CHAPTER 1

PIZARRO, 'POLITICAL PROTEUS'

In the spring of 1799 'expectation was on tip-toe' for Sheridan's new play.[1] *Pizarro*, a spectacular five-act tragedy adapted from Kotzebue's *Die Spanier in Peru* (1796), boasted an all-star cast including John Philip Kemble, Sarah Siddons, William Barrymore and Dorothy Jordan; a musical score with accompanying vocal parts especially composed by Michael Kelly; and 'entirely new Scenes, Dresses and Decorations'.[2] In anticipation of 'overflowing' audiences, Drury Lane unbolted its doors as early as three o'clock in the afternoon. Managers correctly predicted that the already well-advertised play, celebrating 'the joint reputation of Sheridan and Kotzebue, and the first dramatic attempt of the former, after an interval of twenty years', would be certain to excite the eager curiosity of metropolitan audiences.[3] While the first performance pointed to the need for 'judicious' alterations and curtailments (in order to cut down the play's excessive running time), reviewers confidently identified its 'purity of moral sentiment' and 'genuine and enthusiastic bursts of heroic patriotism' as 'indisputable claims to the patronage of the Public'.[4] *Pizarro* was played consecutively for the remainder of the season, bringing in revenue that was desperately needed to replenish Drury Lane's depleted coffers.[5] By 1815 the text had already been issued in thirty different editions and *Pizarro* was

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[1] Michael Kelly, *Reminiscences*, ed. Roger Fiske (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 253.

[2] DL Playbill, 24 May 1799 (Garrick Club).

[3] *The Times*, 25 May 1799.

[4] *The Times*, 29 May 1799.

[5] In its first season alone, *Pizarro* brought in £13, 624 9s. 6d. Avery, Hogan, *et al* (eds.), *London Stage 1660–1800*, 'Part 5: 1776–1800', 11: 2097.

secure in its status as a recognised 'favourite' of the patent theatres. It would be frequently staged at Drury Lane, Covent Garden and provincial Theatres Royal until the mid-nineteenth century.

This chapter investigates how and why Sheridan's tragedy about the Spanish conquest of Peru became one the defining narratives of early nineteenth-century Britain. *Pizarro*'s first reviewers were quick to recognise that Sheridan recycled many of his parliamentary speeches for the play's dramatic oratory. William Pitt the Younger, for example, reportedly claimed that there was 'nothing new' in *Pizarro*; that he had 'heard it all long ago in [Sheridan's] speeches at Hastings's trial'.[6] In *The Rhetoric of English India* (1992) Sara Suleri takes this as her cue to explore *Pizarro*'s debts to Sheridan's highly publicised involvement in the impeachment of Warren Hastings, and to examine how Sheridan's management of theatrical sympathies helped re-condition the imperial and humanist concerns expressed in his parliamentary speeches.[7] Julie Carlson has since identified at least five alarms of

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[6] Qtd. by John Loftis in 'Whig Oratory on Stage: Sheridan's *Pizarro*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8.4, (summer 1975), 454–72 (459).

[7] In 1786 Edmund Burke produced twenty-one charges ('of high crimes and misdemesnours') against Warren Hastings, the former governor-general of India. Sheridan, who was responsible for making the case for the fourth charge (i.e. against Hastings' oppressive treatment of the begams of Oudh), delivered a five-and-a-half hour speech on 7 February 1787. This speech won great acclaim and ensured that Sheridan continued to play a central role in the impeachment proceedings. Hastings was formally impeached on 10 May 1787. The prosecution before the House of Lords began on 13 February 1788 and concluded in 1795, when Hastings was acquitted by a large majority. See 'Hastings, Warren (1732–1818)', P.J. Marshall in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, October 2008 <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2167/view/article/12587> [Accessed 17.10.2014]; and Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, 67–71 esp.

invasion in the focal speech delivered by the Peruvian hero, Rolla: 'those sounding between Peru and Spain, India and England, and England and France…the literary invasion of England by Germany in the 1790s and the perpetually immanent invasion of Ireland by England in the same years'.[8] More recently still, David Francis Taylor has written on *Pizarro* as a tragedy that 'recycles the tropes of both the impeachment and 1798 rebellion-propaganda as part of an extended mediation on the powerlessness of the orator in his attempt to inscribe accountability within the apparatus of colonialism, and the inability of eloquence, however applauded, to counter regimes of despotism and torture'.[9] Taylor's analysis of Sheridan's allusions to his own complex political oratory gives due consideration to *Pizarro*'s inflections of both Indian and Irish colonial concerns. But even these nuanced readings interpret the play on an allegorical level prone to overlook *Pizarro*'s specifically Spanish theme and – what is perhaps one of its most fascinating qualities – the play's phenomenal stage success for over sixty years.[10] This chapter argues that *Pizarro* needs to be contextualised both synchronically and diachronically if we are to truly understand its evolution as a 'national' dramatic mainpiece.

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[8] Julie Carlson, 'Trying Sheridan's *Pizarro*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38 (3/4), (fall/winter 1996), 359–78 (362).

[9] Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, 126.

[10] See Myron Matlaw, 'This is Tragedy!!! The History of *Pizarro*', *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 43, (1957), 288–94. Matlaw provides a broad overview of the play's reception in Britain and the United States between 1799 and its last performances (in 1866 and 1874 respectively). He insists, however, that 'a study of the later history of the play does not reveal any relationship between times of political stress and resurgence in the popularity of the play' (290). Matlaw notably neglects to consider how the Peninsular War – the event most likely to challenge British perceptions of Spain – might have affected *Pizarro*'s reception history.

Set in sixteenth-century Peru, Sheridan's play offers a particularly interesting example of how stage geographies interacted with the sites of theatre production in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England. By 1799 the Spaniard was, after all, nothing short of a bugbear in the English imagination. Lingering hostilities associated with Mary Tudor's marriage to Philip II, the Protestant purges, the Spanish Armada and Spain's 'Black Legend' (with its attendant narratives of colonial rapine, superstition and bigotry) ensured that Spain remained associated with strong feelings of political and cultural revulsion.[11] It is no coincidence, then, that the plots of Sheridan's comedies *The Duenna* (1775) and *The Critic* (1779) were also predicated upon anti-Spanish sentiment. Puff's play 'The Spanish Armada' (in *The Critic*) ends unforgettably with a '*flourish of drums*' and an orchestra playing 'Britons Strike Home' and 'Rule Britannia' as the English fleet advance and fire-ships destroy the Spanish squadron.[12] This characteristic hostility to Spain meant that when *Pizarro* premiered in 1799 it was easy for audiences to

[11] *Pizarro* is replete with references to the Black Legend. In 1.1 Pizarro tries to prevent Davilla from killing the Peruvian cacique, Orozembo, whom, he claims, should undergo the pain of torture (1.1, *DW*, 2: 664). The Inquisition makes another grotesque appearance in Elvira's anticipation of the tortures that await her as Pizarro's prisoner (4.3, *DW*, 2: 693). Interestingly, the latter speech is marked for substitution in the Drury Lane promptbook (1799), where a marginal note [here transcribed in italics] replaces Elvira's description of torture with a lover's sentimental narrative: '*Quench these eyes, that so oft – O God! – have hung with love and homage on thy looks! Pierce this dishonour'd bosom which was once thy pillow! – I will bear it all, – for it will all be justice. – But when thou hopest that thy unshrinking ears* may at last be feasted with the music of my cries, I will not utter one shriek, nor groan …'. This rewriting suggests that the play's more violent references to the Black Legend were moderated for stage production. Garrick Club copy of the Drury Lane Promptbook of *Pizarro* (1799), 61.

[12] Sheridan, *The Critic* (3.1), in *DW*, 2: 550

imagine the eponymous villain of the play as Napoleon Bonaparte. For most contemporary reviewers, *Pizarro*'s Gothic scenery and dramatisation of the Black Legend functioned as metaphors for the sublime and destructive figurations of a Europe beset by post-revolutionary anxieties. This chapter remains sensitive to these early responses but also draws attention the ways in which *Pizarro*'s public valence was subsequently affected by other political events, including, notably, the Anglo-Spanish alliance of 1808.

In *The Political Proteus* (1804) – a series of ten letters addressed to Sheridan – William Cobbett underscores *Pizarro*'s shifting significance, interpreting the tragedy's extended run as a counterpart to what he considered the playwright's all-too slippery reputation as a Member of Parliament. Cobbett deconstructs the 'true English feeling' attached to Sheridan and his putatively patriotic drama by juxtaposing the playwright's early and well-known opposition to the war with his seemingly contradictory speeches in response to the 1797 Naval Mutinies and support for the Volunteer Movement after the collapse of the Peace of Amiens.[13] Cobbett's acerbic attack on Sheridan's politics and dramaturgy underscores how, during the course of the Napoleonic Wars, audiences' appreciation of *Pizarro* had been critically conditioned by changing social, economic, political and cultural factors.

The first section of this chapter considers the dangers ascribed to *Pizarro'*s phenomenal popularity and what this might suggest about the relationship between English tastes and contemporary international politics. As the best-known 'Spanish' play of the period, Sheridan's *Pizarro* testifies to the effectiveness of spectacle on a

[13] William Cobbett, *The Political Proteus: A View of the Public Character and Conduct of R.B. Sheridan Esq.* (London, 1804), 68–94.

large-scale, the cult of celebrity actors and the theatre's interest in the affective possibilities of history. Its success was not, however, confined to the stage. The play's popularity spawned various generically broad re-workings of its historical theme. These adaptations were available for mass consumption as competing translations, histories, chapbooks, songs and juvenile dramas. As a result, before the end of its first year of performance, critics had already begun to complain of a *Pizarro* surfeit, expressing anxiety about the play's ideological migration from the boards of the patent theatres to contemporary culture at large.

In this chapter's second section, I examine Sheridan's controversial decision in 1803 to issue Rolla's exhortation against foreign invasion as a stand-alone broadsheet. 'Sheridan's Address to the People: Our King! Our Country! And our God!' (1803) was published on the heels of Robert Emmet's failed Irish rebellion, while Britain resumed its war preparations after Amiens. Sheridan's broadsheet helped reinvigorate the topicality of his play-text. At the same time, however, by extracting Rolla's impassioned speech from its dramatic frame, Sheridan created a new context for the interpretation of the political ideology encoded in his play. Ever suspicious, Cobbett contemptuously derided 'Sheridan's Address' as 'typographical harlotry', 'stuck up on every dead wall, rotten post, and dirty corner in the metropolis'.[14] His language resonates, interestingly, with the accusations levelled against the play by its many conservative critics, who described *Pizarro*'s popularity as a 'contagion' – and whose fears that its message of popular resistance and liberation could spread indiscriminately seemed only exacerbated by the newfound textual autonomy granted to Rolla's speech. In the second, crucial phase of the war against Napoleon, the relationship between Sheridan's Spanish-themed

[14] Cobbett, *Political Proteus*, 80.

drama and the society in which it was performed remained troublesomely problematic.

Between 1808 and 1814, as explored in the final section of this chapter, *Pizarro* was once again invested with fresh political resonance. Napoleon's attempted invasion of Spain, the heroic resistance put up by the *madrileños* in the *dos de mayo* rebellion, the spread of revolution across the Spanish provinces and the cementing of the Anglo-Spanish alliance meant that by June 1808, Iberian politics had taken a strong hold of British sympathies.[15] Sheridan himself advocated for the Peninsular cause when he introduced the affairs of Spain to the House of Commons.[16] The Foreign Secretary, George Canning, responded favourably: recognizing that 'no interest could be so purely British as Spanish success', Canning elaborated upon the need to conquer 'from France the complete integrity of the dominion of Spain in every quarter of the world'.[17] While *Pizarro*'s historicism meant that it was still possible to conflate French aggression with the ambition of the Spanish conquistadores, in the summer of 1808 it became a political imperative to revise the play's damning representation of Spanish imperial malignity. Hitherto a French ally and rival imperial power, Spain was now regarded as a nation actively resisting French expansionism by leading the crusade against Napoleonic tyranny.

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[15] The 'Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Alliance between his Britannic Majesty and his Catholic Majesty, Ferdinand VII' was signed in London on 14 January 1809 by George Canning (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) and Juan Ruiz de Apodaca (named as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of Ferdniand VII). *The Annual Register of a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, For the Year 1809* (London, 1811)

[16] Hansard (House of Commons, HC), 'Parliamentary debates: Affairs of Spain', (15 June 1808), in *The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present time* (London, 1812), 11: 886.

[17] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 11: 892.

With Sheridan's theatrical success and political agenda once again overlapping, it is essential to unravel to what extent his play's negative portrayal of the Spaniards was able to accommodate the turn in national political sympathies.

Pizarro's status as a dramatic stock piece on the Romantic stage provides a valuable opportunity to trace contemporary audiences' critical responses to political change, and to tap into the process by which theatre contributed to the formation of national identities during the Napoleonic Wars. *Pizarro*'s openness to interpretation permits it to be read as a palimpsestic play, whose meanings were constantly negotiated and contested by the complex performative, social and political relations that tied together the Romantic-period stage and state. By supplementing my study of Sheridan's play-text with a range of sources, – including playbills, periodicals, newspapers, popular prints, songs, biographies and literary anecdotes – this chapter situates *Pizarro* within the broader social and cultural discourses that helped define Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. Questions about nationhood, the processes of history and the link between agency and patriotic action, all came under intense scrutiny and revision during this period. Sheridan's *Pizarro* embodies fascinating evidence of how these issues were variously defined, reflected and refracted by the contemporary stage.

