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THE SHAKESPEAREAN ALTERATIONS OF JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE

DISSERTATION

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The practice of altering Shakespeare's plays, begun during the Restoration and continued throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, originated in continuously evolving literary and dramatic principles that went much deeper than the capricious whims of individual dramatists. Contained within these principles were constant considerations, such as the dramatic unities, delineation of character, didacticism as related to versimilitude, poetical justice, language, and theatrical effect. Thus, each Shakespearean alteration may be utilized as a source of implicit criticism of the drama in the age that produced it, sometimes agreeing with, but often standing quite apart from formal contemporary criticism of the period. Where a play has gone through several alterations in, perhaps, a century's time, a comparative study can provide some insight into the changing rules of dramatic valuation in the eighteenth century.

Such a study is the purpose of this work, in which are examined the Shakespearean alterations of John Philip Kemble (1757-1823). The sheer breadth of Kemble's Shakespearean repertoire, his reputation among contemporary Shakespeare

scholars and his renown for a quarter of a century as England's foremost Shakespearean dramatist and actor at both Drury Lane and Covent Garden all serve to emphasize the validity of such an undertaking. In the score of years which ended the eighteenth century and began the nineteenth, Kemble altered and brought to the stage twenty-seven plays by Shakespeare. Through a comparison of fifteen of Kemble's major stage adaptations of Shakespeare with previous Shakespearean alterations, the dissertation attempts to discover a system of applied aesthetic valuation in late eighteenth-century English Shakespearean drama and establish its relationship to the broader movements of literary critical theory.

The examination of Kemble's alterations is divided into three general categories: history plays, tragedy, and comedy and romance. After an initial introductory chapter, chapters two through five deal with six of Kemble's adaptations of Shakespeare's history plays: Richard III, 1 and 2 Henry IV, Henry V, King John, and Henry VIII. Like previous adapters, Kemble attempted to alter the histories so that the characters became more recognizable eighteenth-century "type" villains and heroes. His alterations of the histories also reveal a penchant to render the plays more conformable to eighteenth-century concepts of tragedy rather than leave them the incongruous medley of humor and misfortune the history play was considered to be.

Chapters six through ten examine Kemble's adaptations of seven tragedies: Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, Othello, and Romeo and Juliet. In Coriolanus Kemble attempted to rectify the play's seeming lack of moral order that so disturbed the neoclassical critics. In Macbeth the usurper gained a degree of courage and resolution, as well as an authentic costume, while the witches lost their supernatural terror through the song and dance added in the seventeenth century by Davenant and spectacularly embellished by Kemble. Kemble's Hamlet also gained a degree of resolution and became in Kemble's hands the Gothic hero in black satin who was to tread the stage into the twentieth century.

Although it is evident that Kemble, in all his adaptations, was concerned with the same dramatic considerations that had occupied Shakespearean adapters throughout the eighteenth century, he applied those considerations as rules of aesthetic valuation in a more or less arbitrary fashion. The changing attitudes toward the principles of dramatic representation, discernable in Kemble himself, and the sheer variety in the plays of Shakespeare forced Kemble to approach each play as a separate unity rather than as a generic type.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When John Philip Kemble (1757-1823) appeared on the London theatrical scene in September, 1783, English drama had sunk to an exceptionally depressed state in the quality of staging, as well as in the dramatic offerings. The eighteenth century's last great actor-manager, David Garrick, had been absent from the theatre for a decade, and the promise offered by the genius of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who had acquired Garrick's share of Drury Lane in 1776, had not materialized. "The genius of the age was certainly not of a dramatic cast," complained James Boaden, "--it supplied nothing that could be even wished to survive beyond the ninth representation, when the poet commonly found, that two benefits might have been more profitable to him than three."¹ Finding little in contemporary native drama to raise their expectations for profit, the theatres relied heavily upon imported tales of Gothic romance to fill their seats. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the influence of German prose upon English drama and popular taste was being regularly decried in one of London's most widely read monthly periodicals, The Gentleman's Magazine. At the

beginning of 1799, one critic regrets "the extreme depravity of the national taste, with regard to dramatic compositions," and censures the public preference for imported claptrap:

Is there not sufficient matter for reproach when we reflect that a country, which has given birth to a Shakespeare, an Otway, and a Rowe . . . should now vouchsafe, through the strainer of a prose translation, to retail to an applauding audience the effusion of German extravagance and German immorality; that the celebrated works of our own poets, though set off by the rare talents of a Siddons and a Kemble, should pass unadmired, nay unregarded, while numbers are easily collected to gape and stare at the most paltry conceptions, assisted by stage-trick and low mimicry.²

Another contributor materialized "The Shade of Alexander Pope on the Banks of the Thames" to comment upon the sad decline of English drama:

Choak'd with vile weeds, our once proud Avon strays.
When novels die and rise again as plays.
No congress props our drama's falling state,
The modern ultimatum is "Translate."
Thence sprout the morals of the German school;
The Christian sinks, the Jacobin bears rule.
No virtue shines but in the peasant's mien,
No vice but in patrician robes is seen.
Through four dull acts the drama drags and drawls;
The fifth is stage-trick, and the curtain falls.³

A third critic identified "the depraved state of the stage at this day" as a result of the strategy of the theatre managers, who systematically turned away native English drama submitted for their consideration and produced Gothic drama instead. Thus, by controlling what the theatre public sees, the critic maintained, a manager "first depraves the taste, then ministers to the vitiated appetite in a manner most likely to promote his own pecuniary views."⁴

Kemble was admittedly in the business of producing plays "to promote his own pecuniary views," but his personal opinion regarding Gothic-inspired drama was quite opposed to the public's. For example, although Kemble staged with great success "Monk" Lewis' The Castle Spectre (1797), a typical representative of imported Gothic drama, he personally noted with customary brevity that the play was "a vile thing--but the Audience applauded it very much."⁵ Appearing to be concerned that Kemble's reputation in the history of drama might be tarnished by such pandering, Henry Saxe Wyndham, who appreciated Kemble as "the most illustrious actor that has graced the English stage since the days of Garrick," felt called upon in the early twentieth century to defend the manager's position:

A manager does not invest capital in a theatre for the purpose of educating public taste, or raising it to a high level, but to make his living. If he finds that the public prefer plays and players of an inferior kind, and it pays him to provide them, he is not only well justified in so doing, but he would be a fool to do otherwise, unless he is pandering to a taste essentially vicious, which is not alleged in Kemble's case.⁶

The practicality and truth of Wyndham's assessment of the business of the theatre manager is essentially correct; however, as it applies to John Kemble, it is not entirely accurate. While Kemble was not averse to the idea of accumulating a fortune through his efforts in the theatre, both as an actor and producer, he saw the drama as a means

of setting a moral standard, of instructing the public "to love virtue and abhor vice."⁷ The fantastic popular success of German romance, translated into English melodrama and spectacularly staged, was for a time all that kept the theatres solvent.⁸ Nevertheless, Kemble felt that if the staging were properly handled, native English drama could supply not only moral instruction but economic rewards as well. This is not to say that Kemble thought contemporary English plays exhibited any great promise. James Boaden relates that the manager was convinced the theatres did not need new material. According to Kemble, "the treasures of our ancient authors were inexhaustible. Shewy after-pieces and laughable farces might be necessary; but what could be expected now in the way of the regular drama that previously had not been better done?"⁹

When Kemble referred to "the treasures of our ancient authors," he had in mind particularly the plays of Shakespeare. During the score of years which ended the eighteenth century and began the nineteenth, Kemble, as manager of Drury Lane (1788-1802) and Covent Garden (1803-1817), brought to the stage with varying degrees of regularity twenty-seven Shakespearean productions. Kemble's heavy dependency on Shakespeare is emphasized in an observation on the manager's first season at Covent Garden by Wyndham, who asks incredulously, "What would our modern actor-managers say to

producing eleven of Shakespeare's heaviest plays in six months? While making every allowance for the simpler mountings permissible in Kemble's time as contrasted with the sumptuous productions we are accustomed to in the twentieth century, still the list of titles alone is enough to take one's breath away!"¹⁰ This number seems only slightly less remarkable when one considers that Kemble appended to his Theatre Journal of 1789-90 a list of twenty-one Shakespearean plays in the working repertoire of Drury Lane. Modern scholars are quick to point out, however, that eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Shakespearean productions are not true Shakespeare, but are rather altered versions of which, in the words of one contemptuous twentieth-century critic, "little need be said."¹¹ Such an attitude is more commonplace among modern scholars than one might suspect and might be acceptable had not Shakespearean alterations found such a great deal of success in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Referring to several specific examples of altered Shakespearean plays which kept the boards through the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Montagu Summers points out the absurdity of disregarding them simply as a matter of taste:

. . . a drama which lives in the theatre for one hundred and fifty years cannot be ignorantly dismissed with a shrug and a sneer. The reason for such vitality must be seriously pondered and examined.¹²

Another reason that the Shakespearean alterations deserve attention lies in the fact that much eighteenth-century criticism is devoted to arguments either supporting or condemning the practice of altering Shakespeare's plays. For example, in 1770 Francis Gentleman deplored the appearance "of so many syllable hunting editions of Shakespeare" and suggested that what was really needed was "a committee of able critics . . . to strike out the insignificant and offensive passages which so often occur."¹³ Twenty years later an angry correspondent to The Gentleman's Magazine sarcastically declared, "We have long had Every Man his own Lawyer,--Every Man his own Physician,--and, Every Man his own Broker; and pray, Mr. Urban, why should we not have--Every Man his own Shakespeare Maker?"¹⁴ But such general indictments against altering Shakespeare were rare, even at the turn of the nineteenth century. More often the arguments concerning Shakespearean alteration were aimed at specific lines or scenes. For instance, while Thomas Davies argued that Colley Cibber's adaptation of King John was a mockery of the original, he admits that where Cibber has Hubert overhearing young Arthur praying for Hubert's soul, "he has heightened the anguish of Hubert by a very fine and affecting incident."¹⁵ Thus, even as the nineteenth century approached, it was thought by some that Shakespeare could still be improved by the addition of affected sentiment.

Since modern students of English literature usually make no distinction between the works of Shakespeare as literature and as representative drama, they often fail to understand that critics of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made such a distinction. Their arguments either for or against altering Shakespeare posed absolutely no threat to the sanctity of his original plays. As a reviewer for The Prompter pointed out in 1789, "Tho' we can never have enough of Shakespeare in the closet, yet it is very easy to cloy with him on the stage. He is too rich to feed long upon."¹⁶ It was this attitude that allowed George Steevens to spend his life preparing the most authentic Shakespearean editions of which he was capable and yet find no contradiction in lavishly praising David Garrick for producing a much altered adaptation of Hamlet.¹⁷ Furthermore, an individual critic's attitude toward Shakespearean alteration seems not to have been seriously influenced by a neoclassical or romantic predisposition. For example, Joseph Addison, a devout classicist, argued against the poetically just ending that Nahum Tate had written into King Lear (1681) while Leigh Hunt, an ardent romantic, argued in favor of Tate's exclusion of the Fool.¹⁸ What most twentieth-century scholars fail to realize is that critics in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries could blithely argue that a Shakespearean scene be omitted or restored because they knew that

Shakespeare was really inviolable. The stage versions of the eighteenth century never threatened to replace Shakespeare's original drama, just as today's alterations of Shakespeare, a musical Romeo and Juliet, for example, pose no threat to our appreciation of real Shakespeare. In the eighteenth century, as today, Shakespeare was appreciated as the pinnacle of English literature. They chose to alter his plays for frequent representation, however, while, in comparison, today we rarely choose to produce him at all.

Another common misconception among twentieth-century scholars, most of whom have not taken the time to examine a few Shakespearean alterations, is that Shakespeare's plays were changed in the eighteenth century so that they merely conformed to the rules of classical drama and thus to the taste of the age. As the ensuing chapters of this investigation will show, however, Shakespearean adapters, particularly in the latter half of the eighteenth century, were guided more by popular taste than by the critical notions of pedantic classical theorists, so that by John Philip Kemble's day the classical unities had all but ceased to be a critical issue. At any rate, what mattered to the adapter was not the approval of the critics, but rather popular success in the theatre, which was quite often in contrast with contemporary critical assessments. Thus, an adapter did not always feel he was improving the original play, nor was he

motivated by a desire to do so. In his advertisement to Romeo and Juliet (1748), for example, Garrick noted that he had omitted Rosaline in deference to popular opinion, not his own. And George Colman regretted in his Preface to King Lear (1768) that he could not restore the Fool since the public would not have endured it.¹⁹ An adapter, therefore, did not always reveal his own literary critical values in his omissions and restorations of Shakespeare; he often disclosed instead how far he was willing to allow formal literary valuation to intrude upon his knowledge of public taste.

John Philip Kemble, who had a talent for correctly estimating the public taste, was the last of the great Shakespearean adapters. He was also, in the words of Arthur Colby Sprague, "a belated classicist."²⁰ Kemble's alterations, which were actually composite adaptations of the original with one or more previous alterations, reveal certain classical predilections that apparently continued to appeal to audiences well into the nineteenth century. Educated at Douay, Kemble acquired a moderate reputation as a scholar and antiquary during his tenure at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. His exhaustive studies in history and stagecraft were often cited by reviewers, some of whom claimed that Kemble had restored Shakespeare to the theatre:

He has therefore, at a prodigious expence, made an unrivalled collection of the dramatic works of British genius, and of books relative to the history

of the stage; and during the long period of his management in the two winter theatres, the public have been indebted to his researches into our antient drama for the revival of many pieces of acknowledged merit, which had been long neglected and almost forgotten; but which his very judicious alterations have contributed to restore to their merited popularity.²¹

The titles in Kemble's magnificent library filled a catalogue of sixty-six pages when they were sold at auction in 1821. Stephen Jones claimed that the Kemble library, made available to him for his own studies, was in great part responsible for the completeness of his 1812 revision of the Biographia Dramatica.²² Jones further asserted that it was due solely to Kemble's exertions that the English stage had reached its present level of magnificence through improvements in scenery and ornamentation:

. . . they will at once give testimony to the good sense, the professional knowledge and classical taste of their introducer, and lay our native drama under great obligations to him for having raised it, in truth and splendour of reputation, far above the competition of any other in Europe.²³

Perhaps because of Kemble's "classical taste" and his formal declamatory acting method, Leigh Hunt was not impressed with Kemble as a scholar nor as an actor: "Mr. Kemble, besides his reputation as a bon-vivant, can afford to throw away his fifty and a hundred pounds upon old black-letter books which no man of taste would read." Nevertheless, Hunt grudgingly joined those who acclaimed Kemble the manager for his devotion to Shakespeare:

If Mr. Kemble has not succeeded Garrick in all tragic excellence, as some of his admirers pretend, he has worthily succeeded him in one important respect, that of loving Shakespeare and keeping him before the public. The other Managers of the present day have so little taste . . . that if it were not for Mr. Kemble's exertions the tragedies of our glorious bard would almost be in danger of dismissal from the stage; and it does him infinite credit . . . to have added to the attractions of his poet by a splendour of scene as seasonable as well-deserved.²⁴

As an actor Kemble excited both admiration and contempt. His acting style, as I have noted, was lofty and declamatory. At the end of Kemble's career, William Hazlitt observed with approval in The Examiner (October 16, 1816) that Kemble was still "the most classical of actors. He is the only one of the moderns who, both in figure and action, approaches the beauty and grandeur of the antique."²⁵ Two months later Hazlitt glumly remarked, "We wish we had never seen Mr. Kean. He has destroyed the Kemble religion in which we were brought up."²⁶ Leigh Hunt, too, noted that Kemble's classical appearance on the stage was "in point of aspect very like what has been called 'God Almighty's nobility'," and affirmed that "it was a critical religion in those days to admire Mr. Kemble."²⁷ But when Edmund Kean appeared on the scene, Hunt recalled, "Kemble faded before him, like a tragedy ghost."²⁸ Because of the presence of Kemble and his sister, Sarah Siddons, the strongest remnants of the neoclassical tradition persisted in the theatre while romanticism had long since triumphed in literature.²⁹ The appearance of Kean

marked not only the end of the Kemble religion, but the end of an era in the drama.

The Shakespearean alterations of John Philip Kemble, bound in interleaved promptbooks and, as James Boaden noted, "distinctly marked by him in his own clear exact penmanship," have survived as a record of the last chapter in that era.³⁰ Kemble's alterations are the culmination of a practice begun during the Restoration and continued throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth. It was a practice which originated in continuously evolving literary and dramatic principles that went much deeper than the capricious whims of individual dramatists. Contained within these principles were constant considerations, such as the dramatic unities, delineation of character, didacticism as related to versimilitude, poetic justice, style of language, and theatrical effect. Thus, each Shakespearean alteration may be utilized as a source of implicit criticism of the drama in the age that produced it, sometimes agreeing with, but often standing quite apart from formal contemporary criticism. A comparative study of Kemble's adaptations with previous alterations and the original versions may possibly reveal a system of applied aesthetic valuation in late eighteenth-century English Shakespearean drama. Such a study may also provide some insight into the changing rules of applied dramatic valuation and their relationship to the formal

criticism of the period, as well as to the broader movements of literary critical theory.

NOTES

- ¹ Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons (London, 1827), II, 247.
- ² The Gentleman's Magazine, 69 (January, 1799), 4-5.
- ³ The Gentleman's Magazine, 69 (August, 1799), 683.
- ⁴ The Gentleman's Magazine, 71 (January, 1801), 38.
- ⁵ The Kemble Theatre Journal (December 15, 1797).
- ⁶ The Annals of Covent Garden Theatre (London: Chatto & Windus, 1906), I, 293, 312.
- ⁷ John Philip Kemble, Macbeth and King Richard the Third (1817; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), pp. 2-3.
- ⁸ Herschel Baker, John Philip Kemble (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), pp. 232-33.
- ⁹ Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq. (London, 1825), II, 100.
- ¹⁰ The Annals of Covent Garden Theatre, I, 302-303.
- ¹¹ Herbert Spencer Robinson, English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1968), p. 23.
- ¹² Shakespeare Adaptations (London: Jonathan Cape, 11 Gower Street., 1922), p. cvii.
- ¹³ The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), I, 149-50.
- ¹⁴ The Gentleman's Magazine, 61 (December, 1791), 1100-1101.
- ¹⁵ Dramatic Miscellanies (London, 1784), I, 63.
- ¹⁶ Quoted in Charles Harold Gray, Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931), p. 304.

17 The Private Correspondence of David Garrick, ed. James Boaden (London, 1831), I, 451-52.

18 Spectator No. 40 (April 16, 1711), in Addison and Steele: Selections from "The Tatler" and "The Spectator," ed. Robert J. Allen (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1957), pp. 87-91; Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism, ed. Lawrence Huston Houtchens and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949), p. 16.

19 Garrick's advertisement is prefaced to Romeo and Juliet in Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), II, 83; for Colman's Preface see The History of King Lear (1768; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969).

20 Shakespearean Plays and Performances (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), p. 53.

21 The Gentleman's Magazine, 82 (February, 1812), 147.

22 Advertisement to the Biographia Dramatica (London, 1812), I, viii.

23 Biographia Dramatica, p. 423-24.

24 Houtchens and Houtchens, pp. 29, 40.

25 The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1903), VIII, 342.

26 Collected Works, p. 345.

27 Autobiography, ed. J. E. Morpurgo (London: Crescent Press, 1948), pp. 137, 155.

28 Autobiography, p. 157.

29 Baker, p. 325.

30 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq. (London, 1825), II, 3.

CHAPTER II

RICHARD III

During the acting season of 1810-11, John Philip Kemble, then at Covent Garden, revised Colley Cibber's adaptation of Richard III and published the prompt copy. In an entry regarding the production of April 1, 1811, John Genest took brief notice of Kemble's Richard III:

J. P. Kemble revised Cibber's alteration of Richard the 3d--but "damned custom had braz'd him so, that he was proof and bulwark against sense"--he digested the cold mutton, and even the spiders crawling upon hopes did not startle him.¹

In this cryptic note Genest is registering his disgust that Kemble had not restored the play to Shakespeare, that it was still essentially Cibber's alteration of 1718 (revised from the 1700 version), and this was not the only voice raised in the early nineteenth century against the continued performance of Cibber's liberal changes in the original play. In 1800 a critic signing himself "An Artist and Antiquary" took Kemble's Drury Lane production of Cibber's Richard III to task in the Gentleman's Magazine "not alone for the wanton innovations made in [Shakespeare's] writings, but for the disarranging his historic incidents; . . . they everywhere seek to improve, or, to speak more truly, to assimilate [sic]

particular parts to modern times, and to modern understandings."² The "wanton innovations" in Kemble's 1800 production were carried over into his 1810 revision and included such additions as Cibber's infamous bedchamber scene, where Richard tries to drive Lady Anne to suicide. In almost every case, however, scenes in which Shakespeare's history is tampered with and alterations which modernize Richard from an eighteenth-century perspective were necessary to give the audience, most of whom were neither artists nor antiquaries, a sense of historical continuity and to make the character of Richard "natural" and credible.

Perhaps the changing critical opinion regarding Cibber's alteration is most easily seen in Stephen Jones' reference to the play in his updated edition of the Biographia Dramatica: "The original compiler of our work has been very lavish in his praise of this alteration; but as his encomiums do not appear to be well founded, we think it unnecessary to insert them."³ Jones is especially incensed that the elegant lines of the chorus at the beginning of Act IV in Shakespeare's Henry V are spoken by Richard immediately before the appearance of the ghosts on the eve of his battle with Richmond. Kemble retained this passage in his revision, along with virtually all of the Cibber additions. An examination of those additions as they appear in Kemble's Richard III will reveal Kemble's attitude toward the character of

Richard, an attitude that resulted partly from his acting style but particularly from his neoclassic concept of the dramatic hero and the function of drama in general. It will also show that Genest and other nineteenth and twentieth-century critics to the contrary, Kemble did not arbitrarily perpetuate a "mangled" version of Shakespeare with the ridiculous notion that it was an improvement. Like English theatre managers from the Elizabethan Age to the present day, Kemble no doubt produced plays principally for his own financial reward, which advanced or diminished with his ability to judge the taste of his audience rather than that of his critics.

The fact that many critics of the theatre are generally at odds with the taste of the public was no less true of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries than it is today. Then, as now, the reason for this antipathy lay in the greater knowledge possessed by the critic concerning the direction of art in general; from the vanguard of romanticism he criticized drama that was produced for an audience still rooted in many ways in the neoclassical tradition. For example, William Hazlitt deplored Richard III as revised by Kemble, whom he considered one of the "modern mechanists" of Shakespearean drama. His comments demonstrate that his strictly romantic point of view obscured his ability to speculate on the reasons which

motivated the alteration. Concerning the opening act, Hazlitt says, "It is apparently for no other purpose than to make Gloucester stab King Henry on the stage, that the fine introduction of the character at the opening of the play is lost in the tedious whining morality of the uxorious king. . . ." ⁴ Kemble had several reasons for not restoring Richard's original opening soliloquy to the play, but none so simple as Hazlitt's. One reason was that Richard's character as revealed in Shakespeare's opening scene did not present to an eighteenth-century audience a credible motive for his villainy. Commenting specifically on Richard's lines from the soliloquy, "And, therefore, since I cannot prove a lover . . . ," Dr. Johnson, without calling the motive a deficiency, pointed out what to most eighteenth-century theatre audiences was irreconcilable with their view of art and nature. Richard's wickedness in the original play proceeds from his physical deformity, merely from his coveting the happiness of others and his desire "to disturb the pleasures which he could not partake." ⁵ To rectify what he thought was wanting in Richard's opening soliloquy, Cibber cut the passage drastically and added ten lines, four of his own and six altered from Richard's opening soliloquy in 3 Henry VI (III,ii). In his revision Kemble restored four lines to the soliloquy from Shakespeare but was compelled to retain Cibber's additions because they introduce

early in the play the theme of Richard's ambition, a more convincing and ennobling motive than the base envy caused by his deformity. It was thus much more suitable to Kemble's conception of the character of Richard as less the deformed villain than the ruthlessly ambitious nobleman and also accommodated his idea of the didactic purpose of the drama.⁶

Kemble had two reasons for keeping Richard's soliloquy in the second scene so that it seemed to Hazlitt to become lost in "the tedious whining morality" of Henry in the opening scene of the play. First, 3 Henry VI was staged only once during the entire eighteenth century.⁷ For the sake of continuity, Stanley and Sir Robert Brakenbury (an unnamed lieutenant in Cibber's version) enter first and provide the audience with the historical background and the present situation of the drama: Tewksbury has been fought, and Henry is a prisoner in the Tower, the setting of the opening scene. Brakenbury describes briefly the character of Henry:

As one whose wishes never reach'd a crown,
The king seems dead in him: but, as a man,
He sighs sometimes in want of liberty:
Sometimes he reads, and walks, and wishes
That fate had bless'd him with an humbler birth,
Not to have felt the falling from a throne.
(I.i.p. 6)⁸

This description of the subdued monarch is followed by the entrance of Henry, and the subsequent dialogue reveals an

unambitious, humbled character whose only self-confessed mistake was an attempt to rule rather "by mildness than severity." The modern reader must subconsciously compare him to the weak, ineffectual Richard II, who never trod the boards in the eighteenth century after 1751 but lived on in the ten lines Henry speaks at the close of the first scene, ending with the absurdly pathetic

Tell thou the lamentable fall of me,
And send thy hearers weeping to their beds.
(I.i.p. 12)

Kemble's second reason for using Richard's soliloquy to open the second scene now becomes clear. After showing Henry to be without strength and ambition, he sets up the obvious juxtaposition of Richard's excessive ambition and ruthless determination:

Why, then, to me this restless world's but hell,
Till this mishapen trunk's aspiring head
Be circled in a glorious diadem.
But then, 't is fix'd on such a height! O, I
Must stretch the utmost reaching of my soul,--
I'll climb betimes without remorse or dread,
And my first step shall be on Henry's head.
(I.ii.p. 13)

The audience is reminded of the contrast between these two extremes in the final act of the play when Norfolk, in lines added by Cibber, advises Richard to offer pardon to those of Richmond's forces who will come over to his side. Richard's answer emphasizes what to Kemble was an important theme in the play:

Why that, indeed, was our Sixth Harry's way;
 Which made his reign one scene of rude commotion:
 I'll be in men's despite a monarch: No;
 Let kings that fear, forgive:--Blows and revenge for me.
 (V.ii.p. 61-62)

As the eighteenth-century classicist and man of reason, Kemble could not help retaining these lines, which so perfectly embody the lesson of Aristotle's golden mean. While he points out a real defect in Henry, mercy without justice, Richard immediately sets himself up as the personification of its polar opposite, vengeance without justice. Kemble's audience was undoubtedly aware of the classical implications and would have instantly recognized Richmond as the representative of the preferred middle way between the extremes of Henry and Richard. The Richmond scenes which immediately precede and follow Richard's promise of "blows and revenge" are heavily altered with additions from Cibber that Kemble retains to emphasize Richmond's function as the reasonable alternative to both Henry and Richard.

Thus, from the beginning of the eighteenth century on, Richard under Cibber's hand did not horrify spectators as Shakespeare's Machiavellian villain, whose malevolent character springs not from natural causes, but from a wilfully perverse malignance within. He rather outrages and exasperates the eighteenth-century audience by allowing his overcharged ambition to drive him to an expression of extreme idiosyncrasy. The fact that Kemble in 1810 found it

necessary to follow Cibber's model demonstrates that his audience still possessed an essentially neoclassical perception of human nature. Hazlitt lamented the loss of Richard's old character because it so perfectly expressed the romantic anti-hero, depicting a remorseless satanic rebel against the order of nature, who, through the exertion of his individual will, attempts to dominate his world. It was perhaps for this reason that Kemble's audience could not tolerate Shakespeare's Richard on the stage. His character for them was too base, too conscienceless to exist in nature.

The most expedient means Cibber could devise to make Richard acceptable on the nineteenth-century stage was to add a series of new soliloquies for Richard to speak at moments in the play where Cibber thought the extremity of his villainy required a softening pause for reflection, or, in some cases, where his evil motives needed to be made more manifest. Part of the success of these additions lay in the fact that some of them gave Richard III a moral that an eighteenth-century audience could recognize. Commenting on the moral of Richard III as it was acted at Drury Lane in 1770, Francis Gentleman identifies a Richard far removed from Shakespeare's original:

. . . from Richard the Third we may draw this useful conclusion, that no degree of success and grandeur, no gratification of lawless ambition, however splendid, can still the voice of conscience;

which, though unheard by the world, speaks in
thunder to the guilty wretch,⁹ who bears such a
painful monitor in his bosom.

The two requisite elements in Gentleman's assessment of the moral of Richard III, lawless ambition and conscience, are identical to those which function in three of the soliloquies added by Cibber to make Richard's character more plausible to an eighteenth-century mind. Kemble retained all three virtually unchanged from Cibber. Although in the first of the soliloquies on ambition and conscience Kemble has penciled out nine lines in the Covent Garden promptbook for excision in the stage representation, he includes enough of the passage to depict an introspective Richard, who must pause briefly to dispel his conscience by justifying his villainy to himself:

There's not a slave but has his share of villain.
Why then shall after-ages think my deeds
Inhuman, since my worst are but ambition?
E'en all mankind to some lov'd ill's incline:
Great men choose greater sins, ambition's mine.
(III.i.p. 34)

The next soliloquy on conscience falls at the end of Act III and serves not only to juxtapose Richard's ambition and conscience, but reminds the audience of the polarity between Henry's rule and Richard's when he says of the crown, "Nor can the means that got thee dim thy luster: / For,--not men's love,--fear pays thee adoration. . . ." As with the first soliloquy, Kemble retains the aphoristic couplet at the end with which Richard fortifies his resolve:

Conscience, lie still! more lives must yet be drain'd;
Crowns got with blood, must be with blood maintain'd.
(III.ii.p. 42)

The final soliloquy on conscience which Cibber added to the 1718 play was the only substantial change from the version of 1700. Originally Cibber had the princes murdered onstage and directed that the curtain fall on the scene after the murder was perpetrated. In the later versions he places the soliloquy immediately after the muffled cries of the dying princes are heard offstage. Cibber's later modification was preferred to his original alteration by Garrick in his Drury Lane production as well as by Kemble in his revision.¹⁰ The scene focuses the visual and aural attention of the audience on Richard while their emotions have been brought to a high pitch by the scene preceding the soliloquy (IV.i), in which the frightened princes are torn from the Queen. Francis Gentleman praised this scene in 1770 for "judiciously" calling forth strong emotions, but James Boaden at the beginning of the nineteenth century found it "disagreeable rather than distressing" in its emotional overstatement and was usually forced to leave his seat until it had passed.¹¹ Thus, with the charged emotions of the audience prepared to endure the grim fate of the children, the penultimate scene of Act IV presents Richard's most shocking act of villainy and his simultaneous reflection on the dead. Richard admits having pangs of remorse but passes

the emotion off as "foolish custom." He reflects also on what future ages will say about him, but concludes, as he has done in the two previous soliloquies, with an acceptance of his evil nature and a reaffirmation of his ambition:

They can't but say I had the crown;
I was not fool as well as villain.--
Hark! the murder's doing:--Princes, farewell!
To me there's music in your passing bell.
(Iv.iii.p. 51)

Francis Gentleman gives us some idea of how this scene projected the character of Richard to the eighteenth-century audience: "The King's soliloquy is masterly; anxious hope and guilty ambition quiver in every syllable. . . ."12

Since Kemble generally played Richmond to George Fredrick Cooke's Richard at the time of his revision, it cannot be said that he kept this soliloquy or any of the others simply because they afforded him an opportunity to gain applause as an actor. Like Cibber, he thought it essential to have Richard suffer a degree of mental anguish, however slight it might be; otherwise he was too unnatural to be real, and the play lost something necessary to Kemble's classically didactic purpose.

Kemble's retention of the Cibber alterations in Richard III demonstrates that the necessity for didactic instructions was still a major motivating force in the English theatre during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. However, his use of the soliloquies on conscience serves a

broader purpose than simply adding an eighteenth-century moral to the play. Along with other added soliloquies and scene changes, they function to make Richard less idiosyncratic and more a recognizable eighteenth-century character type. In his investigation into the reasons underlying alterations of Shakespearean tragedy, George C. Branam points out that the adapter's method of revision usually "reflects the eighteenth-century preference for the general and universalized rather than the particular and the individual."¹³ This practice is characteristic of adaptations of the history plays as well, and to Richard III in particular. Christopher Spencer has noted in the introduction to his edition of Cibber's 1718 version of the play that each of the added soliloquies on conscience and ambition is designed not to create a portrait of the mind of an individual, but rather a reaction after the fashion of a familiar eighteenth-century type villain according to the conventional standard of morality; consequently, the soliloquies are not representative of what a man in Richard's position would think, but what, according to neoclassical standards, he ought to think.¹⁴

Kemble's audience of 1810 had come to expect from the Richard they knew the same stock responses that he had been given by Cibber in the Restoration. Thus, when Richard commits evil deeds, he is a typical villain, and, similarly,

when he woos Lady Anne before the coffin of her dead husband, he takes on the aspect of a typical eighteenth-century lover. Before Richard intrudes upon the funeral procession bearing the body of Edward to Chertsey (I.ii in Shakespeare), Cibber has him lament briefly that his deformity will not let him become an object of love, gaining for him if not sympathy, at least indulgence from the audience. Then, the curtain, which has been only partially drawn, opens fully to discover Lady Anne with the funeral procession, and in lines retained by Kemble, Richard becomes the captivated suitor:

But see! My love appears. Look where she shines,
 Darting pale lustre, like the silver moon,
 Through her dark veil of rainy sorrow!
 So mourn'd the dame of Ephesus her love;
 And thus the soldier, arm'd with resolution,
 Told his soft tale and was a thriving wooer.
(II.i.p. 18)

Kemble's penchant for spectacle and dramatic procession caused him to make two direction changes in this scene, rendering it on the whole more powerful. Having at his disposal the enormous, newly built Covent Garden stage and actors enough to populate it, he discarded Cibber's discovery scene. According to his directions penned on the interleaf, in place of the melancholy tableau he has the funeral procession enter and silently proceed by torchlight toward Richard as he delivers his lover's soliloquy (p. 18). The second change is the addition in the regular stage directions of a tolling funeral bell that signals for the audience

a change in Richard's character that would hardly have been noticed in Cibber's version. Sandwiched between Richard's lines on his deformity and the lover's soliloquy are eight lines in which the Duke is informed of the illness of his brother the king. Upon hearing this bit of hopeful news, Richard delivers lines Cibber altered from the soliloquy which closes Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI (III.ii):

Would he were wasted, marrow, bones, and all,
That from his loins no more young brats may rise,
To cross me in the golden time I look for!--
(II.i.p. 18)

At this point Kemble adds the single mournful note of the funeral bell, and Richard's whole demeanor changes as he beholds the appearance of his love (p. 18). With the addition of the bell in the confrontation scene between Anne and Richard, Kemble dramatically emphasizes the rapidity with which Richard's emotions change as one object of his ambition is replaced by another, each receiving spontaneous expression typical of its nature as the neoclassical mind perceived it.

Richard's attraction to Anne is not the dissembled product of his political ambition as it is in Shakespeare.¹⁵ His love is genuine, although brief, and when, in the notorious soliloquy in Lady Anne's apartment, he reveals his design to discard Anne and marry Elizabeth, his expressed motive is, once again, love:

. . .--Why don't she die?
 She must; my interest will not have her live:
 The fair Elizabeth hath caught my eye,
 My heart is vacant, and she shall fill her place.
 (III.ii.p. 35)

In this scene Kemble has cut sixteen lines from Lady Anne's speech on her unhappy marriage to Richard, who has now become the "rude disturber of her pillow." This represents one of the major excisions in his version of the play and accomplishes more than merely shortening the scene. Presumably, Kemble must have reasoned that Anne's lengthy complaint provided her with the undeserved sympathy of the audience. Allowing herself to be flattered and wheedled into marrying Richard, relenting even as she stands beside the body of her husband, whom she knows he has murdered, should place Anne beyond the range of full human compassion. Francis Gentleman thought that Cibber allowed Anne too much latitude in voicing her woes and maintained that the sympathy of the audience in the bedchamber scene is aroused for no good reason. Lady Anne's misfortunes, he continues, should be presented as no more than the correct application of poetic justice.¹⁶ Kemble possessed a copy of Gentleman's Dramatic Censor, and it is not uncommon to find a scene change in one of his productions which appears to accommodate Gentleman's critical views.¹⁷ It is not surprising to note, therefore, that in Anne's bedchamber soliloquy Kemble cuts everything except the lines which specifically point out the working of poetic justice:

. . . Was marriage made
 To be the scourge of our offences here?
 O, no; 't was meant to be a blessing to the virtuous:
 It once was so to me, though now my curse.
(III.ii.p. 35)

The fact that Kemble edited Lady Anne's speech to make her unfortunate circumstances less affecting to the audience and to emphasize her marriage to Richard as a "scourge" allows the assumption that a just dispensation of rewards and punishments informs Kemble's didactic method in Richard III. This assumption is strengthened by his close adherence to Cibber in the delineation of Richard's character. Kemble retained all the added soliloquies of Richard virtually unchanged from Cibber, revealing not only his eighteenth-century notion of versimilitude in characterization but demonstrating as well his neoclassical attitude toward the rule of poetic justice.¹⁸ As I mentioned earlier, Richard as he was originally depicted was unacceptable to Kemble's audience because they thought him too villainous for credibility. They further conceived him, because of his incredible villainy, beyond any kind of just punishment; consequently, he could neither delight nor instruct an audience which still held to the Aristotelian concept of the dramatic hero as one who "should not be eminently good and just, on the one hand, or simply villainous on the other."¹⁹ The absolute evil of the original Richard outstripped its own consequences, but the Richard who was plagued by a conscience

that forced his reason to justify acts of villainy was not such a monster that his crimes overawed their punishment.

Retribution comes to Richard in the final act of the play only after he is shown to be tormented by his past deeds. Shakespeare suggested Richard's state of mind with the ghost scene; Cibber completely altered the scene to give it a more explicitly eighteenth-century moral, and Kemble followed the altered version. Of the ghosts, only Henry, Lady Anne, and the princes appear (the others are not included in the dramatis personae), and they are represented as appearing only to Richard. Richmond merely relates his own dream, as in Shakespeare (V.iii.231-33). Save for only one line of Anne's, the speeches of the ghosts are wholly changed to emphasize Richard's guilty conscience. Immediately before they vanish, the ghost of Henry sums up the didactic function of their appearance:

Now, Richard, wake in all the hells of guilt!
 And let that wild despair, which now does prey
 Upon thy mangled thoughts, alarm the world!
 Awake, Richard, awake! to guilty minds
 A terrible example!

(V.iv.p. 66)

After Richmond defeats Richard in personal combat, Kemble follows Cibber in having the dying King utter a portion of the curse of Northumberland from 2 Henry IV.²⁰ Kemble, however, omitted from the death speech Cibber's lines in which Richard laments his loss of fame:

But oh; the vast Renown thou hast acquir'd!
 In conquering Richard, does afflict him more
 Than ev'n his Body's parting with its Soul. ²¹
 (V.iii)

Cibber added these lines to emphasize the poetic justice of Richard's end. Ironically, Kemble omitted them probably for the same reason because they weaken the didactic effect of Richard's death and the prospect of his soul's judgment.

