. The philosopher and novelist William Godwin, with whom Lee had a correspondence, wrote a *Life of Chaucer*²¹, which had an impact on nineteenth-century writers such as Leigh Hunt.²² Godwin represents the medieval poet as politically progressive and a critic of the aristocracy of his own time. There is a strong anti-aristocratic element in Lee's use of Chaucer's concept. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the medieval poet was seen as the restorer of the English language after centuries of Norman French linguistic and cultural domination, with its connotations of feudalism, aristocracy and foreign rule. Chaucer was interpreted as an architect of 'Englishness', the restorer of the language and creator of a genuinely 'English' literature and the first portraitist of a complex English society not exclusively dominated by the nobility.²³

²⁰ For politics and sympathy in Smith's *Letters* see e. g. Amy Garnai, 'The Alien Act and Negative Cosmopolitanism in *The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer*', in Jacqueline M. Labbe (ed.), *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), pp. 101-112.

²¹ William Godwin, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Early English Poet: including memoirs of his near friend and kinsman, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster: with sketches of the Manners Opinions, Arts and Literature of England in the Fourteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London: Phillips, 1803). It was reprinted in a four volume edition one year later.

²² Sabrina Piccinini, *The Good Old Times: The Recovery of Medieval Literature in the Romantic Period* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2003), pp. 215-218.

²³ See Godwin, *Chaucer*: 'Chaucer fixed and naturalised the art of poetry in our island. But what is most memorable in our eulogy, is that he is the father of our language, the idiom of which was by the Norman conquest banished from courts and civilised life, and which Chaucer was the first to restore to literature, [...]' (vol. I, p. vii).

By adapting the Chaucerian frame and title, Harriet Lee consciously writes a series in the tradition of canonical English literature. Works of that kind were commonly associated with male writers. On the other hand, as the motto for her *Tales*, she employs a quote from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) describing 'A woman's story at a winter's fire/ Authoriz'd by her granddame' (sic).²⁴ Lee's use of the Shakespearean quotation, made by Lady Macbeth to dismiss her husband's vision of his murdered friend Banquo, is complex and clever. At first sight it seems to downplay the importance of her stories, but in the context of Shakespeare's play, Macbeth's vision proves to be prophetic, so the quote puts Lee's project into an ancient, female tradition of oral storytelling and narration. Additionally, many contemporary readers would have recognized the remark and the speaker; in the 1790s, *Macbeth* was one of the most popular Shakespeare plays, and Lady Macbeth, famously played by actress Sarah Siddons, a particularly well-known example of a dangerous, or even demonic, feminine character.²⁵ Thus, Lee's motto gives her own 'woman's stories' a slightly sinister quality.

The frame story in the introduction is itself filled with political resonance. To tell their tales, the inn guests establish an order which alludes to basic democratic and radical traditions. Lee's narrator declines to be the first storyteller and instead proposes to draw lots and employ the *levelling principle* (xxii; Lee's italics). The pilgrimage to the grave of Thomas à Becket in Chaucer's original *Canterbury Tales* is replaced by a secular and more or less accidental 'pilgrimage' to the burial ground of another and more recent hero of English liberal tradition. When approaching the inn where he intends to spend the night, Lee's narrator passes by a barbershop and meets the shop owner who offers to show him the grave of the poet and satirist Charles Churchill (1731-1764), also buried at Dover (vi-viii).²⁶ The scene,

²⁴ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Walton-on-Thames: The Arden Shakespeare, 1979), III, 4, 64 f.

²⁵ Lady Macbeth was Sarah Siddons' most famous and successful role, which she played from 1785 for over thirty years. See e. g. Catherine B. Burroughs, *Closet Stages: Joanna Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 51-58.

²⁶ For Churchill's life and poetry see e. g.: Charles Churchill, *Selected Poetry*, edited with an introduction by Adam Rounce (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2003); Wallace Cable Brown, *Charles Churchill. Poet, Rake and Rebel* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1953, repr. 1968).

and implicitly Lee's representation of Churchill's political role and afterlife, is at the same time affirmative and ironic. Thus, the barber describes Churchill enthusiastically as '[t]his great man [...] who lived and died in the cause of liberty' (viii). He stresses the anti-monarchist connection in mentioning that Churchill is buried 'in the very ground where King John did homage for the crown he disgraced' (ix), reminding the narrator of the parallels between Churchill's biography and Thomas Becket's defiance of Henry II and subsequent murder.

However, the barber, a comical character of whom the narrator says that 'his distinction was so like a barber' (vii), seems to be the poet's only worshipper at Dover, for he claims that his grave is almost forgotten by posterity (vii). In addition, the narrator expresses a more ambivalent view of Churchill and his politics, describing him as 'that vigorous genius, who, well calculated to stand forth the champion of freedom, has recorded himself the slave of party, and the victim of spleen!' (viif)

Churchill's earlier satires on actors (*The Rosciad*, 1761) and on critical reviewing (*The Apology*, 1761) were highly successful and probably appealed to Lee as an author and playwright. His later career is strongly associated with the famous and controversial Whig MP John Wilkes (1727-1792).²⁷ Through the acquaintance with Wilkes, Churchill's writings became increasingly political and openly concerned with current affairs.²⁸ In 1762, Wilkes was arrested and imprisoned for his political attacks on King George III and his minister the Earl of Bute in his newspaper *The North Briton*, which he co-edited with Churchill.²⁹

²⁷ For Wilkes' political role see: Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London et al.: Pimlico, 2003 (2)), p. 105-117; Adam Rounce, 'Introduction', in Rounce, *Charles Churchill*, pp. vii-xxxv, here: pp.x-xxii. For a recent biography of Wilkes see Arthur H. Cash, *John Wilkes. The Scandalous Father of Civil Liberty*, (New Haven, Connecticut, London: Yale University Press, 2006).

²⁸ The transition is particularly evident in the verse satire *The Ghost* (1762-1763), in which politics become the dominant issue from the third book (Rounce, 'Introduction', p. xiii).

²⁹ For Churchill's involvement in *The North Briton* and in Wilkes' political activities, see Rounce, 'Introduction', pp. xiii-xxii.

The historical Churchill died of natural causes (possibly syphilis) when he visited the outlawed Wilkes in France in 1764.³⁰ Thus, Lee's comment on his heroic death, put into the mouth of the barber, and implicitly his association with Thomas Becket as a rebel against a monarch and a political martyr, are at least partly ironic. In Lee's introduction, the political writer as a type remains an ambiguous figure whose relevance and actual achievements are never made clear.

The collection's complex mosaic structure and Lee's reference to the oral storytelling tradition both in her motto and her use of the Chaucerian concept are also interesting in connection to her approach to history and historiography. She is interested in the ways in which stories are transmitted, becoming fragmented or changing their meaning along the way. This is particularly evident in the Prologue, but, as Allen W. Grove has shown, also in other Tales such as 'The Old Woman's Tale: Lothaire' (published in the first volume), a story about an aristocratic antiquarian researching a medieval manuscript.³¹ Implicitly, *The Canterbury Tales* question the contrast between orally transmitted 'stories' and authoritative (and masculine) 'history'. Thus, Lee also questions the authoritative voice in historiography, showing instead the unreliability and incompleteness of historical transmission and hinting at the fact that the representation of history is always linked with power.³²

Lee's use of the 'Tale' as a genre is another interesting aspect. The individual 'Canterbury Tales' vary in length from 36 to over 500 pages in the original edition. The two longest works are by Sophia Lee, who was mainly a novelist, but with its 366 pages, Harriet's 'Kruitzner' also has the length of a short novel. Significantly, Harriet, as the initiator of the

³⁰ Rounce, 'Introduction', p. xxif.

³¹ For a discussion of 'Lothaire' see Allen W. Grove, 'To make a long story short: Gothic Fragments and the Gender Politics of Incompleteness', *Studies in Short Fiction* 34 (1997), pp. 1-10, here: pp. 7-8. Grove's article, one of the few studies that consider *The Canterbury Tales* independently from Byron's 'Kruitzner' adaptation, is also of interest for its general discussion of the subversive quality of Gothic short fiction and fragments by women writers.

³² As will be shown in chapter 4, this is also a crucial issue in Byron's rewriting of Lee's novella.

project, avoids labelling their stories as either romances, novels or stories. Instead, she uses the more flexible term ‘Tale’, rooted both in canonic English literary history and (appropriately, given the title of her project) the oral tradition of the folktale, which can potentially refer both to poetry or prose fiction (see e. g. Byron’s *Oriental Tales*). Calling her fictions ‘Tales’ gives her the freedom to experiment with genres without having to conform to established genre boundaries and reader expectations in respect to style and content. Significantly, with the end of the third volume, the Lee sisters abandon the Canterbury setting. Their *Canterbury Tales* have themselves become an established and recognizable series no longer in need of the Chaucerian frame to incite the reader’s interest: ‘If you find my day-dreams as agreeable as I have done, we may henceforward recite Tales without going to Canterbury, [...]’³³

Gothic or historical short fiction was, of course, a popular genre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, such productions, usually labelled as ‘romances’, were typically first published in journals or magazines rather than in book form³⁴, and, prior to the Lees’ series, were not usually thematically interconnected. In the Preface to the Standard Novels edition of *The Canterbury Tales* in 1832, Harriet Lee herself refers to the innovative and experimental character of her prose fiction, and, in allusion to later works such as Charlotte Smith’s *Letters*, even positions herself as the originator of the Romantic ‘Tale’ as a genre:

Before I finally dismiss the subject, I think I may be permitted to observe, that when these volumes first appeared, a work bearing distinctly the title of ‘Tales’, professedly adapted to different countries, and either abruptly commencing with, or breaking suddenly into, a sort of dramatic dialogue, was a novelty in the

³³ This claim is repeated in ‘The Poet’s Address’ in the fourth volume (p. 1).

³⁴ According to Grove, at least twenty magazines regularly published such short fiction. For some examples see Grove, ‘Gothic Fragments’, p. 1 f.

fictions of the day. Innumerable 'Tales' of the same stamp, and adapted in the same manner to all classes and all countries, have since appeared; with many of which I presume not to compete in merit, though I think I may fairly claim priority of design and style.³⁵

Her concept of the 'Tale' as a new genre is indeed interesting and creative: passages narrated by an omniscient speaker who gives background information about the setting and comments on the characters' history, development and psychology alternate with long passages of dramatic dialogue. The reader is told the story from a distanced, analytical perspective, but confronted with the characters' own voices in crucial moments. Apart from allowing a more complex and multi-levelled characterisation, the sudden change from narrative to dramatic mode heightens the effect of the dialogue passages in particular. It was probably this quality which inspired admirers of 'Kruitzner' to suggest to Lee that the story was 'calculated for the stage'.³⁶ Combining the techniques and possibilities of narrative fiction with those of drama³⁷, the Leeian Tale is thus an experimental genre related to the 'closet drama'³⁸ or 'mental theatre' of her epoch. Although the term is rarely used for English literature, 'Kruitzner' is probably most aptly described as a novella, a narrative form shorter than the novel, which was particularly popular in early Romantic and 'Sturm und Drang' literature in Germany.³⁹ Clara Whitmore saw Lee as the originator of the English short story.⁴⁰ To my knowledge, Harriet Lee's reception of German prose fiction and her contribution to the English novella as a genre have never been investigated so far, although her texts, with their

³⁵ Preface to the 1832 edition, reprinted in Harriet and Sophia Lee, *Canterbury Tales*, pp. xvii-xix, here: p. xix.

³⁶ Advertisement to *The Three Strangers* (no page numbers).

³⁷ The Romantic novelist Thomas Love Peacock used a similar technique in his satirical 'conversation novels' such as *Headlong Hall* (1815) and *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), where however the theatrical element is even more pronounced, as some passages are written in dramatic form. Like Lee's, Peacock's texts are experiments in search of a genre that combines narrative fiction with dramatic elements.

³⁸ See e. g. Catherine B. Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, pp. 75-109 and *passim*.

³⁹ See e. g. Schiller's novella 'Verbrecher aus verlorener Ehre' ('The Criminal of Lost Honour'; 1785). The impact German novellas had on Lee's *Canterbury Tales* is an interesting aspect which could be further explored.

⁴⁰ Whitmore, *Women's Work*, p. 107.

innovative use of dramatic dialogue in particular, have a central role in the formation of English short fiction.

3

'The German's Tale', the subtitle of 'Kruitzner', invokes associations of German drama; the story is set in the war-torn Holy Roman Empire of German Nation, in Bohemia and Germany during the Thirty Years' War. The protagonist Frederick Kruitzner's real name is Frederick von Siegendorf; 'by birth a Bohemian, and of the first class of nobility' (58), and heir to a county. Frederick is shown as an extraordinary youth, intelligent, sensitive and capable of deep feelings. However, he is also a decidedly antisocial character who considers himself superior to ordinary humans and sees his greatness as innate and independent from his social origin (60 f).

At the outbreak of the Bohemian Revolt against Hapsburg rule (sic) - the 'Austrian yoke' (63) - , the first phase of the 'bloody and ruinous war' (63), Frederick is given the command of his father's troops. Overly self-confident and incapable of cooperation (65), however, he proves irresponsible as a military commander and is discharged of duty (66 f). The Count purchases him a prestigious but less important position in the army, which Frederick also loses after he has missed a battle 'buried in a licentious debauch' (68). Embittered, he leaves his father's estate and even considers joining the (Catholic) Imperial Forces (73)⁴¹; later his father disinherits him because of his persistently careless behaviour

⁴¹ This is a realistic touch in the context of a Thirty Years' War setting. For individuals to change sides was common and became a topos in the literary portrayal of the chaotic situation in the War, and has famously been portrayed in Hans Jakob von Grimmelshausen's novel *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* (*The Adventures of Simplicius Simplicissimus*, 1668). Additionally, the famous Albrecht von Wallenstein, *Generalissimus* of the Imperial army, was like Siegendorf originally a Bohemian Protestant nobleman, but had converted to Catholicism.

(74). Assuming the name of Kruitzner, Frederick lives as a restless wanderer, until he falls in love with and marries Josephine, the daughter of a Florentine scholar in political exile in Hamburg (76-89).

After their marriage and the birth of their older son Conrad (89), Frederick tries to reconcile with his father, only to reassume his former way of life, spending the money the Count has given him for his family (106-113). Disappointed, Count Siegendorf disowns him again (113 f). For a small allowance, Frederick agrees to let his father adopt his son Conrad as his heir (114), although he envies him for coming into a position he himself still feels entitled to (120). However, a distant relative of the Siegendorf family, Baron Stralenheim, attempts to claim the title, trying to have Conrad declared illegitimate (131; 137). By chance, Frederick and Josephine meet both Stralenheim (154) and Conrad (179) at M---, a small frontier town, where they have taken refuge from the war. When given the opportunity, Frederick steals Stralenheim's gold (170-172). Unknown to his parents, Conrad later kills Stralenheim, and succeeds in making his parents believe another stranger at M---, simply called 'the Hungarian', to be the murderer (335-341). After the death of the old Count, the family returns to the Siegendorf estates. Bohemia experiences a short period of peace after 'repeated sieges and pillage' (274), and Frederick, who presents himself before the Bohemian states at Prague, is cheered 'like one arisen from the grave' (274), and restored to the family title (275). Remorse leads him to donate the stolen gold to a monastery (276), but the family's domestic happiness is destroyed by the arrival of the Hungarian, who discloses that Conrad is both the murderer of Stralenheim and a leader of a group of banditti who maraud over the Bohemian countryside (317-350). After his identity has been discovered, Conrad leaves the estate and soon gets killed by an Austrian Hussar (364 f). Shortly afterwards, Frederick, sick and old before his years (367), dies as well, leaving his younger son Marcellin to inherit the title.

While the largest part of the story is narrated by an omniscient speaker, who occasionally assumes Frederick's or Josephine's perspectives, the events in M--- and Frederick's later confrontation with the Hungarian and Conrad are presented in more detail, and shown rather than told, with longer passages of dramatic dialogue.

Frederick has many traits of the Byronic Hero, the proud and mysterious, but sensitive and passionate character that was to make Byron famous:

It was observed that he was still pale, [...]; that he had powerful features, a brow marked by sorrow, and an eye of no striking effect in his countenance, unless kindled up by some sudden emotion, when it darted forward a fire that seemed like new-created light on the world. [...] [He] now and then cast eager glances upon his wife and child. These temporary starts of sensibility excepted, Krutzner was sombre, abstracted, and frequently employed in writing. (13 f)⁴²

However, in spite of his sensibility and intelligence, he is pictured as a self-interested, weak and self-pitying character, whose sense of superiority and disdain for an ordinary life are not really justified, and stand in sharp contrast to his personal failings.⁴³ Lee rejects the idea of innate greatness, stressing instead the importance of responsibility for others and the fulfilment of a productive role within the community. Thus Frederick's immaturity, self-pity and inability to reform himself are repeatedly stressed. When he loses a battle after a night spent drinking and gambling and is thrown out of the military, he proves unable to realize his own responsibilities. Instead he considers taking 'revenge' by fighting for the opposite side. In spite of their mutual affection, Frederick abandons his family to resume his former life

⁴² See also Peter L. Thorslev, *The Byronic Hero. Types and Prototypes*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), *passim*; Gabriele Poole, *Byron's Heroes and the Byronic Hero* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Notre Dame, 1998), *passim*.

⁴³ See e. g. p. 90: 'it was self, and self only, that had hitherto guided all his actions [...].'

when given the opportunity. Lee's conclusion about her hero's character is that 'he was not a villain; if the man who always first considers himself can be securely deemed otherwise' (98).

Julie Shaffer, who discusses 'Kruitzner' in two essays on non-canonical women writers⁴⁴, interprets Lee's project in *The Canterbury Tales* as an example of what Anne Mellor and others have termed 'feminine Romanticism' – an ideology which is community-oriented and evolutionary and opposed to masculine Romanticism as the celebration of the exceptional individual.⁴⁵ She also argues that, in the representation of Frederick, Lee is implicitly alluding to the image of male artists of her epoch: 'Although he writes letters, not poetry, this image of the man of strong feeling who writes in some kind of tranquillity links him with canonical Romanticism, a link strengthened when we learn that when overwhelmed with emotion, Frederick turns towards nature.' She sees 'Kruitzner' as a response to works such as the *Lyrical Ballads*, 'the work inaugurating the English Romantics' use of the 'growing self' as subject for poetry.'⁴⁶

Indeed, Lee's approach to poets has a decidedly ironic touch – her introduction to the *Tales* in the first volume is a subtle parody on the idea of a writer as a superior being. The narrator adopts the persona of an idealistic, but vain and naïve writer, who describes himself as 'among the eccentric part of mankind, by the courtesy of others, and themselves, ycleped poets'. (iii) In 'Kruitzner', the narrator repeatedly stresses the contrast between Frederick's egotistical, solipsistic character and the socially oriented, practical and courageous disposition

⁴⁴ Julie Shaffer, 'Challenging Conceptions of Proper Femininity and Women's Novelists' Relation to the Romantic', in Rainer Schöwerling, Hartmut Steinecke and Günter Tiggesbäumker (eds.), *Literatur und Erfahrungswandel 1789 – 1830: Beiträge des zweiten Internationalen Corvey-Symposiums, 8- 12 Juni 1993* (München: Fink, 1996), pp. 231 – 247; Julie Shaffer, 'Non-Canonical Women's Novels of the Romantic Era: Romantic Ideologies and the Problematics of Gender and Genre', *Studies in the Novel* 28/4 (1996), pp. 469 – 492. Shaffer focuses on Lee's 'feminine Romanticism' in 'Kruitzner', but does not discuss *Werner* or *The Three Strangers*, nor provide a detailed analysis of Lee's story.

⁴⁵ See e. g. Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism & Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), *passim*.

⁴⁶ Shaffer, 'Non-Canonical Women's Novels', p. 475 f.

of his wife.⁴⁷ Lee's motto for the novella, a shortened quotation from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Part I (1597/1598), reflects and foreshadows their relationship. Like the motto to *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole, it quotes a female Shakespearean character, in this case Lady Percy, wife to King Henry's enemy 'Hotspur' Harry Percy, who complains about her husband's change of character, inner restlessness and estrangement from her.⁴⁸

However, Lee's interest is not only in gender but also in class differences, education and *habitus*.⁴⁹ The story continually stresses both Frederick's irresponsible lifestyle and ill health, and his paleness and physical weakness, thereby calling up associations with the theme of the decadent nobility. More important, however, is Lee's interest in the tension between the influences of 'nature' and of 'nurture'. Frederick himself fails to recognize his charisma as a result of his aristocratic origin and upbringing and believes instead that his privileged background has prevented him from realizing his true potential:

The person of the young Count was early formed. [...] His features were fine; his voice was commanding, his eye then sparkled [...] and he had a loftiness of demeanour which seemed the expression of a noble soul. [...] [H]e was proud, not of his ancestors, but of himself. [...] The splendour, therefore, which the united efforts of education, fortune, rank, [...] threw around him, was early mistaken for a personal gift. [...] [A]s he believed, he was indebted to Nature, he

⁴⁷ The difference between Frederick's self-absorbed and Josephine's practical and socially oriented character is a central theme: 'Josephine, who in the contemplation of nature experienced a sacred feeling, that, while it swells the soul with rapture, fills the eye with tears, laid her hand in silence on that of her husband, and gently checked the speed with which he was driving.' (p. 267) Lee also stresses the difference between solipsistic sensitivity and sensibility for others. Not focused on herself, Josephine can see through the character and motives of other people: 'The habits of her mind, unlike those of Siegendorf, ever leading her to discriminate the sensations and opinions of others, created that nice perception of character to which he was a stranger' (p. 299).

⁴⁸ 'What is it that takes from thee/ Thy comfort, pleasure, and thy golden sleep?/ Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth,/ And start so often when thou sitt'st alone?/ Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheek?/ Oh! What portents are these?', William Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan (London: Thomson Learning and The Arden Shakespeare, 2002), II, 3, 42-65. Since Harry Percy's prowess and charisma as a soldier and military commander is a central theme of *1 Henry IV*, Lee's allusion to him in reference to her Frederick von Siegendorf is clearly ironic.

⁴⁹ The term *habitus* is used here in the sense established in the writings of Pierre Bourdieu. See introduction.

resolved not to be accountable to man. [...] He never stopt to inquire what he could have made himself, had he been born any thing but what he was. (59-61)

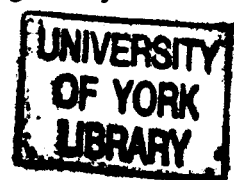
But for Lee, a character's *habitus* can easily be misleading and hide his personal failings. Thus, Josephine's father mistakenly 'place[s] to the credit of nature, and love of study, what was in fact the result of a highly cultivated education.' (81)⁵⁰ When Josephine discovers Frederick is a disinherited aristocrat, she is disappointed about him having declined from his original station in life rather than risen above it: '[S]he was mismatched. [...] She had given her hand to a man gifted, as she believed, beyond his fortunes: she perceived on the contrary she had united herself to one who debased them.' (93 f)⁵¹ She also fears that his position might result in him not treating her as an equal, and fears she will become a commodity, one of his 'many objects, and perhaps the one the least valued' (94).

The title 'Kruitzner, or The German's Tale', as Julie Shaffer points out, evokes associations of German Romanticism and in particular of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), an international success which made the young author famous and inspired a wave of interest in German sentimental literature and 'German' themes.⁵² The sensitive, exceptional protagonist of Goethe's epistolary novel, with his love for nature and disposition for unhappiness and self-destruction has indeed a lot in common with Lee's Frederick (and Byron was to allude to this association by giving his protagonist a name phonetically similar to 'Werther' and by dedicating his play to 'the illustrious Goethe'). Unlike Frederick, however, Werther is of bourgeois origin. His humiliating experiences as a secretary at a

⁵⁰ Josephine's father later fears that Frederick might abandon her in order to reconcile with his father and reassume his hereditary position, 'making his peace at the expense of her honour' (p. 96). Indeed when Frederick on his journey back to Hamburg is recognized by some fellow nobles, he 'relapse[s] into those vices which had already made a wreck of his honour' (p. 111 f), and only returns to his family after his father has 'disclaimed him for ever' (p. 114).

⁵¹ A 'mismatch' between a weak, selfish man and a 'sentimental' woman also features in Lee's novel *The Errors of Innocence*, in which the heroine is tricked into marrying a man whom she believes to be fatally ill (see *Errors of Innocence* I, p. 263; Jane Spencer, *Women Novelist*, p. 123).

⁵² Shaffer, 'Non-Canonical Women's Novels', p. 474; for the English reception of *Werther* see e. g. Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 490.



prince's court and his exclusion from aristocratic circles despite his exceptional capacities are central themes in Goethe's novel.⁵³ *Werther* criticises a society which values people according to their rank instead of their personal 'inner' qualities. Lee goes a step further in suggesting that the notion of innate greatness is in itself class-bound and that the 'loftiness of demeanour' and charisma of the exceptional individual is merely the part of the *habitus* of a member of a privileged class.⁵⁴

For the contemporary audience, however, the most obvious association would not have been with *Werther*, but with Friedrich Schiller's *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*, 1781). In spite of Goethe's criticism of eighteenth-century society in *Werther*, in England in the 1790s, Schiller's play was even more strongly associated with radicalism and 'Jacobin' politics. Nevertheless, the tragedy was immensely popular in Britain throughout the 1790s and 1800s, and was translated and adapted several times.⁵⁵ As 'one of the most influential books of the period' (Marilyn Butler)⁵⁶, *Die Räuber* was crucial in shaping the image of German literature and its 'radical' tendencies in late eighteenth-century Britain. Schiller's protagonists, the 'noble robber' Karl von Moor and his villainous brother Franz, became models for the Romantic rebel and the Gothic villain. Henry Mackenzie's discussion of the play in his 'Account of the German Theatre' (1788, in *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 2

⁵³ For an interpretation of *Werther* as a criticism of German eighteenth-century aristocracy see e. g. Arnold Hirsch, 'Die Leiden des jungen Werthers - Ein bürgerliches Schicksal im absolutistischen Staat' in Manfred Wacker (ed.), *Sturm und Drang* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), pp. 341-367.

⁵⁴ Compare Shaffer, 'Non-Canonical Women's Novels', p. 474.

⁵⁵ See e. g. Peter Mortensen, *British Romanticism and Continental Influences. Writing in an Age of Europhobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 155-172; Peter Mortensen, 'Robbing *The Robbers*: Schiller, Xenophobia and the Politics of British Romantic Translation', in *Literature and History* 11 (2002), pp. 41-61; Gerhard Stilz, 'Robbers, Borderers and Men: Englische Räuberstücke zwischen Revolutionstragödie und melodramatischer Restauration', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 65 (1991), pp. 117-131; Douglas Millburn Jr., 'The First English Translation of *Die Räuber*: French Bards and Scottish Translators', *Monatshefte* 59 (1967), pp. 41-53; Frederic Ewen, *The Prestige of Schiller in England 1788-1859* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), pp. 10-26; L. A. Willoughby, 'English Translations and Adaptations of Schiller's *The Robbers*', *Modern Language Review* 27 (1921), pp. 297-315; Margaret W. Cooke, 'Schiller's *Robbers* in England, 1788-1859', *Modern Language Review* 11 (1915), pp. 156-172; Thomas Rea, *Schiller's Dramas and Poems in England* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906), pp. 7-27. However, there is to my knowledge no comprehensive discussion that considers all existent English adaptations of the play.

⁵⁶ Butler, *Jane Austen*, p. 116.

(1790), 154-192) is a good example of its ambiguous British reception.⁵⁷ Mackenzie praises Schiller's 'ardent and creative imagination', but also fears 'danger of a drama such as this' because it 'covers the natural deformity of criminal actions with the veil of high sentiment and virtuous feeling'.⁵⁸ Lee's rewriting of the 'noble robber', or the bandit with an aristocratic background, as a criminal, suggests she would have agreed with this judgement.

Significantly, by the time Lee was writing 'Kruitzner', 'German' themes and settings had already become a cliché. Their association with political radicalism was easily recognizable and well-established and, given her project's political dimension, evidently deliberately evoked by Lee. In this context, it is interesting that, although otherwise reviews of her novella were largely favourable, *The Critical Review* dismissed it as 'constructed on ideas which the modern German writers have so abundantly supplied' and criticised its 'gloomy, horrid, and unnatural picture'.⁵⁹ Labelling originally German or German-themed plays and prose fictions as 'absurd' or 'unnatural' was a common strategy employed by anti-Jacobin or anti-radical writers, because the transcendence of class boundaries through sympathy, sentimentality and passion displayed in many of such works was perceived as politically subversive.⁶⁰ Thus the terminology of *The Critical Review* suggests an anti-radical agenda rather than merely a criticism of the story's literary quality.

The family conflict in 'Kruitzner' obviously draws on Schiller's play, taking the familiar ingredients which by then had become stock elements of sentimental drama – a German (or in this case a German-named Bohemian) noble family, an estranged father, a disinherited heir, a young aristocrat who becomes a famous bandit captain, a war-torn

⁵⁷ Henry Mackenzie, 'Account of the German Theatre', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 2 (1790), pp. 154-192.

⁵⁸ Mackenzie, 'Account', p. 180, p. 192.

⁵⁹ *The Critical Review* 38 (1802), p. 331 f; quoted from <http://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/cw3/ContribPage.cfm?Contrib=188> (21 April 2008).

⁶⁰ See chapter 3 of my dissertation.

country. However, Lee reshapes them in several significant ways. Instead of a conflict of brothers, her version tells the story of a conflict between different generations in an aristocratic family.⁶¹ Significantly, her story lacks a charismatic contender for the noble title like Schiller's villain Franz von Moor (Stralenheim is a minor character with little development interesting only in connection with his role in the tragedy of the Siegendorf family). The disinherited son who turns bandit is split into two characters: his roles are given to Frederick and Conrad respectively.

There are other crucial differences: while Karl, like Frederick heir to a Bohemian county, loses his position because of his brother's accusations and intrigues, Lee's protagonist is disinherited because he has really led the unreliable life Schiller's Karl is wrongly accused of. Conrad, in contrast to his father, is an energetic, resourceful character whose reputation as a bandit is similar to the image of Karl Moor. The particularly 'German' quality of the character was later recognized in a review of Byron's *Werner*: 'As to the beauties, the character of Ulric [the equivalent of Lee's Conrad], especially as contrasted with that of his father, is a lofty conception; the attributes of a Richard and Hotspur united, with a fine touch of true German feudality.'⁶² At their final confrontation, the Hungarian tells Frederick about Conrad's fame as a noble, extraordinary leader of a group of banditti:

⁶¹ Incidentally, the repetition and variation of the father-son-conflict in the second generation has a parallel in Schiller's original project of a second part of *Die Räuber*, for which he only wrote some notes and a short outline (1783-1786). The play was to be called *Die Braut in Trauer* (*The Bride in Mourning*) and would have told the story of the conflict between a middle-aged Karl Moor, now styling himself 'Count Julian', and his son Xaver, who has an incestuous affection for his sister Mathilda. (Friedrich Schiller, 'Die Braut in Trauer', in Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke in zehn Bänden. Berliner Ausgabe*, vol. 5 part 2, ed. Hans-Günther Thalheim et al. (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1990), pp. 633-639)). Schiller claimed that he planned a play 'of the kind of *Oedipus Rex*' or Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, but also in the tradition of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. The title was taken from William Congreve's *The Mourning Bride*, which had recently been translated into German by Johann Schlegel. *Die Braut in Trauer* was intended to be a 'complete apology [...] of the first part [...] wherein all immorality shall dissolve into the most sublime morality' (Letter to Heribert von Dalberg, 24 August 1784, translated by me and quoted from Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke* 5, p. 1145). Despite this announcement, the outline Schiller sketched suggests that, like Lee's novella, his drama would have criticised the inherent cruelty of a patriarchal system based on hereditary rank and title.

⁶² Review in *The Examiner*, possibly by Albany Fonblanque, 1 December 1822, pp. 754-757; 8 December, pp. 771-774, here: p. 774; quoted from: Donald H. Reiman (ed.), *The Romantics Reviewed. Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers. Part B: Byron and Regency Society Poets* (hereafter referred to as *RR*), 5 vols. (London and New York: Garland Publishing, 1972), pp. 1021-1027, here: p. 1027.

‘His [Conrad’s] birth and fortune were said to be princely: [...] his person was exaggerated to something super-human both as to strength and to beauty; his prowess was deemed unrivalled; and his influence [...] was represented to be almost that of witchcraft. [...]’ (329 f)⁶³ Lee, however, mocks this image of grandeur by letting the Hungarian stress the economical and social dimension of *habitus* and charisma: ‘I, therefore, concluded he was rich.’ (330)

Conrad’s image as a noble outlaw is totally subverted when he ultimately turns out to be a ruthless and merciless killer, who shows no remorse at the confrontation with his father and the Hungarian. He quotes Frederick’s own excuse that ‘there are crimes rendered venial by the occasion’:

Remember *who* told me, when at M-, that there were crimes rendered venial by the occasion: *who* painted the excesses of passion as the trespasses of humanity: [...] is it so wonderful that *I* should dare to act what *you* dared to think? [...] *You* held the torch! *You* pointed out the path! [...] (354 f)

Like her representation of Frederick, Lee’s image of Conrad reflects her scepticism about the idea of the great individual, emphasising instead the importance of education and social background. Both Frederick and his son have an air of superiority, a *habitus* than has been shaped by their upbringing as members of the social elite. At the same time, Conrad’s career as a cold-blooded criminal illustrates her views about the importance of an education of sensibility. Thus Conrad’s dynastic upbringing by the old Count, deprived of the personal affections of his parents, is employed to explain the lack of feelings that gives rise to his criminal career. However, while Lee, unlike Schiller, unambiguously rejects the idea of crime as a means to justice, ‘Kruitzner’ is more than a rewriting of *Die Räuber* from a ‘feminine’

⁶³ This character type resembles the protagonists of Byron’s verse tales such as the Giaour, Lara or the Corsair Conrad, who is probably named after Lee’s hero.

perspective, or a conservative rejection of the 'radical' tendencies associated with German drama and Schiller's play in particular. It can be read as a reflection on the question of the legitimacy of aristocratic rule and a criticism of a social and political system based on hereditary rank and title.

While 'Frederick' or 'Friedrich', Schiller's own first name, is common enough in Germany, 'Kruitzner' is taken from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), where, as 'Kreutznaer', it is the original name of Robinson's German-born father, a native of Bremen, changed into Crusoe 'by the usual corruption of words in England'.⁶⁴ Robinson is even born at the time of the Thirty Years' War, in 1632, although the reasons why his merchant father left Germany to settle in Britain are not specified.⁶⁵

The reference to Defoe's novel is significant: like Robinson, Frederick falls out with his father, loses his inheritance and becomes an exile. Old Crusoe's praise of the 'middle state' of life is mirrored in 'Kruitzner':

He told me [Robinson] that mine was the middle state, [...] which he had found by long experience was the best state in the world, the most suited to human happiness, not exposed to [...] miseries and hardships, [...] and not embarrass'd with the pride, luxury, ambition and envy of the upper part of mankind. [...] that the middle station had the fewest disasters, [...] they were not subjected to so many distempers and uneasinesses either of body or mind, as those were who, by vicious living, luxury and extravagancies [...], or by hard labour [and] want of necessaries, [...] bring distempers upon themselves by the natural consequences of their way of living; [...] that temperance, moderation, quietness, health,

⁶⁴ See: Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

society, all agreeable diversions, and all desirable pleasures, were the blessings attending the middle station of life [...]⁶⁶

Robinson's disobedience to his father is represented as a rebellion against divine order; his subsequent shipwreck is a result of divine providence and leads to his redemption (the phonetic similarity between 'Kreutznaer' and 'Kreuz', the German term for 'cross', hints at the Christian allegory). In contrast, in Lee's secularised story, Frederick's exile is caused by his personal disposition and failings. Far from being an unquestioned authority, old Count Siegendorf is portrayed as an embodiment of aristocratic values whose lack of sensibility helps to bring about his son's and grandson's downfall. By separating Conrad from his parents for dynastic considerations, the Count deprives him of the personal affections of his nuclear family, which in the novella serves as an explanation for Conrad's later lack of emotions and criminal career. Siegendorf's attempt at a restoration of the old order proves unstable.

The historical setting in the Thirty Years' War, is evidently also suggested by Schiller's writings. His recent *Wallenstein* trilogy on the famous and controversial imperial military commander and warlord Albrecht von Wallenstein had just been translated into English by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.⁶⁷ In 1799, when 'German themes' were at the height of popularity on the English stage, Captain William Blaquièrè had published a translation of Schiller's prose work on the period, *The History of the Thirty Years' War*, which in 1800 had already gone into a second edition.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶⁷ See Julie Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 63-93; Julie Carlson, 'Command Performances: Burke, Coleridge and Schiller's Dramatic Reflections on the Revolution in France', in *The Wordsworth Circle* 23 (1992), pp. 117-134; Matthew Scott, 'The Circulation of Romantic Creativity: Coleridge, Drama, and the Question of Translation.', in *Romanticism on the Net* 2 (1996), <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/1996/v/n2/005715ar.html> (30 July 2006), no pagination.

⁶⁸ Blaquièrè, Captain William. *The History of the Thirty Years' War in Germany: Translate from the original German of Frederic Schiller*, two vols. (Dublin: G. Burnet et al, 1800). For Schiller as a historian, particularly on the Thirty Years' War, see e. g. Michael Hofmann, *Schiller. Epoche – Werke – Wirkung* (München: C. H. Beck, 2003), pp. 72-91, esp. pp. 84-91.

The interest in this particular period of continental history is by no means incidental. For the audience of the late 1790s and early 1800s, the parallels between this turbulent epoch and the contemporary war against Revolutionary and then Napoleonic France was obvious, and the association between Wallenstein himself and Napoleon would have been especially poignant. In the preface to his translation, Captain Blaquièrè announced his intention 'to publish the history of a second war, more recent and more bloody, and by it to terminate the two most memorable epochs of the German history.'⁶⁹

Although these aspects are not explored in 'Kruitzner', as a Bohemian noble, despite his German family name, Frederick would have been a member of the Czech-speaking minority within the German-dominated Holy Roman Empire, as well as a Protestant. As a liberal writer, Lee sympathizes with the uprising of the Bohemian Estates for political and religious independence that led to the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War: 'Bohemia was on the point of plunging into a bloody, though hazardous war, and by her rejection of the Austrian yoke offered to the brave and independent a sphere of action calculated to awaken every nobler energy of the soul.' (63)

Robert Miles has interpreted Frederick as 'an avatar of the modern', disinherited by his father (who, according to Miles, stands for traditional feudal nobility), because through his military indiscipline and 'riotous living', he constantly violates the feudal code, but still is not able to entirely free himself from the value system of his class.⁷⁰ However, in reading Frederick as an essentially 'modern' character in opposition to his noble background, Miles neglects the fact that for Lee's readers, the disgraced officer was a recognizable contemporary

⁶⁹ Blaquièrè and Schiller, *History*, vol. 1, 'Preface'.

⁷⁰ Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 215-217.

aristocratic type.⁷¹ Lee's criticism of hereditary rule and of a decadent aristocracy evidently applies to her own time as much as to the epoch in which her story is set. Thus, Frederick's progress as a gambler and spendthrift seems to be more typical for a late eighteenth-century Englishman than a Bohemian noble at the time of the Thirty Years' War, and alludes to contemporary debates on aristocrats, military masculinity and effeminacy.⁷² In fact, Lee herself had already used that type in an earlier Canterbury Tale, 'The Landlady's Tale', this time a domestic story with a contemporary setting, in which the aristocratic officer is shown as a rake and seducer.

Crucially, in the case of 'Kruitznier', Frederick's moral decline during his time in the army is partly due to the corrupting influence of an all-male environment. Characteristically, without Josephine's sensible, polite and educated company, he immediately returns to his former ways. However, while Lee employs the familiar motif of women as educators who have a balancing influence on men, her main emphasis is on the question of aristocratic privilege. Essentially, Frederick's character is spoiled because due to his family's rank and money, he is given a position and responsibility he is not fit for, because of his immaturity and lack of experience and responsibility. The story's historical setting during a major pan-European war, in the cause of which Frederick's incompetence could pose a serious threat to his soldiers, gives Lee's critique of the purchased commission a particular poignancy.

In this context, Frederick's return to Prague, where despite his former failings he is cheered as a saviour because he symbolizes the return of the feudal stability of the pre-war era ('the hearts of men leant with indulgence to every thing that looked like the restoration of order' (274 f)) also seems like a prophetic description of the political Restoration in Europe at

⁷¹As will be discussed below, Byron's own father, himself a disgraced officer, has some biographical parallels to Lee's Frederick, which may be one of the reasons why the story appealed to Byron.

⁷²See e. g. Catriona Kennedy, 'John Bull into Battle: Military masculinity and the British army, 1793-1815', paper presented at the *Gender and Empire, 1763-1815* conference at the University of York, 1 December 2007, unpublished; p. 3; pp. 7-9.

the Congress of Vienna after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. However, the association for Lee's contemporary readership would have been with the return of French emigrants after the end of the Terror.

In the end, however, this restoration proves unstable: Frederick's position turns out to be based not on public acceptance and tradition, but on the violence and criminal actions of Conrad's bandits, and his 'loyal' subjects are actually in his son's pay. The attempt at a restoration of the pre-war order and society is thus represented as a chimera, or even as a criminal act – a poignant comment against political restoration.

CHAPTER 2

‘IF YOU ENCOURAGE ME, I SHALL PERHAPS TRY SOME MORE’ –

**GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE,
CLOSET DRAMA, PEDAGOGY, PATRONAGE,
AND FEMALE ARISTOCRATIC AUTHORSHIP**

1

Only a few months after its initial publication, ‘Kruitznier’ was for the first time adapted in dramatic form, in a rather unexpected context. Like *The Canterbury Tales*, the adaptation was a collaborative effort by two sisters; however, unlike the Lees, they were of highly elevated social rank. In the autumn of 1801 Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806), who was exactly the same age as Harriet Lee, and her younger sister Henrietta (Harriet), Countess of Bessborough (1761-1821), commenced the composition of their adaptation, a tragedy that would eventually be called *The Hungarian*.

Whereas to my knowledge there are currently no other known literary works by the Countess of Bessborough (and she herself acknowledged *The Hungarian* to be principally her sister’s production¹), the Duchess of Devonshire was a prolific writer, and in many ways involved with the theatrical world. Both her own works and her collaborative projects document a shift of interest to German literature (while her earlier influences are mainly

¹ Letter from Harriet, Countess of Bessborough, to Granville Leveson Gower, February 1802, in Lord Granville Leveson Gower, *Private Correspondence, 1781-1821*, 2 vols., ed. Castalia Countess Granville (London: John Murray, 1916), vol. 1, p. 332. See also Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p. 331; p. 431 n. 8.

French and Italian) and simultaneously show how around the turn of the century, topics of ‘sensitivity’ became loaded with political significance and connotations. Thus, as will become evident in the course of the two following chapters, her small dramatic oeuvre is an interesting example of the politicisation of closet drama, of private theatricals, the practice of adaptation and of German settings and themes.