Pizarro 1799–1800, the initial reception

Pizarro's first reviewers expeditiously attributed the play's frenzied reception to its political appeal. Setting aside its merits on 'a dramatic point of view', the emphasis was placed, instead, on the techniques by which Sheridan had 'applied the text to

the duties of this Country'.[18] For many, *Pizarro*'s Spanish theme offered a conveniently transparent allegorical rendering of the war against France, which had begun in 1793. As the *True Briton* explained:

> Though the struggle is between SPANIARDS and the PERUVIANS, the author has been impelled by a true sense of the important contest in which we are engaged.[19]

Arguing along the same lines, the *Morning Post* claimed that in *Pizarro* Sheridan was 'pleading at once the Peruvian and the British cause.'[20] The charges of cruelty levelled against Bonaparte for his Egyptian and Syrian campaigns even helped underline his biographical affinities to the upstart tyrant Pizarro.[21] Audiences' fascination for the theatre's new stage designs, Sheridan's fame as a playwright and the vogue for German dramas undoubtedly contributed to the play's box-office appeal, but the play's first reviewers nevertheless agreed that the interest excited by *Pizarro* was, above all, political and patriotic. War, the national character, and the resolution to fight for ideals would, from the outset, define the logic of *Pizarro*, both on stage and off.

The very first performances of Sheridan's Spanish tragedy made it clear, however, that the play's relation to – and command of – public space was controversial. Since its renovation in 1794, Drury Lane had been able to accommodate more than three thousand spectators. The stampede on the opening

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[18] *TB*, 30 May 1799.

[19] *TB*, 30 May 1799.

[20] *MP*, 27 May 1799.

[21] This association pre-dated the play's premiere. See, for example, the account of the Egyptian expedition published in *The London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 10 December 1798.

night of *Pizarro* was, notwithstanding, quite exceptional, even by contemporary standards. Thousands of expectant theatregoers were disappointed. 'The conflict' between those who had secured seats and those turned away was 'extremely distressing':

> Ladies of the first fashion, in full dress, were fainting; some lost a shoe, others a hat; the stair-case windows were broken; the door-keepers could not resist the torrent, and many went in without paying; the outside of the doors were surrounded by hundreds who dared not enter, and many went away who had places rather than encounter the crowd.[22]

This description from the *Morning Post* divides Drury Lane's socially heterogeneous crowd into villains and victims, defining the scramble for admittance as a theatrical event in its own right. Yet, the scene, however animated, was ultimately pathetic rather than bathetic. The decidedly unembarrassed, who opportunistically made their entrance without paying, and the consequently dishevelled ladies of fashion, constituted nothing less than a microcosm of social chaos. With panicked crowds rendering the check of theatrical tickets wholly redundant, managers' traditional attempts at social segregation in terms of the theatre's physical space were woefully ineffectual. On its opening night, *Pizarro'*s uncontainable popularity was tinged with a *frisson* as frightening as it was exciting.

Unsurprisingly, the popular agitation surrounding *Pizarro* resulted in several attempts to control the play's public meaning(s). Consider, for instance, the contemporary newspapers that made it their cultural duty to remark on the celebrity figures who lent their patronage to Sheridan's play: readers were variously informed that the radical Horne Tooke attended an early performance on 20 June 1799, that

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[22] *MP*, 25 May 1799.

Lord Nelson watched the play in early December the following year, and that even William Wilberforce, who had not been to the theatre for twenty years, seemed very satisfied with it.[23] Most illustrious of all *Pizarro*'s patrons was the Royal Family, who watched the play on 5 June 1799 during its first season, and ordered a command performance in 1804. Reporting on the Royal Family's first attendance at Drury Lane after an absence of four years, the *Morning Post* established an explicit comparison between the royal visit and the play's opening night:

> The difficulties of entering the galleries and pit were…excessive; the crowd was dreadful; several Ladies fainted, and one falling down near the door, was much bruised. On opening the box doors, the crowd was as great as on the first night of *Pizarro*; the railing was burst off; and the windows, which had been repaired, were again broken.[24]

On both occasions, fashionable ladies were injured by the crowds, and the theatre itself damaged (through broken windows, most notably). The crucial difference was that on the evening of the Royal Family's attendance, audiences' impatience to secure the theatrical terrain could be figured as a sign of their loyalty to George III, rather than a merely voyeuristic curiosity for *Pizarro*.

The *True Briton* reported that while '*Pizarro* drew from the Audience great applause throughout' language could do scant justice to 'the rapturous bursts of loyalty and patriotism that arose on the delivery of those passages which expressed an attachment to a beloved Monarch'.[25] Sheridan, who personally escorted the Royal Family to their seats, was quick to exploit the patriotism already ascribed to

[23] On Nelson's visit to the theatre see *Lloyd's Evening Post* 24–26 November 1800; for Wilberforce's reaction to *Pizarro* see *MP*, 31 May 1799.

[24] *MP*, 6 June 1799.

[25] *TB*, 6 June 1799.

Pizarro by the contemporary press.[26] In this climate, even the spring flowers and shrubs that had been used to decorate the royal box could be seen to strategically evoke the Peruvian kingdom's aromatic fruits and plants, relating George III to the play's celebrated rhetoric. For the reviewer from the *True Briton*, at least, the 'electric force' operating within the auditorium constituted decisive proof 'that our excellent Monarch reigns in the hearts of his People'.[27]

On the evening of the royal performance, the Drury Lane chorus, with the assistance of the Duke of York's band, performed 'God Save the King' to an ebullient, patriotically enraptured auditorium. Audiences also responded with animation to the play's celebrated second act, which saw John Philip Kemble (who played the part of the Peruvian hero, Rolla) deliver a morale-boosting speech to the native soldiers as they prepared to defend their homeland against the Spanish armies. The *True Briton* was not alone in seizing this scene as the affective climax to both the drama and the Royal Family's response. As *Lloyd's Evening Post* observed:

> His Majesty appeared peculiarly gratified with the noble and animated address of *Rolla* to the Peruvians, in support of their just rights as an independent and happy people, against the lawless encroachments and savage ambition of foreign Invaders.[28]

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[26] Sheridan's ceremonious escort of the Royal Family was caricatured in many contemporary prints. See Isaac Cruikshank's *The Return from Pizarro* (5 June 1799); *Pizarro a New Play, or the Drury Lane Masquerade*, published by S.W. Fores (11 June 1799); and William Holland's *Returning from Pizarro!!* (June 1799).

[27] *TB*, 6 June 1799.

[28] *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 5–7 June 1799 (540).

Most reviewers drew attention to the applause attendant upon Rolla's stirring speech on *Pizarro*'s opening night.[29] It is likely, therefore, that it was during this high point of the royal performance that 'the King wept in the second Act', as related by the *Morning Post*.[30] This observation not only underscored the king's sympathetic attachment to the stage narrative, but also effectively positioned George III within the play's framework of heroic action, allowing the monarch to be identified with Rolla, 'the first and best of heroes' (2.1, *DW*, 2: 667), as much as Ataliba, the Peruvian king.

At the end of Act 2 scene 2 Ataliba draws his sword and leads his soldiers into battle. With paternal care, he addresses them as 'my brethren, my sons, my friends' (2.2, *DW*, 2: 670), orders Alonzo and Rolla to assume their strategic positions, and takes responsibility for leading the main assault: 'strait [*sic*] forwards will I march to meet them, and fight until I see my people saved, or they behold their Monarch fall' (2.2, *DW*, 2: 671). But in the lead up to this war cry Ataliba significantly defers his main address to the Peruvian warriors in order to allow Rolla to 'animate' their spirits (2.2, *DW*, 2: 669). Rolla's speech (recognised as one of Sheridan's original contributions to Kotzebue's text)[31] was a celebrated 'point' in the play, provoking wild bursts of applause and sentimental tears in the auditorium night after night.[32]

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[29] *Evening Mail*, 24–27 May 1799; *The Morning Herald*, 25 May 1799; *The Oracle*, 25 May 1799.

[30] *MP*, 6 June 1799.

[31] Rolla's harangue – an obvious borrowing from Sheridan's parliamentary oratory – was considered critical to the 'unique' character of his adaptation. See, for instance, [Stuart Moncrieff Thriepland], *Letters Respecting the Performances at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1800), 246.

[32] As Peter Thompson explains, 'points' were 'those passages of a play that could be enlivened by eye-catching stage business, much of it traditional, and for which the actor would be rewarded by

As Thomas Moore observed, Kemble's success in Act 2 was further heightened by the fact that Rolla's speech was indebted to not only Sheridan's oratory during the Warren Hastings Trial, but also his response to 'The King's Message respecting the Designs of the Enemy' (20 April 1798).[33] These echoes would have permitted George III to identify in Rolla's speech Sheridan's public support for his own address to the nation at a time of possible invasion. Indeed, if the King truly 'wept in the second Act', then his response would not have been out of place: manly tears were common in contemporary parliamentary culture (especially when the vindication of personal character was at stake), and would certainly have been in line with popular responses to the play from within the auditorium at large.[34]

'George III had every reason to be happy with *Pizarro*, particularly with its portrayal of kingship', writes Gillian Russell, for whom the characterisation of Ataliba is dependent upon the 'benevolent, paternalistic relationship to his people … which George III had himself done much to promote'.[35] While I largely agree with this interpretation, I would nevertheless like to complicate Russell's reading of *Pizarro* by suggesting that the force of Rolla's key speech is likely to have encouraged George III to identify (however wishfully) with the inspirational Rolla,

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ritually repeated rounds of applause'. See 'Acting and actors from Garrick to Kean', in Moody and O'Quinn (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to British Theatre*, 12–13.

[33] Qtd. by Cecil Price, 'Introduction' to *Pizarro*, in *DW*, 2: 639.

[34] Christopher Reid, 'Debating Robert Clive: eloquence and identification in the eighteenth-century House of Commons'. Paper presented at the Romantic Realignments seminar series, University of Oxford, 25 February 2010.

[35] Russell, *Theatres of War*, 57.

rather than the benign but from an early stage relatively passive Ataliba.[36] Even more decisive than the points of contact between Rolla's speech and Sheridan's response to the 'King's Message Respecting the Designs of the Enemy', is the fact that in *Pizarro* heroic action is patterned, specifically, on Rolla, the war hero. After Ataliba is injured, it is Rolla who leads the charge against the Spanish armies and wins the advantage; in Act 4 Rolla saves Alonzo from Spanish imprisonment; and finally, while Ataliba expresses his frustration at being unable to soothe Cora's despair, he is cut short by Rolla's arrival with Fernando (5.2, *DW*, 2: 700). At this point, Rolla appears '*bleeding*', returns Cora and Alonzo's missing child, and – in an unique invention of Sheridan's – dies on stage soon after.[37]

Rolla's heroism is powerfully reinforced by the play's stage directions, but narration also exercises a crucial role. This occurs most notably at the end of the second act, when a young boy excitedly relates Rolla's actions to his blind grandfather:

BOY […] [*Ascends a rock, and from thence into the tree*] O – now I see them – now –yes – and the Spaniards turning by the steep.

O.MAN Rolla follows them?

BOY He does – he does – he moves like an arrow! – now he waves his arm to our soldiers – [*Report of cannon heard.*] Now there is fire and smoke.

[36] On George III's self-styling as king, see Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty, and the British Nation 1760–1820', *Past and Present* 102.1, (1984), 94–129.

[37] In Kotzebue's play, Rolla's death occurs off stage, narrated in a soldier's report to Pizarro (5.6). See *Pizarro; the Spaniards in Peru; or, the Death of Rolla. A Tragedy in Five Acts: by Augustus von Kotzebue*, transl. Anne Plumptre. 2nd ed. (London, 1799), 89.

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O.MAN Seest thou the King?

BOY Yes – Rolla is near him! His sword sheds fire as he strikes!

(2.4, *DW*, 2: 674–5)

Ataliba may be present, but it is Rolla who saves the day. Indeed, even Pizarro admires Rolla's actions. In Act 5, as he orders his soldiers to pursue him, Pizarro watches Rolla's escape with fascination: 'With what fury he defends himself! – Ha! – he fells them to the ground – and now –' (5.2, *DW*, 2: 699). As in the boy's report to his grandfather, punctuation by dashes imparts the excitement inspired by Rolla's actions while simultaneously suggesting the difficulty of narrating the hero's fast, spirited exertions. Throughout the play, the Peruvian is depicted as energetic, spontaneous and triumphant. His very first line, which occurs half off stage, represents him as the leader *par excellence*, with trumpets announcing Rolla's entrance as he commands the Peruvian soldiers to assume their positions (2.1, *DW*, 2: 667). In the words of the *True Briton*, Drury Lane that night delivered 'a triumph of Loyalty'.[38] The play's characterisation and patterning of action nonetheless mutually suggest that *Pizarro*'s loyalism rested less on its depiction of kingship than on the heroic agency inspired by the nation's chosen leaders – not necessarily royal.

Strong ideological investment in the mobilising power of heroic agency defined *Pizarro* as, first and foremost, a performative text. The play's readers and spectators were bound by markedly different perceptual limitations, as underscored

[38] *TB*, 6 June 1799.

by the anonymous 1799 publication *A Critique of the Tragedy of Pizarro*. In an attempt to underline *Pizarro*'s numerous inconsistencies, the *Critique* focuses significantly on how the play's meanings in the closet diverge from those fostered by its Drury Lane stagings: 'stripping it of the pomp of procession, the glitter of scenery and the noise of music', 'unprejudiced by the voice of the multitude' and 'unawed by the authority of a name', the author of the *Critique* deconstructs the play's performative agency.[39] This dismissal of *Pizarro*'s 'stage-worthiness' ironically identifies the very characteristics that seem to have caused the greatest anxiety about the political and institutional uses to which Sheridan's text could be put.