Thus, the changes Kemble made in Cibber's lines here and in the third act seem to indicate that he held the same classical eighteenth-century attitudes regarding poetic justice as his predecessor, and his only argument with him was over the best method of expressing those attitudes so that they are made explicit to the audience. In the final application of poetic justice, however, he follows Cibber closely. First, Richmond delivers the inevitable moral over the dead usurper's body: "Farewell, Richard! and from thy dreadful end / May future kings from tyranny be warn'd" (V.x.p. 72). One small change Kemble adds, having Richard's body borne offstage to the sound of trumpets to emphasize Richmond's victory. Next, Stanley announces heaven's prize for virtue:

And see the just reward that heaven has sent thee:
 Among the glorious spoils of Bosworth Field,
 We've found the crown. . . .

Here, to signal the establishment of a new order, Kemble adds a scene in which everyone kneels amid a flourish of drums and trumpets to proclaim, "Long live Henry the Seventh,

King of England!" Heaven's final dispensation to virtue is then acknowledged by Richmond when he hears that Elizabeth is close at hand:

Ay, there, indeed, my toil's rewarded.
(V.x.p. 73)

Kemble's reason for perpetuating Cibber's play lay not only in his neoclassical attitude regarding the purpose of the drama. The figure he presented on the stage and his unique declamatory style of acting lent themselves less to Shakespeare's Richard than the reflective Richard of Cibber, who has become the characteristic eighteenth-century nobleman. The added soliloquies helped to exhibit Kemble the actor at his best when he played Richard, for many who had even seen Garrick in his prime agreed with Richard Cumberland's retrospective assessment that Kemble's talent in the soliloquy was unsurpassed.²² Where many disagreed with Kemble's handling of Richard was in the actor's insistence on portraying him as too typically noble. Sir Walter Scott points out that this portrayal resulted from Kemble's own patrician demeanor:

We have said that he could not appear ludicrous, and we must add that, neither could he seem constitutionally villainous: he could never look the part of Richard, and it seemed a jest to hear him, whose countenance and person were so eminently fine, descant on his own deformity.²³

Kemble reasoned that Richard must have been sophisticated and refined in his behavior to have won so many to his

purpose: thus he departed from George Fredrick Cooke's vulgarly cunning Richard and gave him nobility. Apparently Cooke depicted Richard as a more straightforward "type" villain. An article in Oxberry's hints that Kemble's portrayal suffered in the comparison by stating that Kemble "sacrificed his ambition to his interest" when he condescended to allow Cooke to play the part in 1803.²⁴ When Genest compares the two actors, he might well be comparing their characterizations of Richard III: "Cooke was a plain man, but Kemble is said to have possessed the singular faculty of persuading a person contrary to what he knew to be his own interest, and yet doing it in such a manner as to preclude opposition. . . ." ²⁵ James Boaden called Kemble's approach "rightly conceived," ²⁶ and Charles Lamb, after watching Kemble play Richmond to Cooke's coarse rendition of Richard, reveals in his criticism what some had come to expect from "the daring Son of York" after the first decade of the nineteenth century:

Nothing but his crimes, his actions, is visible; they are prominent and staring; the murderer stands out, but where is the lofty genius, the man of vast capacity--the profound, the witty, accomplished Richard?²⁷

Since public sentiment was, however, in general disagreement with Kemble's "witty, accomplished Richard," Kemble regularly played Richmond after he took over management of Covent Garden in 1803, allowing Cooke the part of Richard until he

sailed for America in 1811. After that, Kemble's Richard kept the boards until his retirement in 1817.

Kemble's deference to Cooke is ample proof that he willingly subordinated his ambition as an actor to his interests as a businessman of the theatre. It was this same business interest which motivated the changes Kemble made in his productions of Shakespeare's plays. This point has been consistently misunderstood by many twentieth-century scholars. For example, Harold Child says of Kemble that "he did not see Shakespearean drama as an artistic form already moulded and fitted to a certain kind of stage representation, a form which could not be altered without loss of dramatic power."²⁸ And Kemble's most recent biographer agrees with Child when, referring to the passage just quoted, he says, "This, I think, is the key to understanding Kemble's very free omissions, rearrangements, bowdlerizings, and even verbal alterations of a poet whom he professed to adore."²⁹ In other words, Kemble altered Shakespeare because he did not understand him properly, for if he had only perceived Shakespeare's artistry, he would have produced his plays without alteration. I must disagree; Kemble understood Shakespeare as well as any man of his time. He was famed as a man "more deeply scientific, more learned, and more laborious in his profession, than is probably to be found in the annals of the British Theatre."³⁰ Kemble recognized that

Shakespeare's plays had an artistic form already molded to a certain kind of stage representation, but it was molded to a stage which did not exist in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century London.

Kemble saw, as did other noted Shakespearean scholars of his day,³¹ that Shakespeare could stay pure only in the closet, loved and appreciated for his dramatic genius, forgiven for his lapses in dramatic power. But his productions of Shakespeare were dictated by the tastes of his audience, who wanted only instructive simplicity, a good deal of spectacle, and a farce at the end. Consequently, when he prepared Richard III for the stage, Kemble exemplified a mechanical attitude that only the neoclassicist could take toward art. It is an attitude which modern critics, grounded as they are in the romantic tradition, rarely understand. This misunderstanding is probably nowhere better demonstrated than in one modern critic's praise of Thomas Whately's Remarks on Some of the Characters of Shakespeare (1785). Whately's treatment of Richard, Herbert Robinson says, is important as the first attempt at psychological analysis of a Shakespearean character.³² Since Robinson is a near-fanatic in his censure of eighteenth-century alterations, it is especially ironic that the essay he praises so highly deals with the character of Colley Cibber's Richard.³³ But Robinson's oversight is understandable. Like most modern

critics, he recognizes no distinction between the poetry of Shakespeare's plays and their theatrical production. Nevertheless, the distinction existed for Kemble because his audience demanded it. He was secure in the knowledge that Shakespeare's plays were inviolably recorded in most textually correct editions that could be produced. One has only to peruse random volumes of the Gentleman's Magazine from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to be convinced of the serious effort of the age to preserve Shakespeare's original work. So for Kemble Shakespeare would always remain Shakespeare, correct and unaltered, in his library, but preserving him on the stage became an issue only when he could sell more seats.

NOTES

¹ Some Account of the English Stage (Bath, 1832), VIII, 233. Genest is referring specifically to the strange metaphor concerning the young princes, Edward and York, uttered by Richard at the end of IV.ii, in Cibber's version of Richard III ("I've lately had two spiders / Crawling upon my startled hopes") and retained in Kemble's.

² The Gentleman's Magazine, 70 (April, 1800), 319.

³ Biographia Dramatica (London, 1812), III, 206-207.

⁴ Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, ed. Catherine Macdonald Maclean (1906; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1960), p. 300.

⁵ Notes to Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo, Augustan Reprint Society (Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 1956), II, 100.

⁶ Kemble's view of the function of serious drama was formally stated in his essay on Macbeth and King Richard the Third (1817; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), p. 3: "The stage . . . promotes the cause of good morals, whenever, by the personated imitation of some history or fable,--drawn to an impressive conclusion by principles and actions natural to the agents who produce it,--we are instructed to love virtue and abhor vice."

⁷ C. B. Hogan, Shakespeare in the Theatre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), II, 719.

⁸ Parenthetical references to Kemble's Richard III are to Charles H. Shattuck, ed., The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), Vol. VII. Parenthetical references to Shakespeare's plays throughout this work are to the Ribner-Kittredge edition of the The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Lexington, MS.: Xerox College Publishing, 1971). References to Shakespeare's original plays are given by act, scene, and line numbers (e.g., I.i.1-10); references to eighteenth-century versions of the plays are given by act, scene, and page numbers (e.g., I.i.p. 10).

⁹ The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), I, 10.

¹⁰ See Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), III, 50.

¹¹ Bell's, p. 8; Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., (London, 1825), II, 59. It is interesting to note that Hazelton Spencer, a modern critic who is sometimes strongly critical of Shakespearean alterations, agrees with Gentleman that Cibber here created "an effective stroke." See Shakespeare Improved (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927), p. 337.

¹² The Dramatic Censor, I, 7.

¹³ Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1956), p. 108.

¹⁴ Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), pp. 27-28.

¹⁵ See Shakespeare's Richard III (I.i.153-59).

¹⁶ The Dramatic Censor, I, 5.

¹⁷ A Catalogue of the Extensive Miscellaneous Library, Choice Prints, and Theatrical Portraits, of John Philip Kemble, Esq. (London, 1821), item 247, p. 15. Hereinafter noted as the Kemble Library Catalogue.

¹⁸ I realize that popular critical opinion today regards any application of poetic justice, particularly in the eighteenth century, as deriving from a neoclassical attitude; however, such is not the case. The acceptance of the idea of poetic justice in drama requires the spectator to subordinate his reason to the dictates of his emotions. His reason can supply him with abundant proof that poetic justice does not exist in nature, yet he willingly allows his feelings to overrule reason and accepts for a time a world in which supernatural retribution is certain. Thus, the application of poetic justice calls for a "willing suspension of disbelief" in the natural world.

¹⁹ Clarence C. Green, The Neoclassical Theory of Tragedy in England During the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1934), p. 165.

- 20 And let this world no longer be a stage
To feed contention in a ling'ring act;
But let one spirit of the first-born Cain
Reign in all bosoms, that, each heart being set
On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,
And darkness be the burier of the dead!
(I.i.155-56)
- 21 Colley Cibber, The Tragical History of King Richard the Third (1718; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), p. 82 (paginated as p. 70 in the promptbook, but the pagination is faulty after p. 72).
- 22 Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes (London, 1825), IV, 228.
- 23 Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., by James Boaden, Quarterly Review, 34 (1826), 218.
- 24 Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes, I, 116.
- 25 Some Account of the English Stage, VII, 611.
- 26 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I, 132.
- 27 On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation, in The Works of Charles Lamb (New York: H. W. Derby, 1859-61), III, 92.
- 28 The Shakespearean Productions of John Philip Kemble (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1935), p. 8.
- 29 Herschel Baker, John Philip Kemble (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), p. 158.
- 30 Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes, IV, 229.
- 31 In a letter to David Garrick, for example, George Steevens praised the actor's alteration of Hamlet. See The Private Correspondence of David Garrick, ed. James Boaden (London, 1831), I, 451-52.
- 32 English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1968), pp. 179-80.

33 The conclusion that Whately is commenting on Cibber's Richard is supported by George Winchester Stone, Jr., "David Garrick's Significance in the History of Shakespearean Criticism," PMLA, 65 (March, 1950), 193.

CHAPTER III

HENRY IV, PARTS ONE AND TWO

Until he left Drury Lane Theatre in 1803 to take over the management of Covent Garden, Kemble did not stage the first part of Henry IV with any regularity.¹ Thirty years earlier Francis Gentleman had correctly prophesied the reason for his reluctance in a note to the last act of 1 Henry IV in Bell's Shakespeare when he observed that "through an excellent Falstaff only, can it enjoy occasional life."² Among the players Kemble inherited at Covent Garden was George Fredrick Cooke, his "excellent Falstaff," whose boisterous style of acting and genuine affinity for sack secured him the role until his departure for America in 1811. Thus, beginning in 1803, Kemble regularly produced 1 Henry IV every season until his retirement from the stage in 1817. The first promptbook edition of his revision of the play appeared during his initial year at Covent Garden, and subsequent editions were published in 1804, 1811, and 1815.³ Kemble himself took the role of Hotspur, and it is for this reason, perhaps, that the omissions and restorations in his revision of 1 Henry IV seem at least partly intended to increase the dramatic importance of Hotspur by enhancing the

tragic nature of his character and, as a result, of the play as a whole. But Kemble had broader intentions than merely heightening the consequences of his own role in the play. For example, many of his changes were designed to shorten the playing time. Kemble's concern with the presentation length of the play is registered on the last page of his promptbook where each act is figured to the minute in his precise hand, with the whole totaled at two hours and forty-four minutes.

Other changes seem intended to strengthen the moral purpose of the drama, which, in spite of the presence of Shakespeare's most famous comic character, Kemble staged as a tragedy.⁴ The version of 1 Henry IV in Bell's, which Kemble followed to a degree, had emphasized the comic effect of the play. The best example of this comic emphasis is in Act Five, Scene One, in Bell's during the serious battle exchange between King Henry and Worcester, which culminates in Prince Hal's offer to face Percy in single combat. Francis Gentleman comments on what takes place next: "It is common for the King to be here seated on a drum, to rise at this line, when Falstaff, who is strangely placed beside him, tumbles down to create a very ill-timed Bartholomew-fair laugh. Can anyone suppose the fat knight would venture so near the King, who knew him to be the chief companion of his son's dissipation."⁵ Kemble's interleaf stage directions for

the scene (p. 61), show that he agreed with Gentleman, for they include no indication of Falstaff's buffoonery. Kemble evidently wanted to preserve the high seriousness of the confrontation scene, to which he restored several lines of the original that were omitted from Bell's.

Through the restorations in the truce scene, as well as in others, Kemble was attempting to cope with the same problem in 1 Henry IV that had plagued the eighteenth-century dramatists before him: how to deal with the apparent disunity of a play that is one-half comic and one-half tragic and give it at least the semblance of unity. To Worcester, for example, are returned the lines which accuse Henry of having been nothing more than an opportunist when he usurped Richard's throne, as well as the lines with which he attempts to vindicate his own rebellion (V.i.56-58, 67-71). Kemble was seeking here to restore the consistency of Worcester's character, which had been destroyed by the omission of many of his lines in Bell's. The manager's purpose is evident in the next scene, where he restored the whole of Worcester's admonition to Sir Richard Vernon, which reveals The Earl's reasons for not telling Hotspur about King Henry's offer of clemency:

All his offences live upon my head
And on his father's. We did train him on;
And, his corruption being ta'en from us,
We, as the spring of all, shall pay for all.
(V.ii.20-23)

Thus, under Kemble's management, Worcester's true motives become once more apparent, and as a result his character is more natural and complete. Samuel Johnson had voiced his opinion in his Preface of 1765 regarding the necessity of consistency of character in the history play when he made what could be considered the definitive eighteenth-century statement concerning the relationship of Shakespeare's histories to the dramatic rules of the ancients:

His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws; nothing is more necessary to all the praise they expect than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the incidents be various and unaf-fecting, and the characters consistent, natural, and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is to be sought.⁸

In restoring the lines which reveal Worcester's motives, Kemble seems to be following Dr. Johnson's rule of character consistency in the history play, not only by making the Earl's character more consistent, but Hotspur's as well. When he restored the clarification of Worcester's reasons for not telling his nephew of the King's offer of amnesty, Kemble rendered Hotspur a more tragic figure by emphasizing the dramatic irony of his fall, which results not merely from his own unbridled temper, but from the perfidy of his scheming uncle as well.

Although admittedly Kemble is here simply reinstating Shakespeare's original design for Hotspur, it should also be pointed out that he deleted lines and retained omissions

he found in Bell's to make the young rebel appear more uniformly tragic from his own classical point of view than the original character. For example, Kemble saw himself as repairing what he must have perceived as an apparent inconsistency in Hotspur's character when he omitted the whole of the Glendower scene (III.i), in which Shakespeare so finely contrasts the deficiencies of Hotspur with Prince Hal's restraint and discipline in the following scene. The Glendower scene had also been deleted from Bell's and was pronounced by Francis Gentleman "a strange, unmeaning, wild scene . . . , which is properly omitted."⁷ Kemble, whether or not he was influenced by Gentleman's remark, was probably guided by a similar reaction in his own omission of the scene. Hotspur is a rash, impetuous, choleric young nobleman, and Kemble played him that way. Sir Walter Scott says, for example, that Kemble was a remarkable Hotspur, whose sudden bursts of temper were "like a greyhound . . . slipped--like a rocket lighted--like a bolt from a cross-bow."⁸ But Kemble no doubt saw Hotspur going beyond impetuosity and becoming downright uncouth in the Glendower scene, where, seemingly to no purpose, he ridicules Glendower, poetry, and things Welsh in general. His character is shown at too great a disadvantage. He might even have seemed ludicrous to a sophisticated English audience at the turn of the nineteenth century, resulting in a distortion of his

tragic role and, consequently, detracting from Kemble's tragic design for the play.

Elsewhere in the play Kemble omitted lines by Hotspur that were retained in Bell's, and his reasoning once more seems to have been to preserve the narrower consistency of his character. In Shakespeare's Act One, Scene Three, for instance, Kemble reduced by ten lines Hotspur's violent tirade wherein the young noble angrily tells his father and uncle they must redeem themselves for sacrificing Richard to "this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke" (I.iii.p. 17). Bell's contains the whole speech; however, in a note Francis Gentleman says, "This circumstantial speech is much too long for a man of Hotspur's temper, so agitated; and rather hangs cold, as we have perceived, on the best actors. . . ." ⁹ Because of his conspicuously formal method of delivery, this criticism may have had special significance for Kemble, who, although he was generally acclaimed the best actor of his day, was once described by Hazlitt as "an icicle upon the bust of tragedy." ¹⁰ The lines Kemble omitted (460-69) are part of a balanced series of rhetorical questions which make up the most euphuistic portion of the speech and could be seen, therefore, as quite out of character for the straightforward Hotspur, especially when he is in the heat of anger. In the same scene Kemble struck out six lines (288-33) in which Hotspur says he would have the Prince of Wales "poisoned

with a pot of ale." He probably reasoned that even in a fit of anger such a shameful method of disposing of an enemy should not occur to a character like Hotspur. Altogether Kemble omitted one hundred thirty-two lines from the role of Hotspur, and, as I have attempted to show, most of the deletions were, he thought, necessary to strengthen the consistency of the character, one of the results of which was to make Hotspur more believable to the audience. For Kemble and eighteenth-century critics, who were, for the most part, moralists, improving Hotspur's credibility was absolutely essential in order for 1 Henry IV to fulfill its purpose in representation as Kemble understood it.

Kemble was the chief representative of English drama during the age which insisted that the dramatic arts had a moral obligation to the public. Horace Walpole had earlier noted that the eighteenth century was an age in which the dramatist, not the historian, formed the opinions of the general public concerning the important figures in British history. It was incumbent upon the dramatist, therefore, to render an accurate representation of the actions and personalities of historical figures. One anonymous critic, signing himself "Arabicus," is fairly representative of the general late eighteenth-century critical attitude toward characterization in the history play:

. . . it ought to be a point of conscience with the former dramatists not to exhibit the personages of their drama in colours different from what their deportment in real life authorizes. To heighten, in some degree, their virtues may be allowable, but surely not to depreciate them; we may acquiesce, perhaps, in a slight palliation of their vices, but never in their exaggeration.¹¹

Thus, in the last noted omission of Hotspur's lines, as well as in the omission of the Glendower scene, Kemble was tempering the depiction of Hotspur, not just to make him a more sympathetic and, consequently, more tragic character. By omitting lines in which he thought Shakespeare had made Hotspur appear mean or ridiculous, Kemble was raising the memory of an honest and daring young nobleman in the esteem of the English people.

As it was defined from the mid-eighteenth century onward through the early nineteenth century, the function of the history play was to reinforce the moral values of the society that produced it. Kemble himself formally stated that the purpose of drama which imitates a particular history is to promote good morals and to instruct the public "to love virtue and abhor vice."¹² This attitude toward the function of the stage is firmly rooted in the eighteenth-century critical tradition, which had always insisted that a faithful representation of reality was essential to the didactic obligation of drama. Not long after Dr. Johnson had stated in his Preface that the characters and changes of scene in history plays ought to be consistent and probable,

Elizabeth Montagu, for whom Kemble had high regard,¹³ published her influential Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare. In the section "On the Historical Drama" she says that the history play is well suited to correct society's prejudices and vices, and she makes explicit the relationships between this office of the drama and its adherence to real life, for "when we cease to believe, we cease to be affected."¹⁴ Thus, when Kemble was strengthening the character consistency in 1 Henry IV, he saw himself emphasizing the moral impact of the drama as a whole.

Mrs. Montagu made an observation about Shakespeare that Kemble and other drama critics apparently still held in the early nineteenth century. Shakespeare is not only a poet, she said, "but he is certainly one of the greatest moral philosophers that ever lived."¹⁵ Throughout Kemble's formative years as a dramatist, critics had widened the gap between the distinction of Shakespeare as poet on the one hand and moralist on the other in order to account for the excellence and success of his history plays while continuing to censure their departure from the classical rules. One of the most explicitly stated examples of this attitude is to be found in William Hodson's critical postscript to his tragedy Zoraida (1780). The lack of unity in Shakespeare's history plays is a defect, Hodson says, but "his art of moving the passions on the stage, and the beauty of his poetry in the

closet, bear him triumphantly through it."¹⁶ The separation of Shakespeare the moralist in the theatre from Shakespeare the poet in the closet continued to find critical expression into the nineteenth century. In the Gentleman's Magazine, for example, a favorable reviewer of More's Observations on the Effect of Theatrical Representation (1804) quotes lines that are virtually the same as those of Mrs. Montagu in the preceding century.¹⁷ Understanding this dichotomous view of Shakespeare in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is important for the modern investigator if he is to gain insight into the reasons for much of the alteration and even the restoration of lines in Shakespearean drama during the period. As evidenced by most of the Hotspur omissions in 1 Henry IV, Kemble often sacrificed Shakespeare the poet on the stage to Shakespeare the moralist, especially where the poetry seemed to outrun the drama or digress from the plot. As Kemble saw it and as Hodson expressed it, Shakespeare's duty on the stage was to move the passions. Where Kemble thought the poetry worked with character and scene to this end, it was spared; where it did not and was merely beautiful, it was either transposed to another scene where its first end could be accomplished, or it was cut from the acting version of the play and relegated to the closet.

By emphasizing the tragic moral of the play, this process in 1 Henry IV not only provided for Kemble a stronger

character and thematic unity, it strengthened the bond between the tragic and comic elements in the play. Shakespeare's history plays, particularly those with abundant comedy scenes, had always irritated eighteenth-century critics, even after Dr. Johnson's vindication of their failure to adhere to classical rules. Being neither tragedy nor comedy, the history plays defied the abilities of critics to describe them according to the standard models of acceptable drama. Those who wanted to explain their success could point to Shakespeare's dual achievement as a philosopher-poet. Other critics attempted no explanation of the history plays, but merely offered an opinion. According to Francis Gentleman, for example, tragicomedy was "the most heterogeneous production that ever entered the imagination, yet we must contend that our author has in this piece [1 Henry IV] made it as pardonable and probable as a union so unnatural would admit."¹⁸ Commenting on 1 Henry IV, Mrs. Montagu voiced essentially the same objections when she said that "correct taste may be offended with the transitions from grave and important, to light and ludicrous subjects, and more still with those from great and illustrious, to low and mean persons." But in her treatment of historical drama in general, she offered a theory of comedy in the history play:

historical plays, and the mixture of the comic, weaken the operations of pity and terror, but introduce various opportunities of conveying moral instruction . . . more useful in common life than

those drawn from the conditions of kings and heroes,
and persons greatly superior to us by nature or
fortune.¹⁹

As I have shown, Kemble's changes reinforced the tragic moral of the play, thereby strengthening the elements of pity and terror against the weakening effects of the comic parts. As a result, Kemble had aligned the comic and tragic parts of his revision of 1 Henry IV so that each functioned on a more purely didactic level than in either the original or the revision in Bell's, endowing the "heterogeneous production" with a unifying singleness of purpose--a moral unity.

An examination of the changes Kemble made in the comic scenes of the play reveals that in them, as in the tragic scenes, he was at least partly motivated by a desire to heighten the moral purpose of the representation. I have already mentioned his omission of Falstaff's burlesque tumble in the first scene of Act Five in Bell's. Kemble elsewhere deleted from comic scenes lines which add nothing to the moral function of comedy in the play and, as a result, which weaken its moral consistency. For example, Kemble followed Bell's in leaving out the conversation of forty-six lines between Gadshill and the Chamberlain, which contribute nothing new to the plot and, from an eighteenth-century point of view, suffer from a useless abundance of quibbling. Kemble allowed most of the preceding scene between the carriers to stand, omitting only three distasteful lines (included in

Bell's) which refer to the unsanitary practice in Elizabethan times of urinating into the hearth when no chamberpot was available. Since he thought they had a degenerating rather than corrective effect on morals, it was a general practice for Kemble to excise individual lines of vulgarity or, if necessary, even entire scenes of scatological or prurient humor.²⁰ Kemble's minute concern with the effect of the comic parts of 1 Henry IV is amply illustrated in his restoration to Falstaff of several humorous lines in Act Two, Scene Two that were omitted in Bell's. When Falstaff and his thieves set upon the travelers, the fat knight hangs back, bellowing his verbal support in the lines reinstated by Kemble: "Down with them! cut the villains' throats! ah! whoreson caterpillars! bacon-fed knaves! they hate us youth . . ." (p. 24). Reasoning that these lines, along with Falstaff's attendant actions, would serve to instruct the audience against such middle-aged foolishness, Kemble could restore them in good conscience, but almost as an afterthought he panned through the line, "cut the villains' throats." Kemble would not have made such a small excision to shorten the presentation time; therefore, we must assume that he was attempting to control the effect of the action by removing the one bloodthirsty line containing the only vestige of seriousness in the scene.

In general, the comic scenes suffered fewer changes than the serious ones in Kemble's revision of 1 Henry IV. Except for the omission of the "play extempore" in Act Two, Scene Four, which Francis Gentleman had pronounced "dreadfully tedious," the Falstaff scenes are the most nearly complete in the play.²¹ Kemble's task, as he saw it, was to achieve an artistic balance between the tragic and comic elements of the play by restoring or deleting necessary lines to strengthen, where he could, the didactic functions of both. George Odell, one of the few twentieth-century critics to distinguish between "the closet-student of the closet-drama" and the student of theatrical drama, testifies to Kemble's success in the endeavor. Usually offering scant praise for the productions of those who altered Shakespeare for the stage, Odell declares Kemble's Covent Garden promptbook edition of 1 Henry IV to be "an almost perfect acting copy."²²

Professor Odell's good opinion is not extended to Kemble's production of the second part of Henry IV, however. The reason may be that Kemble, in his revision of the second part of Henry IV, employed a more liberal hand in omitting lines from both serious and comic scenes, and his motives in the omissions seem to have been less governed by a design to achieve a uniform effect than to purge the play of unnecessary lewdness and obscenity and to shorten the playing

time. In spite of the fact that he restored some lines of the original that were omitted in the traditional acting version in Bell's Shakespeare, Kemble's own deletions resulted in a play almost two hundred lines shorter than Bell's.

Although the first page of text in the promptbook copy of 2 Henry IV bears the direction "Green Cloth" in Kemble's handwriting, there is no accompanying order to lock the stage doors, which, according to interleaf stage directions, appear to have been used in both comic and serious scenes (II.ii and IV).²³ Thus, unlike the first part, 2 Henry IV was technically designated neither tragedy nor comedy. Part of the problem the manager faced in dealing with 2 Henry IV had been pointed out by Gentleman in his introduction to the play in Bell's. The sequel does not compare well with the first part. The tragic scenes contain "less fire" and the comedy "less intrinsic humour," and the whole production eventually draws to "a frivolous, jingling conclusion."²⁴ Since Kemble found so little tragic emphasis in the serious scenes of 2 Henry IV, he was unable to fan his revision into anything approaching even the compromise tragedy he had managed in the first part. At the outset he was forced to cut the entire first scene of Act I, which might have been used to set a tragic mood for the beginning of the play. But, as Gentleman notes at the opening of

2 Henry IV in Bell's, this scene in which Mortimer acquaints Northumberland of his son's death at the hands of the Prince of Wales "has been plundered of its most striking beauties, to enrich the part of Henry the Sixth, in Cibber's alteration of Richard the Third."²⁵ And since Kemble retained Cibber's adaptation of the lines in his own production of Richard III, he followed Bell's in omitting the entire scene from 2 Henry IV.

Kemble also followed Bell's in omitting the Induction to the play spoken by Rumour, opening instead with Shakespeare's first comic scene (I.ii). Although Gentleman had pronounced it "rather indelicate," Kemble retains the original opening lines with Falstaff asking his page about the doctor's opinion regarding the condition of his urine. Of Falstaff's ensuing lines in Bell's (I.ii.5-28), Gentleman had italicized several which he thought should be omitted because they contained "A sameness and prolixity of quibble."²⁶ Whether Kemble was following Gentleman's opinion or his own inclination to clear up what he considered an obscurity, he omitted all but one sentence of the lines italicized by Gentleman. For the same reasons Kemble omitted Prince Hal's first long speech in Act Two, Scene One (Shakespeare's II.ii), with its innumerable puns and quibbles on topical subjects that had long since become meaningless to the theatre audience. Kemble deleted Shakespeare's lines of

rapidly moving puns not only because they had lost their topicality, however. The pun had become too gross for the refined sentimental humor of the age. George Colman the elder, in his comedy Man and Wife (1769), stated the eighteenth century's case against the pun while at the same time indulging the modern taste for sentimental humor. Calling Shakespeare's use of puns "the vicious taste of the times," Kitchen, the hero of the play, declares, "Sheer wit is like sheer wine--but a pun or a quibble--rot it--a pun is nothing but gingling the glasses."²⁷

Kemble's omissions in 2 Henry IV demonstrate that he agreed at least in part with Colman's assessment of Elizabethan taste in drama. The attitude that Shakespeare was a genius among barbarians, forced to make his way in the theatre by lowering his lofty artistic abilities to satisfy a mob of rude, licentious, superstitious morons had gained widespread acceptance throughout the eighteenth century as an explanation of what critics took to be his "defects." Contemporary with Colman's Man and Wife, for example, was Mrs. Montagu's statement that the history plays in particular were blemished because they were aimed at "a rude, illiterate audience," not to mention "the low condition of the stage" when they were written.²⁸ In the advertisement to Bell's, Francis Gentleman called Shakespeare's audience "the Goths and Vandals of criticism."²⁹ Toward the end of

the eighteenth century, however, critical opinion concerning Shakespeare's "defects" was becoming more divided, although the general low opinion of Elizabethan taste still held. According to Hugh Blair, for instance, the history play was filled with beauties but was particularly deformed by "grotesque mixtures of Tragedy and Comedy" and "affected witticisms." The audience appreciated Shakespeare for the former, but the latter, Blair says, "we consider blemishes, and impute them to the grossness of the age in which he lived."³⁰ Throughout the eighteenth century it was argued that Shakespeare's deficiencies resulted from his living in a period graced by no rules of taste in drama. "Shakespeare then was forced to please this chaos," one critic declared, "and to please it, he was forced to write a chaos."³¹

Although during the first quarter of the nineteenth century the old attitude still prevailed to a great extent, objections to it were beginning to be raised. One anonymous subscriber to a theatrical journal expressed his outrage at the critical smugness of some of his contemporaries: "How monstrous must be the ignorance, or how consummate the impudence of him who dares refer to the age of Ben Johnson [sic], Massinger, Ford, Heywood, Dekker, Marlowe, nay, of Shakespeare himself, as the infancy of the drama?"³² Rather than merely voicing an objection, Charles Lamb, during the same year that Kemble published a revision of 1 Henry IV,

took the popular critical assessment and reversed it. Shakespeare is too subtle, Lamb says, to be represented on stage before the vulgar masses. He implies that Shakespearean adaptors are not, as they imagine, changing the plays to make them appear more artful to a modern audience. They are instead making them less subtle so they may be understood by the grosser intellects of their contemporaries.³³ Thus, Kemble was producing Shakespeare's histories at a time when critics were sharply divided over their merits. On the one hand the histories were deficient in art but saturated with nature so that a modern audience could still understand and enjoy them, at least after they had undergone a bit of tinkering. On the other hand they were "grounded so deep in nature . . . that the depth of them lies out of the reach of most of us."³⁴ Accordingly, Kemble's restorations, omissions, and transpositions of lines in 2 Henry IV often reflect both attitudes. He generally took Shakespeare's quibbling scenes, Blair's "affected witticisms," to be an artistic defect, tangential and unnecessary to the action, and since their comic function, too gross from one point of view, too subtle from another, was lost on the modern audience, he omitted them for the sake of clarity and continuity.

It would be untrue, however, to say that Kemble thought his province as manager was merely to modernize Shakespeare in order to put him back within reach of the theatre public.

Such "modernizers" had enjoyed for a time the approbation of genteel critics, but if Kemble ever considered himself among their number, he would have found during his managership of Drury Lane that critical opinion was changing. An article in the Gentleman's Magazine, for example, may have been aimed at the young manager when it ironically praises those who "have taken care to substitute pleasing and fashionable words, instead of the obsolete and gross terms which sometimes occur in that admirable author." The article goes on to recommend the services of several unemployed counterfeiters to undertake a complete renovation of Shakespeare's plays.³⁵ Kemble could not help feeling the influence of the changing critical attitude, which, coupled with his own penchant for accuracy, caused him to make small restorations throughout 2 Henry IV where the Bell's edition had substituted modern for archaic diction. For example, in the third scene of Act Two, where Bell's has the Chief Justice tell Falstaff, "clear your reputation," Kemble has restored Shakespeare's "answer in the effect of your reputation," and where Falstaff says in Bell's, "I will not undergo this rebuke," Kemble has restored sneap for rebuke (p. 11). According to James Boaden, restorations such as these were part of Kemble's long-term design for producing Shakespeare on the English stage. It was Kemble's opinion, Boaden says, that "as we grew accustomed to our elder

language by frequent republication of Shakespeare, the numberless substitutions of familiar for obsolete expressions were now to be struck out; and our great poet, upon the stage, rendered more strictly like his own works in the closet."³⁶

Nevertheless, the reaction of critics to Shakespeare's occasional bawdiness and Kemble's own squeamishness in the matter kept him from extending this practice to include what he considered lewd and indecent dialogue in 2 Henry IV. For instance, where Bell's retained all of the opening dialogue between the Hostess and the two officers, Fang and Snare, in Act One, Scene Three (Shakespeare's II.i), in which Mistress Quickly testifies to Falstaff's indifferent violence "if his weapon be out," Kemble struck out all the lines which could be given a licentious double meaning. He elsewhere omitted passages of sexual innuendo that Bell's allowed to stand. In Scene Two of the second act (Shakespeare's II.iv), for example, Kemble deleted several lines of the quarrelsome conversation between Falstaff and the two women. In a note concerning the conversation, Francis Gentleman had stated, "The ideas arising from what these two ladies utter, are gross; they should be softened, a little."³⁷ Kemble obliged him by keeping the Hostess's sexual allusion to Doll being the "emptier vessel" but omitting Doll's remarks about having to bear the weight of Falstaff. Kemble also omitted

Pistol's threat to "discharge" upon the Hostess "with two bullets" and even threw out the kissing scene between Falstaff and Doll, which Gentleman had said "is so much beneath Shakespeare, we wonder how he could stoop to it."³⁸ In the following act (III.i) Kemble omitted several bawdy lines of the conscription scene that were retained in Bell's. Gentleman had favored the omission of the entire scene, labeling it, among other things, "exceedingly tedious."³⁹ But Kemble probably realized Shakespeare's purpose in showing the tediousness of Falstaff's wit when he does not have the Prince and Poins to prick him on and so left most of it intact. The specific sexual passages Kemble deleted were the lines that played on Feeble's occupation as a woman's tailor (he becomes simply "a taylor") and Falstaff's indelicate comparison of Justice Shallow to a monkey. Kemble had no need of finding artistic grounds on which to banish the sexual references in 2 Henry IV. In a word they were immoral. And if Shakespeare had been compelled by circumstances to gratify the "vicious taste" of the Renaissance public with indecent dialogue, his successors in the more fastidious Georgian age were equally compelled to impute him righteous by continually adapting his plays to the changing moral conventions.

A similar moral purpose was perhaps partly responsible for Kemble's omitting another scene retained in Bell's

wherein Hostess Quickly and Doll are arrested (V.iv). Ostensibly the scene depicts the just reward of immoral behavior, but the beadle's manhandling of the two women might have evoked an underserved sympathetic response from an audience grounded in the drama of sentiment. Kemble followed through with the alteration by omitting Pistol's comically heroic address to Falstaff concerning Doll's incarceration (V.v.30-37). Kemble's purpose in removing the arrest scene was probably also based on dramatic considerations, for the omission contributes to a more dramatic movement of events in the fifth act. The audience no sooner hears that the old king is dead than it is transported to the scene of the coronation procession. Kemble also transposed scenes to make the play more effective in representation. He followed Bell's, for example, in consolidating all of the old Henry's appearances in the fourth act. The result, which included the famous "Ode to Sleep" from Act Three, Scene One, was an act of "so much sterling merit," according to Gentleman, "that it throws the others into disgrace."⁴⁰ Kemble departed from Bell's when he transposed the confrontation scene between the new king and the Chief Justice from the second scene to the third scene of Act Five in his Covent Garden production. The manager may have been prompted to this transposition by Gentleman's parting remark in Bell's that the play had "a frivolous, jingling conclusion."⁴¹

Kemble thought he could improve the ending by bringing down the curtain on the one scene which shows all the kingly qualities of the new monarch. Immediately following Henry's rebuke to Falstaff, Kemble gave Lancaster's line "I like this fair proceeding of the King's" to the Chief Justice, followed by an added line of his own, "Yet still I fear, 'twill bring no grace to me" (p. 62). Then follow King Henry's lines from Shakespeare's Act Five, Scene Two, where Kemble had left off in the second scene of his own Act Five: "Still all look strangely on me;--and you most; / You are, I think, assur'd I love you not" (p. 62). And the rest of the scene to the end of the play, save for the omission of twenty-six lines, is Shakespeare's. Noting that the last act of Kemble's 2 Henry IV differed from Bell's, George Odell claims that the difference is to Kemble's disadvantage.⁴² Professor Odell offers no explanation for his opinion; however, most critics would agree that Kemble's sentimental couplet ending of the play jingles louder than the original in modern ears:

No prince nor peer shall have just cause to say,
God shorten Harry's happy life one day!

But Kemble himself played the part of Prince Hal in 2 Henry IV, and his decision as manager to close the production with Harry's mettlesome speech allowed Kemble the actor to bring his part to the final curtain with a flourish he could not have managed in the original.

NOTES

¹ C. B. Hogan notes only two Drury Lane performances of 1 Henry IV between 1788, the year Kemble assumed management of that theatre, and 1800 in Shakespeare in the Theatre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), II, 261, 264.

² Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), IV, 74.

³ Introduction to 1 Henry IV in The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), III, ii. Shattuck has reproduced the edition of 1811; all parenthetical references to both parts of Henry IV are to this source.

⁴ Kemble's penned stage directions in the promptbook at the beginning of the play call for the "Green-cloth" and give the order to "Lock stage-doors," which meant that all entrances were to be made upstage of the proscenium. The directions formally designate the drama as tragedy (see The Kemble Promptbooks, III, ii).

