Introduction

Shakespearean Chartists

In the autumn and winter of 1842–43, the poet and activist Thomas Cooper faced legal prosecution on three separate occasions for matters related to his activities in the Chartist movement. First, in October, Cooper was tried unsuccessfully for committing arson in Hanley, Staffordshire during the massive strike wave of August 1842.[1] The following March, in a trial that 'commenced on [his] birthday', Cooper was convicted of seditious conspiracy for speeches made during that same summer and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Staffordshire Gaol.[2] But even as he awaited his second trial, the activist was summoned to Leicester's town hall to answer a seemingly unrelated accusation: on 30 January 1843, Cooper was charged with performing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* 'on the 9th and 16th inst., for profit and gain, contrary to the statute' that restricted the staging of tragedy and comedy to theatres with a royal patent.[3] These performances grew out of the cultural world of Leicester Chartism. Under Cooper's leadership, the local movement combined advocacy for the Charter, which sought a set of political reforms to establish democratic rule, with a vibrant counter-culture that included a school, frequent lectures, and 'sections … for the cultivation of singing, study of the drama, &c.'.[4] Members of the latter group performed a series of plays in December and January, culminating with the controversial production of *Hamlet*.

Although the stakes of Cooper's court appearance on 30 January were undeniably lower than the other prosecutions, in which if convicted Cooper faced penal transportation or imprisonment, the idea of the impoverished stockingers who made up Leicester Chartism's rank-and-file staging serious drama provoked scandal in the town.[5] Such was the cultural trespass that on the day of the trial, the 'Town-hall … was crowded with persons anxious to hear the information against Mr. Cooper for unlicensed theatrical performances!'[6] Although the prosecutor asserted that Cooper not only 'caused plays to be acted' but took 'the part of "Hamlet"' himself, the proceedings ended anti-climatically when charges were withdrawn in exchange for Cooper's 'public pledge' that all dramatic performances 'should cease from that time forth'.[7]

Cooper's appropriation of Shakespeare was hardly unique. Chartist writers celebrated the bard as an artisan poet and republican genius, conscripting him into the service of democratic reform.[8] Nor was Leicester alone among Chartist localities in performing Shakespeare. Groups in Failsworth, Lancashire and Kilbarchan, Scotland staged *Othello* at least one time each.[9] While Leicester's branch styled itself the 'Shaksperean Brigade' after the name of their (idiosyncratically spelled) meeting room, a troupe of 'Shaksperean … amatures' in Nottingham raised nearly two pounds for the 'local Defence Fund' by performing an unnamed play.[10] In London, a Chartist benefit at the Strand Theatre paired *Henry IV* with *Damon and Pythias* to raise money for the 'National Victim and Defence Committee'.[11] Beyond actual performances, Cooper himself frequently lectured on Shakespeare, once reciting 'the entire first act' of *Hamlet* to a London audience, which required that he 'personate the whole of the characters who figure in the first act – the *Ghost* included', a task made especially arduous 'considering the total absence of those essential helps, dress, scenery, stage, and the other aids, real and illusive, which are to be found only in the theatre'.[12] Finally, in spring 1840 the Chartist newspaper the *Northern Star* ran a column that culled egalitarian sentiments from *Henry IV*, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and other plays, thus purporting to deduce 'Chartism from Shakespeare'.[13]

Nevertheless, the Shaksperean Brigade's production of *Hamlet* in the massive Leicester Amphitheatre carried a particular charge. Termed 'the most spacious building in a theatrical form out of London', the Amphitheatre was 'crowded to excess each night'.[14] Hamlet's fated destruction must have resonated with the coming trial and anticipated imprisonment of the Shaksperean Brigade's 'General' for the 3000 people who nightly witnessed Cooper in the title role, a part he took, as he later recalled, because he 'knew the whole play by heart'.[15] The Chartist context would have called to the fore the insurrectionary import of a play about a contemplated regicide, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's surveillance of the hero would have taken on special significance in the midst of the wave of trials of Chartist activists following the 1842 strikes, many of which relied on testimony by informants and police spies. The fundraising purpose of the production – which sought 'to raise money for [Cooper's] law expenses' – would only have strengthened these associations.[16]

More speculatively, one might consider the play's 'Mousetrap' sequence an apt metaphor for Chartist literary and dramatic culture, which adapted a wide array of texts and genres for new purposes. Hamlet, in order to test Claudius's conscience about the death of his father, commissions a group of travelling actors to perform the 'The Murder of Gonzago' and has them learn 'a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which [he] would set down and insert in't'.[17] This introduction argues that just as Hamlet turns to theatre to articulate truths that cannot be voiced in other contexts, Chartist performance of both received and original texts offered a way of considering ideas, especially about political

violence, that were subject to prosecution when expressed openly in oratory or journalism. Drama served the Chartists in many fashions: as a means of political education, a way to raise money, and a method of bringing their democratic message to the broader public. But perhaps most importantly, it granted opportunities for creativity and self-expression, encouraging both participants and audience members to engage in acts of imagination akin to the movement's efforts to transform society.

The texts collected in this volume were each written or performed by members of the largest working-class protest campaign in nineteenth-century Britain. At its most basic, Chartism sought the adoption of the six points of the Charter: universal male suffrage; secret ballots; no property qualification for Members of Parliament; payment to Members; equal electoral districts; and annual elections. These measures promised to reshape British political life at a time when a small fraction of the population had the right to vote. The Chartists further believed that by establishing democracy they would initiate a host of social and economic reforms and protect the interests of 'the people' against the privileged orders.[18] In particular, they hoped to end the social austerity of the New Poor Law, secure the right to participate in unions, raise wages, and reform working conditions in factories. Beyond a political and economic programme, however, Chartism represented a cultural mobilisation. The flowering of educational and literary activity in Leicester's 'Shaksperean Brigade' was matched in localities throughout Britain. Chartist associations founded 'Democratic chapels', organised alternative schools, formed musical groups, participated in theatrical clubs, and hosted innumerable tea parties, dances, and literary soirees.[19]

Growing out of this extraordinary milieu, each of the plays in this collection represents an important work in Chartist dramatic culture. Stagings of Robert Southey's *Wat Tyler* (1794/1817), which concerns the Great Rising of 1381, were part of a broad array of Chartist efforts to re-imagine the past from the perspective of ordinary people. Performances of the play connected the Chartists to earlier generations of British radicals: the Jacobins of the French revolutionary era – Southey's contemporaries when *Wat Tyler* was written – and the reformers of the post-war period, who first published the text in pirated editions. Chartist stagings are also the only documented productions of Southey's important Romantic text. John Watkins's *John Frost* (1841) treats a crossroads in the history of Chartism, the Newport rising of 1839, which resulted in the last mass treason trial in British history. Written by a Chartist poet, the play illustrates the intense debates within the movement about the implications of Newport for the future of Chartism. *The Trial of Robert Emmet*, which was the most frequently staged Chartist production, also deals with questions of political violence and state repression. Even though the Chartists never published a text for this work, this volume reprints their source material, popular and inexpensive editions of memoirs of the Irish revolutionary's life and trial. Those works offer a good

sense of what performances might have looked like. Finally, *St John's Eve* (1848) by Ernest Jones is notable as the only extant drama of this influential Chartist writer, journalist, and politician. It also represents the sole play published in its entirety in a Chartist journal and speaks to the way the Chartists sometimes staged less explicitly political drama.

The range of genres represented in the volume – the texts include a history play, a tragedy, a gothic melodrama, and a trial re-enactment – testifies both to the eclecticism of Chartist literary culture and the dynamism of early Victorian theatre. As Jane Moody has shown, the 'illegitimate' theatres of London fostered an array of experimental genres as ways of circumventing the patent monopoly.[20] Conflicts over legal restrictions of theatrical performance came to a head in the early 1840s. In 1843, the Theatres Regulation Act overturned the century-old Theatre Licensing Act, which had restricted the performance of tragedy and comedy to theatres possessing a royal patent. Just as in the 1830s, a forceful campaign against the patent monopoly played out against the crisis around the Reform Bill of 1832, efforts at theatrical reform in the 1840s found echoes in the decade's broader upheaval.[21] Appreciating Chartism's links with London theatrical culture sheds light on the politics of commercial theatres during this critical period.

The remaining sections of this introduction take up a number of questions. In the next part, I situate the volume's texts in the wider context of Chartist culture and drama, exploring the relationship between print and performance in Chartist life and describing what can be gleaned about the social setting and dramatic practices of Chartist theatre. In the third section, I assess the connections between Chartist and commercial drama. While most Chartist performances were amateur, activist groups in London hosted two dozen benefits at many of the city's most important working-class theatres, including the Standard, the Pavilion, and the Victoria. A smaller number of professional benefits took place in Manchester while the Glasgow Chartists commissioned an acting troupe to stage re-enactments of the *Trial of Robert Emmet* in several Scottish towns and cities. Beyond these collaborations, professional theatre inevitably influenced Chartist amateur performance in terms of the kinds of plays performed and the styles utilised.

The concluding sections of the introduction turn to thematic subjects from the plays. The fourth part looks in depth at the question of 'physical force' in Chartist drama. Texts in the collection centre on the Great Rising of 1381 (*Wat Tyler*), the failed Dublin rising of 1803 (*The Trial of Robert Emmet*), and the Newport rising of 1839 (*John Frost*). The spectre of the latter sits over all Chartist theatre, which obsessively explores issues of state violence and repression while repeatedly embodying revolutionary crowds on stage. Approximately 80 per cent of Chartist performances (where titles of pieces are available) included at least one play that explicitly depicts revolution, insurrection, or conspiratorial

plotting. Finally, I explore women's participation in Chartist theatre. Although no text in this collection was written by a woman and several articulate a masculinist perspective that situates political agency with martial men, women played important roles in bringing Chartist drama to the stage. Beyond organising theatrical benefits, women performed a wide range of parts, several of which complicate Chartist discourse that figures the radical movement as the protector of distressed femininity and the patriarchal family, thus countering Chartist celebrations of heroic masculinity.

Chartist dramatic culture

Chartism had a paradoxical relationship with the world of writing. On the one hand, the campaign fostered a massive print culture that comprised over one hundred journals and newspapers, including some of the most widely read in Britain in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Beyond editorialising about contemporary politics and recording Chartist rallies and other events, these papers provided a forum for writers to publish a huge array of poetry and fiction. On the local level, Chartist classes and schools promoted literacy as a tool in the struggle for democracy. In Leicester, for example, nearly three hundred people attended an adult school that Cooper superintended, at which class sections were named for poets and radical heroes.[22] Finally, the national petitions of 1839, 1842, and 1848 staked a claim to political legitimacy partly on the ability to write.[23] Patrick Brantlinger evocatively describes the national petitions as 'acts of symbolic literacy' for a democratic mass.[24] While all this highlights the importance of reading and writing within Chartism, a substantial portion of the movement's ranks were nevertheless unlettered. James Vernon estimates that 'in 1840 something like 50 per cent of women and 33 per cent of men were still illiterate'; among the coal miners, factory proletariat, and distressed textile outworkers who formed important constituencies within Chartism, the proportion was likely higher.[25]

So if Chartism promised members the possibility of educational uplift and cultural citizenship, it simultaneously attempted to mobilise people who could not read or write. Chartist groups did so by fostering an oral culture that included such participatory spectacles as protest marches, ceremonial dinners, and mass rallies.[26] Robert Lowery's description of a giant meeting in late September 1838 on Kersal Moor outside Manchester captures the theatrical nature of such occasions: 'When we got out of the streets it was an exciting sight to see the processions arriving on the Moor from different places, with their flags flying and the music of the bands swelling in the air, ever and anon over-topped by a loud cheer which ran along the different lines.'[27] Speaking from a raised platform, Lowery looked out on the crowd (estimated at 300,000 by *The Times*) while other speakers mounted some 'half-a-dozen' wagons distributed throughout

the multitude. From these improvised stages, orators combined ostentatious gesture with passionate speech in ways that provoked, in Lowery's words, a 'response … swelling up from [the spectators'] very hearts depths'.[28]

While in recent years historians have come to appreciate the ways the Chartists sutured divisions between the movement's literate and illiterate members, literary scholars of radicalism have had less to say about the interplay between orality, performance, and print.[29] As a literary art uniquely accessible to those who cannot read, drama demands such a reckoning. John Watkins's *John Frost*, takes up potential divisions within the movement around the question of literacy. Notably, the play begins with Frost, a Chartist leader, '*solus*' in 'a library room' but moves in Act 2 to the public space of an outdoor meeting.[30] When at the meeting the discussion turns to the national petition, a working-man declares 'I can neither read nor write; but I can work, / and, maybe, fight' while another admits he 'cannot write' though he 'can read'.[31] In this way, Watkins draws attention to the exclusions petitioning entails. The soon-to-be martyred Shell – a character based on a Chartist aged 19, killed at Newport – advances a separate critique that echoes throughout the play.[32] Suggesting petitions are a paltry alternative to physical force, Shell promises: 'Next time I write, I'll dip my pen in blood— / The blood of tyrants, and a pike my pen.'[33]

Chartist drama emerged out of and remained connected to the movement's broader performance culture. In October 1842, the *Star* declared that 'concerts, Balls, Raffles, &c. are constantly taking place in all quarters of the metropolis, for the benefit of the victims … and London is fast redeeming her character'.[34] Such events, along with ubiquitous Chartist tea parties and soirees, included many different kinds of cultural expression. Typical was an 1845 ball in Burnley where 'the gay lads and bonny lasses enjoyed themselves with singing, reciting, &c., until one o'clock, when they reluctantly separated to hold themselves in readiness for the tinkling of the factory bells at five o'clock'.[35] Similarly, political dinners involved ceremonial toasting, oratory, recitation, and song.[36] Although drama sometimes occurred as a stand-alone event, it frequently formed part of larger festivity.[37] After the performance of *The Trial of Robert Emmet* at an 1841 Christmas Day gathering 'in the Working Man's Hall' in Keighley, Lancashire, 'the Hall was thrown open for general entertainment, and songs, recitations, and dancing were continued during the remainder of the evening, the whole enlivened and assisted by an excellent quadrille band'.[38] On Easter Tuesday, 1842, 'several pieces were performed … from Wat Tyler, William Tell &c.' at 'a tea and dancing party' in Coventry.[39] And as part of a concert in the London Chartists' 'City Rooms, Old Bailey', a 'Mrs. and Miss Ford, with Mr. Ford' performed a scene from *John Frost* during an evening that featured a recitation of Byron's 'The Gladiator' (from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), a second scene from

Watkins's play, and the performance of 'a number of patriotic songs', including 'the Marseilles Hymn'.[40]

Even as Chartist drama was grounded in a culture of conviviality and political spectacle, it also depended on writing. Two texts in this collection, Robert Southey's *Wat Tyler* and the anonymous *The Trial of Robert Emmet* (or rather the *Memoir of Robert Emmett* from which the latter is drawn) were some of the most widely read literary works in Chartist circles.[41] Southey's text had been a staple of the radical press since its publication in a pirated edition in 1817, the circumstances of which is discussed in more depth in the play's introduction. In the 1840s, ads for 2*d*. editions featured regularly in several Chartist periodicals, including the *Star*, the *Charter*, *Cleave's Gazette of Variety*, the *Northern Liberator*, and the *Odd Fellow*. In 1851, the Manchester publisher, bookseller, and Chartist Abel Heywood testified to a parliamentary committee that he sold 450 copies of the play each week (three times the sales of Shakespeare in penny numbers).[42]

