

**THE FORTUNES OF *KING LEAR* IN LONDON BETWEEN  
1681 AND 1838:**

**a chronological account of its adaptors, actors and editors,  
and of the links between them.**

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### **Abstract**

This thesis examines three interwoven strands in the dramatic and editorial history of *King Lear* between 1681 and 1838. One strand is the history of the adaptations which held the London stage during these years; the second is the changing styles of acting over the same period; the third is the work of the editors as they attempted to establish the Shakespearean text. This triple focus enables me to explore the paradoxical dominance of the adaptations at a time which saw both the text being edited for the first time and the rise of bardolatry. The three aspects of the fortunes of *King Lear* are linked in a number of ways, and I trace these connections as the editors, adaptors and actors concentrated on their own separate concerns.

The thesis evolves chronologically. The arrival of the adaptations is discussed, each adaptation is examined, and the major revisions are noted as the adaptors shifted backwards and forwards towards a gradual return to Shakespeare's text and the final abandonment of the adaptations. The major productions of *King Lear* are explored, and I have included criticisms of the changing styles of acting among the players who were important in a *King Lear* role. The pioneering work of the editors and their growing confidence is studied and representative examples of their glosses and notes are offered. My final chapter draws together the links between the adaptors, actors and editors. It explores why Shakespeare, at a time when his reputation was in the ascendancy and whose plays were at the centre of developing skills in editing, nonetheless had many of these plays, represented in this thesis by *King Lear*, staged only in adaptation. I offer explanations for the initial interest in adaptations, why the audiences remained faithful to them and why they were finally abandoned.

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## Preface

Between 1681, the date of the first performance of Nahum Tate's *King Lear*, and 1838, when William Charles Macready returned to Shakespeare's text there were no performances of Shakespeare's play on the London stage as far as we know. During these years, Tate's adaptation was itself to be adapted and versions of his *King Lear* continued to hold the stage for over one hundred and fifty years.

In the course of the eighteenth century, while Shakespeare's play was never seen on the public stage, a nascent editorial tradition emerged which attempted to clarify the text where either printers' errors had made nonsense of the words or where obscure language needed explanation. During these years a number of the major cruces were confronted and solutions were suggested for the first time, sometimes successfully and sometimes bordering on the ludicrous. Editors started to offer criticism on the play itself and this constituted the tentative beginnings of what has developed into an essential and major part of Shakespearean scholarship.

During the same period, the adaptors continued to work on Tate's version. Lines from Shakespeare's play were reintroduced; parts of the plot in Tate's play were cut and Shakespeare resubstituted only for the next adaptor to return to Tate again. Contemporaneously with this ebb and flow in the adaptations, the style of acting also shifted, influenced by the style offered by each leading player. This was most apparent with the arrival of David Garrick but held true to an extent with all of the leading names.

My thesis follows these three strands in the history of *King Lear* and I have chosen to present this work in chronological order because I wish to outline the changing aspects of the strands as they occurred, between 1685 and 1838. I look at the work of the editors and what they achieved; their gradual progress towards establishing the text from the earliest decision on acts and scenes, through to the first awareness of the problems of the two versions in quarto and Folio. Parallel to this, I give an account of the fluctuating fortunes of *King Lear* on stage by considering both the adaptations and the changing acting styles. I outline the major changes and trace the gradual return to Shakespeare's play and I study the leading players and their acting in and staging of *King Lear*.

Because of the large amount of material, I have had to make a representative selection and this is particularly so with regard to the editorial tradition. Similarly, I have confined myself to the theatre in London only and been selective with the players significant to *King Lear* over the same period which featured a large number of minor names. Some of the manuscript material I have used is, I believe, new.

I explore the links between the work of the adaptors, the actors and the editors and consider the paradox that while the editors worked on Shakespeare's text and the phenomenon of bardolatry was established, during this same period the adaptations dominated the stage to the total exclusion of Shakespeare's *King Lear*.



### Acknowledgments

My first thanks are to the English Department at University College London for offering me the opportunity to work on this Ph.D. My greatest thanks are to Dr. Keith Walker, Dr. René Weis and Professor Henry Woudhuysen of the English Faculty at UCL for guiding me through my work on this thesis. Dr. Walker encouraged me at the start and patiently helped me to consolidate the topic of my thesis. Dr. Weis came in when I was well into my work and his clear ideas and general kindness were invaluable during the final stages. Professor Woudhuysen generously offered his help whenever I required it.

In addition I have been given help from many other quarters. Jessica Hodge at Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd. kindly sent me a proof copy of Professor R.A. Foakes's New Arden edition of *King Lear* before publication date and I have used this edition as my main text for reference. Mrs. Enid Foster of the Garrick Club library allowed me access to the excellent collection of playbills held there. Ms. Roberta Zonghi of the Department of Rare Books at the Boston Public Library (Mass.) and Ms. Annette Fern of the Harvard Theatre Collection sent me photocopies of material on Hugo Vamp's *King Lear and his Daughters Queer*. Dr. G. W. Nicholls of the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum, Lichfield and Ms. Helen Smailes of the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh were generous with their time in answering my queries. Dr. Barbara Murray of St. Andrew's University kindly let me see her earlier work on *King Lear*. The staff at the Norfolk Record Office, Norwich and the Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich helped me with manuscripts and early Garrick material as did the staff at the Public Record Office in my search through the Lord Chamberlain documents. Finally, the staff at Lambeth Palace Library, the Bracknell Weather Centre, the Theatre Museum, the Colindale Newspaper Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Birmingham Public Library, the UCL Library, Senate House Library and the British Library were all supportive in their different ways and greatly aided my research.

THE  
 HISTORY  
 OF *Stanley*  
 KING  
 LEAR.

Acted at the  
 Duke's Theatre.

Reviv'd with Alterations.

By N. T A T E.

*of 27 of January*  
 L O N D O N,

Printed for E. Flesher, and are to be sold by R. Bentley, and M. Magnes in Russel-street near Covent-Garden. 1681.

## CHAPTER 1

**An outline of the position of the theatre after the Restoration to 1681;  
Nahum Tate's *King Lear* and its first performance in 1681**

Within weeks of the Restoration of Charles II to the throne in May 1660, Sir William Davenant, dramatist, poet and adventurer and Thomas Killigrew, dramatist and royalist, were granted licences to establish two theatres in London.<sup>1</sup> Killigrew, with the King's Company, started at Vere Street before moving to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane in 1663. Calamity struck in January 1672 when this theatre was destroyed by fire. Killigrew immediately started rebuilding and the new Drury Lane opened in 1674. William Davenant first settled at Lincoln's Inn Fields with the Duke's Company, named after James, Duke of York, and initiated the construction of the Dorset Garden Theatre which was completed in 1671, three years after Davenant's death. On 11 August 1670, the actor Thomas Betterton (?1635-1710), who had joined Davenant's company in 1661, took out a lease on the theatre for thirty-nine years. The theatre opened on 9 November 1671<sup>2</sup> so that in the 1670s London enjoyed two new theatres which held a monopoly on staging plays.

These theatres were responsible for two innovations which had an enormous impact on the English theatre. The King's Company was the first to employ an actress on the professional stage in England. The part was Desdemona at the theatre in Vere Street; the date was almost certainly 8 December 1660<sup>3</sup> but the name of the actress is not known although she would have been a member of the King's Company.<sup>4</sup> The second innovation was the introduction of scenery and spectacle and the company responsible for this development was the Duke's Company at Dorset Garden. Earlier, other productions had made use of flats or painted panels known as 'scenes' which slid into position on stage. Samuel Pepys saw a production of *Hamlet* in 1661, at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre 'done with Scenes'.<sup>5</sup> James Wright in his *Historia Histrionica*, claims that it was Drury

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<sup>1</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952-9) 1, 293ff.

<sup>2</sup> John Downes, *Roscus Anglicanus*, (1708) 31.

<sup>3</sup> Hazleton Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1927) 39.

<sup>4</sup> This excludes Mary Sanderson, wife of Thomas Betterton, suggested by J.H. Wilson as one of two 'distinct possibilities', (*All the King's Ladies*, (Chicago, 1958) 7); Hazleton Spencer prefers Margaret Hughes, (*Shakespeare Improved*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1927) 39); Elizabeth Howe proposes the 'talented and attractive' Anne Marshall, (*The First English Actresses*, (Cambridge, 1992) 24).

<sup>5</sup> *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 24 August, 1661, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (1970-83) 2, 161.

Lane in 1663 that ‘first made use of scenes’.<sup>6</sup> ‘Scenes’ were, in themselves, an important innovation but it was at the Dorset Garden that machinery and scenery were developed into something capable of staging spectacle. John Evelyn, on 26 June 1671, visited the as-yet unfinished Dorset Garden Theatre and was impressed by its elaborate stage mechanics ‘which were indeede very costly, & magnificent’,<sup>7</sup> and Wright declares that the theatre was ‘very much improved, with the Addition of curious Machines’.<sup>8</sup>

On 29 June 1675 at the now completed Dorset Garden Theatre, the Duke’s Company performed *King Lear*.<sup>9</sup> John Downes tells us that the play was ‘as Mr. *Shakespear* Wrote it; before it was alter’d by Mr. *Tate*.’<sup>10</sup> This 1675 performance was probably the last time Shakespeare’s play was seen on stage until 1838 when William Charles Macready reinstated Shakespeare’s text. Downes gives no cast list and little information survives about the performance in 1675. Thomas Betterton would have been aged about forty and perhaps too young to play *Lear*. However, age is not the only yardstick when casting. The Duke’s Company consisted of relatively young newcomers, (the older actors having gone to the King’s Company under Killigrew) and it is, therefore, entirely possible Betterton played *Lear* in 1675, nearly six years before appearing in Nahum Tate’s adaptation. F. G. Waldron and Thomas Davies in the 1789 edition of *Roscius Anglicanus* take opposite views on this, Waldron suggesting that because Betterton was at this time ‘a young man; it is more probable that *Lear* was performed by some Veteran’ while Davies writes that ‘we must suppose’ Betterton played the role.<sup>11</sup> The part of Cordelia was perhaps played by the seventeen-year-old Elizabeth Barry (1658-1713) who was to achieve great success, but more probably by Mary Sanderson, Thomas Betterton’s wife.

There is as little certainty regarding the text used for the 1675 production. The quartos of 1608 and 1619 may have been considered out-dated and it is more probable that either the folios or the third quarto of 1655 would have been used. Hazleton Spencer argues that

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<sup>6</sup> James Wright, *Historia Histrionica, An Historical Account of the English-Stage*, (1699) 10.

<sup>7</sup> *The Diary of John Evelyn*, 26 June, 1671, ed. E.S.de Beer, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1955) 3, 583.

<sup>8</sup> James Wright, *Historia Histrionica, An Historical Account of the English-Stage*, (1699) 11.

<sup>9</sup> *The London Stage, 1660-1800*, ed. William Van Lennep and others, 5 parts (Carbondale, 1965-8) pt.1, 234; hereafter referred to as *The London Stage*.

<sup>10</sup> John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, (1708) 26. *The London Stage*, (pt.1, 75) notes a possible performance of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* at Lincoln’s Inn Fields between Michaelmas (29 September) 1663 and Lady Day (25 March) 1664 before the Duke’s Company moved to Dorset Garden.

<sup>11</sup> John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, ed. Thomas Davies and F.G. Waldron, (1789) 36.

it would be unlikely that the 1655 quarto would have yet found 'its way into the theatrical library'<sup>12</sup> because the theatres were closed at the time of its publication, during the Interregnum. However, as only one or two copies would be needed, the actors copying their parts from the master copy, the 1655 quarto or the 1663 folio both seem possible.

It is also possible to conjecture about the staging of this 1675 performance. In 1674 a celebrated production of *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island* as adapted by Thomas Shadwell, was performed at Dorset Garden in which a 'shower of Fire ... Lightning, and several Claps of Thunder' were used for dramatic effect in the opening scenes. Further, there are references to caves and 'a very Rocky Coast'.<sup>13</sup> From this description, it is possible to imagine the effects which could have been achieved in the storm and heath scenes of *King Lear* by a company which specialised in spectacle and was no doubt aware of their audience's love of this spectacle.

There is an interesting reference made to this performance of 1675 in a surviving paper which lists seats taken by Nell Gwyn between September 1674 and November 1676 at Dorset Garden.<sup>14</sup> One line reads: 'Madam Guinn and 1 att King Lear 8s' which perhaps suggests that Nell Gwyn 'had the freedom of the house when she went to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane' but not at Dorset Garden. Be that as it may, Nell Gwyn accumulated a debt totalling £35.19.0. at Dorset Garden and attended fifty-five performances.

Following the 1675 performance, the next recorded staging of *King Lear* was in March 1681,<sup>15</sup> again by the Duke's Company at Dorset Garden but the play was the drastically altered version by Nahum Tate<sup>16</sup>. A cast list<sup>17</sup> survives for this performance and includes two of the great names of the English theatre. Thomas Betterton, playing Lear, was a man under middle height, rather portly in build, and yet his contemporaries agree on his 'strength and dignity and ... a flashing blue eye that compels attention and respect.'<sup>18</sup> The actor Barton Booth claimed a 'divinity hung round that man'.<sup>19</sup> At a time when the world

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<sup>12</sup> Hazleton Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1927) 75.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Shadwell, *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island*, (1674) 1.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in W. Van Lennep, 'Nell Gwyn's Playgoing', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 4 (1950) 405-8.

<sup>15</sup> The exact date is not known. The play is listed in the Term Catalogue of May 1681; see *The London Stage*, pt.1, 294.

<sup>16</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.1, 294.

<sup>17</sup> This cast list is given in Appendix A.

<sup>18</sup> Hazleton Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1927) 9.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 3, 32.

of the actor was one of disrepute and scandal, Betterton's private life appears to have commanded respect. His first biographer, R.W. Lowe, writes that 'Thomas Betterton walked unspotted'.<sup>20</sup> Betterton was also a dramatist but his writing was more critically received than his acting. *A Comparison Between the Two Stages* complains that Betterton's plays are 'but alterations of other Men's Plays new dipt'.<sup>21</sup> The first truly great English actress, Elizabeth Barry was cast as Cordelia. She had joined the Duke's Company in about 1673<sup>22</sup> but both Colley Cibber<sup>23</sup> and Edmund Curll<sup>24</sup> claim that she had no success during her early attempts on stage. Cibber writes that she was sacked after her first season; Curll that she failed three times and it was not until the Earl of Rochester, under whose protection she was living, 'entered into a Wager'<sup>25</sup> and arranged to coach her in the skills of acting, that she finally succeeded. Two other actresses of the Duke's Company at this time are still remembered in the history of the theatre. Anne Shadwell (née Gibbs) who took the role of Goneril, joined the Duke's Company in 1661 and married the dramatist Thomas Shadwell in c.1663. The second actress was Mary Lee (d. 1694; née Aldrich /Alridge, later Lady Slingsby) who joined the Company in about 1670 and was cast as Regan in 1681. She played many lead roles including breeches parts in which she was particularly successful. Of the other actors who appeared in the first production of Tate's *King Lear*, William Smith (d. 1696) is of interest. Smith, who took the part of Edgar which now offered the new love interest with Cordelia, had joined Betterton a year after the formation of the company.<sup>26</sup> In 1677 he became joint artistic director of the Duke's Company under Betterton. Although a successful actor, in 1685 after an argument with 'a Gentleman behind the Scenes', Smith received such a 'Chorus of Cat-calls' when he next appeared that he had the play stopped and 'retired permanently from the theatre'.<sup>27</sup> In the years after the Restoration, attempts to control audience behaviour had been made by directives from the Lord Chamberlain restricting 'unauthorized persons from appearing ... on stage, lest

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<sup>20</sup> Robert W. Lowe, *Thomas Betterton*, (1891) 56.

<sup>21</sup> [Charles Gildon], *A Comparison Between the Two Stages*, (1702) 15. This criticism could have been levelled at many of the playwrights of these years.

<sup>22</sup> John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, (1708) 35.

<sup>23</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 94.

<sup>24</sup> [E. Curll], *Betterton's History of the English Stage*, (1741) 14.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 14-6.

<sup>26</sup> John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, (1708) 20.

<sup>27</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 49. In fact Smith was persuaded back ten years later to appear as Scandal in Congreve's *Love for Love*.

they interfere with the proper working of the scenes and the progress of the play'.<sup>28</sup>

However, the audiences remained volatile and were not afraid of showing their disapproval of an actor as happened in the case of William Smith.

As well as being the only legitimate theatre companies in London, the King's Company and the Duke's Company had the exclusive acting rights to certain plays by decree of the Lord Chamberlain.<sup>29</sup> With this monopoly of the originals went rights to adaptations. The exceptions were the burlesques; Thomas Duffett's *The Mock-Tempest* (1674) was performed by the King's Company as an attempt 'to draw the Town from the Duke's Theatre' where 'that admirable reviv'd Comedy call'd *The Tempest*.'<sup>30</sup> was playing.<sup>31</sup> Among the plays allocated in 1660 were Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Coriolanus* which went to Killigrew, who therefore owned Tate's adaptations *The Sicilian Usurper* and *The Ingratitude of a Common-wealth*; Davenant received Shakespeare's and Tate's *King Lear*.

Nahum Tate's name is today almost forgotten and each year his carol, *While Shepherds Watch'd Their Flocks by Night*, is sung without any knowledge of the author. Similarly, it is largely forgotten that his version of one of Shakespeare's greatest plays, *King Lear*, held the stage for over one hundred and fifty years during which time, as far as is known, Shakespeare's play was never once publicly performed. Therefore none of the literary giants of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century - Pope, Richardson, Johnson, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and many others - if they saw *King Lear*, would have seen Shakespeare's play. This is all the more remarkable if it is remembered that in the early part of this period the first named editor, Nicholas Rowe, published his edition of Shakespeare's plays (1709) and that throughout the eighteenth century other editors were attempting to clarify the text as Shakespeare wrote it. Authors and actors, however, were adapting his plays freely and banishing the originals from the stage. *King Lear* was not alone in suffering from the order of 12 December 1660 which instructed Davenant to set about 'reformeinge some of the most ancient Playes ... and of makeinge

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<sup>28</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.1, lxvi.

<sup>29</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama, 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952-9) 1, 352-3.

<sup>30</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, (Oxford, 1691) 177; this version of *The Tempest* was the operatic Shadwell adaptation.

<sup>31</sup> Another production by the King's Company which was an attempt to draw audiences from Dorset Garden was *Psyche Debauched*, also by Duffett, at Drury Lane in August 1675. This was staged after the highly successfully production of Shadwell's operatic *Psyche* by the Duke's Company, (*The London Stage*, pt.1, 219 and 235).

them fitt<sup>32</sup> nor was Shakespeare the only author to be thus used.<sup>33</sup>

The three adaptations of Shakespeare by Tate, *King Lear*, *Richard II* (renamed *The Sicilian Usurper*) and *Coriolanus* (renamed *The Ingratitude of a Common-wealth*) were all first performed between December 1680 and December 1681,<sup>34</sup> a record which neither Davenant nor Dryden, the other major adaptors of the early years, could equal.<sup>35</sup> When Tate first 'adapted old plays to new audiences',<sup>36</sup> it is not certain which play he wrote first, but in the Epistle Dedicatory of *The Sicilian Usurper*, he notes '*I fell upon the new-modelling of this Tragedy, (as I had just before done on the History of King Lear)*'.<sup>37</sup> It is therefore probable that he adapted *King Lear*, then *Richard II*, and finally *Coriolanus*. Although he had no success with two of these adaptations,<sup>38</sup> his *King Lear*, written before December 1680,<sup>39</sup> printed and performed in 1681, was among the most successful of all adaptations of Shakespeare's plays made during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. According to James Black,<sup>40</sup> Tate's source was Shakespeare's text exclusively, and he made no use of other possible sources. Black also argues that Tate worked from both quarto and Folio and that these were probably Q2 (1619), Q3 (1655) and F1 (1623). The title-page makes no mention of Shakespeare but states that the play is 'Reviv'd with Alterations'.<sup>41</sup>

Of the major alterations<sup>42</sup> which Tate made while re-stringing and polishing his 'Heap of

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama, 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952-9) 1, 352. Other early adaptations of Shakespeare include Davenant's *Macbeth*, (1674); Shadwell's *Timon of Athens*, (1678); Otway's *Caius Marius*, (*Romeo and Juliet*), (1680).