⁵ Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 64. Gentleman also criticizes this "contemptible piece of stage buffoonery" in The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), II, 393.

⁶ Preface to Johnson's edition of The Plays of William Shakespeare, in W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., ed., Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), p. 36.

⁷ Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 43.

⁸ Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., by James Boaden, Quarterly Review, 34 (1826), 220.

⁹ Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 18.

¹⁰ The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1903), VIII, 304.

¹¹ The Gentleman's Magazine, 59 (August, 1789), 697-98.

12 Macbeth and King Richard the Third (1817; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), pp. 2-3.

13 Herschel Baker, John Philip Kemble (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), p. 215.

14 An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare (1769; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), p. 58.

15 Writings and Genius of Shakespeare, p. 59.

16 Observations on Tragedy, postscript to Zoraida (London, 1780), p. 75.

17 The Gentleman's Magazine, 76 (July, 1806), 640.

18 The Dramatic Censor, II, 394. Gentleman offers a similar opinion in his introduction of 1 Henry IV in Bell's Shakespeare, stating that tragi-comedy runs against his "critical relish" (IV, 3).

19 Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare, pp. 101, 62.

20 Kemble even went so far as to delete the entire scene of Katherine's English lesson in Henry V (III.iv).

21 Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 41.

22 Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), II, 40, 41.

23 Shattuck's facsimile of the promptbook of 2 Henry IV used in the present study is from the 1804 edition. Other editions were published in 1803 and 1815.

24 Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 3, 77.

25 Bell's, p. 5. Actually the striking beauties Gentleman alludes to were not used to enrich the part of Henry, but that of Richard, who speaks several of Northumberland's lines as part of his death speech at the end of the play.

26 Bell's.

27 The Dramatic Works of George Colman (London, 1777), II, 250.

28 Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare, p. 71.

- 29 Bell's Shakespeare, I, 6.
- 30 Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783; rpt. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1965), I, 40.
- 31 Rev. Martin Sherlock, Letters on Several Subjects (London, 1781), II, 63.
- 32 Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes (London, 1825), III, 197.
- 33 On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation, in The Works of Charles Lamb (New York: H. W. Derby, 1859-61), III, 82-86.
- 34 On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, p. 86.
- 35 The Gentleman's Magazine, 61 (December, 1791), 1099-1101.
- 36 Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons (London, 1827), II, 250.
- 37 Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 25.
- 38 Bell's, p. 30.
- 39 Bell's, p. 37.
- 40 This transposition was originally made by Thomas Betterton in his 1721 alteration of 2 Henry IV.
- 41 Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 77.
- 42 Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving, II, 42.

CHAPTER IV

HENRY V

Kemble's transposed conclusion for 2 Henry IV, in which the new king dramatically takes up his role, ended the play with a scene depicting the young monarch's mature and confident purpose to guide England's destiny at home and among the nations. The manager's reason for the alteration may not only have been that he thought that this scene furnished a better finale than the original, for the new ending also provided the king with a stronger character transition into Henry V, which opens in the first scene with Canterbury's high praise of Henry's abilities, followed in the second by the king's decisive action at court when he consults with his advisors and deals with the Dauphin's messengers. Shakespeare had originally concluded 2 Henry IV with an historical transition, ending the play with Prince John's remark to the Lord Chief Justice that a military expedition to France might be a future possibility. The original ending had not only made Francis Gentleman unhappy; it had earlier caused Dr. Johnson and, to his thinking, everyone else who encountered it to cry out with Desdemona, "O most lame and impotent conclusion!" Johnson goes on to declare that he would be content for the play to end with the

death of Henry IV.¹ Kemble's ending partially realizes Johnson's wish, composed as it is of the speech of Prince Hal which immediately follows the death of the old king in the original play. But whether or not his new ending for 2 Henry IV was influenced by Johnson's criticism, Kemble was motivated in part by his design to emphasize Henry as the faultless English prince and king whom he had perfected fourteen years earlier in his Drury Lane revival of Henry V in 1789.²

As it was advertised on the title page of the 1789 promptbook, Kemble's production of Henry V was, on the whole, "altered by curtailment only."³ One of the primary reasons underlying Kemble's omissions seems to have been his desire to "improve" the character of Shakespeare's Henry by removing several of the king's lines which might show some weaknesses, however slight, in his character. This design seems in part to inform the alterations and omissions of the 1806 prompt copy as well, for through the omissions and manuscript stage directions Kemble further emphasizes Henry's greatness and the general superiority of the English by representing the French court and character to be at a greater disadvantage to their English counterparts than in Shakespeare's original. For this reason one modern scholar, David Rostron, has argued that Kemble may have originally revived Henry V after its twenty-year hiatus for political

reasons, giving a patriotic boost to English morale in 1789 during the French upheaval.⁴ One of Kemble's contemporaries, James Boaden, discounted political reasons for the play's long absence from the stage or its resurrection, presuming "that the mob always like to be told, that Englishmen, extenuated by disease, and in numbers as one compared with ten, are yet sure to become the conquerors of France."⁵ Nevertheless, one is compelled to agree with Rostron that the political and social turmoil in France prompted Kemble's first decision to stage the play, though perhaps as much for economic reasons as political ones. Like producers of drama throughout history, Kemble was aware of topical issues that held theatrical possibilities, and he could not have found a better way to capitalize on the historical moment and the fancy of his audience than to modify the account of England's greatest playwright of what Boaden termed England's "brightest period" to fit the contemporary state of affairs. Since Napoleon carried the French threat to English security and self-confidence into the nineteenth century, Kemble had no reason to change the strategy of his alteration in subsequent prompt editions.

Kemble's plan of modification begins immediately with the opening of the first act, where he not only attempts to improve the character of Henry, but gains as well a universal historical perspective by removing the chorus, with its

references to a specific historical event. Gentleman had admonished in Bell's Shakespeare, which had also excluded the chorus, that "it should always be spoken," and in a note beginning the second act in Bell's, he offers the standard classical argument as a reason for the retention of the chorus: ". . . though inconsistent with the English drama, yet the chorus seems necessary to soften the gross irregularities of plot, which frequently occur in this piece."⁶ But Kemble was not concerned in Henry V with a detailed representation of a long-past moment in history, nor did he feel obliged to account for abrupt movements of time and place in the drama. Lord Kames in his Elements of Criticism (1761), Johnson in his Preface (1765), and the many lesser critics who followed their example had long since vindicated any dramatist who disencumbered himself of the notion that he must adhere to the classical unities. Consequently, Kemble was satisfied to dispense with the chorus, which could have only limited his purpose in Henry V, and he showed "the mob" what they had really come to see, the superiority and triumph of the generic English character over the French.

Part of the means by which Kemble depicted this natural superiority is apparent in his omissions and restorations of lines concerning the young Henry, as well as those spoken by him. Although Shattuck notes that Kemble restored Canterbury's opening panegyric upon the new king (p. ii), the lines

had been retained in Bell's Shakespeare, which Kemble largely followed in his own revision. One thing he did restore to the opening scene of the play was the Bishop of Ely's strawberry-under-the-nettle metaphor, which beautifully complements Canterbury's encomium; nevertheless, Kemble generally retained Bell's very liberal omissions in the first scene, probably to shorten the playing time. Kemble also followed Bell's in cutting forty-three lines from Canterbury's long justification of the war on France, omitting as well another nine lines retained in Bell's. Perhaps reasoning with Gentleman that it would be impossible for any actor to hold the attention of the audience through "so long, labourious, and intricate a speech," Kemble not only shortened it; he also broke up some of Canterbury's lines, giving them to Exeter and Gloster (pp.9-10).⁷ His strategy seems to have been to dispense with the droning legal talk and to move more directly into the confrontation between Henry and the French messengers, where, as in Bell's, Kemble omits Henry's bombastic vow to conquer France and part of his answer to the Dauphin (i.ii.225-33, 281-88), which, as Gentleman noted, "runs into the vaunting strain, which good sense and resolution, always carefully avoid."⁸ Kemble seems to have agreed with Gentleman on this point, for he depicted his Henry V as sensible and, above all, unpretentiously resolute. He even went beyond Bell's, deleting

the lines in which Henry describes himself to the French as "a wrangler" (I.ii.265-65). Kemble preferred to let mockery, pretension, and boasting characterize only the French court so that it would contrast more readily as a foil to its English counterpart.

Many of Kemble's omissions to improve Henry's character occur in the third act, where thirty-one lines are cut from the king's address to the governor of Harfleur (Shakespeare's III.iii). He restored four lines that were omitted in Bell's to the speech in which Henry appeals to the French to avoid bloodshed and submit themselves to English mercy. Omitted are lines which imply that Henry might not be able to restrain his soldiers from pillaging the city, as well as his threat on the virginity of the town's maidens, his description of "infants spitted upon pikes," and other threats which might have been distasteful to Kemble's audience and which cast a shadow upon the brighter aspects of Henry and the English character. But Kemble's design was not simply to soften the character of Henry where he appeared too stern or boastful. At one point Kemble alters Henry's lines in which the young monarch seems not resolute enough. At the end of his final scene in Act Three (Shakespeare's III.iv), Kemble omitted some of the concluding lines which were retained in Bell's:

We are in God's hand, brother, not in theirs.
March to the bridge. It now draws toward night.

Beyond the river we'll encamp ourselves,
 And on to-morrow bid them march away.
 (III.vi. 163-66)

Francis Gentleman probably stated Kemble's intention when he said, "We do not approve of the national reflections thrown out by the King in this scene; the sum total of this audience [with Montjoy] is, that he will neither seek nor shun a battle."⁹ It may be that this criticism of Gentleman's, along with the historical context of Kemble's revisions, prompted the manager to delete the lines which come after Shakespeare's "March to the bridge." Substituted for the deletion are the following lines, penned in the margin in Kemble's fine handwriting:

Were the French twice the number that they are,
 We would cut a passage through them to our home,
 Or tear the lions out of England's coat.
 Forward--March.--

(III.iii.p. 36)

And if Kemble's alterations were not sufficient to clear the scene of Henry's seeming indecision, the orchestra closed the third act by following the king's speech with a rousing march titled, according to manuscript stage directions, "Briton's Strike Home" (p. 36). Henry's renovated declaration, together with the added music, serves not only to bolster the spectators' pride in the English character, but also heightens their anticipation of the action to come.

Another way Kemble showed the superiority of the English character in Henry V was by reducing the pomp of the French court in contrast with the English at the beginning

of the play. When King Henry makes his first appearance (I.ii.p. 7), Kemble's manuscript directions indicate that he is surrounded by retainers and courtly array. The king is discovered seated beneath a canopy over his throne, which forms the apex of a V-formation of fifteen lords and heralds, and the scene is conducted with the utmost solemnity and deference to the English king. In contrast, when the king of France makes his first appearance in the next act (II.iii.p. 23), he is not discovered in state, as was King Henry. Instead, Kemble has him enter an empty stage, followed by a meager entourage of eight lords, who spread themselves in two thin lines across the stage with the King in the middle. Moreover, when Montjoy presents Henry's pedigree to the French king, Kemble gives specific manuscript directions that "Montjoy must not kneel to the King, when he gives him the Pedigree" (p. 25), implying that the king's own subjects hold little respect for him. In the final scene of the play, however, after the English have defeated the French and Henry has announced his intentions to unite the two kingdoms through his marriage to Katherine, Kemble's interleaf directions present both courts in the double assemblage of royalty as equally balanced in ceremony and number of retainers (p. 61).

The length and function of the remainder of the original French scenes are greatly reduced in Kemble's version of

Henry V. For example, Kemble deletes the entire scene of Katherine's English lesson, perhaps because he agreed with Gentleman that its bawdiness made it "disgraceful to the author, and the piece."¹⁰ Furthermore, whereas Shakespeare ended his third act with a scene depicting the French camp on the eve of the Battle of Agincourt (III.vii), Kemble followed Bell's in omitting 112 lines and reduced the scene further by deleting five of the final six lines. In addition, Kemble transposed the scene to the fourth act in his version (IV.iii), replacing the lines he struck out at the end with the Constable's final four lines from Shakespeare (IV.ii.60-63).¹¹ All the frivolous banter through which Shakespeare characterized the French was deleted, and only Kemble's meager additions and the twenty-six lines in which the French discuss their English foe remain. Why Kemble cut the scene so drastically is puzzling, especially when, according to the manuscript stage directions, his main reason for retaining the scene at all seems to have been specifically to gain time after the Harry-in-the-night scene, enabling him to change into Henry's battle regalia. At the end of Act Four, Scene Two (p. 43), for example, Kemble wrote the direction, "Take good time to change." He also directed that the march preceding the entrance of the Dauphin and his officers be "very long," and as a final admonition to the actors, he penned the marginal direction,

"Beg them to take time in this scene." The regular stage directions show that originally Kemble's French scene ended with a flourish of drums and trumpets, but in the manuscript directions he has marked out the flourish and inserted the direction for the orchestra to play another "very long" march and adds a final reminder, "Take time to change" (p. 44).

The omission of all the lines in the third scene of Act Four, in which Shakespeare had revealed the shallow vanity of the French warrior spirit, seems on the surface to contradict the idea that part of Kemble's purpose in altering Henry V was to depict more forcibly the superiority of the English character over the French. Attempting to account for this discrepancy, Rostron implies that the severe abridgment of the scene itself and its reduction in dramatic status to mere filler material are proof of Kemble's design to make the French appear less worthy of notice than in the original.¹² However, it is not likely that Kemble would have shortened the scene to show contempt for the French when leaving it intact would have better served the same purpose. More realistically, Kemble may have determined that his audience would more easily bear an interlude of martial music while Henry dressed for the battle than listen to the tedious, affected patter of the Dauphin and his officers. Kemble may have reasoned further that, on the whole, the

music would serve to heighten the audience anticipation better than the French scene and would thus provide a more appropriate transition between the eve of the Battle of Agincourt and the battle itself.

Perhaps Kemble's concern for dramatic continuity and audience anticipation led also to his excision of the comic scene in which Pistol captures the Frenchman, M. le Fer (Shakespeare's IV.iv). Although Bell's had retained the scene, Gentleman criticized it as "a despicable, unnecessary scene, serving no purpose but to destroy the dignity of expectation."¹³ Kemble had also probably read Gentleman's criticism of the scene in The Dramatic Censor, where it is condemned not only for destroying the anticipation of the battle, but for being "contemptibly farcical" and for "playing upon sacred terms" in the reference to "Signieur Dew."¹⁴ It should also be noted that in the the minds of Kemble's audience Pistol's buffoonery may have destroyed not only the dignity of expectation, but the dignity of the English military character as well. Perhaps for the same reason Kemble also omitted all of the earthy military dialogue among Captains Gower, Fluellen, Macmorris, and Jamy (III.iii.59-130), almost all of which was included in Bell's. Gentleman's remarks concerning the scene contained such expressions as "insignificant," "trifling," and "prophane" [sic], epithets which may have characterized Shakespeare's

four career soldiers for Kemble as well.¹⁵ Rather than portray the backbone of the English army as coarse and profane, Kemble places before the audience England's ideal soldier-king at the gates of Harfleur.

There may also have been other reasons why Kemble omitted the dialogue among the captains. In the original play the scene is a beautifully realistic interlude falling between the bombast of Henry's exhortation at the breach (III.i) and the bombast of his address to the governor at the gates of Harfleur (III.iii). Kemble may have feared that the relatively minor actors who would have played the parts of Macmorris and Jamy could not have brought it off well or that the quiet realism of the scene would be out of place. More likely, however, Kemble willingly sacrificed the scene to help achieve his overall purpose in Henry V, which, it seems, was not only to keep before his audience an ideal rather than a true depiction of the English military character, but also to step up the dramatic pace of the play as well. As was noted earlier, by omitting the conversation scene of Fluellen and company, Kemble's production moves directly from the breach in the wall at Harfleur to Henry's ultimatum to the town's governor. Similarly, by omitting the affected French banter in Act Four, Scene Three and the scene in which Pistol captures the Frenchman, the long interlude of martial music ending Kemble's third

scene is followed immediately by Henry's St. Crispin's Day speech, after which events lead quickly to Shakespeare's Act Four, Scene Five and the French defeat.

I have attempted to show that part of Kemble's design in the deletions of the third and fourth acts was to enhance the English character by the omissions themselves and to restore the audience anticipation by intensifying the dramatic movement. I have also noted that Kemble's substituted lines at the end of Act Three and his addition of martial music to both acts serve the same purpose. In light of these considerations, it is necessary to deal with an alteration in Kemble's prompt copy of Henry V that would cause most critics to exclaim with Shattuck, "Could it be true that Kemble omitted the St. Crispin's Day speech?"¹⁶ The speech is clearly marked in pencil for excision (IV.iv. p. 45); therefore, the only response that can be offered to Shattuck's incredulous query is that it would appear Kemble did indeed omit the speech. A more important question for the purpose of this study, however, is why Kemble crossed the speech out, especially since he originally included it and since it functions more admirably than any other speech in the play to show Henry's character to good advantage. The answer lies, perhaps, not in any dramatic considerations, but in the limitations of Kemble the actor. Kemble suffered all of his life from asthma. As a result of this respiratory

ailment, he was forced to adopt a slow and methodical style of delivery.¹⁷ During the early part of his career, he was able to control his asthma so that its effect was much less noticeable than in his later years. A review of his first performance at Drury Lane, for example, claimed that "his recitation is evidently his great talent, and here, in our mind, he has no equal."¹⁸ Thomas Davies also noted that the young Kemble possessed a voice that was "strong and flexible."¹⁹ In contrast, William Macready, who was almost thirty-six years Kemble's junior, recalls the older actor:

. . . he had a serious disadvantage to contend with in a very disagreeable voice, husky and untunable, and in a constitutional asthma that necessitated a prolonged and laborious indraught of breath, and obliged him for the sake of distinctness to adopt an elaborate mode of utterance, enunciating every letter in every word.²⁰

It is impossible to determine exactly when Kemble deleted the St. Crispin's Day speech. He was forced to duplicate from memory the marginal and interleaf manuscript directions in all his Shakespearean prompt copies after 1808, when the originals were destroyed in the Covent Garden fire.²¹ Since these directions are all in ink and the St. Crispin's Day speech is marked in pencil, quite possibly Kemble crossed it out at an even later date, and his reason may well have been that his worsening asthmatic condition prevented him from delivering the speech with the declamatory force and effectiveness it required. Kemble's

asthma may also have been part of the reason that Henry's exhortation at the breach (III.i.p. 27) was cut to a mere four lines from the original thirty-four. Following Cibber, Kemble had given four of the omitted lines to Richmond in his Richard III.²² He moved the final eighteen lines of the exhortation to the end of Act Four, Scene Three in Henry V (pp. 46-47), where, delivered immediately before the Battle of Agincourt, they might have had, from Kemble's point of view, a greater dramatic effect. Because there are only ten lines spoken by characters other than Henry between the excised St. Crispin's Day speech and the lines transposed from the preceding act, Kemble would have found it all the more necessary, as his asthmatic condition worsened, to delete the first speech in order not to overtax himself for the final exhortation before the battle.

In his comments on Kemble's preparation of Henry V for the 1798 production, Boaden notes that the manager's alterations were not made to dispute Shakespeare's judgment. As I have tried to show, Kemble was rather "suited the time of the representation to the habits of his audience, or a little favoring the powers of his actors" with the changes he made in the play.²³ The principal actor for whose diminishing powers the play had to be altered in later years was Kemble himself, but none of his contemporaries thought that the character of Henry suffered in the change. On the

contrary, some critics thought that Kemble's Henry V was "better played than his other kings,--Richard and John."²⁴ James Boaden claimed in retrospect that even Kemble's Coriolanus, considered by most critics his best role, did not exceed his "royal Hal."²⁵ One reason Kemble was successful in the part, according to Boaden, was due to "the heroic perfection of his countenance and his figure."²⁶ Toward the end of Kemble's career, Leigh Hunt, in one of his rare backhanded compliments to Kemble, similarly noted in a more general sense that notwithstanding his "artificial manner" and "inefficient voice," the actor had, through the "general superiority of his demeanour, . . . added a respectability to his profession of which it has too often stood in need."²⁷ Perhaps this, as much as anything else, was what Kemble was attempting to do in his alteration of Henry V, to portray the English character at its greatest advantage and so pass on to his audience a respect for the potential of that character, particularly in relation to its French counterpart, during the politically troubled years of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

NOTES

¹ Notes to Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo, Augustan Reprint Society (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1956), II, 56.

² The present study of Kemble's Henry V is based on the Covent Garden promptbook of 1806, reproduced by Shattuck in The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), Vol. III. All parenthetical references to Kemble's Henry V are to this source.

³ Biographia Dramatica (London, 1812), II, 295.

⁴ David Rostron, "Contemporary Political Comment in Four of J. P. Kemble's Shakespearean Productions," Theatre Research, 12 (1972), 113-19.

⁵ Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq. (London, 1825), II, 8.

⁶ Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), IV, 5, 21; see also The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), II, 351.

⁷ The Dramatic Censor, II, 352.

⁸ Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 16.

⁹ The Dramatic Censor, II, 356.

¹⁰ Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 39; see also The Dramatic Censor, II, 355.

¹¹ The remainder of Shakespeare's IV.ii Kemble omits entirely.

¹² Rostron, p. 116.

¹³ Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 39.

¹⁴ The Dramatic Censor, II, 360.

¹⁵ Dramatic Censor, p. 355; Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 37.

- 16 The Kemble Promptbooks, III, ii.
- 17 Herschel Baker, John Philip Kemble (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), 253-54.
- 18 The Gazeteer and New Daily Advertiser (October 1, 1783), quoted in Arthur Colby Sprague, Shakespearean Players and Performances (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), p. 44.
- 19 Dramatic Miscellanies (London, 1784), III, 151.
- 20 Macready's Reminiscences, and Selections from His Diaries and Letters, ed. Sir Fredrick Pollock (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1875), p. 108.
- 21 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 459.
- 22 See The Kemble Promptbooks, VII, 68.
- 23 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 2.
- 24 Doran's Annals of the English Stage, ed. Robert W. Lowe (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), III, 197; Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 2.
- 25 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 8.
- 26 Memoirs, p. 2.
- 27 Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism, 1808-1831, ed. Lawrence Huston Houtchens and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949), p. 104.

CHAPTER V

KING JOHN AND HENRY VIII

Since Kemble's apparent intention in his alteration of Henry V was to enhance the English military character on the stage, seemingly in reaction to his audience's awareness of the real French military threat, one might assume that a similar purpose would guide Kemble in the production of King John, the only other Shakespearean drama in which a confrontation between France and England plays a major role. A brief examination of Kemble's King John will show that such an assumption is probably correct. As in Henry V, Kemble's omissions, restorations, and additions to King John seem designed to strengthen the representation of the English character while it weakens that of the French. Kemble accomplishes this design specifically by making Faulconbridge less the "Billingsgate bravo" disapproved of by Francis Gentleman in the Bell's version.¹ In his altered speech and demeanor, the bastard in Kemble's revision is portrayed as more obviously the by-blow of a royal sire. Also, Kemble's handling of other characters and scenes in specific instances again promotes a general emphasis of the superiority of the English character over the French.

Kemble first appeared in the part of King John at Drury Lane shortly after his London debut in 1783, when the Royal Family expressed a wish to see the young Kemble and his famous sister, Mrs. Siddons, appear in a play together.² Presumably in this performance Kemble acted from the Drury Lane prompt copy as given in Bell's Shakespeare, and Boaden notes that "old Mr. Sheridan" himself privately coached the young actor in his part "very nearly as he used to play it."³ Playing the role of Faulconbridge was Thomas "Gentleman" Smith, who had dominated the part at Drury Lane since 1767.⁴ Smith may have emphasized the comic aspects of Faulconbridge, for during the actor's heyday at Drury Lane Francis Gentleman thought it proper to criticize "that tendency to the ludicrous, which some capital actors have given to this character."⁵ Since Kemble's own part in the play was serious, he probably would not have approved of a comic rendition of Faulconbridge, which would not only detract from the gravity of his role as John, but also weaken the tragic tone of the entire play as well. Accordingly, Kemble, as manager of Drury Lane, revised the play in November of 1800, giving his brother Charles the role of Faulconbridge, and attempted to alter the part, mainly through omissions, so that it could be played with more dignity.⁶ When he again revised King John in 1804 during his first year at Covent Garden, Kemble made one more minor change in the play, adding some lines to the fifth act that emphasize even more Faulconbridge's

seriousness and strength of character. The opening manuscript stage directions in this version are "Lock Stage-Doors" and "Green-Cloth" (p. 5), indicating that Kemble's King John was staged as a tragedy.

In the first act Kemble struck out forty-one lines which were spoken by Faulconbridge in the original and retained in Bell's. There are two major omissions, totalling nine lines and twenty-nine lines respectively, and both seem designed to render Faulconbridge less the comic rogue. The first is the bastard's impudent address to Elinor, in which he speculates on how he was begotten (I.i.167-75). Gentleman's complaint that the bastard's speech is "tainted with licentiousness" and is "abominable stuff for the ears and respectful decorum of royalty to be violated with" would have been noted by Kemble, who, by deleting the "tainted" lines which were incongruous in the presence of royalty, deleted as well the circumstances from which Faulconbridge's humor was derived.⁷ The second omission is the major part of the bastard's comic soliloquy on having become a knight (I.i.188-216), which was also criticized by Gentleman, who claimed that in spite of the satirical worth it once held, "it cannot be intelligent to above one tenth of any audience."⁸ Kemble also omitted several Faulconbridge lines in Act Two, notably the dialogue which passes between the bastard and Austria (II.i.141-49). Most of Kemble's deletions in Act Two had

also been cut from the version of Bell's, probably because, as Gentleman had noted, much of the act is taken up with a confrontation between Elinor and Constance, who verbally abuse each other "without seeming to have the least regard for essential delicacy: what passes between Austria and the Bastard also, is fitter for coalheavers than men of rank and education."⁹ Kemble's seeming regard for decency and decorum in his conformity with Bell's version in the second act was probably motivated by a concern for improving Faulconbridge's character credibility. As I pointed out in Kemble's treatment of Richard III and Hotspur, part of the problem the manager faced in revising Shakespeare was to make certain characters believable to an audience at the turn of the nineteenth century. By toning down the bastard's vulgarity in the presence of royalty and restraining his temper to a degree, Kemble made Faulconbridge a more plausible representative of his audience's notion of English gentility.

Although Kemble was anxious to make Faulconbridge a more refined representative of English knighthood, he was careful not to lose the artistic consistency of the bastard's character through the extravagance of his alterations. One of the changes Kemble made in the 1804 version of King John seems to be an indication of this regard for character consistency. In the opening scene of the third act, Constance, in her resentment at the Duke of Austria because he will not

support her claim against England, tells him to remove Richard's lion skin from his shoulders "And hang a calve's-skin on those recreant limbs." Faulconbridge, perceiving an opportunity to goad Austria into a fight, immediately repeats the taunt (III.i.133), and Bell's has here inserted the following lines from The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England, anonymously published in 1591:

Aust. Methinks, that Richard's pride and Richard's fall should be a precedent to fright you, Sir.

Faulc. What words are these! How do my sinews shake!
 My father's foe clad in my father's spoil!
 How doth Alecto whisper in my ears,
 "Delay not, Richard; kill the villain strait;
 "Disrobe him of the matchless movement,
 "Thy father's triumph o'er the savages."--
 Now by his soul I swear, my father's soul,
 Twice will I not review the morning's rise,
 Till I have torn that trophy from thy back,¹⁰
 And split thy heart for wearing it so long.

C. B. Hogan indicates in his notes to King John that the added lines from The Troublesome Raigne appeared in Kemble's 1800 version.¹¹ In the promptbook of 1804, however, they are omitted, and Kemble restores the confrontation exactly as it appears in Shakespeare. Austria dares Faulconbridge to repeat the line, and, according to manuscript stage directions, the bastard "rushes down to him" and throws the taunt in his face (p. 26). Kemble may have originally included the additional lines because they add an aspect of heroic determination to Faulconbridge's character and, as Francis Gentleman pointed out, help make his behavior toward

Austria more justifiable. But Gentleman also pointed out that such justification is unnecessary, and in its bombast the speech seems to conflict with the character Faulconbridge displays in the second act, where he "indulges a general blunt oddity, that even treads upon the heels of majesty."¹² Gentleman's criticism may have prompted Kemble's deletion of the added lines. I noted earlier that Kemble's changes often agree with the criticisms and recommendations of Gentleman in his notes to Bell's and in The Dramatic Censor.¹³

Whether the result of Gentleman's remarks or Kemble's re-examination of Shakespeare's version of the play, the reinstatement of the original lines to the confrontation scene restored the artistic unity of Faulconbridge's character and at the same time made it more realistic. Kemble probably realized as well that the bombastic threat with its classical allusion, aside from the artistic conflict it created, was out of place coming from one with a yeoman's background. On the other hand, Faulconbridge's original reaction to Austria, his bold display of temper gone beyond mere threats but held in check at a word from his king, was appropriate to his character and the dramatic circumstances. The historical circumstances at the time of the 1804 revision no doubt also influenced the change, for with Napoleon having just announced his intention to be crowned Emperor of

France, Kemble's Faulconbridge represented what the English audience wanted to see in the English military character, controlled outrage in the face of French presumption, ready to be unleashed at a word from the king. In the following scene (III.ii) Kemble further accommodates his audience by showing the unleashed fury of the bastard in a way that went beyond Shakespeare and Bell's in dramatic action. Shakespeare has Faulconbridge enter, carrying Austria's severed head, the gruesome trophy of a battle fought between scenes. Similarly, Bell's opens the scene with the contest already concluded, but there is nothing in the stage directions concerning the head. Instead, the following lines are inserted, making clear Faulconbridge's success and Austria's death:

Thus hath King Richard's son perform'd his vow,
And offered Austria's blood for sacrifice,
Unto his father's ever-living soul.¹⁴

Hogan's notes indicate that Kemble followed Bell's in the 1800 version of this scene;¹⁵ however, the stage directions in the promptbook of 1804 call for an onstage fight, during which "Faulconbridge drives Austria off the state, and presently re-enters, with the lion's skin in his hand." (p. 30). Kemble exchanged the bastard's original trophy for one less shocking but of greater symbolic importance; furthermore, the Englishman's savagery in the battle was directly represented and reinforced by Kemble's restoration

of Faulconbridge's original lines, addressed to another offstage trophy: "Austria's head lie there / While Philip breathes."

In the final act of the play Kemble made another small change from his King John of 1800, enhancing the character of Faulconbridge this time through the addition of several lines appearing neither in Bell's nor in the original. In Shakespeare's Act Five, Scene One, after Faulconbridge tells John that his nobles have sided with the invading French and that England has fallen into confusion, the bastard ends the scene with an exhortation to reinforce the king's waning battle spirit (V.i.65-76). Bell's retained the speech as it is delivered in the original, but Kemble deleted the last three lines of Shakespeare, substituting five lines of his own that intensify the expression of British nationalism in the exhortation. Kemble may have thought that the original ending of the speech was weak and indecisive where Faulconbridge says, "let it at least be said / They saw we had a purpose of defence." Consequently, Kemble gives the Faulconbridge of 1804 a conclusion to the exhortation which his audience would find more appropriate to the situation:

Sweep off these base invaders from the land;
 And above all exterminate those slaves,
 Those British slaves, whose prostituted souls,
 Under French banners move in vile rebellion,
 Against their king, their country, and their God.
(V.i.p. 52)

Having added these lines to condemn Salisbury and the

rebellious English nobles, Kemble underscored his contempt of treason in the next scene (V.ii). For example, the manager omitted all of Salisbury's speech to the Dauphin wherein the Earl announces his sorrow at the necessity of taking such a rash and rebellious step. Also omitted is the Dauphin's praise of Salisbury's "noble temper" (V.ii. 9-64). Bell's had omitted twenty-four lines from these speeches; Kemble omitted another thirty-three, so that the only line of Salisbury's speech retained is the first line of the Earl's reply to the Dauphin's insistence that the newly placed faith of the English nobles remain "firm and inviolable": "Upon our sides it shall never be broken" (V.ii.p. 53).

Anxious to avoid any saving grace that Shakespeare may have accorded the French in the original King John, Kemble followed Bell's in excluding most of the Dauphin's ennobling speeches to Cardinal Pandulph that fall immediately after the dialogue with Salisbury. His rebuff of the Cardinal, wherein the Dauphin refuses to be a mere instrument of Rome, as well as his references to the welcoming attitude of the English during the French invasion, are omitted (V.ii.79-82, 97-116). To further reduce the stature of the French in representation, Kemble restored the scene in which the Dauphin learns of the defection of his English allies and the loss of his supplies on Goodwin Sands (V.v). Francis

Gentleman thought it "properly omitted" from Bell's as a "short trifling scene."¹⁶ In the original play the scene helps to explain the Dauphin's peace negotiations in the last act. Since Bell's deleted any reference to the peace, however, the scene became superfluous. Kemble followed Bell's in leaving out the peace settlement; nevertheless, considering the lines he added to the bastard's exhortation when John receives similarly bad tidings, Kemble may have restored the same to provide contrast between the deflated attitude of the Frenchman and the strong determination of the British in similar circumstances, characterized by Faulconbridge.

This is the state of affairs upon which Kemble closed his King John, an uncertain French invader facing a desperate English foe. As I just noted, after the death of John in Kemble's version there is nothing concerning the negotiated peace with Cardinal Pandulph as mediator (V.vii.73-98). The play thus seems to end with greater uncertainty than the original, but this uncertainty is a calculated effect on Kemble's part. Kemble transfers the concluding lines of the play from the bastard to Prince Henry, whose speech has more force in the face of uncertainty, as he announces England's determination to stand united "Come the three corners of the world in arms." By giving the closing speech to young Henry, England's next king, Kemble emphasized for

his audience what he and they recognized as a statement of national policy during the uncertain times of the first decade of the nineteenth century. Kemble's manuscript directions indicate that the orchestra struck up a grand symphony as the curtain fell after Henry's speech, and one imagines that the audience left the theatre gratified by the knowledge of what Gentleman had termed "a very pleasing, incontestable political truth, that unanimity must always make Britons formidable abroad, and comfortable at home."¹⁷

In his treatment of eighteenth and nineteenth-century editions of Shakespeare, George Odell has practically nothing to say about Kemble's King John, maintaining that Kemble's version is enough like Bell's to be considered an updated, "more highly finished" copy of that version.¹⁸ While it must be admitted that such an assessment is true to a degree, Kemble's King John deserves some comment because, as I have attempted to show, what few alterations Kemble did make in the play correlate completely with his design in Henry V to capitalize on the political state of affairs in Europe and to give his audience a feeling of security in the ability of the superior English character to bring them through the uncertain times. Another Kemble history play that Odell claimed was too much like the Bell's version to warrant comment is Henry VIII.¹⁹ In spite of Odell's opinion, however, Kemble's revision of Henry VIII also deserves at

least a cursory examination because it reveals better than any other Kemble production the manager's penchant for elaborate spectacle and processional grandeur, as well as his willingness to subordinate his position as leading actor to that of managing director for the greater overall success of the play.

Kemble revived Henry VIII "with great splendour" on November 25, 1788, shortly after he undertook the management of Drury Lane.²⁰ Noting that Kemble did not play a major role in the 1788 production, Shattuck says in his introduction to the play that Kemble's primary design in this first revival was not to increase his own status as a leading actor, but was rather "to enrich the play by stage decoration based on antiquarian research."²¹ The remarks of Kemble's contemporaries concerning the production seem to bear Shattuck out. Francis Gentleman noted in a final comment at the end of Garrick's version of Henry VIII in Bell's that the success of the play, "unless before a very sensible audience, depends chiefly on decoration, and splendour of show."²² Kemble appears to have been of the same opinion, according to Sir Walter Scott, who recalled that the manager originally produced Henry VIII mainly because of the opportunities the play offered for adding spectacle to the processional scenes.²³ James Boaden also notes that in the initial revival of Henry VIII Kemble's main concern

in the staging of the drama was to add historically correct detail to the processions. Kemble was able to give a great deal of time to antiquarian research and representational exactness, Boaden says, because he took only a minor role in the part of Cromwell, who also spoke the lines of Griffith in Kemble's production.²⁴ Boaden implies that Kemble took a subordinate role principally because of his respect for Robert Bensley, who had been in possession of the part of Wolsey since 1772 and also because he felt that by combining the roles of Griffith and Cromwell, he could more readily enhance the acting of Mrs. Siddons as Katherine.²⁵ Whether one is more inclined to agree with Shattuck and Herschel Baker, Kemble's latest biographer, that Kemble played a small role so that he could more completely supervise the expensive stage preparations,²⁶ or with Boaden that he was mainly showing deference to other established actors, the fact remains in either case that Kemble had a greater commitment to the effect of the drama as a whole than to his personal acting career.

When Kemble again revived Henry VIII, this time shortly after he assumed the management of Covent Garden in 1804, Mr. Bensley had retired and the manager himself played the part of Wolsey, with Charles Kemble as Cromwell, who continued to speak the lines of Griffith as well. Unfortunately, this revision coincided with the phenomenal appearance on

the London stage of William Henry West Betty, the fifteen-year-old "Young Roscius" from Ireland. Master Betty's incredible popularity initiated what Herschel Baker has called "one of the most preposterous episodes in English theatrical history," and, although short lived, it threw a temporary shade over Kemble's acting career. Consequently, while the Covent Garden manager shared financially in the lad's enormous success, he took pains to stay away from the theatre as much as possible during the 1804-1805 season.²⁷ Thus, Kemble's grand revival of Henry VIII was postponed until the spring of 1806, after the Master Betty mania had subsided. The play was a great personal success for Kemble not only because he had made Henry VIII one of the most sumptuous and historically accurate productions at Covent Garden, but also because as Wolsey he rendered "one of the most affecting moral lessons on the stage."²⁸

In his discussion of Kemble's Henry VIII, John Genest gives the impression of having been present at the opening performance of the 1806 revival. He notes in general that the play was well acted and, aside from the bishops' being incorrectly dressed in Protestant robes, that the staging was "gotten up with much care."²⁹ In his discussion of specific alterations Kemble made in the text of Henry VIII, however, Genest is much less favorable, and, according to another stage historian, critics in general

similarly disapproved of the manager's textual adaptations.³⁰ One main objection was to Kemble's following Bell's in combining the characters of Griffith and Cromwell, for, as Genest pointed out, there is "a manifest absurdity in representing the same person as in the confidence of Wolsey and the Queen--."³¹ Genest also objected to Kemble's omission of the entire first scene of Act Three, wherein Wolsey and Campeius falsely attempt to convince Katherine of their good intentions. The omission might also seem puzzling to modern critics of the drama, especially since the scene offers the actors who play Katherine and Wolsey an excellent opportunity to display the most subtle aspects of their art. The scene's requirement for subtle acting, however, is probably one of the reasons Kemble did not stage it. As Allardyce Nicoll long ago pointed out, the increased size of late eighteenth-century theatres forced actors to change their style of delivery:

. . . their performances became louder and more banal. The finer lights and shades were lost; . . . the managers found that only the broadest effects could prove successful, and accordingly intensified that tendency toward spectacle in serious drama. . . .³²

Thus, as early as 1784 John Davies could declare that from his vantage point in the Covent Garden gallery the scene was properly omitted as tedious and unnecessary.³³ No doubt Kemble was also thinking of the continuity of action when he made the change, for without the intervening scene

between the Queen and the two cardinals, the play moves with more dramatic swiftness directly from Henry's growing dissatisfaction with Wolsey (II.iv) to the Cardinal's reversal and decline (III.ii).