Memoirs of the Irish revolutionary Robert Emmet were also very popular. Emmet owed his celebrity to the failed Dublin rising of 1803 and the treason trial that followed, at which, following the verdict, he made what would become one of the most famous speeches in Irish history. Bronterre O'Brien recalled 'the sensation which the publication of that speech excited in England – the avidity with which every copy of the [*Poor Man's*] *Guardian* … was bought up'. 'Since then,' O'Brien claimed with little exaggeration, 'the speech itself has been reprinted over and over again – each edition circulating in the tens of thousands.'[43] Based on the anonymous *The Life, Trial and Conversations of Robert Emmet* (1836), John Cleave's *Memoir of Robert Emmett* appeared in a variety of formats. Cleave sold the memoir as a 1*s*. chapbook alongside a 1*d*. edition of Emmet's courtroom speech, both of which he advertised extensively in the *Star* and the *Northern Liberator*. The *Memoir* also ran serially in Cleave's own *English Chartist Circular* as well as the Glasgow *Chartist Circular*, the latter paper selling 20,000 copies per issue.[44] Notably, Chartist groups from Glasgow and Greenock toured Scottish towns with competing productions of Emmet's trial within a year of the *Chartist Circular*'s series.[45] Such was the perceived propaganda value of Emmet's life that activists also distributed the texts for free. In Gateshead, the local branch of the National Charter Association provided 'weekly missionaries' with a dozen copies of 'Emmett's Speech after his sentence' to loan to interested readers, and when William Beesley was arrested for seditious libel in Burnley in early September 1842 'two or three dozen of Emmet's life and trial' were discovered on his person.[46]

Chartist drama was thus able to reach audiences who never attended a performance. The movement's print culture interacted with drama in other ways as well. Tickets for productions were available at radical bookstores, including at Heywood's in Manchester and Cleave's in London.[47] Additionally, movement papers advertised benefit performances, reviewed the commercial stage

and weighed in on such issues as the patent monopoly and the question of copyright for dramatic adaptation. The London-based *Charter* sided with the playwright W. T. Moncrieff in a controversy over his use of Charles Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* as the basis of a script. 'It is somewhat illiberal and ungrateful', Moncrieff reasoned in a letter the *Charter* published, 'that being indebted to the stage for so many of his best characters … [Dickens] should deny it a few in return.'[48]

Feargus O'Connor and Ernest Jones's literary journal the *Labourer* gave more space to drama than any other Chartist paper. Besides serialising Jones's own *St John's Eve*, the magazine displayed a literary internationalism by introducing readers to Friedrich Schiller's *Fiesco* and *The Robbers* and publishing a scene from Count Sigismund Krasinski's *Infernal Comedy* translated from Polish.[49] An essay by Jones called for the democratic renovation of the 'expiring drama – expiring, because it has been dedicated to an expiring cause'. Urging Chartist writers to go beyond 'combating the fallacies of opponents', he exhorted them 'to do *something more*, – more in the matter they treat of – more in the moral they deduce. We have had the misfortunes of younger sons, the mishaps of injured daughters of noble houses, but when has the Bastile victim, when has the lost child of labour, when has the hapless operative (the martyrs of the nineteenth century,) when have these been brought before the public eye in the drama, or when will they?'[50]

The significance of drama for Chartism lay partly in the form's capacity for exploring social relationships and imagining ways these might change. In this regard, drama was allied with poetry, which occupied a central place in Chartist culture. Mike Sanders has theorised the importance of poetry in Chartism in terms of the aesthetic experience it offered, the way it functioned as 'an incarnation of the process of becoming'. In other words, the catharsis involved in reading verse helped reveal 'the creative potentialities and possibilities inherent in social-historical being, namely that life can be different'.[51] Drama too served as an attempt to improvise alternative worlds. The former Chartist Ben Brierley's memoir describes theatre's transformative potential for audience members and performers alike. His account of the 'wonders that were held out to us as if by the hand of some mighty magician' during his first visit to the Theatre Royal in Manchester evokes the way drama transported many nineteenth-century theatregoers beyond the realm of the ordinary.[52] And his description of performing *William Tell* and Southey's *Wat Tyler* with a Chartist group suggests theatre's capacity to reframe the given: 'only fancy two armies meeting, fighting, and subverting a government, on three or four planks; and you will think less of the glories of the battlefield, and the dignities of rulers'.[53]

The spaces in which Chartist drama occurred heightened this sense of possible transformation. Chartist association rooms, working men's halls, Democratic

chapels, and similar locales offered opportunities for conviviality, creativity, and self-expression often lacking in other arenas of working-class life, especially the workshops and 'cotton bastiles' which dominated daily experience.[54] Chartist meeting rooms were elaborately decorated for special occasions in ways that would have heightened the contrast between the makeshift theatre and outside neighbourhood, potentially replicating the experience of awe commercial venues inspired in playgoers such as Brierley. For a tea party in Sheffield, a Chartist meeting room 'was beautifully ornamented … small arches of evergreens being formed on the walls, in the centre of which arches, were placed garlands of white muslin decorated with flowers. … From the centre of the ceiling was suspended a large and beautiful garland of evergreen flowers, fruit and ribbons.'[55] At the same time, the avowedly political context of Chartist drama underlined its ambition to reconfigure the present state of things. 'EVERY CHARTIST IN LONDON TO HIS POST' and 'IT IS THE CAUSE! IT IS THE CAUSE!!' blared advertisements in the *Star* for benefits held at the Victoria and Standard Theatres.[56] By overlaying spectatorship with political action, the *Star* rejected the idea of art as apolitical, a posture that explicitly countered the aims of theatrical censorship, which sought to ban controversial subjects from the stage. Occurring in spaces of holiday celebration (and often on holidays themselves), Chartist drama simultaneously set itself apart from, criticised, and attempted to transform the outside world.[57]

Just as poetry within Chartism helped make the movement 'culturally intelligible to its constituencies', drama provided a shared experience that could powerfully interpret past and present life.[58] Key differences, however, separated the genres. Anne Janowitz observes that as Chartism matured 'a process of poetic stratification set in', so that a small number of 'laureates of labour' received more and more attention in the movement press.[59] Theatre, on the other hand, necessitated the participation of large numbers of people who remained largely unheralded. To bring drama to life required the labour not only of actors and directors, but of musicians; ticket-sellers; and committee members, who arranged practical details, decorated the performance space, and prepared and served refreshments. We have already encountered the 'dramatic section' of the Shaksperean Chartists in Leicester and the 'Shaksperean amatures' in Nottingham. Other Chartist theatre troupes formed in the neighbouring Lancashire mill towns of Failsworth and Hollinwood, which performed *The Trial of Robert Emmet*, *Wat Tyler*, and several other plays; in London, where the Amateur Dramatic Society made its debut performance at the Standard Theatre; and in Ashton, where the Juvenile Chartist Association staged *The Trial of Robert Emmet* over a dozen times.[60]

Shannon Jackson's work on contemporary performance provides a helpful framework for considering the situated labour of these Chartist thespians. Jackson emphasises the way performance requires participants to 'think

deliberately but also speculatively about what it means to sustain human collaboration spatially and temporally'.[61] Her focus on art that foregrounds its institutional and organisational support is suggestive for Chartist theatre because movement papers gave as much attention to work preparing for dramatic benefits as to performances themselves. Readers of the *Star*, for example, learned scant details about the performance of *Othello* by the Chartists of Kilbarchan. Instead, the paper focused on a meeting following the event when a committee gathered in the 'Chartist vestry' to pay expenses, disperse profits to various causes, and '[return] their best thanks to … members of the Historonic [*sic*] club of Paisley, for … the loan of their scenery'.[62]

While the Chartist press stressed the preparatory work that made theatre possible, Chartist plays depicted collaboration as a constitutive element of democratic politics. On stage, the Chartists instantiated meetings, depicted conspiratorial plots, and personified revolutionary crowds, thus using theatre to explore the limits and possibilities of various kinds of mass action. Indeed, the capacity or inability of people to sustain mutual efforts in the face of economic hardship and political persecution form a central problematic of *Wat Tyler*, *John Frost*, and *The Trial of Robert Emmet*. Other plays the Chartists staged, including *William Tell*, *Henry IV*, and *Venice Preserved*, take up similar questions.

As much as any work in the Chartist repertoire, *John Frost* explores the process through which political groups come into being. The play is framed with opening and closing scenes that foreground the protagonist's isolation. The action begins with Frost at home, alienated from his wife and disconnected from 'the people' he would aid. By the end, the radicalised hero is again cut off from the outside world, now awaiting exile in a prison cell. In contrast, the middle portion of the play shows a collective force arising that promises not only to dissolve the protagonist's estrangement but to redress the antagonisms that define society. Act 2 shifts from the private space of Frost's home to a Chartist meeting 'in the open air'. 'Here only we can meet', declares Shell, 'but meet we will, / In spite of wind and weather, or the whigs'.[63] The Chartists resort to the outdoor location, because the 'gagging whigs won't let us have a room, / A place to meet in to discuss our griefs'.[64] By calling attention to the restrictions on the right to assemble Chartist groups faced, Watkins delineates how barriers to working-class organisation are both material and political. Act 4 extends this theme by highlighting how ruling-class efforts to restrict access to politics are underwritten by violence. The police, armed with 'orders from the magistrates / Not to allow assemblages like these', disrupt a second meeting and arrest the leader Albion in the middle of his speech.[65]

In these and other instances, Watkins emphasises the fraught and contingent nature of efforts at radical change. Beyond external pressures, ethnic and ideological differences within the movement pose a threat to unity, albeit ones that are, at least temporarily, superseded.[66] In these ways, *John Frost* confronts

Table 0.1 Plays known to be performed multiple times

Play and author (when stated or otherwise unambiguously known)	Number of performances
The Trial of Robert Emmet. Anonymous	36 (possibly an additional 21 or more)
William Tell. James Sheridan Knowles (×1)	8
Wat Tyler. Robert Southey (×1); John Watkins (×1); others presumably Southey	7
Hofer, the Tell of the Tyrol. Edward Fitzball?	3
Wallace, the Hero of Scotland. William Barrymore	2
Douglas. John Home	2 (likely 3)
Black-Eyed Susan. Douglass Jerrold	2
Venice Preserved. Thomas Otway	2
Hamlet. Shakespeare	2
Othello. Shakespeare	2

issues of social agency that Chartist verse frequently elides, a problem taken up in more detail in the introduction's penultimate section.[67] Crucially, however, Watkins suggests that the obstacles that confront democratic politics cannot be addressed theoretically (as in Frost's solitary reflections in Act 1). They must rather be surmounted through collective action, which the collaborative space of the meeting (and the stage) typifies.

The ambition of Chartist theatre to imagine social transformation was reflected in its subject matter. While Chartist performance spanned the range of Victorian genres – including melodrama, pantomime, burletta, farce, comedy, tragedy, and opera – history plays occupied the pride of place (see Table 0.1).[68] *The Trial of Robert Emmet*, *Wat Tyler*, *William Tell*, *Wallace*, and *Hofer, the Tell of the Tyrol* were each performed multiple times while *Henry IV* and two French revolutionary dramas (*Robert le Grange* and *The Black Doctor, or the Siege of the Bastile, and Revolution of 1793*) were staged at least once. Notably, these plays each concern a revolt thirty or more years in the past in Britain, Ireland, or elsewhere in Europe. Even *John Frost* might be deemed a kind of history play, especially considering its prologue, which situates the Newport rising in a *longue durée* of oppression and resistance.[69]

Wat Tyler and *The Trial of Robert Emmet* best illustrate the dynamic relationship the Chartists imagined between past, present, and future. Both conclude by suggesting the history they have recounted remains open-ended even in the face of the revolt's defeat. The close of Emmet's speech from the dock turns to the future as the arena in which the rising's failure will be made comprehensible:

> Let no man write my epitaph; for as no man who knows my motives dare now vindicate them, let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them and me

> repose in obscurity and peace, and my tomb remain uninscribed, until other times, and other men, can do justice to my character. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth – then, and not till then – let my epitaph be written.[70]

The complex temporality in play here animates much Chartist drama. A voice from the past looks forward to a time (potentially the moment of performance) that will prove capable of redeeming history's wreckage. *Wat Tyler* ends with a parallel gesture when the condemned priest John Ball bequeaths to an unknown generation the work of liberation: 'the destined hour must come, / When [the truth] shall blaze with sun-surpassing splendour, / And the dark mists of prejudice and falsehood / Fade in its strong effulgence.'[71]

So far I have focused on the cultural and ideological significance of drama within Chartism, but it also possessed practical importance. As theatre was a popular form of working-class entertainment, staging plays offered a way to raise funds and, potentially, to broaden the base of the movement. The venues the Chartists chose for benefits testified to this popularity; in many instances activists selected the largest space available. Beyond the Leicester Amphitheatre, which held 3000 and was the site for at least four performances, Chartist groups staged productions at the Owenite Hall of Science in Manchester, which also sat 3000; in the Ashton Chartists' Charlestown meeting room, which accommodated 1600; at the Dundee Democratic School where 'from 1,000 to 1,200 attended' a 'soiree' featuring the school's 'scholars' performing *The Trial of Robert Emmet*; in the 'Democratic Chapel' in Nottingham, which seated between 650 and 800 and witnessed one or more performances of *John Frost*; and at Cook's Circus in Glasgow, which was 'capable of holding 2000 [and] was crowded to suffocation' for an 1843 performance.[72] In London, benefits performances occurred at several prominent working-class theatres, including a minimum of six at the Standard, said by the *Star* to be the East End's 'most commodious House', four at the Victoria, and two each at the City and the Pavilion, all venues with capacities around 2000.[73] Although performances also took place at many smaller locations, it is safe to assume that tens of thousands of people at one time or another attended a dramatic performance associated with Chartism.