<sup>33</sup> Other early adaptations include John Webster's *Appius and Virginia* adapted by Betterton as *The Roman Virgin*, (performed 1670); William Heminge's *The Fatal Contract* adapted by Elkanah Settle as *Love and Revenge*, (performed 1674); William Rowley's *Match at Midnight* adapted by Thomas Durfey as *Madam Fickle*, (performed 1676), and many others.

<sup>34</sup> There are no surviving cast lists for the first performances of *The Sicilian Usurper* or *The Ingratitude of a Common-wealth* (*The London Stage*, pt.1, 303-4).

<sup>35</sup> Ruth McGugan, *Nahum Tate and the Coriolanus Tradition*, (New York, 1987) xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* x.

<sup>37</sup> Nahum Tate, *The History of King Richard the Second Acted at the Theatre Royal Under the Name of the Sicilian Usurper*, (1681) A1r.

<sup>38</sup> *The Sicilian Usurper* (1681) failed because it was too politically sensitive for the authorities, (Ruth McGugan, *Nahum Tate and the Coriolanus Tradition*, (New York, 1987) xxvi); Tate, 'perhaps taught by his experience with *Richard II*' (George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) I, 60) took care not to upset the authorities in his *The Ingratitude of a Common-wealth* (1682), but it did not survive beyond its first staging.

<sup>39</sup> See the Epistle Dedicatory in Nahum Tate's *The Sicilian Usurper* (1681) in which he states he new-modelled *King Lear* first, i.e. before December 1680 (A1r).

<sup>40</sup> James Black, *Nahum Tate, The History of King Lear*, (1976) 97-100.

<sup>41</sup> Nahum Tate, *The History of King Lear*, (1681); hereafter referred to as Tate, *King Lear*.

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix B for the main differences between Shakespeare's and Tate's texts.



Jewels',<sup>43</sup> the love affair between Cordelia and Edgar (which is already established when the play opens) and the happy ending are well known. Other alterations include the removal of the Fool and the King of France. No doubt partly for political reasons, Tate wrote out the role of the King of France to avoid 'any suggestion of the intervention of France in an English sovereignty dispute'<sup>44</sup> and put Kent as the leader of the rebellion. The King of France has also become redundant because if Cordelia loves Edgar there is no need of a further suitor to rival Burgundy. It is also no longer desirable to remove Cordelia from the action (which Shakespeare does by sending her to France) while her sisters drive Lear into madness. Instead Tate's plot demands that Cordelia should remain to seek out Lear on the heath and to encounter the ruffians in the abortive rape attempt. The King of France's role is to advance the plot, first as a rival suitor, then as a means of taking Cordelia away from the centre of action, and finally to supply Cordelia with an army to overthrow Lear's opponents, but when these reasons are removed,<sup>45</sup> his excising becomes a simple matter.

The removal of the Fool is a more drastic revision. In Shakespeare's play the Fool is important both as a character within the play and also as a supplier of what William Hazlitt called a 'well-timed levity'. This levity tempers the 'over-strained excitement' the audience experiences at Lear's agony,<sup>46</sup> although the Fool's quips are rarely without some underlying tragic significance and he is not merely a 'comic buffoon to make the groundlings laugh'.<sup>47</sup> However, to pursue Hazlitt's point, when Tate removed the tragic aspect of the play, he removed a possible purpose of the Fool to ease the concern of the audience. Instead, this concern is resolved by the survival of Lear and Cordelia and her marriage to Edgar. The loss of the Fool as a character within the play is more difficult to justify. In the storm scenes he offers both physical and mental support to the suffering Lear but his relationship with Lear goes much deeper than comfort. During the early scenes the Fool's purpose is 'to focus on but one object, Lear's folly'<sup>48</sup> and his barbed jokes are not merely attempts to comfort Lear and distract him from his obsessive fury, first at Cordelia and Kent and then

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<sup>43</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, A2v.

<sup>44</sup> *Plays in Performance, King Lear*, ed. J.S. Bratton, (Bristol, 1987) 2. Louis XIV was at his most powerful at this time and feared by much of Europe.

<sup>45</sup> The peasants, led by Kent, rise up against the sisters in Tate's version.

<sup>46</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) 'Characters of Shakespear's Plays', 4, 260.

<sup>47</sup> *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. Thomas M. Raysor, 2 vols. (1930) 1, 63.

<sup>48</sup> Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice*, (Oxford, 1979) 158.

at Goneril and Regan, but are intended to show up this folly. When Lear gives way to violent outbreaks of anger, the Fool 'may be thought of as a lightning conductor, earthing the power of majesty, and humanizing Lear'<sup>49</sup> but the puns and quips are too close to the reality of Lear's situation to bring comfort. For example during the clowning in his first scene, the Fool makes a number of jokes about Lear's being a fool to divide and give away his kingdom. One of these is in the ditty when he refers to 'The sweet and bitter fool'<sup>50</sup> and identifies himself as the sweet one and Lear as the bitter one. The Fool is also a part of the theme of madness: the King driven mad, the half-witted Fool, Edgar pretending madness and even the wild madness of the elements. The debate as to whether the Fool is really half-witted or merely acting, is a moot point but does not invalidate the Fool's role within this theme of madness. A further significance of the Fool is in his relationship to Lear. There are moments in which the Fool is seen almost in the role of a son to Lear. Lear's first greeting to the Fool is 'How now, my pretty knave'<sup>51</sup> and he frequently calls the Fool 'boy'. A.C. Bradley makes the point that Lear's line 'And my poor fool is hanged'<sup>52</sup> is perhaps the 'confused association' of an old, sick man who 'may confuse two of his children'<sup>53</sup> and this might suggest that the Fool does, in part, fill the role of a son to Lear.

It is also to the Fool that Lear first shows his concern for another's suffering when, on the heath, he says 'Come on, my boy. How dost my boy?'<sup>54</sup> but in Tate's version, the king addresses these words to Kent. James Black in his edition of Tate's *The History of King Lear* feels that it is incongruous to retain these lines and address them to Kent.<sup>55</sup> However, there may be an explanation. It raises the possibility that Tate, recognising the father/son relationship between the Fool and Lear, attempts to remedy this particular loss by placing Kent in a similar role. This consideration is strengthened by Tate's retention of Kent's line when he declares he has 'Loved [Lear] as my father'.<sup>56</sup> Further proof may be found in Tate's Act V where Lear and Cordelia, with Kent, are all taken prisoner. Here Lear

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<sup>49</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. R.A. Foakes, (Arden, 1997) 58; hereafter referred to as Arden, *King Lear*.

<sup>50</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 137-40.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. I, iv, 95.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. V, iii, 304.

<sup>53</sup> A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, (1988) 262.

<sup>54</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act III, p.25; Arden, *King Lear*, III, ii, 68.

<sup>55</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act I, p.5; James Black, *Nahum Tate, The History of King Lear*, (1976) xx.

<sup>56</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, I, i, 142.

addresses the two almost as brother and sister:

*O Kent, Cordelia!*  
You are the onely Pair that I e'er wrong'd.<sup>57</sup>

The age of Shakespeare's Kent is established as forty-eight<sup>58</sup> but Tate cuts this line and the age of his Kent is less clear. The actor who played Kent in the first production of Tate's *King Lear* was John Wiltshire. The previous year, in John Crowne's *The Misery of Civil War*, this actor was cast as Young Clifford,<sup>59</sup> whom the Queen calls 'brave young *Clifford*'<sup>60</sup> and Warwick, 'young boasting *Clifford*'.<sup>61</sup> Against this, it can be argued that in the scene where Kent is placed in the stocks, Tate retains Shakespeare's line 'Sir, I am too old to learn'<sup>62</sup>; in the final scene Kent, following Lear's blessings on Cordelia and Edgar, says 'Old *Kent* throws in his hearty Wishes too'<sup>63</sup>; Lear's final speech contains the lines 'Thou, *Kent* and I ... Will gently pass our short reserves of Time',<sup>64</sup> all of which seem to take Kent firmly out of the younger generation. Weighing the evidence, it is difficult to be certain about Tate's intentions and, anyway, age alone does not establish a father/son relationship. Whether or not Tate recognised in the Fool a surrogate son for Lear and was deliberately attempting to put Kent into this role, cannot be certain. What can be said is that Tate's decision to cut the Fool seriously lessens the impact of his adaptation. Although in the plot of *King Lear*, he is not a major character, the Fool helps us to see the King as tragic rather than merely 'a disheveled and deprived old man'.<sup>65</sup> Because Tate's revisions softened the impact of the play, it was no longer desirable to see the Fool in his role as Lear's conscience, forcing Lear into the agony of facing his own folly. Tate chose to simplify 'the complexity of the matter he was dealing with'<sup>66</sup> and his play is thereby diminished.

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<sup>57</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act V, p.57.

<sup>58</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 39.

<sup>59</sup> Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Bumim and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses ... and Other Stage Personnel in London 1660-1800*, 16 vols. (Carbondale, 1973-93) 16, 181; hereafter referred to as Highfill.

<sup>60</sup> John Crowne, *The Misery of Civil War*, (1680) Act I, p.9.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Act II, p.16.

<sup>62</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act II, p.16; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 125.

<sup>63</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act V, p.66.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. Act V, p.66.

<sup>65</sup> Ruth McGugan, *Nahum Tate and the Coriolanus Tradition*, (New York, 1987) xxxi-xxxii.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. xxxii.

Tate either failed to recognise or ignored the 'complexity' of Shakespeare's tragedy. His comment in his Dedication that by his revisions, the '*Distress of the Story is evidently heightened*',<sup>67</sup> is at first sight, startling. James Black, however, argues that Tate is using the word 'distress' to mean 'an agreeable uneasiness',<sup>68</sup> and if this is what Tate hopes his adaptation offers, it explains in part why he cuts out so much of the anguish in Shakespeare's play and settles for the sentimentalised ending. The '*New Scene or Two*'<sup>69</sup> which he introduces to raise the 'distress' level are presumably the abortive abduction of Cordelia on the heath by Edmund's ruffians and her rescue by the disguised Edgar and, secondly, the love scenes with the possibility that this love will not be happily resolved. Tate acknowledges that in Shakespeare's *King Lear* Cordelia and Edgar '*never chang'd word with each other*'<sup>70</sup> but he finds several reasons to justify his inclusion of their love story, other than the general one of heightening the distress. First he claims that it explains Cordelia's response to Lear in the opening scene. Her apparently unfeeling words have certainly been the cause of debate but they are usually explained as evidence of her strict fealty to the truth and her suspicion of her sisters' rhetoric. However, Tate in his Dedication feels that it is necessary to make Cordelia's '*Indifference ... in the first Scene probable*'<sup>71</sup> and he does this by the introduction of the love affair. It is logical that if Cordelia is already in love with Edgar, she would not welcome the proposed marriage to another man. Unlike her married sisters, the truth-loving Cordelia would find it difficult to declare that she loves her father above all others if she loves Edgar. This, in part, follows Shakespeare's reasoning when he has Cordelia say 'Sure I shall never marry like my sisters/To love my father all',<sup>72</sup> a line which Tate retains. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's Cordelia is hurried into marriage with the King of France and whether she loves him and whether she is able to remain true to her declaration that she will 'never marry' without love, is not made known, although France's love for her is beautifully expressed.<sup>73</sup> In Tate's version the audience learns immediately about the love between Cordelia and Edgar.

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<sup>67</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, A2v.

<sup>68</sup> James Black, *Nahum Tate, The History of King Lear*, (1976) xxviii-xxix.

<sup>69</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, A2v.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* A2v.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* A2v.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* Act I, p.4; Arden, *King Lear*, I, i, 103-4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* I, i, 252-63.

At Lear's first entrance, the first words are spoken by Edgar in an aside to Cordelia pleading with her to 'Cast back one pitying Look on wretched *Edgar*' and she replies that she is being forced 'from her *Edgar*'s Arms to *Burgundy*'s'<sup>74</sup> by her father. So the puzzle of the Shakespearean Cordelia's answer to Lear is removed as is the puzzle over her acquiescence to marriage with the King of France to whom she scarcely speaks and whom she never claims to love.

A further reason given by Tate for his Cordelia/Edgar love interest is that it 'gives *Countenance to Edgar's Disguise*'.<sup>75</sup> Instead of Edgar rushing into disguise as Poor Tom merely to save his own life, which Tate considers '*a poor Shift*',<sup>76</sup> Tate has Edgar argue that he is doing so in order to 'do service to *Cordelia*'.<sup>77</sup> When Edmund first pretends to warn Edgar that their father seeks his life, Edgar barely listens, his thoughts being entirely with Cordelia. As he is finally hurried off-stage, Edgar's last words are 'Friend I obey you - O *Cordelia!*'.<sup>78</sup> The brothers next appear together, as in Shakespeare's II, i, when Edmund suggests that Edgar is in further danger because he has 'spoke against the Duke of *Cornwall*'.<sup>79</sup> Tate's Edgar shows bravery in his defiant answer: 'Let 'em come on, I'll stay and clear my self' but he is nonetheless hurried away by a persuasive Edmund. Edgar's speech, which begins 'I heard myself proclaimed'<sup>80</sup> is retained by Tate but in the middle section, Tate introduces thoughts of Cordelia. Edgar contemplates suicide but is halted by a personified Love who whispers to him 'Cordelia's in distress'. He decides that he must help Cordelia and 'That charming Hope',<sup>81</sup> a typically artificial phrase suitable for a conventional hero, is what keeps him from suicide. His opportunity comes when he saves Cordelia from the ruffians sent on Edmund's orders. By this action, Tate's Edgar justifies his flight and disguise and appears in a heroic role.

Tate's final reason for introducing the love interest was his determination to have '*the Tale conclude in a Success to the innocent distrest Persons*'.<sup>82</sup> Of course, the survival of

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<sup>74</sup>Tate, *King Lear*, Act I, p.3.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. A2v.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. A2v.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Act II, p.17.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Act I, p.8.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. Act II, p.13.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Act II, p.17; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 172.

<sup>81</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act II, p.17.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. A2v-A3r.

Lear and Kent and the poetic justice of Goneril's and Regan's deaths, each poisoning the other, were also part of his scheme to bring about the 'success' of the innocent. However, love 'had come to be considered essential to tragedy'<sup>83</sup> and the survival of Cordelia with the marriage of the young couple was a central element in the happy ending which Tate desired, the audience enjoyed and many, but not all, contemporary critics approved.

Thus Edgar becomes the traditional hero, 'amiable and interesting ... dutiful to his father, unsuspecting of his base brother, constant in love, steadfast in loyalty, resolute in danger'<sup>84</sup> which he willingly endures to serve his mistress. Further, the audience enjoys the additional frisson when Cordelia fears that Edgar only loves her because she is 'the darling Daughter of a King'.<sup>85</sup> Burgundy has rejected her without a dowry and the audience may wonder if Edgar's love will be true. In turn, Cordelia has become a typical heroine. The baffling aspect of her nature is gone and her predicament is straightforward, love of father in conflict with love of future husband. Lear wishes her to marry Burgundy, but she loves Edgar and hopes that she is loved in return. James Black puts it succinctly 'Cordelia is recognizable to the audience as beautiful, in love, and in difficulty. Edgar is her male counterpart'.<sup>86</sup>

In common with many of the adaptors, Tate has developed the importance of the female roles. As well as the love interest for Cordelia, he also includes an attempted abduction and rape scene which became very popular at this time<sup>87</sup> and he introduces the character of Arante,<sup>88</sup> a companion for Cordelia.<sup>89</sup> He also alters the roles of Regan and Goneril who become more overtly evil. Regan plots a clandestine meeting with Edmund; a few lines later, she unconcernedly endorses the blinding of Gloucester; then in the scene immediately following she and Edmund are discovered in a grotto '*amorously Seated, Listening to Musick*'.<sup>90</sup> Here Regan hopes for her wounded husband's death and has her suspicions regarding her sister's intentions over Edmund confirmed. Goneril also fears that Edmund

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<sup>83</sup> T. Lounsbury, *Shakespeare as Dramatic Artist*, (New York, 1901) 310; see this book for further information on the French influence on love in tragedies.

<sup>84</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 373.

<sup>85</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act I, p.7.

<sup>86</sup> James Black, *Nahum Tate, The History of King Lear*, (1976) xxi-xxii.

<sup>87</sup> For example rapes or attempted rapes of Clarina in Dufey's *The Injured Princess*, (*Cymbeline*) 1682 and Virgilia in Tate's *The Ingratitude of a Commonwealth*, (*Coriolanus*) 1682.

<sup>88</sup> This name is spelt Arante in Tate but in some adaptations and playbills it is given as Aranthe.

<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Miranda in *The Tempest* adaptation acquires a sister, Dorinda.

<sup>90</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act IV, p.40.

has returned to Regan on 'the Wings of Love'.<sup>91</sup> The jealousy between the two sisters finally finds its climax in their deaths when 'Each by the other [is] poison'd at a Banquet'<sup>92</sup> but before this news is heard, further treachery from the sisters is revealed when Goneril, not Edmund, orders the death of Lear and Cordelia: 'Let me hear they are Dead'.<sup>93</sup>

There remains Tate's alteration to the character of Edmund, and, of course, to Lear. In Tate's version Edmund is ruled by self-devotion and sees the sisters only in terms of satisfaction for himself. He learns that he is loved by Goneril and Regan when, in an unintentionally comic moment, 'Two Servants from several Entrances deliver him each a Letter'.<sup>94</sup> The two letters, one from each sister and both conveying a similar message, leave Edmund exulting at his good fortune. Not content at his success with two of the sisters, he plots to abduct Cordelia and 'like the vig'rous *Jove* I will enjoy/This Semele in a Storm'.<sup>95</sup> In his final scene, after he has been wounded by Edgar, Edmund admits his defeat in the line '*Legitimacy*/At last has got it',<sup>96</sup> a line which echoes the 'legitimates' in the 'Thou, Nature, art my goddess' speech, with which Tate opens his play. When Edmund is carried dying from the stage he gloats, in an exaggerated version of Shakespeare, that he has rival queens contending for him in death. His wickedness lies almost exclusively in his 'predatory sexuality'<sup>97</sup> and his character is without the intricacy of Shakespeare's Edmund.

Lear also suffers under Tate's hand. Shakespeare's Lear is a huge, complex character who through great personal suffering is forced to confront his mistakes and then dies. These mistakes are in part his division of the kingdom but also, more importantly, his inaccurate 'perception of the true nature of Goneril and Regan'<sup>98</sup> and, indeed, of Cordelia and Kent. When he learns that he has been tragically mistaken in his judgment of, and thereby his behaviour towards, his three daughters, his character changes radically but too late. Tate allows his Lear to survive and the succession passes to the rightful heir.<sup>99</sup> The

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Act IV, p.44.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. Act V, p.66.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. Act V, p.56.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. Act III, p.25.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. Act III, p.28.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Act V, p.61.

<sup>97</sup> J.S. Bratton, ed. *Plays in Performance, King Lear*, (Bristol, 1987) 17.

<sup>98</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, 58.

