Comedy, Christianity and Melodramatic Affect: The Sorrows of Satan at the Shaftesbury Theatre

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Abstract
This article examines Paul M. Berton and Herbert Woodgate’s 1897 melodrama, The Sorrows of Satan, which opened at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London. The play was adapted from Marie Corelli’s bestselling novel of the same name (1895). In this article, I show how the stage production injected comedy into Corelli’s story, while maintaining and perhaps even amplifying its didactic Christianity. In exploring the techniques of the Berton and Woodgate play, and tracking the production’s critical reception, we can see that late-Victorian religious melodrama was both affectively and visually powerful, as well as capable of considerable nuance.

Keywords
Melodrama, late-Victorian theatre, Christianity, comedy, adaptation, bestsellers, affect

Early Bestsellers and the Stage
In 1895, bestselling English author Marie Corelli published what would become her most famous novel, The Sorrows of Satan. The story follows an impoverished hack writer, Geoffrey Tempest, who arbitrarily inherits an enormous fortune. Almost immediately, Geoffrey strikes up a friendship with the mysterious and
incredibly wealthy Prince Lucio Rímánez, a seeming philanthropist interested in Geoffrey’s literary pursuits. The two embark on an alliance in which Lucio vows to help Geoffrey publish his writing and to introduce him to London’s literary elite. With Lucio’s help, Geoffrey ascends the social ladder, marrying the daughter of the Earl of Elton, Lady Sibyl, and befriending the bestselling and deeply moralistic authoress, Mavis Clare. However, despite the appearance of good fortune, Geoffrey’s life increasingly turns to tragedy and the once-charming Lucio becomes ever more sinister. What Geoffrey does not know, of course, is that Lucio is Satan in human form and that, by allowing Lucio into his life, Geoffrey has struck a deal with the devil. When he recognises Lucio for what he truly is during a climactic thunderstorm at sea, Geoffrey renounces Satan, accepts God into his life and he is freed from his Faustian bargain. Doomed as he is to roam the earth and tempt humans away from the Christian path, Lucio moves on to his next victim.

*The Sorrows of Satan* was Corelli’s first novel to be published under the new one-volume system, and its Faustian plotline proved to be an enormous hit with *fin-de-siècle* readers. The novel sold 25,000 copies within a week of publication and 50,000 copies (through eight editions) in under two months. Given its immense popularity, the story was adapted for the stage almost immediately and by multiple playwrights. While it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of stage adaptations that were produced on the back of Corelli’s text, H. Philip Bolton catalogues several stage adaptations of *The Sorrows of Satan* that were performed across England at the end of the century, and while no published version survives, there are at least three versions of the story in the Lord Chamberlain’s plays collection in the British Library. These are Henry S. Dacre’s 1897 adaptation, Maurice H. Hoffman’s shorter sketch version from the same year, and Paul M. Berton and Herbert Woodgate’s four-act melodrama, which opened on Saturday, 9 January 1897 at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London. Here I focus on Berton and Woodgate’s version of the text, the biggest of these productions, which, though less successful in London, proved to be a hit when it toured neighbouring provinces. Analysing the structure of Berton and Woodgate’s play, its use of verbal and physical comedy and its complex techniques of doubling, I argue that the stage adaptation capitalised on comedy as a way of boosting the story’s popularity even further, while simultaneously enhancing the central, Christian concerns of the novel through affective amplification. In exploring the techniques of the Berton and Woodgate play, and tracking the production’s critical reception, we can see that late-Victorian religious melodrama was both affectively and visually powerful, as well as capable of considerable nuance.

The adaptation of *The Sorrows of Satan* for the stage was not exceptional, given its tremendous sales figures, as well as the fact that there was a long history of theatrical remediation in the nineteenth century. Not only were renowned novelists often as interested in the theatre as they were in the book trade, but there was also a huge demand for popular literature to be realised on the stage. As Deborah Vlock has argued, most nineteenth-century readers were theatrically literate and, having been ‘brought up on theatre’, they read books with a distinctly visual
imagination. By the end of the century, the two-way exchange between page and stage was common; writers frequently deployed dramatic techniques in their fiction, and equally the public read novels with a practiced theatrical eye. While the mid-Victorian tendency of adopting fiction for the theatre had lessened somewhat by the end of the century, some of the biggest commercial hits of the 1890s and early 1900s were still using popular novels as source texts. Thus, the continual re-imagining of Corelli’s story was made possible and fuelled by a theatrically minded public, hungry for new and alternative expressions of much-loved stories. This kind of cultural visuality in the existing reading practices of Corelli’s audience is reflected in the fact that Berton and Woodgate’s play enjoyed one significant form of marketing in particular: word of mouth. Two years after Corelli’s original publication, William Moy Thomas observed in *The Graphic* that many theatregoers were already well aware of what they could expect from the production on its first night:

‘You will find it all explained in the novel’, was the remark of a lady in the stalls at the SHAFTESBURY Theatre on Saturday evening to her companion, who seemed to be a little bewildered by *The Sorrows of Satan*, but unfortunately, the lady’s companion had not brought Miss Marie Corelli’s work with her, nor owing to the present system of keeping the auditorium in semi-darkness, in order to heighten the effects of light upon the stage, would it have been possible to refer to it.

Thomas’s observations suggest that one of the strongest advertisements for Berton and Woodgate’s new play was Corelli’s novel, which had cultivated a broad readership over the previous two years. As Martin Meisel reminds us, pre-existing familiarity was part of the process of dramatic realisation: ‘The effect of a realization depended on recognition; and beyond that, familiarity would allow the series of images to work as evocation of a more compendious whole.’ Such familiarity is crucial to my central argument here: that the melodrama’s deployment and manipulation of the familiar is what enabled audiences to invest emotionally in the content of the play, and thus to fall under the spell of the play’s Christian underpinnings.