In certain cases, drama took on a more important role than even these numbers suggest. A remarkable experiment in amateur performance helped revitalise the movement in Lancashire following the devastating setbacks of 1839, which saw the defeat of the national petition, the failure of the Newport rising, and the arrest of hundreds of activists. Between 1840 and 1842, Ashton's Juvenile Chartist Association toured factory towns around Manchester, staging *The Trial of Robert Emmet* over a dozen times in a production with a cast of twenty-seven (on one occasion at least).[74] Composed of mostly young adult men and women,

the Juvenile Association combined militant politics with a cultural programme that included a night school, frequent lectures, and drama.[75] As the group prepared to launch its theatrical venture, an Ashton representative reported to the South Lancashire delegate meeting that 'they were going on a great deal better now than they had for a long time. They were getting up a trial of Robert Emmet … and he had no doubt but in a short time there would be a most numerous society again at Ashton.'[76]

The Trial proved a success, attracting enthusiastic audiences in Ashton, Manchester, Stockport, Oldham, Middleton, and Hyde. The Ashton troupe also inspired imitators in four nearby localities (Keighley, Failsworth, Hollinwood, and the slightly further Bierley), where groups staged their own productions (performances in Preston may or may not have been by the Ashton group). In sum, the tour raised funds, improved morale, and forged deeper connections between associations in the region. Advertising placards invited 'friends' and the 'public in general', making explicit the Chartists' effort to appeal to people outside the movement's core.[77] Performances succeeded in this regard too. In Middleton, between '150 to 200 men, women and children' attended the re-enactment, a figure representing, according to the *Manchester Courier*, 'by far a greater number than have attended any Chartist meeting in that town for some time past'.[78]

Like most aspects of Chartist drama, fundraising was tied to local circumstance and therefore idiosyncratic. At the same time, nearly half of all benefits went to defray legal expenses or support prisoners and their families (see Table 0.2). Such was the case for the performance of scenes from *John Frost* as part of a concert on 'behalf of Bronterre O'Brien' upon the publisher's release from prison in 1841 and of a performance in Nottingham of Watkins's play held to alleviate debts 'contracted in defending the Mapperly [*sic*] Hill Victims'.[79] Two performances of *Wat Tyler* at the Darlington Theatre raised money for 'Durham political prisoners', and a production of *Robert Emmet* in Bierley supported a similar cause.[80] Notably, these three plays feature show trials and state prisoners

Table 0.2 Chartist performances' fundraising beneficiaries (when indicated)

Beneficiary	Number of performances
'Victims' (Prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families)/ defence funds	30
Organisational expenses/debts (non-building related)	20
Charity (including orphans and refugees)	7
Expenses related to buildings	6
Individual activists	3
Schools	2
Costumes for future performances	2

(though the trial occurs offstage in *John Frost*). The second most common object for theatrical benefits was meeting organisational debts, especially associated with the cost of securing meeting places.[81] Finally, drama supported a variety of charitable causes. Funds raised by *The Trial Robert Emmet* contributed to the 'Oldham Relieving Society', the Keighley Chartist Sunday school, 'Hungarian and Polish refugees', and three orphans whose 'last parent was killed a short time since in Ashton'.[82]

The amount of money raised also varied. Some productions were highly lucrative. In Glasgow, two performances of *The Trial of Robert Emmet* before 'crowded houses' at Cooke's Circus cleared a tidy £70, a figure roughly equalled by the sole event at a professional theatre in London for which a detailed breakdown of ticket sales, receipts, and expenses is available.[83] While other performances at professional venues likely earned significant amounts, amateur productions netted far less, often between 10*s*. and £5. These modest totals reflected low ticket prices (usually threepence and sometimes less) and relatively high outlays for costumes and other expenses. Performances of *The Trial of Robert Emmet* at the Greenock 'Mechanic's Institution', for example, incurred 'considerable debt … for dresses and room, and the proceeds barely covered them'.[84] Similarly, because actors in Thomas Cooper's *Hamlet* 'demanded payment, both for the cost of their dresses and their time … the income hardly covered expenses'.[85] In fact, Cooper had already abandoned the idea of future theatrical exploits when he appeared at Leicester's town hall and foreswore additional performances. Money, not the law, proved decisive. By contrast, three lectures Cooper delivered at the Amphitheatre charging only 'one half-penny' for admission paid the expense of the hall while leaving £10 for the 'suffering wife of the exiled William Ellis'.[86]

With these factors in mind, Thomas Martin Wheeler had the narrator of his Chartist novel *Sunshine and Shadow* voice frustration at the 'expensive and ill-judged' nature of 'benefits at theatres, balls, concerts, tea parties, lotteries, raffles, &c' as a means of raising money.[87] One might, however, see the slender takings of theatrical benefits in a different light: they suggest the Chartists turned to drama as much for its own sake as to alleviate the movement's chronic financial needs.

Chartist drama and early Victorian theatre

Unlike Chartist drama outside London, which was overwhelmingly amateur, 80 per cent of benefits in the capital occurred at professional establishments. Those amateur performances that did take place, moreover, consisted largely of 'dramatic recitations' or the staging of individual scenes rather than full-length plays. The availability of relatively high quality theatre with sophisticated production values seems to have discouraged the more ambitious amateur efforts

Table 0.3 London and Manchester theatres with Chartist benefit performances

Theatre	Number of performances
Standard	6
Victoria	4
City	3
Astley's	2
Marylebone	2
Milton Street	2
Pavilion	2
Queen's (Manchester)	2
Strand	2
Thespian (Manchester)	2
Albert	1
Grecian Saloon	1
Pantheon	1

characteristic of Chartist drama elsewhere. The theatres too proved willing accomplices. Save the important exceptions of the Surrey and the Britannia, almost all major houses catering to working-class audiences hosted one or more Chartist benefits between 1842 and 1851, which stands as a remarkable measure of mainstream establishments' openness to radical politics, though a fact previously absent from both general histories of London theatre and accounts of particular houses (See Table 0.3).[88]

While professional venues hosted all manner of benefits to boost sales and strengthen ties to the local community, implicitly endorsing Chartism presented a more charged decision than aiding such charitable organisations as the Lambeth Philanthropic Institution, a group that held a benefit at the Victoria the same 1845–46 season as a Chartist event there.[89] Unlike evenings supporting humanitarian causes, Chartist benefits risked attracting attention from the licensing authorities or the police.[90] Such was the case for the Milton Street Theatre, which was approached by 'detectives who did their best to prevent the manager from letting the theatre' to the Chartists for a 'grand concert and entertainment' for the wife and family of the prisoner John Bezer in 1848.[91] 'Surely the liberal Whigs', the *Star* opined, 'ought to be satisfied with the incarceration of their victims without satiating their vengeance by the starvation of their wives and families'.[92]

No matter the risk, Chartist events offered a good business opportunity, given the movement's popularity among working-class playgoers, which, thanks to falling ticket prices, represented an ever larger portion of the audience in the 1840s.[93] Following an account of the Victoria's crowd, Henry Mayhew records a conversation with a costermonger about the politics of his fellows: 'you might

say, sir … that they *all* were Chartists, but as its [*sic*] better you should rather be under than over the mark, say *nearly* all'.[94] For his part, the Milton Theatre's proprietor, who frequently rented the space for political lectures and meetings, not only refused to comply with the police's request but 'offered the theatre to the committee at a lower rate than usual' for a benefit the following week.[95]

As might be expected, Chartist benefits concentrated in the working-class East End: the Grecian, the Pavilion, the Standard, and the City of London all saw performances. Benefits also took place on the southern side of the Thames at the Victoria and Astley's. Each of these establishments were neighbourhood institutions, drawing their audiences in part from local residents. As Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow document, police reports conducted during the lead-up to the passage of the Theatre Regulations Act of 1843 describe how 'weavers' and others from Whitechapel frequented the City of London Theatre while the 'Standard drew tradesmen, mechanics, their children, and silk weavers from Spitalfields'.[96] The fare companies offered often dealt with subjects that would have appealed to local residents or neighbourhood workers. The Pavilion, which catered to sailors and labourers from the nearby docks, staged frequent nautical melodramas (as well as regular doses of Shakespeare).[97] The Victoria, which drew mechanics from its Lambeth neighbourhood, featured many melodramas exploring social issues such as poverty and alcoholism. Charles James Mathews called the theatre 'the incarnation of the English "domestic drama", or rather of the drama of English domestics. There you will always find the truest pictures of virtue in rags, and vice in fine linen.'[98] In 1842, the Vic literally advertised to 'female domestics', promising that a performance of *Susan Hopley*, whose heroine was a maid, would end by 8 30, allowing servants to return in time to satisfy punctilious mistresses.[99] Chartist benefits thus grew out of the working-class milieux in which theatres operated.

The extent and nature of collaboration between professional houses and the Chartists varied.[100] At a minimum, Chartists groups publicised events and sold tickets 'at most Chartist-halls and other places of meeting'.[101] But evidence also points to activists occasionally taking a more active role in the evening's entertainment. 'Aided by several members of the "Standard Company"', a troupe of Chartist amateurs performed the melodrama *Ella Rosenberg* and the fourth act of *Venice Preserved* at a benefit for the 'National Victim Fund' at the Standard in 1843.[102] In other cases, activists might deliver 'an appropriate prologue' before the beginning of a play.[103] At a union benefit at the Victoria Theatre, a mason read a poem provided by the Chartist writer John Watkins, which linked a recent strike with the coming performance of *William Tell*: 'Tyrants no warning take, – / Their hardened hearts no judgments can awake, – / Save when wronged labour rises in its might, / And hurls oppression from its harmful height. / Thus did bold Tell!'[104] Finally, it seems plausible that Chartist groups sometimes weighed in on their preferred programme. Although chosen pieces were

usually part of the house's repertoire, they seem often to have been selected as appropriate for Chartist audiences. Benefit performances at the Victoria featured such topical plays as *The Factory Lads*, which dramatised, in the words of a contemporary review, 'the misery of the working classes, arising from reduced wages and frequent discharges'.[105] Plays about revolution were also common, and indeed many titles overlapped between professional venues and Chartist amateur theatre. Performances included *William Tell*; *Hofer, the Tell of the Tyrol*; *Venice Preserved*; and *The Black Doctor or the Siege of the Bastile*, in which a scene featuring the Bastille's destruction 'elicited the loudest applause'.[106]

Only in rare instances did Chartist benefits feature no overtly political works. Such was the case for a fundraiser for 'assembly and reading rooms' at the Marylebone Theatre in December 1846 'under the patronage of T. S. Duncombe, MP', a frequent ally of the Chartists.[107] More typical were evenings that paired lighter fare with one or more plays concerning political or industrial strife.[108] Like other early Victorian theatre, Chartist benefits also included 'singing, dancing, and other entertainments' between plays.[109] A Chartist event at the Victoria, for instance, incorporated a '"Highland Fling" in national costume' and an amateur performance of 'several admired airs on the accordion' alongside two revolutionary dramas.[110] Such interludes could be less innocuous. At a Chartist benefit at the Pavilion, 'the Ethiopian Serenaders' performed the crude racial caricatures of blackface minstrelsy.[111] That the *Star* singled out these performers for 'special praise' while noting that the audience was 'evidently delighted with the entertainments of the evening' underlines how racist elements in popular culture could enter the Chartist milieu as well.[112] Yet the paper's coverage of theatre makes clear that ideas about race within the movement were far from monolithic. The *Star* lauded the 'highly-creditable' performance of John Home's tragedy *Douglas* by an all-black amateur company at the Theatre Royal in Jamaica and noted that the singing of the important London activist William Cuffay – a black man whose father had been enslaved in St Kitts – 'was warmly encored' at the 1843 benefit at the Standard mentioned in the preceding paragraph.[113]

Beyond the business potential of Chartist events, the politicised nature of London theatre encouraged collaborations with the Chartists. Ironically, contests over the state's efforts to regulate and censor the stage had contributed to this politicisation. The Stage Licensing Act of 1737, which stayed in place until 1843, restricted the performance of comedy and tragedy to theatres possessing a royal patent. Lacking patents, so-called illegitimate theatres could only legally perform such genres as farce or melodrama. These establishments had long associations with democratic politics. In the 1790s, the theatrical monopoly became sharply contested as the right to stage drama increasingly resonated with questions of political representation, a set of associations forcefully renewed in the early 1830s when efforts to abolish the patent monopoly ran in harness with the

campaign for political reform.[114] During the period between the Jacobin and Chartist decades, non-licensed theatres transgressed many aesthetic, generic, and political boundaries.[115] Unlike the Theatres Royal, the minor houses did not have to submit scripts to the Lord Chamberlain's office, a freedom that permitted them to stage plays about industrial strife, rebellion, and mutiny, subjects likely to be censored if ventured at patent houses.[116]

At the same time, unlicensed theatres defied the patent monopoly in a number of ways, including by performing Shakespeare under such thinly disguised titles as *The Moor of Venice* and *The Three Caskets; or the Jew of Venice*, both offered by the Coburg (later renamed the Victoria) in 1827.[117] Finally, unlicensed theatres developed an array of new genres in response to the monopoly's strictures. Melodrama, pantomime, burletta, musical comedy, extravaganza, hippodrome, and other hybrid forms made illegitimate theatres a site of dynamic innovation. Ironically, the patent houses of Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the Haymarket found that in order to compete financially with the minor theatres they had to abandon their pretensions to being home to the nation's dramatic heritage and mount the same kind of spectacles that captivated large audience at unlicensed venues.[118] So in some sense the 1843 abolition of the patent monopoly merely recognised a de facto reality: the minor houses routinely staged legitimate plays, and the patent theatres shamelessly borrowed from their more successful competitors.[119] At the same time, the Theatres Regulation Act of 1843, passed partly in the hopes of reigning in the anarchic culture of the illegitimate stage, greatly expanded censorship by requiring that all new plays be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain; although theatres were no longer required to have a patent to perform comedy and tragedy, all theatres became subject to greater control.

Venues hosting Chartist benefits often had specific traditions affiliating them with radical politics. The Victoria had waged a campaign against the patent monopoly in the late 1820s, establishing a 'fighting fund' to deter prosecutions, and occasionally weighed in on issues in the wider political realm.[120] Six months after the 'Tolpuddle martyrs' suffered penal transportation for swearing a secret oath to an agricultural labourers' union in Dorset, the Victoria placarded its walls 'with a very large bill' announcing that 'Unionists' had recently made a set of 'extensive alterations' to the theatre, demonstrating 'their skill, industry, and sobriety'.[121] In 1839, the theatre more explicitly supported victims of the repression of unions by hosting a performance for five Glasgow cotton spinners transported the previous year for assaulting strike breakers and another for the Dorchester labourers after their return from penal transportation.[122] Nine years later, the theatre responded to the 1848 revolution in France by rapidly mounting *Vive la Liberté*, a play that promised to bring to stage 'two glorious days of the French Revolution! And the wonderful and rapid results of the Grand Struggle of the People in the cause of liberty.'[123] The Queen's Theatre in Manchester, the site of at least two Chartist benefits, also held fundraisers for trade unions as well

as for the 'relief of the distress in Ireland' during the famine years. The theatre, moreover, allied itself with far-left unionism by selling tickets at the office of the *Voice of the People*, the organ of the Owenite National Association for the Protection of Labour.[124] As these examples make clear, the Chartists inherited a rich set of connections linking radical groups to the world of popular theatre, connections they exploited and deepened with their frequent benefits.

What might amateur Chartist performance have drawn from professional productions? The remainder of this section explores Chartist drama in relationship to the professional stage, considering in particular the spectacular nature of Victorian theatre, the behaviour of audiences, and the question of censorship. Given the popularity of theatre with working-class people, commercial plays assuredly served as models to which amateurs aspired. Recollecting a visit to the Theatre Royal in Manchester with fellow members of a Chartist 'mutual improvement society', Ben Brierley rhapsodised: 'our first acquaintance with the legitimate stage led us to aspire to be specks of light in the milkyway about which the constellations revolved'.[125] At the same time, amateurs could not straightforwardly emulate some aspects of professional theatre and Chartist groups surely rejected others due to political or aesthetic concerns.