In spite of the general critical disapprobation concerning Kemble's textual alterations in Henry VIII, the play not only found initial success but also remained a popular stock piece in the Covent Garden repertoire, averaging at least six performances every season until Mrs. Siddons retired in 1812.³⁴ After his sister's retirement, Kemble continued to stage Henry VIII, although with less frequency, until his own retirement in 1817. A principal reason for the play's enduring popularity lay in the acting of Kemble and Mrs. Siddons; however, the stage pomp and splendor that attended their acting was also a necessary factor in making Kemble's Henry VIII a success. As with the dialogue, Kemble had made a few changes from the traditional staging techniques that had been employed in Garrick's old version given in Bell's. Besides his greater attention to historical accuracy, Kemble generally increased the spectacle of procession wherever he thought it would produce an agreeable effect. In the opening scene of the first act, for example, where Bell's has Wolsey and Cromwell enter with "certain of the guard, and two secretaries,"³⁵ Kemble's manuscript directions indicate an imposing procession of twenty-four footmen, gentlemen ushers, priests, secretaries,

pages, and attendants all bearing staves, pillars, and various other religious symbols of Wolsey's high position (p. 6).

At the end of the same act Kemble again adds to the spectacle of the play by increasing the magnificence of Wolsey's banquet at York Place (I.iv). The stage directions in Bell's set the scene with a small table for the Cardinal and a larger table for the guests (p. 17). Kemble's interleaf sketches of the banquet scene, inserted at the back of the promptbook, indicate that he may have used as many as four long tables for the Cardinal's guests. The movements of the actors in Kemble's version are carefully choreographed on interleaves throughout the scene (pp. 18-22), and where Bell's merely has the actors exit at the end of the banquet scene, Kemble has Henry, Wolsey, and other important figures retreat to a privy chamber at the rear of the stage, after which, according to manuscript directions, a drop is lowered to close off the rest of the guests while the banquet scene is still in progress. Kemble's final manuscript instructions for the scene direct the orchestra to play a flourish of drums and trumpets as the King and his train exit to the privy chamber, then "to play some Symphony cheerful and grand" while the drop is lowered (p. 22).

Kemble's design in the staging of Henry VIII was not merely to eclipse the spectacle of Garrick's old Drury Lane version of the play. It is interesting to note, for example, that the scene upon which Garrick lavished his greatest processional grandeur, the coronation of Ann Bullen (IV.i), was omitted altogether in Kemble's version of 1804. Garrick omitted Shakespeare's dialogue between the two gentlemen, preferring to open Act Four with the coronation itself, consisting of a procession of one hundred and thirty-eight actors.³⁶ Francis Gentleman implied that the coronation was necessary to keep Act Four in Bell's from being disagreeably short.³⁷ Kemble, however, apparently did not feel bound by such considerations of time, since his Act Four consists only of Cromwell's audience with Katherine and is even ten lines shorter than the already heavily cut version in Bell's. Kemble may have omitted the coronation of Ann Bullen because in spite of whatever scenic splendor he could muster, the stage production would fall too far beneath the majesty of the real procession for credibility. Regardless of the care in representation, far from doing the event justice, such a scene would be unconvincing, serving only to emphasize for the audience the limitations of the theatre. Kemble might also have been influenced by Dr. Johnson's comments on the coronation of Ann Bullen, in which he maintains that just as a stage battle

in which a few actors represent an army is totally unconvincing, so the coronation is "liable to all that can be objected against a battle."³⁸

Instead of gratifying his audience with a showy display, Kemble also refrained in Act Four from staging the pantomime of angels who appear to the sleeping Katherine. It is possible that Kemble agreed with Francis Gentleman that Shakespeare's introduction of unessential visions and spirits was beneath the notice of the more sophisticated eighteenth-century audience.³⁹ Shattuck surmises that Kemble "was husbanding his resources in order to bolster the final act, which is undoubtedly the feeblest ending of any play in the Shakespeare canon."⁴⁰ Shattuck may be correct in his assertion, but whatever Kemble's reasons were for not taking advantage of the opportunities for ostentatious display in the fourth act, his staging of the christening of Elizabeth in the penultimate scene of Act Five was made even more magnificent by the omission of spectacle in Act Four. According to the three pages of interleaf manuscript directions following the end of the play, the orchestra played throughout the entire scene (V.iv). Bells, trumpets, drums, and huzzas were sounded at intervals; a cannon was fired three times during the celebration; and ninety-two actors proceeded across the stage twice as the orchestra played "the most magnificent triumphal march that can be imagined."

During Kemble's farewell season William Hazlitt accused the aging actor of having a lack of imagination and an inability to impart "life and motion" to those who acted with him. "Give Mr. Kemble only the man to play, why, he is nothing;" Hazlitt said, "give him the paraphernalia of greatness, and he is great."⁴¹ But he was criticizing Kemble at the end of a long career when his powers were exhausted. Perhaps if Hazlitt had seen a young Kemble play a minor part in Henry VIII to draw out the greatness of his incomparable sister, he would have been less harsh in his criticism. Nevertheless, there were still many Kemble admirers left who remembered the power of the young actor, and they probably remembered as well that whatever paraphernalia of greatness the stage had to offer, not only in Henry VIII but in any Shakespearean production, was due almost solely to the efforts of John Kemble.⁴²

NOTES

¹ Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), IV, 16.

² James Boaden, Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq. (London, 1825), I, 133.

³ Memoirs.

⁴ C. B. Hogan, Shakespeare in the Theatre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), II, 326-31.

⁵ Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 7.

⁶ Hogan, II, 319, 333. With minor exceptions, Hogan's notes indicate that the 1800 version is not materially different from Kemble's revised Covent Garden version of 1804, the prompt copy reproduced by Shattuck in The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), Vol. V. Parenthetical references to Kemble's King John are to this source.

⁷ The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), II, 155.

⁸ Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 10.

⁹ The Dramatic Censor, II, 157.

¹⁰ Horace Edward Furness, ed., Variorum of Shakespeare's King John (London: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1919), p. 484. According to Gentleman, the addition of the lines was originally made by "Mr. Pope and other commentators" (The Dramatic Censor, II, 159).

¹¹ Hogan, II, 319-20.

¹² The Dramatic Censor, II, 159.

¹³ See above p. 30.

¹⁴ Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 33.

¹⁵ Hogan, II, 319-20.

- 16 Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 61.
- 17 Bell's, p. 64.
- 18 Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), II, 54.
- 19 Betterton to Irving.
- 20 The Kemble Theatre Journal, November 25, 1788.
- 21 The Kemble Promptbooks, IV, i.
- 22 Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 72.
- 23 Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., by James Boaden, Quarterly Review, 34 (1826), 228.
- 24 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I. 423.
- 25 Memoirs, 421-22; Hogan, II, 300. Boaden's account of Kemble's motives was given credence by John Doran in Doran's Annals of the English Stage, ed. R. W. Lowe (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), III, 196.
- 26 Herschel Baker, John Philip Kemble (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), pp. 128-29.
- 27 Baker, pp. 277-83.
- 28 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I, 422.
- 29 Some Account of the English Stage (Bath, 1832), VIII, 5.
- 30 Henry Saxe Wyndham, The Annals of Covent Garden Theatre (London: Chatto & Windus, 1906), I, 310-11.
- 31 Some Account of the English Stage, VIII, 11. Francis Gentleman had defended the combination, reasoning that it made Cromwell "more respectable" (Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 54).
- 32 A History of English Drama, 1660-1900, 2nd. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966), III, 23.
- 33 Some Account of the English Stage, VIII, 10.

- 34 The Kemble Promptbooks, IV, ii.
- 35 Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 7. Subsequent parenthetical references to the Bell's text of Henry VIII are to the same source.
- 36 The order of the coronation procession and the Champion's Procession which followed in Garrick's Henry VIII is given in Brian Vickers, ed., Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), IV, 468-70.
- 37 Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 58.
- 38 Notes to Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo, Augustan Reprint Society (Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 1956), II, 110.
- 39 Bell's Shakespeare, IV, 56.
- 40 The Kemble Promptbooks, IV, 11.
- 41 The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1903), VIII, 343-44.
- 42 George Odell notes that almost all the great staging of Shakespeare from 1788 to 1817 was Kemble's doing. See Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving, II, 82.

CHAPTER VI

CORIOLANUS AND JULIUS CAESAR

Kemble's remarkable display of spectacle in the grand procession in Henry VIII, which helped make the play a perennial favorite among the Covent Garden productions of Shakespeare's history plays, had its counterpart among the tragedies in Coriolanus, first revived by Kemble on February 7, 1789, after an absence from the boards of over twenty years.¹ While the spectacle in Henry VIII relied upon Kemble's historical accuracy, however, the grandeur of Coriolanus resulted in great part from the manager's complete disregard for verisimilitude in staging and costume. Instead of the relatively primitive setting of post-Tarquin Rome in 500 B.C., Kemble's stage depicted the marble and bronze of the Imperial Age, complete with standards bearing the insignia of the eagle and the inscription "S.P.Q.R." But, as is true of audiences in the present day, Kemble's audience did not care to distinguish between the Rome of one period and another, as long as the one depicted was sufficiently splendid and entertaining. The few complaints one does find concerning the staging of Coriolanus refer to pre-1800 versions. Herschel Baker notes, for example, that

Thomas Guilliland complained of the similarity of the set to Coriolanus and certain recognizable locations in London, and C. B. Hogan quotes from the Thespian Magazine of April, 1793: "The grand triumphant entry would have disgraced a barn; the displeasure of the audience was loudly manifested to it."² These criticisms, particularly the latter, were probably due to the fact that Kemble's acting company had to relocate temporarily while Drury Lane Theatre was being torn down and rebuilt from 1791 through 1793. Consequently, the staging during those years was, no doubt, a bit slipshod because the actors had to shift their productions alternately between the King's Theatre and Haymarket.

During Kemble's initial revival of Coriolanus in the 1788-1789 season, it was staged seven times and was greatly applauded. According to Kemble himself, it was said that he had never acted better.³ However, the success of Coriolanus was perhaps owing mostly to Mrs. Siddons, who played Volumnia, for her absence from the theatre kept the play out of the bills for the next two years.⁴ The next four showings were at the Haymarket during the 1792-93 season, where, for the reasons previously noted, conditions rendered the staging markedly unsatisfactory. Thus, Kemble could not produce Coriolanus effectively until his troupe had moved into the new Drury Lane Theatre and the scenery had been prepared. Unfortunately, by the time Kemble was once more

able to stage Coriolanus with the splendid ornamentation of his original revival, it had become unpopular with the gallery, who, in light of the social unrest surrounding the French Revolution, were offended by the play's portrayal of the general populace as a fickle mob of cowards. As a result, Coriolanus was again withdrawn after 1797.⁵ Some years later Elizabeth Inchbald described the circumstances of the play's withdrawal:

This noble drama, in which Mr. Kemble reaches the utmost summit of the actor's art, has been withdrawn from the theatre in late years, for some reasons of state. When the lower order of people are in good plight, they will bear contempt with cheerfulness, and even with mirth; but poverty puts them out of humour at the slightest disrespect. Certain sentences in this play are therefore of dangerous tendency at certain times.⁶

Coriolanus was not seen in London again until Kemble was firmly settled in at Covent Garden, where, in November of 1806, he brought out a major revival with himself once again playing Coriolanus to his sister's Volumnia. Of this same match in the 1789 production John Genest had peevishly remarked that Mrs. Siddons "was on the stage, as off, Kemble's sister not his mother."⁷ Charles Mayne Young had a very different impression of Mrs. Siddons in 1806, however. In his father's biography, Julian Young recalls the actor's impression of Mrs. Siddons' portrayal of Volumnia during the grand ovation (II.ii.p. 21), during which, he says, "no fewer than 240 persons marched, in stately

procession across the stage":⁸

She was no longer Sarah Siddons, tied down to the directions of the prompter's book; she broke through old traditions; she recollected, that, for the nonce, she was Volumnia, the proud mother of a proud son, and conquering hero. So, that, when it was time for her to come on, instead of dropping each foot, at equi-distance, in its place, with mechanical exactitude, . . . sensitive to the throbbings of her haughty, mother's heart, with flashing eye, and proudest smile, and head erect, and hands pressed firmly on her bosom, as if to repress by manual force its triumphant swellings, she towered above all round her, and rolled, and, almost reeled across the stage; her very soul as it were, dilating, and rioting in its exultation; until her action lost all grace, and, yet, became so true to nature, so picturesque, and so descriptive, that, pit and gallery sprang to their feet, electrified by the transcendent execution of the conception.⁹

Mrs. Siddons' great success in Coriolanus was due in some measure to Kemble's alterations, which, it appears, the manager partly intended to increase the dramatic impact of Volumnia, so that the role more fully complemented the histrionic powers of his sister. James Boaden, besides noting the excellence of Mrs. Siddons' performances in the 1806 production, observed that her lines heightened Volumnia's already exaggerated martial bearing. "From the first line to the last," Boaden says, "all was coloured from one abstract principle; THAT, if Rome was the queen of nations, her sway was only commensurate with her COURAGE. This it was that taught her [Volumnia] to glory in the wounds of victory, and to mock the feeble shrinking from the sight of blood."¹⁰ One alteration Kemble made to emphasize Volumnia's

martial vigor and her exultation in the wounds of battle was the transposition of several lines of Cominius' encomium to Coriolanus (II.ii.104-107). Originally the lines are spoken before the senate, but Kemble moved them to the preceding scene, where, with some added lines, they are given to the hero's proud mother. As she anticipates her son's arrival in Rome, Volumnia seems spontaneously transported by a vision of the exploits of Coriolanus among the Volscians:

He with his single arm subdu'd Corioli.
 His sword, death's stamp,
 Where it did mark, it took: from face to foot
 He was a thing of blood, whose every motion
 Was tim'd with dying cries:--
 Where'er he went, before him fortune flew,
 While victory upon his dreaded brow
 Sat thron'd, and joyful clapp'd her silver wings:--
 Three times mine eagle singled out Aufidius,
 And thrice the Volscian sunk beneath his thunder,
 Bending the knee, as 't were in adoration.

(II.ii.p. 20)

These lines were effectively placed, for they initiated the ecstasy of Volumnia that exploded in the grand ovation of the next scene, in which Siddons so profoundly impressed Charles Mayne Young.

The grand ovation itself must have been a spectacular sight. According to the order of the procession appended in Kemble's handwriting to the 1806 prompt copy, one hundred-twenty-two actors took part in the celebration.¹¹ The procession was divided into four parts, and the whole was carefully choreographed, with the procession entering through

a massive-looking triumphal arch to the music of the full orchestra. The first division to enter was a display of Roman military might, consisting of soldiers bearing weapons, trophies, and various emblems of Rome; second, the political and religious representatives of Rome filed across the stage, leading a lamb and two oxen for sacrifice; the third and largest division consisted of a parade of Volscian captives and a display of the battle spoils; the final division was headed by a group of ten choristers singing "See the Conquering Hero," and while the attending characters were still taking their places on the stage, Volumnia, drunk with pride, reeled among them, followed last and, perhaps, a bit anticlimactically by Coriolanus.

Although the spectacle of the ovation was, no doubt, influential in drawing audiences to see Coriolanus, Mrs. Siddons was probably the major attraction in the play. Her effect on audiences in the ovation scene has already been noted. For further proof one has only to recall that Kemble withdrew Coriolanus from the acting bill during his sister's two-year absence from Drury Lane. It is also interesting to note that Sheridan's Covent Garden version of Coriolanus (1755), with its fantastic ovation scene employing "upwards of TWO HUNDRED Persons," had been shelved as an economic failure for over twenty years when Kemble brought out his first revision in 1789.¹² Thus, it cannot

be said that spectacle alone was responsible for the great and continuing success of the 1806 revision, which was almost identical with Kemble's initial production.¹³ Nor was Siddon's by herself the play's sole attraction. She owed her dramatic accomplishment as Volumnia not only to her superior acting abilities, but in great part to Kemble's alterations. For example, the lines noted previously that Kemble transposed from Cominius to Volumnia, together with the added lines (II.i.p. 20), allowed Siddons to impart a passion to her audience that she could not have managed as Volumnia in the original play.

Similarly, in the last act, where Volumnia appeals to Coriolanus to spare Rome, Kemble altered the scene in order to capitalize once again on his sister's great talent for histrionics. In the original play, Menenius first attempts to prevail upon Coriolanus but is roughly turned away (V.ii). Then Volumnia comes to the Volscian camp with the wife and child of Coriolanus and, in two long speeches, numbering altogether eighty-four lines, appeals to her son's reason and sense of honor (V.iii.94-125, 131-82). Francis Gentleman regretted Coriolanus' rudeness to Menenius, and Volumnia's argument, he maintained, "is perswasive, but rather tedious," adding that "one third of it might very well be spared, notwithstanding the weight and urgency of her subject."¹⁴ Kemble may have been of a similar mind,

for he completely omitted the second scene of Shakespeare's Act Five in his version, and he omitted as well over fifty lines of Volumnia's petition to Coriolanus, substituting in their place a number of lines from the final act of James Thomson's 1749 version of Coriolanus. The added lines, particularly those with which Volumnia ends her address to Coriolanus, are anything but tedious, and they enabled Siddons to thrill her audience with a passionate outburst that brilliantly transferred the weight of dishonor from Coriolanus to his mother:

Hear me proud man!--I have
 A heart as big as thine: I came not hither,
 To be sent back rejected, baffled, sham'd,
 Hateful to Rome, because I am thy mother:
 A Roman matron knows, in such extremes,
 What part to take.--
 Go, barbarous son; go, double parricide;
 Rush o'er my corse to thy belov'd revenge!
 Tread on the bleeding breast of her, to whom
 Thou ow'st thy life!--Lo, thy first victim.
 (V.i.p. 59)

After delivering this splendid tirade, Volumnia increased its effect by drawing a dagger and offering to stab herself, only to be prevented at the last moment by her contrite son, who has not been moved by arguments, as in the original, but has rather been manipulated through his feelings of filial devotion to his mother. Kemble's audience was probably no less manipulated by the addition of Volumnia's affected address to Coriolanus, for her speech would tend to make Volumnia agree more exactly with the eighteenth

and early nineteenth-century preconception of the ideal Roman matron. Furthermore, the audience no doubt found Kemble's Volumnia more credible than Shakespeare's for the same reason. She was a recognizable generalization of the neoclassical mind, speaking not what an individual woman in similar circumstances would be likely to say, but what, according to an idealized notion of the Classical Age, she ought to say.

In his introduction to Kemble's Coriolanus, Charles Shattuck identifies another function of Volumnia's speech: to provide a more swift and dramatic movement to the confrontation with Aufidius and the subsequent assassination scene. In addition, Kemble's alterations provided a generally faster movement throughout the drama and allowed the manager to produce a "tidy, workable play."¹⁵ This aspect of Kemble's Coriolanus received a mixed reaction from his contemporaries. In one of his rare approvals of a Shakespearean alteration, John Genest concluded that Kemble had "judiciously" introduced the Thomson material in the fifth act to repair an originally lame conclusion.¹⁶ John Doran's assessment of Kemble's tidying up Shakespeare's play, however, was wholly unfavorable:

The revival of Coriolanus was a mixture of Thomson and Shakespeare's tragedies, with five of the best scenes in the latter omitted, and what was judicious in the former, marred. I cannot help thinking that Kemble had only that sort of regard for Shakespeare

which people have for the picturesque, who tear away ivy from a church tower in order to whitewash its walls.¹⁷

Although Kemble omitted ten complete scenes of the original from his Coriolanus, it is not difficult to identify the five that Dr. Doran probably had in mind, considering that Genest had also noted five scenes "omitted for no good reason," all from the fourth act (i,ii,iii,iv,vii).¹⁸ One reason Kemble probably had for deleting these scenes was, as Shattuck has noted, to quicken the dramatic pace. With the excision of the initial four scenes of the fourth act, the longest of which contains only fifty-seven lines, Kemble's drama moves directly from the banishment of Coriolanus at the end of Act Three to his discovery in the house of Tullus Aufidius. Omitted is the farewell scene in Rome, Volumnia's confrontation with the tribunes, and the exchange of news between Nicanor and the Volscian. In his version of 1806 Kemble had reinstated the twenty-six lines of Coriolanus' arrival in Antium (Shakespeare's IV.iv) to begin his fourth act, but he later reconsidered and penned them through for excision, redesignating Scene Two (Thomson's I.i-iii greatly reduced) the initial scene of Act Four (pp. 43-44), making the 1806 revision a more exact copy of the version of 1789.¹⁹

Kemble's omission of the scenes in question and his addition of the Thomson material appear to serve a more complex design than merely to speed up the action of the

drama, however. For example, the first scene of Kemble's Act Four introduces a new character from Thomson's Coriolanus, Volusius, a rough old warrior whose relationship with Aufidius parallels in a way the friendship of Menenius for Coriolanus. The presence of Volusius, accompanied by other alterations, helps to make Aufidius a more sympathetic character, clarifying his motives and relieving him of blame. In the opening dialogue of the fourth act, Aufidius' lines express in a forthright manner the plain, honest character of their speaker; he is presented from the first as a more distinct counterpart to Coriolanus than in the original version:

Thirst of revenge consumes me; the revenge
 Of generous emulation, not of hatred.
 This happy Roman, this proud Marcius, haunts me.
 Each troubled night, when slaves and captives sleep
 Forgetful of their chains, I in my dreams
 Anew am vanquish'd; and, beneath his sword
 With horror sinking, feel a ten-fold death,
 The death of honour. (IV.i.p. 44)

Aufidius is not at all the envious and cunning assassin of Shakespeare's play. He refuses even to consider the idea of base assassination when Volusius incites his anger against Coriolanus (IV.iv.p. 50). Kemble omitted the original introduction to the conspiratorial nature of Aufidius by deleting the seventh scene of Shakespeare's Act Four. Also deleted are the first eighty-five lines of Shakespeare's Act Five, Scene Six, wherein Aufidius meets with the conspirators to plan the death of Coriolanus.

In his own Act Five, which consists of only one scene, Kemble replaced the omitted dialogue between Aufidius and the conspirators with lines from Thomson's fifth act, in which Aufidius nobly offers Coriolanus safe conduct to Rome so that he may help defend the city against the impending Volscian attack (pp. 60-61). This passage Kemble spliced to the drastically reduced remainder of Shakespeare's Act Five, Scene Six, which includes the argument with Aufidius and the assassination of Coriolanus, and he placed the whole directly following the triumphant exit of Volumnia, who has just persuaded her son to spare Rome (Shakespeare's IV.iii). Kemble either deleted or transposed to other parts of the play the sixty-seven lines of the two intervening scenes in the original (V.iv and v). Thus, beginning in Act Four and continuing throughout the action leading up to the assassination of Coriolanus, Kemble systematically altered the play so that Aufidius becomes a more admirable character than in the original. Finally, he altered the assassination scene itself so that Aufidius has no direct part in the death of Coriolanus. During the course of their argument, Aufidius, angered at Coriolanus' presumptuous treaty with Rome, once more tells the Roman general to depart from the Volscian camp. For reasons of pride, Coriolanus refuses to leave and, in his scornful answer to Aufidius, inflames Volusius beyond patience. Uttering the words given to

Aufidius in the original, "Insolent villain," the old Volscian and several other officers kill Coriolanus in a spontaneous act of rage rather than in a planned conspiracy (p. 63).

Besides improving the nobility of Aufidius, Kemble's alterations also seem intended to soften the nature of Coriolanus without removing his overbearing pride, which remains the cause of his downfall. Through some of his changes the manager may have been trying to increase the audience's sympathy for Coriolanus so that his death might have a greater dramatic effect. Francis Gentleman had complained in Bell's Shakespeare that Coriolanus was entirely unsympathetic because he "behaved like a traitor, abroad, intirely like a brute, and partly like a fool, at home." As a result, Gentleman said, "it must be a very suseptible bosom indeed, which yearns for his fate."²⁰ Since the hero's pride and foolishness are diminished almost not at all in Kemble's play, however, it is likely that Kemble had a different or at least an attending reason for making Coriolanus less harsh in his treatment of others. Perhaps he was not attempting to make his hero more sympathetic to the general audience but rather less offensive to the gallery, who would tend to identify with the common people in the play and, it should be recalled, whose disapprobation had forced the play's withdrawal in 1797. Thus, it was possibly to render

his Coriolanus more palatable to the gallery that Kemble excised from the first scene of the play fourteen lines of the hero's abuse of the fickle mob, particularly his reference to them as scabs (I.i.150-52). Kemble also omitted several lines from the scene in which Coriolanus sardonically courts the vote of the common people (II.iii.78-102, 106-15). The remaining lines preserve the hero's mockingly superior attitude without laboring it. When Coriolanus finally loses his temper completely with the mob, who, having chosen him Consul, want to revoke their decision, Kemble once more omitted lines spoken by Coriolanus that might have been too insulting for his audience to bear, especially the hero's reference to the cowardice and rebelliousness of the people making them unworthy to be given corn during periods of grain shortage (III.i.119-39). The economic depression and the corn shortages in England that occurred intermittently in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would probably have made the common members of Kemble's audience extremely sensitive to such remarks.

The impression that Kemble was attempting to create a merely less offensive rather than a more sympathetic Coriolanus is strengthened by the fact that he reduced the roles of Brutus and Sicinius from the thoroughly developed examples of bureaucratic villainy in Shakespeare to scarcely more than

bit parts in his revision. In the original play it is through the crowd manipulation of the two tribunes that most of Coriolanus' problems at home derive, and it is through their hatred and machinations, therefore, that Coriolanus gains sympathy. Thus, it stands to reason that Kemble would not have reduced the tribunes' roles so drastically if he were attempting to elicit the sympathy of the audience for the hero. The question that remains to be answered, then, is why the manager deleted so much of the matter of Brutus and Sicinius that they ceased to function as individuals. Shattuck maintains that Kemble may not have had enough competent actors to fill all the parts; consequently, he reduced the scenes between minor characters as much as possible.²¹ It must also be remembered that Kemble's deliberately slow style of acting generally required him to cut lines from his Shakespearean productions simply to get through them in a suitable amount of time. Aside from cutting the playing time of the drama, Kemble greatly reduced the subplot through the Brutus and Sicinius deletions, thereby facilitating a more dramatic movement of events. For example, Kemble omitted the scene in which the tribunes are confronted by Volumnia after they have contrived the banishment of Coriolanus (IV.ii), the omission thus helping to move the action more swiftly from Rome to Antium. Also, in Act Five Kemble omitted the scene between

Menenius and the tribunes which falls in the original between Volumnia's exit from the Volscian camp and the argument with Aufidius so that the play runs with greater dramatic swiftness to its conclusion.

Another reason that may have figured in Kemble's wholesale reduction of the parts of Brutus and Sicinius could have been his inclination to avoid the moral issue of unrequited villainy in the play. A general eighteenth-century criticism of Coriolanus had always been that the villainy of the tribunes and Aufidius should not have gone unpunished. Early in the eighteenth century, for instance, John Dennis had complained in his Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare (1712) that its failure to include a distribution of justice at the end "makes the Coriolanus of Shakespeare to be without Moral." What is even more unacceptable, he continued, the assassin of Coriolanus "not only survives and survives unpunish'd, but seems to be rewarded for so detestable an Action, by engrossing all those Honors to himself which Coriolanus before had shar'd with him. But not only Aufidius, but the Roman Tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus, appear to me to cry aloud for poetic vengeance."²² At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Charles Dibdin voiced much the same objection to Shakespeare's Coriolanus. Like Dennis, he was troubled by the fact that Aufidius and the tribunes look forward to a life of political power and prosperity

after the death of Coriolanus. Dibdin would have preferred that the play depart from history, with the Volscians resisting "the calumny of Aufidius" and Coriolanus being restored to his people to initiate a lasting peace, for the sake of an ending which "would have been correctly poetical."²³ Dennis' solution to the moral dilemma was to write his own version of Coriolanus (1720), in which the disenchanted constituents of Brutus and Sicinius hurl them from the Tarpeian Rock and Coriolanus manages to kill Aufidius and the conspirators before dying of his wounds.

Kemble's own belief in the moral purpose of tragedy, coupled possibly with the fear that his play would be a failure because of the frustration and outrage his audience might feel at such an apparent lack of justice, no doubt influenced his alterations in Coriolanus.²⁴ However, his penchant for historical accuracy, although it may have been suspended for the scenery, would not have permitted him to indulge in such blatant disregard for Plutarch as was suggested by Dibdin or resorted to by Dennis. Kemble's approach was to sidestep the moral issue altogether by removing the blame from Aufidius for the death of Coriolanus and, as was noted earlier, dissipating it in an act of spontaneous violence that the hero brings upon himself. Perhaps for the same reason, to avoid the moral issue, Kemble excised most of the lines which frankly portray the

perfidious motives of Brutus and Sicinius. In the second and third acts, for example, Kemble omitted almost all their dialogue with the people, their private conversations, and their instructions to lackeys, that is, most of the lines which reveal manipulative techniques and scheming ambition. They remain villains, but their parts in the play are so meager that they are no longer individuals who "cry aloud for poetic vengeance." Seemingly to appease those who would have the tribunes punished, however, at the end of the fourth act Kemble had a group of citizens, terrified by the approach of Coriolanus and the Volscians, seize the tribunes with the intention of throwing them from the Tarpeian Rock (IV.v.p. 54), but they are persuaded by Cominius to suspend their punishment for a time, and Brutus and Sicinius are heard from no more. Thus, introducing the possibility of punishment for Brutus and Sicinius but ultimately leaving it in question, Kemble allowed the imagination of his audience the prerogative of supplying whatever fate justice required.

The long popularity of Kemble's Coriolanus was climaxed by the actor's inclusion of the play among the list of performances during the final season of his career. In fact, it was as Coriolanus that Kemble made his farewell theatre appearance on June 23, 1817, choosing his last role "as much from deference to public opinion," James Boaden recalled, "as any other motive."²⁵ While the success of the production,

as I have noted, was greatly due to the acting of Mrs. Siddons, at least until her retirement in 1812, and to Kemble's alterations, it must finally be said that Kemble himself was the catalyst that brought the play off. His haughty presence, his noble countenance, and his restrained yet competent method of acting were all agreeably suited to the character of Coriolanus. John Doran, for example, who had criticized Kemble's alterations in Coriolanus, nevertheless had to admit that in the part of the hero "he was not only never surpassed, but never equalled."²⁶ This seems to have been the critical consensus of Kemble's contemporaries.²⁷ Only one notable critic, Leigh Hunt, disagreed. Because Kemble had the classical appearance of a Roman, Hunt said, he "made a very good ideal, though not a very real Coriolanus, for his pride was not sufficiently blunt and unaffected."²⁸ Leigh Hunt's assessment is perhaps indicative of the transition in dramatic criticism from the neoclassical appreciation of the representation of generalized character types to the romantic critic's greater approval of a realistic portrayal of individual character traits. It is interesting to note that Kemble, not only in his acting, but in virtually all of his textual changes in Coriolanus, assumed a neoclassical stance in his audience. This stance may be described as a moral and social orientation, as opposed to the individual psychological orientation exhibited

by Hunt's criticism.²⁹ By diminishing the individual character traits of the persons in the drama and making them general types, Kemble emphasized a broader social pattern of human relationships rather than a portrayal of individual motives and actions. Moreover, his concern in restructuring the Aufidius-Coriolanus relationship and in reducing the roles of the tribunes seems at least partly to have been to rid the play of its moral uncertainty.

It would thus seem that Kemble's success in Coriolanus may have resulted as much from the lingering neoclassical bias of his audience, at least as far as their appreciation of Shakespearean drama was concerned, as his own ability to gratify that bias. This lingering neoclassical bias may have contributed as well to the great success of Kemble's adaptation of Julius Caesar. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, Charles Dibdin offered a favorable assessment of the original play that was characteristically neoclassical:

It must be confessed that the unities are all broken, and there is much extraneous matter brought into the piece, but the inimitable beauties that so thickly pervade it spring out of these circumstances, nor do we so much incline to cavil at this incongruity, since we see through it treason discomfitted and the death of CAESAR revenged.³⁰

The moral dispensation that Dibdin was willing to grant Julius Caesar resulted from the critic's recognition of the apparent moral order in the play as one of the principal

features that deserved to be represented on the stage. Although Kemble did not concern himself too greatly with Shakespeare's disregard for the classical unities, both he and his audience were probably no less convinced than Dibdin of the didactic value of the reaffirmation of moral order in Julius Caesar. In addition, Kemble found in Shakespeare's depiction of the characters in the play, particularly that of Brutus, the role he chose for himself, characters who needed no reduction of individual traits to fit perfectly into his audience's generally neoclassical conception of the noble Roman. More specifically, the classically stoic demeanor of Brutus, like that of Addison's Cato, was completely suited to the appearance and acting style of Kemble, who was once characterized by Hazlitt as "a perfect figure of a man; a petrification of sentiment, that heaves no sigh, and sheds no tear."³¹

Considering his early success in the roles of Coriolanus and Cato, it seems puzzling that Kemble waited until late in his career to produce Julius Caesar. Before its revival on February 29, 1812, the play had not been seen in London since April, 1780.³² Even before 1780, moreover, Julius Caesar was produced only sporadically. According to John Davies, Julius Caesar was not acted at Drury Lane during the management of Garrick because "he thought he should only swell the consequence of his competitor Quin in Brutus."³³

Samuel Johnson thought the play lacked appeal because it was "cold and unaffecting," and he implied that Shakespeare failed in Julius Caesar because of "his adherence to the real story, and to Roman manners."³⁴ In the introduction to Julius Caesar in Bell's Shakespeare, Francis Gentleman agreed with Dr. Johnson that the play lacked "the tender or more common passions." For this reason, along with the fact that the play "rests upon one great, independent idea, the love of our country," Gentleman concluded that "it can never be very popular; . . . besides it requires a greater number of good speakers, than generally meet in one or both of the theatres."³⁵ Gentleman's implication that the idea of love of country rendered the play unpopular has been explained by Shattuck to refer to "the rising tide of republicanism," which, Shattuck hypothesizes, no doubt prompted the Tory establishment to discourage the theatres from producing Julius Caesar.³⁶ Shattuck's theory helps to explain why Kemble, in the aftermath of the French and American Revolutions, waited so long to revive the play.

Although Gentleman agreed with Johnson that Julius Caesar was lacking in emotional impact, he did not agree that it was a failure, noting that while it might not appeal to the females in the audience, the play had intellectual merit in its "truly interesting" subject and its "noble and instructive" sentiments.³⁷ Whether a similar recognition

by Kemble helped influence him to produce Julius Caesar is impossible to determine; however, Gentleman's remarks concerning the merits of the play closely corresponded to Kemble's own idea of what constituted good tragic drama. Furthermore, the success of Kemble's revival of Julius Caesar indicates that the London audiences evidently held a similar opinion. According to Julian Young, who attended the premier engagement of Kemble's Julius Caesar, as well as the farewell performance in 1817, everyone he knew who saw the play "admitted [sic] it to have been the greatest intellectual recreation he ever enjoyed."³⁸ Young noted in addition that Kemble's Julius Caesar was perfectly cast, with Charles Mayne Young as Cassius and Kemble's younger brother Charles as Marc Antony. Kemble himself was, by Young's account, "the very ideal of Marcus Brutus."³⁹ James Boaden also remarked that the three main characters in Julius Caesar were effectively cast and further stated that Kemble had made "some very judicious alterations and arrangements in the piece."⁴⁰

Many of the alterations Kemble made in Julius Caesar consisted of omitting several minor characters and bestowing their lines on other more important figures. For example, Shakespeare's Marullus and Flavius, who chide the fickle commoners at the opening of the play, are omitted and their lines given to Casca and Trebonius.⁴¹ Similarly, Kemble

omitted Artimidorus from the cast and gave to the soothsayer the lines in which he reads over his letter and petitions Caesar, thereby reducing the number of necessary actors while credibly preserving the action. Also, the tragic scene of Cinna the poet (III.iii) and the comic scene of the poet who enters after the argument between Cassius and Brutus (IV.ii.124-38) are excised completely. Kemble was not the first Shakespearean adapter to omit or combine minor characters in Julius Caesar. The Bell's version, in which it is Casca and Decius Brutus who chide the mob, followed the same practice and was commended for doing it judiciously by Francis Gentleman.⁴² Twentieth-century critics usually find the tendency particularly irritating, and even Professor Odell, surprisingly enough, can find no reason "for so doubling and confusing the minor parts."⁴³ However, in view of the fact that Gentleman was seriously of the opinion that there were not enough actors, even in the combined acting companies of both theatres, who were skillful enough to speak all the individual roles of Julius Caesar competently, it seems clear that at least part of Kemble's reason for the omissions and combinations was to counteract the deficiency.

Kemble was also motivated in his alterations by considerations of taste and theatrical staging. For example, Kemble omitted the death of Cinna the poet because he agreed

with Francis Gentleman, no doubt, that Antony's oration was a much more effective stage ending for the third act "than the short, immaterial, boistrous scene of popular rage introduced by the Author."⁴⁴ Kemble also omitted the scene in which the conspirators stoop and wash their hands in Caesar's blood. Perhaps considering the ritual act of the assassins' besmearing their hands and arms in blood a bit too macabre for popular taste, Kemble altered Shakespeare's lines where Brutus says,

Stoop, Romans, stoop,
And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
Up to the elbows and besmear our swords.
(III.i.105-107)

The altered lines no longer require the actors to engage in such an apparent bizarre act:

On, Romans, on:
With hands and swords besmear'd in Caesar's blood,
Thus walk we forth even to the market-place; . . .
(III.ii.p. 37)

Kemble may also have shared Gentleman's opinion that the lines, as they originally stood, were completely unsuited to Brutus and thus constituted a flaw in characterization.⁴⁵ Gentleman's criticism appears to have directly influenced at least one of Kemble's changes in Julius Caesar. Following Bell's Shakespeare, Kemble began the second act in his version of 1811 with Shakespeare's Act One, Scene Three, the meeting between Casca and Cicero, who exchange descriptions of the unnatural occurrences that have passed during the

night. Also as in Bell's, Kemble replaced Cicero with Trebonius, probably because he considered the former character superfluous and too, perhaps, because he was enough of a classicist to agree with Thomas Davies that "so important a man as Cicero should not have been introduced in a scene of so little signification as the relation of a prodigy."⁴⁶ Gentleman maintained that the lines containing the omens and prodigies had become so insignificant to modern audiences that they were better left out altogether, and that the second act "would commence much better with Cassius and Casca meeting."⁴⁷ Apparently following Gentleman's advice, Kemble excised the meeting between Casca and Trebonius in his 1812 revision of the play, beginning Act Two instead with the entrance of Cassius and his subsequent dialogue with Casca. Kemble further yielded to Gentleman's opinion by omitting all of Cassius' references to the supernatural (I.iii.46-71).