More generally, part of the appeal of the theatre in relation to already-successful bestsellers like Corelli’s was its affordability. As we have seen, even after its initial surge in book sales, the content of *The Sorrows of Satan* was still in wide circulation. And although we cannot identify exact figures, we can reasonably speculate that sales only increased during and after such productions as Berton and Woodgate’s, which provided additional and new advertising for the same product. Corelli’s novel retailed at the moderately expensive price of 6s., but playgoers could enjoy the same story for a fraction of that cost. For the wealthy theatregoer, some ticket prices to the Shaftesbury Theatre’s production were even higher than the price of the novel, costing £3 3s, £2 2s or £1 1s for Private Boxes, 10s 6d. for Stalls, 7s 6d. for Balcony Stalls and 6s for the Dress Circle. However, for those who could not pay at such rates, tickets could be purchased cheaply at 4s.
for a seat in the Upper Circle, 2s 6d. for the Pit, 1s 6d. for the Amphitheatre and just 1s for the Gallery. Moreover, as the range in ticket prices indicates, London’s West End drew on a wide hinterland by this point. Although direct access to the West End remained a difficulty for visitors coming from the north, Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow note that by 1885, ‘there were more than 100 omnibus lines serving the center of London’. They also note that the expansion of the railway and underground in the 1870s and 1880s enabled the West End to become a popular tourist destination, attracting playgoers from Kent, Greenwich and southern suburbs such as Lewisham, Beckenham and Bromley. This kind of access allowed for a far wider audience demographic. In contrast to previous notions of London’s cultural centre (the West End) and its periphery (the East End), Davis and Emeljanow’s extensive research on specific London neighbourhoods and theatres stresses the diversity of theatregoers during this period. Thus, affordable prices and geographic accessibility meant that plays like Berton and Woodgate’s were required to cater to a broader variety of public interests, somehow tackling the hard questions of ‘high’ culture (in the form of theological and philosophical discourse), while simultaneously responding to more ‘lowly’ appetites for comic relief. In short, The Sorrows of Satan needed to impact its audiences on two affective tiers: the meaningful and the superficial.

One way of theorising the relation of page and stage has been offered by Meisel, who tells us that truly external affect can only be found in the visual physicality of stage demonstration. He states:

On the nineteenth-century stage, passion and affect – rationalized, schematized, and abstracted in the century and a half since Descartes set them forth in number and order – were realized finally in character, passing from quasi-allegorical embodiments to the stereotypes of melodrama... In such thoroughly reliable characters the gestures and expressions associated with passions as temporary states became fixed, as mask and attitude. Meisel’s focus on the pictorial nature of Victorian drama reminds us that such plays intersect with both narrative and painting of the time, and thus provide ‘the evident meeting place of story and picture’. And while pictorial affects are certainly embodied and fixed in onstage characters, they are also palpably concretised through (and enhanced by) a given play’s mise en scène; its atmospheric lighting, for example, its dramatic timing and its special effects. But affects and atmospheres are not exclusively pictorial, and Meisel notes that it is also through ‘sound and movement’ that sensation becomes ‘charged with wonder’. With this in mind, we must remember that the popularity of such dramatic fiction was partly due to the fact that it touched on a variety of interconnected public interests, which were deeply rooted in lived experiences and ubiquitous social meanings. Not least of these were the ways in which Christianity was made manifest in everyday life at this later stage of Modernity. Popular novels such as Corelli’s made use of tactics drawn from melodrama, providing readers with sudden reversals of fortune,
emotionally heightened and action-packed plotlines that relied on stock characterisation and an enduring proclivity towards externality (of emotion, pathos and the otherwise private realms of the individual).

Ultimately, though, stage melodramas of popular fiction offered additional pleasures that the novels simply could not; namely, they staged a more visceral articulation of affect. Here, however, I want to draw a distinction between my nuanced examination of a very particular play and Meisel’s panoramic overview of nineteenth-century theatre, literature and art. This article examines the combined effects of pictorial spectacle, sound and movement in order to demonstrate how Berton and Woodgate’s stage adaptation of *The Sorrows of Satan* at the Shaftesbury offered an affective amplification of Corelli’s original story. But, as we shall see, these features serve a purpose beyond the merely sensorial. The play perpetuates the explicitly Christian ethos of the novel in new ways, and it draws our attention to an emergent set of melodramatic aesthetics at the end of the century, which were much more sophisticated than their earlier iterations.

**A Play of Two Halves**

The structure and plotting of *The Sorrows of Satan* plays a key role in the affective appeal of Berton and Woodgate’s melodrama, which is divided into four acts that adhere closely to the plot of Corelli’s novel. Like its namesake, Berton and Woodgate’s stage adaptation demonstrates *fin-de-siècle* anxieties surrounding the functions of money, publishing trends, literary taste, social morality, the marriage market and issues of sexual propriety. The play’s four-act structure provides a clear turning point in the middle of the story, from a wilfully ignorant kind of frivolous fun and romantic match-making in Acts I and II to an atmosphere that is increasingly sombre and otherworldly in Acts III and IV. Act I is used to set up the main points of the play. It introduces the audience to the protagonists and some minor characters, provides information on what has already occurred. In addition to providing some early comic relief in the form of Bentham and Ellis, it foreshadows what is to come by presenting the play’s central themes and concerns (sin, religious belief, hack literature, bourgeois dandyism and so on). Because Berton and Woodgate’s play is so little known, it is worthwhile analysing an overview of the melodrama in order grasp its structural significance in relation to affective content, as well as to map its similarities to and deviances from Corelli’s more famous novel.

Opening onto the apartment of Prince Lucio, the play starts in the middle of the action; Geoffrey Tempest has already received his large inheritance and has already befriended the demonic Prince. Geoffrey receives a visit from his solicitors, Bentham and Ellis, who are there to finalise the details of his inheritance. They reluctantly tell him that, though usually astute, his deceased relative, from whom Geoffrey has received his millions, ‘had one very curious idea’, which was that he ‘imagined that he had acquired his enormous wealth by selling himself body and soul to . . . the devil!’ At this revelation, Geoffrey and Lucio – the latter of whom
has been standing aside unseen – erupt into scornful laughter. Bentham and Ellis then exit, and Geoffrey falls into a conversation with Lucio about God and the devil. Here, the Prince tells the story of Lucifer’s fall from divine grace, a version that Geoffrey has never heard. As in Corelli’s novel, Lucio explains how, as punishment for his revolt against God, Lucifer was condemned to earth to tempt mortals to evil, and that humanity’s rejection of Satan is what will ultimately pardon him in the eyes of God. Far from being out of sync with the merriment of the first half of the play, such discussions are executed as a kind of recreation, or passing of time, with their moral significance only being realised much later. Likewise, as part of Act I’s foreshadowing tactics (which gesture towards Geoffrey’s suicidal impulses in Act IV), this section concludes with the suicide of Geoffrey’s new friend, Lord Lynton. After betting and losing his soul in a card game with Lucio (something that all the players believe to be a farce), Lynton drunkenly staggers away from the party and shoots himself inexplicably. Despite the seriousness of the incident, there is a concerted effort made by both Lucio and Geoffrey to make light of what has just occurred. Lucio asks Geoffrey ‘What are you going to do?’ and instructs him to ‘Keep cool’, lest he be ‘called up to identify’.17 Equally, Geoffrey admits that Lynton’s demise is ‘too horrible to think of’, and instead turns the conversation to whether Lucio subscribes to the idea of the soul, to which latter light-heartedly jests:

PRINCE. I! Ha! Ha! I am brainsick! Have you not found that out yet? Much learning hath driven me mad, my friend!... If I were Satan now –

TEMPEST. You would have cause to rejoice.18

Thus, the suicide of Lord Lynton is swiftly forgotten within moments before the curtain call, and it goes unremembered in the revelry that follows.