In the 1830s and 1840s, ever larger auditoriums encouraged a grandiose acting style in the tradition of the famous tragedian Edmund Kean while increasingly sophisticated stage technology enabled spectacles on a massive scale. Staged fires, explosions, avalanches, naval battles, pursuits on horseback, and the appearance of ghosts using 'lantern-slide projections, mirrors … and traps' were all common.[126] Needless to say, amateur productions could attempt few of these feats, although Chartists in Longton bravely staged Matthew Lewis's 1797 *Castle Spectre*, which owed its continued popularity to an apparition sequence.[127] Instead of the technically ambitious spectacles of established houses, Chartist stagecraft likely resembled the humble penny gaffs, which in Henry Mayhew's estimation had 'no very great scenic embellishment' on their tiny stages.[128] An account by the Nottingham artisan and radical Christopher Thomson of the first production of his amateur troupe gives a sense of the challenges that would have confronted aspiring Chartist actors. Thomson, who went on to work as a scene painter and 'strolling player', recounts how the troupe's stage manager was able to befriend and borrow costumes from 'the wardrobe-keeper of the Theatre Royal'.[129] Scenery presented more formidable difficulties. Though a cast member was 'by profession a coach herald painter', the group could only afford one scene, requiring the 'painter … to show his skill in design, by contriving a picture, "Which served us for parlour, and kitchen, and all"'.[130]

Aspects of the two most frequently staged Chartist plays, *John Frost* and *Robert Emmet*, seem well suited to amateur performance in that they obviate the need for large-scale spectacle. Instead of staging the Newport rising's climactic confrontation, in which soldiers exchanged fire with a Chartist crowd, Watkins's

play retrospectively narrates the attack through the hero's confused perspective. Similarly, *The Trial of Robert Emmet* does not represent the 1803 Dublin rising on stage but instead reconstructs events via eyewitnesses' fragmentary accounts, the prosecutor's opening address, and Emmet's final speech. If these plays permitted minimalist staging, however, Chartist drama sometimes embraced an aesthetics of spectacle, a style to which Chartist crowds (whose members would themselves have participated in protest marches and other political displays) were not strangers. The considerable expense some groups dedicated for costumes and the massive settings of certain performances (including the Leicester Amphitheatre and the Glasgow Circus) suggest something more than threadbare productions. Newspaper accounts of the Ashton *Trial of Robert Emmet* stress the way the performance recreated the elaborate rituals of a treason trial. The large cast included jury members, 'six soldiers', judges, and attorneys, all of whom exercised 'the greatest decorum' and adhered to the 'regular court' forms.[131] One Irish paper remarked that 'the appearance of the court, with the necessary number of witnesses, counsel for the crown, judges and their attendants arranged in gowns, wigs, &c. was very well got up'.[132]

Furthering a sense of spectacle, Chartist performances sometimes included music. An orchestra performed for a Leicester production of John Home's tragedy *Douglas*, and 'the patriotic Winlaton band … played several appropriate airs during [a] performance' of *John Frost*.[133] As Michael Pisani describes, such extra-diegetic music was ubiquitous in Victorian theatre and assisted 'the actors in establishing and sustaining the [play's] emotional pitch'.[134] Music accompanied characters' entries and exits, helped define the heroine, the villain, and other parts, and punctuated climaxes. For *John Frost*, music would have called to the surface the play's melodramatic elements. Doleful melodies might have accented scenes representing suffering or dissonant chords signalled highly wrought emotion. Either strategy would suit a worker's speech at a public meeting in Act 2, which describes his penal transportation for swearing a union oath, his return to England, and his wife's descent into madness, which culminates with the murder of their starving children. Similarly extraordinary situations can be found in each text in this collection and such events would have encouraged a melodramatic acting style defined by broad gestures and extreme emotion, a style common in professional theatre.

Early Victorian theatre audiences shared an affinity with political crowds. Accounts of popular theatre by both working- and middle-class observers describe boisterous playgoers interacting with the performance in numerous ways, thus helping to shape its meaning and significance.[135] The gallery would call for tunes from the orchestra, stamp in time during dances, and join in the choruses until 'the ears positively ache[d] with the din'.[136] 'Showers of applause' greeted characters' 'worthy' sentiments while 'cowardice and falsehood' met hissing.[137] Other interventions might break drama's 'fourth wall'; Mayhew

describes how at one show at the Victoria a 'lady begging for her father's life was told to "speak up old gal"'.[138] A working-class memoir similarly records how someone at a melodrama called out following a death scene: '"Die again, my bold Bricks! die again!" and the cry being taken up by the other gods, was repeated with a frequency and strength of lungs, that proved sufficient to wake the (stage) dead. For, in obedience to the call, Bricks got up and *did* "die again".'[139]

Interruptions could also have political import. The gallery might demand the *Marseillaise*, and applause or expressions of displeasure could transform the meaning of particular lines. The most notorious example of this practice occurred in 1794–95 when Jacobins succeeded in inverting the significance of Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved* by cheering the sentiments of characters conspiring to overthrow Venice's senate. The radicals' efforts were so successful that they forced the cancellation of successive runs at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. After the incident became part of the prosecution's case in the treason trial of John Thelwall, the play remained controversial for decades.[140] By performing *Venice Preserved* twice in the autumn of 1843, once in an amateur production that cast the novelist and activist Thomas Martin Wheeler as the lead conspirator, the Chartists affiliated their dramatic culture with a tradition of radical theatre arising with the audience. The re-appropriation had become so complete that the crowd's cheers were no longer against the grain.

The controversy around *Venice Preserved* brings up a crucial difference between Chartist amateur drama and the professional stage. Although illegitimate theatres tested the bounds of the patent monopoly and theatrical censorship, they nevertheless had to contend with the Lord Chamberlain and local magistrates, who could impose fines, jail actors, or revoke an establishment's licence. Censorship became especially acute in times of political upheaval. Jenna Gibbs describes how 'in the face of Chartist agitation' the Lord Chamberlain vigilantly policed East End theatres and 'became intolerant of licensing violations'.[141] From the early 1840s, the police repeatedly raided the Britannia; later in the decade, the Lord Chamberlain cancelled performances of George Dibdin Pitt's *Revolution in Paris* (1848); Pitt's *Terry Tyrone* (1845), which concerns an Irish rebellion; and *The Chartist; or, a Dream of Every-day Life* (1848), although the latter shows the ruinous consequences of an artisan's embrace of radicalism.[142]

The Chartists, on the other hand, routinely staged plays that celebrated a revolutionary tradition linking Britain, Ireland, and Europe. Yet the overwhelming majority of amateur Chartist productions met no interference from theatrical authorities or the police. Indeed, the Chartists staged plays on subjects that were suppressed in commercial venues for decades to come. In 1881, the Lord Chamberlain refused the Lyceum permission to perform Frank Marshall's *Robert Emmet*, and films about the Dublin rising encountered censorship through the 1910s.[143] Several factors contributed to the Chartists' relative freedom. First,

censorship was less easily enforced outside London, though local elites could exercise a kind of soft censorship by denying space to planned productions, a circumstance which frustrated efforts to stage William Cobbett's *Surplus Population* in Tonbridge, Kent a few years before the rise of Chartism.[144] Second, the informal spaces and irregular schedules of Chartist performances likely shielded them from unwanted attention. Third, after 1843 the Chartists could simply refuse to submit scripts to the Lord Chamberlain, a stratagem established theatres sometimes used to circumvent the law.[145] Finally, prosecuting the Chartists under the Theatre Licensing Act must have struck authorities as wasted resources, given how members of the movement routinely faced far more serious charges. Together, these factors created a rich irony: while other kinds of Chartist speech and writing were heavily surveilled and served as the basis of hundreds for prosecutions, the movement turned to theatre – the only art form in Britain subject to statutory censorship – as a way for members to express themselves freely.

Political violence and state repression in Chartist drama

Chartist drama began in the shadow of the Newport rising of November 1839 and served as one of the ways the campaign took stock of itself in the aftermath of the rising's failure. As Table 0.4 indicates, the first burst of Chartist performance occurred in 1840, a year of crisis for the movement.

While Watkins's *John Frost* made Newport its explicit subject, the Chartists staged numerous plays that reflected on violence as a political strategy as well as

Table 0.4 Chartist performances identified by year*

Year	Number of performances
1839	3
1840	11
1841	14
1842	17
1843	17 (possibly an additional 21 or more)
1844	3
1845	1
1846	5
1847	4
1848	6
1849	4
1850	6
1851	6
Unknown year	8

* *Note:* The ambiguity surrounding 1843 concerns a tour of *The Trial of Robert Emmet* the *Star* ceased covering. See Footnote 68.

on governmental repression, which many believed had set the rising in motion and which only intensified following the outbreak's defeat. Reckoning with Newport involved first understanding what had actually occurred on the night of 3 November and the morning of 4 November when some nine thousand armed miners and iron workers marched on the economically critical Welsh port, which connected the Monmouthshire coal and iron fields to Britain and the wider world. In Newport, the Chartists attacked the Westgate Hotel (in the hope of liberating a group of Chartist activists who had been detained by police forces). They were repelled by soldiers who killed at least twenty-two and wounded approximately fifty, leading to the rising's collapse. Did these events, as many contemporaries believed and historians deem probable, represent a misfired 'signal' for other parts of the nation 'to rise in insurrection also'?[146] Or were they, as the defence claimed at trial, a protest or riot that led unintentionally to tragic consequences? Whatever the case, Newport sent shockwaves through the nation. Over the following months, what proved to be the last mass treason trials in British history transfixed the public. Before a Special Commission in Monmouth that included the Lord Chief Justice Nicholas Tindal, sixteen Chartists stood accused of capital crimes. Three leaders, Zephaniah Williams, William Jones, and John Frost were sentenced to death. Although a petition campaign (or the government's calculation that a degree of conciliation might purchase peace) saved the men's lives, they were transported to Van Diemen's Land under life sentence.

Newport marked a strategic and ideological turning point in Chartism's history. As several scholars note, the disastrous consequences of the rising and juxtaposed success of the petition campaign that rescued Frost, Williams, and Jones bolstered the movement's moderate wing while prompting figures identified with physical force to temper their opinions.[147] At the same time, Chartist positions on violence represented a continuum rather than a set of simple oppositions. Anticipating a modern scholarly consensus, the *Charter* wrote in the wake of the rising: 'the difference between moral and physical force is not so *wide* as writers seem to think'.[148] Moral force strategies could include confrontational tactics or contain the threat of escalation, and physical force language might signal militancy without prompting concrete steps towards armed rebellion. Nevertheless, at a point when insurrectionary politics appeared discredited, it is striking that Chartist performers in several localities staged plays that lauded a revolutionary tradition.

Among the plays the Chartists performed, John Watkins's *John Frost* was extraordinary in a number of ways. Not only was Watkins himself a Chartist activist, the temporal and geographic proximity of the play's subject matter separated it from works set in different times and places. Where *Wat Tyler* concerned the Great Rising of 1381, *Wallace, the Hero of Scotland* recounted the war for Scottish independence at the end of the thirteenth century, and

William Tell depicted legendary events that supposedly brought Switzerland independence, *John Frost* treated episodes barely one year old and still very present in Chartist consciousness when the play appeared in spring 1841. Watkins's text, furthermore, staked out extreme positions even within Chartist discourse. Watkins himself believed the play's politics led 'the chief Chartist publisher in London [to shrink] from the responsibility of publishing it', a circumstance that forced the author to self-publish.[149] At issue was political violence. In Malcolm Chase's account, 'Watkins articulated sentiments as close to open advocacy of revolution in print as any Chartist at this time'.[150] Although the play registers ambivalence about physical force (primarily in the voice of John Frost following the rising's defeat), it ultimately justifies insurrection, a stance the prologue unambiguously endorses.[151] Reconstructing a history of British resistance to oppression by the Romans, Normans, and others, the prologue projects this history into the future, declaring: 'Silurian Frosts again shall lead us on, / And Freedom's baffled battle yet be won!'[152]

Yet the calamitous course of the rising made it a challenging subject with which to advocate revolt. How democratic rule might be achieved forms a central problem of Watkins's play, which scrutinises and complicates notions of agency prevalent in Chartist verse. As Mike Sanders argues, Chartist poetry typically elides the question of what 'social force' would be 'capable of securing the Charter'.[153] Naturalistic metaphors of apocalyptic change, for example, suggest the inevitability of revolution while '[mystifying] the actual political obstacles which Chartism has already encountered'.[154] Other poems skirt the question of agency with recourse to a 'voluntarist paradigm', which attributes social power to an abstracted will of 'the people'.[155] Such language appears in Watkins's essay, *The Five Cardinal Points of the Charter*, which declares: 'When they [common people] all unite as one man, moved by one will, to obtain one object – nothing can drive them back, nothing can stand before them.'[156]

John Frost, on the other hand, grapples more seriously with the obstacles blocking change, even if it fails to satisfactorily resolve the issues raised.[157] In the play's opening scene, the protagonist himself ascribes to voluntarism, musing that 'Combined for freedom, we at once were free', but the action that follows presents combination as a difficult process threatened both by internal divisions and outside forces.[158] Tellingly, Watkins recasts naturalistic metaphors, literalising a figure for divine justice as a form of human action. When the Chartist leader Albion asks: 'Just Heaven, where was thy thunder? Sleeps it, God? / Oh, at our cries awake it, let it fall!' the worker-activist Shell responds: 'We'll launch it forth – our hands shall deal the bolt! / We are not passive, non-resisting slaves.'[159] Yet if the 'people' cannot simply will its own liberation nor await divine power to overthrow tyranny, the question remains what exactly might be capable of bringing about democracy. In Act 2, the eponymous hero encounters a series of allegorical figures, who articulate alternative models of change. Frost

finds common cause with Aquarius, who recommends abstinence from alcohol, and Utopian, who propounds Owenite socialism, but Middleman's advocacy of political gradualism – 'the course of rational reform' – is shown merely to cover a commitment to class rule.[160]

In satirising Middleman – a figure for Whig politicians who had allied with working-class radicals to win the franchise for a segment of the middle classes only to abandon the cause of further reform – Watkins stands on safe ground with the Chartist public. His text becomes controversial, however, in its attacks on petitioning as a political strategy, a set of critiques that position Watkins outside a constitutionalist tradition by declaring the impossibility of change within the present system. If in Act 2 the Chartists place their hopes in 'our National Petition, / Wherein [our] wants, [our] woes, [our] wrongs are writ, / The cause set forth, and quick redress implor'd', by the next act the Privy Council dashes those hopes when it treats the document as an object of ridicule, notable only for its 'ludicrous size'.[161] Lord Littlejohn (a figure for John Russell) describes to his fellows the presentation of the petition in Parliament: 'The members stared aghast awhile, and then, / Burst into laughter fit to shake the house.'[162] More damning still, Shell articulates the self-defeating nature of seeking redress from an anti-democratic body: 'Petitions do no good, but harm; as this – / They are acknowledgments of unjust power, / As if usurp'd and fraudful force were legal.'[163] This critique echoes the preface, in which Watkins declares the 'uselessness as well as mean-spiritedness of petitioning those who had banished' Frost for his return.[164] To advance this case, the play elides the seeming efficacy of the petition for Frost's pardon, making the commutation of the death sentence a cynical calculation by the Privy Council, rather than a concession to the popular will. With other modes of redress foreclosed, only revolt remains. On the eve of Shell's death, the young man resolves to