The contemporary concern over performativity was not, of course, exclusive to *Pizarro*. 'Porta', the author of a two-part essay for the *Monthly Mirror* entitled 'Defence of the Stage', claimed that 'in a theatre, a moral sentiment, well written and delivered, forces its way to the bosoms of an audience, which, elsewhere, would never be heard' (imagined, in fact, 'most irreligiously asleep' in a church).[40] But even this celebration of the theatre as 'one great source of public instruction' relies, notably, on the proper expression and delivery of 'moral' sentiments. These qualifications are best understood with reference to the next issue of the *Monthly Mirror*, which included a review of Joanna Baillie's *A Series of Plays in which it is attempted to delineate the Stronger Passions of the Mind. Each passion being the*

[39] *A Critique of the Tragedy of 'Pizarro'* (London, 1799), 5.

[40] *MM*, January 1801, 11: 45. The first part of the essay was published in the December 1800 issue of the *MM*, 389–90. Gillian Perry suggests that 'Porta' may have been the pen name of the French actress Hyppolite Clarion, who was writing for the *MM* in 1800 and 1801. *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theater 1768–1820* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), 209.

subject of a tragedy and comedy (1798). Revealingly, the reviewer for the *Mirror* considered Baillie's design 'more philosophical than practical' because audiences – 'a large assembly of people, indiscriminately collected' – 'have neither time, inclination, nor capacity to enter minutely into discriminations of character'.[41] As Elaine Hadley explains, 'theatres had become the primary public location where all kinds of people could be legally heard and where they could be "dramatized" as contentious voices in public debate. In a theater, if not in a parliamentary election, these people could "vote" their pleasure'.[42] This helps explain why the author of the *Critique* – alarmed by *Pizarro*'s extreme popularity, audiences' predilection for spectacle and Sheridan's public renown – betrayed such little confidence in the discriminatory powers of theatre-goers. As the *Critique* acknowledges, inherent to every performance is the potential to dabble in deceit and mislead by seduction. This made Sheridan's political detractors understandably apprehensive about the statesman's capacity to influence the crowds at Drury Lane. To many of the play's conservative reviewers, *Pizarro*'s fantasy of national liberation could all too easily morph into a nightmarish image of radical interference.

The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1799 reprints a letter in which its author (a self-styled 'A Lover of Variety') deals with *Pizarro* as a double-edged threat. Not only does 'A Lover of Variety' acknowledge that the play could inflame the passions of its audiences but, through complaints of being 'Pizarroed', conceives of the play as a phenomenon in its own right. *Pizarro* had achieved an unimagined degree of popularity; so much so, in fact, that according to the letter, the play now

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[41] *MM*, February 1801, 112–14.

[42] Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800–1885* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 37.

threatened the permanence of the nation's greatest institutions (including the Royal Society and Houses of Parliament).[43] Frustrated with 'the reign of the monopolizing Pizarro', the author vents despair at the social ubiquitousness of Sheridan's play-text, nervously tracing its progress across the private and public spheres, the metropolis and provinces, and different social classes.[44] This anxiety finds its most dramatic expression through an arresting personification of the play:

> I shall make no objection to Pizarro at Drury Lane, or in the booksellers' shops; but I do not like to meet him at the corner of every street, to see him lurking among the dishes of the table, disputing or causing disputes among the quidnuncs of the coffee-house, and following us not only to the doors, but half up the aisles of the churches.[45]

The author had earlier invested the name of Sheridan's play with verbal force (in order to describe a culture that had been '*Pizarroed*'). Here, rather than referring to the eponymous villain of Sheridan's piece, 'Pizarro' is used to signify the abstract identity of the play itself. The technique allows 'A Lover of Variety' to extend the dangers associated with the play's villain into a diatribe against *Pizarro*'s pervasive ideology and, more specifically, its infiltration into the public domain. Locating 'himself' within the radical fringes of London's geography, *Pizarro* is described as 'lurking', 'disputing' and 'following' the city dwellers. In a fit of conservative paranoia 'A Lover of Variety' personifies and dresses *Pizarro* in the garb of a dangerous revolutionary.

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[43] 'Pizarro the Universal Topic!' in *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1799* (London, 1800), 314–9 (315).

[44] *Spirit ... 1799,* 317.

[45] *Spirit ... 1799,* 315.

Memories of the French Terror and England's own movements for domestic reform remained highly topical in the late 1790s, invigorating the surveillance culture that monitored the circulation of Sheridan's play. Habeas Corpus Suspension Acts were passed in 1794, 1798 and 1799. Sheridan, an active speaker in the House of Commons during this period, described the Habeas Corpus Bill as 'the greatest insult that could be offered to the nation'.[46] By relegating *Pizarro* to the fringes of the metropolis, 'A Lover of Variety' thus effectively insinuates that Sheridan's radical Whig politics (seen to inform so much of his play's rhetoric) had exceeded the limits of constitutional and social propriety.[47] The author's description of *Pizarro*'s popularity as a 'general contagion' functions, unmistakably, as an appeal to authority against a public menace in urgent need of containment.[48]

Indeed, the public's fascination for Sheridan's *Pizarro* had helped promote a host of derivative texts, including a radical re-working of the play's romance that offered a happy ending for Cora and Rolla.[49] As the *Monthly Review* would succinctly put it, *Pizarro* became 'a hackneyed subject'.[50] But this did not mean that the offshoots of Sheridan's commercial success were unquestioning of their source narrative. Thomas Dutton, who marketed his translation of *Die Spanier in Peru* as

[46] Hansard (HC), 'Debate in the Commons on the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill' (13 February 1800), in *PH* (London, 1812), 34: 1466. See also: 'Debate in the Commons on the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill', *PH*, 1798, 33: 1429.

[47] Sheridan's biographer Fintan O'Toole pointedly notes that whereas in 1792 Sheridan had been seriously considered as a candidate for the role of prime minister, by 1794 he was regarded 'a potential felon'. *A Traitor's Kiss: The Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan 1751–1816* (London: Granta, 1997), 286.

[48] *Spirit ... 1799*, 316.

[49] See *Pizarro: A Tragedy in Five Acts [...] by a North Briton* (London, 1799).

[50] 'Article 38', in *MR*, February 1800, 31: 211.

the 'ORIGINAL of the NEW TRAGEDY, now performing at Drury-Lane Theatre', repeatedly claimed that *Pizarro*'s historical setting had been invalidated by Sheridan's pandering to the public predilection for spectacle.[51] Claiming that Alonzo's dress is 'better suited for a ball, or some grand festivity than for scenes of blood and carnage', Dutton's edition exposed a series of historical gaps and inconsistencies in Sheridan's drama.[52]

Peru itself, although exotic, was not entirely foreign to the public eye.[53] 'The mines of Mexico and Peru' often featured in late eighteenth-century newspaper reports as shorthand for the imperial economy. Following the loss of the American colonies, reports of native unrest in South America became prominent news items. In June 1790, for instance, *The Times* not only described Peru's 'insurgent state' but speculated that it 'would require but little address in a British Commander to excite a general revolt'.[54] The emotive power kindled by Spain's Black Legend was explicitly recognised:

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[51] Thomas Dutton, *Pizarro in Peru, or the death of Rolla; being the original of the new tragedy now performing at the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane. Translated from the last German edition of Augustus von Kotzebue, with notes, &c. by Thomas Dutton* (London, 1799).

[52] Dutton, *Pizarro in Peru*, 65.

[53] In 1795 an impromptu gold rush in County Wicklow, Ireland, caused reporters to dub the area 'Little Peru' (*The Times,* 20 October 1795). Helen Maria Williams's poem *Peru* (1784) was well known by the time of *Pizarro*'s premiere, helping excite an interest in Peru that was both fictional and real.

[54] *The Times*, 3 June 1790.

> The cruelty of the first settlers from the Old World, will perhaps be never forgotten, but be handed down in traditionary remembrance from one generation to another, till the end of time.[55]

Sheridan's dramatisation of sixteenth-century Spanish designs for the New World drew upon his audiences' larger understanding of the Black Legend's continued, oppressive hold in contemporary South America.[56]

In *Pizarro* the priest Las Casas, the voice of 'reason and religion' (1.1, *DW*, 2: 662), launches a humanitarian appeal against Spanish violence:

> LAS-C Do not, I implore you, Chieftains – Countrymen – Do not, I implore you, renew the foul barbarities which your insatiate avarice has inflicted on this wretched, unoffending race! But hush, my sighs – fall not, drops of useless sorrow! – heart-breaking anguish, choke not my utterance – All I entreat is, send me once more to those you *call* your enemies.
>
> (1.1, *DW*, 2: 661)

This sentimental supplication for diplomatic intercession can be seen to dramatise the real potential, acknowledged by the contemporary press, for Britain to step in as a substitute for Spain's colonial government. In contrast to representations of Spanish imperialism as rule by usurpation and localized tyranny, the British took pride in a model of 'good governance', exchanging conquest for commerce and styling themselves benevolent settlers. Yet, if British governance was put forward as an alternative to Spanish oppression, its substitutionalist qualities were implicitly

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[55] *The Times*, 27 August 1790.

[56] It is worth comparing *Pizarro* to earlier theatrical representations such as William Davenant's *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* (1658).

destabilizing.[57] In a political essay that appeared in *The Times* in 1787, the conquest of Peru was explicitly cited in order to declaim against the persistent 'evils' of British commerce, especially slavery:

> Have not the original tracts of the natives of Montezuma's empire, Peru, and the other extended countries of South America, felt severely the dreadful effects arising from the same source? and if fresh instances should be wanting, let us look to the conduct of a *Clive* and a *Hastings*, where, to borrow from the words of a celebrated oration of Mr. Sheridan's in the British House of Commons "we may see the genius of empire wielding the bloody sceptre in one hand, and picking pockets with the other".[58]

The essay brings together the exploitation of native people, Spanish colonialism, the Warren Hastings trial and Sheridan's celebrated speech in one narratorial frame. The parallel drawn between Spain's introduction of slavery to the New World and Britain's own investment in human trafficking in the late eighteenth century, may also explain why Wilberforce broke his twenty years of abstinence from the theatre in order to watch *Pizarro*.[59] But more significantly still, the essay distinctly identifies Sheridan in the attempt to remedy these prime examples of the moral degeneracy of empire. As Suleri and Taylor have compellingly argued, Sheridan's speeches in the Warren Hastings trial would continue to inflect the patriotic rhetoric

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[57] Britain's imperial policy in the late eighteenth century was marked by what Daniel O'Quinn describes as 'a combination of almost unrestrained ambition and nagging trepidation that the British Empire would go the way of ancient Rome, sixteenth-century Spain, or seventeenth-century Holland'. O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 23.

[58] *The Times*, 14 September 1787.

[59] *MP*, 31 May 1799.

of *Pizarro*.[60] The charges of corruption and oppression directed against the East India Company hovered below the play's emotive oratory, exposing the British interest in the subcontinent as one no less sanguinary than that of the Spanish conquistadores in the Americas.

Sheridan's ideological centrality in both playhouse and Parliament thus provided competing sites for the social redemption promised by his new play. Pitt's accusations against *Pizarro*'s originality suggest that, in his opinion, Sheridan was guilty of both manipulating the theatre for political ends and conducting politics as role-play. English theatres constituted contested spaces in which political ideas were disseminated and consumed. While the newspapers' initial response had been to laud *Pizarro*'s patriotic narrative (thereby promoting and ensuring its celebrity status as a national mainpiece), the play's broad appeal was soon regarded with decided mistrust. Conservative anxiety was particularly acute by the end of *Pizarro*'s first season. Whereas to some, *Pizarro* provided evidence of Sheridan's radical sympathies, others feared that the mass appeal of spectacle could lead to the confusion of theatrical illusion with reality, or even result in altogether senseless fits of hysteria.[61] In short, *Pizarro* existed as a phenomenon both on stage and off; its meanings available for circulation, negotiation and exchange (beyond institutional control).

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[60] Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), see Chap.3 esp.; and Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, Chap. 4.

[61] See *London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 18 December 1799, for its 'whimsical' report of a sailor's impassioned response to the play: 'Whenever *Pizarro* appeared the honest Tar grumbled forth his indignation, till his feelings were fully gratified in the fall of the Tyrant'.

Pizarro's Political Meanings, 1801–1803

Between March 1802 and May 1803, Britain and France enjoyed a brief respite from war. To celebrate the Peace of Amiens, the Union Club held a grand masquerade at its headquarters, Cumberland House. No expense had been spared and tickets sold out fast, with an additional six hundred unexpected revellers raising the total count of guests to approximately two thousand.[62] In the area surrounding the house, the attendees were invited to stroll through an avenue illuminated by a large transparency that represented '*War* subdued by Peace'. Inside, distant views of London and Paris framed the Club's 'sumptuous' ballroom, while the billiard room, with its various allegorical representations of 'the return of *Commerce* through *Peace*', was reserved for the exclusive use of the evening's guest of honour, the Prince of Wales.[63] In this highly symbolic and carefully demarcated social space, Sheridan's *Pizarro* was also unmistakably present: the *Morning Chronicle* espied among the socialites 'above a dozen *Priestesses* and *Virgins* of the Sun, chiefly copied from the dresses of Pizarro [*sic*]'.[64] These fashionable ladies would undoubtedly have been admired for their beautiful, costly dresses and the noble, dignified air these imparted.[65] But were their costume choices also politically judicious?

The Priests (rather than 'Priestesses') and Virgins of the Sun first appear in Act 2 scene 2 of *Pizarro*; a scene famous for its magnificent setting in 'The Temple

[62] A ticket costing twenty guineas would allow one member to attend with two ladies. *MP*, 9 March 1802.

[63] *MC,* 2 June 1802.

[64] This included Lady Holland as a Priestess of the Sun. *MC,* 2 June 1802.