As Devonshire has an interesting, though hitherto largely unacknowledged place in the history of closet drama and female playwriting, this chapter will be concerned with several aspects of her early engagement with theatre and theatricality preceding the Lee adaptation she composed with her sister. I will briefly discuss her earlier productions and literary interests, her anxieties about authorship, her role as a patron and the theatrical elements of her self-fashioning and earlier political career. I will also show how her example illustrates the boundaries between professional writing and dilettantism in the late eighteenth century, and their connections with issues of class, genre, gender and propriety, as well as the difficulties and possibilities of crossing and/or adapting to those boundaries. As will become evident in the following two chapters, all these aspects are crucial for understanding *The Hungarian* and Devonshire’s other plays in the context of her Whig politics and her particular position as an aristocratic woman dramatist. On a broader level, they help to illustrate the cultural, social and political dimensions of closet drama, private theatricals and adaptations.

Meanwhile, the main focus of this chapter will be on the Duchess’s earliest surviving play *Zillia* (1782), which is illuminating in connection to her development as a playwright, her interest in closet drama and the pedagogical and political dimensions of her dramatic works. A detailed discussion of *The Hungarian*, its political connotations and, more generally, of Devonshire’s role in the politicisation and cultural appropriation of ‘German drama’ and German historical settings around 1800 will follow in the next chapter.

Although her later dramatic works have only recently been relocated in the Huntington Library (the manuscript of *Zillia*, is preserved at the family estate at Chatsworth²), the Duchess had long been famous as a ‘queen of society’ (Katherine Byerley Thomson)³, *salonnière* and woman of fashion, but also a patron to the arts and a prolific writer. Born in 1757 and 1761 as the eldest and third child of the first Earl and Countess Spencer (they had two further surviving siblings), in their childhood Georgiana and her sister Harriet accompanied their parents and grandmother on their extensive travels to the Continent, and received a thorough private education, both in ‘feminine’ arts typical for upper class women such as music or dancing (in addition to her literary productions, Georgiana was also a composer, and both sisters were dilettante⁴ painters), and in languages and geography. They were partly educated by their mother Margaret Georgiana, Countess Spencer (1737-1814) with whom Georgiana in particular had a famously strong relationship.

From their childhood, the sisters had close contact with the theatrical and literary world. As members of the high aristocracy and daughters of passionate theatre-goers, they frequently attended both London theatres and private⁵ plays and *masques*, and met the famous actors and playwrights of their day. Their parents were patrons of writers like Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), who dedicated a section of his novel *Tristram Shandy* to the Spencer family, and actors such as David Garrick (1717-1779), who performed passages from his most famous

² Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, *Zillia*, Chatsworth MSS, 5th Duke Group, 411.

³ Devonshire kept this image and remained famous long after her death. See e. g. Grace and Philip Wharton (pseudonym for Katherine Byerley Thomson), *Queens of Society. Illustrated by Charles Altamont Doyle and the brothers Daziel*, 2 vols. (London: J. Hogg, [1860]), vol. 1, pp. 159-186. Thomson’s study also covers Devonshire’s niece Lady Caroline Lamb (vol. 2, pp. 167-186).

⁴ The term is used in the way it was used in the eighteenth century, without the modern negative connotation, meaning an educated person of elevated social standing pursuing a personal interest (such as a science or art) without financial interests and as an accomplished amateur, not a professional. As this chapter will show, Devonshire deliberately avoided the role of a professional writer.

⁵ The term ‘private’ is here used in the sense it was used in the second half of the eighteenth century, signifying a non-commercial event open to a selected, elite audience that was not publicly advertised. In many cases, ‘private’ productions could be quite pompous and lavish, and were attended by large audiences. For a thorough discussion of the nature of private theatricals see e. g. Gillian Russell, ‘Private Theatricals’, in Jane Moody and Daniel O’Quinn (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre 1730- 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 191-203.

roles at Spencer House or the family estate in Althorp.⁶ Young Georgiana in particular was interested in literature as well as theatre and spectacle from an early age. An undated letter to her friend Mary Graham, in which she records one of Garrick's private readings, vividly describes her strong reaction to his performance: 'I have no terms to express the horror of Mr. Garrick reading Macbeth. I have not recovered yet, it is the finest & most dreadful thing I ever saw or heard for his action & countenance is as expressive and terrible as his voice, it froze my blood [...]'.⁷ The fascination for the power of theatrical performance to create and command strong emotional responses in the audience remained with her throughout her life, and was later deliberately employed in her own writings. As a young girl, Georgiana began to compose her own poems and short plays which were performed in front of her family, and her juvenilia were praised both by her parents, and their social circle.⁸ In 1774 Lord Palmerston, a friend of the family, wrote a poem in celebration of her juvenile poetry.⁹

In 1774, at the young age of 17, Georgiana married William Cavendish, fifth Duke of Devonshire (1748-1811). All her life, the Duchess would be very much a public figure. Charming, intelligent and a member of the privileged circles of 'high Whiggery', she quickly became one of the central characters in London's 'fashionable' society, a fashionable hostess and herself a patron of famous actresses such as Sarah Siddons and Mary Robinson, and playwrights like William Hayley, Joanna Baillie and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (whom Devonshire also sponsored in his political career, supporting his entering parliament in 1780¹⁰). However, her private life, always a matter of public interest, was famously turbulent. She remained childless for nine years (her two legitimate daughters were born in 1783 and

⁶ Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p. 6.

⁷ Devonshire to Mary Graham, undated, National Library of Scotland, Lynedoch MSS 3624, f. 276. Also quoted in Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 46 f. Graham's biographer ascribes the letter to Devonshire (see Margaret-Ethel Maxtone-Graham, *The Beautiful Mrs. Graham and the Cathcart Circle* (London: Nisbet, 1927), p. 131). The handwriting clearly confirms the attribution.

⁸ Foreman, *Georgiana*, 10 f.

⁹ The poem was entitled 'On Reading some Poetry of Lady Georgiana Spencer's, Wrote at Althorp – 1774', and celebrates Georgiana's 'artless song'. See Gross, 'Introduction', p. 6 f.

¹⁰ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 83 f.

1785, the only son in 1790), and her marriage was notoriously unhappy.¹¹ Famous for her beauty and bright conversation, but also for her affairs (in 1791, she had an illegitimate daughter who was taken away from her), gambling addiction and persistent financial problems and debts, simultaneously admired and attacked for her flamboyant lifestyle and extravagant outfit, throughout her life she remained the subject of public interest and gossip among the London *ton*.¹²

Whereas even in modern literature Devonshire's image had long been limited to that of a *salonnière*, woman of fashion or even an 'aristocratic super-tramp',¹³ in her important study *Britons* (1992), Linda Colley has pointed out the gender bias in such representations.¹⁴ As Colley shows, the Duchess was a central figure in late eighteenth-century politics. A friend and regular correspondent of the Prince Regent and many prominent Whig politicians and an opponent of the Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger (1759-1806), she took a leading role as a canvasser for the Whig politician Charles James Fox (1749-1806) in the constituency of Westminster for the General Election of 1784.¹⁵ However, as a woman who 'crossed the boundaries of female propriety'¹⁶ as a political campaigner, she was frequently the subject of hostile satire and political caricature.¹⁷

¹¹ The birth of Devonshire's only son, born in Passy, Paris, after she and her husband had been many months abroad, was a complicated affair, and the real identity of his parents the subject of gossip. See Franco Crainz, *The Birth of an Heir to the 5th Duke of Devonshire, Passy, Paris, 21 May 1791* (Roma: Peliti Associati, 1989), pp. 5-24 and *passim*.

¹² For visual representations of Devonshire see e. g. Caroline Walker, 'Anomalous Beauties: Princess Charlotte of Wales, Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, and the Prince Regent's Gallery of Beauties', paper presented at the *The Eighteenth Century Now* conference at the University of York, 23-24 June 2006, unpublished.

¹³ Roy Porter, 'Seeing the Past', in *Past & Present* 118 (1988), p. 204, quoted from Colley, *Britons*, p. 242.

¹⁴ Colley, *Britons*, pp. 242-250.

¹⁵ Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 141-159. The Westminster Election, Devonshire's politics and their relationship to her theatrical inclinations and activities will also be discussed at more depth below and in the following chapter. See section 3 below and notes.

¹⁶ Betsy Bolton, *Women, Nationalism, and the Romantic Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 30.

¹⁷ See section 3 below and notes.

While Bessborough has only recently received her first full biography for many decades¹⁸, the eventful life of her more famous sister has been retold in several publications, most prominently in Amanda Foreman's biography (1998).¹⁹ The book probably owed at least part of its immense success to the fact that advertisements and reviews drew on the parallels to the life of Princess Diana, who had died in a car accident a year earlier. Indeed there are several striking similarities, which have recently prompted Dalya Alberge in *The Times*, on a forthcoming biographical film on Devonshire, to call her 'the 18th century Diana'.²⁰ Like Devonshire, Princess Diana was the daughter of an Earl Spencer, a celebrated beauty and a fashion icon. Both women were famously unhappily married, had notorious love affairs and issues with addiction, and died at an early age.²¹ Like Prince Charles, the Duke of Devonshire for many years lived in a ménage à trois, and after his wife's death married his long time lover. In addition to these biographical details, there are also deeper parallels. Both Devonshire and Princess Diana were public characters whose private lives were the subject of popular interest and fascination. Both had a gift for self-fashioning and created a recognizable public persona which they deliberately promoted in the media, but at the same time they also were 'media products', who could not always control the ways in which they were represented (the tension between Devonshire's public image and her literary inclinations and identity as a writer are discussed further below). Foreman herself, however, does not focus on the Princess Diana connection. Her biography is a scholarly, thoroughly researched portrait of

¹⁸ Janet Gleeson, *An Aristocratic Affair. The Life of Georgiana's Sister, Harriet Spencer, Countess of Bessborough* (London et al.: Bantam Press, 2006). For an older biography see: Ethel Colburn Mayne, *A Regency Chapter. Lady Bessborough and her Friendships* (London: Macmillan, 1939).

¹⁹ Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 1998). There is also an abridged version with extensive illustrations: Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana's World. The Illustrated Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 2001). See also Foreman's PhD thesis, *The Political Life of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 1757-1806* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1998). A condensed version is published as 'A politician's politician: Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire and the Whig party', in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (Harlow: Longman, 1997), pp. 179-204.

²⁰ Dalya Alberge, 'Film will recount tragic life of the 18th century Diana', in *The Times*, 31 August 2006, p. 24. See also Norman A. Bergman, 'Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and Princess Diana – a Parallel', in *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 91:4 (1998), pp. 217-219, which draws on the medical parallels.

²¹ Devonshire's death, possibly by thrombosis, has been recently discussed in I. G. Schraibman, 'A Dead Disease, as illustrated by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire', in *Journal of Medical Biography* 10 (2002), pp. 105-108.

Devonshire's personal life, her social class as well as of the cultural and political context she lived in. Most importantly, Foreman follows Colley's short sketch in *Britons* and re-estimates and stresses the Duchess's political role as a *salonnière* at the centre of London's Whig society, and as a close associate of Charles James Fox and herself an influential supporter of and campaigner for the Whig party.²²

2

For reasons discussed in this chapter, in spite of her fame and strong presence in public life, Devonshire was so discreet about most of her more ambitious literary productions that questions of attribution have been major issues in establishing her oeuvre. As a consequence of her extreme discretion, the Duchess's prolific literary career is still to a large extent shrouded in mystery. Her role as a writer is still so obscure that literary critics have yet not settled on one of her names. According to their individual preferences and inclinations, she is called or indexed as 'Georgiana' (Foreman, Bolton, Cochran), 'Lady Georgiana' (Gross), 'Cavendish' (Wu), 'Devonshire' (Colley, Pearson, Turner), or even with her birth name, 'Spencer' (Grundy).²³

Apparently, however, apart from her poetry, Devonshire's literary ambitions were originally directed towards the novel and later shifted to drama and pedagogical writing.²⁴

²² For the political dimension of the role of the aristocratic hostess, with emphasis on Devonshire, see also Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c. 1754-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 91-97; Judith S. Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism. Gender, Class and Politics in Late Georgian Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 103-109.

²³ In recent years, however, 'Devonshire' seems to have become fashionable. In my study, the Duchess is primarily referred to by that name, which I consider more satisfactory than either the use of her first name or her rank alone. 'Cavendish', her surname after marriage, is not used partly because in literary studies it usually refers to the seventeenth century aristocratic woman writer Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623-1673), who is more commonly called by her family name (rather than title) than the Duchess of Devonshire.

²⁴ For Devonshire as a novelist see e. g. Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundy (eds.), *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English. Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 288; Janet Todd, 'Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire', in Todd, *British and American Women Writers*, p. 102 f; Martin J. Smith, 'Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire', in Ann Crawford et al. (eds.), *The Europa Biographical Dictionary of British Women* (London: Europa Publications, 1983), p. 86 f.

Thus, young Georgiana Spencer was probably the author of *Emma, or The Unfortunate Attachment*, an epistolary novel published anonymously (as was common for epistolary novels in the eighteenth century, which were often advertised as ‘authentic’ letters) in three volumes in 1773, which may have been her first serious literary attempt. Although the debate about her authorship is still going on, the novel has traditionally been attributed to her²⁵, as it is also in the recent critical edition by Jonathan David Gross (2004).²⁶ In an essay on Richardsonian novels²⁷, Isobel Grundy has shown that *Emma*, which she also attributes to Devonshire, is modelled on Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*. At the age of sixteen she would have been extremely young to write such a complex work, but teenage novelists, especially female ones, were not unusual in the late eighteenth century. In addition, as Gross shows in his introduction, textual evidence, first hand knowledge of fashionable society and the list of subscribers clearly point in Georgiana Spencer’s direction.²⁸ *Emma* was successful enough to be reprinted in a Dublin pirate edition in 1784, and went through three further editions in 1787, 1789 and 1793.²⁹

Four years after her marriage, at the age of 21, Devonshire probably wrote another epistolary novel, entitled *The Sylph*.³⁰ Like her first attempt, it was published anonymously (1779), but Devonshire never denied her authorship and according to Foreman even admitted

²⁵ See e. g. Antonia Forster and James Raven, *The English Novel 1770-1829. A Bibliographical Survey of Prose Fiction Published in the British Isles, vol. 1: 1770-1799* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 203. *Emma* is listed under Devonshire’s name, but a question mark indicates that her authorship is not completely ascertained. For a list of the secondary sources which attribute the novel to Devonshire, see Gross, ‘Introduction’, p. 33, n. 21. Unfortunately, Gross does not mention the sources that doubt the Duchess’ authorship.

²⁶ Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, *Emma, or The Unfortunate Attachment: A Sentimental Novel*, ed. Jonathan Gross (Albany: New York State University Press, 2004).

²⁷ Isobel Grundy, ‘“A novel in a series of letters by a lady”: Richardson and some Richardsonian Novels’, in Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (eds.): *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays*. Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 223-237, here: pp. 227-229.

²⁸ Gross, ‘Introduction’, in Devonshire, *Emma*, pp. 1-39, here: pp. 10-14.

²⁹ Gross, ‘Introduction’, p. 14; p. 33, n. 27. Forster and Raven, *English Novel*, p. 203 (Forster and Raven do not mention the 1793 edition).

³⁰ There are two modern editions: Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, *The Sylph*, ed. with an introduction by Jonathan Gross (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007) and Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, *The Sylph. A Novel*. Introduced by Amanda Foreman (York: Henry Parker, 2001).

it in private.³¹ Better known than the still obscure *Emma*, it is usually accepted as the Duchess's production³², although Forster and Raven consider Sophia Briscoe, author of two epistolary novels, a possible alternative.³³ *The Sylph* is occasionally mentioned in biographies of Devonshire's literary protégées, showing she shared their interests and ambitions.³⁴

Openly autobiographical, the novel's plot is largely modelled on the tumultuous and unhappy early years of Devonshire's marriage. In his biography of the two subsequent wives of the 5th Duke of Devonshire, Arthur Calder-Marshall has suggested that Fanny Burney's *Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778), another anonymous epistolary novel, which has a similar subject matter and had been published shortly before, inspired Devonshire 'to try her hand'.³⁵ Indeed the ascription to 'A Young Lady' on the title page of *The Sylph* obviously alludes to the subtitle of Burney's work, and promises an 'authentic' glimpse into the world of London's fashionable society. Devonshire also chose Burney's publisher, Lowndes, whose advertisements suggested both novels had been written by the same author – a marketing strategy to which Burney objected.³⁶

The Sylph was highly successful³⁷, quickly went through four editions (1779, 1780, 1783, 1784), and was translated into German (1779) and French (1784).³⁸ For a long time, it

³¹ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 60.

³² Secondary sources which attribute *The Sylph* to Devonshire include: Gross, 'Introduction', p. 10; Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 59-61; Duncan Wu, *Romantic Women Poets. An Anthology* (London: Blackwell, 1997), p. 170; Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 168.

³³ See Forster and Raven, *English Novel*, p. 277f. However, like *Emma*, the novel is still listed under Devonshire's name, though with a question mark. Sophia Briscoe is mentioned as the author of *Melmoth, or The New Clarissa* (1771) and *A Fine Lady* (1772), both of which, like *The Sylph*, were published at T. Lowndes in London.

³⁴ See Sarah Gristwood, *Perdita. Royal Mistress, Writer, Romantic* (London et al.: Bantam Press, 2005), pp. 53, 59, 66, 145; Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith. A Critical Biography* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 1998, 2001), p. 102.

³⁵ Arthur Calder-Marshall, *The Two Duchesses* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), p. 38.

³⁶ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 411 n. 45; Foreman, 'Introduction', in Devonshire, *The Sylph*, pp. v-viii, here: p. vii; Calder-Marshall, *Two Duchesses*, p. 38.

³⁷ As late as 1795, Charlotte Smith asked her publisher for a copy of *The Sylph* (letter to Thomas J. Cadell, Exmouth, 22 July 1795, in *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Judith Phillips Stanton (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 204).

³⁸ Foreman, 'Introduction', p. vii, Forster and Raven, *English Novel*, p. 277.

has been considered as no more than a roman à clef, which owed its success to its revelations about the Devonshire house circle and the lifestyle of the fashionable classes rather than its literary merits.³⁹ Implicitly fashioning herself as a deceived sentimental heroine, young Devonshire is even said to have been the inspiration for another rich, romantic young woman, also called Georgiana, Jane Austen's Miss Darcy from her novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).⁴⁰ Arthur Calder-Marshall stresses the contrast between Burney's 'masterpiece', which took two years to write, and Devonshire's hastily written 'jeu d'esprit'.⁴¹ However, Devonshire was deeply engaged with the novels of her literary role models Richardson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Her surviving copy of Rousseau's sentimental epistolary novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, which celebrates 'feminine' sensibility and family affections, is filled with her personal markings, comments and annotations.⁴² In recent years, perhaps inspired by the success of Foreman's Devonshire biography, there has been a growing interest in Devonshire's novels. While a reprint of *The Sylph* with an introduction by Amanda Foreman had already been issued in 2001, Jonathan Gross, the editor of *Emma* (2004), has recently published a critical edition.⁴³ As in the case of her niece Caroline Lamb's (1785-1823) notorious roman à clef *Glenarvon* (1816)⁴⁴, a novel about her affair with Lord Byron, there also seems to be a growing readiness to appreciate *Emma* and *The Sylph* not only as autobiographical fiction, but also for their quality as literary works.⁴⁵

³⁹ For a typical example of that view see Muriel Jaeger, *Before Victoria* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956), p. 76 f; Foreman, 'Introduction', p. vii; Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 61; Calder-Marshall, *Two Duchesses*, p. 38.

⁴⁰ See Stephen Derry, 'Two Georgianas: The Duchess of Devonshire and Jane Austen's Miss Darcy', in *Persuasions. Journal of the Jane Austen Society of North America* 16 (1989), p. 15 f.

⁴¹ Calder-Marshall, *Two Duchesses*, p. 38. This comparison is repeated in Gross's introduction to his edition of the letters and journals of Devonshire's friend Lady Melbourne. Foreman also stresses that the novel is uneven in quality and was written in haste (see Jonathan David Gross, 'Introduction', in Gross (ed.), *Byron's 'Corbeau Blanc': The Life and Letters of Lady Melbourne* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), pp. 13-67, here: p. 24; Foreman, 'Introduction', p. viii; Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 61).

⁴² Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 55; Brian Masters, *Georgiana* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981; repr.: London: Allison & Busby, 1997), p. 68.

⁴³ See n. 28.

⁴⁴ Caroline Lamb, *Glenarvon*, ed. Frances Wilson (London: Everyman; Vermont: C. E. Tuttle, 1995).

⁴⁵ A detailed discussion of *The Sylph* and its engagement with eighteenth-century literature can be found in Jonathan Gross's introduction (Gross, 'Editor's Introduction', in Devonshire, *The Sylph*, pp. xi-lvii, here: pp. xxxii-liii).

Significantly, the extent of Devonshire's discretion seems to have depended on the genre she was writing in. Indeed, as will become evident in the course of the following two chapters, her attitude towards her writing illustrates both the class and gender dimensions of authorship as well as the hierarchies of genres in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus, within her social circle she was known for her sophistication and talent as a poet. Her correspondence is interspersed with poems, some of them occasional works for family events, but many of a philosophical, political or satirical nature. Most remained unpublished, but were collected and circulated among her family and friends, and preserved in private albums.⁴⁶ Writing poetry was considered a prestigious pastime, and, as long as their works did not appear to have been written for commercial publication, members of the gentry and aristocracy were usually happy to acknowledge their poems, even in published form.⁴⁷ At least two of Devonshire's poems were published under her name during her lifetime, an 'Anacreontic' song (1785) and a very popular travel poem, 'The Passage over the Mountain St. Gothard' (1799) inspired by her journey through the Swiss Alps.⁴⁸

On the other hand, a travel account in prose, outcome of the same journey, was published without her name in the same year, and never acknowledged by her.⁴⁹ More importantly, even in her most personal correspondence she never mentions her two novels. Lacking the prestige of poetry as a genre, novels were frequently published anonymously, even by writers who put their names to their poetry collections.⁵⁰ The publication of a novel

⁴⁶ This was common practice for aristocratic women poets. See Paula R. Feldman, 'Women Poets and Anonymity in the Romantic Era', in E. J. Clery, Caroline Franklin, Peter Garside (eds.), *Authorship, Commerce and the Public. Scenes of Writing, 1750-1850* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 44-53, here: p. 44 f. See also Paula R. Feldman, 'How Their Audiences Knew Them: Forgotten Media and the Circulation of Poetry by Women', in Stephen C Behrendt and Harriet Kramer Linkin (eds.), *Approaches to Teaching British Women Poets of the Romantic Period* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America), pp. 32-39, esp. p. 35 f.

⁴⁷ Feldman, 'Women Poets', p. 44.

⁴⁸ Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, *Anacreontic. By her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire*. Salisbury: Fowler, printer, [1785]. The 'Passage over the Mountain of St. Gothard', which was first published in *The Morning Post* on 21 December 1799, is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

⁴⁹ [Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire?], *Memorandums of the Face of the Country in Switzerland* (London: Cooper and Graham, 1799 (published anonymously)).

⁵⁰ Feldman, 'Women Poets', p. 47 f.

under the author's own name only became socially acceptable for 'respectable' women, by the early nineteenth century, particularly if they were members of the social elite.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the extent of Devonshire's discretion (although subscribers to her novels would have been aware of the author's identity⁵²) is unusual. In her case, the need for anonymity was enforced and aggrandised by the combination of her gender, social class and public visibility. Prose fiction was associated with commerciality and consumerism, and aristocrats, irrespective of gender, were anxious to avoid the impression of writing for money and public success.⁵³ Additionally, the Duchess's prominence as a society woman meant that the acknowledgement of a novel would have made her a subject of public scrutiny and endangered both her social position and political influence.

3

A constant tension between her carefully maintained public persona and political role and her literary ambitions also heavily informed Devonshire's career as a dramatist, and will be a central issue both in the remainder of this and in the following chapter. Meanwhile, her attitude towards playwriting and the theatre is a lot more complex than her straightforward acknowledgment of her poetry or her silence about her published prose. Famous as a patron of actresses, author of epilogues and herself an ambitious playwright, in her correspondence she only alluded to her plays in an extremely covert way, avoiding open acknowledgment of her authorship. As will become evident in this and the following chapter, her attitude reflects the epoch's multi-levelled and sometimes contradictory relationship to theatre and theatricality, which is in many ways central to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century culture.

⁵¹ Peter Mandler, 'From Almack's to Willis's: Aristocratic Women and Politics, 1815-1867', in Vickery (ed.), *Women, Privilege and Power*, pp. 152-167, here: p. 161 f.

⁵² Feldman, 'Women Poets', p. 45.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Whereas the Duchess is just in the process of being rediscovered as a novelist and poet, her dramatic oeuvre is still virtually unknown.⁵⁴ Her complex involvement with playwriting and private theatricals, but also with the public theatrical world and with French writers and 'German' themes has to my knowledge never been considered before.

Meanwhile, since the 1990s, scholars such as Gillian Russell or Betsy Bolton have pointed out the theatrical and performative aspects of Devonshire's image and public presence.⁵⁵ For members of late eighteenth-century fashionable society with its hierarchies, rituals and numerous formal and informal events, spectacle and performance were integral parts of social intercourse. However, from an early age, young Georgiana had a particularly keen sense for theatricality and self-fashioning, which differed from that of most other aristocratic women in degree and quality. In the early years of her marriage, she associated with the 'macaronis', a group of young nobles (both male and female) who cultivated an eccentric, deliberately exaggerated fashion and hairstyle.⁵⁶ The young Duchess quickly became the most prominent female 'macaroni', known for her bright conversation and extravagant appearance, and 'famous for being famous'.⁵⁷ Her flamboyant dresses and *peruques* were reported on in journals and newspapers, and emulated by other women.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Foreman refers to her 'Kruitznier' adaptation and 'a religious drama', obviously her sacred drama *The Hebrew Mother* (*Georgiana*, p. 331; see the following chapter of this thesis), both of which were still thought lost at that time. Jeffrey Cox mentions two unpublished plays by Devonshire, evidently referring to *The Hungarian* and *The Hebrew Mother* at the Huntington, but does not mention their titles or any further reference (Jeffrey N. Cox, 'Baillie, Siddons, Larpent: gender, power and politics in the theatre of Romanticism', in Catherine B. Burroughs (ed.), *Women in British Romantic Theatre. Drama, Performance, and Society, 1790-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)), pp. 23-47, here: pp. 25, 30, 43).

⁵⁵ Bolton, *Women*, p. 30 f, p. 38; Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War. Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 38.

⁵⁶ For a definition of the term 'macaroni' and its possible origins see Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 57.

⁵⁷ Judith S. Lewis, '1784 and All That: Aristocratic Women and Electoral Politics', in Vickery (ed.), *Women, Privilege and Power*, pp. 89-122, here: p. 94.

⁵⁸ See e. g. Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 37-39; Lewis, '1784', p. 94 f.

As Foreman points out, the Duchess's rise to fame coincided with an increasing importance of the British press, a growing variety and frequency of periodicals, and a wider readership.⁵⁹ She achieved a status as a celebrity and fashion icon that had not been possible in earlier times. Based on her costumes and hairstyle as much as on her social standing, her fame and representation in the press had a decidedly theatrical quality, which is reflected by the fact that her later friend and protégé, the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, arguably enhanced the glamour of his comedy *The School for Scandal* (1777) by basing its female main character Lady Teazle on the young Duchess.⁶⁰ However, apart from admiration and praise, Devonshire's self-fashioning during the 1770s, also inspired critical reactions.⁶¹ Significantly, the theatrical, spectacular dimension of her image in the press, and the implicit association with actresses, seems to have been among the main reasons for attacks against her. Actresses, because of their presence in a public space and their enactment of passions and emotions on stage, were associated with 'unfeminine' conduct, impropriety and sexual availability.⁶²

While several attacks on her were published, personal anonymous letters to the Duchess may well have been even more numerous. One of them, undated but evidently written not long after her marriage⁶³ (it refers to her as a recently married woman and criticizes the notorious grand *peruque* with an ostrich's feather she wore in 1775⁶⁴), is of particular importance, as Devonshire seems to have taken the author's advice seriously. She

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁶⁰ See e. g. Gillian Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 203 f.

⁶¹ See e. g. William Combe's pamphlets, e. g. *A Letter to her Grace the Duchess of D.* (London: R. Baldwin, [1777]) and *A Second Letter to her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Fielding and Walker, 1777). See also e. g. Lewis, *Female Patriotism*, p. 136 f; Lewis, '1784', p. 95; Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 216-218; Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 37.

⁶² For the image of actresses and the common association with prostitutes, see Laura J. Rosenthal, 'Entertaining women: the actress in eighteenth-century theatre and culture', in Moody and O'Quinn, *British Theatre*, pp. 159-173.

⁶³ The letter is preserved among her eldest daughter's papers at Castle Howard. See CH Carlisle MSS, J 18/67/6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3; p. 12 f. See also Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 37 f. William Combe's pamphlet *Letter* (see n. 57) also criticises the feather *peruque* as 'foolish' and indecorous (Combe, *Letter*, quoted from Mitchell, *Whig World*, p. 43)

had the letter bound as a booklet and kept it among her personal papers. The anonymous author identifies herself as a woman, but provides no further personal information. Interestingly, she names her gender as a justification for addressing the young Duchess: 'while I leave to the Men the department of political examination, [...], I shall avail myself of the privilege [...] to hold forth the examples of Female Error which are so glaring a disgrace to the times wherein we live'.⁶⁵

In the context of her comments on the public space of the press, the letter writer emphasises the boundaries between the feminine sphere of fashion and the masculine sphere of politics. Probably to increase her authority as a moral adviser, she thus implicitly distances herself from women writers who venture into political discourses, stressing instead that she is concerned only with 'feminine' topics such as fashion and propriety. Thus, her criticism focuses on Devonshire's public image as a woman of fashion: '[...] it was rather singular, that among the many parts of importance and dignity which solicited your choice, you should fix upon one so trifling in its nature, and so unworthy of your rank [...], as the Dispenser of Fashion, and the Genius of Pleasure'.⁶⁶ The writer criticizes the young Duchess for association with the macaronis (who are described as 'corrupted' and 'fashionable Fools'⁶⁷) and her adoption of the 'grotesque' macaroni outfit and hairstyle, both of which she describes as improper and irreconcilable with her social position. Significantly, she is concerned about the implicit theatrical quality of Devonshire's public fame: 'Do the triumphs over reason and good sense in [...] sanctifying a grotesque Fashion to the imitative Multitude afford you any real pleasure? [...] [W]here will be your comforts when the novelty of your appearance is over, and the crowd no longer gaze?'⁶⁸

⁶⁵ CH Carlisle MSS, J 18/67/6. p. 2.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 21 f.

The vocabulary used in the latter sentence in particular links the Duchess's celebrity to that of successful actresses. While their public display of erotic desirability was certainly reason enough for the letter writer to consider such similarities as indecorous⁶⁹, there is more to her disapproval of this kind of popularity. Primarily based on beauty and style, rather than rank, the fame she describes here is fluid, bound to easily fade into obscurity. Rather than keeping Devonshire socially aloof, it makes her both dependent on the approval of the 'crowd', and subject to the same 'crowd's' imitation. Consequently, the anonymous writer, intent on preserving the distinctive and exclusive position of aristocracy, perceived the Duchess's media presence and the resulting public accessibility as inappropriate.

In turn, both the association with actresses and the fact that Devonshire could be imitated by emulating her fashion drew attention to the theatrical and performative quality of aristocratic self-fashioning in general. Showing that social identities and roles were in themselves flexible and negotiable constructions, they thus implicitly undermined the notion of an innate aristocratic superiority. As a result, Devonshire's celebrity status in her early years was a potentially rich subject for authors attacking 'fashionable' society and evoking images of a decadent nobility.

The anonymous writer proposes an alternative social role for female aristocrats, a role that emphasised rank and social distinction and through its social benefit could help to justify the elevated position of aristocracy:

This Age in particular, offers to your Grace a singular and most happy means of distinguishing your beneficence, in holding forth to your Patronage many of your own Sex who are eminent in almost every branch of Art, Science, and Literature.

⁶⁹ Judith Lewis, commenting on moralist writings against aristocratic women, points out the implicit association between female aristocrats and prostitutes, both of whom were 'valued for valued for their physical appearance rather than productivity' (Lewis, *Female Patriotism*, p. 136 f.).

To preside over, encourage and protect the Female Genius of your Country, wou'd [sic] be a situation so honourable to yourself, so beneficent to the Community and [...] so replete with novelty, that one wou'd think it impossible such a pre-eminence shou'd [sic] not be desired by you.⁷⁰

The author's suggestion is interesting in several ways. Of course, in itself, being a patron was anything but 'novel', but part of the traditional role of a member of the nobility. Before the eighteenth century, patronage had been the central, if not the only, possibility for most artists or scientists to support themselves by their profession. In contrast to the celebrity of a fashion icon, by definition the reputation of a patron is based on his or her superior rank and influence in the exclusive circles of the social elite. Thus, a patron's presence in the press does not invite the audience to emulation or imitation, but is a marker of distance and social distinction.

However, the letter writer's suggestion to concentrate on patronizing women is significant. As an appeal to assist female artists and intellectuals to achieve both public recognition and financial self-sufficiency, it has a proto-feminist aspect. At the same time, though, it shows the author's focus on recommending a course of action by which Devonshire could avoid possible points of attack. Although patronage implies inequality of rank, as the following chapter will show, in the late eighteenth century, the relationship was usually conceived as a friendship, and patron and protégé used the language of sensibility and intimacy to bridge the social distance between them. Thus, the patronage for a male artist might have suggested an 'inappropriate' intimacy and made the Duchess vulnerable to hostile publicity.

As will become evident in the remainder of this chapter, the Duchess took the author's advice to heart on more than one level. While many members of the high aristocracy were

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

patrons of the arts, Devonshire came to enjoy a particular reputation as a patron and friend of the theatre. Although her patronage extended to some male authors, her main focus was clearly on women writers and actresses. She became both a patron and personal friend of the most famous actress of her time, Sarah Siddons (1755-1831)⁷¹ and of the actress and poet Mary Robinson (c. 1758-1800)⁷², who wrote two laudatory poems about her⁷³. Moreover, the idea of female aristocrats as patrons for female artists sketched in the anonymous letter is echoed not only in her own activities, but also in her play *Zillia*, a pedagogical drama for girls in which the fulfilment of the role of a benefactor implicitly serves as a justification for aristocratic privilege.

On the other hand, in the patriotic or political activism of her earlier years, dramatic and performative elements remained central parts of Devonshire's self-representation. Together with other noble 'volunteers' (both male and female), in 1778 she donned a 'regimental' uniform and spent the summer with her husband 'in camp' at Coxheath.⁷⁴ Living in luxury in the middle of serious military preparations against the threat of a possible French invasion, the 'female auxiliary corps' displayed a spectacle of fashionable aristocratic patriotism that was followed by the press with great interest.⁷⁵

More importantly, during her campaign for Whig politician Charles James Fox in the Westminster Election of 1784, as an orator appealing to the emotions of her audiences, the

⁷¹ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 174.

⁷² Their lifelong friendship features in several recent Robinson biographies. See: Gristwood, *Perdita*; pp. 75 f, 118, 214 f; Hester Davenport, *The Prince's Mistress. Perdita. A Life of Mary Robinson* (Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2006), pp. 34 f, 167; Paula Byrne, *Perdita. The Life of Mary Robinson* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), pp. 17, 69 f, 75, 89, 392. For political and gendered aspects of their association see also Bolton, *Women*, pp. 30-36.

⁷³ See e. g. Byrne, *Perdita*, p. 281.

⁷⁴ Russell, *Theatres of War*, pp. 37-39.

⁷⁵ Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 53-65; Guest, *Small Change*, pp. 102 f. For Devonshire's self-fashioning in military dress as a reflection of the transformation of the 'theatre of war' into a space of patriotic elite sociability see also Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre*, p. 192 f.

Duchess was herself part of a public spectacle.⁷⁶ While Foreman pointed out Devonshire's exceptional status as a Whig politician, more recent research places her within a wider network of politically active elite women.⁷⁷ Devonshire was by no means the only female canvasser – her sister the Countess of Bessborough was also campaigning for the Whig party in 1784, as their mother had done in 1768 and 1774.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, her close association with Fox still implied a particularly influential role, and combined with her celebrity status generated major public visibility. In part, such female campaigners' venturing into the masculine sphere of electoral politics and their public display of 'fashionable' and implicitly eroticised patriotism (Devonshire was reported to have sold kisses for votes⁷⁹) were a calculated provocation. As Leslie Mitchell has recently argued, '[a]t considerable cost to their public image, Whig women gently nudged gender barriers in ways that were at once outrageous and chic.'⁸⁰ Attacks, thus, were common⁸¹, and certainly expected or even welcome, as they enhanced their public presence and the impact of their campaigns. On the other hand, if a female canvasser was seen as a political threat, hostile press attacks could easily be used as a weapon to endanger her reputation and political influence. As Betsy Bolton has pointed out, associations with actresses and prostitutes (themselves closely

⁷⁶ For Devonshire's role as a canvasser see Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 141-159; Anne Stott, "'Female Patriotism': Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and the Westminster Election of 1784'", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 17 (1993), pp. 60-84; Chalus, *Elite Women*, pp. 216-221; Lewis, *Female Patriotism*, pp. 140-145; Lewis, '1784', p. 89 f; pp. 94-96; p. 98; pp. 100-114.

⁷⁷ See e. g. Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde*, pp. 22-62, esp. p. 29. See also Vickery, 'Introduction', esp. p. 3. Vickery reminds us that '[a]lthough feminist hagiography has accustomed us to see female activists as heroic outsiders rising sui generis from a hostile environment, new research restores them to their contexts both intellectual and familial.'

⁷⁸ See e. g. Lewis, *Female Patriotism*, p. 2; p. 132. For the involvement of aristocratic women in electoral processes, see Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c. 1754-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 192-227; 'Women, Electoral Privilege and Practice in the Eighteenth Century', in Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (eds.), *Women and British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 19-38, esp. p. 34; "'That epidemical Madness': women and electoral politics in the late eighteenth century", in Barker and Chalus (eds.), *Gender*, pp. 151-178, esp. p. 178; Lewis, '1784', pp. 104-111. For Bessborough's and Spencer's electoral activities see Chalus, *Elite Women*, p. 209 f; pp. 216-218; "'Epidemical Madness'", p. 151; p. 171 f.

⁷⁹ See Elaine Chalus, 'Kisses for votes: The Kiss and Corruption in eighteenth-century English elections', in Karen Harvey (ed.), *The Kiss in History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 122-147; particularly pp. 132-143; Lewis, *Female Patriotism*, p. 2; Lewis, '1784', p. 112 f; Amelia Rauser, "'The Butcher Kissing Duchess of Devonshire'": Between Caricature and Allegory in 1784', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36 (2002), pp. 23-46.

⁸⁰ Leslie Mitchell, *The Whig World 1760-1837* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), p. 52.

⁸¹ See e. g. Lewis, *Female Patriotism*, p. 2.

associated with each other for the eighteenth-century audience) were frequently invoked to chastise women who were perceived as crossing the boundaries of female domesticity – particularly if they were successful.⁸²

Thus, Devonshire's notoriety, combined with her success as a canvasser resulted in particularly vitriolic public attacks⁸³, which started to emerge when it became evident that Fox would win the election.⁸⁴ Significantly, a central point of attack was her use of image as a famed beauty for campaigning purposes. Her 'familiarities with plebeians'⁸⁵ (polemically labelled as her 'butcher-kissing') was perceived as inappropriate for much the same reasons the anonymous woman writer had criticised her in the 1770s. It posed a political threat because it threatened to blur the social boundaries between the commoners and the elite⁸⁶, the Duchess and the actress. Bolton shows how political caricatures associated Devonshire with Mrs. Hobart, campaigner for Fox's opponent Sir Cecil Wray and herself an avid actress in private aristocratic theatricals, but also with Devonshire's protégée, the actress Mary Robinson, who had had notorious affairs both with the Prince of Wales and Charles James Fox.⁸⁷ The caricatures linking Devonshire with Robinson subtly suggested a parallel between Robinson's public sexuality and Devonshire's public political activism, representing them as similar advances towards men and transgressions from 'proper' feminine behaviour.⁸⁸

⁸² Bolton, *Women*, p. 38. See also Rosenthal, 'Entertaining women', pp. 159-164; Chalus, *Elite Women*, p. 217.

⁸³ See e. g. the anonymous poem *The Paphiad, or Kensington-Gardens. Humbly dedicated to Her Grace the Duchess of Dev-n-re* (sic). London: W. Harlowe, 1785. Some satirical attacks on Devonshire from the time of the Westminster Election are also quoted in Edward Lascelles, *The Life of Charles James Fox* (London and Oxford: Humphrey Milford and Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 153-155. For Devonshire as Fox's supporter see also Loren Reid, *Charles James Fox. A Man for the People* (London and Colchester: Longmans, 1969), pp. 202-204, p. 233, p. 239 f.

⁸⁴ Chalus, *Elite Women*, p. 217; Lewis, '1784', p. 119 f. For reasons for the hostility towards the Duchess, see also Vickery, 'Introduction', pp. 11-14.

⁸⁵ Vickery, 'Introduction', p. 13.

⁸⁶ See also Vickery, 'Introduction', p. 12 f; Chalus, 'Kisses for votes', esp. p. 139 f; Lewis, *Female Patriotism*, pp. 132-134; '1784', p. 112 f; p. 120.

⁸⁷ Bolton, *Women*, p. 30 f. For a thorough discussion of Devonshire's representation in political caricatures, the way she was associated with Hobart and Robinson, and the gendered association between politics, theatre and sexuality see Bolton, *Women*, pp. 30-38. Bolton also displays some of the Devonshire caricatures from the time of the Westminster campaign (pp. 32, 34, 36, 37).

⁸⁸ For Devonshire's representation in caricatures see also Chalus, 'Kisses for votes', pp. 137-141; Guest, *Small Change*, pp. 104-106, p. 217 f; Lewis, '1784', p. 114 f; Stott, "'Female Patriotism'", pp. 71-82; Colley, *Britons*, pp. 245-249.

Gillian Russell points out the close association between aristocratic amateur theatricals and the Whig elite in the late eighteenth century.⁸⁹ The public perception and medial representation of the Duchess illustrate the close vicinity between the theatrical and the political spheres, and the ways in which women in particular were associated with the spectacular aspect of politics, possibly even more so if they had Whig alliances. Bolton argues that '[i]f women helped to mark the boundary dividing theatre and politics, under close examination that boundary proved only too obviously fragile.'⁹⁰ The public ridicule Devonshire was subjected to during and after the Westminster Election can be interpreted as an attempt to protect the masculine sphere of politics and public debate from the androgynous sphere of the theatre. At the same time, it illustrates the fragility of this boundary.