Act II (which takes place six months later) offers an escalation of the pleasures that were introduced in Act I, insofar as we see Geoffrey’s newfound wealth being put to use. Geoffrey throws a lavish fête with Lucio’s assistance, and so this part of the play adopts a carnivalesque quality, featuring entertainments such as a Maypole, fairylike children, and ‘PAGES dressed in eighteenth Century costume of pink and blue carrying torches’.19 Act II also introduces several minor characters, who contribute to the play’s marriage sub-plots; while Geoffrey’s marriage proposal to the atheistic Lady Sibyl is accepted and celebrated, we also see the courtship of the Duke and Miss Chesney. The scene concludes with Lucio’s pages leading the party to their next entertainment, and when Lord Elton tells him, ‘Good gracious Prince! The path is narrow as the way to heaven!’, Lucio replies: ‘Heaven oh no! The time draws near when we must drain the parting cups, and drink to our next merry meeting! On fair ladies and gallant gentlemen. This path of light leads... not to Heaven... but to supper! Come! Follow your leader! – Follow your leader!’20 Structurally, The Sorrows of Satan is a play of two halves, and this descent down the narrow pathway at the close of Act II marks the end of frivolity.
It is the dramatic moment of *peripeteia*, after which Geoffrey must recognise evil and triumph heroically.

Act III adopts a much more sinister tone, which disallows characters to overlook the seriousness of events (as they have done before), and which persists until the final curtain. After barely a year of marriage to Lady Sibyl, Geoffrey’s feelings have turned sour; he recognises that she is emotionally vacuous and morally debased, and he thinks himself a fool for engaging with her at all, exclaiming: ‘All! All is a sham, and a longlinked chain of deceptions!’ In one of the most sensational scenes in the play, Geoffrey discovers Lady Sibyl declaring her love for Lucio, who rejects her contemptuously. In desperation, Lady Sibyl responds by taking poison, realising only as she dies to whom she has given her soul. Thus, Act III sets in motion the chain of actions that eventually brings the audience to the climactic spectacle scene of Act IV.

In that final Act, Geoffrey and Lucio take a yacht trip, upon which Lucio reveals himself to be the play’s eponymous Satan (Geoffrey’s second instance of *anagnorisis*). At the eleventh hour, amidst the terror of an onstage thunderstorm and a chorus of demonic voices, Geoffrey rejects Satan and promises himself to God alone. As the curtain comes down for the final time, Geoffrey floats adrift in the ocean, while Lucio rises up to heaven. There is no dénouement after the thunderstorm of Act IV, but instead, a tableau that displays ‘Jacob’s vision to Heaven’, which freezes the following scene: “Front gauze clearing away to show a calm sea at early sunrise. TEMPEST, clinging to a spar, is floating above the waves; and towards the East a misty angel figure is seen drifting towards the rising sun.” Thus, while Act II is an escalation of the debauchery, comedy and gaiety of Act I, Act IV operates as an intensification of the moral and emotional unravelling that begins in Act III, clearly splitting the play into two halves. This structural dynamic reflects the play’s thematic and tropological orientations, which, are made to generate affective amplification.

**Slapstick and Affective Amplification**

In terms of music, casting, as well as costume and set design, the production of Berton and Woodgate’s *The Sorrows of Satan* appears to have been an extravagant affair. Its stage manager, Edward Hastings, made full use of the play’s large budget by employing three musical composers, as well as two artistic designers. Although the story was scorned in the media, critics largely congratulated the Shaftesbury’s staging of Corelli’s story. The *Glasgow Herald* applauded the fact that the dialogue had been significantly reduced (with the ‘long-winded speeches of the novel [having] been eliminated’). The *Illustrated Police News* noted that a ‘strong cast’ had been engaged for the performance and claimed that the final act presented ‘something exceptional in the way of scenic effects’. Providing resoundingly positive reviews of the individual performances of the cast, *The Era* celebrated the play’s expensive stage artistry with great detail, commenting:
The adaptation was dressed and mounted with liberality and care. Mr Hemsley’s Grounds at Willowsmere and Mr Bruce Smith’s ancient hall with its organ [...] were effective stage pictures, and in the Arctic set, in which the performance concluded the latter artist had done the utmost with the space at his disposal – we will not write the ‘means’, for certainly expense did not seem to have been spared, either in the scenery or the costumes, the ladies’ dresses being pretty and of the latest fashion. No less than three composers, Messrs Hamilton Clarke, Howard Talbot, and Denham Harrison to wit, had been employed to prepare the incidental music and choruses; and the theatre had been redecorated for the occasion, and looked very comfortable and smart. Mr Edward Hastings, the stage-manager, deserves praise for the uniform smoothness of the performance.26

Berton and Woodgate’s The Sorrows of Satan was a ‘long-expected’ production, particularly given its West End venue, and its luxurious budget clearly created a visual success.27

As noted in The Era’s review, the costumes used for the production were fashion-conscious pieces. They relied on hugely popular fabrics and styles, attracting the attention of fashion aficionados, who scrutinised every detail of Lady Sibyl’s ‘three charming gowns’ in newspaper gossip sections.28 In this way, even the play’s staging relied on familiar cultural tropes, with the costumes functioning as signifiers for Lady Sibyl’s social standing. As the melodrama exploits its own dramaturgical tactics for the sake of subversion and affective impact in the second half of the play, so the beautiful gowns disappear to give way to an immodest dressing gown in Sibyl’s final scene onstage, with Lucio telling Sibyl: ‘So you, a woman, bearing your husband’s name, holding a husband’s honour, clothed in the very garment purchased with a husband’s money, – offer me your love!’, having earlier told her: ‘You make a boast of your beauty. Your beauty! I see none of it, – I see You, – and to me you are hideous!’29 This switch from the elaborate and fashion-forward dresses of Acts I and II to the indecent attire of Act III indicates that, though appearing to serve the purpose of superficial pleasures in the first half (much like the play’s comedy), Berton and Woodgate’s costuming functions as a visual echo to the much more serious questions of morality that emerge in the second half.