<sup>99</sup> Partly perhaps for political reasons although political expediency did not help his two following adaptations as I have noted.

emphasis of the play shifts away from the love of Lear and Cordelia to the love of Edgar and Cordelia, Lear loses importance and his role becomes subordinate. Although he suffers, his agony is no longer central. He is bewildered and angered by his daughters but his personal tragedy has to share the stage with the love scenes, the abortive rape and the rescue from prison. The complexity of Shakespeare's Lear is smoothed away. The pathos and catharsis of the final scene are wiped out in favour of Tate's mishmash of 'Old Lear shall be/A King again', 'Cordelia is a Queen', both lines spoken by Lear, and Edgar's lines which close the play, 'Peace spreads her balmy Wings ... Divine Cordelia, ... Thy bright Example shall convince the World ... That Truth and Vertue shall at last succeed.'

Tate, therefore, makes major alterations to the main characters in his *King Lear*. The King himself loses much of his majesty and becomes merely an aggrieved old man baffled by the behaviour of his children. Cordelia and Edgar are transformed into the conventional Restoration hero and heroine; Kent remains a trusty servant and accompanies Lear in the storm, but he loses one of his best moments by the cutting of his final lines which start 'I have a journey, Sir, shortly to go'.<sup>100</sup> The three villains are steeped in their villainy with no complexity of character such as that found in Shakespeare's Edmund who makes an attempt, in the last moments of his life, to save Lear and Cordelia.

Following the taste of his time, Tate introduces the opportunity for spectacle and music. Of course, the first entry of Lear and his Court can be staged with spectacle and the storm scenes, in particular, have always been an opportunity for each generation of players to show their latest stage-effects. Tate's additional lines:

... such drenching Rain,  
Such Sheets of Fire, such Claps of horrid Thunder,  
Such Groans of roaring Winds.<sup>101</sup>

would have provided an excellent opportunity for new skills to be displayed and because *King Lear* was staged at Dorset Garden, which was renowned for its stage machinery, it is almost certain that something spectacular would have been attempted. Additional to these is the grotto scene where Edmund and Regan meet which would have consisted of scenery depicting a cave or similar shelter, almost certainly with elaborate backcloth and flats. The stage directions indicate that music is playing although no further details survive.

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* V, iii, 320.

<sup>101</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act III, pp.24-5.



So Tate's *King Lear* took firm hold. For all the faults we see in it today, and those which some critics have seen in it throughout its long history, it nevertheless survived because it offered what the audience wanted.<sup>102</sup> It also provided some of the greatest actors with one of their greatest roles and I propose to look at the most successful of these players in the following chapters.

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<sup>102</sup> This point will be examined again in my final chapter.

Illustration 2



The frontispiece of Nicholas Rowe's *King Lear* (1709)  
taken from BL. C.123.fff.2

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CHAPTER 2

**Confusion in the theatres and in the country; the return to stability  
and the publication of Nicholas Rowe's edition of 1709**

The ten or so years following the first performance of Tate's *King Lear* were not particularly productive ones for the theatre and there were few recorded performances of *King Lear*. Charles II died in 1685 and the new monarch, James II, was less supportive of the stage. The country was unsettled by the political implications of the Succession; the theatres were unsettled by the bickering among the managers. When these concerns were finally allayed, a new team was in control at the theatre and Anne, last of the Stuarts was on the throne. The interest for this thesis lies in the changing attitude of the authorities towards the content of plays during this period; the emergence of 'star' performers and their power within the companies; and the work of Nicholas Rowe and Charles Gildon in the early editing and literary criticism of *King Lear*.

**1682-1694**<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the first performance of Tate's *King Lear* in 1681, financial difficulties forced the amalgamation, in 1682, of the Duke's Company with the King's Company to form the United Company which performed mainly at Drury Lane but on occasion, at Dorset Garden. The causes of the financial failure are not entirely clear and the Dorset Garden Theatre's ability to add 'Spectacle and Musick to Action'<sup>2</sup> failed to save it. Dryden comments in his Epilogue spoken at the opening of the new Drury Lane on 26 March 1674, that 'Our House relieves the Ladies from the frights/Of ill-pav'd Streets, and long dark Winter Nights',<sup>3</sup> no doubt with the stress on 'Our' and intended as a stab at the less-central Dorset Garden Theatre. Although bias in favour of the new Drury Lane Theatre is to be expected in a poem written especially for its opening night, there was probably some truth in Dryden's claim because, in spite of its magnificence, 'shining all with Gold',<sup>4</sup> the fortunes of the Dorset Garden Theatre declined. The players at Drury Lane also suffered from a loss of popularity, perhaps

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<sup>1</sup> The theatrical season in London usually ran from September to late May. However, for the sake of clarity, I have chosen to use the ordinary calendar year, January to December.

<sup>2</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 57.

<sup>3</sup> John Dryden, *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. James Kinsley, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1958) 1, 379-80.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 378.

because many of them 'were past it'.<sup>5</sup> The result was the formation of the United Company and for the next thirteen years, between 1682 and 1695, there was only one patent theatre in London. Several of the actors retired at the time of the union but Thomas Betterton remained as the leading player of these years.

There were only two known performances of *King Lear* and a possible third, during the thirteen years the United Company was in existence. The two known performances were held at the Court in Whitehall. A warrant issued by the Lord Chamberlain dated 30 June 1687 notes a performance on 9 May 1687 and another on 20 February 1688.<sup>6</sup> However, I have found no information regarding the casts for these two Whitehall performances. A third performance probably took place in 1689 when the second edition of Tate's text was printed. The title-page of this edition reads in part 'Acted at the Queen's Theatre' which suggests a performance at about this time. What is interesting is the reference to the Queen's Theatre. The famous Queen's Theatre with which Betterton's company was to be associated was in the Haymarket but did not open until 1705. However, when James II succeeded to the throne in 1685 he was married to his second wife, Mary of Modena, and it was after this queen that the Dorset Garden Theatre was renamed the Queen's Theatre. From the title-page of Tate's *King Lear*, it seems that the United Company returned to the old Dorset Garden Theatre (now renamed the Queen's Theatre) to perform *King Lear* in 1689. Why *King Lear* should have been performed at the Queen's (Dorset Garden) rather than at Drury Lane is not known. Perhaps the 'machinery' available at this theatre was used for spectacular storm effects. No details survive about the cast or exact date. Betterton had played the title-role in 1681 and he was the company's leading actor; it is therefore likely, but not certain, that he played the part of Lear in all three of these performances.

During the thirteen years that the United Company was at Drury Lane, its position remained precarious. The death of Charles II in 1685 and the unsettling times which followed must have been in part to blame. For example, according to Downes, a spectacular production of Dryden's *Albion and Albanus* was 'perform'd on a very Unlucky Day, being the Day the Duke of Monmouth, Landed in the West'.<sup>7</sup> This news

<sup>5</sup> Hazleton Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1927) 111.

<sup>6</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama, 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952-9) 1, 351; E. Boswell, *The Restoration Court Stage*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1932) 291 and 292.

<sup>7</sup> John Downes, *Roscus Anglicanus*, (1708) 40.

of an attempt, in June 1685, by Monmouth to snatch his father's crown from James, the legitimate heir, was particularly unfortunate for Dryden. The political implications of the event resulted in unrest among the London population; further, Dryden's new play had originally been intended as a celebration of Charles II's victory over his enemies. After Charles's unexpected death in February, Dryden had revised his work but nonetheless, events proved fatal to the new play.<sup>8</sup>

Another factor which contributed to the unhappy state of the theatre at this time was the intrigue and malpractice among the management. The company was now controlled by the sons of William Davenant and there was controversy over the ownership of the theatre's shares.<sup>9</sup> Finally, in 1690 Alexander Davenant sold out to Christopher Rich, a lawyer and 'base successor of Davenant and Killigrew',<sup>10</sup> who was guilty of 'some extraordinary ill Management'.<sup>11</sup> To economise Rich attempted to cut salaries and also ordered that the roles of Betterton and Barry be given to the newcomers, George Powell (1658?-1714) and Anne Bracegirdle (1663?-1748). Powell was some twenty-three years younger than Betterton<sup>12</sup> and Colley Cibber shows Powell's inexperience and youth when he writes that 'the giddy Head of *Powel*, accepted the Parts of *Betterton*' but that Bracegirdle was wise enough to refuse Barry's roles.<sup>13</sup> As a junior member of the company he had joined in 1690, Cibber observed the quarrels behind the scenes and decided that a company would not flourish if 'the chief Actors and the Undertakers were at variance'.<sup>14</sup> In this he was proved right. The years of Rich's management were filled with dissent and the actors were often split in their allegiances, some siding with Rich, some with Betterton. The situation was not resolved until after Betterton's death in April 1710 and the establishment of Colley Cibber, Thomas Doggett and Robert Wilks, as what Cibber termed the 'Triumvirate of Actors'<sup>15</sup> who led Drury Lane from 1710.

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<sup>8</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.1, 337.

<sup>9</sup> For an account of these events see Leslie Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1928) chapter VII.

<sup>10</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 1, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 108.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Aston, *A Brief Supplement to Colley Cibber, Esq.*, [1748] 5.

<sup>13</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 110.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 111.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 247.

**1695-1705** Before the stabilising influence of the Triumvirate was felt, the internal disagreements within the company continued. In 1695 there was a split among the actors and a breakaway company was formed. Goaded by the tyranny of Rich, Thomas Betterton, together with Elizabeth Barry and other leading players, petitioned King William who granted them permission to set up a second theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields near where Betterton and the original Duke's Company had been established in 1660. Now, in 1695, Betterton headed a company which ceded from Rich's management and moved to the new theatre, sometimes known as the Little Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre.<sup>16</sup> However, before discussing this move and the next performance of *King Lear*, (1699) I wish to look first at an event which took place in 1698 and which has a bearing on Nahum Tate, the reviser of *King Lear*. This was the publication of Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* which shows Collier as part of a growing opposition to the style and language of the late-seventeenth century playwrights.<sup>17</sup> A document in Lambeth Palace Library shows that Nahum Tate was also part of this opposition. In February 1699 Tate wrote 'A Proposal for Regulating of the Stage & Stage-Plays'<sup>18</sup> in which he appeared to submit without demur to censorship and supported a directive from the Lord Chamberlain to clean up the language of plays. He argues for 'all Plays (capable of being reformd) [to] be rectify'd by their Authors ... And proper Persons appointed to Alter & reform those of Deceased Authors' and seems to suggest that it might be necessary for the theatres to be entirely 'Silenc'd'. Tate does not refer directly to immorality but his meaning is clear. One of his points is that 'no Gentlemen be sufferd to come behind the Scenes, nor Women in Vizard-Masques<sup>19</sup> admitted to see a Play'. The accepted custom of men walking freely backstage or, indeed, on stage, was something which the players had long contended with. Some years later, in 1720, a bill was introduced which attempted to control

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<sup>16</sup> Hazleton Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1927) 117-8.

<sup>17</sup> *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller, 15 vols. (Cambridge, 1907-27) 8, 163ff. lists Sir Richard Blackmore, Robert Wolseley and Joseph Wright as writers who questioned the licence of the stage at this time.

<sup>18</sup> Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 933/57.

<sup>19</sup> This reference to 'vizard-masques' is to prostitutes who came to the theatre thus disguised. Cibber writes that this custom started as a disguise for ladies who 'were afraid of venturing bare-fac'd to a new Comedy' but that the custom 'had so many ill Consequences ... that it has been abolish'd these many Years', *An Apology for the Life*, (1740) 155.

'Rioting, and disturbing the Audiences'<sup>20</sup> (although there is no mention of disturbing the long-suffering players) but it was not until the time of David Garrick that the audience was finally kept from the stage.

Tate's manuscript is particularly interesting if a comparison is made between his views of 1699 and those of 1681. In the 1680s the chief anxiety was over the political content of the plays and this anxiety was reinforced by the conspiracy known as the Popish Plot (1678-9) which had raised fears of the possible establishment of a Catholic government. This was followed by the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81 when Charles II dissolved three parliaments which had attempted to legislate to exclude the Catholic James, Duke of York, as heir to the throne. The emphasis of the authorities' concerns over the next fifteen or so years was therefore largely political. Nahum Tate, in his attempts to 'improve' Shakespeare, was among those who suffered for political reasons under the censors. In the Epistle Dedicatory to his play *The Sicilian Usurper* (1681), a reworking of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, Tate lamented the fate of his play, which was suppressed on the third day 'without Examination'. He complains that he could as well have placed his characters in the Moon for all the good his rewriting did him.<sup>21</sup> While the reason for suppressing *The Sicilian Usurper* in 1681 was political (the State was touchy about plays which suggested instability of king or government), the reason for rewriting plays, which Tate advocates in 1699, was moral. Tate's support of censorship, albeit moral rather than political, in the last years of the seventeenth century is ironic but not surprising. Although he had suffered from censorship early in his career, now, eighteen years later Tate was an established author and Poet Laureate and no doubt preferred to conform with the authorities of which he was now part. The shift in public opinion away from the 'smut'<sup>22</sup> of the Restoration comedies was growing at this time.<sup>23</sup> William and Mary issued proclamations against immorality shortly after coming to the throne in 1688 and these were read from the pulpits four times a year. As

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<sup>20</sup>See Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952-9) 2, 8-25.

<sup>21</sup> Nahum Tate, *The Sicilian Usurper*, (1681) A2v-A3r.

<sup>22</sup> Collier's use of this word in this sense is the earliest recorded instance (B. Hellinger, ed., *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, New York, 1987, 9, note; OED sb.5.). The following information is from Hellinger.

<sup>23</sup> For example, one of the greatest of the Restoration comedies, William Congreve's *The Way of the World* had its premiere in 1700 but was not, at first, a success.

Crown and State became more settled, the emphasis had switched from concern over the political content of the plays to concern over their '*Smuttiness of Expression; Their Swearing, Profainness, and Lewd Application of Scripture.*'<sup>24</sup>

An interesting example of this opposition to 'debauchery' on stage at this time is seen in another manuscript held at Lambeth Palace Library. This anonymous manuscript expresses views similar to those in Tate's 'Proposal' of 1699, and strongly condemns the 'Obscene Sentences, The Cursing & Swearing, The Profaness & Impiety, with which the Plays now-a-days are usually fill'd'<sup>25</sup> and refers to 'Her present Majesty' issuing a 'gracious Proclamation against Vice & Profaness'. The writer also complains that *The Tempest*<sup>26</sup> was acted 'within a very few days after the late dreadful Calamity that befell the Nation. That terrible Storm which so loudly proclaim'd Gods Displeasure against us, was scarcely laid, before They, with a daring Impudence, began to make a Storm the Subject of their Drollery!' The manuscript is undated but reference to 'Her Majesty' places it between 1702 and 1714, the dates of Anne's reign and there is little doubt that the storm is the one of Friday 26 November 1703.<sup>27</sup> The performance of *The Tempest* mentioned in the manuscript must, therefore, be the one listed in *The London Stage* for Wednesday 1 December at Lincoln's Inn Fields, five days after the catastrophic storm.<sup>28</sup> This anonymous writer was not alone in these views. Jeremy Collier also condemned, for similar reasons, a performance of *Macbeth* at Drury Lane on 27 November, one day after the storm. Collier is concerned that after the hurricane, a 'sad Instance of God's Judgments', the playhouse chose to act '*Macbeth* with all its Thunder and Tempest ... [and] the Audience were pleas'd to Clap, at an unusual Length of Pleasure and Approbation'.<sup>29</sup> No doubt the writers had an innate objection to

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<sup>24</sup> Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, (1698) 2.

<sup>25</sup> Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 953/131.

<sup>26</sup> Charles B. Hogan in *Shakespeare in the Theatre, 1701-1800*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1952), hereafter referred to as *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, states that the performances of *The Tempest* at this time were the Dryden/Davenant/Shadwell adaptation (1, 422).

<sup>27</sup> I am indebted to the Weather Centre at Bracknell whose staff immediately identified the storm when told that it occurred between 1702 and 1714. After learning its exact date, I found several references to it in contemporary writings including *The Storm or ... [what] happen'd in the Late Dreadful Tempest*, attributed to Daniel Defoe, (1704).

<sup>28</sup> *The London Stage*, pt. 2, vol.1, 50.

<sup>29</sup> Jeremy Collier, *Dissuasive from the Play-House Occasion'd By the late Calamity of the Tempest*, (1703) 14-5.



the theatre inherited perhaps from the earlier Puritans, and now that political concern was in abeyance, this objection combined with a disquiet over blasphemy. Aversion to the theatre, abhorrence of irreligious behaviour and the coincidence of the storm, all united to produce these complaints.

By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the censorship of plays, 'founded only on tradition',<sup>30</sup> had become lax and was now virtually impossible to enforce. The official censorship of books had ended in 1695 when the Commons refused to renew the Act of 1633. Except for blasphemy and sedition, there was no longer state censorship of the printed word.<sup>31</sup> The Master of the Revels still retained powers of censorship in the theatre but his authority was rarely enforced. However, Collier's *A Short View* caused enormous interest in 1698 and, as already mentioned, was only one of a number of works expressing similar views, all part of a growing distaste of the degenerate morals of the times. Further, William III, and later Anne who succeeded in 1702, did not share the early Stuarts' love of the theatre. The importance of the Court to theatre life was diminished and the increasing powers of the middle classes perhaps reflected a 'reaction against old aristocratic codes'.<sup>32</sup> These years were an unhappy and confused time for the players of London.

During the years 1695 to 1705, with Betterton again at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and in spite of the disarray of much of the theatres' management, the fortunes of Tate's play seem to have revived somewhat with nine performances listed. The first of these was given by Rich's company on 3 February 1699 at Drury Lane<sup>33</sup> which coincided with the publication of the third edition of Tate's *King Lear*. No details survive regarding the cast but because George Powell was with Drury Lane for the 1698-9 season,<sup>34</sup> it is probable that he took the title-role. Two performances are recorded for 1701, the casts and dates written inside a British Library copy of *King Lear*.<sup>35</sup> The dates are 27

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph W. Krutch, *Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration*, (Columbia, 1924) 185.

<sup>31</sup> R. Findlater, *Banned! A Review of Theatrical Censorship in Britain*, (1967) 33.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>33</sup> Leslie Hotson, *The Commonwealth and Restoration Stage*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1928) 377.

<sup>34</sup> *The London Stage*, pt. 1, 501.

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion on these two performances, see my article 'Filling in the Gaps: further comments on two performances of Nahum Tate's *King Lear* in 1701, their dates and cast' (*Theatre Notebook*, vol. 49, no. 1, 3-10, 1995).

January and 19 May and the near-complete cast list suggests that the performances must have been given at Betterton's theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Powell is known to have moved to Betterton's company for the 1700-1 season and this is the first time he is recorded as Lear.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Anne Bracegirdle appears for the first time as Cordelia at these 1701 performances. On 30 October 1702 there was another performance, this time at Drury Lane. No cast list survives but the occasion was a benefit for Henry Fairbank, a minor actor who played secondary roles at Drury Lane up until 1709.

The custom of benefit performances started at the end of the seventeenth century and according to Cibber, Elizabeth Barry, 'in King *James's* time', was the first player thus honoured. Cibber writes that she was 'the first Person whose Merit was distinguish'd by the Indulgence of having an annual Benefit-Play'.<sup>37</sup> He must have been referring to a benefit held solely for one person because Pepys mentions a benefit shared by all the women players as early as 28 September 1668. The benefit system became a means whereby 'quick-witted managers' kept players 'in economic subjection' by reducing their salaries and promising them the high rewards of a benefit.<sup>38</sup> Although it was true that popular actors were able to earn considerable sums from their benefits, this was not guaranteed and the size of audience could be affected by bad weather or other outside influences. In addition to this risk, the managers also demanded that the costs of running the theatre for that one night must be deducted from the takings. These costs were frequently increased until, in 1709, the Lord Chamberlain ordered a maximum deduction of £40 for each night.<sup>39</sup> Various refinements to the benefit system grew up during the early eighteenth century.<sup>40</sup> *The London Stage* comments that multiple benefits lost favour 'when individuals secured personal benefits'<sup>41</sup> and it would have been usual for that individual to be 'the centre of attraction on the "night"'.<sup>42</sup>

In this year (1703) there were three known performances of *King Lear*, on 9 and 27

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<sup>36</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.1, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 95. OED (sb.4.a) notes Barry's performance on 16 January 1687 as the first benefit.