In reaction to the attacks on her during the Westminster Election, Devonshire became more cautious about her public visibility at public political venues, and more discreet about her political influence. During the election campaign of 1788, even when her associates Fox and Sheridan held electoral speeches from of the balcony of Devonshire House, she took care to remain inside, although the crowd called for her appearance.⁹¹ However, as her political activities had theatrical elements, at least in the early 1780s, her dramatic oeuvre and her involvement with public theatre were both informed by a decidedly political agenda, which will be largely explored in relation to *The Hungarian* in chapter 3. Indeed, the Duchess's entire career both as a politician and playwright was marked by a constant negotiation between the spheres of the political and the theatrical. Her high social status, strong public presence and the care she had to take to maintain her reputation to keep her political influence meant that

⁸⁹ Russell mentions an incident in April 1787, when a motion in the House of Commons was postponed because a great number of MPs attended a private performance at Richmond House (Russell, *Theatres of War*, p. 125). The incident is also recorded in Sybil Rosenfeld, *Temples of Thespis. Some Private Theatres and Theatricals in England and Wales, 1700-1820* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1978), p. 38.

⁹⁰ Bolton, *Women*, p. 38. Lewis, *Female Patriotism*, p. 136 f.

⁹¹ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 205 f.

she was extremely discreet about her plays, and apparently made no attempt to have them publicly staged. Nevertheless, her dramatic career can be read as a constant search for an appropriate, socially acceptable position as a writer, as will become evident in the discussion below and in the following chapter.

4

Apart from the short plays composed in her childhood, her first documented dramatic attempt is a short play entitled *Zillia*⁹², which will be discussed in the following part of this chapter for its relevance to Devonshire's self-representation, her ambivalent views on women's writing, as well as her interest in pedagogical writing and development as a playwright. Although, as will become evident below, *Zillia* is an ambitious, complex piece of pedagogical writing, like most of Devonshire's *verses d'occasion*, it has a very personal subject matter. Indeed at first sight, the play appears to be a purely private, personal text. Dedicated to her mother, the Countess Spencer, *Zillia* is a celebration of Devonshire's affection for and devotion to her. Accompanied by a note to Countess Spencer, *Zillia* is to my knowledge the only longer original literary text⁹³ acknowledged in her correspondence: 'You must accept of the following paquet instead of a letter – I was tempted one day to try something in Mme de Genlis stile (sic), if you encourage me I shall perhaps try some more, & you must only look on this as my first attempt - [...]'⁹⁴

⁹² *Zillia* is mentioned in Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 104, and Gross, 'Editor's Introduction', p. xxix and 'Introduction', p. 6. Both Foreman and Gross, following her, misspell the title as *Zyllia*, probably on account of Devonshire's difficult handwriting.

⁹³ Her poem 'Passage of St. Gothard' and her Metastasio translations are acknowledged in a letter to her mother written in 1802 (Chatsworth, 5th Duke group (hereafter referred to as Chatsworth MSS, 1645), which is discussed below.

⁹⁴ *Georgiana*, Duchess of Devonshire, Note to Countess Spencer, 4 August [1782; year added later, not in Devonshire's hand], Chatsworth MSS, 410.

A manuscript of *Zillia* survives, in Devonshire's own hand, which is preserved in the family archives at Chatsworth.⁹⁵ The manuscript itself is not dated, and the note to Countess Spencer only gives the day – 4 August, the year – 1782 – being a modern addition. Although the archive catalogue lists the manuscript as written in that year, Gross believes that it was actually composed when Georgiana Spencer was still a young girl, around the age of fifteen.⁹⁶ However, Devonshire's letters to her mother written in 1782 (discussed below), which mention both *Zillia* and its inspiration, Madame de Genlis, and evoke Devonshire's friendship with her mother in the same vocabulary employed in the play itself, clearly indicate that in its present form, the text was written at that time, although the short plays written in her childhood, which are now lost, may have had similar themes and subject matters.

Zillia is written in prose and is very short – the manuscript has only nine pages, including the title page – and the plot is accordingly simple. It is the story of a young woman or girl, Zillia, who is in search of an ideal friend. The cast consists of no more than four characters, all of them female: the title character Zillia, the 'good Fairy' Serena and her attendants Fatme and Chloris. While the latter two have only a few sentences in the exposition which serve to introduce the main characters and the setting, the rest of the text consists of a dialogue between Serena and Zillia, who has visited the fairy to ask her for '*a perfect Friend*' (Devonshire's italics)⁹⁷.

Devonshire's play is an interesting document of cultural history which illustrates the eighteenth-century cult of friendship and as well as the ideal of family relationships based on personal affection. The conversation between Zillia and the fairy is entirely written in the

⁹⁵ Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, *Zillia*, manuscript, Chatsworth MSS, 411.

⁹⁶ Gross, 'Introduction', p. 6.

⁹⁷ Devonshire, *Zillia*, p. 4.

language of sentimentality and sensibility typical of the second half of the century.⁹⁸ Instead of naming a specific person, Serena describes the ‘requisites’ a friend should possess:

She must be [...] attaching and agreeable in her conversation, &/ winning in all her ways/ [...] have an Understanding, deep, just &/ Penetrating; she must have a cultivated and adorn’d mind/ [...] She must be pious, charitable and benevolent, Her principles/ must be good, her judgement sound, Her taste refin’d [...] she must love you with the warmth of /truest affection, [...] guide you, with the caution and coolness/ of temper’d zeal, [...] / She must be/ your example in conduct, your companion in pleasure, your/ comforter in affliction. [...] love you with tenderness & prefer/ your happiness to her own!⁹⁹

Zillia then realizes she has already found her ideal friend in her mother, whereupon the fairy calls her ‘endow’d’ and ‘blest’.¹⁰⁰ Serena’s list reads like a catalogue of the epoch’s criteria for ideal friendship, which is described as a community of souls united by the strongest possible affection.

Indeed, Spencer, who survived her daughter for eight years, remained her close *confidante*, provider of emotional support and constant correspondent for her entire life. Georgiana, otherwise extremely discreet about her literary works, sent her mother manuscripts and story drafts, and at least in one instance Spencer collaborated with her in expanding on one of her ideas.¹⁰¹ In their correspondence, particularly around 1782 when Georgiana repeatedly complained about her childlessness, both women frequently stressed their affection

⁹⁸ For the language of sensibility see e. g. G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility. Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁹⁹ Devonshire, *Zillia*, pp. 5-7.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰¹ In August 1782 Devonshire send her mother a sketch of a story set in ancient Persia (Devonshire to Spencer, 15-17 August 1782, Chatsworth MSS, 413), while around the same time Spencer reciprocated by sending her her own exploration of another story idea by Devonshire, ‘Antenor & Aleanzar. From an Idea of the D[uche]ss of D[evonshire]’ (Spencer to Devonshire, [August 1782], Chatsworth MSS, 415).

for each other and employed the language of sensibility used in *Zillia*. Thus, Spencer describes herself as the ‘dearest mother to an invaluable child’¹⁰², and Devonshire, in a long passage praising her mother’s love for her, replies: ‘The heart of a Mother likewise deining [sic] to be the heart of a friend should – must work miracles [...]’¹⁰³

A few months after the composition of the play, Georgiana confessed to feelings of bitterness and envy towards a friend who was pregnant. Asking her mother for her understanding and sympathy, she reminded her of the play: ‘You accepted of *Zillia*, and therefore I am going to open the foolish nonsense of my heart, to my *friend*. I am discontented with myself – I feel a sentiment something like uneasiness and envy at the accounts I receive of Lady George and her grossesse [pregnancy] [...] – ’¹⁰⁴ (Devonshire’s italics)

In this particularly delicate and personal text, the play becomes an offer of friendship, which is formally *accepted* (my italics) in terms similar to those of a marriage proposal.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, according to Devonshire’s letters and play, the intercourse between friends allows for a closer intimacy and openness than even the mother-daughter relationship. In the eighteenth century ‘friendship’ implied a strong emotional closeness, but was a flexible concept which could describe a relationship between people of the same age or between an older and a younger person. It meant a self-chosen communion based on equality and personal affection that should, at least in theory, transcend boundaries of class, gender and age.¹⁰⁶ In the Duchess’s case, there is also a specifically class-bound aspect. While in an aristocratic family the traditional role of the mother was one of distance and authority, both Spencer (who

¹⁰² Spencer to Devonshire, 7 June 1782, Chatsworth MSS, 396.

¹⁰³ Devonshire to Spencer, 12 June 1782, Chatsworth MSS, 399.

¹⁰⁴ Devonshire to Spencer, 30 September 1782, Chatsworth MSS, 446. The letter is also quoted in Foreman (*Georgiana*, p. 104).

¹⁰⁵ The play’s character as a proposal of friendship is increased by the use of the Metastasio quotation, which, as a promise of future harmony, seems to imply *Zillia* was an attempt at reconciliation after a quarrel.

¹⁰⁶ Although the ‘sentimental’ concept of friendship described in *Zillia* is typical for the second half of the eighteenth century, the idea of friendship as a communion of two people on the basis of equality originates in classical antiquity. See e. g. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43), *Laelius de amicitia* (*Laelius, or on Friendship*).

'deigns' to be her daughter's friend) and Devonshire, along with many other female members of the nobility, embraced the originally bourgeois idea, made popular by the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* Georgiana particularly admired¹⁰⁷, that family relationships should be based on friendship.

In Devonshire's manuscript, Zillia and her mother (who does not appear on stage in the play) obviously stand for the writer herself and Countess Spencer, whereas Serena is a more complex figure. Her attendant Fatme addresses her as the member of a 'superior race'¹⁰⁸, and wonders 'what golden minutes/ [...] what Palaces of Ivory, what gardens/ clustering with gems'¹⁰⁹ she might enjoy in Serena's position. The fairy, however, has other priorities: 'I have devoted my time, to listening to the/ petitions of human beings; and instead of raising fantastic/ treasures for myself, I have bestow'd my fairy gifts on/ deserving mortals'.¹¹⁰ Finding satisfaction and enjoyment not in a life of luxury, but in charitable works, the benevolent fairy is simultaneously an idealized portrait of both Spencer and Devonshire herself.

On another level, the character of Serena is also interesting in a broader political and cultural context. Devonshire here constructs a role model for the female citizen of elevated social rank, which her readers are implicitly invited to emulate. The 'good fairy' embodies her ideal of the aristocratic woman, a role the author herself attempted to fulfil both with her several charity and educational projects, and as a patron of 'deserving' actors, musicians and playwrights. Thus, the play, echoing the anonymous letter to Devonshire discussed above, is an implicit critique of women of her own standing who do not live according to the ideal

¹⁰⁷ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 55. For Rousseau's popularity and cultural impact see Robert Darnton, 'Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensibility', in *The Great Cat Massacre* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 209-281.

¹⁰⁸ Devonshire, *Zillia*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

sketched in the play, but also a moral justification of her class and elevated economic and social position in general. As Colley has pointed out, Rousseau's concept of citizenship and civic virtue had a potentially liberating appeal for women. Not linked with traditionally masculine properties such as possession of land or the ability to bear arms, but with personal virtues, sensibility and family affections, the values it asked for were available to women as well as men. Thus, it attracted women writers from such different backgrounds as the Duchess of Devonshire and the radical Mary Wollstonecraft, whom Colley despite their very different political affiliations both labels as 'feminists'.¹¹¹ With *Zillia* and her later pedagogical plays, but also as a literary patron, *salonnière* and campaigner for the Whig party, Devonshire clearly embraced and appropriated such a concept and fashioned herself in the role of a female citizen. In many ways, her entire career can be read as a search for an acceptable position as a citizen for herself and more generally for women of the high aristocracy, a role which justified their privileged status and transcended and negotiated between the spheres of the private and the public.

5

In contrast to her novels and later dramas, *Zillia*, which Devonshire described as a first attempt, may not have been intended for either publication or public performance in its surviving form, although it is impossible to say whether it was ever performed in a private context. However, despite the play's proclaimed private nature, she puts the theme of friendship in a wider literary and cultural context. Thus, her own text is prefixed by a motto from *L'Olimpiade* (1733), a libretto by the Italian poet Pietro Trapassi, better known under his pseudonym Metastasio (1698-1782), whose sacred dramas she was to translate twenty years

¹¹¹ Colley, *Britons*, p. 273 f.

later (see the following chapter).¹¹² The story about two friends in love with the same woman, set in a fictitious version of ancient Greece during the Olympic games¹¹³, was highly popular in the eighteenth century, set to music both by Italian and British composers several times, and translated into English by John Hoole (1727-1803). Although the association of the Olympic games with peace and harmony between nations was not as strong or even obvious in the eighteenth century (more than 100 years before the introduction of the modern Olympiad) as it would be for a modern audience, friendship and reconciliation after conflict are the central themes in Metastasio's drama. This is especially obvious in the quotation Devonshire chose, a vow of solidarity between the two main characters, and a promise for future concord and a community of spirits: 'Dirà la Grecia poi/ che fur comuni a noi/ l'opre, i pensier, gli affetti [...]'. The 1767 translation by John Hoole reads as follows: 'Observing Greece [i.e. Greece, when it sees us, ...] henceforth shall say,/ Our thoughts, or actions are the same;/ Our hearts the like affections sway [...]'.¹¹⁴ In the context of her address to her mother, this quote emphasises the play's status as a formal offer for friendship (and possibly for a reconciliation after a quarrel), but also Devonshire's engagement with the literature and the cultural debates of her time. At the same time, the quote, made at a point in the play when one character agrees to pose as his friend to take his place in the Olympic games, is a subtle hint at Devonshire's 'literary mimicry' in her emulation of Genlis.

¹¹² For a discussion of Metastasio's *L'Olimpiade* as a drama see e. g. David Kimbell, *Italian Opera* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 250-257; Patrick J. Smith, *Tenth Muse. A Historical Study of the Opera Libretto* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 84-89. For a general discussion of Metastasio as a librettist see Smith, *Tenth Muse*, pp. 74-100.

¹¹³ Metastasio's story, which centres around a contest for the hand in marriage of the noblewoman Aristeia, who is wooed by her lover Megacles, was evidently inspired by the historical contest for the hand of Agarista (ca. 571 b. c.), daughter of the tyrant Cleisthenes of Sykion, who ultimately chose the Athenian noble Megacles as his daughter's bridegroom. The story is narrated by Herodotus in *Histories*, VI, 126-131 (see e. g. Herodotus, *The Histories. Translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt. Revised with introductory matter and notes by John Marincola* (London et al.: Penguin Classics, 1996)).

¹¹⁴ See Pietro Metastasio, *The Olympiad*, in Pietro Metastasio, *The Works of Metastasio, translated from the Italian by John Hoole*, 2 vols. (London: T. Davies, 1767), vol. 1, pp. 119-234, here: p. 128 (concluding speech of act I, scene 2).

The short manuscript itself is an even more obvious illustration of her talent for ‘literary mimicry’ and stylistic imitation, as well as her literary ambitions. Thus, several years after the anonymous publication of her novels, the note to her mother suggests that at this point she was looking for a position as an author which would be reconcilable with her social standing. Madame de Genlis, whose works the note mentions as the inspiration for the play, could have been an appropriate role model. A few years older than the Duchess and like her a member of the high aristocracy, Stéphanie Félicité Du Crest de Saint-Aubin, Comtesse de Genlis (1746-1830) was a French lady-in-waiting, governess of the children of the duchesse de Chartres (among them the future French king Louis-Philippe) and a prolific and influential pedagogical writer.¹¹⁵ At the time of Devonshire’s letter, Genlis had already published several novels, ‘moral’ comedies and theoretical works on pedagogy, and her *Théâtre à l’usage des jeunes personnes* (1779-1780)¹¹⁶ had recently been translated into English.¹¹⁷ The educational dimension of Genlis’s dramas may well have provided the initial inspiration for Devonshire to try her hand at playwriting. Although the dedicatory letter to her mother represents *Zillia* as a purely ‘private’ first attempt, the play clearly shows her ambitions as an educational author. An aristocratic woman whose works were intended for the education of the social elite, Genlis was a perfectly suitable writer for the Duchess to emulate.

More importantly, writing with a proclaimed pedagogical purpose, particularly for the education of girls, was a popular strategy for women writers to justify their literary activities. For elite women in particular, the boundaries between a ‘private’ role as an educator and a public position as a pedagogical writer were fluid. Before she published her plays, Genlis had

¹¹⁵ See e. g. Gillian Dow, *Reviewing Madame de Genlis. Gouverneur, mère de l’Eglise, hypocrite* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2005); Birgit Neschen-Siensen, *Madame de Genlis und die Französische Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 1992); Ute Niemeier, *Madame de Genlis oder Zur Konstitution der Rolle einer Literatin zwischen Ancien Régime und Bürgerkönigtum* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Siegen, 1989).

¹¹⁶ Stéphanie Félicité, comtesse de Genlis, *Théâtre à l’usage des jeunes personnes* (Paris: J.E. Dufour & Ph. Roux, 1780).

¹¹⁷ Stéphanie Félicité, comtesse de Genlis, *Theatre of Education. Translated from the French of the Countess of Genlis*, 4 vols. (London: T. Cadell and P. Elmsly, 1781).

already been a well-known educator¹¹⁸, and Devonshire's own mother, famous for educating her children herself, although not a writer, enjoyed a similar reputation.¹¹⁹ Becoming a pedagogical writer for those women thus implicitly meant assuming the position of a mother figure, allowing them to pursue a literary career while still staying within a decidedly 'feminine' role.

Genlis's oeuvre, immensely successful in Britain, was an important influence on female writers from very different social backgrounds such as Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen or Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821).¹²⁰ Genlis's recent drama *Zélie, ou l'ingénue* (1781)¹²¹, from which the name of Devonshire's title character Zillia is probably taken (although her play itself is not an adaptation of *Zélie*), was later adapted in English by Inchbald as *The Child of Nature* (1788).¹²² In addition, Genlis's works were also frequently translated by female amateur writers, who pursued such projects as intellectual exercises.¹²³ Although Devonshire's letter to Spencer represents *Zillia* as a similarly 'private' attempt, the play reflects her serious literary ambitions. Significantly, instead of choosing the traditional 'feminine' role of a

¹¹⁸ For Genlis's own strategic use of her role as a 'devout wife and mother' to justify her literary productions see Dow, *Reviewing Madame de Genlis*, p. 69.

¹¹⁹ The anonymous letter to Devonshire quoted above mentions the 'affection and wisdom' with which her parents conducted her education (see CH, Carlisle MSS, J 18/67/6).

¹²⁰ For the English reception of Genlis see Gillian Dow, 'The British Reception of Madame de Genlis's Writings for Children: Tales and Plays of Instruction and Delight', in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (2006), pp. 367-381; Dow, *Reviewing Madame de Genlis*, esp. pp. 69-75, pp. 87-93; Susan Allen Ford, 'Romance, Pedagogy and Power: Jane Austen Re-writes Madame de Genlis', in *Persuasions* 21 (2001), pp. 172-187; Cliona Ó Gallchoir, 'Gender, nation and revolution: Maria Edgeworth and Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis', in Eger, *Public Sphere*, pp. 200-216.

¹²¹ Stéphanie Félicité, comtesse de Genlis, 'Zélie ou l'ingénue', in *Théâtre de société*, 2 vols. (Paris: M. Lambert & F. J. Baudouin, 1781), vol. 2, pp. 158-323.

¹²² Elizabeth Inchbald, *The Child of Nature. A Dramatic Piece in Four Acts. From the French of Madame the Marchioness of Sillery, formerly Countess of Genlis* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1788). See also P. Clancy, 'Madame de Genlis, Elizabeth Inchbald, and the Child of Nature', in *Australian Journal of French Studies* 30 (1993), pp. 324-340. Additionally, there is a later anonymous English production as *Zilia, or The Mysterious Child* (1802). See Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), vol. 4, p. 558.

¹²³ Dow, 'British Reception', p. 370. Thus, at the age of fifteen, young Maria Edgeworth translated Genlis's novel *Adèle et Théodore* (1781).

translator¹²⁴, she writes an original composition, that, as will be seen below, engages with Genlis's pedagogical plays in complex ways.

One of the attractions of Genlis's works for women writers in particular was the attention she put to female education. Her epistolary novel *Adèle et Théodore* (1782)¹²⁵, a pedagogical manifesto like Rousseau's *Emile* (and in some aspects explicitly opposed to it), promotes a thorough and systematic education in literature, history and modern languages for both boys and girls, and devotes particular attention to the upbringing and reading of the female child, Adèle.¹²⁶

Genlis's emphasis on the education of girls is also reflected in a peculiar trait shared by all her 'moral' plays (though not her novels): the almost complete absence of male characters. Her dramatic works are set in an entirely female world, often an allegorical, biblical or fantasy space, and explore relationships and dynamics between girls and women.¹²⁷ The Duchess emulated these characteristics in *Zillia*, which, while not a straightforward adaptation of any of the French writer's plays, is exactly modelled on her style and subject matter. Like Genlis's pedagogical dramas for girls, it has an unspecified allegorical setting (the abode of a 'good fairy') and an all female cast. Men are scarcely mentioned, and only in an ironic manner.¹²⁸ More importantly, only a woman can be imagined as the girl Zillia's

¹²⁴ For the association between women writers and translation see e. g. Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation. Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London et al.: Routledge, 1996), p. 27; Dow, *Reviewing Madame de Genlis*, p. 74.

¹²⁵ Stéphanie Félicité, comtesse de Genlis, *Adèle et Théodore ou, Lettres sur l'éducation* (Paris: M. Baudoin and F. J. Lambert, 1782). For a discussion on the novel see Gillian Dow, 'Introduction', in Stéphanie Félicité, comtesse de Genlis, *Adelaide and Theodore, or Letters on Education (1783)*, ed. Gillian Dow (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), pp. ix-xxvii; Neschen-Siemsens, *Madame de Genlis*, pp. 82-96; Niemeier, *Madame de Genlis*, pp. 70-85.

¹²⁶ For Genlis's emphasis on female education and her criticism of Rousseau see Dow, 'Introduction', pp. xii-xvii; Niemeier, *Madame de Genlis*, p. 71 f. For a general discussion of Genlis's views on Rousseau's *Emile* see also Neschen-Siemsens, *Madame de Genlis*, pp. 96-115.

¹²⁷ See e. g. John Dunkley, 'Review of *Madame de Genlis et la théâtre de l'éducation au XIIIe siècle* by Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval' in *Modern Language Review* 95 (2000), p. 511 f.

¹²⁸ The only reference to men is an ironic remark which refers to the clichés and conventions in romance literature and is rather dismissive about the relationship between men and women: Serena's attendant Fatme wonders whether Zillia is 'some Princess in disguise, in search of a lover, or a/ lapdog; some Captive to a Giant, or Heroine of a tournament'. (Devonshire, *Zillia*, p. 2). Implicitly, the friendship between women is represented

potential 'friend' (the fairy Serena, describing the 'requisites of a friend', throughout employs the female pronouns 'she' and 'her'), while friendship between women is represented as the closest possible form of intimacy.

Both in the case of Genlis's dramas and *Zillia*, the focus on female characters is partly due to the fact that the plays were intended for girls' education, and it also reflects their status as children's literature. The restriction to one gender allows for a detailed exploration of family relationships and intimate emotional bonds between characters while ignoring issues of courtship, marriage and sexuality. However, for Genlis and for Devonshire in emulation of the French playwright, the exclusion of males probably also served other purposes. Although not primarily designed for public productions, Genlis's plays were decidedly written not to be read, but staged. They were intended for amateur theatricals for the education of the female aristocratic elite, both in private homes and boarding schools for girls. Indeed she was herself the director of several private productions in which her two daughters acted in front of a large invited audience.¹²⁹

Without male characters, plays for children were more likely to be considered suitable for performance. Not only were male-female relationships absent on the plot level, but more importantly, the casting required neither the interaction with male actors nor girls' cross-dressing. Gillian Dow suggests that both the 'sound moral' of the plays and the fact that Genlis's daughters did not perform together with male actors were the reasons why her private productions were received with unmixed approval.¹³⁰

For Devonshire, had she published *Zillia* and written other plays in the same vein, these considerations would have been even more important, and may well have provided a reason why Genlis's all-female plays were a model for her. In Britain, the idea of performance

as a more serious matter.

¹²⁹ Dow, 'British Reception', p. 368. In one instance, the audience consisted of about 500 people.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

as a educational tool was regarded with decidedly more reservation than it was in France. Several scholars have linked the British anti-theatricality of the 1790s and early 1800s to the experience of the French Revolution. In the post-Revolutionary era, the possibility acting provided to experiment with alternative identities was perceived as potentially subversive as it suggested that social roles and positions were in themselves flexible and unfixed.¹³¹ Indeed, the reception of Genlis clearly hints at a progressive hostility towards private theatricals. Whereas the English translation of her *Théâtre à l'usage des jeunes personnes* was favourably reviewed at its first publication (1781), in 1803 the writer Sarah Trimmer, although still praising the plays, emphasised that they should only be read, but 'never be acted'.¹³² However, as Gillian Dow shows, private theatricals, particularly for young people, had already been controversial in the early 1780s.¹³³ Thus, the title of the first English Genlis translation, *The Theatre of Education*, puts the emphasis on the plays' pedagogical purpose rather than performance for its own sake, possibly in anticipation of concerns about suitability.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, the issues of suitability and propriety were still brought up in all reviews. They were only answered positively because, as one reviewer put it, 'all love intrigues, low humour, and loose conversation, [are] secluded (sic)'.¹³⁵

The reasons why the enactment of 'love intrigues' with boys or men would have been considered 'improper' for young girls are quite obvious and straightforward. While both theatre-going and amateur theatricals were central parts of late eighteenth-century polite culture, Devonshire's contemporaries were keenly aware of the erotic and 'seductive' potential of acting. In scenes of courtship and forbidden love, the distinctions between the interactions of the characters on stage and the actors embodying them could easily become

¹³¹ Russell, 'Private Theatricals', pp. 200-203; Penny Gay, *Jane Austen and the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 103.

¹³² Sarah Trimmer in *The Guardian of Education* 2 (1803), p. 511, quoted from Dow, 'British Reception', p. 370.

¹³³ Dow, 'British Reception', pp. 368-370. See also Niemeier, *Madame de Genlis*, p. 64.

¹³⁴ Dow, 'British Reception', p. 368.

¹³⁵ Review in the *London Magazine*, March 1781, p. 141. See also Dow, 'British Reception', p. 368 f.

blurred.¹³⁶ However, cross-dressing, through which such situations would have been avoided, and which in a girls' school could have been more practicable, might well have been regarded as equally problematic and potentially subversive. As Russell has recently argued, private theatricals provided a space to explore and experiment with alternative identities and roles, in terms of class as well as gender.¹³⁷ In itself, this potential for experimentation and reinvention of the self through performance suggested the instability of social roles (and in some cases provided the initial spark for real social mobility).¹³⁸ Although this aspect of acting became particularly controversial in the aftermath of the French Revolution¹³⁹, the initial critical reaction to Genlis's plays in Britain shows that it was already a matter of concern at the time of their first publication. Pedagogical theatricals were acceptable as long as they prepared young girls for their future social roles, but only if they did so without instructing them to act a part they were not expected or desired to play in real life.

However, the use of a purely female setting, though excluding central issues of social intercourse, also has a liberating dimension, which may have been an inspiration for Devonshire. While in the vast majority of dramatic works of the eighteenth century (or indeed, of any time), the representation and function of female characters is largely restricted to their interaction with men, here the usually marginalized interaction between women (and girls) comes to the foreground. The central position of children, themselves rarely featuring in most eighteenth-century drama, and the focus on emotions and issues of friendship and

¹³⁶ The famous rehearsal scenes for the eventually abandoned private production of Elizabeth Inchbald's Kotzebue adaptation *Lovers' Vows* in Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* (1814) offer a fictional, but illustrative example of the possible blurring of the flirtation and erotic tension between stage characters and the amateur actors playing them. For a detailed discussion of the interaction between both levels, see e. g. "It is about *Lovers' Vows*": Kotzebue, Inchbald, and the Players of *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasions On-line* 27 (2006), <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no1/ford.htm> (20 March 2008), no pagination; Paula Byrne, *Jane Austen and the Theatre* (London et al.: Hambledon and London, 2002), pp. 149-176. Although Austen's novel was written long after Genlis's plays, the 1780 review of *The Theatre of Education* quoted above which praised that 'all love intrigues [...] are] secluded' shows that concerns about the 'seductive' potential of private theatricals were already common at that time.

¹³⁷ Russell, 'Private Theatricals', pp. 199-203.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16 f.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13 f.

intimacy implies that the action remains within a 'private', closeted setting. While this can be read as a restriction, at the same time it means that such plays concentrate on and attribute importance to a space which was marginalized in the majority of contemporary stage plays.

The restriction to girls and women also potentially enables the playwright to create strong and independent female characters without openly addressing the gender dichotomy and implied hierarchy. Thus, it potentially allows for a more flexible and less prescriptive representation of women's roles than would otherwise be possible without rendering the text too controversial to be acceptable as children's literature.

In the 1770s and 1780s, debates on pedagogy and education were closely linked to debates on national characteristics and identity.¹⁴⁰ Indeed the collaboration between Cadell and Elmsley, the publisher of *The Theatre of Education*, and the *London Magazine*, represents an interesting case of cultural and national appropriation, with which Devonshire engaged in complex ways. Gillian Dow has pointed out that British reviews of Genlis's series appropriated the plays by aligning them with a specifically British context.¹⁴¹ Thus, the *London Magazine* draws particular attention to *The Blind Woman of Spa*, a play in which an aristocratic Englishwoman, called 'Lady Seymour' ('Miladi Semur' in the original), during her stay in 'fashionable' Spa is moved by a humble, but virtuous family, who support a blind woman even poorer than they are, and decides to become their benefactor.¹⁴² Crucially, Lady's Seymour's genuine sensibility is accentuated by the contrast to a French Viscountess, who abandons giving charity to a beggar when she comes across a display of expensive fashionable 'caps and feathers', suggesting that to her, an act of charity also is a merely fashionable endeavour.¹⁴³ In the original version, the contrast between the Viscountess and

¹⁴⁰ See e. g. Emma Major, 'Nature, Nation and Denomination: Barbauld's Taste for the Public', *English Literary History* 74 (2007), pp. 909-930.

¹⁴¹ Dow, *Reviewing Madame de Genlis*, p. 72.

¹⁴² Genlis, *Theatre*, vol. 2, 1-47; *Théâtre*, vol. 2, pp. 5-31.

¹⁴³ Genlis, *Theatre*, vol. 2, pp. 32-47.

‘Miladi Semur’ is used as a criticism of Genlis’s own compatriots. In the English translation, it becomes a reiteration of national stereotypes, which is rendered particularly powerful by the play’s French origin and by Genlis’s claim to have dramatised an actual event.¹⁴⁴ Significantly, the *London Magazine* review not only emphasises the drama’s ‘true story’ aspect, but explores on it by claiming to have uncovered the English lady’s real identity and announcing ‘that Lady Spenser [sic] is represented by Lady Seymour’.¹⁴⁵ Obviously, this revelation is designed to promote both Genlis’s series by stressing its ‘English’ patriotic quality, and the *London Magazine* itself by emphasising its proximity to fashionable society.

No matter whether there is any truth to the *London Magazine*’s claim, Spencer’s association with Genlis’s *Théâtre* adds another dimension both to Devonshire’s play and the dedication to her mother. Devonshire’s reference to ‘Mme de Genlis’ stile’ is a subtle praise of Spencer’s public reputation for charity and benevolence, that implicitly enforces her appeal for her mother’s acceptance of her literary ambitions. *Zillia* itself, with its focus on sympathy and the moral duties of elite women towards ‘deserving’ social inferiors, also engages with the similarly-themed *The Blind Woman of Spa*. Alluding to the play’s sympathetic Lady Seymour, Devonshire’s fairy Serena becomes a covert eulogy on Lady Spencer. Characteristically, had *Zillia* been published anonymously, the allusion would have been recognized exclusively by members of Devonshire’s own circle, who knew about her authorship, thus reflecting the play’s position on the margins between elite culture and the wider literary public.

Unfortunately, no matter whether the Countess Spencer encouraged her daughter to ‘try [...] some more’, *Zillia* is currently Devonshire’s only surviving effort in Genlis’s style. It is impossible to say in what ways she would have used the genre’s

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ Review in the *London Magazine*, March 1781, p. 141. See also Dow, *Reviewing Madame de Genlis*, p. 72.

possibilities had she continued writing plays in that tradition. In itself, however, *Zillia* is already an interesting experiment.

With its allegorical fantasy setting and stress on social hierarchy (the superior position of the fairy Serena is emphasised through the dialogues with her attendants), the short play is an interesting, hybrid mixture. While appropriating the eighteenth-century discourse and language of sensibility, *Zillia*, therein emulating Genlis's plays, harks back to the aristocratic *masque*. Originating in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and particularly popular in England and France, the *masque* was a decidedly aristocratic theatrical form. Involving courtiers or members of the high nobility as actors or dancers, *masques* had highly allegorical settings which mirrored and symbolised the performers' social position within the hierarchy at court or at the aristocratic home where they were staged.¹⁴⁶

Interpreted as a work in this tradition, *Zillia*, performed within the Spencer/Cavendish family, would have both represented the elevated social position of its amateur actors especially (but not exclusively) if the Duchess herself, and possibly also her mother, would have themselves acted in the spectacle. Thus, it would have celebrated the bond between Devonshire and Countess Spencer together with the elevated station of and the *concordia* between their families (a topic hinted at in the motto to the play discussed above). However, as an allegorical play both about 'sensible' family relationships and social hierarchy (and the appropriate role of women within it), *Zillia* would also function outside such a personal context. Combining the allegorical elements of aristocratic *masques* with eighteenth-century sensibility and pedagogy, the short play thus exemplifies the aristocratic origins of private theatricals and the ways they are linked to late eighteenth-century 'closet' drama. Implicitly, its vicinity to the *masque* also reflects the elitist character of Devonshire's plays and

¹⁴⁶ For the origins and politics of aristocratic *masques* see e. g. David Bevington and Peter Holbrook (eds.), *The Politics of the Stuart Masque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

educational projects, all of which, as the following chapter will show, were largely intended for aristocratic readers and audiences.

At the same time, however, the drama's focus on social hierarchy and theatrical education is enforced by the presence of Serena's two female attendants, who have almost no dramatic function other than to emphasize her elevated position. As Russell has recently reminded us, the continuous presence of domestic servants in aristocratic or gentry homes was a central issue to private theatricals. They often formed a large part of the audience (a detail stressing the differences between eighteenth-century and modern notions of 'privacy'), and thus were subjected to spectacles that engaged with the hierarchies power dynamics within the household in complex ways.¹⁴⁷ Servants were also themselves involved in productions, often preparing costumes and props, but also taking minor parts themselves.¹⁴⁸ Both with actual servants or with aristocratic amateurs cast as Serena's 'attendants', a private staging of *Zillia* would have mirrored the hierarchies within the household, and instructed all its members about their respective appropriate roles.

As mentioned above, *Zillia* sketches the Duchess's ideal of female aristocratic citizenship. Within her social circle, Devonshire's reference to Spencer emphasises the fact that the girl Zillia and the fairy Serena serve as role models, teaching the implied girl actors and their audience about female virtues, friendship, affection within the family and, echoing the anonymous letter discussed above, benevolence towards 'deserving' social inferiors (as is reflected in the fairy Serena's role as a patron and guide). The performance of educational dramas like *Zillia* or the plays by Genlis could potentially fulfil a function equivalent to that of 'speech days' at public schools for boys, on which students recited theatrical monologues

¹⁴⁷ Russell, 'Private Theatricals', p. 195 f. For a more thorough exploration of the involvement of servants in their employers' theatrical activities see Gillian Russell, "'Keeping Place": Servants, Theater and Sociability in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 42 (2001), pp. 21-42.

¹⁴⁸ Russell, 'Private Theatricals', p. 195; Russell, "'Keeping Place'", p. 29.

or classical oratories to an invited audience.¹⁴⁹ Like those semi-public events, pedagogical theatricals for girls were intended as rehearsals for their future role as members of the social elite. They could take part in the deliberate shaping of an elite *habitus*, thereby illustrating the performative quality of aristocratic sociability. Instructing female nobles both for their position within the private and public spheres, they implicitly advocate a prominent role for elite women, and sketch a model of female nobility that combines a superior *habitus* with the culture of sensibility.

Thus, *Zillia* is an interesting example of the ways in which the initially bourgeois concept of a citizenship based on personal virtues, sympathy and sensibility could be appropriated for an aristocratic context, and employed for a justification of an elevated social position.

6

As a play that explores its characters' relationships and emotions in an intimate, 'private' setting, *Zillia* in some ways anticipates Joanna Baillie's concept of a new kind of drama of the 'closet', sketched in the famous 'Introductory Discourse' to the first volume of her *Plays on the Passions* (1798)¹⁵⁰ Baillie's theory describes a genre not primarily interested in spectacle and action, but in the dramatic exploration of intimate, private 'passions which conceal themselves from the observation of men'¹⁵¹ through the representation of scenes 'from a character's closet'¹⁵²: 'the passions must be depicted not only with their bold and prominent features, but also with those minute and delicate traits which distinguish them in an infant, growing and repressed state [...]'.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ For the function of such 'speech days' at Harrow and other public schools see: Paul Elledge, *Lord Byron at Harrow School. Speaking out, talking back, acting up, bowing out* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 5-10. See also chapter 4 of this thesis.

¹⁵⁰ Joanna Baillie, 'Introductory Discourse' in Joanna Baillie, *Plays on the Passions* (1798 edition), ed. Peter Duthie (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2001), pp. 67-113.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁵² Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, p. 91. For a discussion of Baillie's dramatic project, see particularly pp. 86-91.

¹⁵³ Baillie, 'Introductory Discourse', p. 104.

Although written 16 years before Baillie's 'Discourse', *Zillia* shares its interest in 'private' emotions and in marginalized characters and spaces. Like Baillie, who was to describe the theatre as a 'school'¹⁵⁴, the Duchess also had a central focus on the educational aspect of theatre as well as on the dynamics between private and public roles¹⁵⁵, which her protagonist in *Zillia* is implicitly taught to negotiate. Devonshire, who in 1800 would provide an epilogue for the Drury Lane premiere of Baillie's tragedy *De Monfort* (as is discussed in the following chapter) was clearly herself attracted by the dramatic potential of the representation of 'private' or even repressed inner feelings. As will become evident in the following chapter, the issues *Zillia* is concerned with remained central for her later dramatic work.

In addition to thematic parallels, another crucial affinity between the Duchess's theatrical activities and Baillie's dramatic theory is in the attitude towards performance. Indeed, the contact with Baillie and her concept of an intimate drama may have inspired Devonshire's return to playwriting after, as far as we currently know, a gap of almost twenty years. A central feature in her theory that may have attracted Devonshire is the lack of an opposition between the 'closet' and the 'stage'. On one hand, Baillie is in no way opposed to theatrical performance. The ideas presented in the 'Introductory Discourse' focus on a drama *about* the 'closet', representing its characters' intimate emotions, not necessarily, or even exclusively, *for* it. However, she stresses that her dramas are intended both for private and public consumption, to be read as well as performed.¹⁵⁶ Crucially, Baillie defines a drama as a *literary* work, to be measured primarily by quality in concept and execution instead of its stage representation or even commercial success. By implication, the position of the playwright is thus closer to the traditionally highly respectable role of the poet rather than the

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁵⁵ Misty Anderson describes Baillie's theatre as an exploration of the 'tension between public roles and private bonds'. See Misty G. Anderson, 'Women playwrights', in Moody and O'Quinn (eds.), *British Theatre*, pp. 145-158, here: p. 155.

¹⁵⁶ Anderson, 'Women Playwrights', p. 155; Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, p. 91.

artisan or craftsman – a concept clearly attractive to Devonshire as a member of the social elite.¹⁵⁷

Significantly, her interest in the dramatic potential of the domestic sphere also links *Zillia* and her later plays with her earlier Richardsonian novels. As the critic Francis Jeffrey pointed out in 1806, a major element of the fascination of epistolary fiction lies in its quality to ‘uncloset’ its characters’ most intimate space: ‘With Richardson, we slip, invisible, into the *domestic privacy* of his characters, and hear and see everything that is said and done amongst them, [...]. We feel for [them] as for our private friends and acquaintances, with whose whole situation we are familiar’.¹⁵⁸ Jeffrey describes the reading of a Richardsonian novel as an essentially theatrical experience, with the reader cast in the role of an audience observing the action on stage but ‘invisible’ to the characters. His comment illustrates the thematic parallels and reciprocal influence between between epistolary fiction and ‘closet drama’, as well as the parallels in reception.¹⁵⁹ If a Richardsonian novel is theatrical in its use of the domestic space and the ways in which its engages with its readers, a dramatic text on the ‘closet’ is not dependent on the physical stage in order to create a performance in the audience’s mind.

Closet drama, then, with its affinities both to poetry and epistolary fiction, as a genre is deliberately situated on the margins between two different modes of reception, and potentially open to both. The attraction of such a concept for Devonshire is evident. As will be seen, while she continued to avoid the public stage, in later years she made serious attempts to

¹⁵⁷ See discussion above and Feldman, ‘Women Poets’, p. 44. Significantly, the first volume of Baillie’s *Plays on the Passions*, preceding the premiere of *De Monfort* for two years, with its combination of plays and dramatic theory stressed her point about the respectability and professionalism of playwriting. Nevertheless, the initial publication was anonymous, and Baillie’s authorship only disclosed after the *De Monfort* premiere, as is discussed in the following chapter.

¹⁵⁸ Francis Jeffrey in *The Edinburgh Review*, October 1804, quoted from Karen Lipsedge, “‘Enter into Thy Closet’: Women, Closet Culture and the Eighteenth-Century English Novel”, in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds.), *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 107-122, here: p. 107. My italics.

¹⁵⁹ For the act of reading as a ‘very private theatrical’ and for the theatrical dimension of sympathy see also Emily Allen, *Theater Figures. The Production of the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003), p. 62.

publish her plays and find for herself a socially acceptable role as a playwright and pedagogical author. Additionally, its dual status as a genre for intended for physical and 'mental' performance also links closet drama with Byronic 'mental theatre', an aspect equally considered below.

In the preface to the third volume of her *Series of Plays* (1812), Baillie made a proposal for the introduction of smaller theatres, which also illustrates the affinities between her idea of 'closet drama' and Devonshire's plays.¹⁶⁰ With a smaller space between actors and audience and the aid of particular light techniques, they were intended to enable the viewer to watch the actors' facial expressions and small, unspectacular gestures, in detail.¹⁶¹ Essentially describing a theatrical space adapted for the representation of intimate psychological drama, Baillie thus sought a way to circumscribe the limitations of contemporary public theatre that were among the main reasons for the supposed 'anti-theatricality' of many Romantic writers. Such a theatre would certainly have been attractive to Devonshire. In comparison to a large playhouse, its smaller scale would have rendered it a more exclusive space, implying an audience of less social diversity. Potentially occupying a space on the margins between private venues and large patent houses, it might have provided a suitably respectable setting for non-commercial performances of works by elite women.