[65] See also *The Times*, 1 January 1801, on ladies' fashions and the trend for 'Pizarro feathers'.

of the Sun' and Rolla's speech to the Peruvians preparatory to war.[66] The mood of thanksgiving with which the scene opens nevertheless gives way to one of *Pizarro*'s most politicized moments, wherein even the rituals performed by the Priests and Virgins conclude with a song of 'praise' that doubles as a passionate call to arms:

[*Priests and Virgins*]

[Kelly, Dignum, Mrs Crouch, Miss Decamp, Stephens, Dufour, Leak]

…….

[*Thanksgiving*]

Give praise, give praise, the God has heard,

Our God most awfully rever'd!

The alter his own flames enwreath'd!

Then be the conquering sword unsheath'd,

And victory sit on Rolla's brow,

Our foes to crush – to overthrow!

(2.2, *DW*, 2: 670)

While the Peruvians might, in more general terms, be aligned with liberty, in this particular scene, they are at their most war-like, and their religious superstitions furthest from the British Protestant norm. In recognition of the play's aggressive male heroics, it is significant that none of the gentlemen who attended the ball seem

[66] While Priestesses of the Sun do not, in fact, appear in *Pizarro*, they feature significantly in Kotzebue's *Die Sonnen-jungfrau* (1789) – for English translations and adaptations, see Anne Plumptre, *The Virgin of the Sun* (1799); Benjamin Thompson, *Rolla* (1800); and Frederick Reynolds, *The Virgin of the Sun* (1812). It is possible that either the reviewer for the *MC* conflated the two plays or that the masqueraders appropriated *Pizarro*'s dramatis personae, but the Temple of the Sun nevertheless constitutes a sacred space in both plays.

to have chosen to dress as either Rolla or Alonzo. In *Pizarro*, the Peruvians' private and public spheres are very carefully differentiated. When the men go to battle, the women and children retreat among the rocks to safety (3.1, *DW*, 2: 676). Consequently, the men might be understood to fight in order to protect the sanctity of the private sphere, while the Virgins symbolize female moral influence and the virtues of domesticity. In their decision to don the robes of the Peruvian nobility and align themselves with this favourite scene of *Pizarro,* the ladies at the Union Club imparted a symbolic message of social reconciliation and regeneration. By engaging with the play's complex visual register (rich in contingency) they sought to express their political sympathies through an affirmation that the Peace they celebrated had been sanctioned as noble, ethical and principled. Reinventing the interplay between theatrical and political realities, the Union ladies' '*Pizarro* masquerading' testifies to the perceived centrality that Sheridan's play had acquired in contemporary society.

When the fragile Peace of Amiens collapsed in May 1803 it brought renewed fears of an imminent French invasion. Sheridan responded to this turn in political events by also looking to Act 2 scene 2 of *Pizarro.* It is characteristic of the play's 'protean' nature that the same scene that had been used by aristocratic ladies to celebrate the Peace of Amiens could, less than a year later, represent the urgent need for a return to arms. In 1803 the playwright extracted Rolla's speech in the Temple of the Sun and re-titled it 'Sheridan's Address to the People: Our King! Our Country! And our God!'. Published as a broadsheet in London and Dublin, it was widely disseminated.

Sheridan's decision to divorce Rolla's speech from its original dramatic context was, however, loaded with political implication. In an engaging discussion

of the links between radicalism and visual culture in the 1790s, John Barrell contends that 'the language of theatre advertising could function as a language that addressed both the polite and the vulgar much more effectively than the language, or rather the languages, of formal political debate'; 'the sheer ubiquitousness' and consequent familiarity of the playbill making it one of the 'most conspicuous, attention-seeking, visually enjoyable advertisements around'.[67] 'Sheridan's Address', as it came to be known more colloquially, reinforced this link between theatrical and political cultures, with the broadsheet's prominence in the cities of Dublin and London giving the play's rhetoric a visible presence in the propaganda campaign that sought to equip Britons for the renewed war effort.

This pitch of loyalist sentiment was variously (re)figured in satirical prints by Isaac Cruikshank, James Gillray and William Holland, whose caricatures, like theatrical performances, excited the interests of a broad urban audience, sensitive to political nuance. As Daniel O'Quinn asserts, there was a 'tight fit between theatrical performance, political life, and the print media of late eighteenth-century Britain'.[68] Visual satire circulated more widely than textual satire, and was more difficult to prosecute (however personal, and potentially libellous). In *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (2006) Vic Gatrell explains how these satires 'operated within a shame-culture in which the public demolition of reputation was the most feared of social sanctions'.[69] The numerous satirical prints

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[67] John Barrell, 'Radicalism, Visual Culture, and Spectacle in the 1790s', *Romanticism on the Net* (May 2007), Numéro 46 [Accessed 01.07.2012] <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2007/v/n46/016131ar.html> [DOI : 10.7202/016131ar].

[68] O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 11.

[69] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books, 2006), 220.

that capitalized upon Sheridan's theatrical fortunes in order to denounce his politics offer a neat exposition of this; the specific identification of Sheridan with Pizarro lending support to Fintan O'Toole's argument that '*Pizarro* was much more about Sheridan than it was about either Spaniards or Peruvians'.[70]

Gillray's *Pizarro Contemplating Over the Product of his New Peruvian Mine* (4 June 1799; Figure 1.1) depicts Sheridan, in full Spanish costume, greedily handling *Pizarro*'s box-office takings. With brilliant metonymy, Gillray uses the play's narrative of colonial adventure to denounce Sheridan's exploitation of patriotic sentiment. In the print, Drury Lane's neoclassical columns are decorated with cherubim blowing the trumpet of Fame while holding scrolls that read 'Morning Chronicle – Puff Puff Puff', 'Morning Herald – Puff Puff Puff', 'Courier – Puff Puff', and 'Times – Puff Puff'.[71] Cobbett's strictures on Sheridan in *The Political Proteus* would similarly declaim against the newspapers' eulogistic reviews of *Pizarro* as 'a natural alliance, a sort of family compact, between the press and the theatre'.[72] In the early 1800s the theatre's conflation of political and financial cultures continued to destabilize *Pizarro*'s claims to patriotism, making the loyalism of 'Sheridan's Address' highly questionable.

[Insert Fig. 1.1 here – portrait]

[70] O'Toole, *Traitor's Kiss*, 345.

[71] These can also be read as allusions to Sheridan's *The Critic.* See especially 1.2 for Puff's definition of the various forms of the art, including 'THE PUFF DIRECT – the PUFF PRELIMINARY – the PUFF COLLATERAL – the PUFF COLLUSIVE, and the PUFF OBLIQUE, or PUFF by Implication – '. *DW*, 2: 514.

[72] Cobbett, *Political Proteus*, 206.

Fig. 1.1 James Gillray, *Pizarro Contemplating Over the Product of his New Peruvian Mine*, 4 June 1799. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

[Insert Fig. 1.2 here]

Fig. 1.2 James Gillray, *Pizzarro*, etched by J. Chapman. 1 October 1799. Harry Beard Collection. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Gillray's misspelt *Pizzarro* print (1 October 1799) for the *Anti-Jacobin Review* also denounces Sheridan's claim to the laurels of patriotism (Figure 1.2).[73] Here, Gillray depicts Sheridan, mounted upon Kemble's head, with a bag of money under his left arm and a scroll in his right hand, which reads 'Spoken before a select party of Friends':

> This season true my Principles I've sold
> To fool the world & pocket George's gold
> Prolific mine! – anglo-peruvian food
> Provok'd my taste – and Candidate I stood –
> While Kemble my support with LOYAL face
> Declares THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE with stage-trick grace.[74]

The print's typographical enhancements elide Sheridan's distorted 'Speech' with Rolla's address to the Peruvian warriors:

[73] The print appeared in *The Anti-Jacobin* (October 1799, 4: 318) alongside a review of *A Critique of the Tragedy of 'Pizarro'*. The author of *A Critique* also uses *The Critic* to undermine *Pizarro*'s spectacular appeal.

[74] The scroll can also be interpreted as an attack on the play's 'legitimacy'. Minor theatres often circumvented the ban on spoken dialogue by inscribing key lines onto scrolls and banners. See Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London*, 28–30.

ROL. Be our plain answer this: The throne WE honour is the PEOPLE'S CHOICE – the laws we reverence are our brave Fathers' legacy – the faith we follow teaches us to live in bonds of charity with all mankind, and die with hope of bliss beyond the grave. Tell your invaders this, and tell them too, we seek no change; and, least of all, such change as they would bring us.

[*Trumpets sound.*

(2.2, *DW*, 2: 669)

In the popularly perceived metaphorical exchange that equated Pizarro and his troops with Napoleon and his invading armies, Rolla's speech was seen to rebuke the revolutionary threat by upholding instead the constitutional foundation of the British monarchy. Gillray, however, rejects and reverses Rolla's supposedly 'plain answer'. Sheridan, dressed in Elizabethan costume (as Pizarro) is portrayed instead as the consummate actor. The 'select party of Friends' whom he addresses is suggestive of the playwright's involvement with the 'Society of the Friends of the People', a radical group formed in 1792 to advocate parliamentary reform in the wake of the French Revolution. Despite appearances, Gillray insists that Sheridan retained a firm hold on his earlier, putatively seditious political beliefs.

The playwright's career as an outspoken Opposition Member of Parliament infused jarring political insinuations into *Pizarro*'s outwardly hegemonic appeal. In 'Pizzarro', Sheridan is depicted as if he were 'riding' Kemble because, according to Gillray, it was Kemble's conservative reputation that directed the play's patriotic success. As Shearer West carefully points out, in contradistinction to damning portrayals of Sheridan, *Pizarro* prints tended to emphasize Kemble as the play's

dignified and justly celebrated star performer.[75] The perceived difference between Sheridan's excited opportunism and Kemble's refined 'classical' acting finds powerful expression in Gillray's print, where the artist comes short of actually caricaturing Kemble who is, in fact, quite flatteringly depicted with Romanized features.[76]

In his 1803 print *John Bull and the Alarmist* (1 September 1803; Figure 1.3) Gillray caricatures Sheridan as a dishevelled, self-serving bill-sticker who carries 'Loyal Bills' and the 'Sherry Andrew Address' under his arm.[77] In keeping with the personalized iconography of his earlier prints Gillray depicts Sheridan (with the drinker's tell-tale red nose) as an alcoholic 'Sherry Andrews'.[78] The pun on his name, which retains the clownish label of 'Merry Andrews', references performativity more generally: Sheridan is here depicted as an actor, whose speech

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[75] Shearer West, *The Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representations in the Age of Garrick and Kemble* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), 84.

[76] Gillray emphasizes the actor's roman nose, in probable recognition that 'Kemble was the dominant Shakespearean actor of the period, and Coriolanus ... Kemble's defining role'. Jonathan Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity: Rome in the British Imagination 1789–1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 194.

[77] By the mid 1790s the British government had developed a 'policy of issuing "alarms" – 'predictions first of treason at home, then increasingly of invasion abroad'. Mary Favret explains that by 1796 these 'alarms' were a recognised 'form of prophecy…attributed to and practiced primarily by government supporters, both sincere and cynical' (*War at a Distance*, 85).

[78] See James Gillray's *The Union-Club* (1801) where Sheridan is rendered immediately recognizable, in the words of Vic Gatrell, by 'his boozer's face bloated and nose bulbous and a bottle raised in his right hand' (*City of Laughter*, 289); and *Physical Aid, – or – Britannia Recover'd From a Trance; – also, Patriotic courage of Sherry Andrew, & a Peep Thro' the Fog* (March 1803). For Sheridan's heavy drinking and friendship with the Prince Regent, see O'Toole, *Traitor's Kiss*, 179.

to John Bull is a re-hash of Iago's warning to Brabantio in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Sheridan's ineffectual management of Drury Lane Theatre is also lampooned, with the ragged clothes and playbills peeping out of his breast pocket pointing to the well-known fact that *Pizarro*'s lucrative success had been desperately needed.[79] By portraying Sheridan in such shabby habiliment Gillray secures an efficacious shorthand for his two-pronged accusations against Sheridan's unreliability on personal and professional grounds. The 'pro bono publico' claim stated at the bottom of the playwright-manager's so-called 'Loyal Bill' further reinforces this narrative by exposing Sheridan's true intention of aiming for profit through the staging of putatively patriotic dramas, while the Jacobin cap, hanging from his coat pocket, points to persistent revolutionary loyalties. By such detailing Gillray insists that troubling contiguities persisted between Sheridan's politics after Amiens and his radicalism in the 1790s.[80] *John Bull and the Alarmist* denounces Sheridan's famous 'Address' as nothing more than a political stratagem, while identifying the double-dealing Sheridan as the real cause for alarm.

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[79] Sheridan whispers to John Bull (George III): 'A Corsican Thief has just slipt from his quarters, And coming to Ravish your Wives & your Daughters!'

[80] John Bull in this print is George III (with his coronation chair in the background) holding a tankard with the royal coat of arms. John Bull's frothing tankard seems to conjure the popular anecdote that when John Thelwall blew off the head from a pot of porter, he boasted: "This is the way I would serve kings". See Michael Scrivener, 'Romanticism and the Law: The Discourse of Treason, Sedition, and Blasphemy in the Political Trials, 1794–1820', *Romantic Circles Praxis Series.* <http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/law/scrivener/mscrv.htm> [Accessed 11.04.14]. It is also worth comparing the papers carried by Sheridan to the scroll that he clutches in Gillray's earlier *Pizzarro* print (possibly referring to illegitimate theatre practices). Sheridan's putatively patriotic gesture (in *John Bull and the Alarmist*) is dismissed with the same disbelief and wariness implied by the deflation of Rolla's speech in *Pizzarro*.