<sup>38</sup> St. Vincent Troubridge, *The Benefit System in the British Theatre*, (1967)17.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 45. However, Troubridge notes that this order seems to have been largely ignored.

<sup>40</sup> See Troubridge for full details about this.

<sup>41</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.1, lxxix.

<sup>42</sup> St. Vincent Troubridge, *The Benefit System in the British Theatre*, (1967) 11.

October and 21 December all at Drury Lane but very little information survives about the casts. John Mills is listed as playing Lear on 27 October at his own benefit when he was allowed to take the lead role.<sup>43</sup> From 1706 he was cast as Edmund and retained this lesser part for over twenty years. Mills's career was that of a good, competent actor who, in Cibber's words, was chosen by Robert Wilks 'for his second [i.e. second most important role] in many Plays'.<sup>44</sup> Later he graduated to other title-roles including Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Henry IV, Macbeth and he played Lear on three more occasions.

The years 1704 and 1705 saw one performance each of *King Lear* on November 15 and July 13 respectively, again both at Drury Lane and with no surviving information regarding the casts. The 1705 performance was advertised as having 'Singing and Dancing. Between the Acts.'<sup>45</sup> The custom of including singing and/or dancing, usually between the acts, was popular in the early eighteenth century. This was done in an attempt to boost the falling numbers in the audience and to counter the attractions of singers, dancers, acrobats and tumblers offered at places of entertainment such as the York Buildings and the Mayfair near Hyde Park Corner. Another attraction which the theatre had to compete against was the Italian opera, with 'shoals of *Italian Squallers*',<sup>46</sup> which first appeared in London at this time.<sup>47</sup>

In the autumn of 1705 Thomas Betterton moved his company to the new theatre, known as the Queen's Theatre, built by Sir John Vanbrugh in the Haymarket. This theatre promised great things for Betterton, the finest living English actor, but sadly the promise was not fulfilled. On completion, the theatre was found to have severe acoustic problems and speech sounded like 'the Gabbling of so many People, in the lofty Isles in a Cathedral'; in addition the theatre was 'out of the Reach of an easy Walk'<sup>48</sup> so that the first season was a failure. Nevertheless, Thomas Betterton persevered and gathered together a first-class company so that, according to Cibber and Genest who both use the same phrase, 'a new Spirit'<sup>49</sup> among the players resulted in increased audiences. This

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<sup>43</sup> Highfill, 10, 246.

<sup>44</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 151.

<sup>45</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.1, 97.

<sup>46</sup> [Edmund Curl], *The Life of That Eminent Comedian Robert Wilks, Esq.*, (1733) 8.

<sup>47</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol. 1, lxxiff.

<sup>48</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 183-4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 193; John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage ... 1660 to 1830*, 10 vols. (Bath, 1832) 2, 357; hereafter referred to as Genest.

success, however, was short-lived. By 1708 Rich, who was against a merger, was forced to agree to a union of the companies which then settled at Drury Lane where the machinations of Rich were not yet quite over. In 1709 once again dissent forced some of the players to leave Drury Lane. Led by Betterton, they returned to the Haymarket driven by the oppression of Rich until, after further intrigue, three of the leading actors Robert Wilks, Thomas Doggett and Colley Cibber won control of the management of the Drury Lane Theatre at the end of 1710, and a new era in theatre history began.<sup>50</sup>

**1706-1709** Before the forced amalgamation of the two companies at Drury Lane in 1708 there were three performances of *King Lear* in 1706, all at the Queen's Theatre. The first was on 30 April when comical songs and dancing were added to the programme;<sup>51</sup> the second was on 13 August, and no information survives regarding the casts of either of these two performances. However Genest gives a partial cast list for the third, on 30 October<sup>52</sup> which includes Betterton as Lear and Anne Bracegirdle as Cordelia. This was Bracegirdle's last season as an actress<sup>53</sup> and it is the only time she is listed as Cordelia other than in the manuscript cast of 1701 written in the British Library copy of *King Lear*. Among the other parts, John Verbruggen (d.1708) is given as Edgar. This is interesting for two reasons. First, (like Bracegirdle) it is the only time Verbruggen is known to have played this role other than in the performances of 1701 written in the British Library book. Secondly, Anthony Aston<sup>54</sup> singles out Verbruggen as Edgar for special praise which would suggest that Verbruggen played the role regularly. Aston writes that Verbruggen's 'chief Parts were ... *Edgar* in *King Lear*' and that as Edgar '*Jack shew'd his Judgment most; for his Madness was unlimited*' and Aston goes on to comment on Verbruggen's tenderness when speaking to Cordelia.<sup>55</sup>

The years 1707 and 1740 were the only two years between 1701 and 1750 in which Nahum Tate's *King Lear* was not staged.

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<sup>50</sup> For a concise outline of the events of these years see George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 1,15-6.

<sup>51</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 5.

<sup>52</sup> Genest, 2, 357.

<sup>53</sup> Highfill, 2, 275.

<sup>54</sup> Anthony Aston is believed to have been the first professional actor to appear in America (*Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll, (Oxford, 1951) 38).

<sup>55</sup> Anthony Aston, *A Brief Supplement to Colley Cibber, Esq.*, [1748]16-7.

In 1708 there were two performances of *King Lear* both at Drury Lane. As already noted, this was the year in which Rich was forced to amalgamate his company with Betterton's, from 10 January. The performance on 1 January (immediately before the arrival of Betterton and his company) lists only George Powell as Lear. *The London Stage* notes that the playbill advertising this performance states that the play was 'Not Acted these Five Years'.<sup>56</sup> Clearly, this statement is inaccurate, perhaps intentionally in order to encourage an audience, because the Queen's Theatre had staged the play three times in 1706 and Drury Lane had itself staged one performance on 13 July 1705. The second performance in 1708, on 21 October, has Betterton once again in the title-role. Jack Verbruggen had died sometime before April of that year<sup>57</sup> and the role of Edgar was now taken by Robert Wilks who was to become a leading member of the Drury Lane company playing, among a variety of roles, Hamlet, Othello and a long run between 1708 and 1727 as Edgar in *King Lear*. Another member of the future Triumvirate, Colley Cibber, also made his first appearance in *King Lear* in 1708 as Gloucester which he played until 1730. Cordelia at this performance in October 1708 was taken by another newcomer to the play, Lucretia Bradshaw (d. c.1755).<sup>58</sup> This actress is first listed as a member of Betterton's company at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1695 after the split from Rich at Drury Lane. She played few parts in the last years of the seventeenth century but established herself in the first years of the new century playing Desdemona, Ophelia and Portia among other roles.

The single performance of *King Lear* listed in 1709 was staged on 27 April at Drury Lane. Lear was played by Betterton and Cordelia by 'a young gentlewoman'. This performance was a benefit for the actress Mrs. Elizabeth Willis and therefore, this player should have been 'the centre of attraction'. However, it is possible that Cordelia was played by Miss [Mary] Willis, the daughter of Mrs. Willis. This is further suggested by the fact that when the two Willises were engaged by Drury Lane, part of their agreement stated that they would share the proceeds of a benefit performance.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.1, 162.

<sup>57</sup> Hazleton Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1927)127. Spencer notes that Verbruggen died before 26 April 1708 when a benefit was held for his 'young orphan child'.

<sup>58</sup> Highfill, 2, 283-6.

<sup>59</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952-9) 2, 286.

The unanswered question remains whether Mrs. Willis was cast as either Goneril or Regan, or whether she allowed her daughter, in the role of Cordelia, to take centre-stage on her behalf.

A much more important event in the history of *King Lear* also occurred in 1709 when Nicholas Rowe, a member of the Middle Temple, playwright, and later, on the death of Nahum Tate in 1715, Poet Laureate, published his *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*. Although Rowe's edition was barely more than 'a reprint of the fourth folio edition'<sup>60</sup> because the importance of collating text against text was not understood at that time and only practised in the case of the classical works, he was, nevertheless, the first critical editor of Shakespeare's plays. He divided the plays into acts as in the Folio but offered eighteen scenes instead of the more usual twenty-six;<sup>61</sup> his edition was the first to include a life of Shakespeare; it was the first illustrated edition; and the first to contain criticism of Shakespeare's work. The edition, which did not include the poems, was published in six volumes<sup>62</sup> by Jacob Tonson.

Before publication, Rowe advertised for materials or anecdotes suitable for including in a life of Shakespeare.<sup>63</sup> The resulting essay runs to forty pages and includes notes and criticism on the plays. What is of most interest as far as *King Lear* is concerned is the lack of comment on this play. Rowe confirms Betterton's 'fine Performance' as Hamlet;<sup>64</sup> astutely comments that although he has seen *The Merchant of Venice* 'Acted as a Comedy' and Shylock 'perform'd by an Excellent Comedian', he feels that its 'deadly Spirit of Revenge'<sup>65</sup> makes it difficult to perceive the play as a comedy; but has nothing to say on *King Lear*. He comments on twenty-nine of Shakespeare's plays, comments dismissed by Johnson as failing 'to discover much profundity or penetration'.<sup>66</sup> Some

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<sup>60</sup> Annibel Jenkins, *Nicholas Rowe*, (Boston, 1977) 99.

<sup>61</sup> The number of scenes in modern editions is usually twenty-six. Pope, who followed the French and Italian custom of introducing a new scene at the entrance or exit of a leading character, offered sixty scenes and in R. Foakes's Arden, Act II has only two scenes whereas the more usual number is four. (Q has one more scene than F).

<sup>62</sup> Volume 6 contains six plays which are no longer attributed to Shakespeare.

<sup>63</sup> Annibel Jenkins, *Nicholas Rowe*, (Boston, 1977) 99.

<sup>64</sup> Nicholas Rowe, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, 6 vols. (1709) 1, xxxiv; hereafter referred to as Rowe, *Shakespear*.

<sup>65</sup> Rowe, *Shakespear*, 1, xix-xx.

<sup>66</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George B. Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1905) 2, 71. Johnson's comment refers to Rowe's Preface but the Preface and Life are written as one and there is no separate Preface as such.

of these notes are relatively detailed while others are just passing comments, but there is not a single word on *King Lear*. In the early eighteenth century, plays were judged largely by their success on stage and scholars were not yet involved. Rowe's neglect of *King Lear* might confirm the relatively low value placed on Shakespeare's *King Lear* at this time while Tate's *King Lear* was firmly established.

In Rowe's edition the frontispiece to *King Lear* has several points worth noting. The illustration shows two courtiers, presumably Kent and Gloucester, standing on either side of a distraught Lear. A hovel or shelter is glimpsed at the back of the stage. On the right, a little apart, stands a fourth character with long hair and a beard, dressed in loose garments and carrying a staff, presumably Edgar as Mad Tom rather than the Fool. The scene must represent Rowe's III, iii, pp. 2516-8 which is the only scene in which Lear, Kent, Gloucester and Edgar are on the heath together and Lear is urged by Gloucester to 'Go in with me!'.<sup>67</sup> The Fool is also present during this scene but is not represented in the frontispiece, an interesting omission bearing in mind that the Fool was cut from Tate's version staged at this time.

The central figures are dressed as eighteenth-century gentlemen in buttoned, flared knee-length jackets, shaped to the waist and worn over hose. The courtiers wear three-cornered hats and what appear to be wigs. Although these seem serious anachronisms to our eyes, it would not have bothered the eighteenth-century audience or, indeed, Shakespeare himself. Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and Tate's adaptation *The Ingratitude of a Common-wealth* both contain reference to 'Doublets, that Hangmen wou'd/Bury with those that Wore 'em'<sup>68</sup> and there are other references to out-of-place doublets and even ruffs throughout Shakespeare's plays. Rowe's frontispiece showing eighteenth-century gentlemen is no doubt a representation of how *King Lear* was staged in the early years of that century and perhaps portrays Betterton as Lear in Tate's version.

The scenery appears to consist of flats painted with trees and bushes and the sky is riven by lightning and filled with dark storm-tossed clouds. It is easy to imagine that the stage effects would have included lightning flashes and the sound of thunder. A curious advertisement at the end of Curll's *The Life of That Eminent Comedian Robert*

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<sup>67</sup> Rowe, *Shakespear*, vol.5, III, iii, pp.2516-8; Arden, *King Lear*, III, iv, 144.

<sup>68</sup> William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ed. P. Brockbank (Arden, 1990) I, v, 6-7; Nahum Tate, *The Ingratitude of a Common-wealth: Or, the Fall of Caius Martius Coriolanus*, (1682) I, iii, p.12.

*Wilks Esq.*,<sup>69</sup> lists ‘Moveables of *Ch .....r R .ch*, [Christopher Rich] Esq’ which are for sale. The items include ‘A Dozen and a half of CLOUDS, trimmed with *Black ... A Set of CLOUDS ... streaked with Lightning ... A Mustard-Bowl to make Thunder with*’.<sup>70</sup> A note at the end states that these items were gathered together in July 1709 and, if the advertisement is genuine, it is probable that stage effects similar to these were used for the storm scenes in the productions of *King Lear* now under discussion.

Finally, the frontispiece depicts Lear on the heath, bareheaded and before he acquires the coronet of weeds and flowers. There are no stage directions in Rowe mentioning Lear festooned with weeds, just the simple ‘Enter Lear’.<sup>71</sup> It was not until Lewis Theobald’s edition of Shakespeare (1733) that a reference to flowers was included in the stage directions when ‘*dress madly with Flowers*’ was added to Shakespeare’s text.<sup>72</sup> However, as early as 1681 Nahum Tate had inserted the stage directions ‘*Enter Lear, a Coronet of Flowers on his Head. Wreaths and Garlands about him.*’<sup>73</sup> Although this version is not the text of Shakespeare, to the much-ridiculed Tate goes the distinction of being the first to establish the stage directions for this moment which has created an image of Lear now universally recognised.

It is convenient at this point to look at a volume of Shakespeare’s poems, published by Edmund Curll and edited by Charles Gildon, which was deliberately intended to look like the seventh volume of Rowe’s edition although published a year later. At the end of the volume is a section called ‘Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear’<sup>74</sup> which includes ‘The Argument’ of each play. After outlining Shakespeare’s story of *King Lear*, the writer continues ‘The King and *Cordelia* ought by no means to have dy’d, and therefore Mr. *Tate* has very justly alter’d that particular’<sup>75</sup> and then comments on the ‘disgust’ that is felt when virtue and piety ‘meet so unjust a Reward’, a view which was to be echoed frequently in the following years.

<sup>69</sup> [Edmund Curll], *The Life of That Eminent Comedian Robert Wilks, Esq.*, (1733) 49-53.

<sup>70</sup> A mustard-bowl is ‘proverbially referred to as the instrument for producing stage thunder’ (OED *sb.* 4.c.(b)).

<sup>71</sup> Rowe, *Shakespear*, vol.5, IV, v. p.2532. Q1 reads ‘Enter Lear mad’ while F gives ‘Enter Lear’.

<sup>72</sup> Lewis Theobald, *The Works of Shakespeare*, 7 vols. (1733) 5, IV, p.193.

<sup>73</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act IV, p.47.

<sup>74</sup> [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 257ff.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 7, 406. These comments express very similar views to Samuel Johnson’s in his edition of Shakespeare’s works (1765).



Also in this volume Gildon includes 'An Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in *Greece, Rome and England*'. In this he praises Shakespeare for his ability to 'make a Madman speak exactly as a Madman does ... This *Shakespear* has admirably perform'd in the Madness of *King Lear*; where the Cause of his Frenzy is ever uppermost and mingles with all he says or does'.<sup>76</sup> Then follow some passages and episodes which Gildon considers particularly fine and I will look at a selection from *King Lear*. Among passages praised is Lear's curse on Goneril after she shows her ingratitude<sup>77</sup> which Gildon considers 'very well and naturally chose'. Lear's speech 'No, *Regan* thou shalt never have my curse'<sup>78</sup> followed by his anger when he realises both sisters intend the same humiliation of him, is also praised, as is Lear's speech beginning 'O! reason not the need';<sup>79</sup> Edgar's account of a serving man<sup>80</sup> is labelled by Gildon as being 'very pretty' and Edgar's speech 'How fearful/And dizzy'<sup>81</sup> is praised as 'very good'. Gildon's final selection is the line '*The Usurer hangs the Couzener*'<sup>82</sup> of which he writes 'Tho' all *Lear's* Madness is good' this passage is 'particularly remarkable for the satyrical Reflections'. None of this adds much to the appreciation of the lines. However, there is one line selected by Gildon on which he writes with more substance and this line has been commented on by twentieth-century writers. The line is Lear's 'Didst thou give all to thy daughters?'<sup>83</sup> on which Gildon comments 'There is nothing more beautiful than *Lear's* first Starts of Madness'<sup>84</sup> and he pinpoints the beginning of the king's madness to this moment. William Empson in *The Structure of Complex Words*<sup>85</sup> also notes this as being the first moment of madness as does A.C. Bradley in his *Shakespearean Tragedy*<sup>86</sup> but neither of these last two works mention that the same comment is made in Gildon's 1710 volume. Most of Gildon's remarks on

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 7, xxxiv.

<sup>77</sup> [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 406; Rowe, *Shakespear*, vol.5, I, ii, pp.2488-9.

<sup>78</sup> [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 406-7; Rowe, *Shakespear*, vol.5, II, i, p.2505.

<sup>79</sup> [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 407; Rowe, *Shakespear*, vol.5, II, i, pp.2507-8.

<sup>80</sup> [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 407; Rowe, *Shakespear*, vol. 5, III, iii, p.2515.

<sup>81</sup> [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 408; Rowe, *Shakespear*, vol. 5, IV, v, p.2530.

<sup>82</sup> [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 408; Rowe, *Shakespear*, vol.5, IV, v, p.2534.

<sup>83</sup> [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 407; Rowe, *Shakespear*, vol. 5, III, iii, p.2514.

<sup>84</sup> [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 407.

<sup>85</sup> William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words*, (1977) 137.

<sup>86</sup> A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, (1988) 238.

*King Lear* are not particularly perceptive but his attempt at establishing the first moment of Lear's madness is of a different calibre. This stirring of literary criticism on *King Lear* which found its way into an edition of Shakespeare deserves to be remembered. If *King Lear* was ignored by Rowe, it was included in Gildon's tentative efforts. The theatre had also seen its first great Lear although ironically, not in Shakespeare's play. The next developments in the strands of this thesis were in early criticism of Tate's play and an awareness that the style of acting, particularly in tragedies, was becoming outdated and these points will be looked at in the following chapter.

Illustration 3



*H. Cibber*

Portrait of Colley Cibber, leading member of the Triumvirate,  
taken from BL 010855.f.22

**The rise of the Triumvirate (1710) and the performances to 1724**

The years between 1711 and 1741, when David Garrick first appeared on the London stage, were fallow ones for Shakespeare's tragedies in the theatre in spite of the presence of players of the calibre of Barton Booth (1681-1733), the leading tragedian of his time. Towards the end of this period, from about 1734, there was a revival in performances of Shakespeare's comedies and in some of his neglected works<sup>1</sup> but it was not until the acting of Garrick as Richard III, at a theatre on the outskirts of town, electrified the theatre-going public that there was a sustained revival of interest in the great tragedies, including *King Lear*.