The dynamics between Baillie's theory and Devonshire's oeuvre thus reflect the opportunities that the exploration of the 'closet' had for women writers in particular to find a socially acceptable position as a playwright. Interestingly, from hindsight, her own 'closeted' and repressed attempts at a dramatic career were to have some significant parallels to the themes 'closet drama' as a genre is interested in. A pedagogical play in the tradition of Genlis, but presented as an amateur exercise and personal gift to Devonshire's mother, the play is

¹⁶⁰ Joanna Baillie, *A Series of Plays*, 3 vols. (1798, 1802, 1812). Facsimile edition, ed. Donald H. Reiman (London and New York: Garland Press, 1977), vol. 3, pp. 231-235.

¹⁶¹ For a discussion of those plans, see Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, pp. 91-94.

itself on the margins between the privacy of the 'closet' and the public sphere. By its genre associated with an intimate setting, it was not adapted for a commercial public production with which Devonshire might have compromised her reputation. Like many amateur plays, it could remain within an entirely private context, and be used for circulation among the author's family and friends or productions within her own social circle. At the same time, precisely because it excluded commercial performances and thematically remained with the sphere of 'feminine' topics, it was respectable enough for a potential publication under her own name and thus for her participation in public debates on pedagogy and the social role of aristocratic women. As Russell as recently argued for the involvement in private theatricals, the production of pedagogical drama thus also potentially 'enabled women of the elite to define a public role for themselves without the stigma of involvement in the professional stage'.¹⁶²

Although she apparently produced no further plays 'in Mme de Genlis stile', Devonshire kept a lifelong interest in education and continued to work on pedagogical literary projects. Twenty years after *Zillia*, she wrote a collection of Metastasio translations (briefly discussed in the following chapter), which, in possible allusion to Genlis's collection *Théâtre à l'usage des jeunes personnes*, were explicitly intended for 'a Theatre for Youth'. Arguably, all her later dramatic works, her translations as well as her original plays, are written to be used in an educational context, and engage with politics, pedagogy and the appropriation of sensibility in complex ways. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the Duchess's later pedagogical dramas, her Lee adaptation *The Hungarian* in particular, were part of a reformist, but decidedly anti-radical project in accordance with her liberal Whig politics.

¹⁶² Russell, 'Private Theatricals', p. 199.

On another level, the Duchess's interest in Genlis reflects her anxieties about female authorship. In 1782, at the time when she was probably working on *Zillia*, she twice mentions Genlis in her letters to her mother, in both instances referring to her as a pedagogical author. The first letter praises Devonshire's own Rousseauvian upbringing by her mother by comparing her favourably to Genlis: 'If the education of the heart is of the importance I think, Mme de Genlis *doit baiser vous les pieds* [has to kiss your feet], for *example* must be the only lesson' [italics mine].¹⁶³ Although Devonshire's note indicates that she considered *Zillia* as a first attempt, not intended for publication, it could be classed as a pedagogical play in the Rousseauvian tradition, intended as an 'example' advising and encouraging both young girls and their mothers to consider their relationship in terms of friendship and intimacy, and to devote themselves to charitable works rather than living a life of luxury. The second quote is more complex and ambiguous:

In a new french [sic] book I have down here, that is call'd a Potpourri, & comes out periodically there are great attacks on Mme de Genlis and poor Adèle & Théodore¹⁶⁴ - among other jokes there is one [...] that as she had distributed paintings of history [...] in her different rooms analogue to their situation that a Lady said she ought to place drawings of the *deluge* [Devonshire's italics] in her water closet – what acharnés [sic; rouses] them so much is that she is suppos'd to mean herself in Mme Dalmane [sic; spelled d'Almane in the novel] whose character they say is not at all like Mme de Genlis's – mais tout cela ne rend pas son livre moins précieux – [but all this does not render her book any less precious]

¹⁶³ Devonshire to Spencer, Bath, 30 May 1782, Chatsworth MSS, 392.

¹⁶⁴ For Genlis's own answer to the derogatory criticism of her novel see Dow, 'Introduction', p. xv.

There is another good epigram on another woman who writes [Mme la Comtesse de Beauharnais¹⁶⁵ ; Devonshire's brackets] Chloë belle et poëtte [sic], par un petit [sic] travers/ Fait son visage, et ne fait pas ses vers [Chloë, beautiful and a poet, by a little fault / Makes up her face, and does not make up her verses].¹⁶⁶

At a time when she had just written a play that imitates Genlis's style and subject matter, this quotation shows an ambivalent view of women writers that is characteristic of Devonshire's entire literary career. The passage clearly illustrates her concerns about the consequences that publicity as a writer might entail for a woman of her class. Both the hostile anecdotes about Genlis and the misogynistic epigram by French poet Ponce-Denis Écouchard-Lebrun (1729-1807) are attacks on aristocratic women like herself, with no need to write to support themselves financially and 'live by the pen'.¹⁶⁷ Both describe women's writing as a mere pastime, a pursuit inspired by vanity and boredom rather than serious literary or intellectual ambition, and implicitly the woman writer as a ridiculous character. However, although Devonshire does not openly contradict the jokes, her reaction should not be interpreted as unquestioningly affirmative or approving, but rather as implicitly subversive. She claims that the deriding jokes about Genlis do 'not render her book any less precious' (the use of French here simultaneously serves to emphasize the remark and put a distance between it and the speaker), and thus marks them as ultimately insignificant in connection to the book itself. Devonshire defends not only Genlis's novel, but her right as an author to be judged independently from her gender, character or social origin, by her works and literary achievement alone.

¹⁶⁵ Devonshire probably refers to the French poet Fanny de Beauharnais (1738-1813), who, among others, wrote a poem about Rousseau's grave.

¹⁶⁶ Devonshire to Spencer, 10 October 1782, Chatsworth MSS, 436.

¹⁶⁷ A common eighteenth-century expression for writing as a profession. See Turner, *Living by the Pen*, title and *passim*.

Her subtle use of the Écouchard-Lebrun quote is even more complex. She describes it as a 'good epigram', but then misquotes it in a significant way. In the original text, 'Chloë [...], belle et poète a *deux petits travers*', has *two little faults* [italics mine], instead of only one as in Devonshire's quotation. She does not make explicitly clear whether in her version, 'making up her face' or 'not making up her verses' is considered a 'fault', but, in the context of her preceding dismissal of the Genlis jokes, it seems clear that for her, 'Chloë's' flaw lies not in her interest in her appearance, but in the neglect of her literary productions. In a covert way, Devonshire's rewriting of the epigram enforces her previous claim that a writer should be judged by the quality of his or her work, and not by character or lifestyle. Thus, paradoxically, the passage puts women writers on an equal level with their male counterparts, while at the same time, it mirrors Devonshire's own anxieties that a career as an aristocratic woman writer might render her a subject of ridicule.

Concerns about her public perception were certainly a major issue for Devonshire, and probably one of the reasons why she decided against further pursuing a career as a novelist or (at least at this point) as a playwright. However, although none her own plays was ever performed in public, her role as a patron of actors and playwrights gave her the opportunity to be involved in several theatrical productions, in different capacities. From an early age, her parents' friendship with David Garrick, actor and director of Drury Lane, had given her access to the centre of London's theatre scene, enabling her to promote her own chosen protégées. Thus in 1776, at the age of 19 she helped to arrange to her future friend Mary Robinson's first London stage appearance as Juliet at Drury Lane.¹⁶⁸ She also used her social contacts to ensure the success of Sarah Siddons' second London début after she had seen her in Bath. Siddons herself partly attributed her 'good reception in London' to 'the enthusiastic

¹⁶⁸ Byrne, *Perdita*, p. 75; Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 174

accounts of me which the amiable Duchess of Devonshire had [...] spread before my arrival'.¹⁶⁹ In 1785 the *Morning Herald* reported how she assisted another protégée, Mrs. Nunns, in a more practical manner, given advice on her dressing for one role, and even a dress for another¹⁷⁰ – thus showing how she used her social position of aristocratic patron to have the opportunity to participate in the production process itself.

Writers also attempted to obtain her favour and support, and she is the dedicatee of at least one longer anonymous poem¹⁷¹, a historical tragedy by playwright Sophia Burrell (ca. 1750-1802)¹⁷², and a collection of plays by the poet, essayist and playwright William Hayley (1745-1820).¹⁷³ Hayley's collection, published in 1784, deserves particular attention. Comprised of three comedies and two tragedies, it is an interesting source on plays written for private theatricals and, more specifically, in various ways relevant to Devonshire's involvement with private theatricals. While the comedies ('The Happy Prescription', 'The Two Connoisseurs' and 'The Mausoleum') have no explicit connection to her, in one of the tragedies, 'Lord Russel' (sic), Hayley makes a conventional polite allusion to his dedicatee, as the historical play, set at the court of Charles II, features members from both the Spencer and Cavendish families.¹⁷⁴ In the second tragedy, 'Marcella', there is another possible and more personal allusion: according to Hayley's introduction, the play is based on a dramatic fragment by Samuel Richardson, whose works Devonshire had emulated in her two anonymous novels. More importantly, as the title announces, Hayley's collection is 'Written for a Private Theatre' – and thus for theatricals of the sort that may have been performed

¹⁶⁹ Quoted from Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 174.

¹⁷⁰ *Morning Herald and Daily Adviser*, 4 July 1785, quoted from Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 174.

¹⁷¹ Anon., *Chatsworth. A poem. Dedicated by permission to Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Jeffrey & Co., 1788).

¹⁷² Sophia Burrell, *Theodora, or The Spanish Daughter. A Tragedy*. Dedicated (by permission) to her Grace Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (London: Luke Hansard, 1800). Burrell was also a translator/adaptor of some plays by the French tragedian Pierre Corneille.

¹⁷³ William Hayley, *Plays of Three Acts. Written for a Private Theatre* (London: T. Cadell, 1784). The prolific Hayley was also a Corneille translator, essayist and author of a biography of the poet William Cowper.

¹⁷⁴ Lord Cavendish receives particular praise in the preface, and, alongside Lord Russell, is described as 'an honour to our country' (Hayley, 'Preface to 'Lord Russel'', in Hayley, *Plays*, pp. 267-269, here: p. 269).

within the Devonshire circle. Although there is no other indication that he knew about such productions, his decision to dedicate the plays to the Duchess is evidence of her reputation as a patron and friend of the theatre and of private theatricals. In addition, it also suggests that her own dramatic writing, ambitions as a playwright and private productions may have been known outside the immediate family circle.

The dedicatory poem 'To her Grace the Dutchess [sic] of Devonshire' is a further hint that Hayley had knowledge of his dedicatee's personal interests. After a conventional general address to the 'Great and Fair' who 'in every age and clime,/ Receive free homage from the Sons of Rhyme'(l. 1-2)¹⁷⁵, the speaker addresses Devonshire in a way that at least suggests a personal acquaintance. He praises her 'elegance', 'serious dignity [and] sportive ease' (l. 5-6), but also her gentle character, for, even if 'music has not blest [his] lyre' (l. 11) he would not 'dread th'averted ear of proud Disdain' (l. 10) and refers to her in a way that may possibly allude to private spectacles at Devonshire House: 'Whom Virtue hails, at Pleasure's festive rites,/ Chaste Arbiter of Art's refin'd delights...' (l. 7).

A later part of the poem is even more interesting and complex. Hayley's narrator recollects:

When my first anxious Muse's fav'rite child,
 Her young Serena, artless, simple, wild,
 Presum'd from privacy's safe scenes to fly,
 And met in giddy haste the public eye;
 Thy generous praise her trembling youth sustain'd
 The smile she dar'd not ask, from thee she gain'd;
 And found a guardian in the gracious DEVON (l. 17-23).

¹⁷⁵ Hayley, 'To her Grace the Dutchess of Devonshire', in *Plays*, pp. v-viii, here: p. v, l. 1-2.

The comment about ‘her young Serena’ is ambiguous. On the most obvious level, it refers to the ‘youngest child’ of the narrator’s own ‘Muse’, and thus by implication, to Hayley’s last literary creation, his poem *The Triumphs of Temper* (1781).¹⁷⁶ This poem about a virtuous young woman of ‘sensibility’ in the Rousseauvian or Richardsonian tradition, which ends with her happy marriage to an equally ‘sensible’ man, was extremely successful and received went through numerous editions between the 1780s and early 1800s. Its heroine became the subject of a famous painting by George Romney (1734-1802), entitled *Serena Reading* (ca. 1785). Unsurprisingly, the poem appealed to Devonshire (who may have called her ‘good fairy’ in *Zillia* after Hayley’s *Serena*) and, as he recollects in the dedication to his *Plays*, brought Hayley to her attention.

However, there is another possible level of interpretation. Given the nature of the publication, Hayley may also imply a covert allusion to Devonshire’s own dramatic attempt. In that reading, ‘young Serena’ would simultaneously refer to the benevolent fairy from *Zillia* and implicitly, to Devonshire herself, who as a patron ‘bestow[ing her ...] gifts on/ deserving mortals’¹⁷⁷ fulfils a role similar to that of her fairy character. For knowing readers, the allusion thus enforces Hayley’s praise of Devonshire’s benevolence as the prominent ‘guardian’ of his work. Simultaneously, in this passage, he recognizes Devonshire as an artist in her own right, although her works, in contrast to his own, do not ‘Presum[e to fly] from privacy’s safe scenes’. Additionally, Hayley links himself to her as a fellow author, and thus, despite the social gap between them, implicitly puts their relationship on a level of equality. With his ambiguous reference to ‘young Serena’, which refers both to his own heroine and Devonshire’s character from *Zillia*, he even alludes to the fact that he has inspired her writing, thus, in artistic matters, reversing their roles as patron and protégée.

¹⁷⁶ William Hayley, *The Triumphs of Temper. A Poem in Six Cantos* (London: Dodsley, 1781).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Although such an interpretation might seem far-fetched at first sight, in my opinion, this subtext is valid and intended. In other contexts, Devonshire herself referred to her works in a similarly covert, discreet form, as will be seen further below. Interpreted in this way, this passage in Hayley's dedicatory poem illustrates how private theatricals were not 'private' in the modern sense, but read and discussed in a small elite circle. For an aristocratic woman writer like Devonshire, such a circle would consist of family members and close friends, but also of writers and intellectuals with the same social background as (or even be chosen among) her protégés and visitors to her *salon*. Depending on the individual drama as well as on the author's wishes, this 'private' circle could either be wider or more restricted.

On another level, Hayley's collection is also an interesting source for the experimental potential of private theatricals:

As the following Plays were intended only for a private theatre, I have been tempted by that circumstance to introduce a kind of novelty into our language, by writing three comedies in rhyme, though the Comic Muse of our country has long been accustomed to express herself in prose, and her custom has the sanction of settled precept, and successful example. [...] For the boldness of an attempt, which has no modern precedent to plead in its behalf, some apology may be due to the Public.¹⁷⁸

Hayley's statement is ambiguous. On the one hand, the claim that his dramas are 'only' intended for private diversion seems to excuse their difference from plays performed in a public sphere by downplaying their importance. At the same time, however, his claim to 'boldness' reflects pride and confidence in the innovative quality of his enterprise. The

¹⁷⁸ Hayley, 'Preface', in *Plays*, pp. ix-xv, here: p. ix f.

introduction implies that private theatricals are not bound by the same restrictions as 'public' performances, and is thus an interesting indication that they could provide an occasion of experimentation with new genres and forms that might not have been accepted in public theatres. Moreover, while Hayley goes on to claim that 'by writing a comedy in rhyme, [he does not] mean to convey an indirect censure on the contrary practice' and hastens to praise 'the many excellent comedies in prose, with which our language is enriched'¹⁷⁹, the remainder of the preface suggests the contrary:

The custom of other enlightened nations, both ancient and modern, may be pleaded on this occasion in behalf of verse. Aristophanes, in his play of the Clouds, seems to pride himself on his poetry. Ariosto having written two comedies in prose, converted them both into metre at a maturer period of his life; and Moliere (sic), the unrivalled master of the French comic theatre, [...] is, I think, most admirable, and most truly comic, when he adheres to the latter.¹⁸⁰

Using historical examples from Greek antiquity (Aristophanes), Italian renaissance drama (Ariosto) and French classicism (Molière), Hayley attempts to show that comedies written in poetic language were considered superior to prose dramas outside the English-speaking world – thus stressing that his 'experiment' (the term is used by himself)¹⁸¹, which he also justifies by the peculiarities and stylistic possibilities of the English language¹⁸², is rooted in a 'dignified' literary and theatrical tradition opposed to commercial British theatre. His praise of ancient and French/Italian classicist drama thus can be read as an implicit claim to the superiority of aristocratic private theatricals (stressed by his dedication to Devonshire

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. x.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. x

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. xi.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. x f.

and the subtle hints at her own productions), which, seen exclusively by a small, educated audience, are independent from commercial considerations and requirements.

Like Devonshire's own *Zillia*, Hayley's collection simultaneously harks back to older genres, in this case French and Italian classicist drama (like the *masque* often enjoyed not by a paying general public, but an aristocratic elite), and looks forward to Romantic experiments with new dramatic forms. At the same time liberating and elitist, the concept of a drama written for small productions and intimate settings, which is implied both in *Zillia* and Hayley's collection, in several anticipates both Joanna Baillie's theory of 'closet drama' and Byron's concept of 'mental theatre'.¹⁸³

Hayley's preface shows that he expects his plays to be staged, albeit in a private context. However, the explicit exclusion of public performances reveals a strategy of distancing himself and his works from public theatre that links his preface to similar comments by Romantic dramatists such as Byron (whose introduction to *Werner* is discussed in detail in chapter 5). Like Byron (as will become evident), Hayley does not reject the idea of performance *per se*, but makes a claim for his dramatic works to be judged by their literary merit rather than their potential stage success (a claim slightly reminiscent of Devonshire's comment about Genlis's literary achievement being independent from her character). Thus, he anticipates the Romantic notion of drama as literature and as literary experiment (an aspect sometimes neglected in discussions of supposed Romantic anti-theatricality), like Baillie's closet drama 'designed to be read as well as seen'¹⁸⁴ and deliberately not making concessions to public taste and performability.

¹⁸³ Of course, the Romantic concept of a drama that does not make concessions to the taste of the 'crowd' is also arguably elitist.

¹⁸⁴ Anderson, 'Women playwrights', p. 155.

Both *Zillia* and Hayley's project thus illustrate the complex links between eighteenth-century elite theatricals and Romantic genres experimenting with new forms of (both performed or unperformed) theatricality. As the parallels between those works exemplify, there is not so much a direct opposition or dichotomy between plays intended for performance and those intended to be read, as a continuum within which dramatic works, in different contexts, could be either, or both.

8

As this chapter has shown, while trying to stay within the boundaries of female aristocratic propriety, Devonshire continually attempted to expand these boundaries to pursue a career as a writer without offending the social codes of her class. She also used her role as a patron to find ways to participate in theatrical productions. Her 'literary mimicry', i. e. the imitation of other writers in style and content, allowed her to simultaneously remain within the sphere of dilettantism and show her own literary skills and ambitions. In her later years, she would perfect the technique of imitation as a means to both hide and promote her own works, as will become evident in the following chapter.

Her turn to educational writing in particular illustrates her attempts to find a socially acceptable role as an aristocratic woman writer. As a genre, pedagogical drama, particularly for the education of girls, was itself on the margins between the private and public spheres. Associated with private performances and 'private' issues, it offered female authors an opportunity to pursue their theatrical interests without literally and thematically leaving the 'feminine' space. At the same time, partly because it excluded public performances, it was respectable enough for a potential publication, and, promoting the author's views on

education, family relations and the role of women, was also socially influential. Devonshire's later plans to publish her pedagogical plays, discussed below, show how she attempted to use the genre to combine her literary activities with her pedagogical and political interests.

As has been mentioned above, Devonshire's concept of a drama addressing intimate issues such as emotions or personal affections, as implied in *Zillia*, has several affinities to Joanna Baillie's concept of 'closet drama' as described in the 'Introductory Discourse' to her *Plays on the Passions*. Crucially, for both writers, the 'private' quality of their plays lies in the insight they give into their characters' 'private' feelings, not in the rejection of performance or publicity. While Devonshire avoided a public performance of her own plays, in 1800 she was to play a central role in 'uncloseting' Baillie's dramas and explicitly aimed to promote her as a female playwright. Her involvement in the public staging of Baillie's *De Monfort* in particular is closely linked to her own adaptation of 'Kruitznier', both in aim and subject matter, and to her political activities. The complex links between Devonshire's Whig politics and her later writings, as well as her part in the political appropriation of 'German' plays and settings will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

'THAT WAR WITH SOFTER CARES MAY BE UNITED' –***THE HUNGARIAN*, 'GERMAN DRAMA'****AND THE POLITICS OF ADAPTATION****1**

While Devonshire continued to write poetry and remained active as a theatrical patron throughout the late 1780s and early 1790s, there is currently no known surviving manuscript of a novel or play dating from that time, and it is quite possible that she wrote none. The public ridicule to which she was subjected in the press for her participation in the Westminster election campaign of 1784 may have been a reason why she avoided to cross the boundaries of the female sphere and appear publicly as a writer in the following years. Probably due to the hostile reactions she had received as canvasser for Fox in 1784, despite her close relationship to him, her political influence was to become much more subtle and less obviously visible in the public sphere. However, her interest in a possible literary career seems to have returned in the late 1790s, at a time when she also resumed her acquaintance with Fox and her political activities.

Devonshire's 'Kruitzner' adaptation *The Hungarian*, written in collaboration with her sister Harriet, Countess of Bessborough early in 1802, less than a year after the original publication of Lee's novella, is an especially interesting example of her political appropriation

of a text which, for her contemporaries, had obvious radical associations. Like her other dramas, *Zillia* excepted, *The Hungarian* had long been known only through the Spencer/Cavendish correspondence and oral transmission within her family.¹ The drama itself was thought to have been lost. However, in 2002, a manuscript was unexpectedly unearthed by Professor Donald Bewley in the Huntington Library.² It is bound together with fair copies of three Metastasio translations by the Duchess (*Joseph & His Brethren*, *Abraham*, *The Death of Abel*) and a manuscript of her original sacred drama *The Hebrew Mother* – all of them written in the same hand, evidently Devonshire's own.³ The *Hungarian* manuscript is accompanied by a copy of 'Kruitzner' taken from the 1832 edition of *The Canterbury Tales* in the *Standard Novels* series.⁴ As there are no references to Lee's novella in the tragedy's title or elsewhere in the manuscript, the addition of Lee's story, long after Devonshire and Bessborough's deaths, shows that their descendants were still aware of the play's origin, its source and the circumstances of its production – suggesting, perhaps, that it received private readings or even performances in their social circles.

Apart from the manuscript itself, currently the only known reference to the play is a short but extremely interesting comment by Bessborough to her lover Lord Granville Leveson Gower. In February 1802, she told him about a play she was writing with her sister:

[...] I am very busy with our tragedy. I never intended you should know of this at all if you had not surpris'd it (sic), [...] We began this year at Chatsworth and did a great deal there. My sister work'd very hard at it at Hardwick, and now we are going on again, and it is almost done. But hers is the most considerable

¹ Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 351, 433, n. 5.

² Huntington Library, The Kemble-Devonshire Collection, MS K-D 571. For the discovery of the manuscript see Cochran, 'Harriet Lee's *The German's Tale*, *The Hungarian*, by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and Byron's *Werner*', p. 3.

³ The handwriting closely resembles her hand in her correspondence, but, as fair copies, the play manuscripts are far more readable.

⁴ Harriet and Sophia Lee, *The Canterbury Tales*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1832).

part. I suppose you will think it vanité d'auteur or sisterly partiality if I tell you I really do not think it very bad. The two first acts are the tamest. The second is the one I think worst of. You must never mention or hint at it to her on any account. It is the story of Siegendorf in the Canterbury Tales.⁵

While describing the project as a collaborative effort, Bessborough concedes 'the most considerable part' to be her sister's. Thus, the letter is in accordance with the surviving manuscript of *The Hungarian*, which is written in Devonshire's hand and attributes it to her alone. To my knowledge, in contrast to her sister Bessborough produced no other literary texts, and their family remembered *The Hungarian* chiefly as Devonshire's work (see chapter 5). Thus, in this chapter I primarily consider the play as the Duchess's production, discussing it in the context of her politics and other dramatic writing, although Bessborough's participation and the issue of collaboration will also be briefly addressed. Apart from creating a complex case in terms of attribution, the letter is also interesting as it illustrates the sisters' shyness and discretion concerning their literary production. Even more than in her earlier years, the Duchess negotiated her authorship in complex ways, both within her family and wider social circle. The collaboration with her sister, apparently not otherwise a writer, appears as a strategy to remain within the sphere of dilettantism, and represent her work as a mere pastime. Simultaneously, however, Bessborough's letter itself has the function to announce the sisters' authorship with particular discretion. Such a strategy was also typical for the Duchess herself, and in many ways symbolises the ambivalent position as an aristocratic writer she occupied in her later years.

As this chapter will show, Devonshire's later writings, *The Hungarian* in particular, are closely linked to her politics and her role within the Whig party. In addition, as will

⁵ Letter from Harriet, Countess of Bessborough, to Granville Leveson Gower, February 1802, in Leveson Gower, *Private Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 332. See also Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p. 331; p. 431 n. 8.

become evident, they represent a further exploration of her interest in pedagogical theatre and closet drama, and even more than *Zillia* illustrate their political dimension.

2

Although her authorship is not established with absolute certainty, Devonshire is generally believed to be the writer of an anonymous travel book, *Memorandums of the Face of the Country in Switzerland* (a particularly popular travel destination of British nobles in the late eighteenth century), published in 1799, and based on her own trip seven years before.⁶ The account gives extensive landscape descriptions, but almost no personal references, and it is impossible to say whether Devonshire collaborated on it with other members of her party (possibly her travel companion Elizabeth Forster, who also wrote poetry about the trip). Much better known, however, is another literary outcome of this journey, a longer poem on 'The Passage over the Mountain of St. Gothard'⁷ (the passage over the St. Gothard is also featured in her travel account). Published without her official consent in *The Morning Post* on 21 December 1799, it instantly became famous, and was translated into French by Abbé Jacques Delille and into Italian by Gaetano Polidori in 1802 and 1803 respectively.⁸

According to Foreman there was also a successful German translation⁹, but as she does not provide its translator, title or bibliographical details, so far I have only been able to trace

⁶ [Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire ?], *Memorandums of the Face of the Country in Switzerland* (London: Cooper and Graham, 1799 (published anonymously)).

⁷ Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 'The Passage over the Mountain of St. Gothard, A Poem', in Duncan Wu (ed.), *Romantic Women Poets. An Anthology* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1998), pp. 172-177.

⁸ Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, *Passage du St.-Gothard, poëme, traduit de l'Anglais de Madame la Duchesse de Devonshire par l'abbé de Lille* (sic) (Paris and London: Giguët et Michaud and Prosper & co., 1082 [i. e. 1802]); *The Passage of the Saint Gothard, by the Duchess of Devonshire with an Italian translation by G. Polidori* (London: Bulmer & co., 1803). There are several reasons to believe the poem was intended for publication, and, as will be become evident below, at least the translators were certainly working with Devonshire's consent.

⁹ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 324 n.

one published as late as 1816.¹⁰ The German reception of the poem might be of particular interest, however, for its thematic connection to one of the most famous German plays of the time. The ‘St. Gothard’, which otherwise reiterates the motifs from the *Memorandums* in poetic form, is particularly interesting for its reference to the Swiss fight for political independence and the legendary hero Wilhelm Tell in stanzas 24 to 26¹¹ – five years before the publication of Friedrich Schiller’s dramatisation of the Tell legend. Stanza 24 gives Tell’s story in four lines, narrating how he ‘directed the avenging dart/ [...] that first preserved his child/ Then winged the arrow to the tyrant’s heart’ (24, l. 96-98). The following two stanzas praise the Swiss fight for independence and the country’s concept of liberty.

In 1799, the use of the Tell legend and its motifs of republicanism and the fight against tyrannical aristocratic authorities had strong political connotations, and was, by implication, associated with the French Revolution and ‘Jacobin’ radicalism.¹² The Duchess’s use of the topic is thus surprising at first sight. However, her poem describes the ‘freedom’ the ‘Swiss heroes’ (25, l. 99) ‘stamped on their native land’ (25, l. 100) in a way that decidedly distances it from the ‘liberty’ of the French Republic, and particularly from the Jacobin ‘terror’: ‘Their liberty required *no rites uncouth, / No blood demanded* and no slaves enchained;/ Her rule was gentle and her voice was truth,/ *By social order formed, by laws restrained.*’ (26, l.101-104, my italics).

¹⁰ Translated anonymously and printed in Anon., *Scizze einer mahlerischen Reise durch die Schweiz* (sic). *Aus dem Englischen eines Unbekannten* (Bern: J. J. Burgdorfer, 1816), pp. 71-86.

¹¹ Additionally, in the 1802 edition, three long footnotes explain the legend and historical background.

¹² For the reception of the Tell legend and its radical connotations in the late eighteenth century and the early 1800s, previous to the publication of Schiller’s play, see e. g. Christina Tezky, ‘Aufstand gegen Tyrannei. Wilhelm Tell’, in Stiftung Weimarer Klassik und Kunstsammlungen (ed.), *Die Wahrheit hält Gericht. Schillers Helden heute* (Weimar: Stiftung Weimarer Klassik und Kunstsammlungen, 2005), pp. 234-241, here: p. 234 f; Rüdiger Zymner, *Friedrich Schiller. Dramen* (Berlin: Erich-Schmidt-Verlag, 2002), pp. 143-145. See also the section on *Wilhelm Tell* in the catalogue of the 2005 exhibition ‘Die Wahrheit hält Gericht. Schillers Helden heute’ on Schiller’s characters, in Stiftung Weimarer Klassik (ed.), *Die Wahrheit hält Gericht. Schillers Helden heute*, pp. 242-271, esp. pp. 242-249.

In Devonshire's 'St. Gothard', the Swiss fight for independence is acceptable only because it is directed against an arbitrary, unpredictable despotic system which, unlike the European monarchies of her own days, is not bound by laws. A long explanatory footnote to stanza 24 enforces the point by describing medieval Switzerland as a land conquered by a foreign power, ruled on the Emperor's behalf by 'arbitrary baillies or governors, who exercised much cruelty and oppression'.¹³ This fact is illustrated by the famous episode in which the imperial governor Geissler ('Gessler' in Schiller's play), whom Devonshire explicitly labels as a 'tyrant'¹⁴, forces Tell to shoot the apple from his son's head. The subsequent political order of the Swiss Republic is represented in a way that contrasts it with that of revolutionary Republican France. The implied comparison is particularly evident in Devonshire's choice of words in her annotations, where the Swiss fight for independence is called a 'Revolution'.¹⁵ However, the poem stresses that unlike the French Republic, Switzerland did not introduce the 'uncouth rites' of a new 'enlightened' religion, but adhered to Christianity, and that the new political system did not generate further violent conflicts or wars. Devonshire describes Switzerland as country with both an established social order and a body of laws, thereby implicitly stressing the contrast to the alleged rule of the 'mob' in revolutionary France. To Devonshire's original readers, most of whom were familiar with Edmund Burke's influential *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) with its graphic and prophetic description of the violence and chaos of the Terror that was to follow the destruction of the traditional order of the *ancien régime*, these allusions would have been obvious and immediately recognizable.

Devonshire's representation of the Swiss Republic is consistent with an earlier characterisation she wrote in 1791 in a private journal. As the entry is a central and explicit

¹³ Wu, *Romantic Women Poets*, p. 176 n. 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, st. 24, l. 96 and n. 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175 n. 17.

expression of the Duchess's political views, it will be briefly discussed in the following passage. On her long journey through France, Switzerland and Italy (1791-1793), she kept a journal for her eldest daughter Georgiana. Partly a travel account of a female 'Grand Tour', partly a pedagogical text for her daughter's political, literary, historical, geographical and cultural education, the manuscript is an extremely interesting document. In a longer passage on the history of France in the first volume of the journal, the Duchess mentions the recent division of France into 83 administrative *départements*, and then describes the different systems of government existing in Europe:

Since the Revolution they have attempted to new divide France into 83 departments – the names chiefly taken from Rivers & c. I do not give you as they are very puzzling – and probably will not last or at least will not make the old names be forgotten.

There are four kinds of Government in Europe. – Despotic, where the Sovereign alone follows his own will, and may dispose of the lives of his subjects. [F]ortunately the only example of this barbarous Government in Europe – is in Turkey.

Monarchical, where a King has the chief command – but is subject to the Laws established by his Predecessors, such as was in France, and is in Spain.

Aristocratical where the principal Nobleman govern, as in Venice.

Democratical, where the people govern – either in public assemblys (sic), or in assemblys of men whom they have chosen to explain their sentiments – such as in Switzerland.

- The English government is reckoned the wisest and certainly is the happiest of all, being composed of the three last.

- Monarchical, under the influence of the laws, which our king is. -

Aristocratical – by the means of the House of Lords who represent the nobility.

Democratical by the means of the House of Commons, who are chosen by the people, and express their wishes.

The French government was formerly an absolute Monarchy – they have had sixty seven kings [...a list of all French kings follows here, with characterisations and historical background]¹⁶

The Swiss democracy is here represented as a legitimate political system, along with the ‘aristocratical’ oligarchy of Venice and the pre-Revolutionary absolute monarchy in France. While Devonshire’s description of the British government as the ‘wisest’ and ‘happiest’ is an obvious lesson in patriotism for her daughter, it is also an interesting statement of her political views. The image of the ‘mixed’ government with monarchic, aristocratic and democratic elements dates from classical Greek Antiquity, when it was used to describe the ‘three-legged’ political body of Sparta. Significantly, for the Duchess, neither the Athenian Republic or Republican Rome, nor the Roman Empire (in which the Emperor was usually a military commander acclaimed by his troops) are models worthy of emulation. Instead she reverts to Sparta, which had a stable, hereditary (double) monarchy and, interestingly, was a place where, famously in contrast to classical Athens, aristocratic women did *not* live in seclusion, but were present in public spaces. The allusion to the Spartan government was by no means far-fetched; Sparta’s political system and the supposed patriotism and civic virtue of its citizens were popular topics in late eighteenth-century literature and historiography.¹⁷ The special position of the female members of the Spartiate

¹⁶ Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, *‘Exile’ Journals*, written for Georgiana Cavendish (the Duchess’s daughter), vol. 1, entry from 4 November 1791 (no page numbers), CH Carlisle MSS, J 18/67/2.

¹⁷ See e. g. Catherine Macauley Graham, *Letters on Education. With Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (London: Dilly, 1790), p. 24 f; Alexander Jardine, *Letters from Barbary, France, Spain, Portugal etc. By an English Officer*. 2 vols. (London: Cadell, 1788 (published anonymously)), vol. 1, p. 310; pp. 332-334; William Alexander, *History of Women from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time*, 2 vols., ed. Jane Rendall (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995 (repr. of 1782 edition)), vol. 1, p. 52 f.

social elite in particular was frequently commented on in publications on the Greek city state. Several writers saw parallels with the public role and political influence of British female aristocrats. Implicitly or explicitly, they used the Spartan background to comment on their own time and discuss different concepts of male and female heroism, patriotism, citizenship and civic virtue.¹⁸ The most prominent example is probably Hannah Cowley's tragedy, *The Fate of Sparta, or the Rival Kings* (1788), the heroine of which is arguably a favourable portrait of Devonshire herself as a campaigner for Charles James Fox during the Westminster Election.¹⁹ First staged at Drury Lane, the Whig-oriented 'opposition playhouse', to which she had close connections, and with her protégée Sarah Siddons as the female lead Chelonice and the speaker of the epilogue, Cowley's play was certainly known to the Duchess. Her interest in the reception of women writers (discussed in the previous chapter) shows that she was probably also aware of contemporary debates on the position of women in the public sphere, and the particular relevance those debates had for herself due to her prominence and public visibility. Although in the journal for her daughter, Devonshire does not mention the Spartan origin of her image of the 'mixed' government, the passage suggests her familiarity with contemporary debates on political systems, different models of citizenship and civic virtue, and possibly also her identification with concepts of female patriotism sketched by authors such as Cowley.²⁰

Devonshire's concept of an ideal government is characterised as a system based on hereditary titles, a reliable body of laws, and constant negotiation and balance between

¹⁸ See Guest, *Small Change*, pp. 242-247; p. 251; p. 337 f.

¹⁹ See Angela Escott, "'Bosom'd Foxes Took their Flight": The Duchess of Devonshire, Luxury and Civic Virtue in Hannah Cowley's Tragedy *The Fate of Sparta*', paper presented at the *British Women Playwrights, 1780-1830* Conference at Chapman University, Montreal, March 12, 2005, unpublished. An abstract can be found at: <http://www.etang.umontreal.ca/bwp18000/bwpchapman.pdf> (16 July 2006). Escott also discusses *The Fate of Sparta* and its references to contemporary politics and debates about motherhood, the role of women in public life and female citizenship in her PhD thesis. See Angela Escott, *Generic Diversity in the Dramatic Work of Hannah Cowley* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2005), pp. 143-179, esp. pp. 151-153; pp. 160-179. For her discussion of references to Devonshire see esp. p. 152 f.

²⁰ Additionally, given her interest in pedagogy, the Duchess may have been interested in the Spartan education system, which arguably also extended to the female members of Sparta's social elite, and which was also much debated among intellectuals of her time. See Guest, *Small Change*, p. 246 f.

different social groups and institutions, which are however represented as stable in themselves. The French constitutional monarchy of 1791, when the passage was written, is prominently and conspicuously absent from her list of the forms of government in Europe. Although by her own definition, it could be described as another type of 'mixed' system, with laws binding both the king and the National Assembly, it is thus implicitly represented as an illegitimate, unstable institution which she evidently does not expect to last. This is also reflected in her remarks about the *départements* of France, which she calls 'confusing' and does not consider worthy of listing individually, although otherwise she gives her daughter a detailed geographical description of the country.

In the 'Passage over the Mountain of St. Gothard', the implicit rejection of the French Revolution and the 'radical' Republicanism of Devonshire's own time is more subtle. Not mentioned explicitly, the Revolution is present as a point of comparison both in the Duchess's choice of words and choice of topic. The poem appropriates the radical motif of a fight against aristocratic and monarchic 'tyranny' by reinterpreting it as a fight against a *foreign* and arbitrary rule and for national independence. By contrast, the Revolution in France, directed against the country's own ruling classes, is thereby characterised as an illegitimate uprising. Eliminating the motif's anti-aristocratic elements, Devonshire rewrites it for a reformist discourse in accordance with her own Whig politics. Indeed, the particular anxieties about 'foreign' radicalism' in Britain in 1799 may have been a reason both for her decision to publish the poem and for its subsequent success. As will become evident in the discussion below, this strategy of appropriation and reinterpretation of radical discourse came to be characteristic for Devonshire's later literary and theatrical activities.

At the time of its publication the topic was so politically charged that Devonshire's poem prompted an immediate reaction from Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Three days after the publication of the 'St. Gothard', *The Morning Post* published Coleridge's 'answer', an 'Ode to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire'²¹. Interestingly, Coleridge's entire Ode is a poetic reply to stanza 24 from Devonshire's poem, which Coleridge quotes as his starting point. As such, his poetic reaction illustrates the complex issues connected with Devonshire's involvement with both politics and literature, and the implications of gender and class. His narrator is ambiguous and ironic in his attitude towards Devonshire, praising her 'Genius' (l. 27), while also constantly stressing her privileged social status. 'O Lady, nurs'd in pomp and pleasure! Whence learnt you that heroic measure?', he asks her in the concluding lines of the first three stanzas.²² The rhetorical question has a gendered aspect. Suggesting that the fight for national independence, a theme strongly connected with 'masculine' heroism, is no subject for a 'lady', Coleridge implicitly describes Devonshire's Tell verses as both unconvincing and inappropriate.

However, in questioning the Duchess's heroic sentiments, he also has a political agenda. Thus, when he refers to her as 'From all that teaches *Brotherhood* to Man/ Far, far removed!' (l. 8 f, my italics), he alludes to the revolutionary term *Fraternité*, and thus to the French Revolution and its politics and concept of nation with its rejection of aristocratic ranks and titles. Coleridge's poem reminds the reader of the associations between stories about the fight against tyranny such as the Tell legend and political radicalism. It clearly shows his disapproval of the theme's appropriation by an aristocratic writer, through which the topic might lose its revolutionary momentum.

²¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Ode to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, on the 24th Stanza in her *Passage over Mount Gothard*', in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works, vol. 1: Poems (Reading Text): Part 2* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 610-613.

²² Coleridge, 'Ode to Georgiana', l. 5 f, l. 23 f, l. 50 f. See also Leveson Gower, 'Werner', p. 250.

Ultimately, however, the poem makes an unexpected turn, and ends in a stanza that praises the Duchess. Devonshire's 'St. Gothard' closes with an address to her children ('Hope of my life, dear children of my heart!'; 30, l. 117-120), and an expression of her longing to return home to them (30, 118-120). Without explicitly quoting this part of her poem, Coleridge in his concluding stanza suggests that it is her role as a mother ('That most holy name', l. 52) which enables her to sympathise with Tell's deed, through which he has 'preserved his child'.

In order to reclaim the topic for radical discourse without offending the Duchess, he denies her any political agenda or agency and relegates her poem to the apolitical sphere of feminine maternal sympathy. Ironically, in emphasising Devonshire's motherhood to depoliticise her arguments, Coleridge himself employs a technique frequently used in anti-Jacobin discourse. To reject and devalue radical political ideas, anti-Jacobin writers often resorted to the language of sensibility and stressed the violent aspects of the French Revolution. Contemporary representations of Marie Antoinette in particular often asked for sympathy for the French queen by showing her as a victimized, enduring mother.²³

3

Like her 'St. Gothard' poem, most of Devonshire's later writings, her theatrical works in particular, engage with the political debates of her time. Her interest in the theatre and dramatic writing seems to have been renewed in the late 1790s and early 1800s, when 'German drama' was at the height of its popularity.²⁴ Although in her earlier works she does not display any interest in German literature, history or culture (she read French and Italian

²³ For representations of Marie Antoinette, see e. g. Judith Pascoe's chapter 'Embodying Marie Antoinette' in her study *Romantic Theatricality. Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 95-129, esp. p. 104.

²⁴ See e. g. Theodore Grieder, 'The German Drama in England 1790-1800', *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research* 3 (1964), pp. 39-50.

works in the original, but had never learned German, which was then not part of the educational canon in England), most of the theatrical projects she was involved in later in life – *Pizarro*, *The Stranger*, *De Monfort* and her own *Hungarian* - have either ‘German’ settings²⁵ or are based on German plays. This is by no means coincidental. The popularity of German literature, and of German dramas in particular, brought a huge increase of theatrical adaptations of German plays, as well as original plays set in Germany. The demand for adaptations offered opportunities for women writers in particular. Several women, among them successful authors such as Elizabeth Inchbald or Anne Plumptre, deliberately produced adaptations to establish themselves as playwrights. However, as has been discussed above, ‘German’ drama and German historical settings, while widely popular, were strongly associated with political dissent and ‘foreign’ Jacobin radicalism. As will become evident in the course of this chapter, Devonshire’s involvement with ‘German drama’ is in many ways a political appropriation and rewriting of the genre that deliberately eliminates its anti-aristocratic and ‘radical’ dimension.