The relationship between play’s content (Christianity) and style (melodrama) was immediately attacked in English newspapers. Journalists and critics were quick to point out that melodrama was an improper genre for the appropriation of Christian narratives and biblical figures. On 10 January 1897, for example, the Referee wrote that while a ‘poet might have made something . . . out of the fundamental idea’ of the story, the dramatic ‘coat of white paint, laid on thick, only makes the Devil ridiculous’.30 Likewise, the following day, the Daily Telegraph argued much more vehemently that, ‘Mysticism and melodrama make a very bad salad’, and that while Corelli’s religious concerns could have been ‘elevated into poetic fancy’, they were was instead ‘vulgarised into ordinary unimaginative melodrama’.31 One major concern of the reviews was the extent to which The Sorrows of
Satan bordered on sacrilege in its melodramatic form. The Referee stated that, in the devil’s ascension to heaven at the close of the play, they ‘discover a touch of impiety’, and the Illustrated London News contended that if the play was ‘not so grotesque and banal, it would be blasphemous’.32

However, it is important to note how mixed reviews about this play were at the time. The Daily Telegraph, for example, conceded that although the play was ‘intellectually void’, its production was nevertheless ‘Theatrically effective’.33 This perhaps explains why audiences responded so energetically to the play’s ending. The Daily Telegraph noted that, despite the play’s apparent lack of imagination and poetics, its melodramatic characters and effects ‘please[d] the audiences assembled to see them’, and that the spectacular climax of Act IV ‘was received with rapturous applause’.34 Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper stated that the audience was ‘extremely enthusiastic’ about British actor Lewis Waller (1860–1915), who played Lucio.35 And the Illustrated London News reported that the audience was ‘delighted, and cheered itself hoarse, the culminating point of its ecstasy coming when the Prince, tricked out in shining armour, watched from beneath a crimson halo poor Tempest buffeting with the dark blue canvas waves’.36 Thus, while reviews rejected The Sorrows of Satan’s mixture of melodrama and Christianity, they acknowledged its successful use of spectacle. However, this is not to suggest that Berton and Woodgate’s play was lacking nuance. Indeed, the melodrama also promoted much more serious reflection.

A form that emerged from illegitimate theatre in the wake of the French Revolution, melodrama is the theatrical home of the misplaced and the inappropriate. As Juliet John and Jane Moody, respectively, remind us, melodrama is ‘an anti-intellectual genre which sets out to subvert, rather than replicate, the value systems most commonly used to condemn it’, and its genesis lies at the very heart of ‘vulgarity, lowliness, political radicalism and cultural subversion’.37 By definition, then, the politics of melodrama not only welcome mockery and ridiculousness, but require it. Without comedy, melodrama fails to be subversive. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, melodrama had become far more sophisticated in its cultivation of affect,38 and so the comedy of The Sorrows of Satan is less concerned with vulgarity and anti-intellectualism and more concerned with satire, and with encouraging emotional reflection on issues of morality. In this way, the late-Victorian melodrama more closely resembles the comedy of manners, or the French well-made play from earlier in the century, although it still maintains its propensity towards hyperbole and physicality.

Strategic comedy is one of the major stylistic differences between the stage versions of The Sorrows of Satan and Corelli’s novel. As an author, Corelli claimed that she wanted to ‘uphold all noble things’ and ‘denounce all vile things’ through ‘the Power of the Pen’, which ‘point[s] to the highest aims of life, the best, the greatest things’.39 This is not to underestimate the melodramatic qualities of Corelli’s romance. Rather, it suggests the emotional seriousness with which Corelli addressed popular religious beliefs. As Christine Ferguson has argued, The Sorrows of Satan was part of Corelli’s attempt to capitalise on her readers’ capacity and desire for spiritual simplicity and honesty: ‘The best-selling author and the public are united by their veneration, not
for each other, but for the divine Logos that each seeks in popular fiction. While traces of the ridiculous may be found in the novel, then, it is unlikely that such tendencies were a matter of design; the play, on the other hand, employs the ridiculous for strategic purposes. One clear instance of this is the handling of two minor characters. In Corelli’s novel, Geoffrey’s solicitors – Bentham and Ellis – are shrewd, sententious and grave at their first meeting with their new client. Geoffrey describes Bentham as a preaching moraliser with ‘an observant side-glance like that of some meditative crow’. Later in the novel, Geoffrey discovers the lawyers to be ‘a pair of practised swindlers’, who ‘had forged [his] name so cleverly that the genuineness of the signature had never been even suspected’. In stark contrast, Berton and Woodgate’s play presents the pair as a comedy duo in the opening scene, who perpetually repeat themselves, mimic one another, andumble their words:

BENTHAM. There is a little formal business now, Mr. Tempest. Ah, ah! (searching for document) Ellis! You have the paper!
ELLIS. No! You have!
BENTHAM. I assure you, you have!
ELLIS. No! You, Mr. Bentham!

(BENTHAM fumbling in his pockets, ELLIS taking them out of his pocket.)

ELLIS. (Aside) Dear me, I had them after all. (Handing them to BENTHAM – aloud) Are these they?
BENTHAM. What did I tell you, Mr. Ellis? (Turning to TEMPEST) If you will read these carefully over, and return them to us signed, to-morrow, and also give us the name of your bank, we will settle this matter for you. Of course, if you should wish at any time to entrust your legal affairs to other hands, my partner and myself are perfectly willing to withdraw.
ELLIS. Willing to withdraw!
BENTHAM. Your deceased relative had the highest confidence in us.
ELLIS. In us.

The play excludes the later forgery found in Corelli’s novel, and so the Bentham and Ellis of the stage melodrama are neither so unscrupulous, nor so cunning. And while the duo feature again briefly in Act II, their reappearance is of little consequence to the plot. The extent of the pair’s dramatic action is limited to misplaced items, faux pas and social ineptitude. In Act II of the play, the publisher Morgeson is surprised and almost embarrassed to find the comical pair at the house of a respectable millionaire, commenting: ‘(Aside) What curious people find their way into Society. To think of meeting Bentham and Ellis here. But I suppose even a millionaire must have Solicitors.’ In his review for The Graphic on the 16th of January 1897, William Moy Thomas described Bentham and Ellis – played by actors George Humphery and Compton Coutts – as ‘a brace of grotesquely eccentric solicitors’. Resisting the contrived seriousness of the novel, then, Berton and Woodgate’s use of characters like Bentham and Ellis actively deploys the strategies...
of buffoonery, absurdity and slapstick. Not only do the solicitors finish each other’s sentences and provide constant, unnecessary reiterations, they also mirror one another in action, as the stage directions indicate:

AMIEL. Who shall I say?

(Both immediately, by a similar gesture go into the same pocket and get out a card case, in shape and form alike, and with military precision take out a card which they also simultaneously hand over to AMIEL.)

BENTHAM. Mr. Bentham. (Places card on the tray which AMIEL holds out.)