> Send no more papers begging of my own,
> To get no answer but a curse or scoff –
> Spurn'd from the door of our own House by Thieves,
> Who revel on the booty that's within!
> I'll take a pike, next time, for my petition;
> And knock so loud with it, the door shall fly.[165]

At Frost's treason trial, the defence claimed that the march on Newport was intended as a demonstration seeking the release of Henry Vincent and other political prisoners, an idea the Chartist press promulgated widely.[166] Watkins's treatment of this theme is revelatory; the play accepts the premise that Vincent's rescue (in the figure of Albion) is the Chartists' immediate goal but unpacks the revolutionary logic behind this demand, which defines the state's monopoly of violence as illegitimate. 'Because we were defenceless', Shell declares, 'they have dragg'd / Our friend to gaol for advocating us. / … Now we are arm'd to meet

them on their terms. / If we can't rescue Albion let us die.'[167] When Frost warns the crowd to 'Obey the law, or you arm tyrants with't', Shell replies, 'We'll break the law and make a better one'.[168] Watkins thus places the Chartist debate about force in the context of violence upholding the present system. At Albion's arrest for breaking 'the Queen's good peace', the Chartist leader retorts, ''Tis you have broke the peace and people's heads, / Ye peace preservers!'[169]

Beyond the coercion upon which the state depends, *John Frost* articulates a vision of violence permeating the economic sphere. In Frost's opening monologue and the conversation with his wife that follows, the hero describes inequality as founded on property relations akin to theft: '[Workers] must die off, or quit their native land, / That drones may revel on their labour's produce. / And shall the idler feast upon their store, / And spurn away the plundered working men?'[170] Though Frost initially holds such beliefs abstractly, labourers at the Chartist meeting make clear how violence pervades their everyday lives. One speaker describes his respiratory illness arising from work processing coal; another recounts how his wife wastes away due to starvation wages; a third bemoans his homeless children; another recalls his transportation for joining a union; and a last laments his degradation as a street sweep, though he lost a leg 'in the glorious' wars.[171] Taken together, the testimony lays bare the violence intrinsic to the present order. When Frost's daughter asks her father to consider the 'peace' of their family before taking the fatal step of joining the Chartists, Frost responds that 'peace' can only be illusory in society as constituted: 'Peace? War! peace is not, cannot, shall not be / Until Britannia's slaves have food and freedom.'[172]

Other Chartist drama broadened Watkins's critique of the violent nature of British society to include the state's militarism and commitment to empire. In *The Trial of Robert Emmet*, Emmet speaks from the dock about his effort 'to extricate [his] countrymen from [the] doubly-rivetted despotism' of foreign rule and 'a domestic faction, which is its joint partner'.[173] The Ashton Chartists emphasised this aspect of the trial, advertising performances in Manchester with placards headlined 'Arise! Ye sons of Erin! Your brave patriots are gone.'[174] Southey's *Wat Tyler* also associates anti-democratic rule with violence on the world stage. The play repeatedly stresses that the poll tax which sets the revolt in motion is implemented to raise funds for war with France. Tyler points out the class politics of the conflict by asking: 'What matters me who wears the crown of France? / Whether a Richard or a Charles possess it? / They reap the glory – they enjoy the spoil – / We pay – we bleed!'[175]

If *The Trial of Robert Emmet*, *Wat Tyler*, and *John Frost* all contextualise revolutionary violence in terms of the brutal systems their protagonists seek to overthrow, the works reach different conclusions about the possible consequences of force. In particular, *Wat Tyler* presents a more multivalent view of violence than *John Frost*, offering, in Ian Haywood's account, 'various political fantasies

… of violence ranging from regicide to patriarchal self-defence'.[176] In Southey's narrative, the revolt of 1381 originates in Tyler killing a tax-collector who has sexually assaulted his daughter, an account that casts the outbreak as fundamentally defensive. This posture resonates with Chartist discourse that characterised the movement's recourse to violence as a last stand against aggression, sometimes even justifying insurrection as a means of restoring usurped rights.[177] The Manifesto of the Chartist Convention of 1839, for example, walks a rhetorical tightrope: 'We have resolved to obtain our rights, *"peaceably, if we may – forcibly, if we must"*: but woe to those who begin the warfare with the millions, or who forcibly restrain their peaceful agitation for justice – … in one brief contest their power will be destroyed.'[178] In a similar key, Southey's John Ball inverts who is rebel, who sovereign, declaring that 'The nobles lose their pretext, nor will dare / Rebel against the people's majesty.'[179]

Wat Tyler repeatedly asks the audience to consider the role of violence, exploring at different points in the rebellion's progress whether force appears warranted or efficacious. At the height of the rebels' success, Ball attempts to restrain the crowd, urging them to execute no prisoners and forswear 'the calm deliberate murder of Revenge'.[180] When Piers reasons that the nobles 'would not argue thus humanely on us, / Were we within their power', Ball replies, 'we must pity them that they are vicious, / Nor imitate their vice'.[181] At the same time, the text poses Ball's moderation as potentially misguided. The priest himself expresses doubt three times (echoing Peter's three denials of Christ): 'my frail and fallible judgment / Knows hardly to decide if it be right, / Peaceably to return, content with little, / With this half restitution of our rights, / Or boldly to proceed, through blood and slaughter, / Till we should all be equal and all happy. / I chose the milder way: – perhaps I erred!'[182]

Ball's very next speech is interrupted by 'Great tumult', as the king, who had promised amnesty, breaks 'his plighted vow' and moves to crush the rebellion.[183] The rising's defeat thus encourages a reconsideration of the rebel's restraint. The play asks, along with Ball, whether the insurgents' moderation has 'been like the weak leech, / Who, sparing to cut deep, with cruel mercy / Mangles his patient without curing him'.[184] *John Frost* is notably less self-reflective than *Wat Tyler*. Even as the play dramatises the tragic outcome of the rising, key characters express their continued faith in an insurrectionary strategy without articulating how it might succeed in the future. Shell's own 'last death-utter'd words' affirm his commitment to physical force, demanding his death be revenged.[185] And Frost's wife Mary, previously hostile to Chartism, converts to physical-force doctrines; on the eve of her husband's exile, she tells him she will not 'petition Majesty' for his return but would 'sooner take a sword and lead [the people] on'.[186]

If drama intervened in Chartist debates about force, a question arises as to the ways performance affected the kinds of political acts the movement was able or

willing to take. Brian Maidment and Mike Sanders have speculated that rather than encouraging confrontational acts, poetry when recited might have served a 'cathartic role' through which 'social aggression in the poem was sublimated or acted out rather than developed into action'.[187] Drama too might have '[discharged] anger which [could not] be vented in any other form', but intriguing evidence suggests that in certain cases Chartists groups turned to drama in the hope of revitalising the movement's most militant traditions.[188] In particular, the popularity of *The Trial of Robert Emmet* in the Lancashire cotton district situates performances at associations that saw significant arming and drilling in 1839 and that played central roles in the general strike of 1842.[189] In fact, the Ashton Juvenile Association, which toured area mill towns with a production of the trial in 1841–42, formed following a split in the local movement when older Chartists, objecting to drilling by younger members 'expelled the individuals so offending'.[190]

In this light, *The Trial of Robert Emmet* appears as the extension of Jacobin politics to the cultural sphere. No less formidable an opponent of Chartism than the Irish politician Daniel O'Connell understood productions in these terms. At a Manchester meeting, he condemned performances as offering 'the principles of the torch and the dagger'.[191] The local O'Connellite Association passed a resolution urging 'all Irishmen to refrain from attending'.[192] When Chartist orators invoked Emmet's memory, the authorities understood the revolutionary implications equally clearly. Allusions to the Irish martyr became part of the prosecution's case against Francis Looney, who advised his audience to acquire pikes and pistols in 1848, and Alexander Challenger, who claimed that 'less than these turnouts [i.e. the 1842 strikes] had brought on revolutions … The time was very near when a Cromwell, an Emmett, or a Fairfax would be found amongst the people'.[193] Similarly, Chartist orators invoked Wat Tyler as an insurrectionary example, and such invocations were used against them at sedition trials.[194] Chartist ultra-radicals too became associated with the historical Wat Tyler. A Chartist branch in Sheffield honoured their deceased leader Samuel Holberry, who led an abortive rising in the town, by constructing a 'shrine' that featured a bust of the fourteenth-century hero.[195] In Bradford in 1848, a major riot ensued when the police attempted to arrest the activist Isaac Jefferson, who went by 'Wat Tyler' and was 'the reputed principal Chartist pike-maker of the district'.[196]

What to make of the fact that so many Chartist plays featured unsuccessful revolts? Does this suggest the plays might have served as both inspiration and warning?[197] John Cleave's *The Memoir of Robert Emmett* (from which the trial in this volume is drawn) speaks of 'the danger as well as the necessity of resistance'.[198] In a review of Cleave's memoir, Bronterre O'Brien cautions that 'the failure of the scheme of the United Irishmen ought to be a warning to the reformers of all times and countries. It ought to teach them never to attempt to revolutionize a country by means of secret organisation, or otherwise than

by fair and open appeals to the reason and natural feelings of the people themselves'.[199] Yet caution hardly seems the lesson learned from Emmet's story. In Cleave's *Memoir*, Emmet himself speaks proleptically, warning his comrades that 'should I fall on the scaffold, let not the coward or the knave intimidate you from again and again appealing to Heaven in behalf of your rights and liberties by appealing to my recent failure'.[200] If the *Chartist Circular* regretted Emmet's 'reckless … enterprise', it imagined that had he acted at a more propitious moment he might have become 'an Atlas … [capable of lifting] this world of tyrants … into the cycle of freedom's undying sun'.[201] More broadly, Chartist culture celebrated martyrs and viewed their sacrifices as redemptive.[202]. An address by the Nottingham Female Association was characteristic: 'The martyrs of liberty never die … The murdered Emmett and Fitzgerald still live, and are communed with on every mountain, and in every dell.'[203] For the *Circular*, fallen rebels performed a tangible service: 'Wretchedly enslaved as the world is, it would now have been in a more deplorable condition had there never been resistance to the aggressions of tyrant. … The salutary influence of Wat Tyler, rude as he was, was felt in England for hundreds of years after he was dead: it is even felt to this day.'[204]

A further element linking *Wat Tyler*, *The Trial of Robert Emmet*, and *John Frost* is that each includes a treason trial. As many Chartist performances raised funds for prisoners or their families, this emphasis overlaid the plight of the plays' protagonists with that of the evening's beneficiaries. Notably, all three works turn away from a popular tradition of trial parodies, which included books such as William Hone's *Non Mi Ricordo! Or, Cross-Examination Extraordinary* and mock trials performed in taverns by judge and jury clubs.[205] Instead of parody, Chartist dramas utilise a variety of strategies to undermine the legitimacy of the proceedings they represent. In *Wat Tyler*, verbal irony satirises Ball's 'fair, free, open trial, where the King / Can choose his jury and appoint his judges'.[206] Ball, like many radicals of Southey's time and later, turns 'the vain and empty insult of a trial' into a platform from which to condemn his persecutors and propound 'the electric truth' he possesses.[207] *John Frost*, on the other hand, simply refuses to stage the protagonist's appearance in court, an ironic deflation of the most important political trial in a generation. Watkins's omission makes clear that the verdict has been decided elsewhere – the privy councillors inform the audience of Frost's conviction and death sentence.

Finally, *The Trial of Robert Emmet* turns sharply from parody. Newspaper accounts emphasise how performances attempted to recreate the ceremonies of justice and power that constitute a treason trial. Ashton productions, for example, began with the 'judges' entering the court, the grand jury being 'sworn', the 'Attorney-General [opening] the proceedings in the regular court style', and the prisoner being 'brought forward in chains, attended by an officer, and six soldiers'. All actors appeared 'in full uniform'. According to the *Star*, the

audience 'could not but be struck with the reflections of reality'.[208] Yet despite this verisimilitude, *Robert Emmet* offers a devastating critique of the judicial apparatus. As a courtroom drama, the trial is haunted by Emmet's refusal to mount a defence. At Emmet's instruction, his counsel declines to call witnesses, offer a closing statement, or cross-examine most witnesses for the prosecution. This silence begs several questions. Does it signal Emmet's despair and recognition of his guilt? Should the audience accept the prosecution's narrative in which the conspirators appear alternately sinister and naive, murderous and quixotic? Or is the silence disruptive – an act of non-participation that highlights the emptiness of the ritual of due process the trial enacts? Emmet's closing speech makes explicit his refusal to take part in the proceeding on the state's terms. Offered the opportunity to plead to mitigate the sentence, Emmet replies that he has 'nothing to say that can alter [the judges'] predetermination'.[209] Indeed, instead of speaking simply to the court, he repeatedly addresses posterity, a temporal leap that paradoxically situates the re-enactment's audience in Emmet's courtroom in so far as the spectators embody the future to which Emmet appeals, the 'other times and other men' of the speech's close.[210] As Emmet denounces British rule in Ireland and the right of the court to judge him, the Lord Justice attempts to cut short his speech, which in turn becomes evidence of the trial's illegitimacy:

> Why did your Lordships insult me – or rather, why insult justice, in demanding of me why sentence of death should not be pronounced? I know, my Lord, that form prescribes that you should ask the question; the form also prescribes the right of answering. This, no doubt, may be dispensed with, and so might the whole ceremony of the trial, since sentence was already pronounced at the Castle before your jury was empanelled. Your Lordships are but the priests of the oracle, and I submit: but I insist on the whole of the forms.[211]

Emmet's awareness of a trial's inherent theatricality, his ability to manipulate its rules, and his recognition of the historical contingency upon which those conventions depend in the first place, allow him to transform the courtroom into a site of counter-spectacle, in which he invites the audience to imagine an alternative future – when Ireland 'takes her place among the nations of the earth' – springing from his sacrifice.[212]

'Not wisely but too well': Women and Chartist drama

Chartist drama, like Chartist discourse more broadly, often defined politics as a male domain. In Edward Fitzball's *Hofer, The Tell of the Tyrol* (1832), a play the Chartists performed at least three times, the hero reprimands his wife Marie for pleading with him to make peace with occupying French and Bavarian forces. Although Marie earlier set fire to the family home rather than let it fall into the hands of foreign soldiers, Hofer dismisses her perspective: 'no woman's voice

should ever turn a patriot from his duty. Go, ply thy distaff! love, and be beloved; all that is beautiful and fond, I grant ye; but never meddle with affairs of state – thy hand is all too feeble for the helm.'[213] The protagonist of James Sheridan Knowles's *William Tell* speaks in similarly masculinist language when he refuses to bow to the tyrant Gesler's cap, hectoring the frightened crowd: 'Why gaze you still with blanched cheeks upon me? / Lack you the manhood even to look on'?[214]

Although these plays originally appeared in contexts distant from working-class radicalism, they nevertheless make explicit a set of suppositions that structured Chartist ideas about politics. In debates within Chartism, proponents of confrontational tactics celebrated militancy and courage as masculine virtues while deriding opponents as womanish.[215] At the height of the 1842 strike wave, for example, an address by the National Chartist Association exhorted: 'Brethren, we rely upon your firmness; cowardice, treachery, or womanly fear would cast our cause back for half a century', language wilfully ignorant of the thousands of women on strike throughout the cotton district (where a large majority of operatives were female).[216] Such rhetoric resonated with broader narratives that fashioned Chartism as the protector of working-class families under siege from the factory system and the austerity of the New Poor Law.[217] Benefits held to raise money for Chartist 'widows' and 'orphans' accorded well with this self-image.[218]