After she had long been a prominent and sought after patron of actors and playwrights, in 1798 Devonshire made her first surviving personal contribution to a public performance. She composed a song for Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s (1751-1816) production of *The Stranger* (1798), one of several adaptations of August von Kotzebue’s popular sentimental comedy *Menschenhass und Reue* (1789).²⁶ The play, which Sheridan claimed to

²⁵ Or rather, they are set in the ‘Holy Roman Empire of German Nation’ (‘Das Heilige Römische Reich Deutscher Nation’, to give the Empire its full official name), as ‘Germany’ was not a political unit in the modern sense.

²⁶ Linda Kelly, *Richard Brinsley Sheridan. A Life* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997 (repr.: London, Pimlico, 1998)), p. 216 f. Sheridan probably used Benjamin Thompson’s adaptation of Kotzebue’s play. The earliest edition is: August von Kotzebue, *The Stranger. A Comedy. Freely translated from Kotzebue’s German Comedy of Misanthropy and Repentance* (London: C. Dilly, 1798). Foreman claims that Devonshire contributed a popular song to Sheridan’s even more successful Kotzebue adaptation *Pizarro* (Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Pizarro. A Tragedy in five acts, taken from the German drama of Kotzebue and adapted to the English stage [...]* (London: James Ridgway, 1799)), taken from his historical play *Die Spanier in Peru* (1796) (Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 323). However, as she does not mention the song in *The Stranger*, and the supposed *Pizarro* song is unpublished and mentioned nowhere else, this is almost certainly a mistaken attribution.

have largely rewritten for his production, was immensely successful.²⁷ Devonshire's song, entitled 'I have a silent sorrow here' became famous in its own right²⁸, and as 'The favorite song in the Stranger (sic)', was published under Devonshire's name and reprinted frequently in the early nineteenth century.²⁹ In contrast to her novels and dramatic writing, Devonshire was much more open about her ephemeral poetry, and frequently put her poems into her correspondence.³⁰ Not intended for publication, her *vers d' occasion*, usually written to commemorate events within her extended family and circle of friends, is in accordance with both the public and domestic role of a woman of her social standing. A look at the way in which she dealt with her published works reveals how she took care to remain within that role and avoid the appearance of a professional writer. She acknowledged her authorship only for those writings and compositions that, like her private poetry, could still fit the description of amateur pastime and remained within the boundaries of dilettantism and aristocratic female propriety. The earlier editions of her song for *The Stranger*, while published under her own name, even acknowledge that her melody had been 'adapted by Mr. Shaw'.

A dilettante contribution by a noble patron was a popular marketing instrument for the promotion of plays, music and literature, which at the same time enhanced the reputation of both patron and protégé. Devonshire's sister, the Countess of Bessborough, produced the illustrations for the eighth edition of the *Elegiac Sonnets* (1797; orig. 1784)³¹ by her own protégée, the poet and novelist Charlotte Smith, who in a letter to her publisher acknowledged

²⁷ See e. g. Kelly, *Sheridan*, p. 215 f.

²⁸ Walter Sydney Sichel, *Sheridan. From New and Original Material. Including a Manuscript Diary by Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire*, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1909), vol. 2, p. 276 f. The lyrics to the song, supplied by Sheridan, are reprinted in Kelly, *Sheridan*, p. 216 f.

²⁹ E. g. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (composer), *The favorite song in the Stranger - sung by Mrs. Bland at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. The melody by the Duchess of Devonshire adapted by Mr. Shaw[.] The words by R. B. Sheridan Esqr* ([London]: Printed by Longman and Broderip [...], [ca. 1798]); *I have a silent sorrow here. Sung by Mrs Bland in The stranger, written by R. B. Sheridan, the air by the Duchess of Devonshire* (London: [no publisher and date], [ca. 1810]).

³⁰ Several poems by Devonshire can be found in Calder-Marshall, *Two Duchesses*, pp. 40, 66, 128, 130, 192, and in appendix 3 of Jonathan Gross's edition of Devonshire's novel *Emma* (pp. 297-299).

³¹ Charlotte Smith, *Elegiac Sonnets, and other poems*, 2 vols. (London: T. Cadell junior, and W. Davies, 1797). The edition is dedicated to William Hayley, who in turn is the author of the *Plays [...]* for a Private Theatre dedicated to Devonshire. See the section on Hayley in chapter 2.

the marketing value of Bessborough's contribution: 'Lady B is so good as to undertake the drawing [...] this I apprehend will be an advantage to the work.'³² Both Sheridan and composers like Giacomo Ferrari, for whose *African Song* Devonshire wrote the lyrics³³, used the collaboration with her in similar ways to promote their productions (the title page of the *African Song*, on which her name appears before and more prominently than Ferrari's, and the independent publications of her *Stranger* song are evidence for this). Female patrons like Devonshire and Bessborough in particular also profited from such collaborations. They provided opportunities to fashion themselves as talented, sophisticated women and to publish their works while still remaining within a socially appropriate dilettante sphere.

Although Devonshire wrote lyrics for songs by other (professional) composers³⁴, and was acknowledged as their author, the text for her song in *The Stranger* was supplied by Sheridan himself (as is stated on the title page of its 1798 edition). The crucial difference seems to have been that 'I have a silent sorrow here' was intended for performance within a public theatrical context. Apparently, in a public sphere, for Devonshire the spoken word was a more delicate issue than other kinds of contribution such as musical compositions or advice for actresses on their outfits. While her position as a patron of actors also allowed her to write minor (albeit prominent) elements such as epilogues, her textual contributions were neither published nor openly acknowledged, even in cases when her authorship was an open secret.

Thus, when for an unspecified occasion (but at least one year after her musical contribution to *The Stranger*) Devonshire supplied an epilogue for Sheridan's own play

³² Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell, 20 November 1796, in Smith, *Letters*, p. 244; also quoted in Gleeson, *Aristocratic Affair*, p. 188. Significantly, Smith had a decidedly more critical attitude towards her professional non-prominent engravers and illustrators, about whose work she frequently complained. See e. g. Smith, *Letters*, pp. 243, 251, 254, 267.

³³ Giacomo Gotifredo Ferrari (composer), *African Song. The words by Her Grace the Duchs. (sic) of Devonshire, the music by G. G. Ferrari* ([London]: printed for the author, [1797]).

³⁴ See also John Gross (composer), *Negro song, 'The loud wind roar'd'. The words by the late Duchess of Devonshire, (from Mungo Park's travels)* (London: Regent's Institution, [after 1805]).

Pizarro (1799)³⁵, she was considerably more reticent about her collaboration.³⁶ Adapted from another Kotzebue play, the historical drama *Der Tod von Rolla, oder Die Spanier in Peru* (1796), set during the Spanish conquest of Peru, *Pizarro* became an even greater success than *The Stranger*. The play, which according to Sheridan himself differed so much from Kotzebue's work as to be more an original creation than a translation, even came to be translated back into German.³⁷ Unlike her song for *The Stranger*, Devonshire's epilogue remained anonymous and unpublished, and survives only in manuscript form. As the epilogue spoken at the original Drury Lane production was supplied by another prominent Whig, the Hon. William Lamb, the future Prime Minister Lord Melbourne (1779-1848)³⁸, and there is no mention of the specific occasion within the text itself, it is even uncertain where and when it was performed, or indeed whether performed it was at all.³⁹

While the circumstances of its production are unknown, in several ways, the Duchess's *Pizarro* epilogue is a typical example of such a paratext. Many plays featured prologues or epilogues, sometimes written by the playwright (or, in private plays, one of the actors), but more often supplied by noble or otherwise prominent patrons. Although they were much less frequently written by women than men – at least in the case of public productions – female authors were by no means unusual. Like other aristocratic contributions, these

³⁵ Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Pizarro. A Tragedy in five acts, taken from the German drama of Kotzebue and adapted to the English stage* by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (London: James Ridgway, 1799). As in the case of *Menschenhass und Reue*, there are several English adaptations of the play.

³⁶ 'Epilogue to *Pizarro*', in Album entitled *Poems by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, collected by Caroline Lamb (no page numbers), CH Carlisle MSS, J 18/67/11.

³⁷ Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Pizarro. Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen, aufgeführt im königlichen Theater in Drury Lane; nach dem teutschen Drama des Herrn von Kotzbue: Der Tod von Rolla oder die Spanier in Peru. Für die Englische Schaubühne verfasst [...] von Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Ins teutsche übersezt von Constantin Geisweiler* (London: C. Geisweiler et al. [1800]). For contemporary comments on the originality of Sheridan's version see e. g. Jane Moody, 'Suicide and translation in the dramaturgy of Elizabeth Inchbald and Anne Plumptre', in Burroughs (ed.), *Women in British Romantic Theatre*, pp. 257-284, here: p. 269. See also André Rault, 'Die Spanier in Peru oder die Deutschen in England. Englisches und deutsches Theater 1790-1810', *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität Greifswald* 32 (1983), pp. 83-89; Myron Matlaw, 'English Versions of *Die Spanier in Peru*', *Modern Language Quarterly* 16 (1955), pp. 63-67.

³⁸ Charles Beecher Hogan (ed.), *The London Stage 1660-1800. A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces, together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comment, Part 5: 1776-1800*, 3 vols. (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), vol 3, p. 2177.

³⁹ Prologues and epilogues were equally common in private theatricals, particularly in the more lavish productions of the aristocratic elite. See e. g. Russell, 'Private Theatricals', pp. 196-199. However, a production in a provincial theatre, where the Duchess might have acted as a patron, is also conceivable.

paratexts promoted a play, its author and the entire performance, and simultaneously illustrated the patron's sophistication.⁴⁰ Perhaps even more importantly, they offered him or her an opportunity to provide the audience with a sanctioned, authoritative interpretation of the performance they had just or were about to see. As Gillian Russell shows in a recent article on private theatricals, this paternalistic aspect was an important feature of patronage, particularly in the cases of private performances, which often involved the participation of servants and families from the local neighbourhood.⁴¹

Russell's article points out that, in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century theatre, prologues and epilogues, framing the main performance, had an important role as a 'zone of mediation' between the performance event, the audience and the general social and cultural context.⁴² Such a function is evident in Devonshire's *Pizarro* epilogue, which is a typical example of the genre and reflects her paternalistic position as noble patron and guide. The opening passage marks the transition between the reality represented within the play and the audience's own world: 'Ere yet, whilst many a heart with pity glows/ And many an eye still weeps o'er Rolla's woes/ I come not to obtrude, with flippancy strain / [...] the hallow'd pain/ Oh far from me, your sympathy to wrong [...]' (l. 1-5). The lines express understanding for the viewers' emotional reaction to the play, their 'sympathy' and 'pity', thereby implicitly prescribing the ways in which their feelings should have been moved by the performance. It then briefly revisits the central characters, mentioning 'Cora's griefs' (l. 6) and stresses the role model function of 'brave Rolla, [...] valorous and kind' (l. 9 f). In the following section, the attention shifts from the plot to a more general discussion of the performance and the play's genre: 'Our Drama formed in Virtue's noblest cause/ Boasts that your hearts directed your applause/ The honest plaudits were from nature drawn/ No Spirits fleet around, no

⁴⁰ For the ways in which prologues and epilogues functioned to promote both a performance and a venue, see e. g. Jane Moody, "'Dictating to the Empire": Performance and Theatrical Geography in Eighteenth-century Britain', in Moody and O'Quinn, *British Theatre*, pp. 21-41, here: p. 23 f; p. 31.

⁴¹ Russell, 'Private Theatricals', p. 195 f. See also Russell, *Theatres of War*, p. 125.

⁴² Russell, 'Private Theatricals', p. 197.

Caverns yawn./ No Ghosts appal you with their ghastly forms/ No Demons ride, triumphant on the Storms [...]:⁴³(l. 11-16).

While the German origin of *Pizarro* is not mentioned, the epilogue implicitly defends the play against the charges of ‘absurdity’ that at the time were commonly made against Kotzebue’s plays (several of them hugely popular in the late 1790s) as well as against ‘German drama’ in general.⁴⁴ Devonshire’s emphasis on the lack of the supernatural stock elements of ‘Gothic drama’ (which often had a German setting) is a typical feature of such a defense, also used in John Taylor’s prologue to Elizabeth Inchbald’s hugely popular Kotzebue adaptation *Lovers’ Vows* (1798).⁴⁵ On the other hand, the stress on ‘Virtue’, a keyword that appears three times in the epilogue (also l. 24 and l. 43), is clearly directed *against* associations with other Kotzebue adaptations, and with *Lovers’ Vows* in particular. Despite – or because of – its popularity on the stage, Inchbald’s play was attacked as ‘immoral’ for its sympathetic depiction of an impoverished woman who had an illegitimate son, and was heavily ridiculed in the anti-Jacobin press. With its ‘sentimental’ blurring of class boundaries (the woman, a commoner, ultimately marries her remorseful aristocratic lover), it was one of the most prominent examples for the association between sentimentality, ‘German drama’ and political radicalism.⁴⁶

⁴³ The latter image is taken from Gottfried Bürger’s popular, but also controversial ballad *Lenore*. For a discussion of the English translations of *Lenore* see Mortensen, *British Romanticism*, pp. 43-66.

⁴⁴ For a recent discussion of Kotzebue’s reception in Britain see Carlotta Farese, “‘Rule, Kotzebue, then, and Britannia rule!’: considerazioni sulla ricezione dell’opera di August von Kotzebue in Inghilterra fra Sette e Ottocento, in Diego Saglia and Giovanna Silvani (eds.), *Il Teatro della Paura. Scenari Gotici del Romanticismo Europeo* (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 2005), pp. 47-59.

⁴⁵ E. g. ‘No dreadful cavern, and no midnight scream/ No rosin flames, nor e’en one flitting gleam’ (John Taylor, Esq., Prologue to Elizabeth Inchbald’s *Lovers’ Vows*, in Paul Baines and Edward Burns (eds.), *Five Romantic Plays, 1768-1821* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 189). Taylor’s evocation of ‘Gothic’ features absent in *Lovers’ Vows* is very similar to Devonshire’s, suggesting that she was aware of his prologue.

⁴⁶ See e. g. Stephen Derry, ‘Kotzebue Unbound: “Mansfield Park” and the “Jacobinical”’, *Trivium* 29-30 (1997), pp. 257-263; Colin Pedley, “‘Terrific and Unprincipled Compositions’: The Reception of *Lovers’ Vows* and *Mansfield Park*’, *Philological Quarterly* 74 (1995), pp. 297-316; Syndy McMillen Conger, ‘Reading *Lovers’ Vows*: Jane Austen’s Reflections on English Sense and German Sensibility’, *Studies in Philology* 85 (1988), repr. online: http://www-sul.stanford.edu/mirrors/romnet/wp1800/essays/vows_conger.html (14 September 2003), no pagination.

Like Sheridan's play itself, which was praised for its virtuous rewriting of Kotzebue's original⁴⁷, Devonshire's epilogue is intended to avoid and eliminate such connotations, which is probably the reason why references to Kotzebue's German play are absent. Proclaiming the unimportance of earthly riches ('Than gems far richer is a pitying heart', l. 33) and the superiority of 'Nature and Simplicity' (l. 37), it is also written in a didactic, even moralistic tone. Perhaps surprisingly, given both the play's 'exotic' setting and Devonshire's stress on 'pity' and 'sympathy', however, the epilogue concludes on a decidedly patriotic note:

With loyal warmth, each Patriot bosom beats
 And English hands applaud Peruvian feats.
 With dauntless force resist the foreign sway
 And homage (sic) to their God and Country pay.

To distant scenes howe'er our fancies roam
 Each Clime where Virtue reigns, we think our home.
 To generous minds the noblest cause is clear
 And pity consecrates the kindred fear.

(l. 38-45)

If the epilogue was indeed used around the time of the original production of *Pizarro* in 1799, the concluding lines can be interpreted as an allusion to the current political situation, with the Spanish invaders of Peru standing in for revolutionary France, and the Peruvians for the peoples they had conquered, which, implicitly, are in need of both Britain's 'sympathy' and military support. Thus, the epilogue is an interesting example of a politicised appropriation of the idea of 'sympathy' that illustrates Devonshire's political position and her ideas about the role of 'feminine' values in the political sphere.

⁴⁷ Moody, 'Suicide and translation', p. 269.

On 28 April 1800 Devonshire told her brother about another theatrical epilogue, which is a much more interesting and complex illustration of the link between her theatrical and political and patriotic activities. It was intended for her friend Sarah Siddons, who was to play the female lead in the premiere of Joanna Baillie's tragedy *De Montfort* at Drury Lane on the following day: 'I must now add a very nervous line, but I wish you to know the *confession from me*: that I am guilty of having wrote the epilogue to "de Montfort" (sic) to be spoken by Mrs. Siddons tomorrow - I did not mean it should be spoken but Mrs. Siddons has taken a liking to it – it is simple & that is all I can say for it' (Devonshire's emphasis).⁴⁸

Devonshire's comment to her brother shows a double strategy typical of the methods of justification of female authorship in the eighteenth century. While she excuses herself for the epilogue, and, using terms such as 'confession' and 'guilt', even describes its production as an act of transgression, her letter simultaneously announces and advertises its forthcoming performance to her family. The account of her dealings with Siddons is even more interesting and complex. To justify her consent, Devonshire resorts to the discourses of friendship and politeness, claiming that she had no intention for her epilogue to be read within a public space, but did not wish to deny her friend use of the text she 'taken a liking to'. However, both women were certainly aware that, if Devonshire showed Siddons an epilogue written for the character she was to play in a forthcoming performance, it was a matter of politeness and courtesy expected from a protégée to her patron to express her wish (or offer) to make use of it. Siddons would have known that Devonshire, without mentioning it, had presented her with the text precisely for that reason. Indirectly, this is acknowledged in Devonshire's letter,

⁴⁸ Devonshire to the second Earl Spencer, 28 April 1800, BL Althorp MSS G287; a shorter passage quoted in Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 331.

where she calls herself 'guilty' of having written the epilogue at all, thus implicitly admitting that her showing it to Siddons would result in its subsequent performance. While, as Gillian Russell has pointed out, masters-servant relations in the eighteenth century were highly performative⁴⁹, in a different way this also holds true for relations between patrons and protégés. The conversation with Siddons referred to in the letter is in part the enactment of a ritual between patron and protégée which allows Devonshire to remain within the sphere of female aristocratic propriety while at the same time ensuring that her epilogue would receive a public performance. By extension, the 'confession' in a private letter unlikely to be read outside the immediate family circle, is also part of that ritual.

The epilogue was indeed spoken by Siddons, both at the premiere and on the following evenings⁵⁰, but not included in subsequent nineteenth-century editions of the tragedy. However, it has survived in the manuscript handed to the Examiner of Plays John Larpent (1741-1824), and is now in the Huntington Library. Jeffrey N. Cox (1992) and Peter Duthie (2001) have included it in their editions of *De Monfort*, together with a prologue by Francis North, also written for the premiere and surviving in the Larpent version.⁵¹ Apart from the *Pizarro* epilogue of which the performance history is uncertain, to my knowledge there are currently no other known texts by Devonshire that were publicly performed, although she may well have written other prologues or epilogues for her protégées. As with her novels, she never openly acknowledged the epilogue. However, in his review of the Drury Lane production of *De Monfort* on 9 May, Thomas Dutton in the *Dramatic Censor* attributed it 'to

⁴⁹ Russell, "Keeping Place", p. 23.

⁵⁰ However, according to Thomas Dutton's review in *The Dramatic Censor*, on Saturday, 3 May, Siddons omitted the epilogue because she 'had fatigued herself so much with her exertions' and the audience was 'drowsy' (Thomas Dutton, Review of *De Monfort*, Drury Lane, 3 May 1800 in *The Dramatic Censor*, quoted from: Baillie, *Plays*, Appendix E, p. 455; see also Cox, *Gothic Dramas*, p. 313, n. 336). Dutton's review of the performance on 9 May, however, mentions that the epilogue was attributed to Devonshire, thus implicitly indicating that it was again included in subsequent performances (Dutton, Review of *De Monfort*, Drury Lane, 9 May 1800, *Dramatic Censor*, quoted from: Baillie, *Plays*, Appendix E, p. 458).

⁵¹ Jeffrey N. Cox, (ed.), *De Monfort*, in *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789-1825* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University, Press, 1992), pp. 231-314; prologue: p. 233 f; epilogue: p. 313 f; Joanna Baillie, *Plays of the Passions* (1798 edition), ed. Peter Duthie (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2001), prologue and epilogue: Appendix C, pp. 416-418.

the elegant pen of the Duchess of Devonshire', which suggests that, in spite of her initial anonymity, a week after the premiere her authorship had already become an open secret.⁵² Her shyness about it and about openly making textual contributions in general (such as supplying her own lyrics for her *Stranger* song) seems surprising at first sight, given her reputation as a patron, her public friendship with actresses, and her other well-known involvement in theatrical productions. Like her ephemeral poems, an epilogue that was, after all, not part of the main play itself, did not necessarily transcend the boundaries of dilettantism. The answer lies, perhaps, partly in the dubious and licentious image that theatre still retained in the later eighteenth century. As has been shown in the previous chapter, attacks against Devonshire's role as a campaigner during the Westminster Election had associated her venturing into the masculine domain of political debate with the public presence of the actress Mary Robinson and her image of public sexual availability and lack of feminine decorum.⁵³ If openly acknowledged, a theatrical performance of a text written by Devonshire might have invoked similar associations with public spectacle and would have been at odds with her female propriety.

As is mentioned in the last chapter, Bolton interprets the attacks against Devonshire's campaigning for Fox as attempts to protect the boundary between the masculine political sphere and the androgynous sphere of the theatre, which at the same time also illustrate the fragility of this boundary.⁵⁴ On another level, Devonshire's own theatrical writings, which are always (either implicitly or explicitly) informed by her political agenda, equally show the proximity between politics and the theatrical. While Bolton points out that '[t]he careers of female playwrights depended on their political innocence or neutrality – yet their plays might

⁵² Thomas Dutton, review of *De Monfort*, Drury Lane, 9 May 1800, in *Dramatic Censor*, April-May 1800, in Baillie, *Plays*, Appendix E, pp. 447-458, here: p. 458. John Payne Collier also attributed the epilogue to Devonshire (see Cox, *Gothic Dramas*, p. 313 n. 336), and the attribution is confirmed by the comment in the letter to her brother quoted above.

⁵³ See also Rosenthal, 'Entertaining women', pp. 159-164; Bolton, *Women*, p. 38.

⁵⁴ Bolton, *Women*, p. 38.

well engage political issues within a pose of female domesticity'⁵⁵, in the case of an openly politically active woman such as Devonshire, the opposite was equally true. Although her theatrical activities are part of her political career, had they been too open, they might have endangered her respectability as, in Foreman's words 'the Doyenne of the Whig Party'⁵⁶, and thus her political position.

A merely suspected authorship by a woman of her rank, on the other hand, enhanced the respectability of the play, its author and the entire performance without compromising Devonshire's own reputation. This was of particular importance in the case of a woman playwright like Joanna Baillie (1762-1851), whose plays, though some of them had been published anonymously and achieved popularity as reading dramas, had not been publicly staged before. Initially Baillie remained anonymous; her identity was only disclosed in the press on the day after the premiere.⁵⁷ The revelation was clearly intended and well-prepared for, probably by the playwright herself, who twenty years later recommended a similar strategy to her novelist friend Margaret Holford Hodson.⁵⁸ She advised Holford to publish her first novel anonymously, ensure that the author would initially be 'mistaken for a man', and disclose herself only after it had been reviewed, to avoid critical prejudices against women writers.

Both North's prologue and Devonshire's epilogue reflect Baillie's intended plan for a gradual revelation. With a rhetorical gesture typical for a male patron's prologue written for a female protégée, North's text gives a hint that the playwright is a female newcomer, asking for the audience's favour on her behalf⁵⁹ ('Perhaps a woman sues⁶⁰:/ Let her Dramatic saplin

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

⁵⁶ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 362 (title of chapter 23).

⁵⁷ Donkin, *Getting into the Act*, p. 164.

⁵⁸ Baillie to Margaret Holford Hodson, 29 March [1820], in Joanna Baillie, *Collected Letters of Joanna Baillie*, ed. Judith Bailey Slagle, 2 vols. (Madison, New Jersey and London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), vol. 2, p. 556.

⁵⁹ For such conventional gestures see Anderson, 'Women playwrights', p. 146.

⁶⁰ To pursue or woo. See Cox, *Gothic Dramas*, p. 417 n. 1.

[sic] 'scape your rage,/ And spare this tender Scyon of the Stage'; l. 18-20). Devonshire's epilogue confirms the female authorship in a more self-assured, even triumphant tone by letting Jane de Monfort/ Siddons say: 'Ah! Let me proudly boast my Sex's cause/ A Female Muse triumphant has design'd/ A Paragon indeed of woman kind!' (l. 16-18).

Arguably, Baillie's strategy was only partly successful. Despite the popularity of her *Plays on the Passions* as a publication, *De Monfort* turned out to be no more than a moderate success on the stage. Modern scholars have even argued that the revelation of Baillie's gender affected the subsequent critical reception of both her plays and her dramatic theories, and was an obstacle against further productions.⁶¹ However, Siddons continued to promote the play and repeatedly expressed her wish for further collaboration with Baillie.⁶² She had her own manuscript copy, from which she gave private readings for elite audiences, and she asked Baillie to write her 'more Jane de Monforts'⁶³ – evidently attracted by the strong female lead, who is arguably the tragedy's central character, the play's title referring to both de Monfort siblings.⁶⁴ In turn, Jane de Monfort was associated with Siddons and her style of acting.⁶⁵

Baillie's concept of 'closet drama', depicting the passions from a character's closet⁶⁶, probably had a strong appeal for Devonshire, who had written on the value of 'private' and

⁶¹ See e. g. Julie Carlson, 'Remaking love: remorse in the theatre of Baillie and Inchbald', in Burroughs (ed.), *Women in British Romantic Theatre*, pp. 285-310, here: p. 298 f; Donkin, *Getting into the Act*, p. 165 f. However, Jeffrey Cox points out that Baillie went on to be a well-established member of the theatrical scene, and suggests that, in the case of playwright and Whig politician Sheridan in particular, the reason for reservations about her might not have been her gender but her Tory politics (Cox, 'Baillie, Siddons, Larpent', pp. 27-34; p. 43 n. 7). Given both Devonshire's and North's Whig affiliations, however, their support of Baillie suggests that the contrast between 'Tories' and 'Whigs' may not have been a central issue in the attitude towards Baillie (additionally, eighteen years later, Baillie proclaimed herself a 'sober-minded Whig', which suggests that her 'Tory' leanings were not as stable as Cox interprets them as being; Baillie to Walter Scott, 6 July 1818, in Baillie, *Letters*, p. 380).

⁶² For Siddons as a promoter of women playwrights, both actively and implicitly through her success as an actress see Moody, "'Dictating to the Empire'", pp. 28-30.

⁶³ Donkin, *Getting into the Act*, p. 166; Cox, 'Introduction', p. 56. Siddons's private copy, by the poet Thomas Campbell and with Siddons's own annotations, is now in the Huntington Library (MS 32693). See introductory note to *De Monfort* in Cox, *Seven Gothic Dramas*, p. 232.

⁶⁴ See e. g. Frederick Burwick, 'Joanna Baillie, Matthew Baillie and the Pathology of the Passions', in Crochunis (ed.), *Joanna Baillie*, pp. 48-68, here: p. 54.

⁶⁵ For associations between Jane de Monfort as a character and Siddons's image and style of acting see e. g. Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, pp. 124-129; Cox, 'Introduction', p. 55.

⁶⁶ On Baillie's idea of 'closet drama' see Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, p. 86 f; p. 90 f.

'closeted' emotions in her earlier play *Zillia*. The importance of scenes from the 'closet' in Baillie allowed for prominent female characters like Jane de Monfort, who could be represented as influential while still formally remaining within the 'domestic' sphere, and was also in accordance with Devonshire's own ideas about the important role of women as educators.⁶⁷

Although to her brother the Duchess represents the *De Monfort* epilogue as a 'simple', spontaneously written text not even intended to be spoken, the context of its performance suggests a very different interpretation. Transporting the viewers into the world of the play and back into their own, and aiming to direct their interpretation of and emotional response to the play, both North's prologue and Devonshire's epilogue are, in Russell's terminology, deliberately devised 'zones of mediation' between the audience, the performance and the larger cultural and political context. North and Devonshire themselves were carefully chosen collaborators. Like Devonshire a patron of the theatre, Francis North (1761-1817), later the fourth Earl of Guilford, also had himself written a successful Gothic drama, *The Kentish Barons* (1791). He was not politically active himself, but through his father and brother had close affiliations with Charles James Fox and the Whig party.⁶⁸ With their connections to the social, political and theatrical elites, both Devonshire and North were part of an extremely influential network.

While the particular precaution Baillie took for her 'coming out' as a stage playwright can partly be explained by concerns about reactions to her gender, it was equally motivated by her play's politically charged German setting. With her collaborators, Baillie, who would later explicitly deny any influence German plays might have had on *De Monfort*⁶⁹, strove to

⁶⁷ As will briefly be shown below, Devonshire's own Leonora in *The Hungarian* and her model, Lee's Josephine in 'Kruitzner', echo Baillie's representation of Jane de Monfort.

⁶⁸ Cox, *Gothic Dramas*, p. 85.

⁶⁹ Joanna Baillie, Introduction to *Miscellaneous Plays* (1805), quoted in Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, p. 204, n. 10.

distance the performance from associations to ‘German drama’ and its supposed ‘immorality’ and continental ‘Jacobin’ radicalism.⁷⁰ North’s and Devonshire’s contributions are part of a carefully devised strategy both to promote her as a female playwright and to make *De Monfort* politically acceptable. The same strategy is also reflected in the casting. Siddons and her brother John Philip Kemble, who played the male lead, were well-known and sometimes criticised for their aristocratic connections.⁷¹ In contrast to many of her colleagues, Siddons was publicly perceived as woman of propriety and respect, and famous for her roles as ‘wronged women’.⁷² As such, she was even associated with the executed French Queen Marie Antoinette⁷³, and thus a particularly appropriate choice for an ‘anti-radical’ interpretation of Baillie’s play. As Jeffrey Cox, editor of *De Monfort*, has commented on the 1800 performance, the paratexts and Siddons’ private readings: ‘The text of *De Monfort*, fully considered, then, is not just an aesthetic object but a record of the powerful people who supported her work: the text bears the traces of the theatrical, literary and social circles in which Baillie and her work were circulated.’⁷⁴

Unsurprisingly, in many ways, the acting version, devised by John Philip Kemble, reflects the play’s ‘anti-Jacobin’ revision. The Larpent manuscript of *De Monfort* differs from the play’s earlier published version in some small, but significant details. In particular, de Monfort’s fight with his enemy Rezenvelt and his subsequent disarmament and disgrace are omitted.⁷⁵ Thus, Baillie avoids the radical (or even revolutionary) resonances the humiliation

⁷⁰ For Baillie’s plays and the ways in which they engage with and rewrite ‘German’ drama, see Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic. Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 127-162.

⁷¹ Jeffrey N. Cox, ‘Baillie, Siddons, Larpent: gender, power, and politics and the theatre of Romanticism’, in Burroughs (ed.), *Women in British Romantic Theatre*, pp. 23-47, here: p. 36.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 37 f.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 37; Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality*, pp. 95-101.

⁷⁴ Cox, ‘Baillie, Siddons, Larpent’, p. 30. Cox mentions North’s and Devonshire’s significance as influential collaborators and patrons, but does not discuss their paratexts themselves.

⁷⁵ On the 1800 production of *De Monfort* and Kemble’s alterations to the text see Jeffrey N. Cox, ‘Staging Baillie’, in Crochunis (ed.), *Joanna Baillie*, pp. 146-167, here: p. 158 f; see also introductory note to *De Monfort* in Cox, *Seven Gothic Dramas*, p. 232. However, Cox does not consider the political dimension of these revisions.

of her aristocratic main character might have for her audience. North and Devonshire equally reject any radical and particularly any 'foreign' associations the tragedy might invoke, stressing instead its 'British' quality. To reinforce this, the prologue mourns the prominence of foreign 'Romance' (l. 2), and stresses the superiority of native plays in a decidedly aggressive, militaristic tone: 'O, Shame! – Why borrow from a foreign store/ As if the rich should pilfer from the poor. –/ We who have forc'd th' astonish'd world to yield; Led by immortal Shakspeare [sic] to the Field' (l. 5-8). After a list of English playwrights who 'boast eternal Fame', the first performance of *De Monfort* is celebrated as 'this auspicious day/ The British Drama reassumes her sway.' (l. 15 f).

Compared with North's straightforward claims about the superiority of British drama, Devonshire's epilogue is more subtle, and arguably more effective. Spoken by Siddons, it marks the transition from the world represented in the play back to the audience's reality. During the first four lines the actress is clearly still speaking in the character of Jane de Monfort, claiming that she has 'come to cherish, not forget my woe' (l. 2) and asking for sympathy for her 'Sister's love' (l. 4) for de Monfort. However, the following lines, in which the persona of Jane de Monfort is left behind, emphasise the contrast between British civilisation and the passionate foreign world depicted in the play: 'Dire is the passion that our scenes unfold/ And foreign to each heart of British mould/ For Britons Sons their generous code maintain/ Prompt to defend & slow in giving pain.' (l. 5-8). After asking the audience for 'compassion' (l. 11) for de Monfort, his sister, along with the 'Female Muse' (l. 17) who has created her, is praised for her virtues. The list of her qualities (e. g. 'Commanding wisdom & devoted Love/ [...] strength & tenderness' (l. 20 f) and the lack of 'fancy' (l. 22)) reflects Devonshire's notion of female virtue and citizenship discussed above. The remainder of the poem is explicitly pedagogic, expressing the hope that the play will 'wake the judgement & [...] calm the breast' and appealing to the audience's own civic virtues of 'Love &

Kindness' (l. 40) , friendship and temperance. The concluding lines in particular stress the distance between the passionate, 'foreign' world of the tragedy and English domestic happiness: 'Thus let us bid the scene's dread horror cease/ And hail the blessing of domestic peace' (l. 45 f).

According to Devonshire's epilogue, the play, is meant to fulfil a cathartic, purgative function. With its representation of passion and violence, it is intended to cleanse the viewers from their own potentially dangerous passions, calm their temper and appeal to their sense of citizenship. While Devonshire here seems to emulate the Aristotelian concept of *catharsis* in classical Athenian theatre⁷⁶, with which she was probably familiar through Metastasio's commentary on Aristotle's dramatic theory⁷⁷, the *catharsis* she invokes is also a purgation from 'foreign' political radicalism and the passion associated with it, which restores British temperance and 'domestic peace' in the audience.

So, rather than rejecting 'German Romanticism' and drama, Devonshire's concept seeks to employ the passions expressed and voiced in it for a cathartic effect, in order to purge her British audience from these very sentiments. The German setting and themes thus acquire a function similar to that of the dynastic mythological world of classical Athenian tragedy. In both instances, the theatre audience is confronted with an archaic, passionate world of the past, and by viewing it, both is purged of their own passions and reassured in their role as citizens and members of a superior – British or Athenian – civilisation. With the employment of Devonshire's epilogue in particular, the staged version of *De Monfort* is a decidedly anti-Jacobin rewriting of a potentially 'radical' play. Instead of rejecting 'German' drama and the associated representation of passion and sensibility, the epilogue reinterprets it in the vein of

⁷⁶ For Aristotle's concept of *catharsis* see Aristotle, *Poetics*, chapter 6, 1449b, 24-29. See e. g. Aristotle, *Poetics*. Translated with introductory matter and notes by Malcolm Heath (London et al.: Penguin Classics, 1996).

⁷⁷ Pietro Metastasio, *Estratto dell'arte poetica d'Aristotile*, ed. Elisabetta Selmi (Palermo: Novecento, 1998).

Devonshire's own political agenda. The language of sensibility and sympathy acquires a political dimension, and is used to trigger a cathartic effect.

5

There is some evidence that in the early 1800s, Devonshire seriously contemplated an anonymous career as a dramatist. In the autumn of 1801 she sent a 'pretty Drama' (possibly her undated sacred drama *The Hebrew Mother*, which dramatises an episode from the Old Testament (2 Kings 4, 8-37))⁷⁸ and an otherwise unidentified 'tale on truth for children', both of them supposedly written by 'a friend', to the publisher Joseph Johnson, asking for their possible publication as pamphlets.⁷⁹ Johnson, keeping up the fiction of the 'friend', approved of both works, but recommended in both cases that the said 'friend' should produce more texts of the same genres, so that they could be published in 'bindable' volumes.⁸⁰ Following Johnson's encouragement, Devonshire, possibly with the assistance of her sister, embarked on an ambitious project – a compilation of Metastasio's sacred dramas translated into English⁸¹, published together with original plays by Devonshire emulating his style and subject matter. Although now mainly regarded as a librettist, in the eighteenth century, Metastasio was recognized as the pre-eminent contemporary Italian poet and playwright, whose works were widely read and appreciated independently from their musical settings (twenty years earlier, as has been mentioned before, Devonshire herself had taken a quote from his drama *L'Olimpiade* as the motto for *Zillia*).

⁷⁸ See introductory note to Donald Bewley's unpublished transcription of Devonshire's plays, deposited at the Huntington Library (deposited with Huntington MSS K-D 571; no separate reference number).

⁷⁹ See Joseph Johnson to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 14 October 1801, in Joseph Johnson, *Letterbook* (The Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, The New York Public Library, no further reference number). For Johnson's letterbook and letter to Devonshire see also: Claire Tomalin, 'Publisher in Prison. Joseph Johnson and the book trade', *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 December 1994, p. 15 f.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁸¹ In contrast to his secular plays, which usually use a mythological or historical Greco-Roman setting, Metastasio's religious dramas had not been translated into English at this point.

In April 1802, the *Morning Herald*, probably referring to either *The Hebrew Mother* or her Metastasio project, reported that Devonshire was working on an opera, which was planned to be ‘brought forward at Covent Garden in the course of the next season.’⁸² While Devonshire had almost certainly no intention to publish the plays under her own name, the notice suggests that she seems to have mentioned her project outside the immediate family circle. In spite of Foreman’s argument that she would never had contemplated such a plan as it might have compromised her children, apparently even the idea of a public performance was not completely out of the question, at least in the context of the opera, which, compared to the theatre, both had an audience of considerable less social diversity and was perceived as a less politicised space.

However, in a letter to her mother of 1 September 1802 she wrote about her plans in a characteristically covert manner:

[...] Harriet reads & plays. & from our retreat we are out of the reach of annoyance. – The St. Gothard has had such success in Paris that three editions of de Lille’s translation with the original are doing [?] at Paris. I have delay’d [?] the Sacred Dramas from an idea in which Mr. Fox and others encouraged me – of letting them press without my name but without any adopted name & trusting Johnson – he will give me more & there is no reason why they should not be press’d⁸³ – Mr. Fox said that Metastasio’s sacred Dramas were so much his best that a good translation would be an acquisition. I wish I had been able to do his favourite I[...? unreadable].

⁸² *Morning Herald*, 15 April 1802, quoted from: Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 351.

⁸³ Foreman, who also quotes the sentence referring to Fox and Johnson, reads ‘guess’d’, but in my opinion, ‘they’ refers to the plays, not Devonshire’s name (Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 351).

If this is the case the inscription to you should be altered to something this kind.

[approximately one sentence scratched out; unreadable]

Inscrib'd with respectful affection to the Cts Ger S [Countess Georgiana Spencer]. -

affectionately & respectfully. --- tell me what you think dear M.

Sacred Dramas chiefly from Metastasio

Being the first Vol. of a Theatre for Youth

... .. inscrib'd respectfully & affectionately⁸⁴

Although Devonshire tells her mother about her literary projects, only her Metastasio translations are mentioned directly, while her original works are only hinted at in indirect ways, without referring to her authorship. The initial remarks about a 'retreat' where 'Harriet reads & plays' seems a coded reference to a collaborative literary project – possibly *The Hungarian*, which Bessborough mentions in her letter to Leveson Gower half a year before. While Devonshire does not explicitly grant her approval to her 'St. Gothard' poem being translated, the way in which she writes about Delille's translation shows her pride in the work's success, and clearly implies her consent. By extension, it is safe to assume that she also approved of, and probably even initiated, the poem's subsequent Italian translation by the Metastasio editor Gaetano Polidori (1764-1853), scholar and teacher of Italian in London, on whose recent collection of five of his sacred Dramas in the original⁸⁵ Devonshire's English versions are probably based.

The most interesting element of the letter, however, is Devonshire's extremely discreet reference to her own dramatic work, which illustrates how producing translations/adaptations could pave the way for publishing original plays. *The Hebrew Mother* and any other sacred

⁸⁴ Devonshire to Spencer, 1 September 1802, Chatsworth MSS, 5th Duke groups, 1645.

⁸⁵ Pietro Metastasio, *Cinque drammi sacri, scelti per uso della gioventù da G. Polidori* (Chelsea, 1801).

dramas she might have planned to write are only present in the word 'chiefly', which implies that not all plays in the collection are by Metastasio. Overall, her covert way of referring to her writings bears a striking resemblance to the coded form in which her sister Bessborough in her letters refers to her illegitimate children, using subtle hints that would only be understood by a reader who knew about her personal circumstances.⁸⁶ Devonshire's literary productions, this analogy suggests, were thus 'illegitimate' insofar as they might compromise her public role in society. The statement that she would be 'trusting [her prospective publisher] Johnson and her intention to have the plays published 'without [her] name but without any adopted name' illustrate both her wish to see her work published and recognized (and not attributed to anyone else), but also her anxieties about its publication. Although so far no evidence for this has been discovered in her correspondence, the tension between her public persona and political role in the Whig party and the position of an author/translator was probably the reason why she finally abandoned the project, although she had already completed three translations - *Joseph and his Brethren*, *The Death of Abel* and *Abraham*.⁸⁷

Emphasising the encouragement by 'Mr. Fox and others' she had received for her Metastasio project, in the letter to her mother Devonshire employs a classical strategy for justifying female authorship. Another strategy she had already used in her earlier writings is the reference to a pedagogical purpose, as her translation is intended to be part of a series for 'a Theatre for Youth'. As mentioned above, pedagogical works by women writers had a long tradition in the eighteenth century. For the Duchess, the project had a continuity with and marked a return to her earlier literary interests and ambitions. In 1782, the conservative writer Hannah More (1745-1833) published a collection of original sacred dramas, 'written for young persons', which was frequently reprinted in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

⁸⁶ For Bessborough's coded references to her illegitimate children see Gleeson, *Aristocratic Affair*, p. 271.

⁸⁷ The original Italian titles are *Giuseppe riconosciuto* (1733) *La Morte d'Abel* (1732) and *Isacco, figura del redentore* (1740). Although this list seems to indicate otherwise, the majority of Metastasio's libretti have historical or mythological Greco-Roman settings.

centuries.⁸⁸ Polidori's Italian edition of Metastasio's sacred dramas was also published with a pedagogical aim 'per uso della gioventù', and may have given the impetus for Devonshire's translations.