ELLIS. (Coming forward and doing the same thing) And Mr. Ellis.46

The solicitors’ repetitions are gestural, as well as verbal, with Bentham and Ellis each physically acting as the other’s double. As Louise Peacock contends, doubling is typical of and necessary to slapstick humour: ‘We are presented with characters who are mirrors or doubles of each other and, therefore, their mishaps are doubled.’47

Bentham and Ellis cater to melodrama’s generic demand for comic relief, but their ridiculousness also contributes to the play’s more earnest cultivation of Christian feeling in a process that Meisel has called ‘directed indirection’, whereby a novel or play uses ‘discrete elements – synecdochic detail, homely metaphors, seemingly inconsequential phrases and images’, which ‘accrete meaning with repetition and draw together into a final configuration to achieve and enhance effect’.48 For instance, Bentham and Ellis shadow other, much more menacing, patterns of doubling within *The Sorrows of Satan*, and they provide a humorous simulacrum of the escalating tension. While the play opens with their light-hearted mumblings, it closes with murmurs that are at once similar in structure, but radically different in tone. In the final scene of Act IV, when Lucio reveals his true identity to Geoffrey, the manuscript introduces a chorus of anonymous, repetitive voices that condemn humanity. Lucio asks, ‘Who loves self more than God?’ and the voices reply:

VOICE. Man, the accursed!
VOICE. Man, the redeemed!
LUCIO. Who dares to doubt and deny his Maker?
VOICE. Man, the accursed!
VOICE. Man, the redeemed!
LUCIO. Who doth invite another Power than God to work his destiny – that power whom mortals call Satan, Prince of Darkness, but whom once the angels knew as Lucifer, Prince of Light?
ALL. Man, the accursed! Man, the redeemed! . . .

(Wailing voices are heard in the distance sighing – ‘Rest from sorrow! – Rest from sorrow!’)

TEMPEST. (wildly) Oh God! What crime is mine?
VOICES. Ahrimanès! Ahrimanès! Ave Sathanas!
TEMPEST. (starting) Ahrimanès?
VOICE. Ave! Ave! Ave Sathanas!
(storm and wind increase)

PRINCE. Now you know with whom you have dwelt so long! who it is you have called friend and chosen as guide. One who, proud and rebellious like you, errs less, in that he owns God as his Master!
(Thunder – voices – flash of lightning)

VOICES. Breakers ahead – Breakers ahead! Ave Sathanas – Ave Sathanas.49

The play, then, is bookended by mutterings that do not drive the plot forward in any obvious way. Where, in the first scene, the verbal reiterations of the buffoonish solicitors are deployed for comic purposes, by the final curtain, this repetition takes the form of a sinister, demonic chant designed to cultivate fear.50 For greater polyphonic effect, each of the anonymous voices is clearly individual, separated out in the dialogue as they are. As the scene continues, the voices become more numerous and louder, eventually turning into a rapturous ‘Chorus swelling’, as the yacht sinks and Lucio begins his long-awaited ascent to Heaven.51 The voices not only repeat the answers given to Lucio’s questions, but their escalation audibly parallels the scene’s growing thunderstorm, so that the drama’s sound and visual effects are affectively working together on the senses of the audience. The voices are a structural repetition of the play’s intext, comical repetitions at the opening, and it is in this broader, organisational formula that the scene’s affective power lies. As Meisel argues in a different context, the use of repetition and variation can work to accumulate ‘weight and poignancy, marking “epochs” in the affective structure’ of a cultural text.52 The initial strategy used to induce laughter via Bentham and Ellis’s slapstick performance has been transformed into a strategy for eliciting supernatural terror and religious awe, finally concluding with a tableau of ‘Jacob’s vision to Heaven’.53 Melodrama conditions audience expectations through strategic patterning, and it relies on those expectations for emotional manipulation.

By the end of the play, the audience has come to associate verbal repetitions in The Sorrows of Satan with comedy and gestural buffoonery, but its expectations are subverted. After immersing the audience in the thunderstorm spectacle, the play ends abruptly with the tableau of Jacob’s vision (the ascending staircase to Heaven from Genesis 28), in which Jacob’s dream reveals the unlimited extent of God’s omnipotence. Commenting on the structural importance of the tableau, Carolyn Williams has argued that while ‘audience members may seem to be passive and still, . . . they are moved’, largely because they are ‘guided by the melodrama’s audio-visual language of emotion to feel’, as well as the fact that they are ‘asked to become active internally, . . . to read the stage picture for its compositional significance’ and ‘to engage in critical reflection upon it’.54 The repetitive voices in the final scene, followed immediately by the sudden ending on the biblical image, invites the audience into an extra-linguistic, emotional dialogue. The startling subversion is essential to the affective gravitas of the religious finale, reminding us that, even in melodramatic comedy, ‘the action played out on the stage is ever
implicitly an emblem of the cosmic ethical drama, which by the reflection illuminates life here below, makes it exciting, raises its stakes’. The fact that, as the reviews have documented, there was an explosion of applause at this point in the play is indicative of an emotional escalation, which is brought on not only through the subversion of the audience’s expectations, but because viewers have carried the giddy excitement – caused initially by Bentham and Ellis’ slapstick comedy – into the emotional reception of this structural repetition. Peacock argues that this kind of affective escalation ‘comes about when the elements of repetition and anticipation are combined’. She points to Jessica Milner Davis’s example of Eugène Labiche and Marc Michel’s An Italian Straw Hat (1851), in order to demonstrate how ‘a short sequence of physical activity may snowball very quickly into a frenzy of activity’.57

More broadly, there is a similar dynamic taking place in terms of the play’s exploitation of religious rhetoric, as well as its satire of the faithlessness of Geoffrey and his fellow socialites. As in Corelli’s novel,58 unbelief is propounded shamelessly in Berton and Woodgate’s play, with Lucio often acting as the instigator, commenting: ‘Fancy anyone believing in the Devil! . . . of all the absurd, silly, fantastic theories, this is the worst I have ever heard. Fancy a man selling his soul to the devil! Ha! What an idea! I suppose he has a screw loose somewhere! Imagine any sane man ever believing in the devil! Ha! ha!’.59 There is little trace of doubt or emotional gradation present in such statements of ridicule, and characters’ incredulousness embodies all the moral polarity one would expect of a melodrama, with irrevocable nihilism on the one hand (in the case of Lady Sibyl), and devout certainty on the other (in the case of Mavis Clare). Indeed, Lucio knowingly mocks the secularism of Geoffrey and the doomed Lynton in Act I and, while tempting Lynton to bet his soul in a card game, he states:

PRINCE. Let me persuade you, Lynton just for the fun of the thing! If you do not feel justified in staking money, stake something merely nominal to see whether the luck will turn. (Takes up counter) Let this counter represent for once something that is of no value, – your soul, for example! (ALL laugh) We all know from modern science that there’s no such thing as a soul! Come! Will you risk that non-existent quantity for the chance of winning a thousand pounds?60

When Lynton’s hand in the game is lost, Lucio is keen to remind him of his wager: ‘in the case of the lost soul! (Looking hard at LORD LYNTON) Of course, I cannot afford to wait! (ALL laugh.)’61

Such comments from Lucio, combined with the laughter of the stage directions, serve as instances of extreme dramatic irony. The play juxtaposes the reality of the devil, of which audiences are aware (not least because of the play’s title), with the vociferous certainty of these late-Victorian atheists, whose unbelief appears foolish as a result. Indeed, prior to his enlightenment, and with an air of buffoonery, Geoffrey relentlessly makes statements testifying to his lack of belief. When
Lucio asks him what he will do with his new inheritance, he jokes: ‘Well, I shall not provide funds for the building of a Church.’\textsuperscript{62} And when his demonic companion claims that ‘Generally when bags of money fall to the lot of the aspiring genius, God departs and the devil walks in’, Geoffrey retorts: ‘(Laughing) That sounds foolish, especially in an age when people believe in neither God nor Devil… I certainly do not believe in the devil.’\textsuperscript{63} Geoffrey’s remarks appear clownish because of course he is having these conversations with Satan himself, and indeed the entire plot of \textit{The Sorrows of Satan} hinges on the fact that he cannot properly recognise what is right in front of him. Thus, the play repeatedly makes use of, and relies on, a combination of misunderstandings and information to which the audience is privy, but not the protagonist. In doing so, it presents a dramatic he’s-behind-you dynamic\textsuperscript{64} in order to create tension, and to generate an uneasy humour about the consequences of godlessness.

The laughter of the first half of the play (evident in such scenes as the card game above) foreshadows the religious terror and awakening that is to come at the climax; it echoes in the demonic laughter of Lucio’s once innocuous beetle, Sprite, who in Act IV transforms into an Egyptian mummy and ‘laughs wildly’ at the plight of the doubtful Geoffrey.\textsuperscript{65} Again, this is an uncanny repetition of what was once comical, and the reverberation of laughter at this crucial moment of \textit{anagnorisis} casts a new light on the previous flippancy with which Geoffrey regarded Christianity. Thus, in many ways, the melodrama presents an exercise in retrospection, demanding a recognition of and an affective reflection about the familiar made strange, and about the place of Christianity in the modern world. As the reviews maintain, then, Berton and Woodgate’s \textit{The Sorrows of Satan} is very much a farce, but it is a farce that tactfully plays on the affective conditioning of melodrama. In doing so, the play structurally elevates the audience’s emotional connection with Lucio’s spiritual quest at the close, and thus, with its own religious ethos.

Moreover, this technique of doubling – both in dialogue and in structure – is in keeping with the play’s more general use of the Faustian myth. The trope of the demonic double is common in nineteenth-century literature\textsuperscript{66} and part of the articulation of broader, cultural myths of the devil. In the Berton and Woodgate rendition of the story, the devilish double has a more nuanced treatment, insofar as Lucio and Geoffrey function as shadows of the other. One enjoys the life of atheistic freedom, while the other pursues the restrictions – but also the protections – of monotheism. One rejects atheistic women, while the other overlooks the importance of virtue in women like Mavis Clare. One believes in God and the soul, and the other must learn to do so by the close of the play. This shadowed exchange can be traced through Corelli’s novel also, but it manifests physically on stage in a way that is impossible for the novel. For example, it may be worth noting the physical similarity of actors Lewis Waller (Prince Lucio Rimânez) and Yorke Stephens (Geoffrey Tempest), whose dark hair, medium height and somewhat angular facial features realised this intent shadowing corporeally; with each actor clean-
shaven for the role, and each wearing tailcoats for the majority of the performance, the two made for an uncanny pair. More importantly, the stage directions indicate that, at pivotal moments, either Lucio or Geoffrey can be found lurking unseen in the background, a kind of ghostly alter-ego of the other. When they are both on stage, their actions are like echoes, which repeat or amplify the initial actions of the first: ‘TEMPEST roars with laughter. ELLIS and BENTHAM look at one another very demurely. The PRINCE laughs louder at the back.’ Therefore, though thematically present in the novel, the structural importance of doubling is more affectively powerful in Berton and Woodgate’s stage adaptation. Farce or otherwise, only in the live drama, or the ‘epitome of the whole’, in Martin Meisel’s terms – with its light effects, chorus of voices, repetitive dialogue, corporeal fumbling and strategic positioning of characters on stage – can the technique of doubling be realised in moving images, beyond the interior imagination of the reader.

The Legacy of the Sorrows of Satan

Like so many melodramatic bestsellers of this period, The Sorrows of Satan became part of the world of motion picture at the beginning of the twentieth century, and it was made into a silent film of the same name in 1917, and again in 1926. The former was directed by Alexander Butler and starred Cecil Humphreys (1883–1947) as Prince Lucio, Owen Nares (1888–1943) as Geoffrey Tempest and Gladys Cooper (1888–1971) as Lady Sibyl. And the latter was directed by D. W. Griffith (1875–1948), produced by Paramount Pictures, and starred Adolphe Menjou (1890–1963) as Prince Lucio, Ricardo Cortez (1900–77) as Geoffrey Tempest and Carol Dempster (1901–91) as Mavis Clare. Ben Singer credits Griffith in particular as ‘probably the finest director of melodramas in the feature film era’, because of his cinematic ‘mastery of the mechanics of melodramatic pathos, moral injustice, and sensationalism’. However, despite Griffith’s reputation, and the fact that ‘considerable time and money were spent on apocalyptic fantasy sequences’, his 1926 adaptation of The Sorrows of Satan was a flop at the box office, and the expensive scenes ‘pleased no one’. Some possible reasons for its unpopularity can be found in the aspects that initially made the stage adaptations so successful: comedy and Christianity. The Paramount film had abandoned the overtly Christian dimension of the plot, instead focusing more on a romantic relationship between Geoffrey and Mavis Clare, and, as Singer argues, the comic components of melodrama were often lost in early film, which instead turned its attention to more sensational and more complicated scene effects. This abandonment of religious overtones appears to have been something of a trend more generally, and is evidenced in the cinematic production of other major bestsellers, not least of which was the one-reel Kalem Company adaptation of Lew Wallace’s Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ (1880) in 1907. As Emily Chown-Kambitsch has noted, ‘Christian morality and even evangelism as a cornerstone of Ben-Hur’s popular appeal began to be challenged by the popular desire to see
an alternative narrative of purely spectacular entertainment’. Thus, ‘the Kalem Ben-Hur omitted references to the Christian aspects of the original narrative and instead invited audiences at the nickelodeon to experience the thrill of the film’s variety turns, from its opening crowd sequences to the climactic chariot race’. Although more technologically advanced and reaching a far wider audience, early film melodrama arguably moved backwards in many ways, when we compare it to late-Victorian stage melodrama; with the abandonment of comedy (which enabled plays like The Sorrows of Satan to engage in social satire and complex structuring) and Christianity (which provided a point of emotional gravitas for audiences), early film discontinued the trend of increasingly nuanced melodrama that was emerging at the end of the century and instead reverted to the sensationalism of the 1860s.