Several of Kemble's changes in the traditional eighteenth-century stage version of Julius Caesar, however, demonstrate that the manager did not revise the play on the whole with Gentleman's criticism in mind. Since the appearance of the 1719 version of Dryden and Davenant's Julius Caesar, strategically placed lines of added rhetoric had been spoken by Brutus to make him conform more completely to the eighteenth-century stereotype of the Roman hero. For

instance, after the ghost of Caesar vanishes at the end of Act Four, tacked on to the original closing lines in which Brutus sends messengers to Cassius is this brief soliloquy in Bell's Shakespeare:

Sure they have some devil to their aid;
 And think to frighten Brutus with a shade;
 But ere the night closes this fatal day
 I'll send more ghosts this visit to repay.⁴⁸

Although Gentleman thought these lines uncharacteristic, he had no qualms about their inclusion because they helped to get Brutus off the stage with a flourish.⁴⁹ Kemble also thought the lines uncharacteristic of Brutus and omitted them; moreover, he further omitted the traditional rhetoric that had been added to Brutus' death speech. In the original play, Strato holds the sword while Brutus runs upon it and promptly dies; in Bell's, Metellus holds the sword and Brutus, having run upon it, speaks the following lines from the 1719 adaptation:

Scorning to view his country's wrongs,
 Thus Brutus always strikes for liberty.
 Poor Slavish Rome, farewell.⁵⁰

Gentleman pointed out in a note that these lines are not Shakespeare's but contended that they were "properly added."⁵¹ Although Kemble, too, may have thought that this last bit of rhetoric was properly added, he deleted it apparently because he considered it not dramatic enough. In the last scene of Kemble's production, Brutus can find no one who will hold his sword, and he must complete his

final task alone. On the pretext that he needs to think awhile, he orders Lucius and Metellus to withdraw a little distance. In the scene which follows, Lucius and Metellus focus the attention of the audience on Brutus, whose end is more rhetorically heightened than in the Bell's version:

Luc. Look, he meditates.

Met. Now is that noble vessel full of grief,
That runs over even at his eyes.

Brut. This was the justest cause that ever men
Did draw their swords for; and the gods renounce it.--
Disdaining life, to live a slave in Rome,
Thus Brutus strikes his last--for liberty!--
[He stabs himself.]

Farewell,
Beloved country!--Caesar, now be still;
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will.

(V.iv.p. 71)

This last speech by Brutus was probably intended to furnish Kemble the actor with a more effective death scene than he thought was provided either in Bell's or the original.

A rhetorical statement of classical sentiment was generally applauded by eighteenth-century audiences, and, as Kemble's final alteration in Julius Caesar indicates, even found favor well into the nineteenth century.

The reason for this approval of a more rhetorically formal Brutus may be found, as I have indicated previously, in the classical conception of the Roman hero held by Kemble's audience and in their conviction that Kemble's own appearance and personality reflected that conception. Sir Walter Scott stated this conviction in his discussion of Kemble's

portrayal of "those Roman characters, Cato, Brutus, Coriolanus, by means of which he transported us to the Capitol, so completely had he made the habits, manners, and mode of thinking of the ancients identically his own. They were, indeed, peculiarly suited to his noble and classical form, his dignified and stately gesture, his regulated yet commanding eloquence."⁵² Long after the actor's death, one of his biographers similarly recalled of Kemble that "the bearing, speech, and the modes of thought of 'the noble Roman' adhered to him, even in private life, and was accountable for much of that inappropriate formality and haughty stiffness which excited not a little amusement."⁵³ But however Kemble's inappropriate formality in his private life might excite amusement, on the stage it was generally received with serious approbation. Even Leigh Hunt, in the midst of extolling the romantic acting style of Edmund Kean over Kemble's "majestic dryness and deliberate nothings," paid a grudging tribute to the classicism of Kemble! "He had, at least, a faith in something classical and scholastic, and he made the town partake of it. . . ."⁵⁴ And when, at the banquet held in Kemble's honor upon his retirement from the stage, the town paid tribute to the aging actor, it was the noble Roman they chose to remember. Kemble was presented with a silver medallion that had been struck to commemorate the occasion. One one side was "a classically austere

profile of the actor," on the other the inscription, "Thou
last of all the Romans fare thee well."⁵⁵

NOTES

¹ C. B. Hogan, Shakespeare in the Theatre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), II, 163.

² Herschel Baker, John Philip Kemble (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), 268; The London Stage, ed. C. B. Hogan (Carbondale: Univ. of Southern Illinois Press, 1960-68), Part 5, Vol. III, p. 1524.

³ Shakespeare in the Theatre, II, 163-64; The Kemble Theatre Journal, February 7, 1789.

⁴ The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), II, i.

⁵ Shakespeare in the Theatre, II, 166.

⁶ The British Theatre (London, 1808), V, v.

⁷ Some Account of the English Stage (Bath, 1832), VI, 534.

⁸ Julian Charles Young, A Memoir of Charles Mayne Young (London: Macmillan and Co., 1871), I, 62. Parenthetical references to Kemble's Coriolanus are to the version of 1806 in The Kemble Promptbooks, Vol. II.

⁹ Young, I, 63.

¹⁰ Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq. (London, 1825), II, 427.

¹¹ The discrepancy with Julian Young's figure of two hundred-forty characters may be accounted for by the possibility that the procession filed across the stage twice to give the impression of a greater number of characters than there were real actors, although there is nothing in Kemble's manuscript directions to indicate this was the case. Another possibility is that Young's figure, having come from Charles Mayne Young's prompt copy, reflects a correct count from another performance of Coriolanus.

12 The order of Sheridan's ovation scene, from which Kemble probably took the idea for his own ovation procession, is appended to Coriolanus: or, the Roman Matron (1757; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969).

13 George Odell, Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), II, 57.

14 Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), V, 298, 304.

15 The Kemble Promptbooks, II, ii-iii.

16 Some Account of the English Stage, VI, 534.

17 Doran's Annals of the English Stage, ed. Robert W. Lowe (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), III, 200-201.

18 Some Account of the English Stage, VI, 533. The other five deleted scenes are all from the first act (ii, iv, v, vii, viii), which, Genest notes, was "judiciously altered."

19 Shakespeare in the Theatre, II, 158.

20 Bell's Shakespeare, V, 308, 311.

21 The Kemble Promptbooks, II, ii.

22 Eighteenth-Century Essays on Shakespeare, 2nd ed., ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 26-27.

23 A Complete History of the English Stage (London, 1800), III, 340-41.

24 Kemble's theory of tragedy is stated in his essay on Macbeth and King Richard the Third (1817; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), pp. 2-3.

25 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 558.

26 Doran's Annals of the English Stage, III, 196.

27 See, for example, Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 426; Biographia Dramatica (London, 1812), II, 129; Hazlitt, "Mr. Kemble's Retirement," Times (June 25, 1817), in Dramatic Essays by William Hazlitt, ed. William Archer and R. W. Lowe (London: Sir Walter Scott, Ltd., 1895), pp. 134-38.

28 Autobiography, ed. J. E. Morpurgo (London: Crescent Press, 1948), p. 157.

29 This distinction between the neoclassical and romantic orientations of theatre audiences is noted in George C. Branam, Eighteenth-Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1956), p. 38 and in Christopher Spencer, Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), pp. 11-12.

30 A Complete History of the English Stage (London, 1800), III, 334.

31 The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1903), VIII, 304.

32 Shakespeare in the Theatre, II, 319.

33 Dramatic Miscellanies (London, 1784), II, 213.

34 Notes to Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo, Augustan Reprint Society (Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 1956), III, 45.

35 Bell's Shakespeare, V, 3.

36 The Kemble Promptbooks, IV, i.

37 The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), II, 18-19.

38 Young, I, 59-60.

39 Young, I, p. 61.

40 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 543.

41 The Kemble Promptbooks, IV, i. Shattuck has reproduced both the prompt edition of 1811, as well as that of 1812. The former was never theatrically produced because of various changes that were made as the play was brought to production. Parenthetical references to Kemble's Julius Caesar are to the revised edition of 1812.

42 Bell's Shakespeare, V, 5.

43 Odell, II, 66.

- 44 Bell's Shakespeare, V, 53.
- 45 The Dramatic Censor, II, 8.
- 46 Dramatic Miscellanies, II, 213.
- 47 Bell's Shakespeare, V, 17.
- 48 Ibid., p. 66.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid., p. 75.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., by James Boaden, Quarterly Review, 34 (1826), 222.
- 53 Percy Fitzgerald, The Kembles (London: Tinsley Bros., 1871), I, 285.
- 54 Autobiography, ed. J. E. Morpurgo (London: Crescent Press, 1948), p. 157.
- 55 Baker, p. 341.

CHAPTER VII

MACBETH

While most of his contemporaries agreed, as I have noted, that Kemble was more admirably suited to play a noble Roman hero than any other character, they also agreed that his best performance did not come from the role of Coriolanus or Brutus. It was rather as Macbeth that Kemble achieved his most celebrated accomplishment as an actor. A modern scholar, Joseph W. Donahue, notes that when Kemble played Macbeth, he wore the same black wig he used for Coriolanus and theorizes that the actor may have been trying to suggest qualities of heroism in Macbeth that his audience might identify with his memorable portrayal of Coriolanus.¹ Although Kemble may have intended the association, the wig was not the most significant thing he brought with him from Coriolanus to Macbeth; the most important carry-over was, by far, his incomparable sister to play the part of Lady Macbeth. According to Willaim Hazlitt, Mrs. Siddons in the role of Macbeth's wife was "tragedy personified. . . . to have seen her in that role was an event in everyone's life, not to be forgotten."² Sir Walter Scott was similarly affected by the performance of both Kembles in Macbeth when he saw it on April 21, 1794, as the initial

production of the newly rebuilt Drury Lane Theatre. Many years later he recalled the power of their performance:

Those who have had the good fortune to see Kemble and Mrs. Siddons in *Macbeth* and his lady, may be satisfied they have witnessed the highest perfection of the dramatic art. There have been, and we fear never will be, anything to compare to it.³

One rather strange piece of criticism from Charles Lamb attests to the ability of Kemble to portray *Macbeth* realistically. Paradoxically, *Macbeth* became in Kemble's hands too natural for Lamb's comfort:

. . . when we have given up that vantage ground of abstraction which reading possesses over seeing, and come to see a man in his bodily shape before our eyes actually preparing to commit a murder, if the acting be true and impressive, as I have witnessed it in Mr. Kemble's performance of that part [the prelude to Duncan's murder], the painful anxiety about the act, the natural longing to prevent it while it yet seems unperpetrated, the too close pressing semblance of reality, give a pain and uneasiness which totally destroy all the delight which the words in the book convey. . . .⁴

Unlike his performance in *Coriolanus*, in which Kemble seems merely to have offered his classical presence to complement his sister's overpowering portrayal of *Volumnia*, the power and direction of Kemble's acting in *Macbeth* controlled perceptibly the relationship between *Macbeth* and his lady. One indication that the audience was aware of this relationship may be seen in the comments of G. J. Bell, a Scottish solicitor who was a devoted follower of Mrs. Siddons. When the actress played opposite anyone but Kemble, Bell observed, *Lady Macbeth* became "not the

affectionate aider of her husband's ambition, but the fell monster who tempts him to transgress, making him the mere instrument of her wild and uncontrollable ambition."⁵ Bell's observation is an interesting comment on Kemble's interpretation of the role of Macbeth and his ability to carry it off against the "wild and uncontrollable ambition" of Mrs. Siddons' Lady Macbeth. The resulting characterization of Kemble's Macbeth, if it could be seen today, would probably lead most modern critics to agree with John T. McAleer that Kemble was unsuccessful in the role because he was too boisterous.⁶ Notwithstanding Lamb's comment on Kemble's ability to wring the emotions with Macbeth's "painful anxiety," we are inclined to think of Macbeth today as a more reluctant, a more apprehensive villain than Kemble played him. Nevertheless, Kemble's interpretation was widely applauded in his own day, and his continued success in Macbeth caused the actor to include the play among his farewell performances of his final season.

One reason that Kemble's portrayal of Macbeth was popular lay in the fact that Kemble's interpretation of the role reflected the general eighteenth-century attitude concerning what was considered the primary moral of the play. Macbeth had been slightly modified by William Davenant in 1673 and again in 1674 to express more explicitly what Davenant and his contemporaries conceived the moral to be. Kemble modeled his own 1794 alteration of Macbeth, for the most

part, on Davenant's 1674 version. One present-day critic, Christopher Spencer, has commented on Davenant's Macbeth in such a way as to help clarify the difference between the twentieth-century conception of the moral of the play and the seventeenth and eighteenth-century conceptions, which helped govern Kemble's adaptation and the reaction of the audience who viewed it:

Shakespeare's play was a study in evil, its growth and effects on Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, particularly the latter. Altering the focus of evil to the less profound subject of ambition, the adaptor is more interested in discussing his subject and showing its effects on a character's actions than in revealing the state of a character's outlook as it becomes increasingly diseased.⁷

Thus, it would seem that Davenant did for Macbeth what Colley Cibber was later to do for Richard III; he emphasized the theme of uncontrolled ambition, thereby strengthening the didactic function of the play. The resulting similarity in the moral messages of the two dramas caused Francis Gentleman to pronounce in 1770 that "the moral [of Macbeth] is the same as that of Richard the Third, shewing that a guilty conscience is a constant tormentor, and that a royal, as well as a private murderer, is obnoxious to punishment."⁸ Thomas Whately had previously noted the similarity between Macbeth and Richard, and at his death in 1772 Whately left an uncompleted manuscript in which he had attempted to identify the primary difference between the usurpers that ultimately informed the moral of the two plays. This difference,

according to Whately, was apparent in the separate kinds of courage exhibited by Macbeth and Richard: "In Richard it [courage] is intrepidity, and in Macbeth no more than resolution: in him it proceeds from exertion, not from nature; in interprise he betrays a degree of fear, though he is able, when occasion requires, to stifle and subdue it."⁹

Whately's essay was published by his brother Joseph in 1785 under the title Remarks on Some of the Characters of Shakespeare, and it is certain that Kemble read it shortly after its appearance. James Boaden notes that very early in 1785 "the attention of Mr. Kemble was . . . most particularly excited towards the character of Macbeth, by the publication of a fragment by the late Mr. Whateley [sic]" ¹⁰ Indeed, Kemble was so agitated by Whately's Remarks, it appears, that he requested and was granted the role of Macbeth for his benefit performance on March 31, 1785, notwithstanding that the role belonged to William "Gentleman" Smith and that some other drama, Hamlet for instance, might have brought him greater receipts. In the following year Kemble answered the Remarks with an essay of his own, Macbeth and King Richard the Third, a brief tract that the author subsequently expanded and republished in 1817. Boaden's comments on Kemble's essay and on the actor's benefit performance of Macbeth indicate that the young actor chose the role primarily in reaction to Whately's statement on the failing courage of

Macbeth, to which, Boaden says, "Mr. Kemble could by no means assent":¹¹

But if, in combating [sic] Mr. Whateley, our great actor had seemed to carry his respect for Macbeth's courage rather higher than, without controversy, he would have done in his performance of the character, his feelings were correctly true; and from this, his first exhibition of Macbeth in town, to his last, it maintained the same features of discrimination. . . .¹²

Boaden seems to imply here that Kemble treated the role of Macbeth, from his first performance to his last, as a visual aid in his refutation of Thomas Whately, with the actor shoring up as much as possible "without controversy" the flagging courage of the antagonist. This approach, coupled with the necessity of matching Macbeth's ambition with that of Lady Macbeth in the hands of Mrs. Siddons, who, according to Thomas Capbell, presented the lady as "a sort of sister to Milton's Lucifer,"¹³ probably resulted in a portrayal of Macbeth that gives some validity to McAleer's criticism that Kemble's Macbeth was boisterous. However we may view today the probable result of Kemble's approach, it must be remembered that his characterization remains mostly hypothetical to us today and that in Macbeth he and his sister were hailed by many of their contemporaries for having raised tragedy to its most profound height.

Kemble's reasons for depicting Macbeth as he did, as well as the reasons for some of his textual alterations of Macbeth, may be revealed in part by an examination of his essay on

Macbeth and King Richard the Third. Although few in number, such examinations have been conducted before, but only for the purpose of making some sort of judgment on the essay's place in the critical spectrum. Herbert Spencer Robinson, after having perused Kemble's essay, makes this pronouncement:

The significance of the work . . . is that it shows the hold Shakespeare has upon his admirers. So great is his power, that his characters are regarded as real people, and when they are attacked on any point, their advocates immediately rush to their side, and employ all the warmth and skill that they would offer for the defence of a valued friend.¹⁴

Arthur Freeman, in a preface to the second edition of the essay, concludes that Kemble, both in his performances and in his argument that Macbeth was more courageous than Whately had been willing to grant, implicitly glorified the villainy of the usurper, and thus, the importance of the essay is that Kemble "anticipated much of the romantics' fascination with evil in their Elizabethan criticism."¹⁵ Although I have no doubt that Robinson and Freeman read Kemble's essay before commenting on its significance, neither has taken into account the actor's stated reasons for writing it. They have rather gone beyond the essay itself to do what modern critics can sometimes bring off with impunity, reaching into a psychological vacuum to produce the "real" significance of the essay while apparently ignoring some very plain remarks in the essay itself. Taken at face

value, Kemble's remarks show him to have been neither a simpleton rushing to the aid of a "valued friend" nor a romantic glorifying villainy. He was, in fact, quite the opposite, methodically showing that the portrayal of a certain degree of courage in Macbeth was necessary to the moral and didactic functions of the drama and defining those functions according to long-established neoclassical preconceptions.

Kemble began the essay on Macbeth and King Richard the Third with a general statement of the purpose of serious drama:

The stage, without a necessity for further restraints, promotes the cause of good morals, whenever, by the personated imitation of some history or fable,-- drawn to an impressive conclusion by principles and actions natural to the agents who produce it,--we are instructed to love virtue and abhor vice.¹⁶

The unnecessary "restraints" to which Kemble referred are the classical unities, discounted not out of any romantic leanings, but by a traditional application of neoclassical logic. Kemble first pointed out that the ancients themselves did not uniformly adhere to the unities. Whether or not they are observed, he continued, the unities are "but a conventional merit or defect, that can contribute nothing to the amendment or depravation of the mind."¹⁷ Kemble then went on to apply these general concepts of the drama specifically to Macbeth and the function of courage in the hero, at the outset stating his reason for writing the essay:

This Essay . . . concerns itself strictly with the sentiments of the hero of the play: in hopes, that this grandest of its author's works may be fixed stedfastly [sic] to its purpose of benefit to mankind.¹⁸

Kemble then announced what he considered the justification of his disagreement with Whately:

If Macbeth is really what Mr. Whately and Mr. Steevens would have him pass for, we must forego our virtuous satisfaction in his repugnance to guilt, for it arises from mere cowardice; nor can we take any salutary warning from his remorse, for it is only the effect of imbecility. The stage will not conduce to our improvement, by presenting to us the example of a wretch who is uniformly the object of our contempt.¹⁹

In arriving at this conclusion, Kemble may have been influenced by Dr. Johnson's observation that while "the courage of Macbeth preserves some esteem, yet every reader rejoices at his fall."²⁰ Kemble merely stated the full classical implications of Johnson's comment: The reader's satisfaction does not come merely in contrast to Macbeth's courage; it must, in part, derive from his courage, or the moral purpose of the drama will not be served.

As James Boaden noted, Kemble was speaking in the essay on Macbeth and Richard from a stance that he could not have completely assumed on the stage without public disapproval; nevertheless, his concern to preserve the moral purpose of Macbeth seems genuine and must be taken into account in any serious consideration of the play. Francis Gentleman's statement that the moral in Macbeth was to show the torment of a guilty conscience is fairly representative of the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth-century critical point of view, as was Kemble's assertion that the hero's courage was a necessary concomitant to the didactic function of the play.²² Implicit in the moral, of course, was the knowledge that the crimes of Macbeth are caused by his uncontrolled ambition, and Kemble, like David Garrick before him, employed Davenant's alteration in writing his own version probably because the seventeenth-century adaptor, as Spencer has pointed out, made the theme of ambition more explicit. In Kemble's version, however, ambition does not take on the dramatic proportions that it does in Davenant's in which Macbeth, given his death blow by Macduff onstage, delivers a brief dying speech to make ambition itself the single most important aspect of the moral: "Farewell vain world, and what's most vain in it, Ambition."²³ Following what had become the traditional stage practice, Kemble also has Macbeth die in view of the audience, but he preferred the death speech that had been written by Garrick, for it emphasizes Macbeth's guilt and prospective torment:

'Tis done! the scene of life will quickly close.
Ambition's vain delusive dreams are fled,
And now I wake to darkness, guilt and horror;
I cannot bear it! Let me shake it off--
It will not be; my soul is clogg'd with blood--
I cannot rise! I dare not ask for mercy--
It is too late, hell drags me down; I sink,
I sink,--my soul is lost for ever!--Oh!--Oh!--
(V.vi)²⁴

In his comment in the Dramatic Censor on Garrick's alteration

of Macbeth's death scene, Francis Gentleman put into words the moral sentiments that no doubt prompted Kemble to adopt the passage: ". . . nothing could be more suitable, or striking, than to make him mention, with dying breath, his guilt, delusion, the witches, and those horrid visions of future punishment, which must ever appall and torture the last moments of such accumulated crimes."²⁵

While it may be argued that the addition of the death speech was justifiable to Kemble because it provided a more forcefully instructive moral than Shakespeare's original offstage death for Macbeth, it is also quite obvious that it provided the actor who played Macbeth an exceptional opportunity to display his histrionic talents. This opportunity, however, was greater for Garrick than for Kemble. For example, Gentleman certainly had Garrick in mind when he allowed that Macbeth's fate was "commendably changed to visible punishment," but concluded that "as we are not fond of characters writhing and flouncing on carpets; and as from the desperate state of Macbeth's mind we think his immediate death most natural, we could wish it to take place."²⁶ In the Dramatic Miscellanies, to which Kemble was a subscriber, Thomas Davies indicated that Garrick's sole reason for adding the lines was to enhance his own role as Macbeth when, referring to the addition, he stated that "Garrick excelled in the expression of convulsive throes and dying agonies,

and would not lose any opportunity that offered to show his skill in that part of his profession."²⁷ Garrick further ensured that he would have the audience's complete attention by having Macduff exit immediately after he overcomes the usurper so that Macbeth delivers his speech on an empty stage.²⁸ In both the Drury Lane (1794) and Covent Garden (1803) versions, Kemble left Macduff on the stage. In the absence of stage directions (Kemble was meticulous in directing the movements of his actors), it is probable that in Kemble's version Macduff stood over the fallen Macbeth, his face reflecting Macbeth's horror at the prospect of eternal damnation. In the version of 1803, which is virtually identical to the 1794 adaptation, Kemble omitted the fourth and fifth lines of Macbeth's death speech, which no doubt precipitated the "writhing and flouncing" objected to by Gentleman.²⁹ Thus, Kemble's altered ending for Macbeth seems designed not so much to display his own acting skill as to forcefully but not brutally dramatize the moral of the play.

Kemble may have reduced Macbeth's death speech for reasons other than theatrical taste. The asthmatic condition from which Kemble suffered gradually became worse throughout his life and may have obliged him in 1803 to omit the scene in which the dying Macbeth physically attempts to shake off the blood which clogs his soul. The excision might have been especially necessary because of the sword fight

with Macduff, which quite possibly left Kemble on the verge of total exhaustion. It should be remembered that Kemble's approach to the role of Macbeth was to play him tenaciously courageous up to the point of death; consequently, Kemble probably fought Macbeth's final struggle almost as desperately as he would have fought for his own life. One early nineteenth-century account, recalling Kemble in the final scene of Macbeth during a summer tour of the provinces, particularly illustrates this point:

Playing Macbeth, in Ward's company, [Alexander] Rae was the Macduff; in the fighting scene, Kemble showed a great disinclination to be slain; Rae was, however, a very expert swordsman, and kept it up so long, that when the combat was over, Kemble felt so exhausted, that he was obliged to be carried to the green-room, almost insensible.³⁰

As with the fight scene, most of Kemble's interpretations of a courageous Macbeth were transmitted through his actions and delivery of lines onstage. Some of his textual alterations, however, also helped to preserve a degree of Macbeth's esteem with the audience. For example, Kemble omitted Shakespeare's famous sleep metaphor (II.ii.36-40) perhaps because he felt that the conceit drew too much attention to Macbeth's fearful demeanor. Furthermore, Kemble drastically cut Macbeth's council with the two murderers, and rather than add a third murderer, which would indicate that Macbeth is fearful and uncertain of the enterprise, Kemble omitted the lines in which the third murderer joins the first two (III.iii.1-4).

Also, in the 1803 version Kemble substituted the title "officers" in the stage directions for "murderers" (p. 33), perhaps because he had read Francis Gentleman's criticism that the murderers were usually wrongly dressed "in the most ragamuffin stile" for an audience with their king.³¹

Finally, Kemble omitted the entire scene in which Macduff's family is murdered (IV.ii). Garrick, following Davenant's 1674 version, had kept the scene intact up to the point where the murderers enter. Kemble may have agreed with Gentleman that the scene was too "farcically horrid" to be admitted in representation at all,³² and it is also possible that he felt the scene proved Macbeth such a monster that he lost all audience sympathy and thereby ceased to perform a necessary didactic function.

Although Kemble's purpose in *Macbeth*, as it was stated in his essay, was to instruct the audience "to love virtue and abhor vice," it should not be forgotten that the classical dictum governing stage representation was twofold, and while Kemble did not dwell upon the fact in the essay, the success of Macbeth depended as much upon his ability to delight as to instruct. To most eighteenth-century minds, however, there was not much to be found in Shakespeare's original drama that could be called delightful. The low comic scene of the porter, which opens the third scene of Shakespeare's second act, with all its quibbling humor, was generally considered an excrescence, detracting from the

seriousness of the preceding scene, and was deleted by Garrick as well as Kemble. One scene which eighteenth-century audiences found exceedingly humorous was the brief exchange between Malcolm and Donalbain after the discovery of the murdered Duncan (II.iii.116-22, 132-43), an exchange which we are not apt to think of as humorous today. Garrick included the asides of the princes in his version given in Bell's Shakespeare, perhaps because they afforded comic relief without any aggravating quibbles; however, Francis Gentleman's criticism of the exchange probably points up the reason for Kemble's decision to delete it:

Unless the princes have something more material to say, and something more to do than the author has furnished in this scene, they would be better kept out of sight; indeed they generally create laughter, and their pusillanimous resolution of departure, at the end of it, deserves no better treatment.³²

Kemble found the means to delight his audience not so much in the original text of Macbeth as in Davenant's imaginative additions of music and choreography to the witch scenes, which were staged more elaborately by Kemble than they had ever been.

According to most eighteenth-century critics, the witch scenes served a didactic purpose that was necessary in Shakespeare's day, but they had since lost most of their ability to instruct. Samuel Johnson, for example, defended the inclusion of the witch scenes with the argument that "in Shakespeare's time, it was necessary to warn credulity

against vain and illusive predictions."³³ At the turn of the nineteenth century, Charles Dibdin pointed out that Macbeth's being based on a Scottish story, Shakespeare found it necessary to depict "a people who had a strong belief in witches, second sight, and who indulged themselves in other superstitious whims," and he concluded with Johnson's argument that in Shakespeare's day "to warn the weak and credulous against illusive predictions was here most laudable." In order to countenance their continuation on the contemporary stage, however, Dibdin insisted that the witches must be considered to be symbolic of temptation by the Devil.³⁴ Thomas Davies maintained that surely not all of Shakespeare's audience believed in witches, fairies, and enchantment. The more enlightened spectators, he assumed, considered Shakespeare's supernatural creations merely "as efforts of fancy and effusions of genius, which contributed to the main design of the poet,--to delight."³⁵ The implication in Davies' criticism is that the more sophisticated Elizabethans were equivalent to the general audiences of his own day; Davies could see no cause to rationalize the continuation of the witch scenes in the theatre since their purpose remained essentially the same. For this reason he approved of Davenant's additions to the witch scenes, no doubt because what they lost in their purity of style they gained in the reinforcement of their purpose.³⁶ The only rationale Kemble

required to produce Davenant's additions to the witch scenes, however, was their proven ability to enchant his audience, and the long history of their favorable reception in the theatre, as well as their potential for spectacular staging, reassured him on that account.

The first two appearances of the witches Kemble retained as they are in Shakespeare (I.i, ii). Then, following Davenant, Kemble made the final scene of Shakespeare's Act Two (II.iv), the meeting between Ross and Macduff (Ross becomes Lennox in Kemble's version), the initial scene of Act Three; and he concluded the second act with his own version of Davenant's added witch scene. In Kemble's Drury Lane version the stage directions give the setting as a heath and the characters as "several witches."³⁷ In the Covent Garden version the scene is a bit more elaborate, with the setting given as "A Wood on the skirt of a Heath" and the characters as "the three Witches, and a Chorus of Witches," the chorus numbering four, according to Kemble's marginal notes (p. 29). In Davenant's version Macduff and his wife, apparently taking a midnight stroll on the heath, enter to observe and comment upon the scene. Kemble omitted the Macduffs, but his witches serve essentially the same purpose as Davenant's, acting as a kind of grex to philosophize on the action that has thus far occurred and prophesying Macbeth's future crimes:

3 Witch. Ill deeds are seldom slow,
Nor single; following crimes on former wait;
The worst of creatures fastest propagate.

Chor. Many more murders must this one ensue;
Dread horrors still abound,
And every place surround
As if in death were found
Propagation too.

1 Witch. He must,--

2 Witch. He shall,--

3 Witch. He will spill much more blood,
And become worse to make his title good.

(II.ii.p. 29)

Rather than having the witches simply exit at the end of the scene as in previous productions, Kemble's manuscript directions indicate that they faded back into the woods at the rear of the stage, resulting in a more dramatic conclusion (p. 30). Although he could find no reason for Shakespeare's inclusion of the Porter Scene, Francis Gentleman commended Davenant's addition of the witch scene at the end of Act Two as "a very seasonable relief to a feeling mind, from the painful weight of horror which some preceding scenes must have laid upon it."³⁸

In the next witch scene (III.v), in which Hecate confronts the three witches and tells them to meet her at the pit of Acheron, Kemble draws from both Davenant versions, omitting several lines of the original that Davenant included but, nevertheless, finishing with a scene ten lines longer than Shakespeare's. Where Hecate says "Hark! I am called," Kemble had two spirits descend in "Hecat's Chair," and after

she had placed herself in the chair beside the spirits, the apparatus was raised as Hecate and a chorus of witches sang a parting song (p. 43). A reviewer for the Morning Chronicle (April 22, 1794), commenting on the initial Drury Lane performance, was impressed by Hecate's flying "cloud" but was disappointed that the sorceress was made to ascend backward.³⁹ The reviewer indicates that only one companion spirit descended in the 1794 version. If Kemble found the means to have three characters ascend in the version of 1803, perhaps he also found the means to make them ascend forward. If not, no one else seems to have minded.

For Hecate's next appearance in the following scene (IV.i) the setting is given as a cave. As the curtain rises, the three weird sisters are discovered chanting over a boiling cauldron at the cave's entrance (p. 44). What occurred next must have looked like something out of Gilbert and Sullivan. Kemble's manuscript notes direct that when their incantation is finished (Shakespeare's l. 38), Hecate emerges from the cavern, followed by a host of attending spirits who flood onto the stage. In Kemble's first Drury Lane performance the parts of the "Black spirits and white, / Red spirits and grey" (p. 45) were played by a large troupe of boys, whose presence, along with a chorus of thirty or more singing witches and spirits, must have accounted for nearly a hundred characters on the stage at one time.⁴⁰

However, the children created so much disorder and confusion as they scurried about the stage that Kemble was forced to drop them from the cast. According to some accounts, this confusion was due mainly to the antics of a then aspiring child actor named Edmund Kean, who was soundly thrashed and dismissed by Kemble for pushing and tripping his companion spirits during the performance.⁴¹ Even without the children, the appearance of chorus of thirty-five spirits and witches (p. 2) in Kemble's 1803 version was anything but frightening. James Boaden notes that "the witch of the lovely Crouch wore a fancy hat, powdered hair, rouge, point lace, and fine linen enought to enchant the spectator."⁴² In contrast to Boaden's account is this description of Kemble's scene at the pit of Acheron by Stephen Jones, who is quoting a not-so-enchanted anonymous critic:

. . . the score, or more, of vocal performers who are brought on in russet cloaks, and drawn up in rank for a full ten minutes in front of the stage, are intruders upon the scene of Shakespeare. . . . The men are mostly comedians, as well as singers. . . . The women, who are generally pretty enough, to be-witch us in a sense very different from Shakespeare's, are often employed in laughing with each other, and sometimes with the audience, at their dresses, which they think frightful, but which, in fact, conceal neither their bright eyes, nor rosy lips, nor, scarcely, their neat silk stockings.⁴³

Such negative opinions of the spectacular scene must have been few in number, for it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century, after nearly two hundred years of song

and dance, that the witches were made once more to appear as ugly hags.⁴⁴

In view of the fact that Kemble went to such expense and trouble to expand the supernatural events of the witch scenes, it is interesting to note that he omitted the visible appearance of the ghost of Banquo in both versions of Macbeth. James Boaden denied at some length the propriety of excluding the ghost from the banquet and stated that Kemble, "against the declared intention of Shakespeare," made the excision "on the authority of the poet Lloyd." who had expressed his opinion in a poem called The Actor:

Why need the ghost usurp the monarch's place,
To frighten children with his mealy face?
The king alone should form the phantom there,
And talk and tremble at the empty chair.⁴⁵

A greater authority for Kemble may have been Thomas Davies, who, ten years before Kemble's first revision of Macbeth, had asserted that the appearance of the ghost was a mere theatrical trick, necessary in Shakespeare's day when "a rude audience demanded all the assistance which the poet could give them." Davies quoted the lines from Lloyd's poem and maintained that it was time to attempt the scene without "such ghostly aid."⁴⁶ Some critics and members of the audience appreciated the kind of psychological study Kemble was trying to accomplish in playing the banquet scene without the ghost. A reviewer of the premier performance of 1794, writing in the European Magazine (May, 1794), thought the

alteration was made "with great judgment" and noted that "some of the best judges of drama" had long since recommended the exclusion of the ghost.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the general audience reaction to the omission was probably mixed. John Genest's only comment on the 1803 performance was simply that "Banquo's ghost did not appear and the audience were dissatisfied."⁴⁸ Kemble must have met with enough approval to justify keeping the alteration, however, for he did not give the ghost visual representation until about 1811, when "he was criticized with equal severity by those who would be different."⁴⁹ The date of Kemble's restoration of Banquo's ghost corresponds so closely with Mrs. Siddons' farewell season that one cannot help wondering whether it was his sister's exceptional ability as Lady Macbeth to engage the attention of an audience that allowed Kemble to play the banquet scene without the ghost.

One of Kemble's later biographers, Percy Fitzgerald, identified another feature which may have aided Kemble in producing the scene without Banquo's ghost. Under Kemble's direction, the banquet scene was staged with greater realism than ever before. Until Kemble, Fitzgerald said, "no stage manager had yet dreamed of elaborating 'a banquet scene,' the cups, meats, and guests, &c., so as to make it a marked feature."⁵⁰ This penchant for realism Kemble applied to the costuming in Macbeth as well, particularly to his own

dress as the hero. The lack of care that previous managers had exhibited in costuming was a recurring theme among drama critics. One angry contributor to the Gentleman's Magazine, for example, was upset by Smith's portrayal of Macbeth with "a brace of pistols stuck in his girdle."⁵¹ James Boaden remarked upon the absurdity of Garrick's playing Macbeth "in a general's uniform of the reign of George the Second."⁵² Kemble clothed Macbeth as authentically as the best authorities of his day would allow. One such authority, Sir Walter Scott, helped in authenticating the costume of Macbeth by personally divesting the actor's bonnet of the black plume with which it had been adorned, replacing it instead with "a single broad quill feather of an eagle sloping across his noble brow."⁵³ The opinion of Scott commanded a great deal of respect in his day, and Kemble gladly accepted the change in costume. While the attitudes of most critics varied concerning Kemble's alterations in the text of Macbeth, the lack of negative commentary itself implies that they also concurred with Scott that in the principal role Kemble the actor was unapproachable.⁵⁴

NOTES

¹ Joseph W. Donahue, Jr., "Kemble's Production of Macbeth (1794)," Theatre Notebook, 21 (Winter, 1966), 71.

² Quoted in the Introduction to Kemble's Macbeth (1794; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1972), n. pag. Hereinafter noted as Macbeth (1794).

³ Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., by James Boaden, Quarterly Review, 34 (1826), 219.

⁴ On the Tragedies of Shakespeare Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation, in The Works of Charles Lamb (New York: H. W. Derby, 1859-61), III, 93-94.

⁵ Quoted in Donahue, "Kemble and Mrs. Siddons in Macbeth: The Romantic Approach to Tragic Character," Theatre Notebook, 22 (Winter, 1967), 68.

⁶ John T. McAleer, "John Kemble--Shakespeare's First Great Producer," The Shakespeare Newsletter, 17 (April, 1967), 17.

⁷ Christopher Spencer, Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 16.

⁸ The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom Inc., 1972), I, 106.

⁹ Richard Whately, ed., Remarks on Some of the Characters of Shakespeare, 3rd ed. (1839; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), 54. The 1839 edition is a reprint of the one of 1785, with the addition of a preface, appendix, and notes.

¹⁰ Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq. (London, 1825), I, 261.

¹¹ Memoirs.

¹² Memoirs, pp. 263-64

¹³ Quoted in The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), V, i.

¹⁴ Herbert Spencer Robinson, English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1968), p. 181.

¹⁵ Preface to Macbeth and King Richard the Third (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), n. pag.

¹⁶ Macbeth and King Richard the Third, p. 3. Although Kemble's statement of the purpose of drama might seem a bit outdated for the early nineteenth century and, thus, non-representative of the period, he was not alone in his opinion. One might consider, for example, this criticism by a reviewer for the St. James Chronicle, aimed specifically at Kemble during the last years of the eighteenth century while he was at Drury Lane: "We wish it could be brought to the Recollection of Managers and Writers that Dramatic Audiences are ignorant of real life; that they frequent Tragedies not merely to be imposed upon, but to be agreeably instructed." See Charles Harold Gray, Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931), p. 264.

¹⁷ Macbeth and King Richard the Third, pp. 1-3.

¹⁸ Macbeth and Richard III, p. 10.

¹⁹ Macbeth and Richard III, pp. 10-11. The reference to Steevens was the result of his having supported some of Whately's opinions in his 1795 edition of Shakespeare's works.

²⁰ Notes to Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo, Augustan Reprint Society (Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 1956), III, 24.

²¹ Macbeth and King Richard the Third, p. 171.