[Insert Fig. 1.3 here]

Fig. 1.3 James Gillray, *John Bull and the Alarmist*, 1 September 1803. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

In 1803 when Sheridan extracted Rolla's speech from his play he also drew attention to the defining moments of his political career. *Pizarro*'s humanitarian appeal and Rolla's choice simile, comparing the protection offered by the Spaniards to that of vultures to lambs, ' – covering and devouring them!' (2.2, *DW*, 2: 669), continues to be regarded as one of the play's most arresting political speeches, reverberating with Sheridan's declamation against colonial exploitation in India:

> This was British justice! this was British humanity! Mr. Hastings ensures to the allies of the company, in the strongest terms, their prosperity and protection; the former he secures by sending an army to plunder them of their wealth and to desolate their soil! His protection is fraught with a similar security, like that of a vulture to a lamb; grappling in its vitals! thirsting for its blood! scaring off each petty kite that hovers round; and then, with an insulting perversion of terms, calling sacrifice *protection*![81]

Rolla's address, like Sheridan's apostrophe on British justice and humanity, is also crucially dependent upon irony: ' – Yes – THEY will give enlightened freedom to

[81] 'The Trial of Warren Hastings' (13 June 1788), in *The Speeches of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan. With a Sketch of his Life*, *edited by a Constitutional Friend*. 3 vols. (London, 1842), 1: 413. David Taylor's work on Sheridan's oratory points, however, to a 'second, even more flagrant (indeed verbatim) instance of self-quotation'; Rolla's plea to Pizarro for the safety of Alonzo and Cora's child effectively being a rehash of Sheridan description of Major Naylor's testimony during the Hastings trial. *Theatres of Opposition*, 130–1.

our minds, who are themselves the slaves of passion, avarice, and pride' (2.2, *DW*, 2: 669). The verbal parallels liken the conquistador to the nabob, denouncing both types of colonisers as villainous, corrupt and dehumanised by their greed. By the early nineteenth century, the focal point of Sheridan's play resounded with political and aesthetic valences that were inextricably associated with the playwright's well-publicised career as a Member of Parliament.

There is evidence to suggest, however, that after the opening night, when Sheridan reworked his play into a more manageable performance piece, significant changes were made to Rolla's harangue. Intriguingly, this resulted in the excision of the famous vulture and lamb imagery from the 1799 and 1807 Drury Lane promptbooks for *Pizarro*.[82] Kemble, renowned for his conservative politics, is likely to have felt uncomfortable with the passage's famous allusiveness to Sheridan's political oratory, and thus removed the potential for contention altogether. If so, his decision would suggest that while memories of the Warren Hastings Trial may have helped coalesce the play's humanitarian sympathies, its colonial nuances were not limited to the subcontinent. The exclusion of these key lines from the play's later production serves as an important reminder of the interpretative differences occasioned by reading the play compared to seeing it in performance (differences that will also have a significant bearing upon this book's later discussion of Shakespeare and the Spanish-themed spectacles staged at the minor theatres).

In her investigation of Romantic representations of American Indians, Astrid Wind points out that in 1781, the year after Sheridan's election to the House of

[82] *Pizarro* promptbooks for 1799 and 1807 are respectively housed in the Garrick Club in London and Newberry Library in Chicago. In 2.2 of the Newberry Library's copy, the reference to 'vultures and lambs' is also cut, although emendations by another hand suggest that it was recovered for later nineteenth-century productions.

Commons, there was an indigenous uprising in Peru.[83] Tupac Amaru II led the revolt, claiming to be the descendant of the last indigenous leader of the nation. His rebellion, although unsuccessful, was the first uprising against the Spanish colonists in nearly two centuries, drawing a direct line between *Pizarro* and the international news bulletins of 1781. If Amaru's revolt provided an exemplary moment of the empire 'writing back' by asserting itself against the mother country, then Sheridan's play was equally concerned with offering alternative insights into human consciousness. *Pizarro*'s narrative of invasion, although most immediately concerned with the French wars and British imperialism in India, cultivated the nation's historical mindset at its widest geographical expanse.

Simply put, *Pizarro* was a play that set out to make Britain seem less familiar. In Rolla's key speech the use of the signifiers 'they' and 'we' becomes increasingly mobile. While rhetorical coherence requires the hero's comparison between the Spaniards ('they') and Peruvians ('we/our') to draw upon points of dissimilarity between Peruvian honour and Spanish criminality, this linguistic distinction proves decidedly unstable:

> ROL Your generous spirit has compared as mine has, the motives,
> which, in a war like this, can animate *their* minds, and OURS.
>
> (2.2, *DW*, 2: 669)

The fluctuation between second, third and first person pronouns threatens the speech's all-important ironic turn, which requires the stress to be placed on a rigidly differential us/them dynamic. While the speech inspires audiences to 'feel' its truth, as a written text it demands a degree of labour from the 'thinking' reader. The

[83] Astrid Wind, 'American Indians in National Contexts: The Politics of Literary Encounter', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2002), 102.

published play-text implicitly concedes this, relying upon typographical emphasis to avoid any ambiguities. The 1803 broadsheet also made distinctive use of italicization or, as Cobbett deridingly called it, 'typographical harlotry'.[84] Particular and determinate, the use of 'we' necessarily reinforces a sense of community that excludes the distant 'they' from the space shared by the addressee and his intended audience. Sheridan's broadsheet sought to capture the performative, interactive elements of Rolla's speech and its power to induce social co-operation at a time of national stress and uncertainty.

The notorious difficulty of attempting to define the political other points to *Pizarro*'s socio-cultural framing during a time of constitutional indeterminacy. Fiona Stafford neatly describes how the 1802 political debates exposed 'a new sense of Britain', forged through the war with France but 'wrought into an unfamiliar form by the Union with Ireland'.[85] Sheridan's play found a pertinent outlet in the political climate of 1801–03, which saw the historically tense Anglo-Irish rapport make its contributions to a new sense of British identity in the making. In London, 'Sheridan's Address' was printed by the loyalist publisher James Asperne, who charged six shillings for one hundred copies of the broadsheet: in Dublin, it was available at half this price, costing 'Three Shilling and Three Pence per Hundred'.[86] The higher cost of living in London most probably accounts for this pricing

[84] Cobbett, *Political Proteus*, 80.

[85] Fiona Stafford, '*The Edinburgh Review* and the Representation of Scotland', in *British Romanticism and the* Edinburgh Review*: Bicentenary Essays*, ed. Massimiliano Demata and Duncan Wu (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 38.

[86]'Sheridan's Address to the People: Our King! our Country! And our God!' (London and Dublin, 1803). Compare Shuttleworth copies 145 (1) and (2). The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford.

disparity, but the cheaper (and potentially more inflammatory) Irish 'version' of Sheridan's broadsheet should not go unnoticed.

The broadsheet's parallel geographies of production and dissemination open up constructive new readings of *Pizarro*'s famous rhetorical set-piece. Sheridan's Irish patriotism had amounted, since the 1780s, to 'an innate aspect of his fame'.[87] David Francis Taylor describes the condition of Ireland as 'a political obsession' for Sheridan.[88] From his speeches denouncing the ministry's colonialist attempts to control Ireland, to his precariously close ties with the Irish rebels Edward Fitzgerald and Arthur O'Connor, Sheridan's 'Irishness' provided an alternative dimension to the politics of *Pizarro*.[89] This was especially true in relation to the play's definitions of treachery – an accusation as topical during the Peace of Amiens as it had been during the 1790s and would be again during the Peninsular War.

In the opening scene of the play, Pizarro introduces Alonzo's deflection to the Peruvian way of life as an act of betrayal both to Spain and, more personally, to Pizarro himself:

> PIZ Alonzo! the traitor! How I once loved that man! His noble mother entrusted him, a boy, to my protection. At my table did he feast – in my tent did he repose. I had marked his early genius, and the valorous spirit that grew with it.
>
> (1.1, *DW*, 2: 659)

[87] O'Toole, *Traitor's Kiss*, 319.

[88] Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, 127.

[89] For a more detailed discussion of *Pizarro*'s Irish dimension see Astrid Wind, 'Irish Legislative Independence and the Politics of Staging American Indians in the 1790s', *Symbiosis: A Journal of Anglo-American Literary Relations*, 5 (2011), 1–16.

The intimacy implied by the emotional and physical enclosures of 'protection', 'table' and 'tent' testify to Pizarro's private affections for his one-time friend. By no coincidence, Alonzo's first appearance in the play is also associated with domestic attachments. Audiences are first introduced to Alonzo in Act 2 as a proud father and devoted husband to Cora. Many of the play's early reviewers commented on the profound ways in which playgoers appeared to have been moved by Cora's maternal affections in this scene.[90] Aware that Alonzo had recently been sleepless, nervous and overcome with 'struggling sighs', Cora anxiously inquires after his happiness. In response to her queries, Alonzo poignantly asks: 'Must not I fight against my country, against my brethren?' (2.1, *DW*, 2: 666). It is left to Cora to assuage his restlessness by arguing against the arbitrariness of national ties: 'Do they not seek our destruction, and are not all men brethren?' (2.1, *DW*, 2: 666), she asks, employing language that poignantly echoes the motto adopted by campaigners for the abolition of slavery.

When confronted by Pizarro, it is, therefore, all the more impressive that the hitherto self-tormented Alonzo should succeed in passionately defending his Spanish identity:

> AL No! Deserter I am none! I was not born among robbers! pirates! murderers! – When those legions, lured by the abhorred lust of gold, and by thy foul ambition urged, forgot the honour of Castilians, and forsook the duties of humanity, THEY deserted ME. I have not warred against my native land, but against those who have usurped its power.
>
> (3.3, *DW*, 2: 681)

[90] See, for example, *Star*, 25 May 1799.

Alonzo's speech portrays the Spanish conquest of Peru as the enterprise of a selfish minority who advance corrupt claims of bringing a national project to fruition. It is tempting to construe *Pizarro*'s retelling of sixteenth-century Spanish imperialism as Sheridan's way of re-imagining his own, very personal stake in Anglo-Irish political tensions. While dramatising important reasons for the Irish Rebellion, Sheridan could feel secure enough to stand his own ground against charges of treason. In July 1803 Sheridan spoke in the Commons on 'The King's Message Relative to the Rebellion in Ireland' with a 'sincere and heartfelt love of my country'.[91] Sheridan's use of the possessive 'my' seems to originate from an attachment comparable to that which allows Alonzo to continue to refer to Spain as 'my native land', despite his naturalization into Peruvian society.

Alonzo's speech on identity highlights the anarchic ways by which nationhood might impinge on the concepts of history and agency. During the Peninsular War, this would make the distance between the deictic markers 'we' and 'they' (so clearly italicized in 'Sheridan's Address') irreducibly vexed. By removing it from both the playhouse and its originally English metropolitan audiences, the Irish publication of 'Sheridan's Address' realised a double-displacement of Rolla's set speech. In Dublin, resistance to the Union implicated the distant 'they' with the same political aggression that English audiences of *Pizarro* identified with French enmity.

In London, by contrast, 'Sheridan's Address' had all the visible signs of promoting the strength of the home guard. William Holland's *The Ghost of Queen Elizabeth!!* (20 July 1803; Figure 1.4) parodies the frequency with which sixteenth-

[91] Hansard (HC), 'The King's Message Relative to the Rebellion in Ireland' (28 July 1803), in *PH,* 36: 1677.

century Spain featured in the propaganda efforts of 1803. The print depicts the spectre of the great Tudor queen threatening Napoleon with a picture of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Elizabeth's reign, credited with successful overseas expansion and relative internal stability, provided a favourable benchmark for nineteenth-century Britain, as underlined in 1803 by the broadsheet publication of Queen Elizabeth's speech to the troops at Tilsbury (Figure 1.5). This meant that *Pizarro*'s anti-Spanish inflections coincided fortuitously with the renewed war effort, enabling 'Sheridan's Address' to retain its original dramatic purpose of inciting resistance to foreign invaders.

[Insert Fig. 1.4 here]

Fig. 1.4 William Holland, *The Ghost of Queen Elizabeth!!,* 20 July 1803. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

[Insert Fig. 1.5 here – portrait]

Fig. 1.5 *The Royal standard of our country (with) Queen Elizabeth's speech to her people, when threatened by the Spanish Armada*, 1803. © The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford. Curzon b. 12 (6).

With Sheridan's broadsheet on display across the metropolis, *Pizarro* played to a Drury Lane auditorium packed with Volunteers. In an effort to underline the play's loyalist import, the profits from the Drury Lane performances collected at the end of the season were donated to Lloyd's Patriotic Fund, established in July 1803 to provide charitable support and reward for those wounded or killed in action.[92] According to O'Toole, 'by making himself champion of the Volunteer Corps,

[92] This proved a source of anxiety for Cobbett. See *Political Proteus*, 76.

Sheridan was trying simultaneously to be true to radical principles and to wrap himself in the flag'.[93] This was bound to be tricky, but proved even more so in 1804 when, after the recession of the French invasion threat, fears of an increasingly plebeian Volunteer Movement caused the government to begin to disband its national militia.[94]

Sheridan's decision to re-title Rolla's polemic 'Sheridan's Address' and publish the speech outside its original dramatic frame was, perhaps, ideologically more costly than lucrative. Although the 1803 broadsheet found a ready market in the loyalist press and propaganda efforts to rally Volunteers, its patriotic fervour remained attached to a long and recriminatory history heightened by Sheridan's Irish loyalties and the government's later disbanding of the Volunteers. The Address's potentially radical meanings in Ireland, added to the suspicious loyalist turn taken in Sheridan's English politics, seemed to only further expose *Pizarro*'s essentially porous discourse. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the instability associated with the play's central speech strongly suggested that Sheridan's *Pizarro* was, in effect, more a process than an event *per se*. The play's authority, which had been continually questioned and pointedly re-invented since its first run, continued to generate heated political debate.