Colley Cibber writing of the difficult times the theatre experienced early in the eighteenth century, heads one of his chapters '... *The Beginning of its [the theatre's] better Days, under the Triumvirate of Actors*'.<sup>2</sup> It was these actors who stabilised the finances of the Drury Lane Theatre and finally ended the bickering dissent which had marred the early years of the new century. The three actors were Colley Cibber, Robert Wilks and Thomas Doggett and they were a strangely ill-assorted group. Cibber wrote that the three were as different as 'Fire, Air, and Water'<sup>3</sup> but that each had something to offer the new company. Doggett, 'inclined to parsimony',<sup>4</sup> was considered by Cibber to be 'naturally an Oeconomist'<sup>5</sup> and he managed the finances. Wilks 'had a stronger Passion for Glory, than Lucre' and, providing the 'Audience were liberal of their Applause', Wilks was not concerned with the consequences of his extravagance. It fell to Cibber 'to keep well with them both' which he seems to have done admirably.

**1710-1711** The performance of *King Lear* on 4 February 1710 was the last appearance of Thomas Betterton in this role, shortly before the Triumvirate took over. The play was staged at the Queen's, Haymarket, where Betterton had once again gone

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<sup>1</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols., (1921) 1, 227-8.

<sup>2</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 247.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 262.

<sup>4</sup> Dorothy Senior, *The Life and Times of Colley Cibber*, (1928) 68.

<sup>5</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 255-7 for the following information.

to escape Rich and his oppression. With Betterton as Lear, were Robert Wilks as Edgar, John Mills as Edmund and Jane Rogers as Cordelia. Betterton, 'the first giant of the Restoration stage',<sup>6</sup> was now at the end of his career. He was acknowledged as a great actor in a large variety of parts and that this included Tate's *King Lear* can be seen from the following quotation. Downes describes him as '*an old Stately Spreading Oak ... There needs nothing to speak his Fame, more than the following Parts*' and in the list which Downes then adds is included the role of King Lear.<sup>7</sup> After Betterton's death on 28 April, there was one further performance of *King Lear* in 1710, at Drury Lane on 30 November, with George Powell as Lear, Wilks as Edgar, Cibber as Gloucester and Jane Rogers as Cordelia. According to the anonymous and possibly unreliable *The Memoirs of the Life of Robert Wilks*, Jane Rogers (fl.1704-18), who had a daughter by Wilks, was always 'the Heroine in every Play where Mr. Wilks was the Hero'<sup>8</sup> and this continued even after their very public split. In 1710 and 1711 they were cast as Edgar and Cordelia who are, of course, lovers in Tate's version of the play. Rogers's final appearance as Cordelia was on 28 April 1711 and if Highfill's surmises are correct she would have been aged about forty-three at the time.<sup>9</sup> The second performance in 1711 was given on 10 November, with the same cast except that the role of Cordelia was now taken by Mrs. Elizabeth Sherborn (or Sherburn, fl.1710-12), a minor actress who played Cordelia on this one occasion only. Lucretia Bradshaw who had first played Cordelia in 1708 then took back the part which she held until 1714.

It was also in 1711 that the first voice was raised against Tate's adaptation when Joseph Addison in *The Spectator*<sup>10</sup> argued that Shakespeare's *King Lear* was 'an admirable tragedy' and preferable to Tate's version which 'in my humble Opinion ... [has] lost half its Beauty'. However, this protest appears to have been a lone one and was ignored. It was not until 1753 that the first known return to Shakespeare's text was made and many more years after that before Addison's view became general.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> St. Vincent Troubridge, *The Benefit System in the British Theatre*, (1967) 12.

<sup>7</sup> John Downes, *Roscious Anglicanus*, (1708) 52.

<sup>8</sup> *The Memoirs of the Life of Robert Wilks Esq.*, [1732] 29.

<sup>9</sup> Highfill, 13, 70-1.

<sup>10</sup> *The Spectator*, no.40 (1711).

<sup>11</sup> See chapter 8.

**1712-1715** During the next four years *King Lear* was performed twice in each year except for 1714 when there were three performances, all staged at Drury Lane which was without a company to rival it until 1714.<sup>12</sup> The surviving lists show the cast was unchanged until 1714. George Powell is known to have played Lear on 23 October 1712 and 8 January 1713. Although no cast lists survive for the performances of 26 February 1712 and 21 November 1713, it is probable that Powell played the King before his last known appearance on stage on 27 November 1713.<sup>13</sup> *The Spectator* of 16 April 1711 commented unfavourably that Powell's ranting style, a style usual at that time, contained 'Unnatural exclamations, curses, vows, blasphemies ... [which] pass ... for towering thoughts, and have accordingly met with infinite applause'. Francis Reynardson makes a similar comment on Powell's Oedipus, and writes that 'Big as the Voice of War he mouths his Roll'.<sup>14</sup> These comments suggest there was some awareness this style of acting was growing outdated although it was to be some years before it was generally acknowledged. Nonetheless, Powell who worked 'more by emotion than intellect ...[and] sometimes electrified his audiences',<sup>15</sup> held an important place on the stage in his time. Thomas Davies probably sums up his position accurately when he writes that 'Powell's king Lear ought not to be forgotten'.<sup>16</sup>

Then in 1714 there were important changes. Barton Booth, the new star of Drury Lane, began a long run as Lear. As far as is known, he played the part for the first time on 26 April 1714 and continued in this role until he retired in 1727. Booth was probably the greatest tragic actor during these years. Cibber tells us that 'in the more turbulent Transports of the Heart, *Booth* ... bore the Palm, and left all Competitors behind him'.<sup>17</sup> However, Booth's position was slowly won. He had joined Betterton at Lincoln's Inn Fields back in 1701 but it was not until 1713 that he earned star status in the title-role of Joseph Addison's *Cato*. As a result of this success, he secured a place

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<sup>12</sup> The Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre closed in 1705; the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket (renamed the King's in 1714) became the principal opera house after 1710, (*Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 462.)

<sup>13</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.1, 312.

<sup>14</sup> Francis Reynardson, *The Stage*, (1713), 27, line 5.

<sup>15</sup> Highfill, 12, 114.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 281.

<sup>17</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 338.

as a member of the Triumvirate, replaced Thomas Doggett,<sup>18</sup> and was established as the leading man at Drury Lane succeeding Betterton in the great tragic roles, including Lear. According to Davies, Booth was ‘much admired’ in the role of Lear and although he ‘would sometimes act lazily ... Lear was one of those parts which he never slighted’.<sup>19</sup>

The theatrical season of 1714 was disrupted in August by the death of Queen Anne when the theatres were closed for about six weeks. At the end of 1714 a new theatre opened to rival Drury Lane which had been without competition since 1710. The new theatre, again sited at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, ended ‘once and for all’<sup>20</sup> the monopoly of the London stage by one company. The theatre was built by the tenacious Christopher Rich but managed by his son, John, opening shortly after Christopher’s death in 1714. The first play to be staged there was a revival of George Farquhar’s *The Recruiting Officer* which was given on 18 December 1714. Drury Lane had offered this same play four nights earlier (14 December) and possible attempts at stealing a rival’s thunder<sup>21</sup> must be suspected. On the new Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre’s first night, Drury Lane offered *King Lear*, the third and last performance of the play that year. Booth, Wilks and John Mills played the role of Lear, Edgar and Edmund respectively at all three of the 1714 performances<sup>22</sup> given on 26 April and 9 and 18 December.

The partial cast lists for the performances of *King Lear* given on 9 and 18 December at Drury Lane, are of interest because they list Hester Santlow (fl.1729-78), dancer-actress and second wife of Barton Booth, as Cordelia for the first time. In this same month, on 4 and 11 December, alternating with the *King Lear* performances, Santlow danced at the King’s Theatre, Haymarket. In spite of Thomas Davies’s condemnation of her as Cordelia when he claimed that she was ‘rather a cold actress’,<sup>23</sup> she continued in the role, usually opposite her husband’s Lear, at Drury Lane for over ten years.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. chapter XIV in which Cibber refers to this incident in detail suggesting that, among other things, ‘the Affair of *Booth*’ drove Doggett from the stage (285).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 275-6.

<sup>20</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.1, 327.

<sup>21</sup> This phrase had its origins in theatre history at about this time; see OED *sb.3.d.* and *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, 10 vols., *The Dunciad*, ed. James Sutherland, (1963), 5, 127, line 18 and note.

<sup>22</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 247.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 276. The use of the word ‘cold’ to describe an actress playing Cordelia is interesting when it is remembered that in Tate’s version Cordelia has several love scenes, as well as her reconciliation scene with Lear, so that to be ‘void of ardour, warmth’ (Johnson, *Dictionary*, 7.a) would be seen as a serious fault.

*The London Stage* notes that the *King Lear* performance on 18 December 1714, was staged 'At the Desire of several Ladies of Quality'.<sup>24</sup> There is no information given about who these ladies might have been although the use of this phrase was common. Of the twenty-five performances of *King Lear* between 1710 and 1720, a version of this phrase is found as a comment on fifteen of the performances including, on one occasion in 1718, the phrase 'By His Royal Highness's Command'.<sup>25</sup> These words seem to give a spurious importance to the occasion and while it might be thought necessary when a performance was in competition against a new and spectacular playhouse's opening night, in general the frequency of the phrase's use would be self-defeating.

The year 1715 saw two performances of *King Lear* both at the Drury Lane Theatre, one on 4 January and the other on 29 November. The same partial cast list for both shows Booth again in the title-role with Wilks, Mills and Mrs. Santlow playing Edgar, Edmund and Cordelia respectively. The new theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields, however, although it staged many Shakespearean plays in its first years, did not offer *King Lear* until 1720. I can only presume this was because the company was without an actor experienced enough to rival Barton Booth in the demanding title-role.

In 1715, Lewis Theobald, who later edited the works of Shakespeare, published the first issue of a short-lived publication called *The Censor* which appeared three times a week from 11 April 1715 to 30 May 1717 with a break of about six months in the middle. The interest for this thesis lies in Theobald's articles on *King Lear*, 'the first essays devoted exclusively to an examination of a single Shakespearean play.'<sup>26</sup> *The Censor* no.7, 25 April 1715, comments on 'our Old *British History*', i.e. Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577) as a source for *King Lear*, the first time that this connection had been noted. Theobald also writes that *King Lear*, 'with all its Defects and Irregularities, has still touch'd me with the strongest Compassion, as well in my Study, as on the Stage'.<sup>27</sup> This comment is fascinating because while Theobald could have read either Tate or Shakespeare in his study, he can only have seen the adaptation on the stage. He confirms his approval of Tate's version in *The Censor* no.10 on 2 May 1715 when he

<sup>24</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.1, 334.

<sup>25</sup> The performance at Drury Lane on 20 November 1718. Presumably this was a reference to one of the sons of George I who had ascended the throne in 1714.

<sup>26</sup> D. Nichol Smith, ed., *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1963) xviii-xix

<sup>27</sup> [Lewis Theobald], *The Censor*, 3 vols. (1717) vol.1, no. 7, 47.



firmly states: '*Cordelia* and *Lear* ought to have surviv'd, as Mr. *Tate* has made them in his *Alteration* of this Tragedy; Virtue ought to be rewarded, as well as Vice punish'd'.<sup>28</sup>

Another event of 1715 which must be mentioned was the death of Nahum Tate on 12 August. Tate died in poverty in the Mint where he had gone to escape his creditors, a sad ending for a man who had been a competent adaptor as well as Poet Laureate from 1692 following the death of Thomas Shadwell. John Doran, writing in the nineteenth century, says that 'Careless, easy, free, and fuddling Tate, died in the sanctuary of the Mint; and St. George's, Southwark, gave him a few feet of earth'.<sup>29</sup> Doran seems to base this comment on William Oldys's manuscript notes in the British Library copy of Gerard Langbaine's *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, (1691). These copious notes, dated 1727, fill the margins of many of the pages and against Nahum Tate's biography, Oldys has written Tate 'was a free good naturd fuddling Companion for he woud often drink his Glass too freely'.<sup>30</sup>

During his life Tate's works were subjected to much scorn which continued after his death and throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Langbaine, who was one of the first to write dismissively of him and presumably by a slip calls him Nathaniel, states that he was 'not above the common Rank ... [and] follows other Mens Models'. Langbaine was the author of *Momus Triumphans, or, the Plagiaries of the English Stage Expos'd*, (1687, but dated 1688) and was concerned with plagiarism, a concept which did not normally worry authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who frequently borrowed from earlier works. Langbaine writes 'of Eight Plays that are printed under his [i.e. Tate's] Name, Six of them owe their Origins to other Pens' and he lists the plays including *The Sicilian Usurper* which, by another slip, he calls an adaptation of *Richard the Third*. Langbaine was not entirely dismissive of Tate and grudgingly 'allow'd [him] to be a Man of Wit and Parts'.<sup>32</sup>

Further early criticism of Tate came from Jonathan Swift in his 'Epistle Dedicatory'

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. vol.1, no.10, 72. See Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols. (1974-81) 2, 17 for further comment on *The Censor*.

<sup>29</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 1, 234.

<sup>30</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, (Oxford, 1691) MSS. notes at p.500, (British Library shelf mark C.28.g.1).

<sup>31</sup> The derogatory phrase 'Tatification of a play' was first used by H.N. Hudson, *Lectures on Shakspeare*, (New York, 1848) 2, 277 where he also refers to 'the Tatified Lear'.

<sup>32</sup> Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, (Oxford, 1691) 500-2.

dated 1697, in *A Tale of a Tub*. In this, Swift includes Tate in an ironical passage on contemporary writers, and comments 'There is another call'd *Nahum Tate*, who is ready to make Oath that he has caused many Rheams of Verse to be published ... [and] wonders why the World is pleased to make such a Secret of it'.<sup>33</sup> The poet Thomas Parnell, scarcely a poetic giant himself, was another critic. In a manuscript poem, 'A Letter to a Friend' (probably written c. 1702) which survives in a notebook found among the Congleton papers,<sup>34</sup> Parnell writes 'laborious T - te has many methods try'd,/to know wt. happy way he may succeed'.<sup>35</sup> As already noted, the most famous criticism made in Tate's lifetime came from Addison in *The Spectator* of 16 April 1711.

However, not all critics were dismissive of Tate's writing. On 29 May 1694, *The Athenian Mercury* carried an anonymous poem which declared of Tate 'So pure thy Style, thy Words so just and free'.<sup>36</sup> Samuel Wesley, poet and father of John, wrote of Tate's '*smooth and well turn'd Lines ... Each Rhime, each Syllable well-weigh'd*'<sup>37</sup> and fair'.<sup>38</sup> Then again, when Tate was reappointed to the laureateship in 1702 on the accession of Anne, he was praised in *The Post Angel* for 'even endeavouring to reform the stage'.<sup>39</sup> This comment appears to connect with Tate's manuscript, 'A Proposal for Regulating the Stage and Stage Players', dated February 1698/9, held in Lambeth Palace Library, and discussed in the previous chapter.

**1716-1720** Yet in spite of criticisms and the author's death, Tate's *King Lear* continued to hold the stage. The three years 1716-18, do not offer anything of particular importance to its story. Drury Lane staged one, two and three performances respectively in each of these years and it was in 1717 that the actor James Quin (1693-1766) first appeared as Gloucester. Quin was to become one of the leading actors in London but he had the misfortune to be performing immediately before the style of

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, (1704) 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Collected Poems of Thomas Parnell*, ed. Claude Rawson and F.P.Lock, (Delaware, 1989) 604-6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 345, lines 50-1.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Christopher Spencer, *Nahum Tate*, (New York, 1972) 14.

<sup>37</sup> Sidney uses the phrase 'the well-wayed syllable' in *The Defence of Poesie*, (*The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1912-26) 3, 44.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel Wesley, *Epistle to a Friend concerning Poetry*, (1700) 19, lines 702-4.

<sup>39</sup> *The Post Angel*, April 1701, 299, quoted in Christopher Spencer, *Nahum Tate*, (New York, 1972) 33.

acting was to be changed forever by the arrival of Garrick. Highfill writes that Garrick's sensational debut in 1741 made Quin's style of acting 'suddenly out of fashion' and continues that the 'presence of Garrick from 1741 on prevented Quin from being able to claim the title of the most important actor of the time'.<sup>40</sup>

These years before the arrival of Garrick, were not great ones for *King Lear*. 1719 offered only one performance, again at Drury Lane, on 19 November with Booth still in the title-role and Mrs. Santlow, now named as Mrs. Booth for the first time, in the role of Cordelia. As I have already mentioned, it was not until 1720 that the Lincoln's Inn Fields company first staged a production of *King Lear*, although the new theatre had opened as far back as 1714. The first performance was on 15 October and advertised as 'Never Acted there before'<sup>41</sup> and there were two further performances that year on 5 November and 31 December. The cast for these three performances was chiefly made up of small-time players. The exceptions included James Quin as Gloucester, the role he had first played at Drury Lane. Another exception was Anthony Boheme (d.1731) in the role of Lear, a role he continued in until 1730. Boheme's 'relatively short but energetic stage career'<sup>42</sup> ran from 1718 to 1730 during which time he played a very large number of roles including several leads. Thomas Davies suggests Boheme was a challenge to Barton Booth in the role of Lear. He comments that Boheme's features 'gave force and authority to the various situations and passions' of Lear and adds that his 'whole action suited to the age and feelings' of the King.<sup>43</sup> Equal praise came from John Doran who claimed that Boheme's Lear was 'full of antique grandeur and pathos'<sup>44</sup> but Boheme's relatively early death on 7 January 1731 prevented his career developing into that of a star performer's. Anna Maria Seymour, (fl.1717-23) later Boheme's first wife, played Cordelia. This actress's career was a distinguished one and she played many Shakespearean roles including Desdemona, Lady Macbeth and Hero, before her early death in July 1723, shortly after her marriage. Another actor in these three performances at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1720 was Lacy Ryan who was cast as Edgar. This player remained second-rate but his Edgar was praised by Thomas Davies who

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<sup>40</sup> Highfill, 12, 232 and 240.

<sup>41</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.2, 596.

<sup>42</sup> Highfill, 2, 185.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 277.

<sup>44</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, 3 vols. (1888) 2, 22.

writes that Ryan ‘copied [George] Powell’s manner’ when playing Edgar<sup>45</sup> and in ‘the comic scenes of Edgar he [i.e. Ryan] displayed considerable skill’.<sup>46</sup> The word ‘comic’ sounds strangely when used in connection with Edgar, even in Tate’s adaptation, unless some of the lines or actions of ‘Poor Tom’ were played for laughs. As J.S. Bratton points out, there was an assumption in the earlier Jacobean audiences that ‘scenes of madness were meant to be funny, with overtones of the macabre and pleasurably weird’<sup>47</sup> and it seems that this assumption lingered into the eighteenth century. Tate’s adaptation was not intended as a comedy but madness could still be seen as comic and diverting and was capable of raising laughter.

In spite of its magnificence, this new theatre at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, which ‘surpassed [Drury Lane] in all matters of show’, was unable to equal the older theatre which still retained the greater players and Lincoln’s Inn Fields therefore, remained ‘halting behind ... in the presentation of the “legitimate”’.<sup>48</sup> The fortunes of *King Lear* were only marginally better at Drury Lane during 1720 where the play was staged four times, on 9 January, 7 April, 1 October and 24 November, with the established names of Barton Booth, Robert Wilks, John Mills and Mrs. Booth in the leading roles.

**1721-1724** In 1721 there was a small revival in the fortunes of *King Lear*. Three performances were staged at Drury Lane on 21 February, 7 October and 30 December, with the same actors repeating their roles but, curiously, Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre with the less well-known players, put on six performances. These were on 24 January, 16 March, 12 April, 15 May, 23 September and 30 November and were the highest number given in any one year since Nahum Tate’s *King Lear* was first staged in 1681.<sup>49</sup> The sudden revival in the play’s fortunes was probably due to Anthony Boheme, the Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre’s new Lear. Perhaps he and Anna Maria Seymour should share the credit for the improved fortunes of both play and theatre where their celebrated

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<sup>45</sup> I have found no record of George Powell playing Edgar.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 322-3.