Dramatic productions, however, complicated narratives of female distress and male rescue in several ways. First, radical groups staged a number of plays which feature male protagonists who represent threats to women and their families. Such works as *Othello*, *William Tell*, and *John Frost* suggest the potential costs of celebrating heroic masculinity. Drama's dialogism, moreover, would have opened a forum for audiences to reflect on tensions and contradictions within Chartist attitudes towards gender. While Chartist life granted women few opportunities to speak publicly to mixed-sex groups, theatre allowed them to voice passionate emotions and articulate perspectives different from their male counterparts.[219] Furthermore, female actors sometimes inhabited roles of rebellious wives and daughters (alongside more conventional parts of domestic angels or passive victims). Finally, women helped shape Chartist dramatic culture through their work preparing for and hosting benefits. Although such labour represented something akin to 'separate spheres' within activist politics, it nevertheless afforded women the opportunity to organise on behalf of fellow women and leave a mark on Chartist life.[220]

For many middle-class observers, the prominent place women occupied within Chartism was a distinctive feature of the campaign.[221] Female Chartists attended meetings (both mixed-sex and otherwise), marched in processions, joined strikes, and formed their own organisations. Notably, several Chartist locales with theatrical traditions, including Ashton, Leicester, Greenock,

Table 0.5 Chartist dramatic performances by locality (in localities with two or more performances)

Locality	Number of performances
London	32
Ashton	13–16 (4 in Ashton and 9–12 in surrounding localities by Ashton troupe)
Failsworth	9
Manchester	7
Glasgow	6
Leicester	4
Nottingham	4
Oldham	3
Clitheroe	2
Hamilton (Scotland)	2
Hyde	2
Kilbarchan (Scotland)	2
Keighley	2
Vale of Leven (Scotland)	2
Preston	2

Manchester, and Nottingham, had active female associations or otherwise robust participation by women (see Table 0.5).[222] In Nottingham, the site of two stagings of *John Frost*, the Nottingham Female Political Union (NFPU) drew on local traditions of female activism that went back to at least 1820.[223] At NFPU meetings, women chaired the proceedings, proposed and debated resolutions, and delivered lectures and speeches. At its first gathering on 23 October 1838 the room 'was electrified by the able and energetic address of Mrs Oakland', who moved a resolution that all taxpayers (a category implicitly including women) should have the right to vote.[224]

Female associations were particularly active in the cultural life of Chartist localities. The *Star* frequently reported that 'the fair sex [was] strongly predominant' at festivals and tea parties.[225] Although the press sometimes employed condescending language to describe female participation on such occasions – 'the house was crowded in every part with female beauty' – women did more than grace meetings with their presence.[226] Rather, female associations organised all manner of events, making fundraising for prisoners' families a special mission. In the weeks following the Newport rising, the Nottingham Female Association – the descendant of the NPFU – published an address 'to the men and women of Nottinghamshire' calling attention 'to the condition of the wives and families of our incarcerated brethren … Let us show our enemies that every act of coercion, only binds the advocates of justice more firmly together'.[227]

Benefits depended on much behind-the-scenes work by women, who fre-

quently decorated meeting rooms and sometimes sold tickets. Although the former activity signalled Chartists' willingness to exploit traditional divisions of labour, women's efforts meant that female activists greatly influenced the movement's visual culture. At a holiday party in Manchester, 'The Female Chartists of Brown-Street' trimmed their room 'with evergreens, paintings of various descriptions, portraits, flags, and banners'.[228] Selling tickets too involved more than simple bookkeeping. It constituted a kind of political organising in which women activated their social networks, inviting friends and neighbours to share in conviviality and a project of mutual support. For a benefit at the Standard Theatre, the *Star* expressed its 'trust' that 'our female friends, who invariably are diligent in the great cause of humanity and philanthropy, will take care that all their acquaintances are supplied with box or pit tickets, on the occasion'.[229]

Beyond preparatory work, women also contributed to events as performers. Historians rightly emphasise that female Chartists were excluded from making toasts or speeches at ceremonial dinners.[230] They did, however, participate in a variety of other ways at dinners and similar events. Women played instruments, recited poetry, sang songs (including original compositions), and acted on stage.[231] At the same time, much female labour received little or no attention in the movement press, a mark of the sexual inequality that assigned women to less public roles in the first place. The reader, for example, only learns that it was women who organised a benefit for Polish and Hungarian refugees at Astley's Theatre in London, because the refugee committee invited Feargus O'Connor 'to attend and occupy the Queen's box on that occasion, in company with the wives of the Committee, who had got up the benefit'.[232]

Though many plays the Chartists performed contain few female parts, they also feature such significant characters as Desdemona in *Othello* and Lady Randolph in John Home's *Douglas*. These tragedies and several other works in the radical repertoire reveal conflicts frequently papered over in Chartist discourse. Isolated in worlds of politics and warfare, Home's and Shakespeare's heroines navigate their environments with constricted forms of agency; their fates highlight the dangers represented by male milieux where violence is celebrated and women barred from positions of authority. One might see the plays, then, as reflecting on exclusions women confronted within activist culture and Victorian society more broadly. Home's Lady Randolph expresses anger over the constraints that govern her existence. After the death of her first husband Douglas, she is denied her 'strong desire / To lead a single, solitary life' when she relents to Lord Randolph's suit and her dying father's pleas.[233] Nevertheless, she asserts autonomy in her second marriage, wearing widow's dress for seven years and maintaining a haughty independence by forswearing 'admiration, dear to womankind'.[234] Dominating many scenes, she stands at the center of a plot to restore her foundling son to his rightful title, thus stripping her second husband of estates acquired in marriage. After her son's death, the play concludes

when 'fearless as the eagle' she climbs a precipice, and casts herself 'headlong down', her suicide simultaneously an act of protest and negation.[235] One can only speculate how Chartist audiences in Leicester and Failsworth might have responded to this heroine, but the reception of the song 'I'll be no Submissive Wife' at a benefit at the City of London Theatre provides some clue. '[Eliciting] an unanimous encore', the song concludes: 'Should a humdrum husband say / That at home I ought to stay / Do you think that I'll obey / No no no no no no no no no not I'.[236]

Stories about men rescuing women in distress recurred on the early Victorian stage, but such plots are surprisingly rare in the Chartist dramatic repertoire. Beyond *Wat Tyler*, which (as already described) situates the origin of the Great Rising in a father protecting his daughter, only James Kenney's *Ella Rosenberg* and Jerrold's *Black Ey'd Susan* (both performed at benefits in London) conform to this narrative pattern. In Matthew Lewis's gothic melodrama *The Castle Spectre* (staged by Chartist amateurs in Longton), the hero attempts to rescue his beloved Angela, who is confined by her murderous uncle, but the intervention of the girl's mother proves decisive and Angela herself strikes the blow that kills the villain.

Rather than rescuing helpless women, the heroes of the Chartist stage act with a recklessness that itself poses a threat. Indeed, it is frequently the hero's patriotism or political activism that endangers his family. *Hofer, the Tell of the Tyrol* begins with Hofer's marriage, but by Act 2 his wife and child are captured by the French, who promise their execution unless Hofer surrenders. The climax of *William Tell* has the hero shoot an apple from his son Albert's head, which raises the possibility that he will 'Murder his child with his own hand! – This hand! / The hand I've led him when an infant by!'[237] When Tell later learns that Albert is held hostage against a Swiss attack, the patriot declares, 'I see him not! – / I see my country … not my son! / She holds her arms to me – with piteous cries', the last image recuperating the language of melodramatic rescue in order to disregard claims of kinship.[238] Watkins's protagonist exposes his family to less severe consequences than Hofer or Tell, but Mary Frost repeatedly complains that her husband's actions will 'bring disgrace and ruin on his house'.[239] For his part, the Chartist leader relishes the prospect of sharing martyrdom with his family, whether or not they are so inclined. Eager for a tragic role, he imagines himself an Agamemnon, telling his daughter – the possible Iphigenia: 'By Heaven, I'd put away the wife that thwarts me, / Doom my own son to death, nay thee, my daughter, / And sacrifice myself, for my poor country.'[240]

Frost, Hofer, and Tell represent indirect threats to their families in that their actions inspire public censure or provoke collective punishment. A number of protagonists of plays produced by Chartists, however, pose more immediate danger to women's lives. With unremarked irony, the Chartists of Kilbarchan, Scotland staged *Othello* 'for the benefit of the wives and families of the vic-

tims'.[241] The tragedy might have appealed to the Chartists for the way Iago resembles an agent provocateur, scripting violent plots into which he seduces Roderigo and Othello. The play's racial politics also would have resonated with the identity of the important black leader William Cuffay, who participated in the Orange Tree conspiracy, for which he was transported in 1849. At the same time, *Othello* problematises a number of Chartist assumptions about male agency and female virtue. In a sense, Desdemona falls victim to the martial attributes she admires in Othello. Iago's method of only half-articulating his suspicions highlights how the villain's ideas exist as troubling possibilities within the hero himself. Meanwhile Desdemona, surrounded by men and increasingly estranged from her husband, transforms from a young woman, able to challenge her father and demand of the Duke's Council the right to accompany the Venetian expedition, into a self-abnegating heroine who asks in dying only to be 'commend[ed] … to [her] kind lord'.[242] To a Chartist audience, Desdemona's servant Emilia might have provided an alternative vision of femininity, both for her defiance towards Iago (and Othello) and her delight in puncturing her mistress's sanctimonious regard for sexual virtue: 'Let husbands know / Their wives have sense like them. They see, and smell, / And have their palates both for sweet and sour.'[243]

Desdemona was not alone among Chartist heroines victimised by male figures whose public life appears heroic. Belvidera of Thomas Otway's restoration tragedy *Venice Preserved* dies of madness after one of a group of conspirators seeking to overthrow Venice's senate attempts to rape her, and her lover Jaffier threatens her life. Shakespeare's Ophelia (whose performer would have played opposite Thomas Cooper in Leicester) suffers a similar fate when Hamlet's machinations, seduction, and abandonment leave her 'divided from herself and her fair judgment'.[244] In both these cases, the relationship between domestic and political life is distant from rhetoric that casts radicalism as the champion of distressed femininity. At best, women appear as collateral damage, easily cast aside by men seeking to remedy public wrongs. At worst, virile masculinity becomes actively threatening. In *Venice Preserved*, Jaffier agrees to his fellow plotters' demand that they hold Belvidera hostage to insure his loyalty, even offering his dagger so that 'whene'er [he] prove unworthy – / You know the rest – Then strike it to her heart.'[245]

Ernest Jones's *St John's Eve*, the only original play published in a Chartist journal, provokes many of the same questions concerning female agency and victimhood explored on the Chartist stage. Jones's gothic melodrama comments ironically on plots of male rescue by revealing threatening undercurrents in the hero's efforts on the heroine's behalf. The first scene adumbrates a melodramatic scenario: Gemma suffers the rule of her tyrannical father Rupert and awaits an arranged marriage to 'the cavalier', despite her love for the penniless Rudolf. Gemma's faith, passivity, and fidelity to her oppressive parent indicate her virtue

while underlining her need for outside aid. At the same time, Jones dramatises the problematic nature of these qualities. Rudolf remarks that Gemma is 'Too good, too pure, too beautiful for earth', a pronouncement nearly literalised in a sickness the hero helps precipitate.[246] When Rudolf muses that the death of Gemma's father would make the lovers happy, a Mephistophelean stranger (who is, in fact, the cavalier), appears; together, they perform a graveyard ritual which summons apparitions of those who supposedly will die within a year. Though undertaken on Gemma's behalf, Rudolf's actions doubly threaten her. First, during the rite he spies Gemma's ghostly image; inadvertently revealed to Gemma, this knowledge functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy, precipitating her decline. Worse yet, Rudolf's traffic with sorcery exposes the lovers to blackmail. When Rupert discovers Rudolf's actions, he forces Gemma to renounce him and agree to marry the cavalier. Although the play ends formulaically with Gemma's faith saving the lovers, their projected union is haunted by the way the protagonist and his rival double one another and by the striking 'bridal train' of the final scene, which forms a visual parallel to the procession of ghosts Rudolf summons in Act 1.[247] In many ways distant from the explicitly political theatre the Chartists staged, *St John's Eve* nevertheless interrogates the ability of men to act as women's protectors, a question Chartist performance frequently raised.

Even while criticising plots of male rescue, *St John's Eve* relies on a stereotypically helpless heroine, who is ultimately saved by the conclusion's *deus ex machina*. Watkin's *John Frost* imagines a more combative mode of female subjectivity in the figure of Mary Frost. Although Mary initially embodies a set of misogynistic clichés, playing the part of 'brimstone virago' found in other drama by Watkins, she ultimately models a version of militant female agency lacking in most Chartist drama.[248] The audience first encounters Mary when she tries to turn away the 'ragged wretches' who visit the house to recruit John to the movement, provoking her husband's rebuke that she is 'Unfemininely chilling, callous, cruel'.[249] These negative attributes, moreover, implicitly define an ideal wife as a generous caregiver set apart from the world: 'She, who should heal with balmy sympathy / The wounds my spirit must sustain abroad … / rankles them with venom of her own.'[250] While Mary's depiction seems to reinscribe the opposition between family life and political commitment we saw in Knowles's *William Tell* and Fitzball's *Hofer*, Watkins complicates the dichotomy. For one thing, unlike the women in Knowles's and Fitzball's works Mary is as assertive and opinionated as her husband. Where exchanges between the Chartist leader and various ideological opponents resemble the sententious dialogues of didactic fiction, the spouses argue passionately with both advancing political and personal claims. Mary's repeated warnings about the dangers of the rising, moreover, prove correct. She predicts the protesters will suffer casualties; her husband, incarceration; the family, disgrace; and the movement, failure, warnings that forecast the action of the play.