²² See, for example, Charles Dibdin, A Complete History of the English Stage (London, 1800), III, 328; James Beattie, Dissertations Moral and Critical (London, 1783), p. 625; Biographia Dramatica (London, 1812), II, 2; William Richardson, A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters, "A New Edition, Corrected" (1780; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), pp. 59, 82-83, 85.

²³ Sir William Davenant, Macbeth (1674; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), p. 60.

- 24 Macbeth (1794), p. 64.
- 25 The Dramatic Censor, I, 104.
- 26 Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), I, 69.
- 27 Dramatic Miscellanies (London, 1784), II, 118.
- 28 Bell's Shakespeare, I, 69.
- 29 The Kemble Promptbooks, V, 63-64. Parenthetical references to Kemble's Macbeth are to this source.
- 30 Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes (London, 1825), IV, 176. After he was revived, Kemble was heard to exclaim to the manager, "Oh! Mr. Ward, that young man will be the death of me in earnest" (p. 221).
- 31 Bell's Shakespeare, I, 35.
- 32 Bell's, p. 27. Kemble may also have been influenced by similar remarks in The Dramatic Censor, I, 91.
- 33 Notes to Shakespeare, III, 24.
- 34 A Complete History of the English Stage, III, 329, 327.
- 35 Dramatic Miscellanies, II, 115.
- 36 Dramatic Miscellanies, p. 116.
- 37 Macbeth (1794), p. 29.
- 38 The Dramatic Censor, I, 92.
- 39 Quoted in The London Stage, ed. C. B. Hogan (Carbondale: Univ. of Southern Illinois Press, 1960-68), Part 5, Vol. III, p. 1638.
- 40 Donahue, "Kemble's Production of Macbeth (1794)," p. 69.
- 41 Herschel Baker, John Philip Kemble (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), p. 187. It is interesting to note that among the memoranda inserted in Kemble's Theatre Journal at the end of the 1790-91 season is his observation that "Little Children have a very pleasing Effect in Pantomimes, Processions, &c."

- 42 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.,
I, 418.
- 43 Biographia Dramatica, III, 2-3.
- 44 Thomas Loundsbury, Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist,
2nd ed., (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. 308.
- 45 Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons (London, 1827), II, 305.
- 46 Dramatic Miscellanies, II, 165-66.
- 47 Quoted in The London Stage, Part 5, Vol. III,
p. 1638.
- 48 Some Account of the English Stage (Bath, 1832), VII,
614.
- 49 George Odell, Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving
(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), II, 103, 92.
- 50 The Kembles (London: Tinsley Bros., 1871), I, 307-
308.
- 51 The Gentleman's Magazine, 58 (September, 1788), 778.
- 52 Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons, II, 146-47.
- 53 Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble,
Esq., p. 226.
- 54 Rev. of Memoirs, p. 218.

CHAPTER VIII

HAMLET

The perennial acclaim Kemble received as Macbeth resulted as much from his characteristic style of acting as it did from his understanding of the character. Regardless of the role he played, John Kemble was always himself, studied, methodical, and sure, imposing himself upon the character he represented rather than actually attempting to become the character. This aspect of Kemble's interpretation of his art, while it would not be appreciated today, was applauded by late eighteenth-century audiences because to them it demonstrated that Kemble was a consummate artist, in perfect control of his medium. Early in the nineteenth century, however, Leigh Hunt humorously characterized Kemble's style in The Thespiad (1809), exhibiting an attitude of amused condescension toward the school of declamatory acting, an attitude that was to gain ascendancy during the following decades.

Precise in passion, cautious ev'n in rage,
Lo! Kemble comes, the Euclid of the stage;
Who moves in given angles, squares a start,
And blows his Roman beak by rules of art;

John Kemble see in all the parts you will,
Lear, Romeo, Richard--'tis John Kemble still.¹

Later in Kemble's career, after Edmund Kean had burst upon the scene, the actor's formal style began to meet with more pointed criticism from reviewers. This observation by William Hazlitt in The Examiner (December 1, 1816), coming at the end of Kemble's career, is typical:

Mr. Kemble contributes his own person to a tragedy-- but only that. The poet must furnish all the rest, and make the other parts equally dignified and graceful, or Mr. Kemble will not help him out. He will not lend dignity to the mean, spirit to the familiar; he will not impart life and motion, passion and imagination, to all around him, for he has neither life nor emotion, passion nor imagination in himself. He minds only the conduct of his own person, and leaves the piece to shift for itself.²

An even more telling remark comes from Kemble's friend and biographer, James Boaden, who, long after Kemble's retirement, recalled that too often the actor "was cold and formal, paraded his person and his dress, and would walk the character about, as if teaching it how it should move through the business, and logically pronounce its sentiments."³ The inability or refusal of Kemble to expand the scope of his characterization suited him for roles in which he was called upon to exhibit a particular trait or humor, wilful pride in *Coriolanus*, for example, or stoic resolve in *Brutus* and *Cato*. *Macbeth* was such a role in Kemble's day. Charles Dibdin, for instance, noted that "Macbeth illustrates one passion alone, from which many interests issue."⁴ James Boaden also pointed out that the actor who played *Macbeth*

must have the ability to carry a single passion to its conclusion; "without this mental discipline to regulate the whole," Boaden continues, "the mere external demonstrations will often appear forced, disjointed, and unnatural; a regard to this principle removes all seeming inconsistency, and combines the whole into one great and consistent character."⁵

In view of Kemble's classical predilections and his formal, declamatory acting style, it should come as no surprise that Hazlitt thought Kemble a failure as Hamlet, a role so multifaceted that, according to the critic, it was almost incapable of being acted at all:

Kemble unavoidably fails in this character from a want of ease and variety. The character of Hamlet is made up of undulating lines; it has the yielding flexibility of "a wave o' th' sea." Mr. Kemble plays it like a man in armour, with a determined inveteracy of purpose, in one undeviating straight line. . . .⁶

Hazlitt's disapproval of Kemble's approach to Hamlet, as with his disapproval of Kemble's acting style in general, came at the end of the actor's long career, when the romantic realism of Edmund Kean was asserting itself on the stage. As late as 1808, however, Thomas Gilliland could say that Kemble's characterization of Hamlet improved with every performance and was at that time "the most finished piece of acting on the English stage."⁷ Gilliland's comment, rather than Hazlitt's, seems accurately to reflect the public reception

of Kemble's Hamlet, and Hazlitt himself perhaps touched on the reason in an article appearing in the Times (June 25, 1817) on the occasion of Kemble's retirement: ". . . his monotony did not fatigue, his formality did not displease, because there was always sense and meaning in what he did."⁸ This assessment identifies a streak of rationalism in Kemble's audiences that had its foundation in the neoclassical tradition. Kemble once recounted to James Boswell that he pleased Dr. Johnson greatly when he told him that he did not consider himself to be one of those enthusiasts who felt it necessary to become transformed into the very character he represented.⁹ The greatest part of Kemble's audience appears to have been no less pleased, appreciating a Hamlet who declaimed with understanding rather than one who was merely an embodiment of passion.

Kemble's first performance of Hamlet was at Drury Lane on September 30, 1783, his first London appearance. The young actor had just finished a triumphant engagement at Dublin's Smock Alley and had been introduced to the London public the previous spring by a generous puff among the biographical anecdotes of the Gentleman's Magazine. The reviewer noted that Kemble's best dramatic role was Hamlet and that his understanding of Shakespeare's scenes allowed him to impart "a new and more emphatical grace" to them than had ever been known in a previous actor.¹⁰ London theatregoers

looked forward to Kemble's opening night with an anticipation they had not felt since the days of Garrick. Herschel Baker points out that the new actor arrived on the London scene at a time when the theatres had reached a state of singular mediocrity. Garrick was dead, and Drury Lane had long been experiencing a decline under the management of Sheridan since the brilliant but shortlived success of his comedies.¹¹ The London audiences were ready for a change, and they hoped to find it in the acting of John Kemble, whose fame had obviously preceded him, generating a mood of excitement on his opening night. A reviewer in the British Magazine and Review (September, 1783) commented that for Kemble's first London appearance "the great expectations which were formed of this gentleman drew together a most crowded [sic] audience; and the house was completely filled in a few minutes after the doors opened."¹²

Even in his first London appearance in the role, Kemble approached the character of Hamlet so differently from what the audience had come to expect that critics busied themselves for weeks discussing the merits and faults of the actor's delivery of certain individual lines. Indeed, the way Kemble spoke Hamlet's lines, that is, the way in which he differed from Garrick and Henderson, became such a general topic of critical debate in the late eighteenth century that James Boaden was compelled to devote several pages of

Kemble's biography to the subject of the actor's interpretation of specific lines and the critical reaction to them.¹³ Boaden noted that even the great Shakespearean textual critic George Steevens found it necessary to enter the debate and censure Kemble's Hamlet for saying to Horatio, "Did you not speak to it?" instead of emphasizing the word speak, as Garrick had done. But Kemble had put the question of emphasis in the line to a critic of even greater authority and had told Boaden that Dr. Johnson approved of his delivery, saying, "To be sure, sir,--YOU should be strongly marked. I told Garrick so, long since, but Davy never could see it."¹⁴ This is only one of many lines of Kemble's performance that were seized upon by critics and minutely examined, indicating the great consequence that Kemble had with his contemporaries from the moment of his first appearance on the London stage. Boaden also noted that certain of Kemble's actions as Hamlet departed from the traditional presentation. For example, Kemble trailed the point of his sword when he followed the ghost of Hamlet's father rather than presenting the point, and he reverently kneeled at the spirit's descent, which was censured by many critics as a stage trick but was adopted immediately by John Henderson at Covent Garden.¹⁵ A final distinction of Kemble's Hamlet were the many long pauses Kemble threw into the delivery of his lines. The pauses were so lengthy and numerous that

Sheridan once waggishly remarked that he might have the orchestra play something to fill up the time they took.¹⁶ Most critics thought the pauses were well-considered, although at times a bit long, but Sir Walter Scott has left perhaps the best description of their effect upon an objective, inveterate theatregoer and admirer of Kemble:

Sometimes . . . Kemble permitted the action to hang too long suspended, so that one well accustomed to his manner anticipated the effort which he was about to make, by observing something of preparation, which was like the warning, as it is called, given by some timepieces that are about to strike the hour.¹⁷

Scott also identified part of the reason behind Kemble's new approach to Hamlet when he prophesied in retrospect about the resistance Kemble would meet from critics because his interpretation was so completely different from what they had been used to in the method of Garrick:

. . . Kemble in representing it [Hamlet's character] was to encounter at once the shade of the murdered King of Denmark, and in the mind's eye of the audience, that of the lost Garrick. The young performer had never seen and could not imitate Garrick. He was relieved from that great stumbling-block in the path of a novice--the temptation to copy some honored predecessor.¹⁸

Boaden similarly noted that Kemble's Hamlet was completely original because Kemble had seen no great performer he could have copied. Instead, his interpretation of Hamlet "was formed by his own taste or judgment, or rather grew out of the peculiar properties of his person and his intellectual habits."¹⁹ Both Scott and Boaden felt that it was necessary

to comment on the fact that Kemble did not appear in Garrick's alteration of Hamlet (1772). Scott agreed with Boaden that the Garrick version was "written in a mean and trashy commonplace manner" and stated further that the decision to scrap the Garrick alteration was Kemble's, an indication that the new performer was "beginning already to act upon the principles of dramatic criticism."²⁰ Actually, Garrick's alteration had not been seen in London since 1780, when John Bannister restored the original to Drury Lane Theatre (probably the Knappton version of 1751, given in Bell's Shakespeare).²¹ In his Dramatic Miscellanies Thomas Davies catalogued the changes Garrick had introduced into Hamlet. Shakespeare's first act was divided into two acts, the first ending with Hamlet's resolution to wait for the ghost to appear. The original third act extended into the fourth, but Garrick moved most of Act Four to his fifth act. Garrick changed the language and scenery of the first four acts very little, placing his most radical changes in Act Five. The plotting scenes between Claudius and Laertes were completely changed to render the latter more estimable in the eyes of the audience (Davies failed to note that the entire poison plot is excised). After disposing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet returns to Elsinore resolved to kill his uncle. The Gravediggers and Osric are deleted. The audience is not informed of the fate of Ophelia. Hamlet stabs Claudius with a dagger and is attacked by Laertes.

Davies had it that Hamlet and Laertes die of their wounds, but in the Bell's version Hamlet dies alone, and with his last breath he entreats Laertes and Horatio to calm the troubled land, indicating that Garrick may have played the scene both ways. Finally, Gertrude is driven insane by her own guilt.²²

A modern critic and noted Garrick scholar, George Winchester Stone, maintains that the public reaction to Garrick's adaptation generally appeared to be favorable, especially considering that the play held the Drury Lane stage for eight years;²³ however, Davies claimed that the public endured the old actor's alterations only out of the deference they felt was owed to "so eminent a genius." After Garrick's death, Davies continued, "the spectators of Hamlet would not part with their old friends, the Grave-diggers. The people soon called for Hamlet as it had been acted from time immemorial."²⁴ But the Hamlet to which Davies referred was by no means the original. The 1751 Drury Lane version restored by Bannister, in which Kemble undoubtedly appeared in 1783, still contained many omissions, some of which, according to Boaden, were "absolutely essential to the conduct of the story; all of them to the full developement of Hamlet's most interesting and singular character."²⁵ Nevertheless, when Kemble himself undertook to revise Hamlet in 1796, it was this same version, as it appears in Bell's

Shakespeare, that became the basis of his own play. As in Bell's, Kemble omitted all the appearances of Fortinbras and the Norwegians, and he further omitted Horatio's description of the quarrel between Denmark and Norway (I.i.70-107) so that there is a complete absence of references to Norway in Kemble's play. Kemble's restorations to Hamlet, numbering altogether less than thirty lines, are too insignificant to comment upon at any length, except perhaps to note that while Kemble included in 1796 the lines referring to the "politic worms" and the king's "progress through the guts of a beggar" (IV.iii.20-31), he later had second thoughts about the restoration and deleted the last six lines of it in the version of 1804.²⁶

The restoration of the 1751 version of Hamlet to Drury Lane and Kemble's willingness to incorporate the alterations of the old version into his own revisions of the play seem to indicate that the dramatic tastes of the London audience regarding Hamlet did not change a great deal in a half century of production. If anything, Kemble's own meager changes in Hamlet appear to strengthen the apparent purpose of the alterations in the 1751 version, which was to purge the play of obscenity and to make the characters and action more consistent with how the manager and audience felt the action should run or the characters behave. For example, by 1800 Kemble had omitted Claudius' soliloquy preceding his

prayer, in which the king repents his fratricide and voices his fear that Heaven will not listen to his supplication for pardon (III.iii.36-72).²⁷ Kemble excised the soliloquy perhaps because he thought Claudius should remain a thorough villain throughout the play with no recourse to the mercy of God. There also seems to have been a desire among some critics to improve Hamlet's moral character and thereby make him more worthy of the audience's sympathy. Boaden referred to a critical controversy surrounding Hamlet's seemingly "vicious and immoral" nature, quoting George Steevens' pronouncement that in the original play Hamlet's conduct is "every way unnatural and indefensible, unless he were to be regarded as a young man whose intellects were in some degree impaired."²⁸

No doubt to gratify his audiences' desire for a more estimable Hamlet, Kemble decided to keep the prince's character from vacillating too radically between righteous anger and a perverted desire for vengeance. Kemble followed the Bell's version in omitting the soliloquy of Hamlet upon his discovery of the king at prayer, in which the prince decides not to kill Claudius yet, preferring to catch him in the midst of sin to ensure his damnation (III.iii.73-96). In a note in Bell's Shakespeare, Francis Gentleman said that this soliloquy was "commendably thrown aside . . . as tending to vitiate and degrade his character much." And

elsewhere Gentleman noted that Hamlet's sentiments in the soliloquy are "more suitable to an assassin of the basest kind, than a virtuous prince and a feeling man."²⁹ Gentleman similarly criticized Laertes' part in plotting the death of Hamlet by poison.³⁰ The whole conspiracy was restored in the Bell's version, but Kemble apparently thought with Gentleman that such a dishonorable method of vengeance should not have originated in the young nobleman. Garrick may also have considered the poison plot an excrescence, for he omitted the entire scene. Kemble preserved the conspiracy, the king's absolute villainy, and some of the honor of Laertes, however, by having Claudius suggest the scheme and Laertes, in his distracted condition, submit to the plan. Quite possibly, Kemble produced the scene as it appears in Shakespeare until he moved to Covent Garden, for in the promptbook of 1804 he penned through Shakespeare's original lines in which Laertes describes his plan to kill Hamlet and in the margin below substituted the following exchange:

King. To make all sure, your sword shall be anointed
 With a contagion of mortal nature,
 That, if you gall him slightly, it may be death.

Laertes. My Lord, I will be rul'd.

(IV.vi.p. 67)

Thus, Kemble still found sufficient reason in the nineteenth century not only to retain, but also to continue adding changes to Hamlet in the tradition of the version of 1751. For instance, following the version in Bell's, Kemble

omitted all of Polonius' advice to Laertes (I.iii.57-81), perhaps because it seemed too disturbingly illogical that after telling his son he must leave immediately, Polonius launches into a long, sententious oration on proper conduct. Of course, Kemble may have kept the omission merely to cut the playing time of the drama. Other such omissions include Polonius' instructions to Reynaldo (II.i.1-73), much of the dialogue of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the Dumb Show, some of the Mousetrap Play (III.i), and all of Hamlet's narration of his adventures to Horatio (V.ii.1-80). Francis Gentleman thought that a dozen or so of these lines should have been retained to make the plot clearer.³¹

Kemble obliged him by incorporating a few of them into Hamlet's letter to Horatio (IV.v.pp. 64-65). Kemble also followed Bell's in cutting some lines for the sake of propriety. In Hamlet's first soliloquy the comparison of his mother's capacity to mourn with that of the beasts in the field and the reference to her "wicked speed" in posting to "incestuous sheets" are omitted (I.ii.149-51, 153-57).

Perhaps in the same vein, Hamlet's seemingly disrespectful references to the apparition of his father as "the fellow in the cellarage," "true penny," and "old mole" are deleted from the first act. One interesting omission by Kemble of lines that were retained in Bell's is Hamlet's remark to one of the players, "Pray God your voice, like a piece of

uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring" (II.ii.416-17). Perhaps forgetting that Hamlet's comment would have been aimed in jest at an adolescent boy, not a real woman, Francis Gentleman observed that the "hint to the lady . . . is not commendably delicate."³² Since the "lady" was probably played by an actress in Kemble's day as well, the manager struck out the offending line. Kemble also went further than Bell's in omitting all of Hamlet's "merry" obscenity preceding the Mousetrap Play (III.ii.108-15, 134-39).

Altogether, Kemble's Hamlet is over twelve hundred lines shorter than the original, yet it was generally admitted that the production was at least twenty minutes longer than any that had ever played in London, probably a result of Kemble's methodical acting style and the many long pauses he took in Hamlet.³³ In spite of his drastic omissions in Hamlet, however, Kemble is credited with restoring a number of original expressions to the play that had been rejected in the old Drury Lane version in favor of more modern equivalents. To name only a few, Kemble restored "inky cloak" (I.ii.77) for "mourning suit," Horatio's "wild and whirling words" (I.v.133) for "windy words," and "flights of angels" (V.ii.346) rather than "choirs" to sing Hamlet to his rest. Thus, Kemble began early in his career the kind of textual restorations which would help to earn him a reputation not merely as the foremost Shakespearean

actor, but as a textual scholar and antiquary as well. According to James Boaden, it was Kemble's hope that a continuous application of such restorations, when they could be tolerated by the public, would eventually bring Shakespeare on the stage into a closer correlation with his works in the closet.³⁴

In spite of his endeavors to restore the original purity of Shakespeare's language to Hamlet whenever he could, however, Kemble appears not to have felt particularly obliged to prevent certain anachronisms in staging and costuming. One of the most elaborate examples is Kemble's stage-within-a-stage constructed for the scene of the Mousetrap Play. A meticulous interleaf drawing shows it to be an exact replica in miniature of a picture theatre, with its own raised stage and proscenium arch; moreover, the stage directions indicate that it had a drop curtain that was raised at the sound of a prompter's bell, imitating exactly the modern theatre technique in Kemble's day (p. 44). Kemble also permitted some anachronisms in Hamlet's costume as well. For ten years he played Hamlet in eighteenth-century court dress of black velvet, decorated with a star on the breast, the Garter, and the pendant ribbon of the Order of the Elephant. His hair, in the words of James Boaden, was "in powder; which, in the scenes of feigned distraction, flowed dishevelled in front and over the shoulders."³⁵

On October 9, 1793, Kemble dressed Hamlet in the black satin Vandyke costume from the sixteenth century which was to become the Dane's traditional dress for the next hundred years. After the change in costume, Hamlet was still not contemporary with the time when the events of the play supposedly occurred, Boaden noted, but at least his dress was contemporary with the armor of his father's ghost, an anachronism that Shakespeare had seen fit to include.³⁶

John Doran's recollection of the newly accoutered Hamlet was unfavorable from the standpoint of an antiquary.

According to Doran, the costume, trimmed in bugles, was too fancy to be properly called a mourning suit, and it defied chronology. Furthermore, Kemble wore "a carefully curled and powdered wig, such as never sat on Scandinavian head." And finally, he continued to wear the pendant of the Order of the Elephant, which, Doran fumed, "was not instituted till the middle of the fifteenth century!"³⁷

Although the change in dress for Hamlet helped divest the character of the appearance of an eighteenth-century courtier, the addition of the powdered wig and the elegance of the new costume would seem to indicate a retreat by Kemble into a more formal approach to the role than he had used originally. Sir Thomas Lawrence's gothic portrait of Kemble, dressed in his Vandyke as Hamlet in the Graveyard Scene, with his hair dark and loose, his eyes romantically

ardent and melancholy, appears to belie Doran's description of Kemble in the part.³⁸ There seems to be no less a discrepancy between the general, sometimes pejorative characterizations of Kemble's too formal method of acting and the contemporary reviews of his ability to move the passions of his audience in the character of Hamlet. Kemble was especially praised for his handling of the Closet Scene between Hamlet and his mother (Shakespeare's III.iv). A review for the St. James Chronicle (September 30, 1783) called Kemble's part in the scene "one of the finest pieces of Acting since Mr. Garrick's Days."³⁹ The implied comparison between Kemble and Garrick in this remark is typical of the early criticism of the actor. It was a comparison that was probably in everyone's mind during the actor's initial performances at Drury Lane; however, it must be emphasized that Kemble's declamatory style was nothing like the intimate realism that theatre audiences had appreciated in the acting of Garrick. Thomas Davies, in his description of the Closet Scene, underscored the fact that Kemble's approach was not merely different; it was effective:

In the impassioned scene, between Hamlet and his Mother in the third act, Kemble's emphasis and action, however different from those of all former Hamlets we have seen, bore the genuine marks of solid judgement and exquisit taste. I never saw an audience more deeply affected, or more generously grateful to the actor who had so highly raised their passions.⁴⁰

Tate Wilkinson, who, at the time of Kemble's London debut, had seen more years in the theatre than anyone else of his reputation, similarly recalled of Kemble's portrayal of Hamlet that "the manner of conceiving those passages, and conveying them to the audience, is superior by Mr. Kemble to that of any other actor's whatever in my remembrance."⁴¹ On that first night in 1783, the audience showed their gratitude by insisting that the curtain be dropped after Kemble's final line. And Kemble demonstrated his own deference to them and to his fellow actors by not presuming to speak Hamlet's advice to the players (III.ii.1-13).⁴² It is interesting to note, then, that Kemble's audience welcomed from the beginning a return to the declamatory style in the dramatic vacuum that had remained after Garrick's departure from the boards. The enthusiasm of their welcome, moreover, indicates that their taste in Shakespearean drama was still informed by neoclassical principles, for, as Hazlitt was to point out many years later, they did not come to the theatre merely to hear Shakespeare declaimed; they came to hear him declaimed with sense and meaning.

NOTES

¹ Quoted in Brander Matthews and Lawrence Hutton, The Kembles and Their Contemporaries (Boston: L. C. Page & Company, 1886), p. 83.

² The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1903), VIII, 344.

³ Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons (London, 1827), II, 158-59.

⁴ A Complete History of the English Stage (London, 1800), III, 326.

⁵ Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq. (London, 1825), I, 174.

⁶ Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, ed. Catherine Macdonald Maclean (1906; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1960), p. 237.

⁷ The Dramatic Mirror (London, 1808), II, 803.

⁸ Dramatic Essays by William Hazlitt, ed. William Archer and Robert W. Lowe (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1895), p. 141.

⁹ Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. L. F. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), IV, 243-44. According to Kemble, Johnson went so far as to state that "if Garrick really believed himself to be that monster, Richard the Third, he deserved to be hanged every time he performed it" (IV, 244).

¹⁰ The Gentleman's Magazine, 53 (April, 1783), 309-10.

¹¹ John Philip Kemble (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), p. 80.

¹² Quoted in Arthur Colby Sprague, Shakespearean Players and Performances (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), p. 42.

13 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I, 92-104.

14 Memoirs, p. 97.

15 Memoirs, p. 98.

16 John Philip Kemble, p. 254.

17 Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., by James Boaden, Quarterly Review, 34 (1826), 216. See also Thomas Davies, Dramatic Miscellanies (London, 1784), III, 150; Charles Harold Gray, Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931), p. 262.

18 Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., p. 211.

19 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I, 92.

20 Memoirs, p. 112; Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., p. 212.

21 C. B. Hogan, Shakespeare in the Theatre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), II, 217.

22 Dramatic Miscellanies, III, 145-46. George Winchester Stone, Jr., reproduced the entire fifth act of Garrick's Hamlet in "Garrick's Long Lost Alteration of Hamlet," PMLA, 49 (September, 1934), 893-921.

23 "Garrick's Long Lost Alteration of Hamlet," pp. 893-94.

24 Dramatic Miscellanies, III, 145-47. Davies is supported by Isaac Reed in Biographia Dramatica (London, 1812), II, 278-79. It is interesting to note that in a letter to Garrick dated 1771 George Steevens considered Garrick's alteration of Hamlet "a circumstance in favor of the poet" that he had long been wishing to see. Steevens goes on to add humorously that Garrick could combine the "loppings and excretions" from Hamlet into a farcical afterpiece titled, "The Grave-Diggers" with the pleasant Humours of Osrick, the Danish Macaroni." See The Private Correspondence of David Garrick, ed. James Boaden (London, 1831), I, 451-52.

25 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I,
88.

26 Shattuck has reproduced Kemble's Hamlet of 1804 in The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), Vol. II. All parenthetical references to Kemble's Hamlet are to this source.

27 Hogan, II, 190.

28 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I,
89.

29 Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), III, 53; The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), I, 46. Samuel Johnson had earlier stated that Hamlet's speech was "too horrible to read or to be uttered" in Notes to Shakespeare, ed., Arthur Sherbo, Augustan Reprint Society (Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 1956), III, 170.

30 Bell's Shakespeare, III, 69.

31 Bell's, p. 78.

32 Dramatic Censor, I, 43.

33 John Philip Kemble, p. 251.

34 Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons, II, 250.

35 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I,
104.

36 Memoirs, pp. 104-105.

37 Doran's Annals of the English Stage, ed. Robert W. Lowe (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), III, 251, 255. Doran makes no mention of Hamlet's wearing the Garter. Perhaps Kemble divested his costume of the decoration in 1793 when he dressed Hamlet in the Vandyke.

38 Shattuck has reproduced an engraving of the portrait as the frontispiece of Hamlet in The Kemble Promptbooks, Vol. II.

39 Quoted in Gray, p. 262.

40 Dramatic Miscellanies, III, 151-52.

41 Memoirs of His Own Life (Dublin, 1791), III, 95.

42 Shakespearean Players and Performances, pp. 51-52.

CHAPTER IX

KING LEAR

When Hazlitt criticized Kemble for playing Hamlet in one undeviating straight line, he identified a characteristic of the actor that Kemble's audience might well have appreciated. Kemble declaimed the lines of Hamlet with what the eighteenth-century audience would have called "understanding." If Hamlet was fragmented, confused, and at odds within himself, John Philip Kemble was not; thus, by reducing the prince's uncertainty to a minimum and methodically conveying Hamlet from his meeting with the ghost to his anticipated tragic end, Kemble reinforced in the minds of the spectators a belief in the natural moral order of the univers. Aside from the deletion of the Gravediggers, one of the reasons Garrick's alteration did not find favor with the public may have been that it failed to preserve this sense of moral order. Ophelia is left to wander about in a condition of mental unbalance with no other word concerning her fate; Laertes remains at the end to profit from the death of Hamlet; and Gertrude, although driven insane by the knowledge of her crimes, survives the deaths of her son and husband. But it was not enough in the eighteenth

century for her to be merely insane. Only a few days after the premier engagement of Garrick's altered version of Hamlet, one critic pointed out to the adapter in a letter dated January 10, 1773, that "the death of the Queen, whatever the other characters were, had ever a greater effect, being by natural accident, which at the time pleased as a piece of poetical justice."¹ Although Garrick seems to have paid him no heed, the critic was reminding him of what much of the public had come to accept as a formal dictum of the drama, the rule of poetic justice.

The application of poetic justice as a means of effectively and realistically pointing up the existence of a universal moral order was the center of a critical argument that continued throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. And nowhere were the lines of battle more clearly drawn than in the dispute surrounding Shakespeare's King Lear after its alteration in 1681 by Nahum Tate. The major changes Tate introduced into King Lear were the omission of the Fool, an added romance between Edgar and Cordelia, and the last-minute rescue of Kent, Lear, and Cordelia at the end of the play. Although the added love interest received a great deal of critical attention (most of it favorable), it was the altered conclusion which, from the beginning, generated the greatest amount of controversy. In Spectator No. 40 (April 16, 1711), for example, Joseph Addison

claimed that altering Lear "according to the chymical Notion of Poetical Justice" had caused the play to lose half its beauty. Addison demonstrated that the rule of poetic justice simply did not stand up to the logic of neoclassicism, arguing that "an equal Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, and an impartial Execution of Poetical Justice . . . have no Foundation in Nature, in Reason, or in the Practice of the Ancients."² In the following year John Dennis defended from a didactic standpoint the application of poetic justice in Lear. Using an argument that agrees in principle with Kemble's philosophy of tragedy as it is stated in the essay on Macbeth and King Richard the Third, Dennis pointed out that because both the good and bad characters "perish promiscuously" in the original version, "there can either be none or very weak instruction in them: For such promiscuous events call the Government of Providence into Question, and by Sceptics and Libertines are resolv'd into chance."³ Half a century later the debate was still alive, but in 1765 Samuel Johnson reminded critics on both sides that however they regarded Tate's ending for Lear, their arguments were academic:

In the present case the public has decided. Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity. And, if my sensations could add anything to the general suffrage, I might relate, I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor.⁴

Kemble revived King Lear at Covent Garden on May 18, 1808. Leigh Hunt reviewed the play four days later in the Examiner (May 22, 1808), and his comments, not to mention Kemble's version of the play, first produced at Drury Lane in 1792, demonstrate that the application of poetic justice in Lear continued to be an issue. Since Kemble had retained most of Tate's alterations in his own production, Hunt first took the original adapter to task: "If Tate had been content to expunge a few anachronisms, to omit the Fool which is now out of date, and to send Gloster behind the scenes when he is blinded, he might well have been excused."⁵ Although the criticism here implies that Hunt thought Tate's addition of the romance between Edgar and Cordelia and the happy ending were unnecessary, it also plainly shows that he approved of certain alterations of Shakespeare as long as they were judicious by standards Leigh Hunt recognized as modern. An ending for Lear that spares Cordelia and her father was simply not credible to Hunt, a member of the budding school of romantic criticism, and he asserted that "Shakespeare made his play end unhappily because he knew that real nature requires such a catastrophe."⁶ Critics who favored Tate's ending, however, could point out with Dr. Johnson that it was Shakespeare and not Tate who had departed from nature in failing to adhere to the "true" narration of Lear's history in the chronicles of Geoffrey of Monmouth, in which

Cordelia ascends the throne after the death of her father.⁷ The demand for a happy ending preserved the Tate alterations through two more adaptations of *Lear* in the eighteenth century. Although Garrick had begun restoring some of the original *Lear* at Drury Lane beginning in 1756, he was still compelled to retain both the added love interest and the poetically just catastrophe of Tate. Similarly, when George Colman altered the play for Covent Garden in 1768 in order to "purge the tragedy of *Lear* of the alloy of Tate," he omitted only the romance; Cordelia and her father were still spared in the end.⁸

Just as Hunt censured Tate posthumously for failing to alter *King Lear* according to early nineteenth-century standards of criticism, a modern critic, Herbert Spencer Robinson, censures Colman for basing his alteration on "Tate's ridiculous version." Robinson regrets that Colman "did not have enough sense to realize that Shakespeare was better left entirely untouched--even at the risk of shocking the critics of the 'classical' school."⁹ Aside from the absurdity of lamenting Colman's lack of twentieth-century critical perspective, Robinson's remarks reveal a basic misunderstanding that students of literary criticism often have about Shakespearean adapters, that is, that they altered Shakespeare solely out of a desire to "regularize" his plays according to the neoclassical standards expressed by a powerful group

of critics who dictated the taste of the public. In the first place, whether a critic had classical or romantic predilections was not always the controlling factor in his opinion concerning specific Shakespearean alterations. It should be remembered that the first important critic to demand the restoration of the original ending of Lear was none other than Joseph Addison, who authored the only truly successful neoclassical tragedy in English, Cato. And even the romantically inclined Leigh Hunt was quite satisfied with Tate's omission of the Fool in Lear. In the second place, the first obligation of the adapter, if he was to have a successful play, was not to please the critics, but rather the public.

It is reasonable to assume that if it had been at all possible, David Garrick would have restored Shakespeare's ending to Lear because the dramatic intensity of the original conclusion would have displayed his acting ability to much greater advantage. As Thomas Davies was later to note, Garrick seldom missed an opportunity to show his skill in a tormented death scene,¹⁰ but the actor realized that his audience would not endure the restoration of Lear's painful end, and he had to content himself merely with deleting the concluding lines Tate had given to Edgar so that the curtain fell on the last speech of Lear. Colman's version of Lear enjoyed only meager success and was withdrawn

altogether after 1773, probably because it contained too much Shakespeare and not enough Tate. Benjamin Victor's remarks concerning the reception of Colman's Lear reveal a discrepancy between the taste of critics and audiences. It is not difficult to conclude whose taste decided the controversy:

The intent of this alteration was, to clear this celebrated Tragedy from the love scenes of Edgar and Cordelia, which were introduced into this Play by the Poet-Laureate Mr. Tate.--This Love Business has been ridiculed by the Connoisseurs and Admirers of Shakespeare; and yet when the above Alteration was performed, the Play-going People, in general, seemed to lament the loss of those Lovers in representation.¹¹

Isaac Reed noted a similar discrepancy of judgment in his comments on Tate's Lear: "In spite, however, of the sentiments of critics, this alteration still maintains its ground; and it is far from certainty, that the catastrophe as originally penned by Shakespeare, could be bourne by a modern audience."¹² The mere thought of restoring Shakespeare's ending had caused Thomas Davies in 1784 to exclaim incredulously, "Who could possibly think of depriving an audience, almost exhausted with the feelings of so many terrible scenes, of the inexpressible delight which they enjoyed, when the old King, in rapture, cried out--

Old Lear shall be a king again!"¹³

The answer, of course, was no one, at least no dramatist who wanted his play to be a success. Success and failure

in the theatre hinged upon the public, as it always has, and, as Johnson had noted, in the case of Lear the public had decided.

Charles Shattuck records that in Kemble's arrangements of King Lear both at Drury Lane (1792) and at Covent Garden (1808), the manager "unaccountably abandoned all that Garrick had done for the text and resorted to the language of Tate throughout."¹⁴ Another modern scholar, David Rostron, also seems bewildered by Kemble's "far from typical" decision to resort to the Tate version. Noting that Kemble restored "the heroic passion of Edgar for Cordelia," for example, Rostron can only assume that the manager's critical discernment had retrogressed.¹⁵ It is difficult to believe, however, that Kemble suffered an intermittent lapse of judgment every time he undertook to revive King Lear or even that his production of Lear departed so drastically from his dramatic philosophy that it can only be called unaccountable or explained as a retrogression. An examination of Kemble's Lear, particularly where Kemble restored or omitted the alterations of Nahum Tate, reveals that the adaptation is as much in keeping with Kemble's philosophy as any of his productions and that there may always have been after all, as Hazlitt claimed, sense and meaning in everything he did.

Before the Drury Lane acting version of Lear came into Kemble's hands, Garrick had restored a great deal of

Shakespeare to the first three acts, although omitting the fool and managing to retain Tate's romance between Edgar and Cordelia. The remainder of the play, most of the fourth act and all of the fifth, were still Tate's. Kemble preferred to begin the play as Tate had done, opening with Edmund's soliloquy to Nature (Shakespeare's I.ii.1-22), which was shortened and altered to make the Bastard's villainous nature and his Machiavellian intentions apparent from the outset. The technique is similar to Gloucester's opening soliloquy in Richard III, and Kemble may have felt that it set the tragic tone of the play more effectively than Shakespeare's original opening scene of Lear's division of his kingdom. Another reason that Kemble preferred Tate's opening act was that Lear's initial anger at Cordelia is made more credible and the audiences prepared for his violent burst of temper by means of the dialogue between Kent and Gloucester preceding the division of the kingdom:

Kent. I grieve to see him
 With such wild starts of passion hourly seiz'd,
 As render majesty beneath itself.

Glo. Alas! 'tis the infirmity of his age.--
 Yet has his temper ever been unfix'd,
 Cholerick, and sudden.

(I.i.p. 6)

Furthermore, the romantic interest between Edgar and Cordelia, established in the first scene of the play, allowed Kemble's audience, which applauded sentimental displays of filial devotion, to accept Cordelia's seeming

indifference to her father when he asks his daughters to profess their love for him. What the Elizabethans and present-day audiences appreciate as Cordelia's commendable reaction to the fawning hypocrisy of Goneril and Regan, much of Kemble's audience perceived only as wilful impertinence, but they found it more acceptable as a role that she must play to escape an unwanted marriage to Burgundy:

Cor. Now comes my trial.--How I am distress'd,
That must, with cold speech, tempt the cholerick King
Rather to leave me dowerless, than condemn me
To Burgundy's embraces!