<sup>47</sup> J.S. Bratton, ed. *Plays in Performance: King Lear*, (Bristol, 1987) 11.

<sup>48</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 1, 218.

<sup>49</sup> Four Shakespearean tragedies (including adaptations) are listed in *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (1, 460-1) as more popular than *King Lear* in the first half of the eighteenth century. However, in 1721, the year of *King Lear*’s revival, *Hamlet* was staged 8 times, *Othello* and *Richard III* 6 times each and *Macbeth* 4 times, all fewer than the 9 performances of *King Lear*.

partnership 'contributed to establish a company struggling with difficulties'.<sup>50</sup> *King Lear*, at Anna Maria's benefit on 16 March, took £101.6.0., a very respectable figure. Thomas Walker, later to attain great success as the first Macheath in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, played Edmund for the first time in 1721, and retained this role for nearly twenty years at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Walker's Edmund was highly praised as having 'vigour and spirit' and the critic adds 'I cannot, with equal praise, speak of any other Edmund in *Lear*'.<sup>51</sup> It has been claimed that Walker was coached by Barton Booth for the role<sup>52</sup> and if this was so, it was probably before Walker left Drury Lane where he had played Cornwall opposite Booth's *Lear* in 1718.

This revival in the fortunes of *King Lear* was not matched until 1742 when its sudden popularity is easily explained by the acting of David Garrick. The three years (1722-24) saw productions of the play return to the more usual level of between two and four performances annually at both theatres.<sup>53</sup> There were no new names of distinction in the cast lists at either theatre.

A small but curious event which occurred on 21 February 1721 and which concerns the actor William Penkethman (d.1725) is worth noting. The performance of *King Lear* staged at Drury Lane that evening appears to have been given without the Gentleman Usher (Shakespeare's Oswald). Penkethman was ill on that night and instead of casting another actor, 'the management decided to omit'<sup>54</sup> the part. It is difficult to imagine how the sense of the play was retained without this character. The scenes where Kent mocks and spars with him could be cut without loss of meaning but his part in carrying Goneril's incriminating letter which is later found by Edgar on his body,<sup>55</sup> would be needed for the unfolding of the plot. Perhaps the letter could be found as though accidentally dropped by an unnamed courtier or by Goneril herself.

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<sup>50</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 3, 179-80.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 324-5.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 325.

<sup>53</sup> The repertory system was practised throughout the eighteenth century with the managers trying constantly to 'please the whole range of taste in London'. (*The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.1, cxii). Long runs of plays which attracted large audiences did occur from the middle of the century but the repertory system remained largely in place. See *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.1, cxii-cxv; pt.3, vol.1, cxxxviii-cxlix; pt.4, vol.1, clix-clxxv.

<sup>54</sup> Highfill, 11, 329; Highfill gives details about other occasions when Penkethman was forced through illness to withdraw from a role which was then deleted from the play.

<sup>55</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act II, pp.14-6 and Act IV, pp.50-1.

Penkethman deserves further mention in an eighteenth-century stage history of *King Lear*. He never rose above the secondary roles but he was cast as the Gentleman Usher in every performance at Drury Lane between 1708 and 1724 for which an actor's name survives. He died in 1725 and his son, also William (d.1740) took up the same part. He played it for the first time in 1730 and more or less continuously for ten years, but he also acted this role at Goodman's Fields, Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent Garden. In the years between the Penkethmans' monopoly of this part, Theophilus Cibber (1703-58) the troublesome son of Colley, a 'good actor, in a flashy, grimacing style,'<sup>56</sup> played the role at Drury Lane until 1730 when the younger Penkethman took over.

Another small event during these three lean *King Lear* years was the publication of Thomas Parnell's *Poems on Several Occasions* in 1722, edited by Alexander Pope. Parnell, as noted, had already derided Tate's writing and in one of the poems in this new collection, 'The Book-worm', he again attacks Tate's 'pert and humble Lays!'<sup>57</sup> Of more importance is the introduction of the name of the editor, Alexander Pope. Major poet but indifferent editor, Pope's own edition of Shakespeare's works was published in 1725, the next important event in the story of *King Lear*.

In these years following Betterton's death the *King Lear* performances had settled into a competent routine with the occasional lift provided by players such as Anthony Boheme and his wife. Barton Booth was well-considered but without the spark of genius which Betterton had shown. Moreover, there were the beginnings of a dissatisfaction with the 'rant', so popular in tragedy. This awareness, acknowledged by only a few critics, was to grow slowly until Garrick's astounding debut in 1741. The permanent establishment of a second company, first at the new Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1714 and, later, at the new Covent Garden in 1732, meant that hereafter London always enjoyed at least two theatres providing drama. As far as *King Lear* in the theatres was concerned, the next few years continued relatively uneventfully but the editing of the text was to gather momentum and the great achievements of the eighteenth-century editors began.

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<sup>56</sup> Dorothy Senior, *The Life and Times of Colley Cibber*, (1928) 26.

<sup>57</sup> *Collected Poems of Thomas Parnell*, ed. Claude Rawson and F.P.Lock, (Delaware, 1989) 'The Book-Worm', 164, lines 78-84.

Illustration 4



Portrait of James Quin, the leading actor before the arrival of David Garrick,  
taken from BL. 1418.c.34 (1)

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CHAPTER 4

**King Lear in Alexander Pope's edition of Shakespeare's works (1725)**  
**and the stage fortunes of the play from 1725 to 1732**

**1725-1726** By the 1720s Alexander Pope was established as 'the supreme poet of the age'<sup>1</sup> and it is possible that Jacob Tonson, the publisher, was intending that Pope's edition of Shakespeare's works should be published in 1723 to celebrate the centenary of the printing of the first Folio.<sup>2</sup> If this was indeed so, the edition was not only late but its reception was not what Tonson (or, of course, Pope) would have wished. On 18 November 1721, *The Weekly Journal, or Saturday's Post* carried the comment that 'The celebrated Mr. Pope is preparing a correct Edition of Shakespear's Works; that of the late Mr. Rowe being very faulty'.<sup>3</sup> Three years later, Pope wrote on 31 October 1724 to William Broome, a collaborator on the Homer translations, 'Shakespeare is finished, I have just written the preface, and in less than three weeks it will be public'.<sup>4</sup> However, this optimism was misplaced and Pope's edition was finally published on 12 March 1725, in six volumes, quarto.

Nicholas Rowe had based his edition on the fourth folio (1685) and Pope made use of Rowe's edition as 'his starting-point'<sup>5</sup> although he also drew on what he termed 'the old editions' or quartos. Pope, like all the early editors, had detractors and defenders, both eighteenth century and more recent.<sup>6</sup> One supporter who refers specifically to the *King Lear* text is John Hart.<sup>7</sup> Hart makes a spirited defence against accusations that Pope defined words carelessly and was indifferent to collation, and defends Pope's collation of the *King Lear* texts, arguing that Pope collated with considerable skill.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1990) 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 56ff.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in George Sherburn, *The Early Career of Alexander Pope*, (Oxford, 1934) 233.

<sup>4</sup> *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956) 2, 270.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1990) 58.

<sup>6</sup> See Samuel Johnson, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (1765) 1, C8r, and *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G.B. Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1905) 3, 139; R.F. Jones, *Lewis Theobald, his Contribution to English Scholarship*, (New York, 1919) 63; George Sherburn, *The Early Career of Alexander Pope*, (Oxford, 1934) 237; Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1990) 1.

<sup>7</sup> John A. Hart, 'Pope as Scholar-Editor', *Studies in Bibliography*, 23, (1970) 45-59.



Moreover, he argues that Pope ‘always reserves the right to handle his material in his own way’,<sup>8</sup> so that if lines were added or omitted, it was by personal choice rather than carelessness. This seems slightly at odds with Pope himself, who says in his Preface, that he did not allow personal preferences to interfere with his work as editor; he ‘discharg’d the dull duty of an Editor, to my best judgment, ... and without any indulgence to my private sense or conjecture’.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, for all Pope’s faults, he was working in ‘the pioneer days’<sup>10</sup> of editing and today’s critics should bear in mind the early state of textual scholarship at that time.

Pope’s first move towards undertaking the work gave every indication of a serious attempt. He advertised in *The Evening Post* on 21 October 1721 for early editions and enlisted the help of friends.<sup>11</sup> He wrote to Jacob Tonson that he had gathered together a number of friends at Oxford whom he hoped would ‘ease me of part of the drudgery of Shakespear’.<sup>12</sup> He uses the same word, ‘drudgery’, in *The Dunciad* where he writes of ‘the drudgery of comparing Impressions’.<sup>13</sup> Then in May 1722, again to Tonson, Pope writes that he intends to ‘get together Parties of my acquaintance ev’ry night, to collate the several Editions of Shakespear’s single Plays’.<sup>14</sup> How much Pope depended on his friends,<sup>15</sup> or ‘how much Pope knew about Shakespeare and how hard he worked on the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Pope, *The Works of Shakespear*, 6 vols. (1725) 1, xxii ; hereafter called Pope, *Shakespear*. Act II in Pope’s *King Lear* has two scenes labelled Scene VI, at p.36 and p.40. According to Foakes in Arden, *King Lear* (110-28), Pope was the first to make some comparison of the Q and F texts and he initiated the custom of conflating them which was generally followed until the 1980s when *The Division of the Kingdoms* (1983), among others, argued that the Q and F texts are distinct. The 18th century editors, while conflating Q and F, began to recognise that there were differences between the uncorrected and corrected 1608 Q and the falsely dated 1619 second Q. This is discussed in the main text, chronologically.

<sup>10</sup> George Sherburn, *The Early Career of Alexander Pope*, (Oxford, 1934) 238.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 233.

<sup>12</sup> *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956) 2, 81.

<sup>13</sup> *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, 10 vols., *The Dunciad*, ed. James Sutherland, (1963) 5, 191, note to line 328.

<sup>14</sup> *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956) 2, 118.

<sup>15</sup> For example, in a letter to Tonson dated 3 September [1721] Pope writes, ‘Pray let the Division of the Scenes in Shakespear be finishd with all speed: it will else greatly retard the Index’, from which it is clear that this work was not done by Pope himself, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956) 2, 81.

edition cannot be answered satisfactorily<sup>16</sup> and a feeling persists that Pope did not remain deeply committed to the task of editor.<sup>17</sup>

In listing his objectives, Pope includes aims which would be objectives of today's editors. 'Various readings' and 'obsolete or unusual words' are to be tackled. He emended (placing discarded words, usually without comment, at the bottom of the page), restored lines and glossed words, tasks which are now considered essential in the work of an editor. Pope's first emendation in *King Lear* is at Cordelia's first line.<sup>18</sup> The Folio has 'What shall Cordelia speak?' However, Pope, preferring the quarto as he does in many instances, gives 'What shall *Cordelia* do?' and puts 'speak' in a footnote. He also adds the stage direction '*Aside*', which is not found in earlier editions. Further emendations are at Lear's line 'Ha Gonerill with a white beard!'.<sup>19</sup> Pope alters this to the quarto's 'Ha! *Gonerill!* hah *Regan!*' and relegates the Folio reading to the bottom of the page; a second example is where Pope alters the Steward's (Oswald) greeting to Kent from 'Good dawning to thee, friend' to read 'Good evening to thee friend' arguing in his footnote that '*I have restor'd it to sense from the old edition*'.<sup>20</sup>

One emendation by Pope was later to be approved by Johnson. Edgar, speaking of the distance the blind Gloucester is supposed to have fallen, says 'Ten masts at each make not the altitude/Which thou hast perpendicularly fell'.<sup>21</sup> Pope emends<sup>22</sup> to read 'attacht' ('Ten masts attacht make not the altitude') which seems feasible but it did not find favour with subsequent editors other than Johnson, who qualified his approval with the comment 'if the word [i.e. attacht] ... were known in our authour's time'.<sup>23</sup> In *Dramatic Miscellanies*, Thomas Davies glosses a number of Shakespeare's words and these include this same *King Lear* line. Davies undertakes some research and quotes

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<sup>16</sup> George Sherburn, *The Early Career of Alexander Pope*, (Oxford, 1934) 234.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 232-47 for further discussion on this.

<sup>18</sup> Pope, *Shakespeare*, 3, Act I, p.3; Arden, *King Lear*, I, i, 62.

<sup>19</sup> Pope, *Shakespeare*, 3, Act IV, p.86; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vi, 96.

<sup>20</sup> The uncorrected Quarto gives 'deuen'; the corrected Quarto 'euen'; it is in fact night time (line 30) so 'dawning' would seem the better sense.

<sup>21</sup> Pope, *Shakespeare*, 3, Act IV, p.85; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vi, 53-4.

<sup>22</sup> Pope puts Rowe's words 'at least' in the footnote. As Simon Jarvis points out in *Scholars and Gentlemen* (Oxford, 1995) 59, both Q and F read 'at each' but Pope does not record this.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, Act IV, vi, p.125.

John Minsheu's Dictionary (1617)<sup>24</sup> which includes the word 'attache' used in the sense Pope gives thus establishing that the word was current in Shakespeare's time<sup>25</sup> although the fact that the word was current does not prove it was the right reading in the text.

The last speech in *King Lear* in many editions, including the first Folio, Rowe and Arden, is spoken by Edgar, editors arguing that Edgar needs to reply to the speech just spoken by Albany and also that the words 'we that are young' sound better coming from Edgar's lips. In the first quarto the words are spoken by the Duke (i.e. Albany). Pope follows the quarto and specifically criticises the practice of giving the speech of one character 'to another character ... in the subsequent editions' complaining that this is done in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear*.<sup>26</sup> Pope also glossed the occasional word. For example, the word 'Gallow' in Kent's lines 'the wrathful skies/Gallow the very wanderers of the dark' is glossed as 'a West-country word, signifies to scare or frighten'.<sup>27</sup> A further example of Pope's glossing is in a footnote where he explains the word 'œiliads'<sup>28</sup> spoken by Regan, as 'french, for Glances'. Arden gives 'oeillades' and qualifies by adding 'amorous glances'.

Pope restored 142 lines of the text of *King Lear* found in the quartos but not in the Folio or Rowe.<sup>29</sup> For example, Pope restores Cordelia's line 'To love my father all'<sup>30</sup> and adds the footnote '*These words restor'd from the first edition, without which the sense was not compleat*'. In fact Cordelia's meaning is already clear but with the restoration, a different emphasis is put on the lines. A further instance of Pope reinstating lines from the *King Lear* quarto is in the 'trial' scene, immediately after

<sup>24</sup> John Minsheu, (fl. 1617) lexicographer, *Ductor in Linguas, The Guide into Tongues*, (1617) 22.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 311. Davies spells the name Minshew.

<sup>26</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 1, xviii-xix.

<sup>27</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act III, p.56; Arden, *King Lear*, III, ii, 44; Arden glosses 'Gallow' as 'frighten'; OED associates the word with the obsolete 'gally' - to frighten, and quotes *King Lear*, (gally, v. a.)

<sup>28</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act IV, p.82; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, v, 27 and note.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1990) 62.

<sup>30</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act I, p.4; Arden, *King Lear*, I, i, 104. This half-line is first found as an emendation, handwritten in the 1670s, in a Third Folio perhaps used as a prompt copy at the Smock Alley Theatre; see Steven Urkowitz's 'The Base Shall to th' Legitimate' in *The Division of the Kingdoms*, ed. Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, (Oxford, 1983) 24.

Lear's lines 'red burning spits/Come hizzing in upon me'.<sup>31</sup> Pope includes this scene, written 'in the mad way', and asserts that although these lines were in the old editions, they were probably 'left out by the players or by Shakespear himself' but that he will include them and 'leave 'em to the reader's mercy'.

In addition, Pope initiates a unique idea which is a form of literary criticism. Although he states at the beginning of his Preface he will not 'enter into a Criticism upon this Author',<sup>32</sup> he chooses to mark what he calls 'Some of the most shining passages ... by comma's in the margin', and a particularly fine scene by a star. Pope claims the method is a less 'ostentatious' way of 'pointing out an Author's excellencies' than 'general Applauses or empty Exclamations'.<sup>33</sup> In spite of this explanation, the feeling remains that the stars and commas method was the easier one and perhaps its true intention was to save Pope further 'dull duty'. *King Lear* does not collect many commas, and no stars. The main passage which Pope approves is Edgar's speech beginning 'how fearful/And dizzy'<sup>34</sup> which is marked with commas.<sup>35</sup>

At the end of volume 6 is an elaborate index compiled by Elijah Fenton, poet, translator and editor.<sup>36</sup> This 'Index of the Characters, Sentiments, Speeches and Descriptions in Shakespear',<sup>37</sup> is in seven sections covering various topics. For example, section IV, called 'Index of Thoughts, or Sentiments' has *King Lear* listed under 'Astrology ridicul'd', 'Bastardy, defended', 'Eclipses, their influence'; section VI is an 'Index of Descriptions, or Images' and '*Dover Cliff*' appears under 'Descriptions of Places' while '*Bedlam Beggars*' is listed in 'Descriptions of Persons'. 'A Table' of the plays and editions consulted by Pope follows; number VI is the 1608 *King Lear*.

Like Rowe's six-volume edition which had a seventh volume to include the poems,

<sup>31</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act III, p.66; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vi, 17-55. See René Weis, *King Lear, A Parallel Text Edition*, (1993) 22-4.

<sup>32</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 1, i.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 1, xxiii.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 3, Act IV, pp.83-4; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vi, 11-24.

<sup>35</sup> Speeches which receive commas include Claudius's speech 'Oh my offence is rank' (vol. 6, III, pp.418-9), Gaunt's 'Methinks I am a prophet new inspired' (vol.3, II, pp.113-4), Lady Macbeth's 'The raven himself is hoarse' (vol.5, I, pp.529-30) and Cassius's 'Why man, he doth bestride the narrow world' (vol.5, I, pp.224-5). Speeches without commas include 'To be or not to be' and Gertrude's 'There is a willow' (vol.6, IV, pp.448-9).

<sup>36</sup> John Butt, *Pope's Taste in Shakespeare*, (1936) 3.

<sup>37</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 6, Ffff1r-Nnnn2r.

added by Charles Gildon, Pope's edition also had a seventh volume with the poems added by another editor, George Sewell. In this volume 7 Sewell uses, almost verbatim, Gildon's 'Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear' including those on *King Lear*.<sup>38</sup> He adds his own Preface commenting that Shakespeare 'has been handed down from Age to Age very incorrect' and he blames this on 'the Tribe of Editors, Correctors, and Printers'. He goes on to express the view that these errors will 'no doubt ... [be] remov'd in the new Edition of his *Plays*',<sup>39</sup> all of which reads with unintentional irony bearing in mind the scorn which was directed at Pope's edition on its publication.

The edition finally appeared on 12 March 1725 and its hostile reception culminated in Lewis Theobald's *Shakespeare restored, or, a Specimen of the Many Errors as well Committed, as Unamended by Mr. Pope in his Late Edition of this Poet* (1726), a work which deserves to 'rank as a classic in English literature'.<sup>40</sup> The main part of Theobald's book (132 pages out of a total of 208) is a detailed 'Examination and Correction'<sup>41</sup> of the errors Pope introduced or allowed to remain in *Hamlet*. Theobald also quotes a few examples of errors in the other plays and I will examine some relating to *King Lear*.