In addition, there is a significant parallel to Metastasio's own educational role, which suggests that Devonshire's interest in pedagogy and her translation project also had a political agenda. During his residence as court dramaturge and composer at the imperial court in Vienna, Metastasio himself composed and arranged educational plays and *masques* for the imperial children and their companions.⁸⁹ Devonshire very probably knew about those performances from her friend, the French queen Marie Antoinette, who in her childhood as the youngest daughter of Empress Maria Theresia acted in some of those plays. The parallels between Metastasio's spectacles for the Empress's children and Madame de Genlis's pedagogical plays, which were equally intended to educate the children of an aristocratic elite suggest that Devonshire's adaptations and original plays were written for a similar purpose. There is a direct continuity with her earlier play *Zillia*, written twenty years before, which, as has been discussed above, can also be read as an educational drama teaching girls civic virtues and female aristocratic citizenship.

The encouragement by 'Mr. Fox and others' that Devonshire refers to in her letter is of particular interest. Given her political association with Fox, it suggests that her Metastasio adaptations were part of an intended (though for unknown reasons apparently never completed) cultural project of private theatricals written for the education of the elite that has to be interpreted in the context of her own Whig politics. The Duchess's later plays illustrate that private theatricals were not necessarily 'private' in the modern sense, but could fulfil an

⁸⁸ Hannah More, *Sacred dramas: chiefly intended for young persons, the subjects taken from the Bible, to which is added Sensibility, a poem* (London: T. Cadell, 1782).

⁸⁹ I thank Professor Donald Bewley, Metastasio expert, for pointing out to me the possible connection between Devonshire's pedagogical Metastasio project and Metastasio's own educatory plays in Vienna.

important social function and even had a political dimension. They link Devonshire's literary with her political activities, and show that her interest in education was part of the political agenda that also informs her epilogue for *De Monfort*.

6

While it remained unpublished, *The Hungarian* is an obvious attempt to write a play in the popular genre of 'German drama'. In part, 'Kruitzner', which had been published only a year before, may have been chosen because of its popularity and currency. In her letter to Leveson Gower, quoted above, Bessborough describes the play the sisters were writing as an adaptation of 'the story of Siegendorf from the Canterbury Tales', without further explanation, apparently taking for granted his knowledge of the text. The Duchess's collaboration with Bessborough, who otherwise does not seem to have shared her sister's literary ambitions, appears to have served to keep the production within the 'private' sphere of amateur theatre and sisterly dilettante cooperation. However, the play, although never publicly and possibly also never privately performed, would have been perfectly stageable. The manuscript has extensive and detailed stage directions, which illustrate Devonshire's familiarity with the theatre, and suggest a lavish and elaborate spectacle, that could both be staged either physically or in the reader's mind. If Devonshire's involvement with *De Monfort* introduced her to Bailliean closet drama, it may well have inspired her decision to return to dramatic writing herself. Associated with the 'feminine' space of the 'closet', with the analysis of emotions and with literary achievement rather than commercial stagings, the genre potentially offered her a socially acceptable opportunity for serious playwriting.

Significantly, *De Monfort* also seems to have sparked the sisters' interest in English appropriations of German-themed plays. In July 1800, a few months after the Drury Lane premiere of Baillie's tragedy, Bessborough wrote to Leveson-Gower about her experience of reading Schiller, whose *Wallenstein* in turn appears to have inspired their interest in a Thirty Years' War background: 'What are you reading? Anything? I have finished Schiller's 30 years' war (sic), which I like very much, and I am in love with Gustavus Adolphus. The plays of Wallenstein, which he wrote after his history, have ridiculous things in them like all German plays, but there are some very pretty also ...'⁹⁰

Like 'absurd' or 'unnatural', 'ridiculous', in this context, was a term frequently applied to plays with radical or 'Jacobin' associations, particularly if they were by a German authors or set in Germany. Bessborough's comment on *Wallenstein*, with its simultaneous expression of fascination and rejection of the plays' political connotations, is an illustration of the cultural need to appropriate such works and purge them from their potentially subversive elements.

The sisters' choice to adapt Lee's 'Kruitzner', with its parallels to Schiller's *Die Räuber*, even stronger associated with political radicalism than *Wallenstein*, is also relevant on other another level. As has been discussed in chapter 1, the novella, set in Bohemia and Germany during the Thirty Years War, clearly alludes to the political situation in Europe in the 1790s and early 1800s, and to the war against revolutionary and then Napoleonic France in particular. More importantly, however, 'Kruitzner' is decidedly anti-aristocratic, and in its depiction of a decadent, irresponsible protagonist and his criminal son Conrad, implicitly questions the legitimacy of aristocratic rule and rank and title.

⁹⁰ Harriet, Countess of Bessborough, to Granville Leveson Gower, 29 July 1800, in Leveson Gower, *Correspondence* 1, p. 281.

The Hungarian appropriates Lee's novella in several significant ways, transforming its radical discourse into one of reform in accordance with Devonshire's Whig politics. As an aristocratic appropriation of a text with radical connotations, it can be compared to more prominent rewritings such as the Drury Lane production of *De Monfort* Devonshire was involved in and the anti-radical adaptation of *Die Räuber* by Elizabeth Craven, Margravine of Anspach, that was lavishly staged in a private production at her home Brandenburg House.⁹¹ If, as its stage directions suggest, *The Hungarian* was indeed produced as a private theatrical, there would have been a significant analogy between its anti-radical dimension on the textual level and the context of its performance. As in the case of Craven's *Die Räuber* adaptation, the rejection of a public staging in favour of a private spectacle – a decidedly aristocratic form of entertainment – would have emphasised the rejection of political radicalism present in the text itself.⁹²

In Devonshire's 'Kruitznier' rewriting, the political allusions to the Thirty Years war setting are updated, and the play implicitly refers to current political issues such as the Act of Union with Ireland (1800) and the Peace of Amiens (1802), which are also present in a political journal the Duchess kept at the time when the play was written.⁹³ In the journal, Devonshire expresses the hope that the Treaty of Amiens would bring an end to the war against France and peace in Europe, a wish that is also reflected in *The Hungarian*.

⁹¹ For the political dimension of the Margravine of Anspach's *Räuber* adaptation see Moody, 'Suicide and translation', p. 266; Mortensen, *British Romanticism*, pp. 155-172; Mortensen, 'Robbing *The Robbers*', pp. 41-61. For a general account of the Margravine of Anspach's theatricals see Rosenfeld, *Temples*, pp. 53-75. For the English reception of *Die Räuber* see also e.g. Stilz, 'Robbers, Borderers and Men'; Willoughby, 'English Translations and Adaptations of Schiller's *The Robbers*'; Cooke, 'Schiller's *Robbers* in England' (see Chapter 1, p. 28, n. 55).

⁹² For the interaction and correspondence between the setting of historical tragedies, their political dimension and the venues in which they were performed see also Thomas C. Crochunis, 'Women Playwrights and Dramatic Spaces: Locating Historical Tragedy's Venues and Politics', paper presented at the *Emancipation, Liberation, Freedom* conference in Bristol, 26-29 July 2007, unpublished. Crochunis's main focus is on Ann Yearsley's tragedy *Earl Goodwin* (1789) and its performances in provincial theatres. For the anti-radical aspect of the rejection of public performances, see the discussion of Byron's views on 'mental theatre' in chapter 4 of my thesis.

⁹³ Chatsworth MSS, V. 1611 C and 715.136. For the literary reception of the Peace of Amiens see J. R. Watson, *Romanticism and War. A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 84-95.

Appropriately, the adaptation dramatises only the last part of Lee's novella, so that the entire action takes place in a post-war situation, after the Peace of Westphalia (1648), rather than during the war itself. Thus, the action takes place at a moment in history which as a reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant forces recalls both the Act of Union and the Peace of Amiens, reflecting the focus on reconciliation and reform that is central to the entire play.

Unsurprisingly, the anti-aristocratic sentiments present in Lee's novella are left out. To eliminate pro-Napoleonic associations, Devonshire and Bessborough edit the name of the stories female main character, changing it from 'Josephine', the name of Napoleon's wife, to the more neutral 'Leonora'. Taken from the eponymous English title of John Thomas Stanley's popular 1796 translation of Gottfried Bürger's ballad *Lenore*⁹⁴, the name evokes associations of continental literature and a Gothic 'German' setting, but does not allude to contemporary events in the same way 'Josephine' would have.

Perhaps reflecting the two authors' position as members of a family belonging to the country's political elite, Frederick von Siegendorf is elevated from a mere 'Count' to a high-ranking official, the Governor of post-war Prague. Appropriately, a large part of the action takes place in highly public and political spaces, in the Governor's palace and during a public ceremony celebrating the end of domestic conflict in front of the city's Cathedral. More importantly, Lee's protagonist Siegendorf is transformed from an irresponsible to a sensitive and sympathetic character. The fact that his failure as a commander is left aside and the conflict with his father and the theft of his enemy's gold are only narrated in retrospect gives Devonshire and Bessborough the opportunity to downplay his failings and deficiencies, and represent him as victim of circumstances, a man more sinned against than sinning. His bandit

⁹⁴ John Thomas Stanley, *Leonora, A Tale. Translated freely from the German of Gottfried August Bürger* (London: Miller, 1796). For a discussion of Stanley's appropriation of Bürger's ballad see Mortensen, *British Romanticism*, pp. 47-56.

son Conrad becomes a clear-cut, self-confessed villain in the mould of Richard III, leaving aside the subtleties of Lee's original creation as well as any proto-sociological explanations of his development. Instead, Devonshire adds another character, Herman, a kinsman to Siegendorf and Conrad, who embodies her ideal of the sensible hero, able and willing to fight if necessary, but relieved about the peace. Thus, he informs his cousin: 'This day will give, the wise ones have assur'd me/ This day will give the Empire lasting peace./ The wounds of thirty bloody years will close/ And we shall pause enough to breathe again.' (p. 22)⁹⁵

In contrast, Conrad's villainy is most evident in his wish that the war may continue:

Conrad [*alone*]:

Peace ! I disclaim thee, for thy reign returns

With all its fam'd attendants. Plenty, riches

Far spreading commerce and domestic arts !

Yet brings to me nor ease nor occupation.

Peace may be cherish'd by the innocent

The timid or the happy, but I crave

Perpetual warfare strife and agitation [...] (p. 23 f)

The play's concluding words, spoken by Herman after the deaths of both Siegendorf and Conrad, are very much in the same vein as Devonshire's *De Monfort* epilogue, inviting the audience to draw a moral lesson from the action shown on the stage:

Herman [...*after a minute or two rises*]:

At Heaven's high throne I swear, so help me god,

Religiously to fill the awful trust.

⁹⁵ Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire [with Harriet, Countess of Bessborough, uncredited], *The Hungarian. A Tragedy*, Huntington Library, MS K-D 571, p. 22.

Bear witness Lords to noble Siegendorf's
 Expiring sentiments and manly virtue
 On Conrad's errors and his father's grief
 We'll draw a veil respectful – but we'll bear
 Due testimony to their parting greatness;
 And my young Casimir from their example
 Shall learn that virtue leads alone to honor. (p. 154)

While the closing remarks ask to 'draw a veil respectful' on the failings and sufferings of Siegendorf and Conrad, they still attribute 'greatness' (an aristocratic category) to both of them, thus explicitly rejecting the anti-aristocratic position of Lee's original text. In that context, the union between Herman and Emma at the end of the play is of central significance. Although in her letter to Leveson Gower Bessborough had described the play as a 'tragedy', it ends on a note of reconciliation. Significantly, to circumscribe a conventionally tragic ending, Devonshire, avid Metastasio translator, employs a strategy typical for Metastasio's libretti and more generally for Italian *opera seria*: the introduction of a couple (often also two couples) of young lovers who are united at the end of the play, turning a tragedy into a story about reconciliation and thus ending on an optimistic note – a *lieto fine*.⁹⁶ *The Hungarian* thus closes with a union between the two rival families, conventionally embodied by the prospective marriage of two family members of the younger generation (which acquires the function of a dynastic marriage sealing the peace between two aristocratic houses). In contrast to both Lee's and Byron's versions, the ending represents a renewal and a reestablishment of traditional social order, a fact that is additionally emphasised by Siegendorf's elevated rank and high political office – a restoration which mirrors the wider political restoration after the Peace of Westphalia on a smaller scale.

⁹⁶ For Metastasio and the *lieto fine* see Smith, *Tenth Muse*, p. 8; p. 78.

The Hungarian stresses the contrast between a past world of war, passion and revenge and a present world of peace, harmony and civilisation, and makes an implicit appeal to future harmony. Like her epilogue to *De Monfort*, *The Hungarian* is an example of the revision and implicit 'taming' of 'German drama' at the time when it was at the height of its popularity but also contested because of its radical and 'Jacobin' associations. Both texts illustrate the link between her literary and her political activities, and show that her interest in theatre in her later years was part of a decidedly anti-radical agenda. Devonshire's and Bessborough's adaptation of Harriet Lee's 'Kruitzner' is an even more obvious example of her anti-Jacobin rewriting of a potentially radical 'German Romance'. The decision to adapt Lee's 'Kruitzner', a radical text which draws on Schiller's *Die Räuber* and questions the legitimacy of aristocratic rule, is of particular relevance in this context.

On another level, *The Hungarian* has to be read in the context of Devonshire's interest in pedagogical writing as well as in closet drama. Thus, the adaptation emphasises the story's pedagogical dimension that is only implicit in Lee's original novella. The idea of an education in sensibility and sympathy, so important to *Zillia*, is also central to the later play. However, while *Zillia* is purely concerned with female characters, the gender dichotomy and the dynamics between men and women are crucial issues in *The Hungarian*. In comparison to Lee's Tale, Devonshire's and Bessborough's version significantly enhances the role of Siegendorf's wife, and with Emma introduces a second 'sensible' heroine in the younger generation. The play's Josephine equivalent, Leonora, is evidently a Bailliean character, inspired by Jane de Monfort in particular: a charismatic, sensible and strong woman, beautiful but past her first youth, like the women characters Baillie had become famous for.⁹⁷ In fact, had the play ever been staged, Leonora would have been a perfectly suitable role for Devonshire's protégée Sarah Siddons.

⁹⁷ Significantly, Baillie's female characters were a reason why, before her 'outing' as the author of the *Plays on the Passions*, the series was guessed to have been written by a woman, as men usually did not write strong female characters who were past their first youth. See Donkin, *Getting into the Act*, p. 164 f.

As a pedagogical drama promoting the idea of an education of sensibility, *The Hungarian* assigns to women the task of educating men in sympathy and politeness, and teach them to combine military with civilian virtues in the way embodied by the simultaneously courageous and sensible Herman. The play's ideal male character, he characteristically is capable of and shows his affection towards women and listens to their council. Thus, in a way, *The Hungarian* continues the project Devonshire had started many years before with *Zillia*, a project that assigns to elite women the role of educators, who apply plays as pedagogical tools for an education in sympathy, sensibility, politeness and virtue, and who serve as role models both for men of their own rank and for society in general.

Devonshire's example shows the deep and complex links between the public domains of politics, the theatre and printed literature and the private sphere of the salon and aristocratic elite theatricals. With her political and pedagogical plays, Devonshire attempted to combine her role as a politician and political advisor with literary ambitions to construct for herself an acceptable role as a female aristocratic citizen. Her literary career shows a pattern, revealing that she continually attempted to establish herself as an author and participate in theatrical productions without offending the social codes of her class. The popularity of adaptations and translations in the late 1790s/ early 1800s offered new possibilities, especially for women writers, to establish themselves as playwrights. Both Devonshire's sacred dramas and her Lee adaptation are attempts to participate in this movement and find an appropriate position as an aristocratic author in the theatrical world.

CHAPTER 4

**‘THE REJECTION OF THE AUSTRIAN YOKE’ -
NATIONALITY, NOBILITY AND
MENTAL THEATRE IN BYRON’S *WERNER***

1

It is not difficult to see why the young Byron felt attracted to ‘Kruitzner’. The Tale’s pattern of dynastic conflicts, estranged families and disinherited sons was not uncommon in the Byron family. The fifth Baron Byron, the poet’s great-uncle and predecessor, had been estranged both from his son and grandson, and tried to squander and sell large parts of the family property when he outlived them both. When the future poet inherited the title, he became involved in a complicated lawsuit, and had continuous financial difficulties.¹ Perhaps the most obvious parallel is with Byron’s own father, Captain John ‘Mad Jack’ Byron. The son of the fifth Lord’s younger brother, he was disinherited and thrown out of the military for his famously irresponsible, swashbuckling conduct.² Apparently he had married Byron’s mother for financial reasons, and, like Lee’s Frederick, repeatedly abandoned his family to continue his former ways. After having spent the wealth of two wives, he died in poverty in France when his son was three years old, possibly from suicide. Before the future poet inherited the title, he and his mother lived in relative obscurity in Aberdeen, having little

¹ Fiona MacCarthy, *Byron. Life and Legend* (London: John Murray, 2002), p. 17 f; p. 82. General biographical information on Byron is taken from MacCarthy and Benita Eisler, *Byron. Child of Passion, Fool of Fame* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1999).

² MacCarthy, *Byron*, p. 5. MacCarthy points out the similarity between Byron’s father and the protagonist of *Werner* (p. 413).

contact with his paternal relatives.³ According to Thomas Moore's *Life*, he learned of his succession to the title when his teacher in Aberdeen in the daily roll-call addressed him as 'Dominus de Byron'. Realizing the reverence and change of attitude a noble title brought with it, independently of someone's personal qualities, the precocious child observed, as he later remembered, that he could not find any change in himself.⁴

From his childhood, Byron had been an avid reader. His favorite books as a teenager were works on history, biographies and Gothic and historical fiction. According to a 'Reading List' he gave to his tutor at Cambridge in 1807, he had read about 4000 novels before the age of 19.⁵ Several novels he read in his youth made a deep impression on him, and had an impact on his later works. The most famous example might be John Moore's novel *Zeluco* (1789) which Byron read as a child or a teenager.⁶ He is said to have found an affinity between the villain hero of *Zeluco* and himself, and he mentioned the novel in the preface to the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1810-1812). Playing with his own image and the readers' expectation in reading about a Gothic villain, Byron wrote that, had he continued *Childe Harold*, the hero might have developed into a 'poetical Zeluco'.⁷ Joshua Pickersgill's *The Three Brothers* from 1803⁸, another novel Byron read in his adolescence, was to become the main source of his last dramatic work, *The Deformed Transformed* (1822).

³ Ironically, his own position as a distant relative inheriting the title would have been the equivalent of Stralenheim's in Lee's Tale.

⁴ See e. g. Megan Boyes, *My Amiable Mamma. A biography of Mrs. Catherine Gordon Byron* (Derby: J.M. Tatler & Son, 1991), p. 52.

⁵ *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), hereafter referred to as *BCMP*, p. 6.

⁶ John Moore, *Zeluco. Various views of human nature, taken from life and manners, foreign and domestic*, 2 vols. (London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1789).

⁷ Preface to the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in *BCPW* 2, p. 6. Given the recent interest in Byron's self-fashioning and the importance he attributed to his early reading experiences, it would be interesting to explore the many ways in which he and fashioned his image after the romances and novels he had read as an adolescent.

⁸ Joshua Pickersgill, *The Three Brothers. A Romance*, 4 vols. (London: John Stockdale, 1803).

Byron's fascination with Harriet Lee's 'Kruitzner' was equally lifelong. According to the preface to *Werner*, he had read the novella about the age of fourteen, which would have been shortly after its publication. When he left England for his European exile in 1816, he left behind two scenes of a tragedy entitled *Werner*, begun in November 1815, which is his first surviving dramatic attempt. The fragment tells the story of an exile, the disinherited and impoverished son of a Bohemian Count in the time of the Thirty Years' War. Like his later play of the same name, it is based on Harriet Lee's 'Kruitzner'.

While Byron's reservations against having his own plays performed (which will be considered below) have often led scholars to assume that he was altogether opposed to the theatre of his time, theatricality was an integral part both of his self-fashioning and the major part of his oeuvre, including most of his non-dramatic works. Since his early childhood in Scotland (when he accompanied his mother to several plays) he had been an avid and frequent theatre-goer.⁹ More importantly, in his youth, the involvement in theatrical activities was a key element of his education and played a central role in his search for social confidence and the creation of an appropriate public persona. His earliest literary ambitions seems to have been in playwriting as much as in the composition of poetry. According to the preface to *Werner*, his first dramatic attempt was a play entitled *Ulric and Ilvina*, which he wrote at the age of thirteen and 'had sense enough to burn'.¹⁰ Although not mentioned by Byron, the play was almost certainly an adaptation of the eponymous *Ulric and Ilvina*, a historical adventure novel about the Viking Age, published anonymously, but by a writer identifying herself as a woman in the preface.¹¹

⁹ See Boyes, *My Amiable Mamma*, p. 50; John Spalding Gatton, "'Put into scenery": theatrical space in Byron's historical dramas', *Themes in Drama 9: The Theatrical Space* (1987), pp. 139-149, here: p. 139.

¹⁰ Preface to *Werner*, *BCPW* 6, p. 384. Greg Kucich points out that Byron's decision to burn that play, as he mentions in the preface, reflects his lifelong ambivalence towards the stage. See Greg Kucich, "'A Haunted Ruin": Romantic Drama, Renaissance Tradition and the Critical Establishment', in Hoagwood and Watkins (eds.), *Romantic Drama*, pp. 56-83, here: p. 63. Unlike most critics who mention that early attempt, Kucich does not mistake it for a juvenile adaptation of 'Kruitzner', but, like Byron, also fails to mention the anonymous novel it was taken from.

¹¹ Anon., *Ulric and Ilvina. The Scandinavian Tale*, 2 vols. (London: Allan and West, 1797), vol. 1, p. i. According to the preface, the author wrote the novel at the young age of eighteen (vol 1, p. i).

At Harrow School, he acquired some fame as a ‘budding orator’¹² and was among the most zealous speakers at the semi-public Harrow Speech days, carefully choosing roles that either did not draw attention to or subtly negotiated his lameness.¹³ He even was acknowledged in *The Morning Post* as a particularly promising orator.¹⁴ Intended to prepare young male members of the social elite for public office, politics, diplomacy and generally a leading position in society, events like the Harrow Speech day had an important role in the formation of an elite *habitus*. In this, they are analogous to pedagogical private theatricals such as those designed by Genlis and Devonshire, and thus reflect the affinity between stage performance and political or public oration. Byron, who in 1808 wrote to his younger friend William Harness that ‘in this Country, nothing is to be done at the Bar, Stage, Pulpit, or Senate, without [Elocution]’¹⁵, was aware of this affinity early on¹⁶, and also recognized the performative, theatrical dimension of an elite *habitus* and of social intercourse. Crucially, he also saw an analogy between the skills of an orator and those of a poet¹⁷, which illustrates the theatrical aspect of his writing as well as his self-fashioning. Outside the formal context of school events, at an early age he started to create a public persona by emulating both actors and stage characters. When in the small provincial Nottinghamshire town Southwell, where his mother had rented a house, Byron was introduced to their neighbours, he lost his shyness when the neighbours’ daughter addressed him by the name of a popular dramatic character¹⁸, thereby inviting him to gain confidence in public by treating social intercourse as a performance – a strategy he was to follow throughout his life. Arguably he also fashioned his

¹² Matthew Bevis, *The Art of Eloquence. Byron, Dickens, Tennyson, Joyce*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 47.

¹³ For Byron’s performances at Harrow Speech days see Elledge, *Lord Byron at Harrow*, pp. 57, 61-63, 120-134, 156-164. For the significance of his lameness in his choice of roles see *ibid.*, pp. 1, 57 f, 126, 131, 158 f.

¹⁴ *The Morning Post*, 8 June 1804, quoted from Elledge, *Lord Byron at Harrow*, p. 155. Of course, his title may have been a reason why he was particularly acknowledged in the press. However, his talent as an orator was also commented on in his later years.

¹⁵ Byron to William Harness, 29 March 1808, *BLJ* 1, p. 164. Significantly, the letter refers to Harness’s own upcoming performance at Harrow Speech day, and Byron points out the importance of eloquence and declamatory skills.

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of his career as an orator in the House of Lords and the ways in which his rhetorics in his speeches are related to those in his poetry see Bevis, *Art of Eloquence*, pp. 29-84.

¹⁷ Elledge, *Lord Byron at Harrow*, p. 57. See also Byron’s letter to John Hanson, 2 April 1807, *BLJ* 1, p. 113.

¹⁸ Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with Notices of his Life* (London: John Murray, 1830), p. 24.

image after the famous teenage actor 'Young Roscius' William Betty, whom he went to see in London several times.¹⁹

At Southwell, Byron was also actively involved in theatrical activities, both as a patron and actor. In 1804, together with his mother he sponsored a play which was announced as bespoke 'by Mrs and Lord Byron'.²⁰ Two years later, when staying with his mother during the holidays from Cambridge, he participated in the production of two private theatricals with young members of the local town elite. In both instances Byron, the only nobleman in the group, assumed the position of a patron as well as actor: he wrote the prologue, played the lead character, and he was absent at most rehearsals and left the major part of the preparation to the other participants.²¹ Significantly, Byron retained an interest in private theatricals for his entire lifetime. As late as 1822, in his Italian exile, at the time when he had started work on his series of plays, together with the Shelleys, he was involved in plans for a private production of *Othello*, in which, had the plans not been abandoned, he would have played Iago.²²

During his London period, Byron took an intense interest in theatre; in 1815 he was literary adviser at Drury Lane. Both an aristocrat and by this time an immensely popular and successful writer, his position on the Drury Lane subcommittee was at the same time that of a dramaturg and a noble patron.²³ The parallel to his youthful theatrical activities is evident in

¹⁹ For Byron's emulation of Betty see Elledge, *Lord Byron at Harrow*, pp. 85-97.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 186; Moore, *Letters and Journals*, p. 22.

²¹ For the Southwell theatricals see Elledge, *Lord Byron at Harrow* p. 135-139; Boyes, *My Amiable Mamma*, p. 125 f; Megan Boyes, *Love without Wings. The story of the unique relationship between Elizabeth Bridget Pigot and the young poet, Lord Byron* (Derby: J. M Tatler & Son, 1988), pp. 30-38.

²² See Jane Stabler, 'Pisan Theatricals. Byron and *Othello* in 1822', *Byron Journal* 26 (1998), pp. 38-49.

²³ For Byron's experiences at Drury Lane see Michael Simpson, 'Byron in theory and theatre land: finding the right address', in Jane Stabler (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Byron Studies* (Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 191-212, esp. pp. 194-207; Richard Lansdown, *Byron's Historical Dramas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 11-58; 'Lord Byron: Dramaturg. "The Arbiter of Other's Fate"', *Encounter* 74 (1990), pp. 46-51; Alan Richardson, 'Byron and the theatre', in Drummond Bone, (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Byron*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 133-150, esp. 133-135, Peter Jay Manning, *Byron and the Stage* (unpublished PhD thesis, Yale University, 1968), pp. 97-123.

his 'Detached Thoughts' journal of 1821/1822, in which his accounts on his Drury Lane experiences directly precede a paragraph on the Southwell theatricals.²⁴ The original 1815 draft of *Werner* is an obvious attempt to write a 'popular' stage play, the adaptation of a successful prose story, with recognizable elements in the familiar genre of 'German Drama'. Although there is only circumstantial evidence, it is not unlikely that the family legend transmitted by Devonshire's family that *Werner* was authored by her and given to Byron by his lover, her niece Caroline Lamb (see below), had some foundation in actual events. Lamb, who in her letters mentions that she and Byron frequently conversed about literature, may well have shown him her mother's and aunt's manuscript, particularly if she was familiar with Byron's fascination for the story, and *The Hungarian* possibly inspired his own decision to adapt 'Kruitzner' for Drury Lane.

The main character of the 1815 fragment is an exile, driven from his country and inheritance for his unconventional, careless lifestyle (he describes himself as a 'Wayward son', I, 1, 73) and his marriage to a woman who is not of the same rank and not accepted by his noble family. Like many of his other works, the fragment has obvious allusions to Byron's biographical situation. A few months before he was forced to leave England for the scandal following the disastrous separation from his wife and his affair with his half-sister Augusta Leigh, the story's appeal to him is not surprising.

In the fragment, the character of Werner strongly resembles both the protagonists of Byron's verse tales and Byron's own public persona. As in Frederick's case charisma and aristocratic *habitus* are evident even when he is in disguise. Not recognizing him, his enemy Stralenheim describes him in terms that could refer to the hero of Byron's dramatic poem *Manfred* (1816), which he began only a few months later.

²⁴ Byron comments on his activities for the subcommittee in 'Detached Thoughts', paragraphs 67-70, and on the Southwell theatricals in paragraph 7 (*BLJ* 9, pp. 35-37; undated, but written between October 1821 and May 1822).

Stral. [*aside*]: 'Tis strange – this peasant's tone is wondrous high

His air imperious – and his eye shines out

As wont to look command with a quick glance –

His garb befits him not – why he may be

The man I look for – now – I look again –

There is the very lip – short curling lip –

And the o'erjutting eye-brow dark & large

And the peculiar wild variety

Of feature [...]

This is no peasant [...]

(*Werner* (First Draft), I, 2, 210-222)

However, at the time of the Congress of Vienna, while Byron was composing the original *Werner* draft, his choice to adapt Lee's novella for the theatre also has a political dimension. Indeed the 'legitimacy' of hereditary rule, which is discussed in 'Kruitzner', was a keyword at the Congress and the justification for restoration of many former princes in continental Europe who had lost their political power in the Napoleonic Wars. To the disappointment of many European intellectuals, the European powers at the Congress established a restorative policy, which was often perceived as reactionary.²⁵ The political principle of 'legitimacy' as the basis for restoration was invented by the French Foreign Minister Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand who had already been in office under Napoleon.²⁶ Byron called him a 'traitor to every government' and strongly resented him because of his opportunistic political career.²⁷

²⁵ See e. g. Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Vom Ancien Régime zum Wiener Kongress* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2001), pp. 126-135.

²⁶ Fehrenbach, *Kongress*, p. 130.

²⁷ See his 'Letter on the State of French Affairs' (July 29th 1815) about Talleyrand on the Congress of Vienna. In the same letter, he describes the French king Louis XVIII of the recently restored Bourbon dynasty as an average

Byron was an admirer of Charles Churchill, the liberal poet mentioned in the introduction to Lee's *Canterbury Tales*. With his parliamentary speeches in defence of the Nottingham frame breakers and in favour of Catholic Emancipation (1812-1813), like Churchill's friend John Wilkes (who figures as a character in Byron's *Vision of Judgement* (1821))²⁸, Byron belonged to a tradition of politicians who combined a libertine lifestyle with Whig principles.²⁹ Churchill's political verse satires became an important influence on his own early satirical works.³⁰ Thus, Churchill's attack on literary reviewers, *The Apology*, is echoed in his early satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809).

Before leaving England in 1816, Byron emulated the 'pilgrimage' of Lee's nameless narrator and visited Churchill's grave at Dover.³¹ His poem 'Churchill's Grave' (1816) echoes Lee's ambivalent representation of Churchill's afterlife; it celebrates the political poet, but also meditates on the impermanence of poetic fame. The gardener whom the narrator asks about Churchill's tomb wonders 'why frequent travellers turn to pilgrims so/ He died before my day of Sextonship,/ And I had not the digging of this grave' (12-14), but then shows him the tomb of one who he believes 'was a famous writer in his day' (29). This 'natural homily' (41) inspires the narrator to reflect upon 'Obscurity and Fame/ The Glory and the Nothing of a Name' (42 f). Like Lee's introduction, Byron's poem (according to his note in

personality, 'strict in devotion – skilful in cooking – kind to his favourites – a good & probably mild man but – a martyr to the Gout', thereby implicitly mocking the principle of 'legitimacy', as his readers would have been aware of the contrast to Napoleon. Talleyrand is called a 'renegade from all religions' and a 'betrayed of every trust'. *BCMP*, p. 50 f.

²⁸ Jonathan Gross interprets Byron's representation of Wilkes in *The Vision of Judgement* as an example of his 'hostility towards radicalism'. Considered together with his admiration for Churchill and his allusions to the radical discourse of the late 1790s, his treatment of Wilkes is thus an expression of his profound political ambivalence which is considered below (Jonathan David Gross, *Byron. The Erotic Liberal* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 160-163, esp. p. 162).

²⁹ Jonathan David Gross, 'Epistolary Engagements: Byron, Annabella, and the Politics of 1813', in William D. Brewer (ed.), *Contemporary Studies of Lord Byron* (New York, Queenstown, Ontario et al.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), pp. 17-36, here: p. 17. For his emulation of Churchill and Wilkes in lifestyle, see also Gross, *Erotic Liberal*, p. 32 f.

³⁰ Philip W. Martin, *Byron: A Poet before his Public*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 17. For Byron and eighteenth-century verse satire see e. g. Thomas Lockwood, *Post-Augustan Satire. Charles Churchill and Satirical Poetry, 1750-1800* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1979), part. pp. 148-165.

³¹ McCarthy, *Byron*, p. 279.

the manuscript an imitation of the 'beauties and [...] defects' of Wordsworth's poetry³²) is semi-parodic and at the same time affectionate and ironic.³³

2

When Byron left England, the *Werner* draft was left behind among his papers, and the project abandoned. In Switzerland the summer of 1816, he began to work on his experimental drama *Manfred*, which is much more radical in its representation of its exceptional hero and explicit in its confessional attitude and biographical allusions. However, his interest in the story of *Werner* was going to stay with him. He only returned to the project several years later, in his Italian exile in September 1821. It was an extremely productive year, in which Byron wrote *The Vision of Judgement*, experimented with different forms of drama and wrote five of his eight major plays.³⁴ With the exception of the unfinished *Deformed Transformed*, *Werner* was to be his last dramatic work. When he decided to resume work on the drama, he asked his friend John Cam Hobhouse and his publisher John Murray to send him the original draft and a copy of Lee's 'Kruitzner'.³⁵ The manuscript could not be located, so that he had to rewrite the first act. However, close textual parallels between 'Kruitzner' and *Werner* show that he made extensive use of the text of Lee's Tale, particularly of the passages written in

³² *BCPW* 4, p. 447.

³³ Since the late 1990s, the text, which is among Byron's lesser-known poems, has attracted increased critical attention. See Terrence Riley, "'Churchill's Grave': Byron and the Monumental Style", in Brewer, *Contemporary Studies*, pp. 37-56; David Woodhouse, "'Churchill's Grave': A Line of Separation", *Byron Journal* 26 (1998), pp. 68-73. Riley provides a close reading of the poem, interpreting it as a critique of the elegiac tradition; Woodhouse sees Byron's recent separation from his wife and his attempt to 'separate' himself from Wordsworth's poetic style reflected in the poem.

³⁴ See the discussion below. Michael Simpson argues that the plays Byron and Shelley wrote in their Italian exile attempt to reconstruct the radical discourses of the early 1790s, which had been obliterated by the installation of a system of state censorship, in coded form. With the thematic resonances discussed in this article, *Werner*, not mentioned by Simpson, would fit into such a project (see Michael Simpson, *Closet Performances. Political Exhibition and Prohibition in the Dramas of Byron and Shelley* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 3 and *passim*).

³⁵ Letter to John Cam Hobhouse on 27 September 1821, and letter to John Murray on 9 October 1821; *BLJ* 8, p. 224; p. 236 f.

dramatic dialogue, which in some instances he uses almost verbatim, only transforming Lee's prose into blank verse.³⁶

In this preface to *Werner*, however, Byron attributes 'Kruitzner' to Sophia Lee rather than Harriet, as he had already done in his letter to John Murray.³⁷ The incorrect attribution might suggest that he was quoting from memory instead of using the actual text, but a comparison of 'Kruitzner' and *Werner* clearly proves the contrary.³⁸ Rather than a mistake, the attribution to Sophia is apparently one of the various techniques by which Byron attempts to downplay Harriet Lee's importance, as is discussed in Chapter 5.

Although *Werner* is one of Byron's longest plays, he dramatises only the second part of Lee's story. The play opens shortly before the hero's encounter with his son (here called Ulric, as Byron had already used the name Conrad in *The Corsair* (1814)) and his enemy Stralenheim.³⁹ Like 'Kruitzner', the story of *Werner* takes place shortly before the end of the Thirty Years' War. Both texts picture a violent, brutal world permanently at war, and explore the effects the war has on society and the relationship between the characters. Byron more fully develops the exact historical background and circumstantial details. Lee's novella is more detailed on the social background of the setting, a small frontier town in a time of war, where people are narrow-minded and suspicious. In *Werner*, the key dimension is on the

³⁶ 1. Lee, 'Kruitzner', 183-188/ Byron, *Werner*, II, 2, 77-149 – 2. 'Kruitzner', 248-253/ *Werner*, III, 4, 29-41; 49-67 – 3. 'Kruitzner', 319-323/ *Werner*, V, 1, 149-172 – 4. 'Kruitzner', 323-326/ *Werner*, V, 1, 186-208 – 5. 'Kruitzner', 351-355/ *Werner*, V, 1, 409-467.

³⁷ Preface to *Werner*, BCPW 6, p. 384; BLJ 8, p. 237.

³⁸ See Karl Stöhsel: *Lord Byrons Trauerspiel 'Werner' und seine Quelle. Eine Rettung* (Erlangen: Verlag von Fr. Junge, 1891), pp. 20-82. Stöhsel reads *Werner* alongside 'Kruitzner' in order to show the stylistic superiority of Byron's play and 'save' it from the reproach of plagiarism. Byron's direct use of Lee's text is also shown in several contemporary reviews, which compare passages from both works to show the play's lack of originality. For a detailed plot comparison between the two texts see also: Walter Kluge, *Lord Byron's 'Werner or The Inheritance'. Eine dramentechnische Untersuchung mit Quellenstudium*. (Halle: Hohmann, 1913).

³⁹ Peter Manning has suggested that Ulric may be named after Count Ulric from Matthew Lewis's Gothic drama *Adelmorn, the Outlaw* (Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Adelmorn, the Outlaw. A Romantic Drama, in three acts*. London: Bell, 1801). However, while Lewis's murderer and usurper has indeed some similarities to Lee's Conrad, Byron may equally have named his character after the hero of the anonymous *Ulric and Ilvina* which he had read as a boy. See Manning, *Byron and the Stage*, p. 251 n. 4. For a discussion of Lewis's *Adelmorn* see Joseph J. Irwin, *M. G. 'Monk' Lewis* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), pp. 72-74.

hero's psychological situation, the representation of which is a central part of the drama's political dimension. His antisocial disposition, aristocratic pride and sense of superiority, despite his failings, follow Lee's representation of Frederick. He also shares his self-destructive quality, and indulges in the self-pitying awareness that his nature is responsible for own his fate, suffering at the thought of what he 'might have been'. His one redeeming feature is his constant love for his wife:

Wern: But for *thee* I had been – no matter what,
 But much of good and evil; what I am,
 Thou knowest; what I might or should have been,
 Thou knowest not: but still I love thee, nor
 Shall aught divide us.

[...] I am a thing of feelings, [...] (I, 1, 14-19)

His son Ulric blames Werner for his 'inherent weakness, half-humanity,/ Selfish remorse, and temporising pity' (V, 2, 36 f). As in Frederick's case, Werner's remorse is not entirely convincing, for he has kept his arrogance and sense of superiority throughout the play, seeing a grandeur and dignity even in his self-destructive disposition: 'my own nature/ In youth was such as to unmake an empire,/ Had such been my inheritance; [...]' (I, 1, 152-154).

Byron's Josephine (or Josepha, as she is called in his original draft) follows the concept of Lee's original heroine. As in 'Kruitzner', her reason is represented as a contrast to her husband's uncontrollable passions.⁴⁰ Several times, she tries to temper him with a declaration of her love, insisting that personal affections and values are more important than

⁴⁰ The relationship between a solipsistic, proud male character and a loving, courageous and self-confident woman is common in Byron's works. They can be seen as explorations of two different attitudes towards society and the human condition which are embodied by a male and a female character respectively (the metaphysical drama *Heaven and Earth* is an exception in which the usual gender roles are reversed).

outward circumstances and social standing: 'Whate'er thou might'st have been, to me thou art./ What no state high or low can ever change,/ My heart's first choice, - which chose thee, knowing neither/ Thy birth, thy hopes, thy pride; nought, save thy sorrows [...]' (I, 1, 143-146).

In 'Kruitznier', the backward and primitive social situation of seventeenth-century Germany is pictured as a result of the political situation in a country divided into many different independent feudal states. Lee's novella can be interpreted as a criticism of the feudal system, an aspect which is equally central in *Werner*. Like Lee, Byron stresses his protagonist's pride in his social position as an aristocrat (even after he has been disinherited), which hinders him from assuming an 'ordinary' profession and leading a productive, independent life. Thus, when they have left Hamburg, then a centre for trade and commerce, Werner gives a mocking answer to Josephine's suggestion that he could have become a merchant:

Jos.: [...] But for these phantoms of thy feudal fathers,

Thou might'st have earn'd thy bread, as thousands earn it;

Or, if that seem too humble, tried by commerce,

Or other civic means, to amend thy fortunes.

Wern. [*ironically*] And been an Hanseatic burgher? Excellent! (I, 1, 138-142)

Both in *Werner* and 'Kruitznier', the protagonist's wife embodies bourgeois values as opposed to aristocratic ones. Yet there is a small, but significant difference: while Lee's hero has been disinherited because of his irresponsible conduct as a military commander and his careless lifestyle, in Byron's play, the reason for the conflict with the protagonist's father is more conventional. Byron's Count Siegendorf does not inherit Werner because of his

irresponsible conduct, but because he, Count Siegendorf, does not approve of his son's wife, whose family is foreign and not of equal social standing. Significantly, though, while this modification at first glance seems to render the play more openly critical of a social system based on rank a privilege, Byron subverts such a reading by another crucial change. In contrast to Lee's Josephine, Byron's heroine, as the play stresses, is in fact 'born noble also' (I, 1, 730), although her family is not of the same rank as the Siegendors, and from a different national background. By contrast, Lee stresses the fact that her Josephine, who is often taken for a noble, is not of aristocratic origin. Thus, she emphasises that a 'noble' appearance is no inherent trait, but the result of a certain social performance, of which Josephine, who as the daughter of an Italian humanist scholar comes from an elite of education rather than title, knows the rules well enough for less-educated people not to perceive the difference.