Historical Contiguities, 1808–1815

[93] O'Toole, *Traitor's Kiss*, 375.

[94] On the Volunteer movement, see Russell, *Theatres of War*, 13.

During the summer of 1807 Napoleon was at the apex of his political fortunes: having conquered or secured alliances with virtually all of the European powers, only Sweden, Britain and Portugal remained opposed to the French regime.[95] Determined to subdue Britain, 'this nation of shopkeepers', by interfering in the Iberian economy (both political and commercial), Napoleon's actions triggered a brutal war in the Peninsula. Known locally as 'La Guerra de la Independencia' (the War of Independence) the Spanish conflict was characterised by guerilla movements and generally staunch local resistance. The British were quick to espouse the cause of their Spanish compatriots. Almost any news (and indeed even absence of news) from the Peninsula attracted headline notice in the national press. Topical addresses and plays were staged at the theatres, and numerous satirical prints published on the subject of the Anglo-Spanish alliance. The transformation of the Iberian Peninsula into Britain's new focal point for military intervention meant that *Pizarro*'s narrative of imperial encroachment and patriotic agency acquired renewed relevance.

The Spaniards' fight for what Samuel Whitbread termed 'their liberty as a people, and the assertion of their independence as a nation' seemed well represented by the plight of the Peruvians in Sheridan's drama.[96] With the British nation united in support of Spain, the Peninsular Campaign was seized as a chance for 'persons who, at the beginning, blamed the principle of resisting the French revolution; to wish well to the cause of the Spaniards … and to modify their desires of peace, in

[95] Gregory Fremont-Barnes, *The Napoleonic Wars: The Peninsular Wars 1807–1814* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), 25.

[96] Hansard (HC), 'Affairs of Spain' (4 July 1808), in *Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time* (London, 1812), 11: 1142.

order to make it subservient to the cause of Spain'.[97] In this section, I explore how Sheridan's *Pizarro* participated in this re-writing of history in an endeavor that, once again, was both personal and public.

British support for the Peninsular War meant that by the summer of 1808 the sensationalist tendency to associate Spain with the horrors of the Black Legend was no longer viable. In the wake of the new political alliance between the two nations, it was much more convenient for British writers to evoke Spain's spirit of ancient chivalry than to propagate the grotesque narratives associated with Spanish imperial history. Sheridan's characterisation of Alonzo's equivocal 'Spanishness' reveals an especially interesting dimension to *Pizarro*'s revisionist potential. Since 1799 playbills had consistently listed Alonzo as one of the 'Spaniards', despite his attachment to Peruvian society. In Act 3 scene 3 Alonzo distinguishes himself from Pizarro and his army by insisting on a polarised demarcation between 'THEY' and 'ME'. His speech forcefully recalls Rolla's earlier patriotic address to the Peruvian army, which had also made enabling use of an 'us/them' distinction. Pizarro and Alonzo, as markedly different Spaniards, suggested that internal differences could be as important a call to action as external threats. This helped reaffirm, in short, that not all the Spaniards of Sheridan's play were villains.

The casting of Alonzo alongside other 'Spanish' characters, such as Pizarro and his corrupt generals, pointed, instead, to the use of 'national labels' as an empty rhetorical gesture. This allows Alonzo to be the epitome of Spain's uncorrupted martial spirit, as well as the character that comes closest to resembling the Peruvian hero Rolla. In 1808 Sheridan's underlying rhetoric about the fluidity of national identities could help revise monolithic preconceptions of the Spaniard as imperial

[97] 'Article 11', *ER*, July 1808, 12: 437.

villain. In order to stake a successful claim to Peninsular politics, it was clear that *Pizarro* and other stock plays in the repertoire would need to redress the lingering hostilities that had earlier allowed Sheridan and his audiences to conflate 'Spanishness' with general unworthiness.

It appears that theatre-goers were up to the challenge. In September 1812 *The Times* reviewed *Pizarro* as a play that, however haphazardly, chimed with those events of 'the great stage of real life':

> The celebrated author little thought, when writing this play, in which he pourtrays [*sic*], in the blackest colours, the worst offices of Old Spain, that in a few short years, all the eloquence, patriotism, and *energy* which he infused into his Peruvians, would be found inspiring the tongues, swelling the hearts, and animating the exertions of the Spanish nation, in a cause equally sacred, against an invader as foul, treacherous, and insatiable, as ever history, or the drama, have pictured out *Pizarro*.[98]

Napoleon's persistent aggression permitted Sheridan's narrative to remain topical and ideologically pertinent. This meant that during the Peninsular War, as in 1799, the horrors of the Black Legend could continue to be deflected onto the French Emperor. As a common enemy to both Britain and Spain, Napoleon became a 'double' enemy, receiving the brunt of all the odious connotations of cruelty and superstition earlier associated with the play's eighteenth-century anti-Spanish

[98] *The Times*, 21 September 1812. In 1812 Wellington executed of a series of successful attacks that culminated in the Battle of Salamanca and the British army's official entrance into Madrid in August 1812. These triumphs helped turn opinion at home, and may explain why *The Times* chose to make the link between *Pizarro* and Spanish patriotism at such a relatively late stage in the war. On the progress of the Peninsular War in 1812 see Rory Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon 1807–1815* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 193–220.

propaganda. To Robert Southey – England's most prominent Hispanist at the time – Spain's imperial history could also, interestingly, be cited as proof of the righteousness of the Spaniards' current struggle against Napoleon and his armies. In a letter to Walter Savage Landor, dated 1809, the poet accepts that 'doubtless, [the Spaniards] have much to endure; no nation owes so heavy a debt to Divine vengeance. There is retribution to be exacted for the Jews, for the American Indians, for the Dutch'.[99] Likening the Spaniards' struggle to the last stages of a penitent's redemption, Southey imagines modern Spaniards as the ironic victims of the imperial cruelties committed by their sixteenth-century counterparts. Amongst the Peninsular War's most important influences on allegorical readings of *Pizarro* was that the Peruvians had come to symbolize the Spanish, as well as British, determination to resist the Napoleonic yoke.

The Times was, of course, correct in stating that Sheridan could not have anticipated how contemporary politics would effectively re-write the dynamics of his play's patriotic appeal, but he seems nevertheless to have closely followed the progress of the Spanish Campaign.[100] Evidence for this can be found in the extensive corrections made by Sheridan and his son, Tom, to Theodore Hook's

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[99] Southey continues to argue that '[the Spaniards] are now passing through their purgatory, but it will purify them, and the Spaniards will come out like gold from the furnace'. Robert Southey to W.S. Landor (started before and continued on 30 September 1809), in *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Carol Bolton and Tim Fulford, 'Part 3: 1804–1809': Letter 1687. <http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letters/Part_Three/HTML/letterEEd.26.1687.html> [Accessed 06.10.14].

[100] See, for instance, Sheridan's letter to Lady Bessborough (22 January 1809) in *The Letters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, ed. Cecil Price. 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1966), 3: 48–9.

manuscript for *The Siege of St Quintin* (Drury Lane, 10 November 1808).[101] Upon receiving Hook's submission Sheridan was quick to rebuke the playwright's ill-timed attempt to imitate *The Duenna*'s pastiche of Roman Catholicism, explaining that 'the Public sentiment is generally making head against the no Popery cry, and half the Patriotic enthusiasm in Spain is created and led by their Priests'.[102] It is significant that in *Pizarro* itself, Sheridan curtailed the Catholic dimension of Kotzebue's play as much as possible. Having described the problems in Ireland as a struggle 'not of local discontent and partial disaffection' but, rather, 'a contest between the people and the government', it makes sense that he would not have wished to associate the Irish populace (predominantly Catholic) with the religious bigotry that Kotzebue's text ascribes to Spanish Catholicism.[103]

The movement for parliamentary reform on Catholic Emancipation – a hotly debated issue – was active throughout the years of *Pizarro*'s greatest success. The main reason for Pitt's resignation as Prime Minister in 1801 had, after all, been George III's refusal to grant any concessions to the Catholics after the Act of Union. In 1799 Sheridan had handled his play script with knowing dexterity. Anne Plumptre's translation of Kotzebue's *Die Spanier in Peru*, which appears to have

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[101] On Richard and Tom Sheridan's annotations to Hook's play script, see Tom Lockwood, 'The Sheridans at Work: A Recovered Drury Lane Revisal of 1808', *The Review of English Studies* 55.221, (September 2004), 487–97; and 'The Sheridans at Work Again: The Wallace Manuscript of *The Siege of St Quintin*', *The Review of English Studies*, 58.233, (February 2007), 89–93.

[102] Qtd. in 'Postscript: *The Siege of St Quintin'*, in *DW,* 2: 841. Sheridan's comments point to the changing climate on Catholic Emancipation, which was a key concern for Anglo-Irish relations. See also Sheridan's letter to S. Jernyngham (25 November 1811), in Price (ed.), *Letters*, 135–6.

[103] Hansard (HC), 'Debate on the King's Message respecting the Offers of the Militia Regiments to go to Ireland' (19 June 1798), in *PH*, 33: 1503.

been Sheridan's source text for *Pizarro*, included several damning references to the close relationship between the Spanish church and state.[104] In Act 1 scene 4 of Plumptre's text, Las Casas shrinks at the thought that Pizarro's soldiers hanged thirteen Indians as vengeance for the deaths of Christ and his Apostles.[105] Sheridan, by contrast, made no allusion to this in his version of the play.

Describing *The Siege of St Quintin* as 'a translation by Mr. HOOK, retouched by Mr. SHERIDAN', the *Morning Chronicle* identified in Hook's play, 'the same motive which gave rise to the production of Mr. Sheridan's *Pizarro*'.[106] This motive, as the *Oracle of Fashion* explained to its readers, was 'merely to introduce Sentiments of Patriotism'.[107] As such, *The Siege of St Quintin* was generally accepted as a play devoid of any real literary merit, making it all the more significant that *Pizarro* should have provided the all-important point of comparison for Hook's Spanish play on 'the popular feelings of the present day'.[108] It suggests that in 1808 new meanings to *Pizarro* had been grafted onto its old ones, and Sheridan's play re-infused with the nationalist charge that had made it the decided favourite of 1799. The money, soldiers and ammunitions sent by Britain to aid

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[104] Sheridan seems to have written *Pizarro* after receiving a translation of *Die Spanier in Peru*. While the manuscript is anonymous, the Drury Lane Account Book records two payments of £25 to Anne Plumptre, who was requested to withhold publication of her translation of the play until *Pizarro*'s opening performance. As Cecil Price proposes, 'the evidence appears sufficient for us to conclude that Sheridan made use of Anne Plumptre's translation'. *DW*, 2: 646.

[105] Plumptre, *Pizarro* (1.4), 12.

[106] *MC,* 11 November 1808. N.B. Hook's play was an adaptation of R.C. Pixérécourt's *Les Mines de Pologne*. See Price, *DW*, 2: 792.

[107] *The Oracle of Fashion*, 11 November 1808. Clipping from 'Dramatic Annals: Critiques on Plays and Performers, 1807 to 1815', collected by John Nixon (Garrick Club, London), 107 (item 105).

[108] *MC,* 11 November 1808.

Spain's national defense against the French invaders had remodelled *Pizarro* into a paradigmatic play about the patriotic spirit.

It is worthwhile, then, to consider how Hook's play compares to Sheridan's, and what this might suggest about the 'patriotic' label that reviewers had attached to both authors by the end of 1808. In contrast to Hook's first draft, the final version of the play, worked up by the two Sheridans prior to its submission to John Larpent (the Examiner of Plays), treats Spanish religious zeal with considerable care. It opens with the Spanish troops preparing for the Duke of Savoy's arrival to lead the assault against the French forces. The hero Egmont anticipates the signal for attack, alerting 'each true Spaniard that the day has come, which grants him the glorious lot to save his injured Country, or perish with its fall'. On St Lawrence's day, he affirms, 'a nation's gratitude shall mingle with religious zeal'.[109] Hook treats his representation of 'religious zeal' with significant judiciousness. As Sheridan had taken pains to explain, during the Peninsular War priests and bishops helped marshal the local resistance effort (allowing convents and monasteries to be opened up to the Allied armies).[110] This afforded Hook an opportunity to develop an effective historical parallelism. During the Franco-Habsburg War, on 10 August 1557 (the feast day of St Lawrence) the Spaniards, with the support of the English, had gained an important victory over the French King Henry II at the northern

[109] Theodore Hook, *The Siege of St. Quintin* (1808), Larpent collection 1599. British Library Microfiche F254/700. See 1.1 [n.p.]. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

[110] On the role played by Spain's religious orders, see, for example, James Gillray's *Spanish-Patriots attacking the French-Banditti – Loyal Britons lending a lift* (15 August 1808). At the forefront of the print a Catholic monk prepares to charge a cannon while nuns wield bloody daggers at French soldiers. The arrival of another monk on horseback, blowing a trumpet to herald the arrival of a bishop (carrying both crozier and sword), seems to parody the traditional religious procession.