One of the main criticisms levied against Pope in *Shakespeare restored* is on the emendations (or lack of them). Theobald discusses Lear's exclamation 'Is it come to this?'.<sup>42</sup> He writes that this exclamation is used by Shakespeare a number of times and quotes from *Antony and Cleopatra*, as well as from *King Lear*. He castigates Pope for not emending the phrase 'that it should come thus'<sup>43</sup> in *Hamlet* to read as in *King Lear*.<sup>44</sup> Theobald also picks up on Pope's confusion over 'yclept' ('called') and 'clipt' ('cut').<sup>45</sup> In the latter sense, Theobald quotes Kent's '*Nor more, nor clipt, but so*'<sup>46</sup> and

<sup>38</sup> George Sewell, *Shakespear*, (1725) 7, 417-9; [Charles Gildon], *Shakespear*, (1710) 7, 404-9.

<sup>39</sup> George Sewell, *Shakespear*, (1725) 7, viii.

<sup>40</sup> Sidney Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, (1915) 576.

<sup>41</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare restored*, (1726) 1.

<sup>42</sup> 'Yea, is't come to this?' in Q and Arden (*King Lear*, I, iv, 296); Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act I, p.27.

<sup>43</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 6, Act I, p.356 (*Hamlet*).

<sup>44</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare restored*, (1726) 17-8.

<sup>45</sup> In the Sewell volume 7 of Pope, *Shakespear* there is a glossary which includes '*Ycliped*' explained as 'call'd' (lvij).

<sup>46</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare restored*, (1726) 31; Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act IV, p.93; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vii, 6.

compares this with the line spoken by Hamlet which Pope gives as ‘They clip us drunkards’<sup>47</sup> when, as Theobald points out, in this instance the sense requires ‘yclept’. Theobald goes on to observe that ‘yclept’ is found ‘an hundred Times in *Chaucer*, *Spenser* and *Hudibras*’.

Following the main section of *Shakespeare restored* and its revisions to *Hamlet*, Theobald adds an Appendix, briefly covering other plays of Shakespeare and noting Pope’s mistakes in these texts. Theobald’s *King Lear* observations include the following. When Lear and Kent meet again at the end of the play, Lear asks ‘Are you not Kent?’<sup>48</sup> to which Kent replies ‘I am the very man ... Nor no man else.’<sup>49</sup> In Pope’s edition this last line reads ‘’Twas no man else’ and a scornful Theobald writes<sup>50</sup> ‘I am mightily deceiv’d if Mr. POPE ... by espousing this Reading [i.e. ‘’Twas no man else’] enters into the Poet’s Thought’, and he then gives a lengthy explanation of his preferred line ‘Nor no man else’ which is in both Folio and quartos. Theobald is equally stern on the question of punctuation. An example from *King Lear* is in the lines between Cordelia and the Doctor<sup>51</sup> where Theobald writes, ‘a Physician rises’<sup>52</sup> to become a Peer because of faulty pointing. In Pope’s edition the lines read:

Cordelia:       ... Then be it so.  
                    My lord, how does the King?

Physician:      Madam, sleeps still.<sup>53</sup>

Theobald argues, correctly, that the line should read

Cordelia:       ... Then be it so,  
                    My Lord. How does the King?

Physician:      Madam, sleeps still.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 6, Act I, p.356 (*Hamlet*).

<sup>48</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act V, p.109; Arden, *King Lear*, V, iii, 280.

<sup>49</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act V, p.109; Arden, *King Lear*, V, iii, 284 and 288.

<sup>50</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare restored*, (1726) 141.

<sup>51</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act IV, p.93; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vii, 12-3 which gives the line as ‘Then be’t so, my good lord’ and addresses the rest of the line to a gentleman (F) in place of a doctor (Q).

<sup>52</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare restored*, (1726) 153.

<sup>53</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act IV, p.93. In Q the speaker is Doctor; in F, Gentleman.

<sup>54</sup> In his own *The Works of Shakespeare* (1733) Theobald gives the lines as ‘Then be it so, My lord. - How does the King?’ and adds a stage direction ‘To the Physician’ at the end of the second line (5, IV, p.200).

Theobald's *Shakespeare restored* devastated Pope's considerable pride by calling into question his ability as an editor. The result, of course, was the 1728 edition of *The Dunciad* in which Lewis Theobald was immortalised and which won him the lasting fame which his own works have not. The animosity between Alexander Pope and 'pidling Tibbald'<sup>55</sup> is a long and complex story and although it has no place in this thesis, one further stab by Theobald at Pope is worth recording for its connection with *King Lear*. Thomas Davies, referring to *The Dunciad*, tells us that Theobald, 'not well pleased with his exaltation to the throne of dulness, embraces every opportunity to turn into ridicule Pope's emendations of Shakespeare'.<sup>56</sup> Confirming this, seven years after Pope's edition, four years after the 1728 *Dunciad* and shortly before the publication of his own Shakespeare edition, Theobald, still smarting from his duel with Pope, published in 1732, a 46-page booklet entitled *A Miscellany on Taste by Mr. Pope &c* in which he comments further on Pope's inaccuracies. In the phrase '*The Nicety of Nations*' from Edmund's speech 'Thou, Nature, art my Goddess',<sup>57</sup> Pope had substituted the word 'nicety' in place of 'curiosity' which he puts in a footnote. Theobald scoffs at 'this quaint Word Nicety' and goes on to question whether Pope 'derives it either from Mr. Row's Edition, or Mr. Tate's Alteration of this Play'.<sup>58</sup> In fact, the line is cut from Tate's adaptation and Rowe gives the phrase as 'The curiosity of Nations'<sup>59</sup> following the quarto and Folio. Theobald claims rightly that according to the 'Old Reading' the phrase should read 'the curiosity of nations'.<sup>60</sup> However, 'curiosity' may be glossed as 'fastidiousness' (OED, 4.a.), a word similar in meaning to 'nicety' so Pope's choice of word cannot be ridiculed on the grounds of meaning but it can be condemned for being selected as a personal choice rather than on established principles.

<sup>55</sup> *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, 10 vols., 'An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot', ed. John Butt, (1939) 4, 108, line 164.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 34.

<sup>57</sup> Lewis Theobald, *A Miscellany on Taste by Mr. Pope*, (1732) 35; Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act I, pp.11-2. Arden, *King Lear*, I, ii, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Theobald had discussed the same phrase in almost identical words in a letter dated 15 April 1729 to Matthew Concanen (John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, 8 vols. (1817-58) 2, 216-8.

<sup>59</sup> Rowe, *Shakespear*, 5, Act I, p.2477, following Q and F.

<sup>60</sup> In his own edition of 1733 Theobald gives the word as 'curtesie'; see chapter 5.

Theobald's Dedication in *Shakespeare restored* is addressed to John Rich, manager of the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. In the opening lines Theobald writes that it might be considered strange that he should address 'One [John Rich], who has gone a great Way towards ... banishing him [Shakespeare] the Benefit of the Stage'.<sup>61</sup> On checking<sup>62</sup> I found that the number of Shakespearean performances in London theatres over a four-year period between 1721 and 1725 was 344 out of a total of 1961 performances. Then, between 1726, the year Theobald's *Shakespeare restored* was published, and 1730, another four-year period, the number fell to 264 out of an increased total of 2351, figures which seem to justify Theobald's comments. Instead of Shakespeare, the theatre saw the development and rise of the pantomime, when Rich 'raised harlequinade above Shakespeare, and all other poets'.<sup>63</sup> John Rich and Lewis Theobald were two of the foremost exponents of this new entertainment which I will discuss shortly.

Between the years 1725, the date of Pope's edition of Shakespeare's works, and 1733, the date of Theobald's edition, while Pope and Theobald traded insults, Tate's *King Lear* continued to be played at the London theatres. Drury Lane staged two performances in 1725: on 5 January and 22 December with Booth, Wilks and Mills in their usual roles of Lear, Edgar and Edmund respectively; Mrs. Booth played Cordelia and there were newcomers in the roles of Goneril and Regan, Mrs. Heron and Mrs. Seal. Before her retirement because of an accident sometime in 1735, Mary Heron (d.1736) was a noted member of the Drury Lane company, earning £200 a year plus £100 for clothes and a benefit free of house charges.<sup>64</sup> *The Daily Post*, writing at the time of her death on 5 March 1736, claimed she was 'the most celebrated actress of Drury Lane stage' but this may have been hyperbole because of the circumstances. Highfill quotes a manuscript note in a British Library document which calls her 'a feeble actress'. The other newcomer to *King Lear* was Mrs. Seal (later Mrs. Bellamy, then Mrs. Walter), who, after playing Regan at Drury Lane in January 1725, played Goneril five years later in 1730 at Goodman's Fields.<sup>65</sup> She never achieved much success and

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<sup>61</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare restored*, (1726) A2r.

<sup>62</sup> The following information from *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 459.

<sup>63</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888)1, 378.

<sup>64</sup> Highfill, 7, 277-8.

<sup>65</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 255.



today she is chiefly remembered as the mother of the actress George Anne Bellamy who was to be important in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Lincoln's Inn Fields staged *King Lear* three times in 1725, on 23 April, 25 May and 24 September with Anthony Boheme and James Quin as Lear and Gloucester. The newspaper advertisements for the second and third performances, together with several other performances of *King Lear* given at Lincoln's Inn Fields and also at Covent Garden during the 1720s and 1730s, included the words 'Written by Shakespear'<sup>66</sup> and one might conclude from this that the play was not Tate's adaptation. However, as the cast lists include the Gentleman Usher rather than Oswald and there is no mention of the King of France or the Fool, the play must certainly have been Tate's. The words 'Written by Shakespear' serve to underline the apparent confusion in the public's mind regarding the adaptations played on stage during these years and the hold Tate's play had in the theatre.<sup>67</sup>

In 1726 Lincoln's Inn Fields staged *King Lear* five times, 16 February, 26 March, 13 May, 23 September and 18 November and two of these performances name Boheme and Quin as Lear and Gloucester and Elizabeth Younger (c.1699-1762) as Cordelia. Drury Lane staged the play once, on 20 December with the veteran actor John Mills who had played Lear as long ago as 1703, resuming this part having taken Edmund in the intervening years; Mills's son William (1701- c.1750) played Edmund.

The London stage at this time was without any actress who would qualify for the title of 'star' although Hester Booth (née Santlow), who played Cordelia at Drury Lane from 1714 to 1733 almost without a break, probably came nearest. The actors fared rather better with Anthony Boheme and James Quin, both distinguished players. This lack of star quality, particularly among the actresses, was probably responsible in part for the rise of the pantomime as an attempt to win a larger audience by offering spectacle. Pantomime first appeared as early as 1715 at Lincoln's Inn Fields under John Rich who later played the role of Harlequin.<sup>68</sup> By 1726 three out of the five *King Lear*

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<sup>66</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.2, e.g. 18 Nov.1726, 19 Oct. 1727; pt.3, vol.1, 12 Sept., 30 Dec. 1729, 6 Oct.1731, 8 Feb.1732, 14 Nov.1733, etc.

<sup>67</sup> Later the Shakespeare's Ladies Club and the revival of interest in Shakespeare's plays started to raise public awareness regarding the adaptations. See chapter 5.

<sup>68</sup> *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll, (Oxford, 1951) 599.

performances at Lincoln's Inn Fields had a pantomime, devised by Lewis Theobald, staged with it. On 16 February and 26 March Theobald's *Apollo and Daphne, or the Burgomaster Trick'd* was performed and remained part of the repertory for 362 performances. On 23 September the company staged Theobald's *Harlequin a Sorcerer* which achieved 443 performances, and boasted 'the boldest Piece of Machinery that ever yet was seen upon the Stage'.<sup>69</sup> If the lack of players of the first rank was part of the reason for the start of pantomime, the reason for its continued staging can be explained when it is noted that the takings on the night of 23 September, 1726 when *King Lear* was staged with *Harlequin a Sorcerer*, were £103.17.6 while the takings on 18 November, when *King Lear* was staged alone, were £18.3.0.<sup>70</sup> At first pantomime was performed at any time of the year when 'The splendour of the scenes, the vastness of the machinery'<sup>71</sup> drew the crowds and it was not until later that it was specifically linked to the Christmas season. In spite of Pope's dismissive comment that pantomimes were 'absurdities',<sup>72</sup> made partly perhaps because of Theobald's prominence in this new entertainment, their appeal grew during the first half of the eighteenth century. Colley Cibber wrote 'I did it against my Conscience!'<sup>73</sup> but pantomime was soon seen at Drury Lane after its success at Lincoln's Inn Fields. There seemed to be no differentiating between the suitability of staging pantomime with tragedy or with comedy. For example on 26 November 1723, Drury Lane staged Beaumont and Fletcher's comedy *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* together with *Harlequin Dr. Faustus* by John Thurmond, the younger, then paired this same pantomime with *Othello* on 20 April 1724.

**1727-1728** The two years 1727 and 1728 were without special interest in the theatrical history of *King Lear* which was staged only once at Drury Lane in 1727 with Booth as Lear. Lincoln's Inn Fields staged it three times in 1727 and once in 1728 with

<sup>69</sup> Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1990) 21.

<sup>70</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 31.

<sup>71</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 1, 377-8.

<sup>72</sup> *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, 10 vols., *The Dunciad*, ed. James Sutherland, (1943) 5, 333, note to line 266. See Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1990) 27-8 for comment on Pope's interest in pantomime.

<sup>73</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 300.

Boheme. Elizabeth Younger was established in the role of Cordelia at Lincoln's Inn Fields and there was one other Lincoln's Inn Fields actor of note who 'if he had survived, could have approached to our great Roscius' (i.e. Barton Booth who retired in January 1728 due to illness<sup>74</sup>) and that was William Milward (1702-42).<sup>75</sup> He played several roles in *King Lear* including Albany, Cornwall, Edgar and Gloucester. This 'energetic and versatile'<sup>76</sup> actor modelled himself on Barton Booth and, as with Booth, his acting was in the old style, shortly to be swept away by Garrick. Thomas Davies, writing with hindsight, claims that Milward's chief fault was a 'love of ranting'<sup>77</sup> but this was more a question of the style of acting at this time rather than a fault. Milward's first role in *King Lear* was as Cornwall on 13 May 1726 at Lincoln's Inn Fields; in October of the following year, he played Albany, a part he retained for five years until John Rich's company moved from Lincoln's Inn Fields to the new Covent Garden in 1732. Here Milward was cast in the more demanding role of Gloucester but defected to Drury Lane in 1734 where he played Edgar until his early death on 6 February 1742.

1728 is chiefly memorable, in the context of this thesis, for the publication of the second edition of Pope's *The Works of Shakespear*.<sup>78</sup> In this, Pope included 106 alterations based on Theobald's *Shakespeare restored*<sup>79</sup> although, ungenerously he only acknowledges 'about twenty five Words'<sup>80</sup> in his 'Various Readings or Conjectures, on Passages in Shakespear' which is placed at the end of volume 8. Pope largely ignores Theobald's corrections to *King Lear*; sometimes he silently makes use of them and if he does comment on them, it is to disagree. Pope finishes these notes by saying that 'In general Mr. T. . . . prefers the contrary Readings to those chosen by Mr. P. . . . The Readers may take which they think best, and when they are all agreed, the Text may be establish'd accordingly.'<sup>81</sup> Thus Pope seems to wash his hands of the whole affair.

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<sup>74</sup> Highfill, 2, 218.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 8.

<sup>76</sup> Highfill, 10, 261.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 3, 114.

<sup>78</sup> The frontispiece for *King Lear* is by the French engraver, Louis Du Guernier and is taken from Rowe's 2nd edition of 1714.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespear*, (Oxford, 1990) 97.

<sup>80</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, (1728, 2nd ed.) 8, Aa2r.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 8, Aa5v.

**1729-1730** Although Thomas Davies writes that *King Lear* was ‘discontinued’<sup>82</sup> at Drury Lane in 1729 because of the illness of Barton Booth, there was one performance that year. John Mills played the King and his son, William, Edmund. There were two performances at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, 12 September and 30 December, which retained the cast from the previous year. One event in 1729 which was to be significant in the fortunes of *King Lear* was the opening on 31 October of the new Goodman’s Fields Theatre. The theatre was first managed by Thomas Odell and then by Henry Giffard with whom David Garrick started his career but all this excitement was still some years away. The new theatre first staged *King Lear* on 26 May 1730 and offered five performances that year. Their Lear was Philip Huddy, a minor actor who played this role occasionally before taking on Kent. The actor in the title-role on 18 June is simply called ‘A Gentleman for his Diversion, that [had] lately play’d Hamlet’<sup>83</sup> on 20 April earlier that year, at the same theatre. A similar comment is found against a performance of *King Lear* on 9 October 1730 which states that Lear is played by ‘A Gentleman who never appeared on this Stage before’. It is odd that these unknown players were given such prominent roles; I have seen no record of an unknown in a minor part. Perhaps they were amateurs prepared to play for no salary in the hope of fame. Perhaps nepotism flourished even then and they were friends of the manager or leading player. The others at this new theatre were largely minor players. It seems as though the management experienced difficulties in attracting established names during these first years although some defected from the older companies. Mrs. Seal who had played Regan at Drury Lane in 1725, was cast as Goneril at Goodman’s Fields on 26 May 1730 and William Penkethman, Jr. took on his father’s role of the Gentleman Usher.

Drury Lane and Lincoln’s Inn Fields also staged *King Lear* in 1730, Drury Lane once and Lincoln’s Inn Fields on two occasions. The Lincoln’s Inn Fields cast was unchanged from the year before and at Drury Lane John Mills played Lear on 28 November when Robert Wilks gave his final performance as Edgar. The next few years were to see many changes in the London theatre. The members of the Triumvirate were

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<sup>82</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 322.

<sup>83</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 254. The words ‘a Gentleman’, and in the case of an actress, ‘Young Lady’, appear to have been a formula rather than an indication of the players’ class.

retiring from the stage. Thomas Doggett had died in 1721; Robert Wilks died in 1732 and Barton Booth, who had ousted Doggett, in 1733 although illness forced him from the stage some years earlier. Colley Cibber alone was still active and was appointed Poet Laureate in 1730. Cibber, who died in 1757, did not leave the stage until 1745 although he gave up a full schedule of parts in 1733.

**1731** The leading player in London was now James Quin. Although he was successful in some of the major roles, particularly his playing of ‘jolly jocose *Jack Falstaff*’ which was ‘a Character perfectly play’d’,<sup>84</sup> it seems to be generally conceded that his *Lear* was a failure. Quin first played *Lear* on 13 March and 6 October 1731<sup>85</sup> at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, the only London theatre to stage the play that year. The first performance was within weeks of the death of Anthony Boheme who died on 7 January and whose early death seems to have robbed him of recognition as a great actor. Doran attributes Quin’s failure to the fact that he had the ‘temerity to touch [the part of *Lear*] so soon after Boheme had ceased to *be* the King.’<sup>86</sup> Thomas Davies suggests that it was arrogance which caused Quin’s failure, writing ‘No less than twenty-two rehearsals [of *King Lear*] were demanded by him; but he ... attended only two of them’. To this arrogance was added the fact that, in Davies’s opinion, ‘Quin felt neither the tender nor the violent emotions of the soul’ and further, *Lear* was ‘a part for which nature unfitted him’.<sup>87</sup> Both these writers were, of course, commenting many years after the arrival of Garrick and in the 1730s, at the time of these performances by Quin, the old style of acting was still approved. Quin continued as *Lear* playing at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Covent Garden and Drury Lane up to and beyond the arrival of David Garrick.

Also in 1731 Thomas Cooke, another author mentioned in *The Dunciad*<sup>88</sup> because of

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<sup>84</sup> Samuel Foote, *The Roman and English Comedy consider’d ... and an Examen into the merits of the present comic actors*, (1747) 41; usually called *An Examen of the New Comedy*.

<sup>85</sup> According to the Frederick Latreille MS. (BL Add. MSS 32,249-52, 4 vols.) Quin was billed to appear as *Lear* on 28 January but the play was dismissed (2, 364). This practice of dismissing an audience for financial reasons, was discontinued about 1749 (*Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, i.).