Mary's willingness to express dissent makes sense of an incongruous element at the play's close, in which following John's incarceration she changes to become the idealised wife absent in Act 1. Offering to accompany her husband into exile, Mary promises she will 'minister [his] wants … / listen to [his] feeble plaints / … [and] soothe [him] with heart-sympathy'.[251] At the same time, Watkins complicates any simple opposition between Mary in Acts 1 and 5 by making clear she remains strong-minded and confrontational. She challenges the jailer's authority to part her from her spouse and complains to John that the people 'wish me to petition Majesty! / I'd sooner take a sword and lead them on.'[252] Given this finale, one might understand Watkins's earlier portrait of Mary, for all its sexism, as expressing an intimation that a mass movement requires passionate, combative women rather than 'angels in the house'. Similar tensions animate Watkins's popular 1841 essay 'Address to the Women of England', which circulated widely as a tract and in movement periodicals. Although the essay begins by declaring 'the proper sphere of woman is home', it quickly justifies female participation in politics: 'when home is affected by any of the causes before mentioned – when it becomes no longer a home – when it is changed into a hell, shall not women come forth and enquire the causes of this'.[253] Using the language of 'militant domesticity', the address ultimately inverts masculinist rhetoric by celebrating female warriors, including Deborah, Queen Philippa, and Joan of Arc, who 'saved [her] country, when given up for lost by men'.[254]

The female Chartists of Nottingham – who helped bring Watkins's play to the stage – themselves pushed the movement in confrontational directions. They participated in local protests that turned riotous and appropriated the language of force, in a posture that exacerbated fractures in the local campaign.[255] An early address by the NFPU 'to the Patriotic Women of England' predicts that 'the time must and will arrive when your aid and sympathies may be required in the field to fight, for be assured a great and deadly struggle must take place ere our tyrant oppressors yield to reason and justice … We shall glory in seeing every working-man of England selling his coat to buy a sword or a rifle to be prepared for the event.'[256] These women, then, might have heard their own language echoed in *John Frost* when a worker describes how 'my wife herself gave me this pike and said, / Kill the police if we all die for it.'[257] Yet even this fleeting evocation of an anonymous woman's embrace of physical force troubles ideas of heroic masculinity protecting working-class families. The worker recounts how his children looking on 'stopp'd their cry [for food] in fear for me'.[258] In a similar spirit, a woman responded to Watkins's 'beautiful Address to the Women of England' by pointing out the way physical conflict inflicts continued suffering on the survivors it leaves behind: 'The courage which takes a man to the field of battle … is of a coarse character when compared to … that self-same quality, which enables the war-made widow calmly to settle herself to support, it may be, her three or four fatherless-ones, well knowing that her persevering

struggling with poverty and wretchedness must endure – not for a day, but for years.'[259]

The plays that follow open a window on to an extraordinary theatrical subculture, one of the first examples of a protest campaign turning to theatre as part of its mobilisation. Drama served the Chartists as a practical way to raise money while extending the democratic agitation into a domain of popular culture that touched the lives of tens of thousands of working-class people in London and elsewhere. It offered the chance to bring new participants into the movement, including those whose lack of reading made them hard to reach through the printed word. And it provided a space where some of the campaign's most challenging ideas could be aired and debated – where the politics of violence could be considered and questions about women and their political role brought forward. Chartism, a movement that took pride in its literate culture, thus looks different in light of its drama, a collaborative art through which activist groups reimagined British history and advanced their own interpretations of society.

Notes

1 Thomas Cooper, *The Life of Thomas Cooper* (New York: Humanities Press, 1971), pp. 213–18.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 229.
3 'Cooper, the Leicester Chartist', *Stamford Mercury* (3 February 1843), p. 2.
4 Cooper, *Life*, p. 169; 'Leicester', *Northern Star* (3 December 1842), p. 1; Stephen Roberts, *The Chartist Prisoners: The Radical Lives of Thomas Cooper (1805–1892) and Arthur O'Neill (1819–1896)* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 69–80.
5 See, for instance, reviews of the Chartists' performance of John Home's tragedy, *Douglas*: 'Cooperian Theatricals', *Leicestershire Mercury* (17 December 1842), p. 3; 'Shaksperean Theatricals', *Leicestershire Mercury* (24 December 1842), p. 3.
6 'Cooper, the Leicester Chartist', *Stamford Mercury* (3 February 1843), p. 2.
7 'The Unlicensed Drama', *Leicester Chronicle* (4 February 1843), p. 1.
8 Anthony Pennino, 'The Reconstructed Bard: Chartism and Shakespeare', *Monograf*, 1 (2014), 12–38; Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare for the People: Working-class Readers, 1800–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 138–49.
9 Ben Brierely, *Home Memories and Recollections of a Life* (Manchester: Abel Heywood & Sons, 1886), p. 41; 'Kilbarchan', *Northern Star* (6 April 1850), p. 1. For more details on these productions, see Appendix 1, which lists all documented Chartist performances.
10 'Nottingham', *Northern Star* (17 December 1842), p. 1; 'Leicester', *Northern Star* (3 December 1842), p. 1.
11 'National Victim and Defence Committee', *Northern Star* (16 December 1848), p. 5.
12 'London', *Northern Star* (27 September 1845), p. 5.
13 The series, titled 'Chartism from Shakespeare', ran from 25 April to 23 May 1840.

14 'Leicester', *Northern Star* (3 December 1842), p. 1; Cooper, *Life*, p. 229.
15 *Ibid.*, p. 228.
16 *Ibid.*
17 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2012), p. 115 (2.2.567–68).
18 Robert Hall, *Voices of the People: Democracy and Chartist Political Identity, 1830–1870* (Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2007), p. 41.
19 On the cultural side of Chartist Life, see James Epstein, 'Some organisational and cultural aspects of the Chartist movement in Nottingham', in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (eds), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830–60* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Paul Pickering, *Chartism and Chartists in Manchester and Salford* (London: Macmillan, 1995).
20 Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
21 On theatre and the Reform Bill, see Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Katherine Newey, 'Reform on the London stage', in Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (eds), *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
22 Roberts, *Chartist Prisoners*, p. 76.
23 The Chartists, however, firmly rejected literacy qualifications for the vote. Gregory Vargo, *An Underground History of Early Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 133–34; Mike Sanders, 'From "technical" to "cultural" literacy: reading and writing within the British Chartist movement', in Ann-Catrine Edlund, T. G. Ashplant, Anna Kuismin (eds), *Reading and Writing from Below: Exploring the Margins of Modernity* (Umeå: Umeå University and the Royal Skyttean Society, 2016), p. 286.
24 Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 93.
25 James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A study in English Political Culture, c.1815–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 106.
26 Hall, *Voices of the People*, pp. 35–36.
27 Robert Lowery, *Robert Lowery: Radical and Chartist* (London: Europa, 1979), p. 109.
28 *Ibid.*, p. 10. On theatre's influence on Chartist oratory, see Janette Lisa Martin, 'Popular Political Oratory and Itinerant Lecturing in Yorkshire and the North East in the Age of Chartism, 1837–60' (PhD dissertation, University of York, 2010), pp. 196–99. For the theatrical nature of Chartist political spectacle, see Mike Sanders, 'The platform and the stage: the primary aesthetics of Chartism', in Peter Yeandle, Katherine Newey, and Jeffrey Richards (eds), *Politics, Performance and Popular Culture: Theatre and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Vernon, *Politics*, pp. 232–33; Paul Pickering, 'Class without words: symbolic communication in the Chartist movement', *Past and Present*, 112 (August 1986), 144–62.
29 Timothy Randall, 'Chartist poetry and song', in Owen Ashton, Robert Fyson, and Stephen Roberts (eds), *The Chartist Legacy* (London: Merlin Press, 1999), p. 172. Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1998) closely tracks the interplay between written and oral forms in Chartist poetry. On ways Chartist culture included the illiterate, see Robert Hall, 'Creating a people's history: political identity and history in Chartism, 1832–1848', in Ashton, Fyson, and Roberts (eds), *Chartist Legacy*; Robert Hall, 'At the dawn of the information age: reading and the working classes in Ashton-under-Lyne, 1830–1850', in James Connolly et al. (eds), *Print Culture Histories Beyond the Metropolis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), p. 245.

30 John Watkins, *John Frost: A Chartist Play in Five Acts* (London: n.p., 1841), p. 9 (p. 104). The number in parentheses refers to the present edition.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 20 (p. 119).

32 Gregory Vargo, 'Chartist drama: the performance of revolt', *Victorian Studies*, 61:1 (Fall 2018), 9–34, pp. 14–15.

33 Watkins, *John Frost*, p. 20 (p. 119).

34 'London', *Northern Star* (15 October 1842), p. 2.

35 'Burnley', *Northern Star* (22 February 1845), p. 5.

36 James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 147–65.

37 Ros Merkin, 'The Theatre of the Organised Working Class 1830–1930' (PhD dissertation, University of Warwick, 1993), pp. 7–8.

38 'Keighley', *Northern Star* (2 January 1841), p. 1.

39 'Coventry', *Northern Star* (9 April 1842), p. 1.

40 'London', *Northern Star* (14 August 1842), p. 4.

41 Many Chartist accounts add a second 't' to Emmet's name.

42 Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1957), p. 352.

43 'Emmett and the Men of 1798', *Poor Man's Guardian and Friend*, 4 (n.d.), p. 25. The speech appeared originally as 'The Speech of Robert Emmet, Esq.', *Poor Man's Guardian* (2 February 1832), pp. 267–69.

44 'Memoir of Robert Emmett', *Chartist Circular* (5 March–14 May 1842). 'Memoires of Celebrated Patriots. No. 2 – Robert Emmett', *English Chartist Circular* (n.d.), 1:11–1:21.

45 'Glasgow', *Northern Star* (1 April 1843), p. 1; 'Glasgow', *Northern Star* (22 April 1843), p. 1; 'To the Chartists of Scotland', *Northern Star* (29 April 1843), p. 5; 'To the Chartists of Scotland', *Northern Star* (13 May 1843), p. 4; 'Glasgow and Greenock', *Northern Star* (13 May 1843), p. 4.

46 'Gateshead', *Northern Liberator* (12 December 1840), p. 5; 'Examination of Mr. Wm. Beesley, at Burnley', *Northern Star* (17 September 1842), p. 6.

47 'Mr. O'Brien', *Northern Star* (4 September 1843), p. 1; Pickering, *Chartism and Chartists*, p. 153.

48 'Mr. Moncrieff and Boz', *Charter* (9 June 1839), p. 313.

49 'National Literature', *Labourer* (1847), 2: 279–88; 'National Literature. III. – Germany', *Labourer* (1848), 3: 232–43.

50 'Literary Review', *Labourer* (1847) 2: 94.

51 Mike Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 13–14.

52 Brierley, *Home Memories*, p. 39; Marc Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 171.
53 Brierley, *Home Memories*, p. 41.
54 'More Horrors of the Whig Dungeons', *Northern Star* (17 October 1840), p. 7; Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789–1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 189–216.
55 'Grand Chartist Tea Meeting', *Northern Star* (26 October 1839), p. 1.
56 'Notice', *Northern Star* (21 May 1842), p. 1; 'The Play the Thing', *Northern Star* (3 February 1849), p. 5.
57 Vargo, 'Chartist drama', p. 21.
58 Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 138.
59 *Ibid.*, p. 159; Sanders, *Poetry of Chartism*, pp. 77–81.
60 Brierely, *Home Memories*, pp. 30–41; 'Hollingwood and Failsworth', *Northern Star* (24 December 1841), p. 1; 'Dramatic Entertainment for the Benefit of the Victim Fund', *Northern Star* (25 November 1843), p. 1; 'Chartism', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (9 January 1841), p. 3.
61 Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 14.
62 'Kilbarchan', *Northern Star* (6 April 1850), p. 1.
63 Watkins, *John Frost*, p. 17 (p. 114).
64 *Ibid.*
65 *Ibid.*, p. 34 (p. 139).
66 Merkin, 'Theatre', p. 28.
67 Michael Sanders, 'Poetic agency: metonymy and metaphor in Chartist poetry 1838–1852', *Victorian Poetry*, 39:2 (Summer 2001), 111–36, p. 121.
68 Statistics for all figures are drawn from sources detailed in Appendix 1. The data include dramatic readings and performances of individual scenes. Figures count separate evenings of the same production as multiple performances, although almost all productions were staged only a single time in any given locale (or at least newspaper reports fail to record subsequent nights). While by no means definitive – and indeed likely missing dozens or more of performances not located in these sources – the figures nevertheless indicate certain trends. The ambiguity around *The Trial of Robert Emmet* reflects the fact that the *Star* ceased covering two competing touring productions, one of which had announced a plan to visit twenty-one or more locales. 'Glasgow', *Northern Star* (22 April 1843), p. 1; 'To the Chartists of Scotland', *Northern Star* (29 April 1843), p. 5; 'To Readers and Correspondents', *Northern Star* (13 May 1843), p. 5.
69 Other aspects of Chartist culture promoted a sense of radical history. See Hall, 'Creating a people's history'; Kate Bowan and Paul Pickering, '"Songs for the Millions": Chartist music and popular aural tradition', *Labour History Review*, 74:1 (2009), 44–63, p. 57; Sanders, *Poetry of Chartism*, p. 6; Rob Breton, *The Oppositional Aesthetics of Chartist Fiction: Reading against the Middle-Class Novel* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 51–78. Rob Breton and Gregory Vargo (eds), 'Chartist Fiction Online', http://chartistfiction.hosting.nyu.edu/home (accessed 27 August 2019), lists over two hundred 'historical romances' appearing in Chartist papers.

70 *Memoir of Robert Emmett and the Irish Insurrection of 1803; with the Trial of Emmett for High Treason, His Memorable Speech, &c.* (London: Cleave, n.d.), p. 44 (pp. 179-80). The number in parentheses refers to the present edition (note that sections of Cleave's *Memoir* not in this edition are also sometimes quoted)..
71 Robert Southey, *Wat Tyler: A Dramatic Poem in Three Acts* (London: Cleave, n.d.), p. 16 (p. 86). The number in parentheses refers to the present edition..
72 'Glasgow', *Northern Star* (1 April 1843), p. 1; 'Dundee Democratic School Soiree', *Northern Star* (29 December 1849), p. 1. For size of these venues, see Cooper, *Life*, p. 229; Christopher Richardson, *A City of Light* (Nottingham: Russel Press, 2013), pp. 119–22; Robert Hall, 'Work, class, and politics in Ashton-under-Lyne, 1830–1860' (PhD dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1991), p. 150.
73 Heidi Holder, 'The East-End theatre', in Kerry Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 258; Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing, 1840–1880* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), p. 24.
74 'Chartism', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (9 January 1841), p. 3.
75 Robert Hall, 'Work, class, and politics', pp. 159–60.
76 'South Lancashire Delegates', *Northern Star* (17 October 1840), p. 2.
77 'The Irish in England', *Freeman's Journal* (21 December 1840), p. 2.
78 'Chartism', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (9 January 1841), p. 3.
79 'Hamilton', *Northern Star* (11 November 1843), p. 5; 'London', *Northern Star* (14 August 1841), p. 4; 'Nottingham', *Northern Star* (3 February 1844), p. 8.
80 'Darlington', *Northern Star* (31 October 1840), p. 2; 'East Bierley', *Northern Star* (27 February 1841), p. 1.
81 Nearly half of all benefits give no indication to what purpose profits were put. Many of these events likely funded organisational expenses as well.
82 'Local Intelligence', *Northern Liberator* (19 December 1840), p. 5; 'A New Move of the Chartists', *Preston Chronicle* (12 December 1840), p. 3; 'Keighley. – Chartist Festival', *Northern Star* (2 January 1841), p. 1; 'Dukenfield and Ashton-Under-Lyne', *Northern Star* (7 December 1850), p. 1.
83 'Donations', *Northern Star* (25 June 1842), p. 1; 'Balance-sheet of Provisional Committee', *Northern Star* (26 November 1842), p. 3; 'To the Chartists of Scotland', *Northern Star* (13 May 1843), p. 4. Figures for the London performance are ambiguous as outside debts are apparently debited against the benefit's profits.
84 *Ibid.*
85 Cooper, *Life*, pp. 228–29.
86 'Leicester', *Northern Star* (3 December 1842), p. 1.
87 Thomas Martin Wheeler, 'Sunshine and Shadow', *Northern Star* (26 May 1849), p. 3. The novel is also available in Ian Haywood (ed.), *Chartist Fiction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), vol. 1.
88 The Britannia may well have hosted Chartist benefits as well. See Jenna Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia, 1760–1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 218. Evidence also exists that when the Britannia lost its 'music and dance license' Chartists protested on its behalf. Gibbs, *Performing the Temple*, p. 218 and Clive

Barker, 'The Chartists, theatre, reform and research', *Theatre Quarterly*, 1:4 (Fall 1971), 3–10, pp. 8–9.