French town of St. Quentin. To commemorate their success and pay homage to the martyred saint, Philip II of Spain built the illustrious Escorial Palace in the Sierra de Guadarrama. Following Sheridan's recommendations, it was prudent of Hook to align the religious and patriotic themes of his play. In *The Siege* religion provides the spur to heroic action; a rallying cry to inspire courage and conviction in the righteousness of the Spanish cause.[111]

As such, the final version of Hook's play sources its comedy not in religious pastiche but in the interplay between the Spaniards and the motley assembly of British soldiers. Scottish and Irish recruits deployed to the Peninsula between 1808 and 1814 made vital contributions to the war effort, and helped determine a new understanding of the British 'nation' at arms.[112] In *The Siege*, as in *Pizarro*, this raises questions about the different methods available to communicate national identities and allegiances. In Hook's play, the affable Irishman, Sir Leinster Kildare makes a memorable (if bemusing) first appearance. He arrives at the Spanish camp in the capacity of a messenger, proudly stating that as an Irishman by birth he has the added honour of being Alvaro's countryman. Alvaro attempts to correct him: 'You are mistaken sir, I am a Spaniard' – but Kildare, with cool confidence, insists

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[111] The theme of religious zeal in *Pizarro* could also be linked to the Peninsular War, although this was problematic considering the play's generally villainous representation of Spanish characters. When Rolla is first reunited with Alonzo in the Spanish dungeon he explains: ' – this disguise I tore from the dead body of a Friar, as I pass'd our field of battle – it has gain'd me entrance to thy dungeon – now take it thou, and fly' (4.1, *DW*, 2: 688). Rolla here describes the corpse of a political enemy, but during the Peninsular War, this reference could have been seen to underscore the readiness of Spain's religious orders to engage in military conflict and sacrifice.

[112] Between 1795 and 1810, 42% of artillery recruits came from Ireland, and 21% from Scotland. Holmes, *Redcoat*, 55–9.

'So am I' (1.1, [n.p.]). In a long digression explaining how the Spaniards and Irish 'share the same root', Kildare relates that the ancient King Miletus first set foot on Ireland after his trip to Carthage.[113] He proceeds to offer physical proof of this by stating that the first six generations of the Kildare family were born with Spanish whiskers.[114] In deference to Kildare's enthusiasm – and recognition of his need for the Irishman's assistance – Alvaro, although unwilling to consent to the argument, welcomes the colonel, 'for your own nation's sake as well as ours' (1.1, [n.p.]).

Later in Act 2, in his attempt to convince the Scottish Captain to show more tolerance when dealing with the soldiers, Kildare once again indulges in a confused discourse on the subject of national identity:

> SIR LEINSTER However partial I may have been formerly to my own countrymen – by my honour I feel nothing of that exclusive prejudice now – I wish to encourage no rivalry but the emulation of who shall be forwardest and boldest against the Common Enemy. & whether I'm an Irishman, an Englishman, a Scotchman, a Welshman, a Swede or a

[113] From as early as the sixth century, Isidore of Seville claimed that Hibernia (the ancient name for Ireland) derived from (H)Iberia (the Latin name for the Spanish and Portuguese Peninsula). The *History of the Britons* (C9th) and *Lebor Gabála* (a treatise on Irish origins composed in the C11th) both describe the story of the sons of the Spanish soldier Mils Hispaniae/Mil Espáine who invaded Ireland. For a helpful summary of the myth's origin and claims to authenticity, see John Carey, 'Did the Irish come from Spain? The Legend of the Milesians', *History of Ireland* 9.3 (autumn 2001), 9–11. < http://www.historyireland.com/pre-history-archaeology/did-the-irish-come-from-spain/> [Accessed 06.06.2014].

[114] It was not uncommon to portray Spanish men with inordinately large moustaches (or whiskers): consider, for example, the character of Don Ferolo Whiskerandos (the son of the Spanish Admiral) in Puff's play in *The Critic* (2.2), in *DW*, 2: 534–50.

> Spaniard, upon my conscience I won't wish to recollect. Let them divide me equally, & take the six quarters of me between them – & they will make little more of me than half the man I wish to be to each of the remaining five.
>
> (2.1, [n.p.])

Kildare may be somewhat inept at mathematics, but his declaration does not fail to persuade. So fervent and sincere is his disquisition that the Scottish Captain concedes: 'My heart goes w'e ye in the sentiment – tho' I'm thinking you're a wee confused with the expression o't' (2.1, [n.p]). The success of Britain's armies in Spain and Portugal was dependant upon co-operation and trust. Ambivalences needed to be redressed with regard not only to the Spanish and Portuguese, but also within the British regiments. The review published in the *Oracle of Fashion* clearly stated that '[*The Siege of St Quintin*] literally consists of nothing but invectives against the French, and fulsome Panegyrics upon the Spaniards, English, Scotch, Irish, and Welsh'.[115] The play's theme of seeing beyond the duty to one's birthplace in order to conceive of a larger sense of national commitment was an important manifestation of Hook's patriotic intent. A comparable, although much more nuanced, example is provided by Sheridan's characterisation of Alonzo in *Pizarro*, and his lessons on the plurality and essential instability of national labels.

Despite competition from new, obviously topical Spanish-themed plays, *Pizarro* thus continued to retain the necessary urgency associated with its patriotic narrative. Yet, during the 1808–09 season, when audiences were most absorbed by the war in Spain and Portugal, Sheridan's play was only performed four times at

[115] *The Oracle of Fashion*, 11 November 1808.

London's patent theatres.[116] This was the result of an unfortunate, if ironic, intersection between Sheridan's professional fortunes as playwright-manager and politician. On 24 February 1809, as Canning addressed the Commons on the role of Britain in the Peninsula, news arrived that Drury Lane was on fire. At the time, Covent Garden was still under reconstruction, following its own destruction by fire in September 1808. Although Covent Garden re-opened the following September, it would take more than three years to rebuild Drury Lane Theatre. Sheridan, 'realising that no one would invest in a new theatre under his control' was effectively forced to resign from the Drury Lane Committee.[117] Another important consequence of the fire was that the Drury Lane dramatic company had to be temporarily relocated. At first, the actors moved to the Haymarket. Then, in April 1809, and on a more stable arrangement, they took over the much smaller Lyceum Theatre. In this new playspace the capacity for spectacular entertainments was significantly restricted, helping explain the relative absence of *Pizarro* from the company's repertoire during the first years of the Peninsular War.[118] The surviving

[116] This does not necessarily reflect the frequency with which the play was performed in the provinces. Frederick Burwick, for instance, notes that *Pizarro* was played for a 'Committee Night performance in Newcastle, after a sighting in 1809 of a French ship off the English coast'. *Romantic Drama*, 159

[117] O'Toole, *Traitor's Kiss*, 431.

[118] On the Lyceum's limited capacity for spectacle, see *The Times*' review (14 March 1810) of *The Maniac; or, The Swiss Banditti*: 'The scenery deserves particular commendation, and we have seldom seen on so small a scale, as that which the Lyceum admits, a finer specimen of the art …'.

playbills for the period 1809 to 1812 record only one (benefit) performance of *Pizarro* by the Drury Lane dramatic company (on 23 May 1809).[119]

On the face of it, a narrative dramatising Spanish plunder in Peru might not appear to have been an immediate choice for the 1809 repertoire. On the other hand, between 1801 and 1803, *Pizarro* had already proven itself capable of flexible application to changing political circumstances, of successfully striking the difficult balance between principle and pragmatism. The allegorical readings of *Pizarro* that I have already outlined suggest that during the Peninsular War, Sheridan's play would have continued to hold its own in the dramatic repertoire. A cursory look at the patents' wartime calendar testifies to the popularity of Spanish-themed plays between 1808 and 1814. The 'New Comic Ballet' of *Don Quichotte* [*sic*] was staged five times during the company's short stay at the Haymarket in the spring of 1809.[120] John Braham's profitable engagement during the 1811 season and the acclaim he enjoyed for his impersonation of Don Alphonso in John O'Keeffe's *The Castle of Andalusia* also ensured that stage depictions of Spain remained in the spotlight. A year later, the 'very favourable' reception given to H.B. Code's *The Spanish Patriots: A Thousand Years Ago* (1812) was, according to *The Times*, largely the result of the play's well-chosen title, 'sufficiently promising to attract a tolerable auditory, because it announced something to which every British heart vibrates – the patriotism of Spain'.[121] Even a quick study of the playbills suggests,

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[119] *Pizarro* was played as the mainpiece to celebrate the benefit of Henry Siddons and his wife, Harriet, on 23 May 1809. During the interlude, there were songs and sketches including 'Bill Jones; or, the Ship Spectre' and Sylvester Daggerwood. The afterpiece was *Ella Rosenberg*. See 'Calendar': Part B.

[120] *Don Quichotte* was performed on 16, 23 March; 3, 6, and 10 April 1809. See 'Calendar': Part B.

[121] *The Times*, 23 September 1812.

therefore, that Spanish topicality would have only amplified the demand for Sheridan's play.

Once it had recovered from its own fire, the new Covent Garden Theatre testified to *Pizarro*'s enduring appeal through frequent revivals of Sheridan's tragedy.[122] The six performances of *Pizarro* staged there during the 1811–12 season were supplemented, after 31 January 1812, with Frederick Reynolds's operatic drama *The Virgin of the Sun*. Reynolds's play was also a translation of Kotzebue, dramatising the love triangle between Rolla, Cora and Alonzo as a prequel to *Die Spanier in Peru.* The *Examiner* helpfully defined the play 'a sort of companion to *Pizarro*', containing 'the early part' of Rolla's history.[123] *The Virgin of the Sun* proved a popular hit, securing twenty-seven performances by 13 April 1812. Its success was as dependent upon Reynolds's penchant for spectacle as it was on the existing fascination for *Pizarro*.[124] *The Times*, for instance, described how 'on the rising of the curtain, which displayed the *Temple of the Sun*, the whole audience gave a shout of admiration'.[125] The opinion that the Temple was among *Pizarro*'s most magnificent scenes had been almost unanimous.[126] The enthusiasm extended

[122] For example, *Pizarro* was chosen for William Claremont and Thomas Shaw's benefit on 9 July1812. Songs performed that night included 'The Four Saints, or the Union' and 'The Death of Abercrombie'. See 'Calendar': Part A.

[123] *TE*, 9 February 1812.

[124] Reynolds's production included 'The destruction of the Temple of the Sun by an *earthquake*' in Act 1. See *The Life and Times of Frederick Reynolds, Written By Himself*, 2 vols. (London, 1826), 2: 391.

[125] *The Times*, 3 February 1812.

[126] See, for instance, *Morning Herald,* 25 May 1799: 'The scenery is enchanting throughout, and that of the *Temple of the Sun* superlatively magnificent'.

to Reynolds's scenic splendour was significantly heightened by audiences' recognition of the ideological terrain already mapped out by Sheridan.

The intertheatricality that united *Pizarro* and *The Virgin of the Sun* can be compared to Covent Garden's coupling of *Pizarro* (on 30 May 1812) with another Spanish-themed play, Charles Kemble's often-performed farce *The Portrait of Cervantes; or, The Plotting Lovers* (1808).[127] The playbills for Covent Garden's 1813–14 season provide further intriguing evidence of the strategic arrangements made to the theatre's repertoire. *Pizarro* was played once as the mainpiece to Isaac Pocock's successful melodrama *The Miller and His Men*, and twice before the pantomime of *Harlequin and the Swans; or, The Bath of Beauty.*[128] The arrangement suggests that although repeated less frequently, Sheridan's tragedy was still considered high enough in public esteem to promote the theatre's new melodramas and pantomimes. The arrangements made by John Philip Kemble (then manager of Covent Garden) as he structured the various elements of an evening's entertainment are as important as the choice of mainpiece itself.

In September 1809 the Drury Lane company inaugurated its new season at the Lyceum with *The Duenna*, which, if the playbills are to be trusted, was sanctioned for frequent repetition 'in consequence of the uncommon applause' it received. The frequent staging of the play during the Peninsular War may seem hard to account for, especially after Sheridan's censorious approach to Hook's manuscript play and

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[127] This farce – published under the title *Plot and Counterplot; or, The Portrait of Michael Cervantes* – was an adaptation of Michel Dieulafoy's comedy *Le Portrait de Michel Cervantes*. See Warwick Digital Collections <http://contentdm.warwick.ac.uk/cdm/ref/collection/empire/id/19402> [Accessed 18.10.14].

[128] 'Calendar': Part A: 1 December 1813; 30 December 1813; 7 January 1814.

his careful textual editing of *The Siege*'s ridicule of Roman Catholicism.[129] A good example of *The Duenna*'s religious humour occurs in Act 3 scene 5. The Spanish friars sit around a table in the priory, drinking, singing and making lecherous toasts to the abbess of St Ursuline and 'the blue-ey'd [*sic*] nun of St Catherine's'; their benefactions have been spent on wine, and their professions of abstinence exposed as excuses for private indulgence in sensual gratification.[130] Complete with glee and chorus, it is not surprising that Hook should have been drawn to this lively scene of religious hypocrisy. Although Sheridan cannot easily be cleared of a jealous motivation to defend *The Duenna*'s cultural playfulness against Hook's potential literary theft, any charges of hypocrisy against Sheridan can be mitigated by the timing of his play's new stage run. In 1808 when Hook submitted *The Siege* to the Office of the Lord Chamberlain, the British nation was gripped with avid enthusiasm for the Spanish cause: by the end of 1809 the public mood was much more circumspect.

The historian Godfrey Davies explains that although 'all Whigs were united in their detestation of the invasion of Spain, there was from the very commencement of the struggle, the widest division of opinion as to the probable success or failure of the patriots'.[131] As the conflict was prolonged and the fissures in the Spanish government made ever more visible, many Whigs retracted their support for the war. Frustrated at the inefficiency of the Cortes, the Whigs came to realise that the

[129] It is possible that by staging revivals of his earlier anti-Spanish comedies Sheridan was trying to compensate for the notable absence of his 'other' Spanish drama, *Pizarro* (whose demanding scene changes would have been too elaborate for the smaller Lyceum stage).

[130] Sheridan, *The Duenna* (2.5), in *DW,* 1: 273–5 (274).

[131] Godfrey Davies, 'The Whigs and the Peninsular Wars', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series, 2 (1919), 113–31 (116).