While Lee's novella, by drawing attention to the performative aspect of elite *habitus*, thus questions the general idea of innate superiority and the legitimacy of aristocratic privilege, Byron, despite his own fascination with such issues, in *Werner* is more interested in current political affairs and matters of national identity. Thus, he updates the play's political connotations accordingly. In his version, Josephine's aristocratic Italian background alludes to Byron's own Italian partner Contessa Teresa Guiccioli, raising the audience's interest in the drama's biographical connection with its author and with his involvement in Italian affairs.⁴¹ However, at the same time, turning Josephine into a noble eliminates a central element of Lee's social critique, in a manner reminiscent of Devonshire's 'Kruitzner' appropriation. Thus, it is an illustration of Byron's profound ambiguity towards political radicalism that, as

⁴¹ See particularly II, 2, 395-398; MacCarthy, *Byron*, p. 413. Byron's heroine Myrrha, the king's loyal lover in *Sardanapalus*, written shortly before *Werner*, is also said to have been modelled after Teresa Guiccioli (e. g. *BCPW* 6, p. 610).

will be seen below, is also reflected more generally in his attitude towards drama and public theatre.⁴²

At the time when he resumed work on *Werner*, Byron, his partner Teresa Guiccioli and her family were active supporters of the *Carbonari*, the ‘charcoal burners’, a movement of ‘freedom fighters’ against the Austrian occupation of Northern Italy and for a unified Italian state.⁴³ Teresa’s relatives were ‘banished from Romagna for Carbonarism’.⁴⁴ Byron’s own involvement with and increasing frustration with the *Carbonari*, which is arguably also reflected in his earlier two Venetian plays *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari*⁴⁵, also may have been a reason for returning to Lee’s novella, a story representing the members of the rebellious Bohemian nobility as decadent and unable to break free of the ‘Austrian yoke’, which, on the political level, ends with the restoration of Hapsburg rule. Although *Werner* is set during the last phase of the Thirty Years’ War, Byron, like Lee, probably sympathised with the uprising of the Bohemian Estates against the Holy Roman Empire (then already ruled by the Austrian Habsburg dynasty) that caused the outbreak of the war.⁴⁶ The conflict had a

⁴² Robert Miles also stresses that in changing Count Siegendorf’s reason for disinheriting his son, Byron turns him into a conventional Gothic patriarch and altogether makes the plot more conventional. However, Miles does not explore the implications of Byron’s decision to turn Josephine into a noble (Miles, *Gothic Writing*, p. 217 f).

⁴³ For Byron’s literary and political involvement with the Italian *Risorgimento* see also: David I. Harrison, ‘Sex, Seduction and Secret Societies: Byron, the Carbonari and Freemasonry’, paper presented at the 31. *International Byron Conference* in Venice, 7-12 July 2007, unpublished; David Spencer Laven, ‘Byron and Austrian Venice’, paper presented at the 31. *International Byron Conference* in Venice, 7-12 July 2007, unpublished; Mauro Pala, ‘Byron and the Idea of the Italian *Risorgimento*’, paper presented at the *(Trans)national Identities/ Reimagining Communities* conference at the University of Bologna, 12-15 March 2008, unpublished; ‘Facets of the *Risorgimento*: The Debate on the Classical Heritage from Byron’s *Childe Harold* to Leopardi’s *Canzone ad Angelo Mai*’, in Laura Bandiera, Diego Saglia (eds.), *British Romanticism and Italian Literature. Translating, Reviewing, Rewriting* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 193-207. Pala, particularly in his unpublished paper, sees Byron as a Whig aristocrat who, while generally sympathetic to the idea of Italian national liberation and unification, was essentially opposed to political radicalism and the idea of Revolution, and did not understand the complexities of Italian society. See also Diego Saglia, ‘“Byron’s Italy and Italy’s Byron”: Codes of Resistance and early *Risorgimento* Literature’, *Rivista di letteratura moderne e comparate* 56 (2003), pp. 275-95.

⁴⁴ Mary Shelley to her friend Maria Gisbourne, quoted from MacCarthy, *Byron*, p. 407.

⁴⁵ Nat Leach, ‘Historical Bodies in a “Mental Theatre”: Byron’s Ethics of History’, *Studies in Romanticism* 46 (2007), pp. 3-19, here: p. 9 n. 7; William Jewett, *Fatal Autonomy: Romantic Drama and the Rhetoric of Agency* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 168 f.

⁴⁶ For an account of the Thirty Years’ War see e. g.: Gerhard Schormann, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004); Günter Barudio, *Der Teutsche Krieg 1618-1648* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985).

political and religious background.⁴⁷ However, to an early nineteenth-century reader, in an age that saw the emergence of the modern concept of the 'nation', the Czech-speaking Bohemians in the largely German-speaking Empire would have seemed an oppressed people fighting against a foreign ruler. Byron probably noticed the obvious parallel to the Carbonari fighting to break free from the 'Austrian yoke' (63).

In addition to its phonetic resemblance to 'Werther' mentioned above, Werner's name is also a (perhaps ironical) allusion to yet another fight against Habsburg domination. It is taken from Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), where the character Werner Stauffacher is the leader of organised resistance against the Reich and of the fight for Swiss independence (whereas Tell himself is the great individual fighter).⁴⁸

Josephine's Italian background gives Byron the opportunity to allude to the Austrian/Italian conflict in favour of the Italians by letting her criticise the unsophisticated arrogance of German nobility and compare it with the attitude of Italian merchant nobles:

Jos.: [...] I fain would shun these scenes too oft repeated,
 Of feudal tyranny o'er petty victims; [...]
 Even here, in this remote, unnamed, dull spot,
 [...] exist
 The insolence of wealth in poverty
 O'er something poorer still – the pride of rank
 In servitude, o'er something still more servile;
 [...] What a state of being!

⁴⁷ A recent study of the outbreak of the war and its complex causes is: Brennan C. Pursell, *The Winter King. Frederick V of the Palatinate and the Coming of the Thirty Years' War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). See also J. V. Polisensky, *War and Society in Europe 1618-1648* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years' War*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1969 (repr. of 1938 edition)).

⁴⁸ For the relation between the organised Swiss fight for national independence and Tell as the heroic loner in Schiller's play see Tezky, 'Aufstand gegen Tyrannei', p. 235 f; Hofmann, *Schiller*, pp. 171-175.

In Tuscany, my own dear sunny land,
 Our nobles were but citizens and merchants,
 [...] But here! the despots of the north appear
 To imitate the ice-wind of their clime,
 [...] And 'tis to be amongst these sovereigns
 My husband pants! and such his pride of birth –
 That twenty years of usage [...]
 Hath changed no atom of his early nature;
 But I, born noble also, from my father's
 Kindness was taught a different lesson. [...] (I, 1, 698-731)

Byron, who would later join the Greek fight for independence, passionately supported the Carbonari cause, declaring that the Austrian occupants did 'not merit the name of Germans'.⁴⁹ More than a far-fetched invective, the remark alludes to the current political debate. As in the case of Italy, German hopes for a unification and democratisation after the victory over Napoleon had been disappointed at the Congress of Vienna by its policy of the restoration of the pre-Napoleonic rulers and states, according to the principle of 'legitimacy'.⁵⁰ Although several aristocratic privileges were abolished, the individual states of the 'Deutsche Bund', the union of German states established at the Congress in 1815, remained politically independent and in the perspective of German intellectuals, the 'feudal tyranny o'er petty victims' mentioned in *Werner* continued. The most powerful European countries, Britain,

⁴⁹ Letter to Douglas Kinnaird, 22 November 1820, *BLJ* 7, p. 238 f.

⁵⁰ The old Holy Roman Empire of German Nation with its hundreds of duchies, counties, free cities, dissolved in 1806, was however, not re-established. The Congress followed the 'Reichsdeputationshauptschluss', the reform of 1803, when the Reich had already been threatened by Napoleon's conquests; the 'Deutsche Bund' had 38 independent states. For Byron's reaction to the Congress of Vienna and the politics of Restoration see e. g. Malcolm Kelsall, *Byron's Politics* (Brighton, Sussex and Totowa, New Jersey: Harvester Press and Barnes and Noble, 1987), esp. pp. 1-33. Kelsall does not consider *Werner*, but he provides a detailed reading of the politics of his two Venetian plays, *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari* (pp. 82-118).

France, Prussia, Austria and Russia formed a 'Holy Alliance' and cooperated to preserve peace and the established order and persecute anti-royalist, democratic or nationalist tendencies. The countries of the 'Deutsche Bund' and Russia in particular established a system of censorship and a secret police. The Russian and the Austrian Empires were despised by liberal intellectuals like Byron who perceived their politics as reactionary and oppressive. In the following years, perspectives for a united Germany continued to be discussed among German-speaking intellectuals, and two possible scenarios emerged: a 'great German solution' ('großdeutsche Lösung'), a political union of all members of the 'Deutsche Bund' including the Austrian Empire, and a 'small German solution' ('kleindeutsche Lösung') with the exclusion of Austria and the political and military domination of the kingdom of Prussia. Byron's remark thus signifies that the Austrians themselves (probably referring to the troops as much as to the Austrian government), as enemies of the Italian liberal and nationalist cause, did not deserve political inclusion in a national state.

While despite Byron's revisions the play as a whole still implicitly questions the legitimacy of aristocratic rule, the role of Werner's son Ulric is particularly appropriate for Byron's anti-restoration politics. Like Conrad, Ulric has achieved fame as a legendary highwayman, but Byron's 'Hungarian' Gabor mistrusts this idea of greatness as much as Lee's original character:

Gabor: Amongst them there was said to be one man
 Youth, strength and beauty, almost superhuman,
 And courage as unrivalled, were proclaim'd
 His by the public rumour, and his sway
 Not only over his associates, but
 His judges, was attributed to witchcraft.

[...] I have not great faith

In any Magic save that of the Mine –

I therefore deem'd him wealthy. [...] (V, 1, 243-252)

Following Lee in suggesting that Ulric's apparent superiority is no inherent trait but the result of his wealth and aristocratic *habitus*, Byron implicitly undermines Werner's own claim to exceptionality and reveals it to be class-based. Implicitly, he even mocks the image of 'Byronic' greatness present in his earlier works.

While Byron's Werner is a slightly more likeable character than Lee's Frederick, Ulric turns out to be cold-blooded killer. Like Conrad, he kills the family's enemy Stralenheim and justifies his deed by referring to Werner's own self-justification of his theft of Stralenheim's gold (II, 2, 147-149). Byron's character uses almost the same words as Lee's:

Ulric: [...] If *you* condemn me, yet

Remember *who* hath taught me once too often

To listen to him! *Who* proclaim'd to me

That *there were crimes* made venial by the occasion?

That passion was our nature?

[...] Is it strange

That I should *act* what you could *think*?

[...] *You* kindled first

The torch – *you* show'd the path; [...] (V, 1, 439-466)

Like 'Kruitzner', *Werner* raises the question of how far the son's deed was caused by the father's example, and to what extent a character is formed by his biographical background. The play also emphasizes Ulric's emotional coldness, which Ulric himself explains with his parentless childhood: 'My nature is not given To outward fondling; how should it be so,/ After twelve years' divorcement from my parents?' (IV, 1, 329-331) To Werner's shock, his son – despite his young age – sees marriage in terms of convenience, obedience and dynastic considerations rather than as a union of lovers. (IV, 1, 342-366). Although Werner's own father does not appear in the drama, Byron follows Lee in suggesting that Ulric's lack of sensibility was caused by his dynastic upbringing, deprived of personal affections and parental love and example, and is thus linked to his air of superiority and aristocratic *habitus*.

In his adaptation, Byron makes two significant changes to Lee's original cast, both of which serve to emphasize the decay of the Siegendorf dynasty. He leaves out Marcellin, the family's younger son, who survives in Lee's story (although his future fate as heir to their title is not specified). The character is substituted by Ida Stralenheim, daughter of the Siegendorf family's enemy and Ulric's betrothed.

Leaving out Marcellin allows Byron to close the play with Werner's exclamation that 'the race of Siegendorf is past'. While this increases the 'dramatic' effect and poignancy of the ending, it also transforms the drama into a story about the fall of a dynasty, which is closer to the conventional plots of classicist 'high' tragedy (and its aristocratic protagonists and connotations) than Lee's original novella (although Byron does not observe the unities of classical tragedy as he does in his historical dramas).

The effect of Ida Stralenheim's character is more subtle. At first sight the addition of a 'love interest' in the younger generation follows the conventions of 'sentimental' drama. Ida is a typical young woman of sensibility whose youthful innocence is a contrast to Ulric's experience as well as to middle-aged Josephine's disillusioned realism.⁵¹ The prospect of Ida's marriage to Ulric represents the hope for a reconciliation between the rival families and a potential renewal and stabilisation of the Siegendorf dynasty⁵² – a role analogous to that of Devonshire's Emma, daughter of her Stralenheim equivalent Count Unna. As Peter Cochran has pointed out, Byron's Ida Stralenheim may well have been inspired by Emma.⁵³ However, in Byron's rewriting, there is a crucial difference. In *The Hungarian*, the union between Emma and the sensible 'man of feeling' Hermann is a symbol for reconciliation after conflict, representing the restoration of traditional order and its renewal in a younger generation. Significantly, in contrast to Emma, Devonshire's Hermann has no direct dramatic equivalent in Byron's play. Instead, his role as the young heroine's betrothed is transferred to the character of her father's murderer Ulric, who is otherwise based on Lee's (and possibly Devonshire's) Conrad. While this constellation is conventional enough in a tragedy, the character of Ida and her sensibility are employed to emphasize Ulric's complete lack of emotions and remorse, which, in the context of a 'sentimental' drama, is an unexpected feature that serves to illustrate the decline of the Siegendorf family. The union which could potentially bring about reconciliation and renewal, is made impossible. Thus, Byron's rewriting of Devonshire's rewriting turns Devonshire's political message into its opposite, thereby restoring the plot's original anti-aristocratic message with an added poignancy, made even stronger by the resonances with contemporary events.

⁵¹ See e.g. V, 1, 52-58.

⁵² Although the idea of a marriage between two cousins to end a family feud is of course a familiar cliché, the introduction of Ulric's fiancée Ida Stralenheim as a new character in *Werner* could be a deliberate allusion to Byron's personal biography. As a teenager, he was in love with his distant cousin Mary Ann Chaworth of Annesley, the neighbouring estate to his own Newstead Abbey. His great uncle had killed her grandfather in a duel, and the future poet had romantic ideas about their union; his poem *The Dream* (1816), written in the first year of his exile, gives an idealised version of his first love (see MacCarthy, *Byron*, pp. 32-34).

⁵³ Cochran, 'Harriet Lee's *The German's Tale*, *The Hungarian*, by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and Byron's *Werner*', p. 3; p. 8.

The revelation that the crowd cheering Werner and his family on their return are actually in Ulric's pay is also particularly poignant. The return of the Siegendorfs to their family seat and feudal position is not based on the villagers' actual support, but on Ulric's criminal action and propaganda. In *Werner*, the attempt at a return to traditional order after the end of a war is not shown as a justified restoration, but as an act of usurpation.

3

Byron's preface to the 1822 version of *Werner*, in which he claims that the play was 'not intended, nor in any way adapted, for the stage', seems to be a key example for his supposed anti-theatricality. However, several scholars have interpreted the play as an attempt to gain popularity on the public stage. Thus, T. H. Motter argues that Byron wrote *Werner* tongue-in-cheek, in order to prove his ability to produce a box office success.⁵⁴ David Erdman, in his influential essay on Byron's 'Stage Fright' claims that Byron, craving for stage success after the failure of his earlier plays, 'was ready to meet his audience half way, with a tragedy free of the traditional rant and horrors, but still more Gothic than Greek.'⁵⁵ However, as Terry Otten, Alan Richardson and Richard Lansdown have pointed out, the original conception of the play, the first draft of which was composed in 1815, was already closely linked to Byron's activities for the Drury Lane subcommittee during the same year.⁵⁶ As

⁵⁴ T. H. Vail Motter, 'Byron's *Werner* Re-estimated', in *Essays in Dramatic Literature: the Parrot Presentation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), pp. 243-275, esp. p. 273-275.

⁵⁵ David V. Erdman, 'Byron's Stage Fright: The History of His Ambition and Fear of Writing for the Stage', *English Literary History* 6 (1939), pp. 219-243, here: p. 230. The same argument is made by Thomas Corr and Peter Manning. See Thomas J. Corr, 'Byron's *Werner*: The Burden of Knowledge', *Studies in Romanticism* 24 (1985), pp. 375-398, here: p. 375; Peter Jay Manning, 'The Sins of the Fathers', in Robert Gleckner and Bernard Beatty (eds.), *The Plays of Lord Byron. Critical Essays* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), pp. 361-378, here: p. 364; Manning, *Byron and the Stage*, p. 255.

⁵⁶ Lansdown, *Byron's Historical Dramas*, p. 51; Alan Richardson, *A Mental Theater. Poetic Drama and Consciousness in the Romantic Age* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), p. 98, Terry Otten, *The Deserted Stage. The Search for Dramatic Form in Nineteenth Century England* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1972), p. 68.

Lansdown convincingly argues, despite Byron's later claims to the contrary, the original draft has to be read as a dramatic response to his experiences at Drury Lane, written 'with the stage very much in mind'. Despite this, Lansdown's reading is still heavily informed by reservations against 'popular theatre' and common misconceptions about Byron's approach to theatrical performance. Projecting Byron's later comments about the 'tastelessness' of theatre audiences onto the situation of 1815, he presents his interest in stage playwriting as very limited, stating that he embarked on the tragedy only when Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Moore, whom he had approached for suitable new manuscripts, were not delivering. Lansdown suspects that Byron lost interest in *Werner* when Charles Robert Maturin eventually submitted *Bertram* - rather unfoundedly, as Byron himself claimed that his work on the play had been interrupted by personal circumstances when he left England after his separation. Taking Byron's anti-theatricality for granted, Lansdown follows John W. Ehrstine⁵⁷ in expressing his surprise about Byron's return to his earlier 'Gothic interests', which he describes as 'puzzling'.⁵⁸ However, Lansdown still acknowledges its experimental quality as a work combining popular 'Gothic' elements and historical drama while dismissing the unities of his earlier neo-classicist historical plays.⁵⁹

While scholars have sometimes described *Werner* as an 'anomaly' in Byron's oeuvre, and claimed that it suffers from being based too closely on an inferior source text, 'Kruitznier' and its main character had an obvious impact not only on *Werner*, but on several of Byron's works, including such famous productions as *Childe Harold* and *Manfred*.

⁵⁷ John W. Ehrstine, *The Metaphysics of Byron. A Reading of the Plays*. (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1976), p. 132.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51 f and n. 82. In a similar vein, M. K. Joseph describes the play as an 'anomaly' among Byron's experimental dramas (M. K. Joseph, *Byron the Poet* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1964), p. 111). Otten, on the other hand, despite his emphasis on Byron's ambivalence towards the theatre, follows Erdman in supposing that he returned to the project in 'an attempt to gain popularity' after his earlier plays had failed on the stage (Otten, *Deserted Stage*, p. 68).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51 and n. 83. As Lansdown mentions, the innovative quality of the play as a combination of 'Gothic' and historical elements is also mentioned by Erdman (see Erdman, 'Byron's Stage Fright', p. 230).

Although the story's influence on Byron's entire oeuvre cannot be discussed in detail in the course of this chapter, it is interesting to note that, for example, Lee's Frederick thus shares various traits with the original protagonist of *Childe Harold*, particularly at the beginning of Canto I, where Harold is described as an antisocial, arrogant youth, whose sensitivity, emotion and beauty is his main attractive feature. Like Frederick he is a melancholic wanderer, who despite his youth feels that he has wasted his life. There is also a link to Byron's verse tales, particularly to *The Corsair* (1814) and *Lara* (1814), in which the protagonist, the mysterious Corsair Conrad, is probably named after Lee's character.

Frederick's extreme feeling of superiority and disdain for an ordinary human existence which makes him incapable of a productive life in spite of his capacities resembles the disposition of the protagonist in *Manfred* (which was written only a few months after the first draft of *Werner*). It is possible to read *Manfred* not as a celebration of the great individual, but as an exploration of the problems of a solipsistic, self-centred and ultimately destructive disposition, written in the tradition of Harriet Lee's 'Kruitznar'. The fact that the female character, Astarte, is silenced and present only as a phantom with whom Manfred can have no real communication, could be seen as an illustration of the dangerous aspects of his attitude. It is interesting to note that the drama was written only a few months after Byron composed the first draft of *Werner* in 1815.

Most crucially, however, the importance that Byron attributed to the impression his early reading of 'Kruitznar' had made on him, and to the 'singular conformity' between the novella and his own ideas, suggests that like Lee, he was keenly aware of the performative and theatrical qualities of social conduct. A consideration of the influence of 'Kruitznar' suggests that his concept of the Byronic Hero's trademark superiority seems to

have been more one of a socially implanted *habitus* than of an innate quality.⁶⁰ Indeed, the whole concept of the Byronic hero, so central to Byron's fame and literary career is permeated by the idea that the superior *habitus* of a nobleman marks him out amongst his social inferiors, thus reflecting the importance of his early reading of Lee's novella.

4

Byron's famous claim that his dramas were intended exclusively for a 'mental theatre' has often been interpreted as an expression of a straightforward anti-theatricality.⁶¹ At first sight, such an interpretation seems self-evident, even more so as he coined the phrase at a time when he repeatedly stated his opposition to public performances of his plays.⁶² When quoted in context, however, the term suggests a more complex, ambivalent and less oppositional approach towards the stage:

Your friend – like the public is not aware that my dramatic Simplicity is *studiously* Greek - & must continue so – *no* reform ever succeeded at first. -- I admire the old English dramatists – but this is quite another field - & has nothing to do with theirs. - I want to make a regular English drama - **no matter whether for the stage or not - which is not my object - but a *mental theatre*.**⁶³

⁶⁰Angela Esterhammer, 'Improvising Identities: *Beppo* and Bourdieu', paper presented at the 31. *International Byron Conference* in Venice, 7-12 July 2007, unpublished.

⁶¹As recently as 2004, Alan Richardson still defines Byronic 'mental theatre' primarily as 'experimental poetry' and a genre excluding physical performance, and as such opposed to Bailliean 'closet drama' according to Burrough's definition. See Alan Richardson, 'A neural theatre. Joanna Baillie's "Plays on the Passions"', in Crochunis (ed.), *Joanna Baillie*, pp. 130-145, here: pp. 130-132. However, in a recent essay on Byron's plays, Richardson still concedes that among the famous Romantic poets, Byron was the one who had the most direct and extensive experience with the stage. See Richardson, 'Byron and the theatre', p. 133 f.

⁶²See e. g. *BLJ* 8, p. 22 f; p. 53, pp. 59-69, p. 90; p. 210.

⁶³Letter to John Murray, 23 August 1821, *BLJ* 8, p. 186 f. Byron's italics, bold characters mine.

Byron's comment to his publisher John Murray describes his dramatic work as a primarily literary project, the merit of which lies in its poetic quality.⁶⁴ This is emphasised by Byron's allusion to classical Greek drama, which, while read and studied by the educated, was not usually performed on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century stages.⁶⁵ In his *Ravenna Journal* of 1821, Byron made a list of four tragedies he intended to write, which illustrates that the plays he composed between 1820 and 1822 were part of a larger project.⁶⁶ The sequence experiments with different modes and genres such as classicist historical tragedy (*Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*), 'metaphysical' drama (*Cain*, *Heaven and Earth*), popular Gothic drama (*Werner*) and, with the deliberately irregular *Deformed Transformed*, the attempt at a synthesis of all those different traditions.⁶⁷

This focus on literary achievement rather than stage success entailed a deliberate rejection of spectacle. With 'nothing *melodramatic* – no surprises, no starts, nor trap-doors'⁶⁸, Byron's plays lacked the sensationalist elements common on the contemporary London stage. However, if the stage, for Byron as an experimental dramatist, is not his 'object', this does not at all imply a complete rejection. Tellingly, protesting to Murray against a London production of his *Marino Faliero*, he states that '[b]y no adaptation can it be made fit for the *present English Stage*'.⁶⁹ A similar comment to Lady Byron is even more explicit: 'the Stage is not my object – and even interferes with it – *as long as it is in it's present state*'.⁷⁰ Thus, his

⁶⁴ See e. g. Byron's letter to John Murray, 28 September 1820, in which he claims that *Marino Faliero* 'is too long – and too regular for [the English] stage [...] but there is poetry' (*BLJ* 7, p. 182).

⁶⁵ For Byron's comparisons between his own works and classical Greek drama, see also e.g. *BLJ* 8, p. 57; p. 67.

⁶⁶ 'Pondered the subject of four tragedies to be written [...], *Sardanapalus*, already begun, *Cain*, a metaphysical subject, something in the style of *Manfred*, but in five acts, perhaps with the chorus; *Francesca of Rimini*, in five acts; and I am not sure that I would not try *Tiberius*.' (*Ravenna Journal*, 28 January 1821, *BLJ* 8, p. 36 f.) Of those, Byron only wrote the first two, substituting the two latter projects with *The Two Foscari*, *Heaven and Earth*, *Werner* and *The Deformed Transformed*.

⁶⁷ Jeffrey Cox and Michael Gamer appropriately state that Byron's dramatic oeuvre 'demonstrates the same range we see in the drama of the period as a whole'. See Jeffrey N. Cox, and Michael Gamer, 'Introduction', in Jeffrey N. Cox and Michael Gamer (eds.), *The Broadview Anthology of Romantic Drama* (Ontario, Ormskirk, Lancashire, Sydney: Broadview Press, 2003), pp. vii-xxiv, here: p. xx.

⁶⁸ *Ravenna Journal*, 12 January 1821, *BLJ* 8, p. 23. Byron's emphasis.

⁶⁹ Letter to John Murray, 11 January 1821, *BLJ* 8, p. 59 f. My emphasis. Byron reiterates this statement on 20 January, claiming that the play 'could never succeed' 'in the *present state* of the stage in London' (*BLJ* 8, p. 67, my emphasis).

⁷⁰ Letter to Lady Byron, 14 September 1821, *BLJ* 8, p. 210. My emphasis.

emphasis on 'reform' suggests an ambitious endeavour, the deliberate composition of a new kind of literary drama intended for the reader, but also potentially for a future, 'reformed' theatre.⁷¹ While he never published a formal dramatic theory, his project has obvious parallels to, and is clearly informed, by Joanna Baillie's 'Introductory Discourse', her concept of 'closet drama', and her ideas about a smaller, more intimate theatrical space. Byron, who had tried to have *De Monfort* revived during his Drury Lane period, was himself well aware of the connection.⁷² In an unpublished continuation of the preface to *Werner*, he made a list of eminent, but largely unperformed playwrights, to illustrate his point about literary quality being independent from stage success. The only contemporary playwright Byron mentions, Baillie's name is particularly emphasised, by appearing last on the list, and on its own.⁷³ His affinity with Baillie is especially evident in another quotation from a letter to Murray, which links his dramatic project to the *Plays on the Passions*: 'What I seek to show in 'the Foscari's' (sic) is the *suppressed* passions – rather than the rant of the present day.'⁷⁴ In this context, although Byron maintained that his plays were written 'for the closet'⁷⁵ rather than about it, it is tempting to suggest a supplementary definition of 'mental theatre', that is analogous to Burrough's understanding of 'closet drama'.⁷⁶ Rather than prescribing the appropriate mode of reception, in a Bailliean tradition the expression could refer to the plays' theme, the exploration of 'suppressed passions' - a drama *about* the inner life, in which 'not "reality" but

⁷¹ Martyn Corbett stresses Byron's emphasis on a reform of the English stage, claiming that his 'mental theatre' 'operated in his own mind because it could not at that time be realized on the stage: a heroic theater of ideas, not of effects' (Martyn Corbett, 'Lugging Byron out of the Library', *Studies in Romanticism* 31 (1992), pp. 361-372, here: p. 372). See also Byron's comment to Douglas Kinnaird: 'My object is not *immediate* popularity in my productions which are written on a different system from the rage of the day' (25 January 1822, *BLJ* 9, p. 92, Byron's emphasis).

⁷² For the influence of Baillie's plays, *De Monfort* in particular, on Byron's dramas, see William D. Brewer, 'Joanna Baillie and Lord Byron', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 44 (1995), pp. 165-181.

⁷³ 'If it be contended that all *dramatic* work is generally intended for the Stage; – I deny it. – With the exception of Shakespeare (or Tate – Cibber – and Thompson under his name) – not one in fifty plays of our dramatists is ever acted – however much they may be read. – Only *one* of Massinger – none of Ford [...] – and even in Comedy – Congreve is rarely acted – and then in only one of his plays. – Neither is Joanna Baillie.' (Supplement to the Preface to *Werner*, *BCPW* 6, p. 713 f. Byron's italics).

⁷⁴ Letter to John Murray, 20 September 1821, *BLJ* 8, p. 218 (Byron's italics).

⁷⁵ *BLJ* 8, p. 22.

⁷⁶ Burroughs herself points out the ambiguity of the term, without however discussing the parallels to her definition of 'closet drama' (Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, p. 76 f).

the human mind becomes the object of dramatic representation'.⁷⁷ Such a reading also points to the pedagogical aspect of Byronic 'mental theatre' which links Byron's project both to Baillie's and Devonshire's interests, and which, although he never explicitly defined himself as a pedagogical writer, is inherent in his emphasis on 'reform'.⁷⁸ *Werner*, which critics sympathetic to the play have often interpreted as a psychological drama, could clearly be described in those terms.⁷⁹ Indeed, while Byron was trying to get Baillie's tragedy staged, the thematic parallels between *De Monfort* and 'Kruitzner' may well have sparked his initial interest in adapting Lee's novella as his own Bailliean contribution for Drury Lane.

While the definition of 'mental theatre' as an analysis of emotions has become common in modern scholarship, the expression remains ambiguous, and is still interpreted in different ways.⁸⁰ Given both Byron's ambiguity about the stage and his interest in the dramatic potential of 'suppressed passions', a flexible, fluid definition is, perhaps, most satisfactory.⁸¹ The concept of closet drama simultaneously stresses the independence of Byron's plays from physical performance (without absolutely denying a potential staging),

⁷⁷ Frederick Burwick, 'Illusion and Romantic Drama', in Gerald Gillespie (ed.), *Romantic Drama* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1994), pp. 59-80, here: p. 80. Although not mentioned by Burwick, who provides a comparative account of European Romantic experimental plays, Baillie is a major exponent of such a drama, and a major influence on Byron's plays. Pratyush Purkayastha, one of the earlier critics to consider Baillie alongside major male Romantic dramatists, also stresses that Byron's main interest as a playwright is in psychological drama. See Pratyush Ranjan Purkayastha, *The Romantics' Third Voice: Study of the Dramatic Works of the English Romantic Poets* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur Salzburg, 1978), p. 234.

⁷⁸ For the pedagogical aspect of Byron's representation of 'suppressed passions' see also Steven Bruhm, *Gothic Bodies. The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 62. Bruhm, however, links the pedagogical dimension to an opposition to physical performance.

⁷⁹ See e. g. Pamela Kao and David Punter. 'Byron and Psychoanalytic Criticism: *Werner*', in Stabler (ed.), *Palgrave Advances*, pp. 171-190; Manning, 'The Sins of the Fathers'; Corr, 'Byron's *Werner*'; Bernard Blackstone, *Byron: A Survey* (London: Longman, 1975), pp. 252-257; Om Prakash Mathur, *The Closet Drama of the Romantic Revival* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1978), pp. 181-187.

⁸⁰ Most recently Emily Bernard Jackson has argued that the intended 'stage' for Byron's dramas is 'the reader's mind', whereas Nat Leach argues that the term hints to the fact that a performance (whether physical or imaginary) is only made 'meaningful' by an act of mental projection (see Emily A. Bernard Jackson, 'Manfred's Mental Theater and the Construction of Knowledge', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 47 (2007), pp. 799-824, here: p. 821 n. 7; Leach, 'Historical Bodies', pp. 3-6). For the 'classical' definition as a theatre of the mind see also Alan Richardson's pioneering study *A Mental Theater*, p. 43, and his essay 'Teaching *Manfred* as Mental Theater', in Frederick W. Shilstone (ed.), *Approaches to Teaching Byron's Poetry* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1991), pp. 126-129.

⁸¹ Thomas Crochunis rightly describes 'mental theatre' as a 'deliberately paradoxical and unresolved term' (Thomas C. Crochunis, 'Byronic Heroes and Acting: The Embodiment of Mental Theater', in Brewer and Purinton (eds.), *Contemporary Studies*, pp. 73-94, here: p. 88). However, he is convinced that Byron deliberately chose an 'unstageable theatricality' (*ibid.*, p. 76).

points to the theatrical and creative aspect of reading and names the exploration of the inner life as the dramas' central theme.

Another quotation, from a letter to Lady Byron, in which he refers to his three classicist historical tragedies, while particularly explicit on the experimental character of Byron's project, also illustrates its elitist character: 'I am trying an **experiment** – which is to introduce into our language – the *regular* tragedy – without regard to the Stage – **which will not admit of it** – but merely to the *mental* theatre of the Reader.'⁸² This passage has some striking parallels to the introduction to William Hayley's plays quoted in chapter 2. Both Byron and Hayley describe their plays as stylistic experiments, deliberately regular and as such a novelty in the English language, and therefore not adapted for success on the public stage. Although, unlike Hayley, Byron does not mention it explicitly, the emphasis on 'regularity' shows that the model he is referring to here is European or, more specifically, French classicist drama – a genre traditionally associated with aristocratic elite culture. The elite aspect is also emphasised in his repeated references to classical Greek tragedy (itself the model for classicist drama) as his model. Crucially, the implied elite here is not one of noble birth, but of refined taste and education. Thus, unlike Hayley, Byron gives no indication that his dramas are intended for private theatricals. Indeed, such an intention would have been both at odds with his emphasis on their status as literature, with his liberal politics and with his personal situation as an expatriate shunned by a large part of British nobility. Instead, his focus is on individual consumption by educated, understanding members of an aristocracy – or perhaps more appropriately a meritocracy – of taste, who are culturally above the 'trampling [...] audience'⁸³ and the 'wild pantomines'⁸⁴ in a contemporary public playhouse. Nevertheless his complex relationship with playwriting, theatrical experiment and commercial theatre is strongly informed by his own aristocratic status.

⁸² Letter to Lady Byron, 14 September 1821, *BLJ* 8, p. 210. Byron's italics, bold characters mine.

⁸³ Preface to *Marino Faliero*, *BCPW* 4, p. 305.

⁸⁴ *BLJ* 8, p. 210.

Combining Gothic elements with historical tragedy and more flexible than the rigid classicist historical dramas, the *Werner* of 1822, 'neither intended, nor in any shape adapted, for the stage'⁸⁵, is a crucial part of Byron's experimental drama sequence.⁸⁶ Despite the continuity in its political allusions, it is thus written in a totally different context than the 1815 draft, which he had intended for Drury Lane in his capacity as a patron and prominent associate.

As in Devonshire's case, Baillie's concept of playwriting as a primarily literary endeavour appealed to Byron, who in his earlier career insisted on not being paid for his work. Significantly, this changed when he left England, and, moving no longer in the circles of fashionable society, no longer needed to publicly represent himself as a gentleman amateur. While in his later years he openly assumed the position of a professional writer by taking payment for his works – and in his friend Douglas Kinnaird even had someone to act as his agent – the production of stage plays was an entirely different matter. In contrast to the composition of poetry or literary drama, it suggested the craftsman rather than the artist, and was thus irreconcilable with Byron's rank as an English Peer – unless he was writing in a context of patronage, as he had done during his Drury Lane activities in 1815. The position of a patron would have justified the production of an unambiguously commercial stage play, such as the 1815 *Werner* would have been had Byron completed it (albeit of course written not for his own profit but the theatre's). Interestingly, the short half-satirical dramatic sketch, *The Blues*⁸⁷, written in 1821 at the time he was composing his series of dramas, provides a representation of patronage and private performances within London's fashionable society. Byron's alter ego, the poet Inkel, is portrayed as a gentleman-author, who is persuaded to supply an epilogue for a tragedy by the playwright 'Botherby' (II, 82-94). The script clearly

⁸⁵ Preface to *Werner*, *BCPW* 6, p. 385.

⁸⁶ For the fusion of Gothic and tragedy, especially historical tragedy, in Romantic drama see also Diego Saglia, 'Historical Tragedy, the Fate of Gothic Drama and Mary Russell Mitford's *Julian*', in Saglia, Silvani (eds.), *Il Teatro della Paura*, pp. 165-178, here: p. 166.

⁸⁷ *BCPW* 6, pp. 298-308.

implies Inkel's style is superior to and more elegant than that of 'Botherby' (obviously based on Drury Lane author William Sotheby), a commercial writer with whom he is contrasted in the play. The satire reflects Byron's intimate knowledge of literary and fashionable London, the world of 'High Whiggery'⁸⁸ in which he had been moving in his London period, but is also evidence of the distance he had put between himself and that world in his Italian exile.

As an expatriate, Byron was no longer able to write plays for the English theatre in the position of a noble patron-contributor. Thus, straightforwardly producing plays for the stage was no longer appropriate for him. The very fact that he had started taking payment for his works, although it contrasted with his earlier image of the noble poet, made it even more necessary for him to distinguish himself from commercial authors. Jonathan Gross, interpreting Byron as an aristocratic libertine in the Whig tradition, describes his reservations about having his plays staged as a rejection of the democratic implications of performance.⁸⁹ However, while his position as a member of the nobility is central to his views about playwriting, the relationship between his politics and his social and artistic elitism is still more complex. In Byron's view, a commercial approach to authorship threatened both a writer's artistic integrity and political credibility. Significantly, his vitriolic comments against the Poet Laureate Robert Southey (1774-1843), a former radical who had turned Tory, repeatedly stressed the commercial character of Southey's productions, accusing him of having sold his convictions for financial profit.⁹⁰ In combination with the conflict between his dramatic theory and the realities of early nineteenth-century productions, Byron's anxieties about his position as a writer account for the emphasis with which he distanced himself from the contemporary stage.⁹¹ Affectionately written though it is, as a satire about a world he was once part of, *The*

⁸⁸ For Byron's associations with the Whig elite in his London period see e. g. Diego Saglia, "'The Talking Demon': Liberty and Liberal Ideologies on the 1820s British Stage', in *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 28 (2006), pp. 347-77, here: p. 352 f; Gross, *Byron*, p. 154 f.

⁸⁹ Gross, *Byron*, p. 113.

⁹⁰ Most famously, he does this, of course, in *The Vision of Judgement* (BCPW 6, pp. 309-345), stanza 96-102.

⁹¹ Indeed, his statements about his intention to write in Italian once he had mastered the language well enough to express himself at the same level as in English might be a result of the limitations he faced as an expatriate.

Blues marks Byron's break with fashionable London, and his decision to compose drama-as-literature, deliberately excluding the consideration of a potential physical performance, or rather his own involvement in it.

Ultimately, the focus on experiment, psychology and the representation of intimate emotions (often expressed in soliloquies), which renders his dramas unfit for performance in a large contemporary playhouse, and the issue of stage playwriting as a commercial endeavour unsuitable for a nobleman outside a context of patronage, inform and reinforce each other. Malcolm Kelsall, in his influential study *Byron's Politics*, drawing both on Byron's writings and his Whig affiliations in the House of Lords, like Gross has interpreted him as an essentially Whiggish aristocrat, in favour of slow reform but opposed to radical politics.⁹² In contrast, Marjean D. Purinton and Daniel Watkins, writing in the tradition of Michael Foot's and William Ruddick's interpretation of Byron as a radical and political idealist⁹³, have read his dramas, especially *Werner*, as poetical expressions of a straightforward radicalism.⁹⁴ In my opinion, however, Byron's engagement both with radicalism and Whig politics in his plays, in *Werner* in particular, is more complex and ambiguous, which is evident in the tension between his allusion to the radical debates of the late 1790s and his revisions of Lee's plot and ambivalent approach to the theatre.⁹⁵ Simultaneously downplaying and 'taming' the anti-

⁹² Kelsall, *Byron's Politics*, *passim* and esp. pp. 1-56, p. 194 f. See also Malcolm Kelsall, 'Byron's politics', in Bone (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Byron*, pp. 44-55. David Erdman also stresses the crucial influence Byron's aristocratic status had on his politics. See e. g. David V. Erdman, 'Lord Byron and the Genteel Reformers', *PMLA* 56 (1941), pp. 1065-1094.

⁹³ Michael Foot, *The Politics of Paradise. A Vindication of Byron* (London: Collins, 1981); William Ruddick, 'Byron and England: the Persistence of Byron's Political Ideas', in Paul Graham Trueblood (ed.), *Byron's Political and Cultural Influence in Nineteenth-Century Europe: A Symposium* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981), pp. 25-47.

⁹⁴ See Marjean D. Purinton, *Romantic Ideology Unmasked. The Mentally Constructed Tyrannies in Dramas of William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and Joanna Baillie* (Newark, London and Toronto: University of Delaware Press and Associated University Press, 1994), pp. 62-94; Daniel P. Watkins, *A Materialist Critique of English Romantic Drama* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1993), pp. 180-196. While Purinton provides a detailed discussion of Byron's opposition to post-Napoleonic Restoration and the politics of the Holy Alliance, showing the ways in which this opposition is reflected in his works, it cannot, in my opinion, be concluded that his allusions to the radicalism of the 1790s imply that his own politics were unambiguously radical. Watkins, writing in a Marxist tradition, reads *Werner* as a social analysis and criticism of a social order based on rank and privilege, but does not consider Lee's novella or the changes Byron made to the plot.

⁹⁵ Cecilia Pietropoli, writing on *The Two Foscari*, also mentions the equivalence between Byron's ambivalence towards the public stage and his ambivalent political views. See Cecilia Pietropoli, 'The Tale of the Two Foscari from the Chronicles to the Historical Drama: Mary Mitford's *Foscari* and Lord Byron's *The Two Foscari*', in Bandiera, Saglia (eds.), *British Romanticism and Italian Literature*, pp. 209-220, here: p. 214.

aristocratic elements of its source and sympathetically referring the radical discourse of the late 1790s, *Werner* is an expression both of Byron's opposition to the post-Napoleonic Restoration and the politics of the Holy Alliance and his own profound political and aesthetic ambiguity. On a broader level, the tension between his politics and aesthetics also reflects the political disillusionment intellectuals such as Byron faced in the post-Napoleonic era.

CHAPTER 5

**‘A BAD POEM, BUT A FAIRLY GOOD DRAMA’ -
AFTERMATH: *THE THREE STRANGERS*, MACREADY’S *WERNER*
AND DEBATES ON AUTHORSHIP AND ORIGINALITY**

1

Contemporary reviews criticised *Werner* for its supposed lack of originality. A review by ‘Odoherly’ in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* (XII, 1823) compared the drama with ‘common paste-and-scissars-dramas’ and thought it unworthy of Byron:

By now at last has come forth a tragedy by the same hand, which is [...] far worse, than we, [...], could have believed possible for the noble author to indite – a lame and mutilated ‘rifacciamento’ of one of Miss Lee’s *Canterbury Tales*, a thing, which, so far from possessing, scarcely even claims and merit beyond that of turning English prose into English blank verse – a production, in short, which is entitled to be classed with no dramatic works in our language [...], except, perhaps, the common paste-and-scissars ‘Dramas’ from the *Waverley* novels. [...] what a descent is here for the proud soul of Harold!¹

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the play continued to be accused of plagiarism, often in polemical terms. William Gerard (1886), who otherwise praises Byron’s

¹ ‘Odoherly’ in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* XII (1823), pp. 710-719, here: p. 710, quoted from: *RR*, pp. 186-195, here: pp. 188.

achievements as a dramatist, describes *Werner* as ‘a kind of sixth-rate Robbers [which] breathes the spirit of all that is most trivial in German robber-romance’, although he praises ‘Kruitznier’ as ‘an excellent *moral tale*’.² In 1899, Frederick Leveson Gower even attempted to prove that *Werner* was in fact the play written by his grandmother, the Duchess of Devonshire. According to Gower, the manuscript was given to Byron in 1812 or 1813 by the Duchess’s niece, his then lover Lady Caroline Lamb.³ He claims that Byron later published it under his own name because he wanted to raise money for his Greek expedition and expected *Werner* (which Gower describes as ‘a bad poem but a fairly good drama’⁴) to be successful.⁵ Although Gower’s theory was soon refuted by E. H. Coleridge in his Byron edition⁶, it illustrates the association between women writers, ‘German drama’ and stage adaptations.⁷

In the tradition of Samuel Chew’s influential study of Byron’s plays (1915)⁸ most older critics equally considered *Werner* a weak play, an adaptation of a romance lacking originality and poetry. In 1935, T. H. Motter opened his essay on *Werner* by claiming that the extraordinary points about the play were its success on the stage and its ‘sheer badness’.⁹ Another typical example is Anne Barton, who, writing on Byron’s political dramas, described *Werner* as ‘Byron’s one genuinely bad and derivative play, [but] also his one indisputable

² William Gerard, *Byron Re-Studied in his Dramas. Being a Contribution towards a Definitive Estimate of his Genius. An Essay* (London: F. V. White & Co., 1886), p. 136f.