89 'Victoria Theatre', *Morning Advertiser* (16 January 1846), p. 3.

90 Gibbs, *Performing the Temple*, p. 218.

91 'The Whig Conspiracy Victims', *Northern Star* (14 October 1848), p. 5; 'Milton Street Theatre', *Northern Star* (21 October 1848), p. 8.

92 *Ibid.*

93 Marc Brodie, 'Free trade and cheap theatre: sources of politics for the nineteenth-century London poor', *Social History*, 28:3 (October 2003), 346–60, pp. 349–50.

94 Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London: Griffin and Company, 1861), vol. 1, p. 22.

95 *Ibid.*

96 Davis and Emeljanow, *Reflecting*, p. 48.

97 Anita Cowan, 'The relationship between theatre repertoire and theatre location: a study of the Pavilion Theatre', in Karelisa Hartigan (ed.), *All the World: Drama Past and Present* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), vol. 2, pp. 13, 17.

98 Quoted in Tracy Davis, 'Introduction: Repertoire', in Tracy Davis (ed.), *The Broadview Anthology of Nineteenth-Century British Performance* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2012), p. 20.

99 Davis and Emeljanow, *Reflecting*, p. 37.

100 Chartist groups shared a particularly close relationship with the actor-manager John Douglass, who hosted two benefits at the Marylebone and four more after moving to the Standard. See, 'Royal Marylebone Theatre', *Northern Star* (6 February 1847), p. 3; 'Marylebone Theatre', *Northern Star* (27 February 1847), p. 3; 'Marylebone Theatre', *Northern Star* (6 March 1847), p. 3; 'Royal Standard Theatre, Shoreditch', *Northern Star* (14 October 1848), p. 5.

101 'The Widow and Fatherless Family', *Northern Star* (6 December 1845), p. 4.

102 'Dramatic Entertainment for the Benefit of the National Victim Fund', *Northern Star* (25 November 1843), p. 1.

103 'The Political Victim, Widow, and Orphan's Fund', *Northern Star* (21 October 1848), p. 7.

104 'Address', *Northern Star* (29 January 1842), p. 3. Such extra-diegetic prologues could also accompany Chartist amateur productions. For example, in Leeds a lecture on William Tell preceded a performance of a play of that title. 'Leeds', *Northern Star* (22 January 1842), p. 8.

105 'Victoria Theatre', *Morning Advertiser* (24 April 1846), p. 3.

106 'City of London Theatre', *Northern Star* (14 November 1846), p. 1.

107 The night featured George Colman's comedy *John Bull, or, an Englishman's Fire-Side* and the 'musical drama' *The Little Devil*. 'Royal Marylebone Theatre', *Northern Star* (28 November 1846), p. 4.

108 Farces and comedies, of course, also sometimes include class commentary. See, for instance, Walter Watt's *An Irish Engagement*, in which a servant impersonates and otherwise gets the better of upper-class characters. This farce played alongside John Baldwin Buckstone's revenge melodrama *Luke the Labourer* at a benefit for the Chartist prisoner John Shaw. Walter Watts, *An Irish Engagement: A Farce in one act*

(London: S. G. Fairbrother, n.d.); 'John Shaw's benefit at the City Theatre', *Northern Star* (6 July 1850), p. 8.

109 'Royal Albert Saloon', *Morning Advertiser* (12 May 1842), p. 2.

110 'Notice! Every Chartist in London to his Post', *Northern Star* (4 June 1842), p. 1.

111 On blackface performance in 1840s Britain, see Sarah Meer, 'Competing Representations: Douglass, the Ethiopian Serenaders, and Ethnic Exhibition in London', in Alan Rice and Martin Crawford (eds), *Liberating Sojourn: Frederick Douglass and Transatlantic Reform* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

112 'Metropolitan Delegates' Theatrical Benefit', *Northern Star* (1 May 1847), p. 3. For Chartist attitudes on race, see Patricia Hollis, 'Anti-Slavery and British Working-Class Radicalism in the Years of Reform', in Christine Bolt and Seymour Descher (eds), *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform* (Hamden CT: Dawson, 1982); Kelly Mays, 'Slaves in Heaven, Laborers in Hell: Chartist Poets' Ambivalent Identification with the (Black) Slave', *Victorian Poetry*, 39:2 (Summer 2001), 137-63; Gregory Vargo, '"Outworks of the Citadel of Corruption": The Chartist Press Reports the Empire', *Victorian Studies*, 54:2 (Winter 2012), 227–53.

113 'Varieties', *Northern Star* (28 July 1849), p. 3; 'Dramatic Entertainment for the Benefit of the National Victim Fund', *Northern Star* (25 November 1843), p. 1. On Cuffay, see Martin Hoyles, *William Cuffay: The Life and Times of a Chartist Leader* (Hertford: Hansib, 2013).

114 Moody, *Illegitimate*, pp. 51–55.

115 Rosalind Crone, *Violent Victorians* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 127; Monica Cohen, *Pirating Fictions: Ownership and Creativity in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), p. 80.

116 Moody, *Illegitimate*, pp. 108, 124; Jane Moody, 'The theatrical revolution, 1776–1843', in Joseph Donohue (ed.), *The Cambridge History of British Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 202.

117 Rowell George, *The Old Vic Theatre: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 24.

118 Tracy Davis, 'Introduction', p. 20.

119 Tracy Davis, *The Economics of the British Stage: 1800–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 32–35.

120 Moody, *Illegitimate*, p. 42.

121 'Character of Trades' Unionists', *Poor Man's Guardian* (18 October 1834), p. 293.

122 'Royal Victoria Theatre', *Cleave's Gazette of Variety* (13 April 1839), p. 4; 'Glasgow Cotton Spinners', *Northern Star* (4 May 1839), p. 3; 'Victoria Theatre', *Charter* (29 September 1839), p. 568. Prominent Chartists, including John Cleave, Henry Hetherington, James Watson, and William Lovett sold tickets for one or both of these performances.

123 Playbill quoted in Chase, *Chartism*, p. 295. On the Victoria and radicalism, also see Brodie, 'Free trade'.

124 John Storey, *Culture and Power in Cultural Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 45–46.

125 Brierley, *Home Memories*, p. 39.

126 Joseph Donohue, 'Actors and acting', in Powell (ed.), *Cambridge Companion*, p. 20;

Jackson Russell, 'Victorian and Edwardian stagecraft: techniques and issues', in Powell (ed.), *Cambridge Companion*, p. 56; Moody, 'Theatrical revolution', p. 208.

127 'The Longton Amateur Theatricals', *Northern Star* (1 February 1851), p. 5; Jeffrey Cox, 'Introduction', in Jeffrey Cox (ed.), *Seven Gothic Dramas 1789–1825* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992), p. 16.

128 Mayhew, *London Labour*, vol. 1, p. 43.

129 Christopher Thomson, *The Autobiography of an Artisan* (London: J. Shaw and Sons, 1847), pp. 105, 185.

130 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

131 'Ashton', *Northern Star* (31 October 1840), p. 1.

132 '"Breath his name"', *Waterford Weekly Chronicle* (22 April 1843), p. 1.

133 'Winlaton', *Northern Star* (23 April 1842), p. 1. Even though relatively few accounts of Chartist performance mention music, many occurred at events, such as concerts or dances, where musicians played. Another staging of *John Frost* paired Watkins's play with a 'nautical burletta', so music likely accompanied both plays. 'Hamilton', *Northern Star* (11 November 1843), p. 5.

134 Michael Pisani, 'Music for the theatre: style and function in incidental music', in Powell (ed.), *Cambridge Companion*, p. 71.

135 David Karr, '"Thoughts that flash like lightning": Thomas Holcroft, radical theater, and the production of meaning in 1790s London', *Journal of British Studies*, 40:3 (July 2001), 324–56, pp. 326–28.

136 Mayhew, *London Labour*, vol.1, p. 20.

137 Charles Dickens, 'The Amusements of the People', *Household Words* (30 March 1850), pp. 14–15; George Augustus Sala, *Twice Round the Clock* (London: Houlston and Wright, 1859), p. 271.

138 Mayhew, *London Labour*, vol.1, p. 21.

139 Thomas Wright, *Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes; By a Journey Man Engineer* (London: Tinsley Brother, 1867), p. 163.

140 Malcolm Chase, '"Love, bitter wrong, freedom, sad pity, and lust of power": politics and performance in 1820', in Peter Yeandle, Katherine Newey, and Jeffrey Richards (eds), *Politics, Performance, and Popular Culture*, p. 208; Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, p. 48.

141 Gibbs, *Performing the Temple*, p. 218.

142 *Ibid.*, pp. 225–26; John Russel Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama 1824–1901* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 59.

143 Patrick Geoghegan, *Robert Emmet, A Life* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2002), pp. 269–70.

144 William Cobbett, 'Aristocracy, Parsons, and Money-Mongers', *Cobbett's Political Register*, 88:10 (6 June 1835), pp. 592–97; Stephens, *Censorship*, p. 15.

145 *Ibid.*

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170 *Ibid.*, p. 10 (p. 106).
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202 Matthew Roberts, *Chartism, Commemoration and the Cult of the Radical Hero* (London: Routledge), p. 69 and passim.
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205 Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 51–52.
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209 *Memoir of Robert Emmett*, p. 36 (p. 174).
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211 *Ibid.*, p. 40 (pp. 176-177).
212 *Ibid.*, p. 44 (p. 180). On the way Chartist performances of Emmet's trial mobilise counterfactual possibilities, suggesting how the past might have transpired differently, see Vargo, 'Chartist drama', pp. 26–28.
213 Edward Fitzball, *Hofer, the Tell of the Tyrol, an Historical Drama in Three Acts* (London: John Cumberland, n.d.), p. 40.
214 Knowles, *William Tell*, p. 51.
215 Rogers, *Women and the People*, p. 84.
216 Quoted in Chase, *Chartism*, p. 225.
217 Anna Clark, 'The rhetoric of Chartist domesticity: gender, language, and class in the 1830s and 1840s', *The Journal of British Studies*, 31:1 (January 1992), 62–88.
218 'Victoria Theatre', *Northern Star* (10 March 1849), p. 8.
219 Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 35 makes an analogous argument about women in the commercial theatre.
220 Rogers, *Women and the People*, p. 81.
221 Thompson, *Chartists*, pp. 138, 147.
222 'Greenock', *Northern Star* (30 October 1841), p. 1; 'Manchester. – Female Chartists', *Northern Star* (24 September 1842), p. 8; D. Thompson, *Chartists*, pp. 126, 150; Pickering, *Chartism and Chartists*, p. 38; Dorothy Thompson, *Dignity of Chartism* (London: Verso, 2015), p. 45.
223 Richardson, *A City of Light*, pp. 135–42.
224 'Nottingham Female Political Union', *Nottingham Review* (26 October 1838), p. 4.
225 'The O'Connor Festival at Nottingham', *Northern Star* (20 November 1847), p. 7.
226 'Glasgow', *Northern Star* (24 April 1841), p. 1.
227 'Nottingham Female Association', *Northern Star* (23 November 1839), p. 2. Female fundraising often outstripped male efforts. At Todmorden, for example, female Chartists raised more than twice as much money for Peter McDouall as 'male Chartists'. See, 'Subscriptions Received by Mr. Cleave', *Northern Star* (28 January 1843), p. 1.
228 'Tea Party', *Northern Star* (2 January 1841), p. 1.
229 'Standard Theatre', *Northern Star* (6 October 1849), p. 7.
230 Navickas, *Protest*, p. 214; Christina Parolin, *Radical Space: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790–ca. 1845* (Acton: Australian National University E Press, 2010), pp. 173–75.
231 'The Incarcerated Victims', *Northern Star* (6 February 1841), p. 1; 'Finsbury', *Northern Star* (4 September 1841), p. 5; 'Enthusiastic Reception of Mr. Geo White, of Leeds, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne', *Northern Star* (5 December 1840), p. 1; 'Concert at Hanover Square in Aid of the Hungarian Cause', *Northern Star* (20 December 1851), p. 6.
232 'Polish and Hungarian Refugees', *Northern Star* (22 March 1851), p. 1.
233 John Home, *Douglas: a tragedy, in five acts* (London: Samuel French, n.d.), p. 9.
234 *Ibid.*
235 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

236 'City of London Theatre', *Northern Star* (14 November 1846), p. 1; Alex Lee, *I'll be No Submissive Wife, A Ballad* (New York: Firth & Hall, 1838), p. 7.
237 Knowles, *William Tell*, p. 64.
238 *Ibid*., p. 82; 'Marylebone Theatre', *Northern Star* (6 March 1847), p. 3.
239 Watkins, *John Frost*, p. 11 (p. 107).
240 *Ibid*., p. 13 (p. 109). Frost's disregard for his family's safety in Watkins's play is particularly striking in that it ran counter to much Chartist discourse that emphasised his familial commitments as evidence 'of his peaceable intentions' during the rising. See Sanders, *Poetry of Chartism*, pp. 100, 120 and Iota's fifth sonnet in Appendix 2.
241 'Kilbarchan', *Northern Star* (6 April 1850), p. 1.
242 William Shakespeare, *Othello* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2017), p. 245 (5.2.153).
243 *Ibid*., p. 217 (4.3.104–108).
244 Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, p. 211 (4.5.92).
245 Thomas Otway, *Venice Preserved* (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, n.d.), p. 21.
246 Ernest Jones, 'St. John's Eve: A Romantic Drama, in Three Acts', *The Labourer* (1848), vol. 4, p. 190 (p. 210). The number in parentheses refers to the present edition.
247 *Ibid*., pp. 189, 238 (pp. 203, 223).
248 In correspondence about Watkins's not extant *Robin Hood*, Ebenezer Elliot complains of Watkins rendering Marian 'a brimstone virago'. John Watkins, *Life, poetry, and letters of Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-law rhymer, with an abstract of his politics* (London, J. Mortimer, 1850), p. 160.
249 Watkins, *John Frost*, p. 11 (p. 107).
250 *Ibid*., p. 27 (p. 129).
251 *Ibid*., p. 46 (p. 156).
252 *Ibid*.
253 John Watkins, 'Address to the Women of England!', *English Chartist Circular* (n.d.), p. 49.
254 *Ibid*., p. 50. On the concept of 'militant domesticity', see Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), passim. On this rhetoric in Chartism, see Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 229–30.
255 Rogers, *Women and the People*, pp. 80, 101.
256 'Nottingham Female Political Union', *Northern Star* (8 December 1838), p. 6.
257 Watkins, *John Frost*, p. 34 (p. 140).
258 *Ibid*.
259 Sophia, 'Woman – Her Social and Political Influence', *English Chartist Circular* (n.d.), 1:16, p. 63.