In the case of Berton and Woodgate’s play, melodrama provides thrills in the form of comedy and spectacle. But the mode’s coercive capacities – the fact that it can condition and orchestrate audience expectations – is deployed strategically in The Sorrows of the Satan to engage with serious questions about Christian belief and morality. At the level of structure, dialogue, and onstage physicality, the play affectively amplifies the Christian concerns of Corelli’s novel and, moving beyond stock characters and generic stereotypes, it demonstrates the increasingly sophisticated nature of the melodramatic mode at the end of the nineteenth century.

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Notes
1. N. N. Feltes, Literary Capital and the Late Victorian Novel (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), p. 123.
2. H. Philip Bolton, Women Writers Dramatized: A Calendar of Performances from Narrative Works Published in English to 1900 (London and New York: Mansell Publishing, 2000), pp. 116–21.
3. The Berton and Woodgate text is the most complete and least edited version of the play I have examined. Yet, as H. Philip Bolton makes clear in his catalogue of dramatised women writers (Ibid., p. 116), substantial sections of the script have been redacted, corrected and reworked by hand. Such catalogues as Bolton’s are helpful to scholars in terms of theatrical indexing and performance history. However, there are no anthologised versions of such plays, and our most accessible adaptations of The Sorrows of Satan, among other melodramas of the time, exist only in the raw, unfinished conditions one encounters in archival collections.
4. “The Sorrows of Satan”: A Profit and Loss Question’, Daily News, 19 March 1898, p. 3.
5. For example, Richard Pearson notes that there were countless adaptations of the novels of Thomas Hardy, Anthony Trollope, William Makepeace Thackery, George Eliot, Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry James; see: Richard Pearson, Victorian Writers and the Stage: The Plays of Dickens, Browning, Collins and Tennyson, Palgrave Studies in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture, Joseph Bristow (ed.), (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 2. Additionally, see: Tracy Cattell,
‘Transmitting the Thinking: The Nineteenth-Century Stage Manager and the Adaptation of Text for Performance’, Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film, 42:1 (2015), 39–49; Karen E. Laird, The Art of Adapting Victorian Literature, 1848–1920: Dramatizing Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, and The Woman in White (London and New York: Routledge, 2016); Renata Kobetts Miller, ‘Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Adaptations of Novels: The Paradox of Ephemerality’, in Thomas Leitch (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 53–70.

6. Deborah Vlock, Dickens, Novel Reading, and the Victorian Popular Theatre, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture 19, Gillian Beer (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 23.

7. This is evidenced in the countless adaptations of such novels as Anthony Hope’s The Prisoner of Zenda (1894), George du Maurier’s Trilby (1895) and Baroness Orczy’s The Scarlet Pimpernel (1905).

8. William Moy Thomas, ‘The Sorrows of Satan’, The Graphic, 16 January 1897, p. 74.

9. Martin Meisel, Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 251.

10. These prices are a result of my own archival research, and they are taken from a theatre pamphlet for the Shaftesbury production (printed for the Edwardes Menu Co., Ltd., 6 Adam Street, Adelphi by G. Harmsworth & Co., Floral Street, Covent Garden, W. C.), currently housed at the V&A Theatre and Performance Collection: Production Files, Blythe House, London.

11. Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow, Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing, 1840–1880 (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), p. 180.

12. Ibid.

13. Meisel, Realizations, pp. 7–8.

14. Ibid., p. 3.

15. Ibid., p. 41.

16. Lord Chamberlain’s Plays, The British Library, London, Add MS 53,608 I, playscript, Paul M. Berton and Herbert Woodgate, The Sorrows of Satan: A Play in Four Acts, 1896, Act I, pp. 7–8.

17. Ibid., Act I, p. 43.

18. Ibid., Act I, p. 43.

19. Ibid., Act II, p. 33.

20. Ibid., Act II, pp. 44–5.

21. Ibid., Act III, p. 1.

22. Ibid., Act IV, p. 9.

23. ‘The London Theatres. The Shaftesbury’, The Era, Saturday 16 January 1897, p. 10.

24. ‘Music and the Drama. “The Sorrows of Satan” at the Shaftesbury’, Glasgow Herald, Monday 11 January 1897, p. 9.

25. ‘Footlights’, Illustrated Police News, Saturday 9 January 1897, p. 6.

26. The Era, Saturday 16 January 1897, p. 10.

27. “The Sorrows of Satan” At The Shaftesbury’, Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper, 10 January 1897, p. 1.

28. ‘Theatrical Gossip’, The Era, Saturday 30 January 1897, p. 12. The paper went into very detailed analysis of each gown, commenting: ‘The last, and the loveliest, of the trio [of dresses] is an evening gown of emerald-green chiffon over silk, its deep bordering
flounce edged narrowly with sable, and half-a-dozen tiny flounces describing an apron-like curve above it. The décolletage of the bodice accentuated by soft folds of white chiffon, and a berthe of old lace embroidered with emeralds and diamonds, while the long sleeves of shirred chiffon are guarded by epaulettes of the jewelled lace, edged with ruffled chiffon, the same precious stones fashioning the serpent girdle which encircles the waist.’