³ Frederick Leveson Gower, ‘Did Byron Write *Werner*?’, p. 243. Gower claims to have read a letter by his mother, the Duchess’s daughter, to her sister Lady Carlisle, in which she mentions that her mother had written a stage adaptation of ‘Miss Lee’s tale, Kreutzner, or the Hungarian’ (sic) (Gower, ‘*Werner*’, p. 243f). See also Anon., ‘*Werner*. Frederick Leveson Gower Says His Grandmother, Not Byron, Wrote It’, *New York Times*, 2 September 1899, online at http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf_r=1&res=9D07E4DF133DE633A25751C0A96F9C94689ED7CF&oref=slogin (22 April 2008).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 246f.

⁶ George Gordon, Lord Byron, *The Works of Lord Byron: Poetry*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 7 vols. (London: John Murray, 1898-1904), vol. 5 (1901), pp. 329-333.

⁷ Tilar Mazzeo points out that the discussion about the authorship of *Werner* ‘reveals more about the ways in which gender intersected with attitudes toward private subliterate genres than about anything else’. See Tilar J. Mazzeo, *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. 202 n. 15.

⁸ Samuel C. Chew, *The Dramas of Lord Byron. A Critical Study* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915).

⁹ Motter, ‘Byron’s *Werner* Re-estimated’, p. 243.

theatrical success'.¹⁰ Apparently, the play's very popularity on the stage and the fact that it was based on a - by this time - relatively little known story written by a female author seems to have been reason enough for traditional scholarship to dismiss it without much further consideration.¹¹

Although the literary merit of *Werner* has started to be reassessed in recent scholarship¹², Drummond Bone remains one of the few critics who recognize the play's central importance for the Byronic oeuvre:

Of all the dramas, *Werner* is the most clear-cut in its condemnation of the cult of the self. Ulric, Werner's son, represents the nadir of the politics of unrestrained Romantic opposition. Without civilized restraint, the handing over of responsibility from absolute authority to the individual will end in disaster. [...] The son's half-hearted rebellion against his father is carried to its logical anarchic conclusion – the grandson behaves in the way the father 'wanted' to behave. The women, Werner's wife Josephine and Ulric's betrothed Ida (the daughter of Stralenheim), who represent again a domestic middle-way between feudal order and rank individualism, are the casualties of the men's obsessions.¹³

Unsurprisingly, the dismissal of Lee's novella, although it was occasionally appreciated in studies on women writers or Gothic fiction (see above), remained a commonplace in Byron scholarship for a long time, even in critics sympathetic to *Werner*. Bone, like many others, neglects to mention 'Kruitznier' altogether. Margaret Howell in *Byron*

¹⁰ Anne Barton, "'A Light to Lesson Ages": Byron's Political Plays'; in John D. Jump (ed.), *Byron: A Symposium* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1975), pp. 138-162, here: p. 138.

¹¹ Interestingly, *The Deformed Transformed*, based on an even lesser-known novel, *The Three Brothers* by Joshua Pickersgill, has had a similar fate and has also been recently re-estimated due to canon revision.

¹² See also e. g. Drummond Bone, *Byron* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000), p. 80 f.

¹³ See Bone, *Byron*, p. 80 f. However, Bone does not consider the connection to Lee's Tale.

Tonight (1982), concludes that it suffers from being based too closely on a 'bad Gothic romance', which, she argues, causes the protagonist to be a weaker, less engaging character than Byron's other heroes.¹⁴ In his otherwise innovative study *Byron and Tragedy* (1988), Martyn Corbett still describes Lee's story as 'unappealing' to 'modern tastes', for 'its stilted style and pious moralising' (mistakenly, given that the story has no overtly Christian passages), echoing the condescending tone of Byron's preface by claiming that its weakness was 'to some extent redeemed by the strength with which the theme of inherited guilt is presented and its impressive, almost contagiously brooding atmosphere'.¹⁵ In 2001, Martin Procházka still dismissed Lee's Tale, claiming that Byron improved it by 'correcting [its] improbabilities' and emphasising the "detective" element of the plot'.¹⁶ Recently however, such neglect or dismissal seems to have become the exception rather than the rule. Thus, while she does not discuss 'Kruitzner' itself, Jane Stabler, in her comprehensive study of Romantic literature, *Burke to Byron, Barbauld to Baillie* (2002), recognizes the experimental quality of Byron's Lee adaptation, claiming that he was consciously 'following Shakespearean dramatic precedent by borrowing a popular story'.¹⁷ In a very recent article, David Punter and Pamela Kao, writing on *Werner* and psychoanalytic criticism, emphasise the importance Byron himself attributed to his early reading of 'Kruitzner', though they also do not consider the significance of Lee's novella in their analysis of the play.¹⁸ In a short article in the *Newsletter of the Byron Society in Australia*, Margot Strickland discusses Byron's use of 'Kruitzner', stressing that his rewriting cannot be labelled as 'plagiarism'.¹⁹ Paul Douglass, in a survey of Byron's 'feminist canon', equally mentions Byron's

¹⁴ Margaret J Howell, *Byron Tonight. A Poet's Plays on the 19th Century Stage* (Windlesham and Surrey: Springwood Books, 1982), p. 147 f. Boleslaw Taborski expresses a similar view (Boleslaw Taborski, *Byron and the Theatre* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur Universität Salzburg, 1972), p. 125; p. 231).

¹⁵ Corbett, *Byron and Tragedy*, p. 190.

¹⁶ Martin Procházka, 'Byron's *Werner*: Redrawing Moral, Political and Aesthetic Boundaries', in Christoph Bode and Fritz-Wilhelm Neumann (eds.), *Re-mapping Romanticism: Gender – Text – Context* (Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 2001), pp. 79-89, here: p. 86.

¹⁷ Jane Stabler, *Burke to Byron, Barbauld to Baillie, 1790-1830* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 251. For Stabler's discussion of *Werner* see Stabler, *Burke to Byron*, pp. 251-264.

¹⁸ Kao and Punter, 'Byron and Psychoanalytic Criticism: *Werner*', p. 172.

¹⁹ Margot Strickland, 'Werner: Was Byron a Plagiarist?', *Newsletter of the Byron Society in Australia* 30 (2006), pp. 10-14.

acknowledgement of Lee, and even notes the possible influence of Devonshire's play (here misnamed *Siegenderf*), and her collaboration with her sister Harriet, Countess of Bessborough.²⁰ Monika Coghen, writing on *Werner* as a Gothic drama, mentions that the play owes its 'Jacobinical' quality to its source novella, but does not further explore Byron's appropriation of Lee.²¹ Jie-Ae Yu, who discusses *Werner* in the context of Byron's views on heredity and free will, briefly looks at the ways in which the tragedy differs from its source, without however exploring it in detail or considering the political and historical background.²² Despite such appreciation, Yu still emphasises the exceptional 'greatness' of Byron's plays, and his distance from the female writers by whom he was influenced. Contrasting the 'Gothic tradition' of plays such as Baillie's *De Montfort* with Byron's focus on the 'more sophisticated arena of the psychological' and unambiguously stating that he was 'spurning the stage'²³, she neglects the emphasis on psychology in Baillie's 'closet drama' and the close link between Byron's and Baillie's concepts of 'mental theatre'. Robert Miles, who in his 1993 book on Gothic writing, discusses Byron's appropriation of the Gothic elements in 'Kruitznier', is still one of the few scholars who explore the dynamics between Byron and Lee in detail.²⁴

2

Byron anticipated that his adaptation would cause mixed reactions, and insisted on publishing it with an introduction, written in order to avoid being accused of plagiarism.²⁵ The

²⁰ Paul Douglass, 'Lord Byron's Feminist Canon: Notes toward its Construction', *Romanticism on the Net* 43 (2006), <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2006/v/n43/013588ar.html> (5 March 2007), no pagination.

²¹ Monika Coghen, 'Werner: Byron and the Burden of the Gothic Past', in *Filled with many-splendored words: Papers on Culture, Language and Literature in Honour of Prof. Dr. Fritz Hans König*, ed. Alicja Witalisz et al. (Krosno: Państwowa Wisza Szkoła Zawodowa, 2005), pp. 39-54, here: p. 40 f.

²² Jie-Ae Yu, 'Heredity and Free Choice in Byron's *Werner*', *Keats-Shelley Review* 20 (2006), pp. 119-132, here: p. 121 f, p. 124 f; pp. 127-129.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 124 f.

²⁴ Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. 213-224.

²⁵ Letter to John Murray on 23 November 1822, *BLJ* 9, p. 40.

published preface, a shortened version of his original text, acknowledges the tragedy's plot to have been taken entirely from 'Kruitzner'. Byron mentions how Lee's Tale fascinated him as a young man, and he stresses the importance the story had had for his own works: 'When I was young (about fourteen, I think) I first read this tale, which made a deep impression upon me; and may, indeed, be said to contain the germ of much I have since written.'²⁶

However, his comment on Lee's achievement is ambiguous, and he uses several strategies to simultaneously praise and dismiss her, and to stress the originality of his own work and downplay the role of its source. Thus, he attributes the Tale to Sophia Lee rather than Harriet, although textual parallels between 'Kruitzner' and *Werner* clearly show that he had evidently worked not from memory, but with a printed text.²⁷ He also emphasizes the story's obscurity: 'I am not sure that it was ever very popular; or, at any rate its popularity has since been eclipsed by other great writers in the same department'.²⁸ Given that both Harriet and Sophia were well-known writers and 'Kruitzner' and the other *Canterbury Tales* had been favourably reviewed in several journals, this statement seems undeserved. In addition, Byron praises the 'singular power of mind' of the novella, but rather patronizingly adds that 'the story might, perhaps, have been more developed with greater advantage'.²⁹

Considering the importance Byron otherwise attributed to Lee's influence on him, this rather condescending tone seems striking. It becomes even more complex and interesting when compared to a remark he made to Thomas Medwin's directly after the completion of *Werner*, in which he admiringly describes Lee's story as a major work of contemporary English fiction, and which implicitly illustrates Byron's agenda in downplaying Lee's importance:

²⁶ Preface to *Werner*, BCPW 6, p. 384.

²⁷ See Stöhsel, *Byrons Trauerspiel*, pp. 18-82.

²⁸ Preface to *Werner*, BCPW 6, p. 384.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 384.

There is no tale of Scott's finer than 'The German's Tale'. I admired it when I was a boy and have continued to like what I did then. This tale, I remember, particularly affected me. I could not help thinking of the authoress, who destroyed herself. I was very young when I finished a few scenes founded on that story. I perfectly remember many of the lines as I go on.³⁰

Although in contrast to his later preface, the comment gives 'Kruitznr' unreserved praise, the comment about its 'authoress' is revealingly ambivalent, showing Byron's anxieties about producing a dramatic adaptation of a contemporary text. Unlike the real Harriet Lee, the writer Byron imagines here poses no threat, having 'destroyed herself' (probably implying suicide) at a young age. There was no obvious reason why Byron should have supposed Lee to have committed such an action. In fact, as his reference to an adaptation in his childhood suggests, he is here probably mixing her up with the anonymous author of *Ulric and Ilvina*, the novel which, according to his Preface to *Werner*, he had tried to adapt at the age of thirteen. In any case, the quotation suggests that when Byron embarked on the project, he believed Lee to be dead for a very long time. The reasons why such a scenario would have appealed to him are obvious: a youthful woman writer who had ended tragically and killed herself long ago was a more interesting and spectacular source writer than a professional, unmarried, successful female author of 65 years – who, crucially, might have her own say about Byron taking her story (as Lee, indeed, did). Since he was both extremely sensitive about his own texts being used without his consent (as in a theatrical production), and had already been frequently charged with plagiarism throughout his career³¹, Byron evidently feared another such accusation, which partly explains his careful negotiations of the relationship between his tragedy and Lee's Tale in the preface. His erroneous comment

³⁰ Byron to Thomas Medwin, 20 January 1822, in Lovell (ed.), *Medwin's Conversations*, p. 258.

³¹ For a detailed discussion both of Byron's experiences with accusations of plagiarism and his own views on plagiarism and originality see Mazzeo, *Plagiarism and Literary Property*, pp. 86-121.

about Lee's death suggests that he would not have embarked on the project had he known her to be alive – and having found out later, needed to find strategies to dismiss her in order to avoid being accused of plagiarism and being associated both with Lee and with other producers of dramatic adaptations.

3

Although Byron did not live to see it, Harriet Lee did, indeed, have her own say. Four years after the first publication of *Werner*, Harriet Lee published her own theatrical adaptation of 'Kruitznér', a play entitled *The Three Strangers*. As a dramatic interpretation of Lee's novella, it is very different from Byron's version, a commercial play deliberately designed for stage performance. It premiered at Covent Garden on 10 December 1825, featuring James Warde as Kruitznér (as the character is called throughout the play) and Charles Kemble as Conrad.³² Although it received only four performances at Covent Garden in December 1825³³, it was published soon afterwards in 1826. In spite of recent interest in Byron's play, its interaction with Lee's adaptation to my knowledge has never been considered. When it was mentioned at all, it was to emphasize its inferiority to Byron's play.³⁴ However, Lee's adaptation can be read as a response to Byron's views on drama and performance both expressed in his preface to *Werner* and in the form of the drama itself, and as an interesting attempt to reclaim the story as her own.

Her advertisement to *The Three Strangers* can equally be interpreted as an answer to Byron's preface. With an artistic self-confidence reminiscent of that expressed in her

³² Lee, *Three Strangers*, Title Page; Cast of Characters (no page number); John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*, 10 vols. (Bath: Carrington, 1832; repr.: New York: Burt Franklin: 1964), p. 346.

³³ Taborski, *Theatre*, p. 231.

³⁴ See e. g. Taborski, *Theatre*, p. 231.

introduction to *The Canterbury Tales*, Lee positions herself as a professional author and the story's original creator. She employs several strategies to demonstrate the independence of her own adaptation. Although her play was published in 1826, two years after Byron's death, she emphasizes that her version preceded his, and had already been 'written many years ago, while the Tale of *Kruitzner* [...] had yet sufficient possession of the imagination of its author to incline her to try it in a new form.'³⁵

To reclaim her story, Lee emulates Byron's ambiguous mixture of dismissal and praise. Thus she writes that 'Lord Byron did her the honor' of adapting her 'Kruitzner' in his tragedy of *Werner*, but at the same time reminds her readers the debt he owes to her, stressing that he adopted 'much of the language'.³⁶ As she states, Byron's work made it necessary to present her own play to the public immediately, to prevent it from being seen as a 'subsequent attempt'.³⁷ As another motive for originally composing a dramatic adaptation of her novella, she mentions her fear that it 'would probably employ the pen of some other writer'³⁸, thus both emphasizing her own story's popularity and downplaying the position of Byron, who, in spite of his fame, figures as just one playwright among others.

If Romantic mental theatre deliberately attempted to distance itself from melodrama, at least in the case of Lee's *Three Strangers*, the opposite is equally true: in reaction to Byron's adaptation of her work, Lee poignantly and shrewdly rewrote 'Kruitzner' as a melodrama³⁹, and as a text decidedly intended as a stage play, a fact also reflected in the ways in which she pointedly acknowledges the manager and actors involved with the production,

³⁵ Lee, *Three Strangers*, Advertisement.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ For the Romantic melodrama as a genre and its relation to Gothic and Romantic tragedy see Jacky Bratton, 'Romantic Melodrama', in Moody, O'Quinn (eds.), *British Theatre*, pp. 119-127; Jeffrey N. Cox, 'The Death of Tragedy; or, The Birth of Melodrama', in Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (eds.), *The Performing Century. Nineteenth-Century Theatre's History* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 161-181.

thus representing the play as a collective effort while still emphasising her individual achievement as its author. Indeed, as her words suggest, Lee may have well hoped for a stage success, which would have emphasised her own claim to the story as well as its theatrical potential.

In reaction to Byron's strategies of distancing his play from stage performances, Lee's advertisement implies an alternative, more inclusive concept of theatrical originality and of the role of the playwright. Probably with Byron's statement in mind, and in reaction to it, she tells her audience that 'it had been suggested to her that the incidents [in 'Kruitzner'] were calculated for the stage'.⁴⁰ In addition, she puts her drama into the context of its theatrical performance: she explains that she immediately offered it for Covent Garden, mentions its first production, and thanks the actors and the manager.⁴¹ The title page of the published edition also credits the play's first performance at the Theatre Royal, but at the same time Lee herself is described as the 'author of 'Kruitzner', and other *Canterbury Tales*'. Thus, although for Lee, the enactment of her play is part of the play itself, her advertisement is a claim for her own authenticity and originality as a writer. More than a strategy to reclaim her story, her advertisement is implicitly a manifesto for the recognition of stage playwriting as an art in its own right.

In spite of her claim that *The Three Strangers* had been composed before the publication of *Werner*, Lee's approach to playwriting and her attempt to distance herself from Byron's drama are also present in the play itself. In (possibly deliberate) opposition to *Werner*, *The Three Strangers* is evidently written for stage performance. The text is about half as long as that of *Werner*, and it is written in prose rather than Byron's blank verse. Significantly, in contrast to Byron, Lee carefully avoids making use of the dialogue passages

⁴⁰ Lee, *Three Strangers*, 'Advertisement'.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

in 'Kruitznier', thus implicitly stressing the independence and originality of her own adaptation.

Like Byron's hero, Lee's Kruitznier indulges in pitying himself for being responsible for his own misfortune. As in Lee's Tale, Josephine is more reasonable than her husband, suggesting that she might 'think for [him]' (35), and advising him to change rather than dwell on his miseries.⁴² However, Lee simplifies the story and leaves aside much of the psychological and sociological exploration present both in 'Kruitznier' and *Werner*. *The Three Strangers* is a much shorter, condensed version. Lee's focus here is on dialogue and action, with an obvious attempt at stageability.

Like *Werner*, *The Three Strangers* leaves aside the main character's youth and years of exile, and opens shortly before the encounter with Kruitznier's son and his enemy. However, she also omits most of the circumstantial descriptions and background information used in her novella, which Byron partly put into his characters' monologues. Although the plot is basically the same as in her Tale, she has appropriated it with an eye to the genre she is writing in, and consciously adapts the story for a staging as a sentimental melodrama⁴³, adding comical and sentimental characters and scenes. As Jacky Bratton has recently pointed out, early melodrama 'challenged the claims of poetic tragedy to stage supremacy, and brought down upon its writers the condemnation of the literary establishment.'⁴⁴ Such a challenge is clearly inherent in Lee's attempt to reclaim her story.

⁴² See e.g.: 'Kruitz.: A man born, like him, to splendid fortunes; nursed in the very bosom of luxury, [...] yet one who, with a thankless hand, dashed these fair gifts from him. [...] saw Time pass by as carelessly as though his wings were never to be clipped by eternity, [...] Know you, I ask, such a man./ Jos.: [after a pause of irresolution and distress] Know you such a man, husband? If you do, I pray you school him well. [...]' (p. 13) Both Lee's Tale and her play criticise an ideal of female passivity. The drama has an interesting dialogue between Kruitznier and Josephine in which she refuses to be commanded by her husband and favours a more active model of femininity: 'Kruitz.: [...] Retire, Josephine; - this is no time nor place for women: - By your duty I command you to leave me. /Jos.: There is a duty even stronger than that by which you can command; [...] / Kruitz.: What! Be guarded like a coward! Owe protection to my wife.' (p. 29f)

⁴³ For an introduction to sentimental drama as a genre see: Frank Hale Ellis, *Sentimental Comedy: theory and practice* (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1991), esp. pp. 3-22.

⁴⁴ See Bratton, 'Romantic Melodrama', p. 125.

The first act opens with a dialogue between some townspeople and court officials of M., here the residence and capital of Roslach, a small state in the Germany of the ancien regime that would not have been out of place in one of Kotzebue's dramas. Lee explores the provincial atmosphere of the place by adding a subplot about the Count of Roslach, at the end of the play revealed to be the nameless 'Hungarian' (74), and his adulterous wife, who has 'vanished' (3) (she does not appear on the stage) and is the subject of the town gossip.

Lee even parodies her 'German' setting, the genre she is writing in and the clichés associated with it⁴⁵ by letting one character narrate the beginning of Kruitznier's story in the style of a mock German romance:

Iden.: You shall have it in the very style of a modern German romance. [*Assumes a tone of ludicrous solemnity.*] During the horrors of a long and gloomy evening, on the 23rd of February last, when the swelling clouds discharged their torrents to the earth [...] a man, his wife and child arrived [...] (4)

Aiming to fulfil the expectations her audience might have from a 'German drama', Lee heightens the story's sentimental aspects. While in 'Kruitznier' Siegendorf's death is narrated matter-of-factly at the end of the Tale, in the play he is dramatically killed by the revelation of Conrad's crime and dies on the stage (75 f). The focus on sentimentality is even more evident in the representation of Conrad. Unlike both her original character and Byron's Ulric, he feels guilty and remorseful for the murder of Stralenheim, and at the end of the play 'voluntarily surrender[s] [his] sabre' to the Hungarian to atone for his deeds and lost honour. (75) The character's vague claim in 'Kruitznier' that his 'soul has [not] been unmoved' (353) by the Hungarian's narration (which Byron uses almost verbatim; V, 1, 429-433) is here transformed and intensified into a statement of genuine remorse:

⁴⁵ The introduction of comical elements and characters from everyday life is typical for Romantic melodramas. See Bratton, 'Romantic Melodrama', p. 125.

Con.: [...] Look around, Sir! Is there within your observation a man from whose cheek the flush of youth and hope hath suddenly and strangely fled? – whose once open and careless brow is dark and gloomy? – whose soul shuns all society? [...]
 (71 f) Can I live, Sir? Or thus tainted, ought I? The hour, the place, the act - [...]
 (73)

Nineteenth-century theatre historian John Genest, author of a comprehensive chronology of all plays acted at Covent Garden and Drury Lane between 1660 and 1830, appreciated Lee's focus on remorse and sensibility. Although overall he called Byron's play superior, 'particularly in point of language'⁴⁶, he considered *The Three Strangers* psychologically more convincing. In particular, he thought Lee's remorseful Conrad 'a more natural character than the young man in Werner', whose actions he described as inconsistent and 'quite out of nature'.⁴⁷

Another strategy to raise her audience's interest is Lee's use of intertextual references to well-known scenes from other popular plays, in this case particularly to *Macbeth* (possibly inspired by Lee's own motto to *The Canterbury Tales*).⁴⁸ When Krutzner returns to his apartment after he has stolen Stralenheim's gold, Lee includes a scene immediately recognizable to a frequent theatre-goer of her time as an allusion to Shakespeare's tragedy. Like *Macbeth*, Krutzner returns to his wife's chamber in the night after having committed his crime, and in the dark, Josephine, like Lady *Macbeth*, recognizes her husband:

Jos.: [...] Hark! Doubtless I now hear a step; it sounds from that apartment; it is –
 it must be he. [...] My husband! [Krutzner enters, his hand within his breast]

⁴⁶ Genest, *Account*, p. 346f.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 346f; p. 139.

⁴⁸ Interestingly, G. Wilson Knight provides a detailed discussion of the intertextual relations between *Macbeth* and Byron's *Werner*, without however considering 'Krutzner' and Lee's *Macbeth* reception. See G. Wilson Knight, *Byron and Shakespeare* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 19-184.

Kruitz.: Approach me not. I carry a scorpion here that drinks *my* life-blood, and may do yours.

Jos.: What mean you? Wherefore are you so pale? [...] What hideous and baleful thing is it that you thus hide in your bosom? (34)

Although the preceding act closes with Kruitzner's exit from the sleeping Stralenheim's chamber (33), thus making clear that his crime is theft rather than the murder of the rival claimant to his title, the allusion, enhanced by his rhetorical question whether 'the deed that is past [may] be undone'⁴⁹ (35), gives the dialogue a particular poignancy. It stresses both Josephine's virtuous character (implicitly showing the contrast to Lady Macbeth) and the Siegendorf men's decline into a criminal career, and hints at Stralenheim's later violent end.

Apart from Genest's comments, to my knowledge *The Three Strangers* has not received much critical attention. Two older studies, which compare *Werner* to 'Kruitzner' and *The Three Strangers* respectively merely attempt to show the superiority of Byron's literary style, in order to 'save' *Werner* from negative criticism, and do not discuss the play's appropriations and achievements on their own terms.⁵⁰ Significantly, Helene Richter, writing in 1911, while she does not discuss the play itself, still emphasises that Lee refused to let Byron's adaptation 'inhibit' her ('einschüchtern'), and wrote *The Three Strangers* in reaction to his version.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Compare Lady Macbeth: 'What's done cannot be undone' (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V, 1, 53).

⁵⁰ Stöhsel, *Byron's Trauerspiel*, pp. 10-19, pp. 82-86 (Stöhsel names his study 'eine Rettung', 'a rescue'), Kluge, *Byron's Werner*, pp. 19-48.

⁵¹ Richter, *Geschichte der Englischen Romantik* 1, p. 276.

While *The Three Strangers* only ran for a few days in the winter of 1825, *Werner*, notwithstanding that Byron's repeatedly claimed it was not written for the stage, in different abridged versions, was immensely successful and popular both in England and the United States throughout the nineteenth century.⁵² The main character became a very famous part for William Charles Macready (1793-1873)⁵³, well-known Shakespearean actor and theatrical manager, who produced the drama in 1830. Macready's version, featuring himself as Werner, premiered at the Theatre Royal in Bristol on 25 January, and was first shown in London at Drury Lane on 15 December 1830⁵⁴, where it became an immediate success and received 17 performances in the 1830/1831 season.⁵⁵ Macready continued to play the character in Britain and the States throughout his career for more than twenty years.⁵⁶

For his stage version, Macready radically shortened Byron's text, and cut about 30% of the text⁵⁷, shortening or omitting soliloquies and longer monologues, thus stressing the play's dialogical and 'dramatic' aspect.⁵⁸ The drama's success in the theatre has sometimes been attributed not to Byron, but to Macready as the 'creator' of Werner as a stage hero.⁵⁹ Later acting versions in the nineteenth century continued to be based on his promptbook.⁶⁰

⁵² For *Werner's* stage history in the nineteenth century see Howell, *Byron Tonight*, pp. 143-168; Helen Damico, 'The Stage History of *Werner*', *Nineteenth-Century Theatre Research* 3 (1975), pp. 63-81; Taborski, *Theatre*, pp. 229-256; pp. 264-274, Manning, *Byron and the Stage*, pp. 284-293; Motter, 'Byron's *Werner* Re-estimated', pp. 248-257.

⁵³ For Macready's biography and career see: Alan S. Downer, *The Eminent Tragedian William Charles Macready* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966); J. C. Trewin, *Mr. Macready: a Nineteenth-Century Tragedian and his Theatre* (London et al.: Harrap, 1955).

⁵⁴ Damico, 'Stage History', pp. 65-69. For the play's first performance see also Kathleen Barker, 'The First English Performance of Byron's *Werner*', *Modern Philology* 66 (1969), pp. 342-344.

⁵⁵ Taborski, *Theatre*, p. 233.

⁵⁶ The last performance was at Haymarket Theatre, London, on January 23, 1851 (see Howell, *Byron Tonight*, p. 161).

⁵⁷ Byron's original drama has 3219 lines; Macready shortened it to 1940 lines (Howell, *Byron Tonight*, p. 223).

⁵⁸ Howell, *Byron Tonight*, p. 149. The 1830 promptbook edited by Spevack is the original one and the oldest to be preserved. Several later versions exist, some of them with more extensive stage directions and sketches, but only minor differences to Macready's original revisions of Byron's text itself.

⁵⁹ Damico quotes an unidentified contemporary newspaper review that argues that Byron lacked the 'trickery' to write a stageable play, and praises Macready's achievement (Damico, 'Stage History', p. 69; p. 81 n. 16).

Howell's chapter on *Werner* is entitled 'Macready Creates a Hero' (Howell, *Byron Tonight*, p. 143; p. 147).

⁶⁰ Howell, *Byron Tonight*, pp. 163-167; pp. 213-223. Howell discusses the alterations made by Henry Irving and Frank Marshall for their acting version.

Macready admired Byron's poetry, but was less convinced about his achievements as a playwright. In general, he did not consider poets to be good dramatists: 'Never let it be said that a poet knows best how his scenes should be acted; he knows nothing about it at least he has no power of conveying a shadow of an idea of a meaning!' ⁶¹ He described the experimental *Manfred* as 'not a monodrame, but a monologue'.⁶² Although, encouraged by the enduring success of *Werner*, he adapted and produced *Sardanapalus* (1834; Drury Lane), *The Two Foscari* (1838; Covent Garden) and *Marino Faliero* (1842; Drury Lane)⁶³, he found Byron's neoclassical tragedies 'passionless, [...] devoid of action'⁶⁴ and lacking in dramatic quality. In his *Diaries*, he repeatedly praised their poetic language, but doubted they could succeed on the stage.⁶⁵ Apparently, he had no such reservations about *Werner*, which he appropriated comparatively early in his long career. The play had the ingredients the audience expected from a 'German drama', and Byron's name, of course, guaranteed to attract public attention.

Macready increased both the story's sentimental and sensational elements. Thus, he heightened the suspense about the identity of Stralenheim's murderer by making Werner a suspect for the audience.⁶⁶ Several of his alterations increase the parallels between his stage version and Lee's *The Three Strangers*. Like Lee's adaptation, Macready's *Werner* promptbook does not close with the main character's emotional breakdown and despair, but with his death immediately before the final curtain.⁶⁷

⁶¹ William Charles Macready, *The Diaries of William Charles Macready 1833-1851*, 2 vols., ed. William Toynbee (New York, London: Benjamin Blom, 1912, repr. 1969), II, p. 375.

⁶² *Ibid.*, I, p. 165.

⁶³ Howell, *Byron Tonight*, p. 64; p. 126; p. 35.

⁶⁴ Macready on *Sardanapalus*, *Diaries I*, p. 51.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, e. g. I, p. 124; p. 234; p. 251.

⁶⁶ See also Marvin Spevack, 'Introduction', in Byron and Macready, *Acting Version*, pp. VII- XXXIV, here: p. XXV. Spevack provides a detailed account of the alterations made by Macready.

⁶⁷ Byron and Macready, *Acting Version*, p. 188; Lee, *Three Strangers*, p. 76.

Thus, in Macready's version, the family constellation of the Siegendorfs is much closer to the conventions of the 'sentimental' genre than in Byron's original play. As Martin Spevack has shown in his introduction to Macready's promptbook, the emphasis here is not on Werner's innate disposition for melancholy, but on his emotional suffering for the loss of his son and his physical weakness and decay⁶⁸ (features also stressed both in Lee's Tale and drama⁶⁹), which are also reflected in Werner's surroundings. Macready's stage direction lavishly describes the 'decayed old Palace' mentioned by Byron: 'the apartments [...] should convey the idea of long desertion & extreme wretchedness, the rotting tapestry hanging in tatters from the walls [...]'.⁷⁰ Appropriately, Macready's Werner, like Lee's Siegendorf both in the Tale and drama, never doubts his son's innocence (his comments on his Ulric's emotional coldness are cut⁷¹) and is killed by the revelation of his deed.⁷² Thus, Macready's version both stresses the contrast between Werner's age and physical decline and Ulric's youth and vigour, and foregrounds the importance of family affections that are central for melodramas and 'sentimental comedies'.⁷³

Given the parallels between Macready's acting version and 'Kruitznier', it is interesting to note that Macready not only knew Lee's original story, but actually preferred it to Byron's adaptation. In a letter to his friend John Greaves he described it as 'superior to the play – a powerful picture of human weakness, its crime and virtue.'⁷⁴ Margaret Howell mentions Macready's estimation of 'Kruitznier' and concedes that his alterations and changes

⁶⁸ Spevack, 'Introduction', XXIII.

⁶⁹ See also Howell, *Byron Tonight*, p. 150.

⁷⁰ See Byron and Macready, *Acting Version*, p. 4. As a director, Macready favoured such exact and comprehensive stage directions, as they enabled him to shorten or cut descriptive passages in the spoken text itself (Downer, *Macready*, p. 231).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, e. g. p. 146 (IV, i, 363-365); p. 148 (IV, i, 416-421).

⁷² Byron and Macready, *Acting Version*, pp. 179-188.

⁷³ For Macready's alterations and his rewriting of *Werner* as a melodrama see also Stabler, *Burke to Byron*, pp. 260-262. However, Stabler does not consider the impact 'Kruitznier' or *The Three Strangers* had on Macready's stage version.

⁷⁴ Letter to John Greaves, 1 February 1830, in the Folger Shakespeare Library, quoted from: Howell, *Byron Tonight*, p. 148 f; Downer, *Macready*, p. 123.

of emphasis could partly be based on the novella.⁷⁵ However, to my knowledge, hitherto Lee's impact on his stage version has not been analysed in detail.

Margaret Howell suggests that Macready's preference for 'Kruitznér' was caused by the story's decidedly 'moral' quality.⁷⁶ Spevack equally stresses the central importance of religious and 'moral' values both for Macready's stage rewritings and his personal life.⁷⁷ Indeed, while Conrad in 'Kruitznér' dies as a bandit, killed by an 'Austrian hussar', Byron, not intent on writing a 'moral' play, does not show what becomes of Ulric; in Macready's promptbook, the 'Hungarian' Gabor has brought along 'two Officers of Justice', and Ulric is arrested and handed over to the authorities.⁷⁸

However, Macready clearly valued Lee not only because he considered her work morally superior to Byron's, but he also admired her talent as a dramatist. Significantly, almost all of the dialogue passages Byron had taken from 'Kruitznér' are virtually left unchanged in his promptbook.⁷⁹ Where Macready digresses from them, it is precisely for 'moral' considerations. Macready eliminates all ambiguous or redeeming features of the criminal Ulric that Byron had adapted from Lee, and transforms him into a clear-cut villain. Thus, he cuts Ulric's claim to have been 'moved' by Gabor's narrative⁸⁰ as well as the passage in which Gabor describes him as a fascinating 'Byronic' bandit captain.⁸¹

Interestingly, the introduction to the American *Werner* edition in the *French's Standard Drama* series (mid-nineteenth-century), not primarily based on Byron's original text

⁷⁵ Howell, *Byron Tonight*, p. 150.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 148

⁷⁷ Spevack, 'Introduction', pp. XIX-XXI.

⁷⁸ Byron and Macready, *Acting Version*, p. 185.

⁷⁹ 1. Lee, 'Kruitznér', pp. 183-188/ Byron, *Werner*, II, 2, 77-149/ Byron and Macready, *Acting Version* pp. 69-72 – 2. 'Kruitznér', pp. 248-253/ *Werner*, III, 4, 29-41; 49-67/ *Acting Version* pp. 112-118 – 3. 'Kruitznér', pp. 319-323/ *Werner*, V, 1, 149-172/ *Acting Version* pp. 165-167 – 4. 'Kruitznér', pp. 323-326/ *Werner*, V, 1, 186-208/ *Acting Version* p. 168 f (cut: V, 1, 187-191; 195-202) – 5. 'Kruitznér', pp. 351-355/ *Werner*, V, 1, 409-467/ *Acting Version* pp. 179-181 (cut: V, 1, 429-433; 455 f; 450-453; 460-463).

⁸⁰ 'Kruitznér', p. 353/ *Werner*, V, 1, 429-433/ *Acting Version* p. 180.

⁸¹ 'Kruitznér', pp. 329-331/ *Werner*, V, 1, 246-268/ *Acting Version* p. 171 f.

but on Macready's acting version⁸², give particular praise to the dramatic quality of Lee's story. Although the introduction mentions the 'added graces'⁸³ in Byron's adaptation, it emphasizes his debt to her: 'Lord Byron borrowed the entire plot from Miss Lee's 'Canterbury Tales', and the noble author has not disdained to avail himself for material alone, but in several instances, he has even copied Miss Lee's thoughts and language ... [...]'⁸⁴ To illustrate the point, the author quotes Werner's 'celebrated speech' to Ulric in which he justifies his robbery of Stralenheim's gold⁸⁵ alongside Siegendorf's respective speech to Conrad⁸⁶ from which it is largely taken.⁸⁷

Although he does not mention it in his diaries or correspondence, there is also some evidence suggesting that Macready may have been directly inspired by *The Three Strangers*. Spevack has pointed out that Macready implicitly makes Werner a suspect of murder both for Josephine and the audience by not letting him show her his bloodless knife, as he does in Byron, but only the stolen gold.⁸⁸ Although the passage is comparatively less suspenseful, as Krutzner has left the sleeping Stralenheim at the end of the preceding act (33), this is also the case in *The Three Strangers* (34). Additionally, in both Lee and Macready, the Hungarian/Gabor not only discloses the identity of Stralenheim's murderer, but also has the 'villain' Conrad/Ulric suitably arrested for his crime.⁸⁹

⁸² George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Werner. A Tragedy. In Five Acts. With the Stage Business, Cast of Characters, Costumes, Relative Positions etc.*, *French's Standard Drama* LXVIII (New York: Samuel French, nd). Macready later used this edition as a basis for another promptbook with more extensive stage direction.

⁸³ Anon., 'Editorial Introduction', in Byron, *Werner. French's Standard Drama*, pp. iii-v, here: p. v.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. iv.

⁸⁵ Byron, *Werner*, II, 2, 100-123/ Byron and Macready, *Acting Version*, p. 70 f.

⁸⁶ Lee, 'Krutzner', p. 186 f.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. iv f.

⁸⁸ Byron and Macready, *Acting Version*, p. 45; Spevack, 'Introduction', p. XXV.

⁸⁹ By cutting Ulric's claim of remorse (Byron, *Werner*, V, 1, 429-433/ Byron and Macready, *Acting Version* p. 180), Macready has, however, preserved and even increased Ulric's lack of emotions and villainous quality, whereas in Lee's 'sentimental' rewriting, the remorseful Conrad voluntarily 'surrenders' himself to the Hungarian (Lee, *Three Strangers*, p. 75).

Most importantly, Macready supplied a new ending very reminiscent of the conclusion to *The Three Strangers*, in which his appropriation of Byron's text as a 'sentimental drama' is particularly evident. It has the dying Werner announce his own approaching death, after having discovered his son to be a murderer, Josephine cry out in horror for her husband, and Werner forgives his son the moment before he dies (appropriately, his remark that Josephine and he should have remained childless, is cut by Macready).⁹⁰ Like Lee's play ('My son! My son!'; 76) Macready's prompt book closes with the dying hero calling out for his son ('Ulric – Ulric!'; 188). The stress is not on the decline of a dynasty or 'race', but on family affections which triumph over sin and guilt, and the tragedy that was 'not intended nor in any way adapted' for performance is appropriated as a commercial melodrama.

⁹⁰ Damico also sees the new ending as a subversion of the tragic ending in Byron's play, as Macready's Werner is spared the continued suffering as a witness of the fall of his family (Damico, 'Stage History', p. 67).

CONCLUSION

This survey of 'The German's Tale' and its various incarnations has shown the complexity of the Byron/Lee relationship and Lee's importance for the genesis of *Werner* as well as for the critical and theatrical history of Romantic literature. Through her project in *The Canterbury Tales*, Lee alludes to the radical and anti-aristocratic discourses of the late eighteenth century and positions herself as an original writer. *Werner* refers back to the political debates of the 1790s and early 1800s, but also updates the story's political dimension. Critical reactions to Byron's play illustrate both the epoch's and later critics' prejudices towards adaptation as well as the association between adaptation and women writers. Lee's advertisement to her own theatrical adaptation is an extremely interesting attempt to reclaim her story, and offers an alternative view on the stage playwright as an original author. Her play itself has interesting parallels to Macready's rewriting of *Werner*, which illustrate the generic requirements of 'sentimental drama', and implicitly, also Byron's deliberate digression from such generic constraints.

Following Lee's original 'Kruitzner' through its adaptation history, I have looked at appropriations and changes in plot elements, but also at the ways in which stories change their meaning and connotations as they move through different social and political context. Significantly, in its different incarnations, Lee's story itself moved on the margins between genres, navigating between the Gothic, pedagogical drama, historical drama and melodrama. Thus, it illustrates the complex intersections and reciprocal influences between literary genres, as well as the fluid quality of genre boundaries. At the same time, the reception history of 'Kruitzner' reflects the intertextual quality of literature, and the way in which the production

of literary texts is an ongoing process of appropriation, in which literary texts are rewritten and reinvented according to the author's political and social agenda.

My study has shown the close affinities and links between experimental 'closet drama' and aristocratic elite culture. The Duchess of Devonshire's example explores both the possibilities open to and the constraints experienced by elite women in such different fields as literature, theatre and politics, and the strategies they used to position themselves in the public sphere without offending the social codes of their class. For Byron, my discussion illustrates how his concept of mental theatre and his complex and often contradictory attitude towards stage performances are informed both by his focus on dramatic experiment and his rank and social position. The contrast between the circumstances of production of the first *Werner* draft and the later completed drama shows how his involvement with stage playwriting is also linked to with his role as an aristocratic patron, which, because of his position as a major writer himself, has seldom been considered in connection to his relationship with the literary world.

It is, perhaps, not incidental that the rediscovery and reevaluation of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women writers such as Harriet Lee has coincided with the emergence of the study of Romantic drama as a serious academic field. Lee's reclaiming of her story after its appropriation by Byron is a striking illustration of the ongoing reclaiming of the history of Romantic theatre, literature and culture in their complexity, considering aspects of gender and class as well as the complex relation between cultural and political history.

My thesis participates in the ongoing debates on Romantic views on creativity and originality; on the dynamics between author, class and literary genre; on social, political and gendered aspects of adaptation; and on the rich field of cross-cultural influences in the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and their political implications. It also explores the status of Romantic drama on the margins between popular and elite culture, between the private and public spheres and between reading and performance. Ultimately, my study thus contributes to the investigation of the meaning and cultural significance of literary appropriation.

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