Spanish revolution was, at heart, fiercely conservative. The Spaniards were not so much fighting for constitutional liberty, as for the conservative pairing of 'King and Church' (associated with reactionary government in Spain). British commanders in the Peninsula complained of Spanish incompetence, while private letters sent home (and officers' memoirs, published not long afterwards) recounted stories of mutual antipathy between Spanish and British soldiers, unaccustomed, largely, to each other's religious beliefs and cultural traditions. The publication of parliamentary papers on the war further contributed to the nation's disillusionment, making many Britons resentful that their efforts had been hampered by Spanish provincial jealousies and poor co-operation.[132] The image of the Spanish patriot mobilised for action against all odds was denounced as an essentially mythical construct. Britons' early, popular and perhaps naïve support for the war in Spain became liable to serious qualification as a result.

In this politically revisionist climate, there was much uncertainty regarding what constituted a legitimately sanctioned 'Spanish' narrative. In *The Censorship of English Drama 1737–1824* (1976) Leonard Conolly relates Spencer Perceval's surprise that Drury Lane had been ordered to stop reciting a monody to the memory of Sir John Moore.[133] In February 1809 the mention of Sir John Moore was certain to excite debate. Moore had been the British Commander-in-Chief in Spain who, subject to miscommunication and poor intelligence, was unaware that Napoleon had

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[132] See 'Article 16', *ER*, April 1809, 14: 251. The article refers readers to John Moore's letter from Salamanca and a letter intercepted from a French officer at Vitoria, used as evidence in the *House of Commons Papers.* Such accusations of inertia undermined the popular image of Spanish patriotism.

[133] L.W. Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama 1737–1824* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1976), 95.

entered Madrid in early December 1808.[134] When news arrived that Napoleon had 80,000 men at his disposal and that a superior French army was chasing the British, Moore led a desperate retreat to Corunna. When he reached Northern Spain, the military leader's brilliant defensive strategies allowed for an ultimately successful retreat of the British troops, but this, in itself, was cause for humiliation. Not even Moore's death in battle could deflect from the serious damage that the retreat inflicted on the already fragile Anglo-Spanish alliance. To make matters worse, when Moore's soldiers finally returned home, their tales of starvation, exposure to the elements, poor internal discipline and Spanish hostility horrified the nation. Readers were then invited to participate in a pamphlet war between Moore's supporters and detractors, wrestling to take control of the Commander's reputation.[135] John Larpent and Spencer Perceval – two prominent cultural arbiters whose public role was to promote the hegemonic ideal – thus found themselves, understandably, at odds on how to respond to Drury Lane's request for a Monody on the death of Sir John Moore.[136] The division in public sentiment is likely to have informed Larpent's ultimate decision to reject the Drury Lane Monody. With the

[134] Moore's letters, published by his brother shortly after his death, rapidly went into new editions. See James Moore, *A Narrative of the Campaign of the British Army in Spain Commanded by his Excellency Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, &c &c &c. Authenticated by Official Papers and Original Letters* (London, 1809).

[135] See [An Officer], *Letters from Portugal and Spain: Written During the March of the British Troops Under Sir John Moore* (London, 1809); [An Officer of Staff], *Operations of the British Army in Spain: Involving Broad Hints to the Commissariat, and Board of Transports: with Anecdotes Illustrative of the Spanish Character* (London, 1809); and Adam Neale's *Letters from Portugal and Spain: An Account of the Operations of the Armies Under Sir Arthur Wellesley and Sir John Moore from the Landing of the troops in Mondego Bay to the Battle at Corunna* (London, 1809).

[136] 'Monody on the Death of Sir John Moore', Larpent Collection 1568. BL Microfiche F254/235.

final verdict on Corunna still unresolved, the Examiner of Plays seems to have been unwilling to re-direct the question to the theatre's auditorium.[137]

As the Peninsular War became divested of its initial nationalist glamour, *Pizarro*'s Spanish theme, although still popular, became ever more controversial. In 1811 the reviewer for *The Times* explained that the play's first performances had been 'happily timed'. In 1799 'to hear words of courage and comfort from the stage was new'. [138] But more than a decade later, audiences suffering from the hardships of war, troubled Anglo-Spanish relations and political uncertainty at home, struggled to believe that they could still preserve 'their fortunes and their freedom'. In the words of the theatrical reviewer, 'all this now seems to have been singularly absurd'.[139]

The seeds of discord can once again be traced to that fateful year for the campaign: 1809. In his appraisal of Charles Vaughan's eulogistic narrative *The Siege of Zaragoza* (1809), Henry Brougham, writing for the *Edinburgh Review*, was quick to correct its author's 'partiality for his Saragossan friends'.[140] Instead, he wrote a forceful critique of British hopes for Spain and the military operations therein. Brougham claimed that British diplomacy bore all the ridicule associated with theatrical foppery; 'a pompous embassy' indulging 'in gaudiness and parade, and in the trappings of the East'.[141] This derision of spectacle recalls early responses

[137] On 10 January 1812, John Philip Kemble was granted permission to deliver 'A Melologue' on the subject of Spanish victories at CG. By then, the military campaign was, significantly, on a much stronger footing.

[138] *The Times*, 7 October 1811.

[139] *The Times*, 7 October 1811.

[140] 'Article 16', *ER*, April 1809, 14: 245.

[141] 'Article 16', *ER*, April 1809, 14: 255–6.

to *Pizarro,* with the reference to effeminate Eastern luxury conjuring disturbing suggestions of a degenerate British empire. Brougham develops these hints into an insistence that 'No Scicily [*sic*] – no Ceuta – no Sugar islands – no cruizes in the Cattegat' should have influenced the government's Spanish Campaign.[142] The intrusion of commercial interests upon contemporary political ideology had marked consequences for both real and fictional depictions of Spain. By the 1810s Britain's mercantile interests and the global implications of Napoleon's Peninsular Campaign would seriously limit *Pizarro'*s 1808 reading as a play supporting the Spanish cause.

The war in Spain and its repercussions for the Spanish colonies excited contemporary interest, not least because it finally opened South American markets to the speculation of British merchants and traders. Gillray's 1799 satires of a money-grubbing Sheridan came full circle with the British government's very real, if ideologically dubious, financial projects for South America. Rebecca Cole Heinowitz concludes her study of Romantic-period British writings about Spanish America with the arresting anecdote of a ruined speculator whose letter to the *Morning Chronicle* (dated 10 January 1826) was simply signed 'Pizarro'.[143] British commercial interests across the Atlantic had, nevertheless, hinted towards tragedy even prior to the stock market crash of 1825. Britain's political investments in South America had threatened from as early as the 1810s to align Ministerial policy all too closely with *Pizarro*'s characterisations of mercenary Spanish imperialism.

The insurrections in Spanish America were, nevertheless, of ideological value. In the 1790s the Venezuelan Franscisco de Miranda had come to London to

[142] 'Article 16', *ER*, April 1809, 14: 258.

[143] Heinowitz, *Spanish America*, 209.

seek the assistance of the British government. Many other Spanish-controlled states continued to consult the British on their plans for independence from Spain. Leigh Hunt wrote passionately about their cause, using language reminiscent of *Pizarro* in order to inform his readers of Peru's resolution to throw off Spanish rule and erect an independent state:

> May that land, which was the cradle of Spanish degeneracy, prove its grave, and a new race of men spring up in South America, to whom defeated pride may have taught reason; defeated indolence, industry; and defeated oppression, the indispensable blessing of liberty.[144]

This defence of indigenous rights against unlawful oppression chimes closely with *Pizarro*'s dramatisation of the Spanish conquest of Peru in the sixteenth century. After the disappointing convocation of the Spanish Cortes in 1810 and its failure to grant equal participation to the Creole representatives, the movement for independence from Spain gained rapid momentum. Yet, while the British government remained committed to the Peninsular Campaign, it could not afford to sponsor the independence of Spanish America, despite its financial temptations. In this climate, *Pizarro,* which had always sparked political doubts as to its putative loyalism, found itself hard-pressed – betrayed by the difficulty of speaking at once to the Spaniards and the South American Creoles.

Towards the end of Sheridan's play, Pizarro confesses to Rolla: 'I cannot but admire thee, Rolla; I wou'd we might be friends' (4.3, *DW*, 2: 694). He does so in the full knowledge that his wish will most probably be rejected. Pizarro here employs the two modal verbs, 'wou'd' and 'might', in close proximity, as if to provide a defensive anchor for his gesture. Rolla's answer, 'Become the friend of

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[144] *Examiner,* 18 February 1810.

virtue – and thou wilt be mine' (4.3, *DW*, 2: 694), is, of course, alien to the Conquistador's greedy designs. It prompts Pizarro, when alone, to question the actions that his ambition have driven him to commit. He returns to the construction 'I would' in order to express his sense of personal limitation: 'I would I cou'd retrace my steps – I cannot – Would I could evade my own reflections! – No! – thought and memory are my Hell' (4.3, *DW*, 2: 694). Nevertheless, such is his fascination with Rolla that when the Spanish soldiers mistake him for a spy and bring him back to Pizarro, the Spaniard concludes his apology by asking, 'May not Rolla and Pizarro cease to be foes?' (5.2, *DW*, 2: 698). But even this more measured request – in search of something less than, but not divorced from, friendship – is rejected. Humiliated, and suspicious of Pizarro's role in his arrest, Rolla responds: 'When the sea divides us; yes!' (5.2, *DW*, 2: 698). This inability to bridge the distance between Old and New Spain testifies to the competing claims of *Pizarro*'s investment in justified revolt. The Creole Rebellion of Huánuco (1812) and the Rebellion of Cuzco (1814–1816) in Peru meant that during the latter part of the Peninsular War, *Pizarro*'s setting became dangerously imbricated with the movements for independence that swept Spanish America. In the 1810s, the romanticized landscape of Peru was no longer geographically and culturally remote, but troublesomely topical. The task of directing audiences' moral and political responsibilities had, it seems, finally exceeded the scope of Sheridan's play.

The inherently 'protean' character of Sheridan's tragedy spoke, from the outset, to political uncertainties at home and abroad. By focusing on the play's premiere in 1799 and its performances at the time of the Peace of Amiens and Peninsular Campaign, this chapter has considered *Pizarro*'s changing relation to Romantic-period society.

The earliest reviews of *Pizarro* seized upon the physicality of actors and audience members as proof of the theatre's seemingly magical (if also dangerous) capacity to set human passions into motion. Rolla's celebrated speech constituted the emblematic focal point of this psychologically absorbing moment of spectatorship. It was published as a broadsheet after the collapse of the Peace of Amiens, at a time when *Pizarro*'s perceived capacity to transform spectatorship into participation could be used to disseminate ideals of patriotic citizenship and encourage the nation to take up arms against the invader. Five years later, during the first flush of enthusiasm for the Peninsular War, the play's rhetoric was re-infused with patriotic spark. Intriguingly, however, because the war soon found almost as many detractors as supporters, *Pizarro*'s reductive portrayal of sixteenth-century Spain was also relevant to those who protested against British involvement in the Peninsula (caricaturing the Spaniards as dreamers of a mythical golden age).[145]

Sheridan's recourse to the Black Legend meant that *Pizarro* was curiously up-to-date for opponents of the war, while those who supported the Peninsular

[145] In eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century satirical prints, 'the Spaniard was invariably portrayed in late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century dress with feathered hat, slashed doublet and pantaloons or breeches, cloak and ruff...'. Duffy, *Englishman and the Foreigner*, 26. See Charles Williams, *John Bull among the Spaniards; or, Boney decently provided for* (July 1808); and Isaac Cruikshank, *The noble Spaniards; or, Britannia assisting the cause of freedom all over the world, whither friend or foe!* (20 July 1808).

Campaign were at liberty to continue to revise the play's literal plot (imagining nineteenth-century Spaniards in place of the righteous Peruvians and, as was customary, Pizarro and his soldiers as Napoleon and his armies). Contrary to initial predictions the Peninsular War developed into a complex, partisan conflict. This imbued the representation of Spanish themes on stage with political controversy, and partly explains why, after 1809, Sheridan's *Pizarro* was not as popular as it might have been. But other factors, such as the fire at Drury Lane, also seem to have influenced the frequency of the play's metropolitan performances.

Pizarro's fluidity, however enabling, had its limits. When the South American question could no longer be avoided, the play's potential allegories struggled to compete with the real implications of its plot. From Venezuela to Argentina and Peru, the native people of South America were rising against the forces of Spanish imperialism – making proclamations of their liberty and independence that theatre-goers would have been quick to associate with the Peruvians of Sheridan's play. Peruvian independence was declared in 1821 and finally secured in 1824. It is no coincidence that the decreasing frequency with which *Pizarro* was presented in the 1810s corresponded to the most active years in the movement for Spanish American independence. These were also years that marked the decline of Sheridan's celebrity. He was practically forced out of the management of Drury Lane after its destruction by fire, and lost his seat in the House of Commons in 1812.[146] Sheridan's reputation had always been problematically connected to the play's politics, tying together the private and the public, the fictional and the real. By the 1810s, however, the fortunes of a war with obviously global consequences

[146] Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition*, 6.

determined that Sheridan's *Pizarro,* whose patriotism had always been 'debated property', could no longer be allocated a definite place in the theatrical repertoire.[147]

[147] During this period, the Viceroyalty of Peru banned performances of *Pizarro* and promoted 'loyal Spanish-American dramas' instead. The play-text itself may, however, have been read clandestinely, alongside other banned texts smuggled into the country, such as those of the French Enlightenment. Juan García del Rio (Peruvian Plenipotentiary in England and Secretary for the Liberation government of Peru) published his translation of *Pizarro* in 1844. I am indebted to the research assistance of Eduardo Caparó, Director General CSBE, BNP (Biblioteca Nacional del Perú/The National Library of Peru) for this information.