(I.ii.p. 8)

Francis Gentleman, who preferred Tate's first act to Garrick's, perhaps spoke Kemble's mind when he criticized Colman for restoring "that unjustifiable, cynical roughness, which Shakespeare has stamped upon Cordelia, in the barren, churlish answer she gives to her father."¹⁶

The introduction of the love between Edgar and Cordelia did not go unchallenged during the century and a half that Tate's Lear held the stage. From the neoclassical standpoint, Elizabeth Montagu made a general assault on stage romance when she asked the public to consider what the ancients would say if they beheld the modern stage, "no longer attempting to purge the passions by pity and terror, but . . . diverted from its end, melting away in the strains of elegy and eclogue." Montagu thought such refinements to be "rather abuse and degeneracy, than advances toward

perfection."¹⁷ Even after 1810, when Kemble's Lear had been permanently withdrawn from the Covent Garden repertory because of reflections it might have cast upon King George's insanity, Charles Lamb took a parting shot at the idea of a romance's improving such a profound tragedy:

. . . the play is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show; it is too hard and stony; it must have love scenes and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter, she must shine as a lover, too. Tate has put his hook in the nostrils of this Leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the show-men of the scene, to draw the mighty beast about more easily.¹⁸

As I noted earlier, however, most of the criticism concerning Edgar and Cordelia's romance was favorable, and not just because it softened the "hard and stony" plot of Shakespeare's original play. Thomas Davies noted that the love between Edgar and Cordelia strengthened the connection between the Lear and Gloucester plots, a circumstance that has caused one present-day scholar to claim of Tate's Lear that "our ancestors did not show such bad taste as they are thought to have shown in supporting it."¹⁹ The love affair also helped to raise Edgar in the esteem of the audience, who saw him in the original version fearfully taking on the disguise of Mad Tom to save his own life. Kemble followed Tate in having Edgar disguise himself on the chance that he may find some means to assist Cordelia (II.iii.p. 24), thus gaining for Edgar, according to Francis Gentleman, "a degree of estimation with the audience, which otherwise he would

not have obtained."²⁰ Edgar's simpleminded susceptibility to Edmund's scheme to discredit him with Gloucester and steal his inheritance is also made more plausible by his love for Cordelia. Her "just suspicion on the race of men" after Burgundy's refusal to accept her unaccompanied by a dowery causes Cordelia immediately to test Edgar's love by refusing his advances, so that in his distracted condition Edgar is an easy mark for his brother:

Edm. Your danger, sir, comes on so fast;
That I want time to inform you: but retire
Whilst I take care to turn the pressing stream.--
O gods!--for heaven's sake, sir,--

Edg. Pardon me, Edmund:--but you talk'd of danger,
And wished me to retire.--Must all our vows
End thus?--Friend, I obey you.--O Cordelia!
(I.ii.p. 12)

Aside from making certain characters and actions more plausible, the injection of a love affair into the plot of King Lear heightened the distress of the story by eighteenth-century standards. A modern critic, Lucyle Hook, has helped to clarify this idea by pointing out that many of the Shakespearean alterations show unmistakable signs of a movement toward the dominance of the female in the drama, which gained momentum from its beginnings in the adaptations of Dryden, Davenant, Tate, and Otway throughout the eighteenth century.²¹ In his "Epistle Dedicatory" to King Lear, Tate declared that part of his purpose in adding the love interest was to heighten the distress, indicating that by

the late seventeenth century the idea of distress on the stage was generally depicted by a woman in peril. This concept, if anything, had become a theatrical formula by Kemble's day, obliging Kemble, as it had Garrick, to retain Tate's additions, which had come to embody the eighteenth-century idea of distress. The scene between Edgar and Cordelia after her rejection by Burgundy has already been mentioned, but must also be cited as one of those distressing moments in the play, in which Cordelia is dispossessed and rejects the man who is best suited to protect her, contributing to Edgar's befuddled senses and his consequent reversal of fortunes. Another added scene that heightens the distress is the one in which Cordelia begs Gloucester to help her find Lear (III.ii.pp. 34-36). The emotions of the audience are doubly wrung by her pitiable appeal to Gloucester and by Edmund's observing her from hiding and revealing his design to have two ruffians intercept her as she wanders in the storm so that he may ravish her. In the same act Cordelia and her companion Aranthe are threatened by Edmund's ruffians in a scene that must have taken Kemble's audience to the very pinnacle of distress. The scene is climaxed by Cordelia's horrified exclamation, "Help,--Murder!---help. Gods, some kind thunderbolt / To strike me dead!" (II.iii.p. 42). Edgar, disguised as Mad Tom, arrives in time to drive off their

assailants, thereby justifying his decision in the second act to affect the appearance of a bedlamite. With some minor omissions, Kemble concluded his scene, as in Tate, with Edgar's and Cordelia's mutual declarations of love.

Edgar's rescue of Cordelia in the storm and the lover's reconciliation and embrace at the end of the scene were for Thomas Davies, "a gleam of sunshine and a promise of fair weather in the midst of storm and tempest."²² Kemble's audiences were likely of the same mind. However they regarded distress in the drama, they certainly did not have in mind the sort of distress that the original King Lear generated in the audience through the tragic deaths of Lear and Cordelia. Even in the midst of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, evidence that had long been harped upon by neoclassical and romantic advocates of Shakespeare alike, Kemble's audience apparently preferred to believe, at least for the duration of the play, that they lived in a rational world in which they could rest assured that God's universe was governed by the same laws of reason that governed the mind. The temporary turmoil of the storm, they felt, should always be followed by a reasonable working out of affairs. The persistence of chaos after the storm, however, a chaos in which sweet innocence was unhappily cut down alongside wilful pride by the same indifferent force, was too great an aberration of the natural scheme of things for them to bear. In the final scene of

the play, therefore, Kemble adhered closely to Tate, having Edgar once more save the imperiled Cordelia. In Tate's version, Edgar's final words to Cordelia, the last lines of the play, exemplified an attitude which in the eighteenth century had become entrenched as the rule of poetic justice:

How much thy Love to Empire I prefer!
 Thy bright Example shall convince the World
 (Whatever storms of fortune are decreed)
 That Truth and Vertue shall at last succeed.²³

Although Garrick included the last-minute rescue, he eliminated Edgar's concluding lines, which so explicitly demonstrated the moral in Tate's Lear, ending instead with Lear's, "Enjoy the present hour, nor fear the last."²⁴ Kemble also managed to bring down the curtain on the final speech of Lear, but he managed as well to include the speech of Edgar. This he may have done in deference to his brother Charles, who had the part, but it is quite possible, too, that Kemble felt obligated to preserve a statement of the ultimate triumph of truth and virtue no less than its representation, since it followed so closely his own philosophy of the drama.

Kemble was not content merely to depict Tate's explicit triumph of virtue; his purpose in restoring portions of Tate to the play was also to give greater emphasis than the original to the ultimate failure of villainy. Kemble thought that Edmund and the evil forces he set in motion

were important enough to be introduced from the very beginning so that the Bastard is no longer part of a subplot, but overshadows the evil sisters as the archvillain of the entire play. His plan to rape Cordelia shows him to be not simply the bold and clever schemer created by Shakespeare, but a vulgar brute as well. Thus Kemble depicted Edmund as a more nearly total villain than in the original. Tate had made Edmund's villainy more explicit, as well as a more powerful influence upon Goneril and Regan, by adding to the scenes of contact between Edmund and the sisters. Kemble omitted the most infamous of these, the Grotto Scene, perhaps because grottos had been too long out of fashion.²⁵ But he included, to the great displeasure of John Genest, that "most contemptible scene" in which Edmund enters, speaks a soliloquy revealing his lust for the two queens, then receives a letter from each as if in answer to his spoken desire (III.ii.p. 33).²⁶ Edmund's momentary transport over the promise contained in the letters exposes a certain baseness in his nature that Kemble may have thought necessary to underscore as an inevitable characteristic of the complete villain, and it prepares the audience for Edmund's soliloquy at the end of the scene in which his plan to rape Cordelia is revealed. In the fifth act Kemble follows Tate in spelling out the Bastard's degenerate nature in a speech which, like Edgar's final declaration of the

triumph of virtue, sets forth a moral standard. The passage comes immediately before Edmund's single combat with Edgar, when, unlike the original version, the Bastard recognizes his opponent:

Ha! my brother!
 This is the only combatant I could fear;
 For in my breast guilt duels on his side.--
 But, conscience, what have I to do with thee?
 Awe thou thy dull legitimate slaves, but I
 Was born a libertine, and so I keep me.
 (V.iv.p. 65)

Kemble departed from Tate at the end of this scene, where Goneril and Regan, each already poisoned by the other, bitterly bicker over the dying Edmund. Tate no doubt meant the scene as a final exemplum of the ultimate degradation to which villainy can sink before its termination. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, the scene had lost all credibility, drawing laughter instead of sober reflection, and was excised by Garrick, which, according to Francis Gentleman, was much to the advantage of the catastrophe.²⁷

Another scene, this one from the original play, was criticized in the eighteenth century as too preposterous to be credibly staged. The scene in which Gloucester is deceived by Edgar into thinking he has jumped from Dover Cliff and been miraculously saved had been criticized by Joseph Warton in 1754 as utterly improbable (Adventurer, No. 132).²⁸ Although Tate and Garrick had preserved Gloucester's imagined leap without receiving noticeable objection from

the audience, George Colman, reasoning that the scene was "justifiably censured" by Warton, omitted it in the version of 1768 by having Lear enter immediately after Edgar's famous description of the cliff.²⁹ Francis Gentleman noted that the scene had been objected to, but defended retaining Gloucester's leap.³⁰ The success of Garrick and assurances of Gentleman, however, were insufficient to convince Kemble of the credibility of the scene, and he followed Colman's version in deleting it. The minor controversy over whether or not to retain Gloucester's imagined leap suggests that both sides were motivated by the same aesthetic rule: serious drama ought to have a firm basis in truth and reality. Thus, whatever failed in King Lear to conform to a particular adapter's critical definition of reality, insofar as his audience would allow it, was either changed to fit that definition or discarded altogether.

One subtle example of such a change occurs in all of the alterations of Lear. Rather than have Cornwall brutally gouge out Gloucester's eyes, as in Shakespeare, all the later dramatists, reasoning that no man of station would commit such an act while he has inferiors to do it for him, delegated the job to characters of lower rank. Tate had Cornwall command, "Slaves perform your work," and the deed was executed onstage.³¹ Living in an age of more outwardly refined sensibilities, Kemble used the text of Tate but

followed Garrick and Colman in having Gloucester removed by servants and blinded by them while Cornwall and Regan listen to his offstage cries (IV.i.p. 47). Francis Gentleman voiced an old complaint when he criticized "the savage incident of Gloucester's eyes" and maintained that the scene "should have been consigned to oblivion."³² Perhaps Kemble would have excised the scene completely if it had been possible, but George Colman had already tried and found it impossible because Gloucester's blindness was too essential to the plot to be tampered with.³³ Like Colman and Garrick, therefore, Kemble could do no more to soften the scene than to lend it a trifle delicacy by moving it offstage.

A more obvious instance of the application of an eighteenth-century standard of credibility in all of the Lear alterations is the omission of the Fool. Colman, perhaps having some idea of the importance of the part, had considered restoring the Fool; "yet after the most serious consideration," Colman admits, "I was convinced that such a scene 'would sink into burlesque' in the representation, and would not be endured on the modern stage."³⁴ According to Thomas Davies, Garrick had also contemplated restoring the Fool, but he was prevented by his fear that the jestings of a clown would detract from his own portrayal of the agonies of Lear.³⁵ Like Garrick, Kemble may have

omitted the part because he did not relish the thought of a fool's distracting the audience from the serious action of the drama and, consequently, from his own role as Lear. Furthermore, Kemble may have questioned the possibility that his audience could find rational grounds for the existence of a fool. In his comments on Garrick's Lear, Francis Gentleman could see absolutely no reason for the presence of a fool in Shakespeare's play and could only surmise that "fools must have been much in fashion, in his day, he has so often introduced them."³⁶ Even when he restored the tragic ending to Lear in 1823, Edmund Kean was not compelled to retain the Fool, who was not to tread the stage again until 1838, when William Macready restored the original play to the theatre after an absence of over one hundred and fifty years.

In his comments upon Tate's Lear, Davies claimed that Tate deserved to be laughed at for his vanity in presuming to mend Shakespeare in the process of alteration. But in the midst of his laughter he conceded that Tate had rescued the play from oblivion, for without Tate, King Lear in all probability would have remained neglected and unproduced. Davies also maintained that Tate's idea of the romance between Edgar and Cordelia was a good one and implied that Colman's Lear failed, not because his restorations from Shakespeare were injudicious, but because Colman failed to

rescue the love plot "from meaner hands."³⁷ In other words, Davies recognized that for a production of Lear to be more successful than Tate's, the adapter would have to beat Tate at his own game, which in fact was what Garrick had done. Kemble was not a sufficiently imaginative dramatist to create an adaptation that could compete with the Garrick version; nevertheless, his reputation as an actor allowed him to produce the play successfully almost as Tate had written it. Although Kemble's Lear was not critically acclaimed, it was a commercial success until it was withdrawn in 1810, thus substantiating the old claim that in the drama the audience, not the critic, holds the whip. Like Davies, most twentieth-century scholars tend to regard Tate's alteration with laughter. Unlike Davies, however, they laugh at the play itself rather than Tate's quaint attitude of superiority.³⁸ But Tate's audience did not laugh, nor did Kemble's over a hundred years later. Thus, while modern scholars might think presumptuous Gentleman's assertion that Lear with Tate's additions would continue to gain popularity "while any taste for the drama remains,"³⁹ an examination of modern critical methods in assessing the value of Shakespearean alterations reveals in us a presumption no less dependent upon our own critical standards and proves that while taste for the drama does indeed remain, ours is as far removed from Gentleman's as his was from Shakespeare's.

NOTES

- ¹ The Private Correspondence of David Garrick, ed. James Boaden (London, 1831), I, 515.
- ² Addison and Steele: Selections from "The Tatler" and "The Spectator", ed. Robert J. Allen (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1957), pp. 87-88.
- ³ On the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare, in Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare, 2nd ed., ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 28.
- ⁴ Notes to Shakespeare, ed. Arthur Sherbo, Augustan Reprint Society (Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 1956), III, 145.
- ⁵ Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism, ed. Lawrence Huston Houtchens and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949), p. 16.
- ⁶ Houtchens and Houtchens.
- ⁷ Notes to Shakespeare, III, 145.
- ⁸ Preface to The History of King Lear (1768; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), p. iv.
- ⁹ Herbert Spencer Robinson, English Shakespearean Criticism in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1968), p. 153.
- ¹⁰ Dramatic Miscellanies (London, 1784), II, 118.
- ¹¹ The History of the Theatres of London and Dublin (1761, 1771; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1969), III, 119-20.
- ¹² Biographia Dramatica (London, 1812), II, 307.
- ¹³ Dramatic Miscellanies, II, 327.

¹⁴ The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), V, i. Shattuck has reproduced Kemble's Lear of 1808. Parenthetical references to Kemble's Lear are to this source.

¹⁵ David Rostron, "John Philip Kemble's 'King Lear' of 1795," in Essays on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage, ed. Kenneth Richards and Peter Thomson (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1972), pp. 150-51. It is strange that Rostron thinks of Kemble as having restored the love interest in Lear. At the time of Kemble's revision, Garrick's version, which had held the stage for fifty years, contained Tate's romance.

¹⁶ The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), I, 353.

¹⁷ An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare (1769; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), pp. 40-41.

¹⁸ On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation, in The Works of Charles Lamb (New York: H. W. Derby, 1859-61), III, 95.

¹⁹ Dramatic Miscellanies, II, 262; Christopher Spencer, "A Word for Tate's King Lear," Studies in English Literature, 3 (Spring, 1963), 242-43.

²⁰ The Dramatic Censor, I, 357.

²¹ Lucyle Hook, "Shakespeare Improv'd, or A Case for the Affirmative," Shakespeare Quarterly, 4 (July, 1953), 289-99.

²² Dramatic Miscellanies, II, 263.

²³ Nahum Tate, The History of King Lear (1681; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), p. 67.

²⁴ Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), II, 80.

²⁵ Tate's Lear, p. 40. Although Kemble omits the Grotto Scene, he does include the lines in which Edmund and Regan arrange to meet at the grotto (IV.i.pp. 46-47).

²⁶ Some Account of the English Stage (Bath, 1832), VIII, 132.

- 27 Bell's Shakespeare, II, 75.
- 28 The complete text of Warton's essay is given in Brian Vickers, ed., Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), IV, 78-83.
- 29 Preface to Colman's Lear, pp. iv-v.
- 30 Bell's Shakespeare, II, 60. See also The Dramatic Censor, I, 363-64.
- 31 Tate's Lear, p. 38.
- 32 Bell's Shakespeare, II, 50.
- 33 Preface to Colman's Lear, p. v.
- 34 Preface.
- 35 Dramatic Miscellanies, II, 267.
- 36 Bell's Shakespeare, II, 17.
- 37 Dramatic Miscellanies, II, 261.
- 38 See, for example, Hazelton Spencer, Shakespeare Improved (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927), p. 101; Herbert Spencer Robinson, p. 153.
- 39 Bell's Shakespeare, II, 80.

CHAPTER X

OTHELLO AND ROMEO AND JULIET

Like the role of Hamlet, that of Lear was not ideally suited to Kemble's acting method. The range of emotions displayed by the old monarch was too great, and his passion was too intense, too sudden and changing. In his review of King Lear in the Examiner (May 20, 1808), Leigh Hunt noted sardonically that Kemble's formality on the stage prevented him from doing justice to the role of Lear: ". . . he is always stiff, always precise, and he will never, as long as he lives, be able to act anything mad unless it be a melancholy mad statue."¹ One of the obstacles Kemble faced in playing Lear was the lingering memory of Garrick in the part. Lear had been one of Garrick's best roles, suited to his intensity and to the close intimacy of the old Drury Lane Theatre of the mid-eighteenth century. Thus, when Sir Walter Scott gave his estimation of Kemble in the role of Lear, he dismissed the subject simply by saying Kemble was inferior to Garrick.² Similarly, James Boaden could not mention Kemble's Lear without noting that Garrick's portrayal had been as yet unapproached. Boaden recalled that Kemble achieved only one truly great characterization of

Lear, and that was when he first attempted the part on January 21, 1788. In subsequent attempts, Boaden said, Kemble always portrayed the king "too elaborately aged, and quenched with infirmity the insane fire of the injured father."³

Apparently, Kemble depicted Lear as a fragile old man, perhaps because his acting style and his congenital asthma would not allow him to play the role any other way. On the other hand, it is quite possible that Kemble was not attempting to hide his deficiency in the part, but was rather conscientiously adhering to his own idea of versimilitude by playing Lear quite literally as an old man who, by his own admission, is "fourscore and upward." Kemble's literal interpretation of what Shakespeare's characters say about themselves, not to mention his eminent rationality, also caused him to be unsuccessful in the role of Othello. Boaden implied that Kemble failed in the part, noting that in spite of the pathos the actor generated as Othello, still "he was a European: there seemed to be a philosophy in his bearing; there was reason in his rage: he acted as if Othello truly described himself, when he calls himself 'one not easily jealous.'"⁴ If Kemble actually thought Othello was not easily made jealous and could find no evidence in the play to convince him otherwise, he was not alone in his evaluation. Charles Dibdin also seems to have taken Othello

at his word, judging him to be "slow in his suspicions," an assessment that, as far as Dibdin was concerned, "everybody have agreed upon."⁵

When Kemble withdrew from the role of Othello in the season of 1807-1808 to play Iago, his attempts to raise the character to one who could, after a fashion, be truly called "honest" caused him once again to be unsuccessful. The actor who had been in possession of the part of Iago before Kemble was the magnificently villainous George Frederick Cooke, who played the role as a cunning, thoroughly malignant fiend. The transformation of Iago in Kemble's hands was roundly criticized in a review of 1807, reprinted anonymously in Oxberry's Dramatic Biography:

He performs it under the notion, that all have missed the just idea of the character but himself--that it remained for his own BLACK-LETTERED researches, and those of his feeble tribe of amateurs, to restore Iago to what Shakespeare intended him to be In a word, he sinks the villain, in order to bring forward the hero; he mixes him with the general tribe of those who are exhibited on the stage, under the impulse of REVENGE. He strips him of his pusillanimity, his meanness, and malignity, in order to substitute the spirited and lofty revenge of a Zanga. He blows him up to a false elevation,--exhibits him as sublime, instead of hateful,--magnanimous, instead of pitiful,--an object more of compassion than disgust.⁶

Kemble's interpretation of Iago, like that of Othello, was probably the product of several motivating factors, the most obvious being his single-faceted, declamatory method of delivery. Kemble may have felt, too, that his own status as an actor depended partly upon the sublimity of the roles

he played; thus, Kemble may have been able to convince himself that Iago's rage at being passed over for promotion and his suspicions concerning the virtue of Emilia were just reasons for revenge rather than outward reflections and proofs of a vicious character. Whatever Kemble's reasons for depicting a heroic Iago, the audience seems not to have been satisfied with the interpretation, for after appearing in the role twice, Kemble withdrew from the part. Although he continued to produce the play, the manager did not appear in Othello again until his farewell season. William Macready was in the audience at Kemble's 1816 farewell performance at Smock Alley in Dublin, where, strangely enough, the actor had chosen to finish with Othello. In his Reminiscences Macready recalled that Kemble was exceedingly disappointing as the Moor, literally walking through his part and speaking his lines without emotion.⁷ Although Kemble's seeming indifference to Othello may have been the result of his age and respiratory infirmity, it may also have been caused by the indifferent reception the actor had always received in both of the major roles of the play.

Professor Odell has grouped Kemble's alteration of Othello (1804) among those of his productions which followed the Bell's version so closely that they ought to be considered merely "copies eased of a few encumbrances,"⁸ which

in Othello consisted almost entirely of sexual allusions that had been allowed to stand in the already heavily curtailed Bell's edition but which, as the century progressed, appear to have become increasingly less tolerable to critics. For some of his omissions, Kemble seems to have relied on the criticisms of Francis Gentleman, delivered in the margins of Bell's Shakespeare and in the Dramatic Censor. In the opening scene of Othello, for example, Gentleman had italicized Iago's vulgar references to Othello as "an old black ram" tugging Brabantio's "white ewe" and to Desdemona "covered with a Barbary horse," indicating that these lines and others should be omitted for decency.⁹ Kemble omitted all the italicized references except one, retaining the reference to "the beast with two backs," an inexplicable oversight since Kemble's nicety had elsewhere reached such proportions that he changed Shakespeare's "A pox of drowning thyself" (I.iii.355-56) to "A plague of drowning" (p. 21). Also, Kemble omitted over twenty-five lines spoken by Iago at the end of the initial scene of Shakespeare's Act Two (ll. 224-45, 254-58), perhaps because he had read Gentleman's comment in his copy of the Dramatic Censor that Iago's speech contains such unpardonable "licentious sentiment" as to "shame quotation."¹⁰ The most telling evidence that Kemble was relying on Gentleman's advice, however, is in the manager's curtailment of the first scene of Act Four. In

the Bell's version, Gentleman had placed an asterisk beside Othello's command, "Get me some poison, Iago" (IV.i.199), remarking in the margin, "We think beginning the Act at this line would save delicacy a blush or two, and be, in that sense, an improvement."¹¹ Kemble began his own fourth act exactly where Gentleman had recommended.

Kemble's only other notable omission of lines which had been retained in Bell's is where Othello announces his intention to consummate his marriage with Desdemona (I.iii. 8-10). In all his other excisions, Kemble used the Bell's version of Othello as his model. The clown and musicians who appear in the first two scenes of Shakespeare's third act were considered unbecomingly humorous and vulgar for tragedy and were, in the words of Gentleman, "with strict justice, banished; as also another excrescence, Cassio's mistress, Bianca."¹² Bianca's omission resulted not so much from her unsavory profession as from the inconsequence of her presence in the play. The only scene in which Bianca figures heavily is the one in which Cassio is injured by Roderigo, who is himself killed treacherously by Iago (IV.i). Francis Gentleman assured his contemporaries that the scene was much improved with the banishment of the courtesan: "If the whole was done as Shakespeare wrote it, and Bianca produced howling over her gallant, the scene would be intolerable; even as it is, much shortened, it

rather intrudes upon material feelings."¹³ The material feelings to which Gentleman referred were generated in the preceding scene (IV.iii), in which Othello commands Desdemona to go to her bedchamber and wait for him there. The emotional state of the audience resulted only from their knowledge of Othello's murderous intentions, however, not from the melancholy conversation between Desdemona and Emilia or Desdemona's pathetic "Willow Song." Kemble followed Bell's in omitting all but the first seventeen lines of the scene, perhaps having in mind Gentleman's contention that the remaining eighty-six lines were too emotionally conflicting to be retained:

. . . if Desdemona was to chaunt the lamentable ditty, and speak all that Shakespeare has allotted for her in this scene, an audience, as Foigard says, would not know whether to laugh or cry; and Emilia's quibbling dissertation on cuckold-making is contemptible to the last degree.¹⁴

In the final scene of the play, Kemble made his only addition to Shakespeare's Othello, having the Moor first strangle Desdemona, then stab her with his dagger after Emilia begins knocking at the door (V.ii.p. 73). This addition Kemble thought necessary to make Desdemona's death more credible after she briefly regains her speech. As Gentleman had noted, it is highly unnatural for a victim of suffocation to revive and then die seemingly without cause. When Kemble added the stabbing incident, however, it is likely that he was merely putting into print an action

that had been represented on the stage for some time. Although the stage directions do not call for Desdemona to be stabbed in the Bell's version, Gentleman's remarks seem to indicate his approval of the altered manner of her death rather than his opinion that she ought to be stabbed.¹⁵

Thus, Kemble probably added nothing really new to Othello and differed from previous adapters only in the greater extent to which he excised sexual references, resulting in a play over nine hundred lines shorter than Shakespeare's. Even after Kemble's thorough bowdlerizing, however, a reviewer in the Monthly Mirror (January, 1808) claimed that as it was presently altered, Othello remained "a most replenished brothel of the vilest 'goats and monkeys' of Shakespeare's brain" and could not be staged "without committing such a violence on the modesty and decency of the house as is altogether intolerable."¹⁶

Since there was practically nothing of a sexual nature remaining in Kemble's Othello to offend even the most zealous champion of English moral virtue, the reviewer's objections were quite possibly motivated by racial considerations. A very young Kemble had been severely criticized in 1780 for altering Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors so that the two Dromios were black. Kemble titled this first attempt at Shakespearean alteration Oh! its impossible! and was still being censured nearly a century later for a

"gross indiscretion, which speaks an extraordinary deficiency of taste or even intelligence."¹⁷ It should not be surprising, then, that some critics may have agreed with Charles Lamb that Othello should never have been acted because of the disgust and revulsion excited in a white audience when they beheld "a coal-black Moor" make love to and murder his beautiful, innocent white wife, regardless of the fact that he was arrayed in the full dress uniform of a British general during the reign of George III, as Kemble was.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Othello continued to find enough of a following during Kemble's career to make its production profitable to Kemble the manager, if not the actor.

The fate of Othello in Kemble's hands paralleled, to some extent, that of another popular Shakespearean drama, Romeo and Juliet. Like Othello, Romeo and Juliet was altered by Kemble in great part to purge it of overt sexual references, and like Othello, Romeo and Juliet was one of the few plays in which Kemble was unsuccessful as an actor. In fact, Kemble was apparently even less successful as Romeo than he had been as Othello, for after only three appearances in the role during the season of 1788-89, he never attempted it again.¹⁹ His formality and methodical style were obviously not suited to the passions and sudden emotions of a teenage lover. Boaden blamed Kemble's failure as Romeo mainly on the actor's too noble countenance:

". . . youthful love I think was never well expressed by Kemble: the thoughtful strength of his features was at variance with juvenile passion."²⁰ Thus, the male lead of Romeo and Juliet went to young Charles, while the elder Kemble busied himself with the preparation of a suitably decent acting copy of the play.

Kemble's adaptation of Romeo and Juliet was closely modeled on David Garrick's 1748 version appearing in Bell's Shakespeare. The manager's only departures from the Bell's version were in a few minor restorations (Mercutio's "grave man" conceit, for example), and in his more extensive omissions of bawdy dialogue, already heavily cut by Garrick. In the opening scene of the first act of the play, for example, Kemble followed Bell's in omitting twenty lines of the exchange between Sampson and Gregory because of all the naughty references to maidenheads and sexual prowess (I.i. 8-28), and in Scene Four of the same act, where Garrick had retained the Nurse's "by my maidenhead," Kemble altered the indelicate oath to "by my faith" (p. 13). Francis Gentleman was at a loss to explain why Garrick, whom he greatly admired, had allowed the Nurse's indecent remark to pass unaltered, but he was even more scandalized by Garrick's retaining too much of Mercutio's conjuration at the beginning of the second act. Summing up the eighteenth-century rationale that no doubt guided Kemble in excising such

material, Gentleman maintained that while such vulgar remarks might be natural to a nurse or a man like Mercutio, the adapter ought to consider not what such characters might say, but what was fit for an audience to hear.²¹

Kemble could tolerate Mercutio's references to the lady's "fine foot, straight leg," and even her "quivering thigh" (II.i.19), but unlike Garrick, he could not allow "the demesnes that there adjacent lie" (l. 20). In the same speech Shakespeare's Mercutio utters an even more suggestive conceit:

To raise a spirit in his mistress' circle
Of some strange nature, letting it there stand
Till she had conjur'd it down.

(II.i.24-26)

Garrick omitted part of the quibble and changed "circle" to "arms" so that the conceit in the Bell's version is less explicit:

To raise a spirit in his mistress's arms,
Till she had laid it.

(II.i.p. 100)

Kemble omitted the offending lines altogether.

In all the significant changes in the plot of Romeo and Juliet, Kemble followed Garrick's example. One such change was the omission of any reference to Rosaline, the object of Romeo's infatuation before he sees Juliet. In the advertisement to his adaptation of the play, Garrick justified the omission by professing his compliance with public opinion that Romeo's change of affection was a blemish in the

character in spite of his own conviction that Shakespeare had accurately depicted adolescent love.²² When Kemble produced his adaptations at Drury Lane (c. 1800) and Covent Garden (1811), he, too, was probably bowing to public opinion in following Garrick's omission of Rosaline. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Charles Dibdin gave his approval to the banishment of Rosaline by stating that in altering "Romeo's sudden inconstancy" Garrick had "very judiciously done little more than make Shakespeare alter his own play."²³ One early nineteenth-century argument raised in favor of keeping Romeo's initial attachment to Rosaline maintained that Romeo's inconstancy was a flaw in his character, but it was a necessary flaw, contributing to the catastrophe of the young lovers:

Shakespeare seems to have intended, by making him first enamoured with another (Rosalind), to point out his misfortunes in the consequence of one passion, as a piece of poetical justice for his inconstancy and falsehood in regard to a prior attachment; as Juliet's in some measure are for her breach of filial obedience.²⁴

Whatever critical authority a strict application of poetic justice had enjoyed during the preceding century, however, it was diminishing in the nineteenth century. Moreover, those who favored Garrick's alteration could point out that the tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet result from the sins of their fathers, not themselves. With the omission of Rosaline, the tragic flaw of the parents is employed early

in the play when, in lines added by Garrick and adopted by Kemble, Romeo announces that he will attend the Capulet ball so he may find an opportunity to profess his love to Juliet. The naive innocence of young love is placed in direct contrast with the hatred between the two fathers:

I'll watch the time; and, mask'd from observation,
 Make known my sufferings, but conceal my name:
 Though hate and discord 'twixt our sires increase,
 Let in our hearts dwell love and endless peace.
(I.iii.p. 13)

Kemble followed the dialogue of Garrick's version as well in changing the catastrophe of Romeo and Juliet so that Juliet awakens in the tomb before Romeo dies and the lovers enjoy a brief, tragic reunion. This change in denouement, a traditional alteration by Garrick's day, had been introduced to the late seventeenth-century English stage in Otway's Caius Marius, an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet incorporating parts of Bandello's original novella. Theophilus Cibber adopted the change into his own alteration of Romeo and Juliet (1744), which held the stage until Garrick's revision. In the advertisement to this version, Garrick justified the alteration by implying that the only reason Shakespeare himself did not have Juliet awaken before Romeo dies was that he used an inaccurate French or English translation of Bandello, "both of which have injudiciously left out this addition to the catastrophe."²⁵ Garrick's rationale for changing the catastrophe was still

being voiced in the nineteenth century, as were the reasons for the success of the altered scene:

. . . without doing much more than restoring Shakespeare to himself, and the story to the Novel from which it was originally borrowed, he [Garrick] has rendered the whole more uniform, and worked up the catastrophe to a greater degree of distress than it held in the original; as Juliet's awakening before Romeo's death, and the transports of the latter, on seeing her revive . . . give scope for that sudden transition, from rapture to despair, which make the recollection that he must die, infinitely more affecting, and the distress of Juliet, as well as his own, much deeper than it is possible to be in Shakespeare's play.²⁶

Although James Boaden thought Garrick's alteration of the Tomb Scene "very meanly written, when compared with the language of Shakespeare," he nevertheless approved of Kemble's retaining it in his own version "because it affords a scene of exquisit emotion."²⁷ If the enjoyment of the scene by anyone in Kemble's audience might have been dampened by an unhappy juxtaposition of Garrick's lines with Shakespeare's, however, there was no worry on that account, for virtually all of Romeo's original lines after he enters the tomb had been excised. Substituted in their place were lines which were appropriately sentimental and which, in spite of their meanness, generated the exquisite emotion to which Boaden referred. Romeo's death, for example, was no longer prefaced with Shakespeare's simple line, "Thus with a kiss I die." His last words were instead a heart-rending appeal to the poison-induced phantoms of his delirious brain:

She is my wife,--our hearts are twin'd together,--
 Capulet, forbear;--Paris, loose your hold;--
 Pull not our heart strings thus:--they crack,--
 they break,--
 O, Juliet! Juliet!--

(V.iv.p. 72)

Another added scene in Garrick's Romeo and Juliet, like the altered catastrophe, demonstrates the eighteenth-century stage convention of adding sentimental claptrap to raise the emotions of the audience and, consequently, to fill the seats of the theatre. The first scene of Garrick's Act Five is taken up entirely with Juliet's funeral procession, a long train of monks, friars, priests and mourners, whose movement across the stage is accompanied by a ponderous dirge. The fact that Garrick's audience could be moved by such a spectacle, even though they knew Juliet was actually alive, was attested to by Francis Gentleman, who claimed that the addition netted the theatre a great deal of money and that the pageantry of the funeral procession was instrumental in making Romeo and Juliet "thoroughly popular."²⁸ In an essay appearing in The Student (October, 1750), Arthur Murphy called the funeral procession, which was being staged at both Covent Garden and Drury Lane at the time "with a rival magnificence and ostentation," absurd and ridiculous, "for instead of being affected with that seriousness which a real funeral might produce, we must rather laugh at so much pomp and expence bestowed on Juliet, whom we know is not dead. . . . In short, if there is any distress stirring,

the candle-snuffers and scene shifters who assisted as chief mourners have it all to themselves."²⁹ Although Murphy's criticism may have been shared by some, it is not indicative of general opinion, for the sentiments of the audience regarding the procession had probably not changed greatly even by the early nineteenth century, as Kemble's inclusion of the scene demonstrates.

There are no stage directions or interleaf notes in the Covent Garden promptbook to indicate how Kemble staged the procession; his own version follows Garrick's exactly. As Boaden noted in the actor's biography, however, Kemble was aware of the increasing public rage for spectacle, and "there could be no hope that the moderate days of Garrick would ever return."³⁰ Sir Walter Scott thought that Kemble sometimes gave his own penchant for spectacle too free a hand, and, like Boaden, he noted as well that Kemble "sacrificed perhaps his own opinion to the humour of the audience, and to the tempting facilities which the size of the modern theatres afford for what is called spectacle."³¹ Thus, it is probable that although Kemble's Romeo and Juliet was to all purposes Garrick's, certain scenes, such as the Capulet ball and Juliet's funeral procession, were staged more elaborately in Kemble's theatre than they had been in Garrick's, especially considering that the manager did not have to concern himself with acting a part and could devote himself exclusively to the staging of the play.

NOTES

¹ Leigh Hunt's Dramatic Criticism, 1808-1831, ed. Lawrence Huston Houtchens and Carolyn Washburn Houtchens (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949), p. 20.

² Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., by James Boaden, Quarterly Review, 34 (1826), 218.

³ Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., (London, 1825), I, 378-79.

⁴ Memoirs, p. 256.

⁵ A Complete History of the English Stage (London, 1800), III, 349-50.

⁶ Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes (London, 1825), III, 280-81.

⁷ Macready's Reminiscences, and Selections from his Diaries and Letters, ed. Sir Frederick Pollock (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1875), p. 85.

⁸ Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), II, 54. Prompt editions of Kemble's Othello were published in 1804, 1808 and 1814. Shattuck has reproduced the edition of 1804 in The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), Vol. VII. Parenthetical references to Kemble's Othello are to this source.

⁹ Bell's Shakespeare (1774; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), I, 155-56.

¹⁰ The Dramatic Censor (1770; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), I, 137.

¹¹ Bell's Shakespeare, I, 210.

¹² Bell's, p. 205. See also The Dramatic Censor, I, 139-39.

¹³ The Dramatic Censor, I, 147.

- 14 Dramatic Censor, p. 146.
- 15 Dramatic Censor, p. 148; Bell's Shakespeare, I, 225.
- 16 Quoted in Marvin Rosenberg, "The Refinement of 'Othello' in the Eighteenth Century," Studies in Philology, 51 (January, 1954), 80.
- 17 Percy Fitzgerald, The Kembles (London: Tinsley Bros., 1871), I, 81.
- 18 On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation in The Works of Charles Lamb (New York: H. W. Derby, 1859-61), III, 96. Kemble later exchanged the British uniform for the "equally improper" costume of a nineteenth-century Moorish jacket and trousers. See Boaden's Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I, 256.
- 19 C. B. Hogan, Shakespeare in the Theatre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), II, 605-606; The Kemble Promptbooks, VIII, i. Shattuck has reproduced Kemble's Romeo and Juliet of 1811. Parenthetical references to Kemble's Romeo and Juliet are to this source.
- 20 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., I, 419.
- 21 The Dramatic Censor, I, 175-77.
- 22 Bell's Shakespeare, II, 83. Francis Gentleman favored the excision of Rosaline as an improvement upon the original since it rendered Romeo's love "more uniform" (p. 93).
- 23 A Complete History of the English Stage, III, 43.
- 24 Stephen Jones, ed., Biographia Dramatica (London, 1812), III, 223.
- 25 Bell's Shakespeare, II, 84.
- 26 Biographia Dramatica, III, 223.
- 27 Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons (London, 1827), II, 283-84.
- 28 Bell's Shakespeare, II, 141; The Dramatic Censor, I, 185.

- 29 Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage, ed. Brian Vickers (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), III, 379.
- 30 The Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 321.
- 31 Rev. of Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., by James Boaden, p. 228.