29. Berton and Woodgate, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Act III, pp. 21–3.
30. V&A Theatre and Performance Collection, Blythe House, London, Production Files, newspaper clipping, ‘Shaftesbury – Saturday Night’, *Referee*, 10 January 1897, n.p.
31. V&A Theatre and Performance Collection, Blythe House, London, Production Files, newspaper clipping, ‘“The Sorrows of Satan,” at the Shaftesbury Theatre’, *Daily Telegraph*, 11 January 1897, n.p.
32. *Referee*, 10 January 1897, n.p.; V&A Theatre and Performance Collection, Blythe House, London, Production Files, newspaper clipping, ‘“The Sorrows of Satan,” at the Shaftesbury (The Playhouses)’, *Illustrated London News*, 16 January 1897, p. 7.
33. *Daily Telegraph*, 11 January 1897, n.p.
34. Ibid., n.p.
35. *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 10 January 1897, p. 1.
36. *Illustrated London News*, 16 January 1897, p. 7.
37. Juliet John, *Dickens’s Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 26; Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 4.
38. In her analysis of melodrama in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Hayley Jane Bradley argues that while ‘The Era divided “sensations” into those mainly appealing to the eye or to the mind’, spectacle provides (and indeed requires) ‘a more subtle, sophisticated spectrum … in order to acknowledge sensation scenes that appealed to eye and mind, as well as affecting bodily sensations’. See: Hayley Jane Bradley, ‘Stagecraft, Spectacle, and Sensation’, in Carolyn Williams (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to English Melodrama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 130.
39. Marie Corelli, ‘The Power of the Pen’, in *Free Opinions, Freely Expressed on Certain Phases of Modern Social Life and Conduct* (London: Archibald Constable & Co. Ltd., 1905), p. 308.
40. Christine Ferguson, *Language, Science and Popular Fiction in the Victorian Fin-de-Siècle: The Brutal Tongue* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 63.
41. Marie Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Peter Keating (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 39.
42. Ibid., p. 384.
43. Berton and Woodgate, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Act I, pp. 5–6.
44. Berton and Woodgate, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Act II, p. 23. Of course, part of the humorous irony here is that immediately before Morgeson makes this statement, Ellis states, regarding the publisher: ‘Remember Bentham, he is a necessary evil. Millionaires have weaknesses, and our friend Tempest thinks he can write books. They must necessarily be published and so he employs Morgeson. However I should have hardly thought he would have invited him here to-day. But the society is very much mixed.’
45. William Moy Thomas, ‘The Sorrows of Satan’, *The Graphic*, 16 January 1897, p. 74.
46. Berton and Woodgate, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Act I, pp. 1–2.
47. Louise Peacock, *Slapstick and Comic Performance: Comedy and Pain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 41.

48. Meisel, *Realizations*, p. 302.

49. Berton and Woodgate, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Act IV, pp. 5–7. Please note that the Berton and Woodgate play regularly switches between the use of LUCIO and PRINCE in the manuscript dialogue.

50. One is reminded of Eric Bentley’s understanding of the ‘terrors of melodramas’, which arise from the ‘paranoid fantasies’ of the form, and he contends that: ‘If we were not laughing so hard, we would find such worlds terrifying’; see Eric Bentley, *The Life of the Drama* (Milwaukee: Applause Theatre Books, 1991), pp. 246–7.

51. Berton and Woodgate, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Act IV, p. 9.

52. Martin Meisel, *Realizations*, p. 303. In this instance, Meisel is specifically talking about how images function narratively, but his point is equally relevant to stage melodrama. Additionally, the repetition and escalation we see in *The Sorrows of Satan* recall Henri Bergson’s analogy of the snowball in his work on comedy, which ‘increases in size as it moves along’; see Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (trans.), (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005), p. 32. Using a similar analogy to the same purpose, Bergson writes: ‘take a house of cards that has been built up with infinite care: the first you touch seems uncertain whether to move or not, its tottering neighbour comes to a quicker decision, and the work of destruction, gathering momentum as it goes on, rushes headlong to the final collapse. These instances are all different, but they suggest the same abstract vision, that of an effect which grows by arithmetical progression, so that the cause, insignificant at the outset, culminates by a necessary evolution in a result as important as it is unexpected’ (emphasis added).

53. Berton and Woodgate, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Act IV, p. 9.

54. Carolyn Williams, ‘Response: Vehicular Traffic’, *Textual Practice*, 22:1 (2008), 47–54, 51, doi: 10.1080/09502360701841985.

55. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 54.

56. Peacock, *Slapstick and Comic Performance*, p. 42.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 42–3. See: Jessica Milner Davis, *Farce* (London: Methuen, 1978), p. 71; Eugène Labiche, *The Italian Straw Hat*, translated by Frederick Davies (Minnesota: Heinemann Educational Books, 1967).

58. At the novel’s outset, for example, Geoffrey openly states that his age is one in which ‘people believe in neither God nor devil’, that personally he ‘did not believe in any God – then. I was to myself an all-sufficing mortal, scorning the time-worn superstitions of so-called religion’, and that although he ‘had been brought up in the Christian faith’, the Christian ‘creed had become worse than useless’ to him (see: Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan*, p. 28, pp. 7–8). Lady Sibyl confesses that, partly because ‘the scientists say there is no God’, she has ‘imbibed, consciously or unconsciously, that complete contempt of life and disbelief in a God, which is the chief theme of nearly all the social teachings of the time’ (p. 333, p. 163). And, as in the play, Corelli’s Geoffrey makes such statements as: ‘The devil is in it!’, ‘The devil is in the whole business’, and ‘the very devils might turn away aghast from such a loathly comrade’ (p. 15, p. 309, p. 331).

59. Berton and Woodgate, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Act I, p. 8.

60. *Ibid.*, Act II, p. 40.

61. *Ibid.*
62. Ibid., Act I, p. 11.
63. Ibid., pp. 13–14.
64. Of course, we must remember that, among other modes of eighteenth-century illegitimate theatre, melodrama is a descendant of pantomime, a theatre of gestural hyperbole whose enterprise exclusively lies in stressing ‘the importance of unspoken, non-verbal indicators of plot and meaning’, in Peter Brooks’ terms. See: Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, p. 57.
65. Ibid., Act IV, pp. 2–3.
66. One is reminded, for instance, of Robert Wringhim’s satanic double in James Hogg’s 1824 novel, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Hogg’s devil attains power through affective simulacra, as well as his ability to mimic and reflect the features of those with whom he comes into contact. Hogg writes of his devil: ‘He was the same person in every respect, but yet he was not always so; for I observed several times, when we were speaking of certain divines and their tenets, that his face assumed something of the appearance of theirs; and it struck me, that by setting his features to the mould of other people’s, he entered at once into their conceptions and feelings’; see James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Karl Miller (ed.), (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 99.
67. Berton and Woodgate, *The Sorrows of Satan*, Act I, p. 8.
68. Meisel, *Realizations*, p. 249.
69. Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 194.
70. Richard Koszarski, *Hollywood on the Hudson: Film and Television in New York from Griffith to Sarnoff* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), p. 54.
71. Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, p. 190.
72. Emily Chow-Kambitsch, ‘An Alternative “Roman Spectacle”: Fragmentation, Invocations of Theatre, and Audience Engagement Strategy in Kalem’s 1907 *Ben-Hur*’, *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*, 43:2 (2016), 201–21, 216, doi: 10.1177/1748372717707715.
73. Ibid., p. 202.

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