CHAPTER XI

COMEDY AND ROMANCE

Kemble's noble countenance and stately bearing on the stage, verging on stiffness, not only disqualified the actor from pathetic roles, like that of Romeo, but excluded him as well from comedy in general. Kemble's inability to play the comic seems to have been an accepted fact from the earliest beginnings of his career in London. The April, 1783 issue of The Gentleman's Magazine, for example, contained a puff introducing Kemble as the new young actor who would soon be arriving from Dublin. Citing an extensive catalogue of Kemble's dramatic roles, the reviewer concluded the list with an explanation of his reasons for omitting the actor's comic parts, observing that they were "of very little moment, and, to say the truth, much below the attention of such a performer: indeed comedy is by no means his forte."¹ Similarly, during the latter part of Kemble's career, Thomas Gilliland reminded the public of what, no doubt, they had long been aware: "The form and majestic lineaments of Mr. Kemble's face are not calculated to express the ludicrous feelings of the Comic Muse; in parts therefore of a light, airy construction, he must always appear

to great disadvantage."² Kemble was prevented from acting the comic not simply by his habitual demeanor, however, which, if he had been so inclined, he might have suspended. As Boaden was to observe, Kemble did not consider himself a mere entertainer; he would never have thought, like Garrick or Henderson, of indulging an audience with mimicry, even in private:

Mr. Kemble would have thought himself degraded by any exhibitions of such a nature; he was impressed with a higher sense of the dignity and utility of his art; and had not found it so easily acquired, as to be an object of sport and momentary assumption.³

As one might suspect, this sense of dignity and utility Kemble felt about his profession expressed itself in an acting style that was remarkably cold and studied. And while some critics praised Kemble's stage formality for raising serious dramatic representation to its loftiest height, others criticized it as too artificial for credibility; "hence," recalled one critic, "his performances seldom, if ever, transported you into an idea that you were witnessing a real scene."⁴

The sense of realism that Kemble's acting was too often unable to capture was considered by eighteenth-century critics more essential to comedy than to tragedy since comedy reflected contemporary life rather than life in general and since comic characters usually did not conform to recognized types as tragic characters did.⁵ Kemble's presence in comic drama, then, would result not just in the failure of

his role, but in the loss of dramatic illusion for the play as a whole. Just how notable an impact Kemble's inability to play comedy had upon the theatres after his arrival is revealed in Boaden's remarks about the disposition of comedy writers at Covent Garden after Kemble assumed the management in 1803:

The comic writers for that theatre were by no means pleasant under the change; they had found the field open long, and were alarmed at any invasion. Mr. Harris said what he could to still their apprehensions, but they bore their dismay in legible characters about with them. One of Thalia's chief supporters, upon this serious advent, was advised "to fall in gratitude to his knees, that Heaven had blessed him with only two children,"⁶

Thus, most of the offerings of contemporary comedy writers either went unnoticed or were demoted to afterpieces during Kemble's management of Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Nevertheless, Shakespearean comedy was still revived with some regularity. As You Like It, for example, had remained a perennial favorite since its restoration to the London stage in 1740, and Kemble included the play in his company's repertoire throughout his career. As Shattuck notes, however, As You Like It was not important as a vehicle for Kemble's own acting, and when he finally published it in 1810, it was virtually identical with the traditional version given in Bell's Shakespeare.⁷ The Taming of the Shrew was also staged regularly during Kemble's tenure as manager, but it was Garrick's three-act farce, titled Katherine and

Petruchio and shown only as an afterpiece. Kemble had tried to revive All's Well that Ends Well both at Drury Lane (1794) and Covent Garden (1811) but failed in both attempts.⁸

He was more successful as the Duke in Measure for Measure and Shylock in The Merchant of Venice, but only moderately so, for in all the dramatic criticisms of the period of Kemble's ascendancy as an actor and manager, very little note was taken of his efforts in these or, indeed, in any of the comedies he produced.

The paucity of critical comment on Kemble's revivals of Shakespearean comedy did not extend to Kemble's productions of the romances, however. In fact, one of the most controversial and successful adaptations Kemble ever produced was The Tempest, drawing as much critical attention as his tragedies and becoming the traditional stage version of the play for the next half century. Before Kemble revived The Tempest in 1789, it had not been sufficiently popular with audiences to be considered regular theatrical fare.⁹ The play would probably have continued to find only small success in Kemble's hands as well if the manager had not revived certain of the additions with which Dryden and Davenant had altered it in 1670. Kemble's principal borrowings from the Dryden and Davenant version were two additional characters, Dorinda and Hippolito. Dorinda is Miranda's sister and, like Miranda, has never set eyes upon a man. Hippolito is the rightful Duke of Mantua, orphaned as an infant through

the treachery of Alonso and Antonio and rescued by Prospero to be raised on the Enchanted Island. A male counterpart to Prospero's daughters, Hippolito has never beheld a woman, for he has been kept on a part of the island remote from the sisters. His relationship with Dorinda parallels the romance between Ferdinand and Miranda. Another additional character in the Restoration version was Sycorax, Caliban's twin sister, not retained by Kemble probably because her main function in the play was served in establishing an incestuous relationship with her monstrous brother.

After the opening performance of The Tempest at Drury Lane, Kemble noted that the play "was received with great applause" but recorded only about one hundred and fifty-five pounds in receipts, a mediocre gate by late eighteenth-century standards, even considering the small size of the old Drury Lane theatre. His estimation of the success of the play seems to have been accurate, however, for the following performance earned nearly two hundred and fifty pounds.¹⁰ The contemporary reviews of Kemble's Tempest indicate the source of the play's success. The reviewer for The Oracle (October 14, 1789), for example, besides praising the company's great care in staging and acting, asserted that the play owed much of its new-found success to the additions of Dryden, through which Kemble had produced "an entertainment of the most pleasing and rational nature."¹¹ The reviewer's

choice of the term rational to describe the nature of Kemble's Tempest is revealing in its implication that, among other things, the addition of Hippolito and his romance with Dorinda is a counterweight to the Miranda-Ferdinand plot, bringing the play as a whole into a sort of equilibrium analogous to the rational mind. Another critic, expressing his views in a short-lived theatrical journal called The Prompter, had mixed feelings about the alteration. Some of Shakespeare's best dialogue, he maintained, had "suffered an inhuman amputation," and dividing the audience's attention between two pairs of lovers had a weakening effect. On the whole, the reviewer felt that the additions from the Restoration version failed to compensate "for such an encroachment on so great an author," but he was obliged to admit their appeal to popular taste:

The artless innocence, life and novelty of Dorinda, however, give great pleasure, as does the surprise of Hippolito and his consequent love, on seeing Dorinda for the first time. There is a playfulness of language only suited to such an extraordinary situation, that makes the scenes where these two characters appear very interesting.¹²

In his twentieth-century assessment of Kemble's Tempest, Odell examines this same meeting between Hippolito and Dorinda; it is one of the few instances in which he discards the identity of the objective dramatic historian and is compelled to censure the judgment of an adapter:

The lovely first meeting of Ferdinand and Miranda is reduced to a mere scenario of what Shakespeare wrote,

whereas Dryden's Hyppolito and Dorinda prattle away to a revolting degree in their original not very decent Restoration language. . . . Dorinda is really a minx who knows more by nature . . . than most girls ever learn by association with the world. She is a blot on the purity of The Tempest, and Kemble should be reprobated for restoring her.¹³

Although he points out that prior to the appearance of Kemble's version, The Tempest could not be considered regular acting fare, Odell seems at a loss to understand why Kemble felt it necessary to alter the "very satisfactory" version in Bell's Shakespeare, which, although greatly abridged, had none of the Dryden and Davenant additions. He does note, however, that Kemble's play "had a longer life than Shakespeare's own work has ever since enjoyed."¹⁴ Thus, without saying it in so many words, Odell, like the reviewer in The Prompter over a century before, laments the aesthetic loss while acknowledging the increased popularity of Kemble's Tempest with the revival of the Hippolito-Dorinda plot. Odell also identifies one of the primary reasons for the success of the additions when he notes that Kemble demolished the purity of Shakespeare's play with the introduction of the "not very decent" prattle of the naive couple. The average theatregoers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did not appreciate the pristine beauty of the romance Shakespeare had created between Ferdinand and Miranda, but they found the relationship between Hippolito and Dorinda delightful, perhaps because both

lovers were equally naive, offering the audience a situation with a greater scope of sexual fantasy. In a review of Kemble's Tempest in The Examiner (July 23, 1815), William Hazlitt observed with disgust that the audience not only appreciated the additions more than the original, they appeared to have lost all comprehension of meaning in the dialogue of Ferdinand and Miranda: "The lips of the actors are seen to move, but the sounds they utter exciting no corresponding emotions in the breast, are no more distinguished than the repetition of so many cabalistical words."¹⁵

Although Odell implies that it is the indecency of the added dialogue which destroyed the purity of The Tempest and captured the attention of the audiences, even the most zealous champion of decency would be hard put to agree. Considering Kemble's penchant for blotting out Shakespeare's bawdiness in his own productions, even in those which had been scrupulously pruned by earlier adapters, one need not actually read Kemble's Tempest to rest assured that what little indecency may be found in the dialogue between Dorinda and Hippolito is supplied by the mind of the spectator rather than the dialogue itself.¹⁶ In fact, if Kemble destroyed the purity of The Tempest, it was not through the addition of indecent lines, but rather in their omission. In Act One, Scene Two, for example, Kemble omitted Prospero's angry recollection of Caliban's attempted rape of

Miranda and the monster's vulgar reply that it was a pity he failed (ll. 346-52). Similarly, in the second scene of Act Three, Kemble deleted all of Caliban's lustful references to Miranda when the monster prevails upon Stephano to kill Prospero (ll. 88-100), although the omitted lines were retained in both the Restoration version and Bell's Shakespeare. Maurice Morgann had noted in 1777 that Caliban's expressions of lust functioned to contrast the innocence of Miranda.¹⁷ Kemble obviously did not agree that Caliban's lust emphasizes Miranda's innocence, for he not only omitted all of the monster's references to her, but even sent her off the stage before Caliban enters, perhaps in order to preserve a tone of purity that he felt would otherwise be lost.

True to his philosophy of the didactic purpose of drama, Kemble also included additions from Dryden and Davenant which endowed The Tempest with a more explicit moral purpose than the original possessed. Transposing part of the first scene of Shakespeare's second act to the third scene of his own Act Three, Kemble adapted from the Restoration version lines in which Alonzo admits that the supposed loss of his son is poetic justice:

Alon. No, no, he's gone;
And you and I, Anthonio, were those
Who caused his death.

Anth. How could we help it?

Alon. The, then we should have help'd it,
When thou betray'dst thy brother Prospero,

And gavest Mantua's infant sovereign
 To my power: then lost we Ferdinand;
 Then forfeited our navy to this tempest.¹⁸
 (III.iii.p. 35)

Alonzo's realization of the cause of his troubles is followed by Shakespeare's Act Three, Scene Three, in which the banquet appears and Ariel informs the King of Naples that he is fated. Ariel makes no appearance in Kemble's version of 1789, however. Alonzo becomes his own persecutor, and the scene ends with his complete repentance. In the revision of 1806 Kemble staged the banquet scene with greater theatrical effect, employing thunder, lightning, and a gong. A voice beneath the stage speaks a much shortened version of Ariel's speech, omitted entirely from the earlier version of the play. As in the earlier version, however, the scene ends with Alonzo's repentance, followed by the appearance of a chorus of furies who sing a duet and pursue the nobles off the stage. Embellishing the 1789 version, Kemble added the interleaf directions, "Thunder & Lightning--the Volcano erupts--the Lake is changed to a fiery red" (p. 41), indicating that some spectacular stage effects had been added to the Covent Garden Tempest.

The spectacle with which Kemble staged The Tempest in 1789 was remarkable at the time, drawing the admiration of the reviewer for The Prompter:

The manager has been very judicious in the . . . scenery, decorations, and Machinery. Here Shakespeare's invention has been done justice too. The Storm, the furies, the ships on fire, had an awful effect.¹⁹

Kemble saved the shipwreck for the opening of the second act, a change which, according to John Genest, "was very badly managed," not from the standpoint of staging, however, but for the sake of continuity: ". . . the shipwreck should certainly take place in the 1st scene of the play, as it does even in Dryden--according to Kemble's alteration, Trinculo has swum to shore, and walked over a portion of the island while Caliban is speaking 17 lines."²⁰ Montague Summers, a twentieth-century scholar of Shakespearean alterations, also thought it strange that Kemble had placed the shipwreck in the second act.²¹ Although Kemble himself has left nothing in writing outlining his reasons for the change, it should not be too difficult to explain the probable rationale he employed. Kemble's shipwreck scene was not staged as it was in the versions of Shakespeare or Dryden. There is no shipboard setting; the whole is rather conducted as a panoramic representation of Ariel's narration to Prospero in the original (I.ii.196-206), and it must have been very cleverly accomplished if there was to be any realism to the scene. The stage setting of the version of 1789 consists of very simple directions for what must have been some fairly complicated special effects, describing a scene which called for an extreme illusion of depth and physical activity:

"The Sea Shore. A Storm. A Ship in the Midst of the Tempest. Ariel with Spirits assisting the storm" (p. 11). The scene

was concluded with the ship's sinking, followed by the disappearance of Ariel and his attendant spirits. The only material differences in the stage directions of the 1806 version are in the explicit directions calling for Ariel to fire the ship and in the ship's being made to founder, perhaps a more difficult stage trick than its sinking altogether (p. 16).

Kemble probably felt that the shipwreck scene as he staged it, with Ariel flitting about carrying a torch, accompanied by a troop of dancing wind spirits and a chorus of singing storm spirits, would overwhelm an audience who had just come in off the London streets. Charles Lamb was of the opinion that even Shakespeare's Tempest should not be acted because the representation of a conjurer and his familiar spirits "involves such a quantity of the hateful incredible, that all our reverence for the author cannot hinder us from perceiving such gross attempts upon the senses to be in the highest degree childish and inefficient."²² Although Kemble obviously disagreed, he certainly knew better than to produce too much of the "hateful incredible" too soon. Instead, he opened the play with the dialogue between Prospero and Miranda, altered by the presence of Dorinda, and introduced Ariel and Caliban. Thus, Kemble's first act serves to acquaint the audience with the circumstances of the character's presence on the Enchanted Island and with Prospero's

powers as a sorcerer, able to command the spirits of the elements. The supernatural assault on the ship at the beginning of the second act comes on Prospero's command given in Act One, establishing a continuity that, for the sake of spectacle, was worth the discrepancy that had so troubled Genest.

In the 1789 version, Kemble had added another piece of spectacle to The Tempest, the "Masque of Neptune and Amphitrite," borrowed from Shadwell's operatic version (1674) of the Dryden and Davenant play. The two deities enter in a chariot drawn by seahorses and are attended by a chorus of Nereids, Tritons, and wind spirits, led by Eolus (p. 53). Genest had nothing to say about the masque, except that it was introduced by "5 dull lines" from Kemble, apparently the manager's only original addition to the play.²³ In his assessment of the version of 1806 Genest noted with satisfaction that the masque had been omitted and much of the scene restored to Shakespeare but regretted that Kemble "had not the good sense" to restore Prospero's abjuration of arcane knowledge (V.i.33-57).²⁴ Kittredge explains that the soliloquy was important in Elizabethan times for Prospero to keep the sympathy of the audience by recapitulating the "good" character of his magic as opposed to the black magic of Sycorax.²⁵ In his own enlightened day, Dryden perhaps saw no need to retain the lines in the Restoration version because he could find no reason for Prospero's formal

renunciation of purely imaginary knowledge and powers. Kemble may have omitted Prospero's speech simply because it had not been included in his Restoration model, but more likely he decided against restoring it because it called for a sustained vocal effort that, even as early as 1789, his asthmatic condition would not permit him to attempt.

In spite of the many additions and omissions borrowed from The Tempest of Dryden and Davenant, changes which in the twentieth century have caused critics to complain that Kemble "botched the plot of The Tempest" and that, like Dryden and Davenant, his only aim was "to pander," the outcry one might expect from Kemble's contemporaries is not generally to be found.²⁶ According to Boaden, the most remarkable notice the play excited did not result from any of the alterations, but rather from Kemble's pronunciation of the word aches in Prospero's threat to Caliban, unaltered from the original:

If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly
 What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps;
 Fill all thy bones with aches; make thee roar,
 That beasts shall tremble at thy din.
(I.ii.368-71)²⁷

"Mr. Kemble dared to pronounce agreeably to the intention of Shakespeare," Boaden claimed, by sounding aches as a disyllable, aitches. Spectators and critics alike seized upon the actor's quaintness of expression as proof of Kemble's petty intellectual pretentiousness, but although

the pit snickered and jeered whenever Kemble spoke the word, he persisted in pronouncing it as he always had.²⁸ Genest maintained that Kemble's obstinacy in the matter "brought grist to the mill--the *Tempest* was acted several more times than it otherwise would have been." Genest also claimed that the controversy reached such proportions that when George Fredrick Cooke played Prospero, many came just to hear how he would pronounce aches; "he managed the matter very adroitly, by ommitting the line."²⁹

Late in Kemble's career there seems to have been no change in his inclination to pronounce the word as he thought proper, nor in the audience's continued derision, for in his early lectures of 1811-12, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was compelled to join the fray, observing that Kemble's pronunciation was correct although Kemble himself was guilty of "insufferable coxcomby."³⁰ It may have been this accusation, coming as it did from such an esteemed critic, that caused Boaden to say a few words in defence of Kemble's pedantry:

He was commonly, but very erroneously, supposed to be a man extremely gratified by scholastic peculiarity, and a sort of knowledge far fetched and worth but very little. Few men of his time were less addicted to enquiries of such a nature.³¹

As for accusations of pedantry by his contemporary reviewers, Kemble was hardly aware of their displeasure, for he almost never opened a newspaper.³² Rather his attention was cast almost exclusively on means to secure popular success for

his dramatic productions. His exertions with The Tempest gave him that success, both as an adapter and an actor. His alterations gave The Tempest continued success for fifty years, a success that the play has not enjoyed since. And his contribution to the play as an actor, despite the peculiarities of his pronunciation, resulted in a Prospero who "was a marvel of dignity and beautiful elocution."³³

Among Kemble's adaptations, the only Shakespearean romance to rival The Tempest in popularity was The Winter's Tale, first revived during the season of 1801-1802. Kemble, who played the part of Leontes, took note of the play's reception with the simple observation that it "was greatly applauded."³⁴ From his better vantage point in the audience, James Boaden enthusiastically claimed that "perhaps no revival ever drew greater crowds than this did."³⁵ As with Coriolanus, much of the credit for the success of The Winter's Tale was due to the great appeal of Mrs. Siddons in the role of Hermione. Many years after the play's initial revival, Boaden recalled that Siddons was particularly remarkable in the final scene, when the statue of Hermione is brought to life:

. . . in Paulina's chapel, she now stood one of the noblest statues, that even Grecian taste ever invented. The figure composed something like one of the muses in profile. The drapery ample in its folds, and seemingly stony in its texture. Upon the magical words, pronounced by Paulina, "Musick' awake her: strike" the sudden action of the head absolutely startled, as though such a miracle had really vivified the marble.³⁶

William Hazlitt, also recalling the play after the passage of many years, was similarly struck by the memory of Mrs. Siddons, who "in the last scene acted the painted statue to life--with true monumental dignity and noble passion."³⁷ In order to realize the full contribution of Kemble's sister to the play, one has only to consider that after the play's revival in 1811, Mrs. Siddons' farewell season, Kemble permanently withdrew it from the repertoire.³⁸

Apparently Kemble's own role as Leontes was not sufficiently profitable to warrant continuing the drama after Mrs. Siddons' retirement, an indication that it was mainly Siddons to whom the play owed the high success described by Boaden. As always, however, Kemble adequately complemented his sister in his own methodical way. The portrayal of Leontes calls for the development of a single passion, jealousy, to its fullest expression, a role seemingly tailored exactly to Kemble's dramatic abilities. Hazlitt was aware of the actor's suitability to the role and recalled that as Leontes, Kemble "worked himself up into a very fine classical phrensy."³⁹ This seems to have been the extent of Kemble's contribution to the play as an actor, however, for there is little comment from his contemporaries to indicate that his performance in The Winter's Tale was otherwise particularly outstanding. Kemble's primary contribution to The Winter's Tale was rendered as an adapter

and manager. His restoration of much of Shakespeare to the play, although much was still left out, earned him the approbation of John Genest, who noted with approval that "Kemble very properly revived the original play, instead of Garrick's bad alteration."⁴⁰

During his first season as manager of Drury Lane in 1788, Kemble had staged Garrick's adaptation of The Winter's Tale (1758) on five different occasions.⁴¹ Garrick's play may have appealed to the new manager because the alteration corrected what in the eighteenth century had been considered a gross mishandling of the unity of time. Garrick repaired the deficiency by cutting the entire jealousy plot and the ensuing passage of sixteen years. What remained was Florizel and Perdita, a three-act pastoral romance in which all the action takes place in Bohemia. In his prologue to the drama, Garrick indicated that the lack of unity was a blemish that had prevented The Winter's Tale from being acted and that his purpose in altering the play was primarily to mend the defect:

The five long Acts, from which our Three are taken,
Stretch'd out to sixteen Years, lay by, forsaken.
Lest then this precious Liquor run to waste,
'Tis now confin'd and bottled for your Taste.⁴²

Notwithstanding the predictable opinion of Genest, the contemporary critical reaction to Garrick's alteration of The Winter's Tale was generally favorable. In a letter to Garrick dated June 12, 1758, William Warburton praised the

actor for "giving an elegant form to a monstrous composition."⁴³ Tobias Smollett, reviewing Garrick's adaptation in The Critic (February, 1762), noted that critics had "long regretted the irregularity of Shakespeare's Winter's Tale," and he credited Garrick with removing all the objections which had been raised against the play:

The little unavoidable chasms of the original he has supplied and filled with a careful hand. . . . It now appears as a beautiful dramatic pastoral, raised and ennobled by passions, discoveries, and events which influence the fate of princes.⁴⁴

Even at the turn of the nineteenth century, Garrick was still receiving praise for bestowing unity on The Winter's Tale:

This play has been very judiciously separated into two dramatic pieces; and, viewed in this advantageous light, it has very few faults of any description. The subject of that which GARRICK brough forth as a tragedy in three acts under the original title, and in which, to do him justice, he sacredly steered clear of mutilation. . . . is great, natural, and affecting.⁴⁵

The possibility that Kemble may have at first approved of Garrick's alteration is indicated not only by his staging of the play, but also by his attitude toward the unities expressed in Macbeth Reconsidered (1786), the brief argument that Kemble later expanded into the essay on Macbeth and King Richard the Third (1817). In the earlier essay the young actor concedes that "neglect of unity is the obvious fault of Shakespeare's pieces."⁴⁶ Thus, Kemble's decision in 1802 to stage his own adaptations at Covent Garden may have resulted in part from an apparent change in attitude

toward the unities, which, Kemble says in the revised essay, should not act as restraints upon the theatre since they are merely "a conventional merit or defect, that can contribute nothing either to the amendment or depravation of the mind."⁴⁷ This attitude of indifferent recognition of the unities as a matter of convention seems partly to have informed Kemble's alteration of The Winter's Tale, in which he had to deal with the problem of indicating the passage of sixteen years without violating the credulity of his audience. Interestingly enough, Kemble solved the problem quite efficiently by not attempting to account for it at all. Kemble probably reasoned that Shakespeare's chorus (IV.i) only drew unnecessary attention to the time gap, besides forcing upon the audience an annoying breakdown of dramatic illusion; consequently, he deleted the chorus from his own Act Four, retaining Camillo's remark, "It has been sixteen years since I saw my country," as the only reference to the passage of time (IV.i.p. 45).

On the whole, Kemble's alterations in The Winter's Tale seem intended to emphasize the parts of Leontes and Hermione, which had suffered numerous deletions in the alteration of Thomas Hull. Hull's adaptation, given in Bell's Shakespeare (1773), was the acting version at Covent Garden until Kemble's revision. Kemble apparently had the Bell's version before him, as well as Garrick's, when he constructed his

own adaptation, for his omissions often seem to follow Hull while most of his additions are from Garrick. To increase the importance of the Leontes-Hermione plot, Kemble reduced the role of Camillo to little more than a bit part, and he shortened the third and fourth acts so that the Bohemia plot becomes merely a pastoral interlude to help acclimate the audience to the idea that sixteen years have passed in Sicily, where the more serious and important events in the play occur. While he shortened the third and fourth acts, Kemble restored about two hundred lines (mostly to Hermione and Leontes) to the first, second, and fifth acts. The manager's design to emphasize the Leontes-Hermione plot is also suggested by his handwritten directions calling for the stage cloth and locked stage doors (p. 5), indicating that Kemble regarded his adaptation of The Winter's Tale as part of the theatre's tragic repertoire.

Besides strengthening the dramatic importance of Leontes and Hermione in his alteration, Kemble discharged his customary obligation to decency by omitting the sexual innuendo from the lines in which Hermione attempts to persuade Polixenes to stay at the court of Sicily (I.ii.84-85), as well as the copulative imagery that Leontes uses to express his suspicions about his wife (I.ii.194-98, 204-07). Moreover, Kemble changed some of the numerous references to the infant Perdita from "bastard" to less offensive terms. Where

Leontes asks, "Shall I live to see this bastard kneel and call me father?" (II.iv.154-55), Kemble changed the reference to "this creature" (p. 32), and where he tells Antigonus to "carry this female bastard hence" (II.iv.174), Kemble's alteration has "this hateful issue of Polixenes" (p. 33). Another alteration Kemble made apparently for reasons of decency was to change Perdita's reference to her companions' "maidenheads growing" (IV.iv.116) to "maiden honors" (p. 51), and he omitted altogether the servant's bawdy description of the clown with his "delicate burdens of dildoes and fadings" (IV.iv.191-200).

Perhaps because it offered the greatest opportunity for sentimental moralizing and theatrical effect, the fifth act of Kemble's play suffered more extensive alteration than the other four acts, particularly in the concluding scene, in which Hermione's statue is unveiled. Here Kemble relied mostly upon Garrick's additions. The ensuing profusion of sentimental dialogue, in the words of Charles Shattuck, resulted in "altogether too much of 'Heavenly powers,' 'visionary bliss,' 'thou matchless saint,' 'that tender name,' 'thou paragon of virtue,'" that is, all the expressions that in Kemble's day helped make the scene the most effective in the play.⁴⁸ Another reason Kemble employed Garrick's additions was perhaps that to a greater degree than the original they emphasize the contrition of Leontes.

For example, when Leontes first beholds the statue of Hermione in Kemble's version, he speaks these lines by Garrick:

O master-piece of art! nature's deceiv'd
 By thy perfection, and at every look
 My penitence is all afloat again.
 (V.iii.p. 75)

Almost all of the play after the unveiling is from Garrick, with slight changes throughout. After the statue is unveiled and Hermione comes to life, however, Kemble discarded Garrick in favor of several lines from George Colman's brief adaptation of The Winter's Tale, titled The Sheep Shearing (1777), apparently because they more clearly point up Leontes' penitent mood:

If penitence may clense [sic] the soul from guilt,
 Leontes' tears have washed his crimes away.
 If thanks unfeined be what you best require,
 Most bounteous gods for happiness like mine,
 Read in my heart, your mercy's not in vain.
 (V.iii.p. 78)⁴⁹

When Kemble first staged his 1802 revision of The Winter's Tale, he was promptly assailed by a critic in The Gentleman's Magazine for weaknesses in staging and costuming. Although he makes no specific claims against the staging of the play, the anonymous critic vents his anger against Kemble and theatre managers in general, who "pervert one good intent of that patent granted to them by Royal favor, in unblushing impositions on the credulity, not to say ignorance, of those who, by their liberal patronage, have an undoubted claim to receive in return true and appropriate scenic spectacles."⁵⁰ It is doubtful whether this criticism was deserved. Speaking

of the same production, Hazlitt maintained that "nothing could go off with more eclat, with more spirit, and grandeur of effect."⁵¹ Similarly, James Boaden records that in his initial production, "Mr. Kemble presented his revival of The Winter's Tale, in all the splendour of decoration and power of acting, that he could impress upon it."⁵² And it should be remembered that when he assumed the management of Covent Garden, Kemble's facility for spectacle and theatrical effect was considerable and became even greater after the new theatre opened in 1809.

Perhaps the reason for the unknown critic's discontent was not that Kemble was lax in his staging of The Winter's Tale, but that his habitually elaborate staging of Shakespeare was cultivating an audience who expected each new production to be more grand and elaborate than the last. The London audience had no worry on that account, however, for Kemble's spectacular Covent Garden revivals of Henry VIII, Coriolanus, The Tempest, and Julius Caesar all lay in the future. These plays, along with his many other Shakespearean productions, would earn Kemble the esteem and approbation of his contemporaries and recognition in the history of English drama as the first great producer of Shakespeare's plays.

NOTES

- ¹ The Gentleman's Magazine, 53 (April, 1783), 310.
- ² The Dramatic Mirror (London, 1808), II, 807.
- ³ Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq. (London, 1825), II, 532-33. Page 532 is misnumbered 432.
- ⁴ Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes (London, 1825), I, 120.
- ⁵ David Lovett, "Shakespeare's Characters in Eighteenth-Century Criticism," ELH, 2 (November, 1935), 278.
- ⁶ Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 380.
- ⁷ The Kemble Promptbooks (Charlottesville: The Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), I, i-ii.
- ⁸ Kemble Promptbooks, p. i.
- ⁹ George Odell, Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), II, 50.
- ¹⁰ The Kemble Theatre Journal, October 13-17, 1789.
- ¹¹ Quoted in Charles Harold Gray, Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931), p. 290.
- ¹² Quoted in Gray, pp. 305-306. The Prompter ran from October 24 to December 10, 1789.
- ¹³ Odell, II, 59-60. It is interesting to note that Dorinda was considered a better part than Miranda. Elizabeth Farren played it in 1789 and Dorothy Jordan in 1806.
- ¹⁴ Odell, pp. 28-29, 60.
- ¹⁵ The Collected Works of William Hazlitt, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1903), VIII, 235.

¹⁶ See Kemble's The Tempest; or, The Enchanted Island (1789; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1972), pp. 19-20. Shattuck has reproduced the Covent Garden revision of 1806 in The Kemble Promptbooks, Vol. VIII. The meeting between Hippolito and Dorinda has suffered some slight changes in the later version but is for the most part intact (pp. 19-21).

¹⁷ "Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff," in Eighteenth-Century Essays on Shakespeare, 2nd ed., ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 237.

¹⁸ From the version of 1789. The lines are identical in the 1806 version (III.iv.pp. 39-40). The reason for the difference in scene is that Kemble divided the second scene of Act Three in the 1789 version into two scenes in the revision of 1806.

¹⁹ Quoted in Gray, p. 305.

²⁰ Some Account of the English Stage (Bath, 1832), VI, 576.

²¹ Shakespeare Adaptations (London: Jonathan Cape, 1922), p. lvii.

²² On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation, in The Works of Charles Lamb (New York: H. W. Derby, 1859-61), III, 98.

²³ Some Account of the English Stage, VI, 577.

²⁴ Some Account, p. 578.

²⁵ The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Lexington, MS.: Xerox College Publishing, 1971), p. 158ln.

²⁶ John J. McAleer, "John Kemble--Shakespeare's First Great Producer," The Shakespeare Newsletter, 17 (April, 1967), 17; Hazleton Spencer, Shakespeare Improved (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927), p. 201.

²⁷ In Kemble's versions: 1789 (I.i.p. 9); 1806 (I.i.p. 14).

²⁸ Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 517-21.

- 29 Some Account of the English Stage, VIII, 47.
- 30 Shakespearean Criticism, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1960), I, 74.
- 31 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 518.
- 32 Memoirs, p. 521.
- 33 Doran's Annals of the English Stage, ed. Robert W. Lowe (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), III, 203.
- 34 The Kemble Theatre Journal, March 25, 1802.
- 35 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 315.
- 36 Memoirs, p. 314.
- 37 Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, ed. Catherine Macdonald Maclean (1906; rpt. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1960), p. 325.
- 38 The Kemble Promptbooks, IX, i. Shattuck has reproduced Kemble's 1811 production of The Winter's Tale. Parenthetical references to Kemble's play are to this source.
- 39 Kemble Promptbooks; Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, pp. 325-26.
- 40 Some Account of the English Stage, VII, 535.
- 41 C. B. Hogan, Shakespeare in the Theatre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), II, 686-87.
- 42 Prologue to Florizel and Perdita (1758; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969).
- 43 The Private Correspondence of David Garrick, ed. James Boaden (London, 1831), I, 88.
- 44 Shakespeare: the Critical Heritage, ed. Brian Vickers (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), IV, 458-59.
- 45 Charles Dibdin, A Complete History of the English Stage (London, 1800), III, 40. In the Biographia Dramatica (London, 1812), the original Winter's Tale is briefly referred to as "one of the most irregular of its author's pieces, the unities of time and place being so greatly infringed" (III, 411).

- 46 Macbeth Reconsidered (London, 1786), p. 3.
- 47 Macbeth and King Richard the Third (1817; rpt. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), p. 2.
- 48 The Kemble Promptbooks, IX, ii-iii.
- 49 See George Colman, The Sheep Shearing (1777; rpt. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969), p. 38.
- 50 The Gentleman's Magazine, 72 (March, 1802), 231.
- 51 Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, p. 325.
- 52 Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq., II, 314.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

Although Kemble's penchant for added spectacle and stage effect represents a major part of the manager's approach to Shakespearean adaptation, it can be said neither that Kemble allowed his inclination for the spectacular free reign nor that he applied it according to any kind of readily discernible systematic order. The same is true of most of the other considerations which comprised the dramatic principles informing Kemble's approach to Shakespearean adaptation. It seems apparent that while such considerations as theatrical effect, the unities, character delineation, didacticism, poetic justice, and language had remained constant throughout a century and a half of Shakespearean alteration, their application as a system of aesthetic valuation was more or less discretionary. Part of the reason for the arbitrary character of this system as it was applied to Shakespearean drama lay in the continuously evolving attitudes of critics, dramatists, and audiences toward the individual elements within the system itself. In Kemble a specific instance of this changing attitude is discernible in the concern for the classical unities he registered in

the early essay Macbeth Reconsidered, compared to his indifference toward them in the later expanded version of the essay.

A second factor that necessitated an arbitrary application of this system of aesthetic valuation to Shakespearean drama in particular was the extreme variety of subject matter, theme and character representation in the plays of Shakespeare. An adapter was forced to approach each play not as representative of some genre, but rather as a separate unity. This was particularly true of the histories, where one play, Henry VIII, for example, was altered almost solely for theatrical effect, and another, such as Henry V, was altered mainly to take advantage of the historical moment. Another important consideration governing the adaptation of Shakespeare's history plays was character delineation, but, as an examination of the individual plays has revealed, Kemble's reasons for altering one character were not necessarily the same as those for altering another. For example, the eighteenth century found Richard III too evil by nature for belief; therefore, Kemble followed earlier adapters in adding soliloquies in which Richard paused for moral reflection and justification, not to make him less evil, but simply a more recognizable and, therefore, a more credible villain. Kemble's adaptation of Henry IV, on the other hand, resulted in a more sympathetic

Hotspur than the original, partly to restore some luster to the memory of a daring English nobleman and perhaps also to reassure the audience that the generic English character was admirable even in rebellion.

The necessity for such assurances, it has been noted, was occasioned at least in part by the French Revolution and the attending threats of invasion. As was discussed in the examinations of such plays as Henry V and King John, the fear of French invasion was perhaps the single most important factor governing Kemble's adaptation of Shakespearean plays dealing with armed conflict between France and England. This is especially true of the changes Kemble made in the delineation of specific, sometimes minor, English and French characters. In Henry V, it was noted, all of Pistol's ungentlemanly conduct toward the captured French officer is omitted. And in King John, most of the Dauphin's fearful or disreputable remarks are retained, while statements showing any strength of character are omitted. Also a factor in character delineation was the interpretation of specific Shakespearean characters that Kemble brought to a role, as well as his physical assets and limitations as an actor. Kemble's Macbeth, for example, was intrepid to the point of boisterousness; his Hamlet was less vacillating and less vengeful than the original; and his Lear was a fragile old man, either because Kemble thought that all old men over

eighty should be portrayed as fragile or because he was physically unable to achieve the range of emotions called for by the part.

The changes Kemble made in delineating Shakespeare's characters resulted also from his philosophy of the didactic function of tragedy. As was noted in the chapters on Macbeth and Hamlet, Kemble's interpretation of the lead roles in both plays derived in part from a desire to make the characters vehicles of moral instruction. A too-cautious Macbeth would seem cowardly, and a Hamlet who was too irresolute and too perverted in his desire for vengeance would appear weak and immoral. Both would lose the sympathy of the audience and, consequently, cease to have any didactic value. His belief in the didactic purpose of drama prompted Kemble to make changes in Shakespeare apart from those of character delineation. In fact, the only change that was uniformly applied by Kemble to all of his adaptations seems to have been an expression of his desire to instruct the public, as has been noted more than once, "to love virtue and abhor vice." I am, of course, referring to the manager's campaign to bowdlerize his productions of Shakespeare, divesting them of any bawdy or licentious scenes not absolutely necessary to the conduct of the plot and heavily reducing the number of lines where such scenes could not be deleted altogether. This resulted, for example, in the

complete omission of the charming scene of Katherine's English lesson in Henry V. Another result was that some characters, such as the Nurse in Romeo and Juliet and Mistress Quickly in Henry IV, lost a major facet of their personalities.

Kemble's desire to enhance the instructive quality of Shakespearean drama was also expressed, it has been shown, in the application of the rule of poetic justice. This was made apparent in the examination of Kemble's Richard III. Kemble omitted several of Lady Anne's lines that had been added by Colley Cibber apparently because he thought the lines contradicted the poetically just fate of Anne after she marries Richard. It was also noted, furthermore, that Kemble seems to have agreed with the public sentiment that required the poetic justice of Tate's ending for King Lear. As with most of his criteria for adaptation, however, Kemble perhaps applied poetic justice in a more or less arbitrary fashion. On the other hand, he may have applied the rule of poetic justice more systematically than it appears, but his interpretation of what constituted the rule had changed from that of his predecessors in the drama, causing him to alter scenes to fit his own application of the rule. For example, the two evil tribunes in Coriolanus, Brutus and Sicinius, were hurled from the Tarpeian Rock in Dennis' version of the play because the adapter thought that Shakespeare's

conclusion was faulty in not seeing to their punishment. As was pointed out, however, Kemble had the tribunes siezed by a mob but left their punishment in doubt. Also, while Garrick thought poetic justice was better served in Hamlet by having Gertrude go insane, Kemble restored the original ending with Gertrude's death, perhaps for essentially the same reason Garrick had altered her fate, to preserve the workings of poetic justice.

As I have attempted to show, Kemble and the Shakespearean adapters who preceded him were concerned with the same fundamental principles of the drama although the application of those principles by an individual adapter often seems at variance with the work of his predecessors. I hope that it has also become apparent that the application of these principles to Shakespearean drama was often in conflict with the opinions expressed in formal contemporary criticism. The reason for this conflict was perhaps that while the drama critic could judge and make pronouncements from a broad-based knowledge of the current dramatic and literary movements in England and on the Continent, the Shakespearean adapter was producing plays for a public whose attitudes toward the art of dramatic representation were not formed by the art itself. Their attitudes were rather subject to the vagaries of a multitude of social, economic and political events. The success with which Kemble was able to adopt

his own interpretation and application of the rules of dramatic valuation to these changing popular attitudes was perhaps the most significant contributing factor to his long success as the last notable Shakespearean adapter.

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