<sup>86</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 2, 27.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 278.

<sup>88</sup> *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, 10 vols., *The Dunciad*, ed. James Sutherland, (1963) 5, 41.

his attacks on Pope, wrote a pamphlet entitled *Considerations on the Stage and on the Advantages which arise to a Nation From the Encouragement of Arts*. In this, Cooke writes that the theatre is ‘almost an Epitome of the great Stage of Life’ and as such is ‘worthy the Consideration of the wisest and best of Men’.<sup>89</sup> He then uses ‘*King LEAR*, as altered from *Shakespeare* by *Tate*’ as the central play in his argument in praise of tragedy. As he puts it, the revised play is ‘an Instance of Virtue being rewarded and Vice punished.’<sup>90</sup> These words of Cooke’s are an almost exact echo of *The Censor* of 2 May 1715 in which Theobald, also writing on *King Lear*, declares that ‘Virtue ought to be rewarded, as well as Vice punish’d’.<sup>91</sup> Cooke’s words are quoted by William Oldys in his manuscript notes on page 458 of Langbaine’s *An Account of the English Dramatic Poets*, ‘See in Tho. Cooke’s Considerations on the Stage ... *King Lear*, as alter’d by *Tate* ... in almost every character virtue is rewarded and vice punished’. Oldys has written the date ‘1727’ on the title-page but clearly he must have been still writing his manuscript notes sometime after 1731 when Cooke’s pamphlet was first published. It seems likely that Oldys, as well as having read Thomas Cooke, had also read *The Censor* no. 7 because his manuscript notes on page 458 of Langbaine comment that *King Lear* ‘is founded on History ... Holingshed, Sidneys Arcadia, Spenser, The Old Ballad’ and as I have already mentioned in chapter 3, Theobald was the first to connect *King Lear* and Holinshed which he did as early as 1715 in *The Censor* no.7, dated 25 April 1715.

Cooke also considers the way the audience’s view of Lear moves from ‘despising the choleric old King’ for his unjust treatment of Cordelia, through the view that ‘we are scarcely inclined to pity him’ at Goneril’s treatment of him, to a growing ‘Compassion for him’ at Regan’s treatment, so that by the time he is cast out into the storm audiences are ‘Sharers in his Woes’.<sup>92</sup> Cooke then comments on the balance which he sees in the play when ‘*Cordelia, Gloster, Edgar, and Kent*, are in the most desperate Condition’ while ‘*Goneril, Regan, Edmund, and Cornwall*, are filling up the Measure of their Sins,

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<sup>89</sup> Thomas Cooke, *The Triumphs of Love and Honour ... To which are added Considerations on the Stage*, (1731) 47.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* 51.

<sup>91</sup> [Lewis Theobald], *The Censor*, 3 vols. (1717) 1, no.10, 72.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Cooke, *The Triumphs of Love and Honour ... To which are added Considerations on the Stage*, (1731) 51-2.

which produce their own Punishment'. Cooke remarks on the sense of balance between Lear and his daughters with Gloucester and his sons which culminates in the 'rejoicing' felt by the audience at the 'Felicity of *Edgar* and *Cordelia*' at the end of the play. Cooke ends his comments by opining that Tate's revised version teaches that 'Virtue is the inexhaustible Fountain of Joy, and Vice of Misery'.<sup>93</sup> This highly appreciative criticism of Tate's *King Lear* was published in 1731 at a time when the fortunes of the play on stage were particularly low, but Cooke's comments did nothing to improve the situation.

**1732** This year must be noted in the history of *King Lear* because it was in 1732 that Lincoln's Inn Fields ceased to be used as a regular London playhouse although John Rich continued to stage the occasional play here up until 1744. A theatre of the same name had been central in the world of the London stage since the Restoration. The last performances of *King Lear* at this theatre as part of a regular season were on 8 February and 27 October 1732 with Quin in the title-role, William Milward as Gloucester and Mrs. Younger as Cordelia. When John Rich left the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1732, it had 'fallen into decay'<sup>94</sup> although the building had been restored and largely rebuilt in 1714 and the interior apparently refurbished in the summer of 1725.<sup>95</sup> To take its place, John Rich built a theatre in Covent Garden which opened on 7 December 1732 and which was to rival Drury Lane for the staging of 'legitimate' theatre. Covent Garden's first play was a revival of Congreve's *The Way of the World*. As with the opening night of the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1714, it appears that the rival Drury Lane company again attempted to lessen the impact of the new theatre's opening night by staging the same play, *The Way of the World*, on the first night and on the night before. An after-piece was also offered at Drury Lane and as a further inducement, the songs were 'printed and given gratis at the Theatre'.<sup>96</sup> It is a pity that a record of the takings at Drury Lane has not survived. The new Covent Garden took £115 on its first night and it would be interesting to make a comparison between the receipts at the two

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 54-6.

<sup>94</sup> *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll, (Oxford, 1951) 478.

<sup>95</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.2, vol.2, 833.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. pt.3, vol.1, 253.

theatres so as to judge the success, or otherwise, of Drury Lane's chicanery.

These years were poor ones for the stage history of *King Lear* with unexceptional players some of whom were talented like Anthony Boheme but who died before they could become established or like John Mills or James Quin who were without the spark to make them enduringly memorable. Although a Shakespearean text edited by the foremost poet of the time had appeared, the adaptation by Tate still seemed to offer the audiences the sentiments they preferred. It could not yet be known that the next decade was to see things change dramatically in every sense of that word with the arrival of David Garrick who was to revolutionise acting styles and make tentative returns to Shakespeare's text. In the meantime, Shakespeare's plays were edited again, this time by Lewis Theobald who was both a scholar and a man of the theatre.



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M D C C X X X I I I .

**Lewis Theobald's edition (1733) to the arrival of David Garrick (1741)**

Lewis Theobald's achievements have always been eclipsed by those of Alexander Pope. The two men were exact contemporaries, both being born in 1688 and dying in 1744, and both were poets as well as editors of the works of Shakespeare. Pope was the outstanding poet of his age, but it is generally conceded that Theobald was the better editor. However, contemporary views were often coloured by opinions on the personalities of the protagonists and their long-running battles in print. In an age which thrived on satire, the public of that time was 'far more appreciative of the flashes of wit' produced by Pope than 'the researches of scholars'<sup>1</sup> no matter how significant.

**1733** The success of Theobald's *The Works of Shakespeare* was 'immediate and pronounced',<sup>2</sup> with even *The Grub Street Journal*, normally a supporter of Pope, publishing a letter which acknowledged that Theobald's edition would 'give the highest pleasure'<sup>3</sup> and the treacherous William Warburton, later to be a staunch supporter of Pope, writing to Theobald on 17 May 1734 that 'I rejoice heartily in your good fortunes'.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, there remained many supporters of Pope. Among these was David Mallet (1705?-1765) poet and writer who in April 1733 published the poem *Of Verbal Criticism: An Epistle to Mr. Pope*. Any defence of Pope seemed to necessitate an attack on Theobald who Mallet labels 'the self-applauding *Wight* ... accurately dull' in his work.<sup>5</sup> The hostilities between the two men and their supporters continued to reverberate on after the appearance of Theobald's edition, the success of which added to the rivalry and bitterness. A near-contemporary, Samuel Johnson, seemed undecided over the merits of Pope and Theobald as editors. In 1765 he wrote that Theobald was 'a man of narrow comprehension' who being 'so anxiously scrupulous might have been

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<sup>1</sup> R.F. Jones, *Lewis Theobald, His Contribution to English Scholarship*, (New York, 1919) 53.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Lounsbury, *The Text of Shakespeare*, (New York, 1906), 444.

<sup>3</sup> *The Grub Street Journal*, 16 May 1734.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, 8 vols. (1817-58) 2, 634.

<sup>5</sup> David Mallet, *Of Verbal Criticism: An Epistle to Mr. Pope*, (1733), lines 21 and 39. See T. Lounsbury, *The Text of Shakespeare*, (New York, 1906) 430-7 for a discussion on Mallet's poem.

expected to do more”<sup>6</sup> while, in his *Lives of the English Poets*, he wrote of ‘poor Theobald ... whose real crime was supposed to be that of having revised *Shakespeare* more happily than himself’ [i.e. Pope]<sup>7</sup>. Most twentieth-century scholarship is kinder to Theobald and, while acknowledging Pope’s achievements, favours Theobald as an editor.<sup>8</sup> Seary neatly sums up the difference between the two editors when he comments that in Theobald’s edition ‘Scholarship takes the place of poetic genius as the chief requirement in an editor.’<sup>9</sup>

Until 1725, Lewis Theobald was chiefly known as a deviser of pantomimes. After his *Shakespeare restored* (1726), in the Preface to his play *Double Falshood* (1728) Theobald wrote that ‘the Publick shall receive from my Hand his [Shakespeare’s] whole WORKS corrected, with my best Care and Ability’.<sup>10</sup> His edition of *The Works of Shakespeare*, dated 1733, was published in January 1734, seven volumes, octavo. Theobald had claimed that the second Folio ‘in the Generality, is esteemed as the best impression’<sup>11</sup> but it seems he worked largely from Pope’s second edition (1728) while making use of the first Folio and some quartos.<sup>12</sup> Theobald uses his Preface to castigate Pope and, to a lesser extent, Rowe, over their editions. While Rowe is reprimanded because he ‘neither corrected his Text, nor collated the old Copies’, Pope is dealt with more severely because, in Theobald’s view, he ‘pretended to have collated the old Copies, and yet seldom has corrected the Text but to its Injury ...[Pope] frequently inflicted a Wound where he intended a Cure’.<sup>13</sup> Unlike Pope, the work of editing was not considered ‘drudgery’ but his collaborators ‘join’d Business and Entertainment together’ and at their weekly meetings ‘read over a *Play*’ and swapped conjectures.<sup>14</sup>

If Alexander Pope was the first to practise, however unskilfully, new techniques of

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (1765) 1, D1r.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G.B. Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1905) 3, 145-6

<sup>8</sup> See Thomas R. Lounsbury, *The Text of Shakespeare*, (New York, 1906) chapter XXV and R.F. Jones, *Lewis Theobald*, (New York, 1919) chapters IV and V.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1990) 68.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Double Falshood*, (2nd ed., 1728) A5v.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare restored*, (1726) 70.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1990) 132-5 and n.15. Theobald lists Pope’s edition of 1728 as of ‘no Authority’ (end of vol. 7) although he used it himself.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis Theobald, *The Works of Shakespeare*, 7 vols. (1733) 1, xxxiv-xxxv; hereafter referred to as Theobald, *Shakespeare*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 1, lxx.

editing such as the addition of brief footnotes, Lewis Theobald, in his edition, took editorship one step further. He clarifies the duty of an editor as he sees it by listing three objectives. These objectives, he writes, 'seem to be reduced to ... three Classes: the Emendation of corrupt Passages; the Explanation of obscure and difficult ones; and an Inquiry into the Beauties and Defects of Composition.' He then adds that his edition is to be 'principally confin'd to the two former Parts'<sup>15</sup> and he was largely successful in keeping to these aims. To take the last objective first, on occasion he makes comments on 'Beauties and Defects' which would be classified today as literary criticism. Two examples from *King Lear* may be cited. In his Preface, Theobald includes the heading 'Shakespeare's *Knowledge of Nature*'<sup>16</sup> by which he means the understanding of the complexity of natural human behaviour. Theobald uses a passage from *King Lear* to illustrate what he calls a 'grand Touch of Nature in our Author'. The example he selects is when Lear moves in a moment from 'the Violence of Rage to a Temper of Reasoning' when he thinks Regan and Cornwall, by refusing to meet him, are treating him with contempt: 'Fiery! the fiery Duke! Tell the hot Duke that - / No, but not yet; may be he is not well.'<sup>17</sup> In Theobald's view, this understanding of how a person may move instantly from rage to a forced calmness shows a 'surpizing [sic] Knowledge of human Nature, which is certainly our Author's Masterpiece'.<sup>18</sup> Theobald discusses a further example of Shakespeare's understanding of human nature in the blinding of Gloucester when the servants exclaim at this barbarity and decide to help the stricken man. Theobald tells us that he restored this passage from the quarto because he thinks it 'full of Nature' (i.e. that which is natural) and that servants would naturally react thus at such a brutal action 'committed on their Master'.<sup>19</sup>

In his attempt to follow the first two aims of an editor: to give an 'Explanation of corrupt Passages' and 'the Explanation of obscure and difficult ones, Theobald made sixty-four emendations to the text of *King Lear*, including those suggested by William Warburton which Theobald acknowledges by adding Warburton's name to the note. Theobald's emendations offered comments and were sometimes accompanied by

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 1, xl-xli.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 1, xxiii.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 5, Act II, p.146; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 293-4.

<sup>18</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 1, xxiv.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 5, Act III, pp.176-7 and n.35; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vii, 98-106.

lengthy footnotes offering parallel readings,<sup>20</sup> the first Shakespearean edition to do so.<sup>21</sup> This technique was first used when editing the classics but Theobald had made use of it in his *Shakespeare restored*, writing in his Introduction ‘I have throughout endeavour’d to support what I offer by *parallel Passages*’.<sup>22</sup> In the Preface to his *The Works of Shakespeare*, Theobald makes an almost identical comment: ‘I have constantly endeavoured to support my Corrections and Conjectures by parallel Passages’.<sup>23</sup> Of the emendations made by Theobald to *King Lear*, the more important ones include the following. Pope’s revision of a phrase so that it read ‘The Nicety of Nations’ in Edmund’s ‘Thou, Nature, art my goddess’<sup>24</sup> speech had been scorned by Theobald in his *A Miscellany on Taste* (1732) and the phrase given, as in Folio and quarto, ‘The curiosity of nations’. Now, however, Theobald dismisses ‘curiosity’ as ‘a foolish Corruption’ and, in a footnote, explains his preference for a third alternative, ‘the curtesie of nations’.<sup>25</sup> Another emendation in Pope’s edition which Theobald dismisses with a sneer is in Lear’s speech to Regan beginning ‘No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse’.<sup>26</sup> Pope gives the second line as ‘Thy tender-hearted nature’ but Theobald restores the Folio’s reading of ‘tender-hefted’ and adds in his footnote that the change of this word to ‘tender-hearted’ was due presumably to ‘Mr. Pope’s Sophistication’. In fact, this was an emendation made by Rowe in his edition of 1714<sup>27</sup> which Pope merely retained without comment. Theobald’s note leaves the distinct impression that, smarting from Pope’s ridicule, he preferred to point out an incorrect emendation as an error of Pope’s rather than acknowledge that the error was made in the first place by Rowe.

A final example will suffice to demonstrate Theobald’s disdain for Pope’s editing. In the short sequence in Act III between Gloucester and Edmund which is placed between two of the storm scenes, Gloucester’s final speech contains the line ‘there is part of a

<sup>20</sup> For example Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, p.111, n.3; p.121, n.9; p.139, n.15; p.157, n.26; p.188, n.46.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1990) 68.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare restored*, (1726) viii.

<sup>23</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 1, xiii.

<sup>24</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, I, ii, 1-22.

<sup>25</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act I, p.115, n.5; Arden, *King Lear*, I, ii, 4. Theobald and Warburton retained ‘curtesie’ and Hanmer, Johnson, Capell and Jennens gave ‘courtesy’.

<sup>26</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act 2, p.149, n.20; Pope, *Shakespeare*, 3, Act II, p.47; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 359.

<sup>27</sup> Rowe, *Shakespeare*, 9 vols. (1714) 7, Act II, p.44.

power already footed'.<sup>28</sup> The inconsistent Pope, on this occasion following the quarto and not Rowe's editions which both have 'footed', gives this line as 'there is part of a power already landed', placing the word 'footed' in a footnote without comment.<sup>29</sup>

Theobald, in his note, writes 'All the authentick Copies read, *footed*, ... If this Gentleman's [Pope's] nice Ear was offended at the Word in this place, how came he to let it pass undisturb'd in some others?' and Theobald then goes on to quote further examples where the word 'footed' is used.

Not all Theobald's emendations were linked to mistakes made by Pope. New ones which Theobald introduced included one in Gloucester's description of Cornwall as 'My worthy arch and patron'.<sup>30</sup> Theobald sees this as an example where two words have become transposed and he gives the line as 'My worthy and arch-patron' citing the words 'arch-duke', 'arch-angel', 'arch-bishop' etc. as evidence. A further Theobald emendation is to a line which drew much comment from the early editors. In a scene, in quarto only, between Kent and a Gentleman, the two exchange words about the departure of the King of France, and Cordelia's emotions at that time. The Gentleman says 'her smiles and tears/Were like, a better way'.<sup>31</sup> Theobald rather ungraciously acknowledges that Pope 'thought fit to restore' this scene from the quarto and goes on to accept an emendation suggested by Warburton so that the lines read: 'her Smiles and Tears/Were like a wetter *May*'. He gives a lengthy justification for this emendation, praising Warburton's 'very happy Sagacity' but the sense does not need emendation, only, perhaps, the punctuation.

One of Theobald's emendations was first proposed in *Shakespeare restored*, but was recorrected by Theobald himself in his *The Works of Shakespeare*. It comes shortly after the entry of Lear garlanded with flowers. Lear's line 'That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper'<sup>32</sup> was emended by Theobald in his *Shakespeare restored* to read 'That Fellow handles his Bow like a COWKEEPER'<sup>33</sup> and Theobald, unusually, praises Pope for 'very rightly' also emending the word to 'Cowkeeper'. However, by the time

<sup>28</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act. III, p.161, n.28; Arden, *King Lear*, III, iii, 12-3.

<sup>29</sup> Pope, *Shakespear*, 3, Act III, p.58.

<sup>30</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act II, p.135, n.13; Arden, *King Lear*, II, i, 59 which notes the phrase as an example of a hendiadys.

<sup>31</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act IV, pp.185-6, n.44; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, iii, 18-9.

<sup>32</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act IV, p.193, n.49; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vi, 87-8.

<sup>33</sup> Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare restored*, (1726) 191.

he came to edit *The Works of Shakespeare*, Theobald corrects himself, restores 'cowkeeper' and adds a note that 'cowkeeper' was the word used by Pope 'but I am afraid, I betray'd him into the Error by an absurd Conjecture of my own, in my SHAKESPEARE *restored*'. Theobald seems confused at this point because Pope, following Rowe's second edition, had used the word 'cowkeeper' in his edition of 1725 before *Shakespeare restored* (1726) and therefore cannot have been influenced by Theobald's 'absurd conjecture'.

One note by Theobald is interesting because of its similarity to a comment by Pope in a letter to William Broome dated 29 June [1725] after Pope's first edition had been published. Pope writes 'Your conjecture of "cloves in my cap," instead of "gloves," in King Lear, is certainly a right one'.<sup>34</sup> This correspondence was in relation to the forthcoming second edition of Pope's *The Works of Shakespear*, published in 1728. However, in the event, Pope did not use this emendation. Probably he realised on reflection that the phrase 'gloves in my cap'<sup>35</sup> was perfectly acceptable and refers to favours given by a lady to her champion who wore them in his hat as a talisman or symbol of his mistress's affection.<sup>36</sup> Now, in 1733, Theobald writes that a 'learned Gentleman' suggested that the line 'wore gloves in my cap' should read '*wore Cloves in my Cap*' but he rejects this saying he 'must be oblig'd to dissent in Opinion'.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps Theobald's 'learned Gentleman' was none other than William Broome. By 1728 Broome had quarrelled with Pope and there was 'more than coldness'<sup>38</sup> between the two men. Therefore it seems possible that Broome turned to Theobald, the rival editor, in an attempt to get his conjecture accepted after it had failed to appear in Pope's second edition of 1728.

One further Theobald emendation deserves comment. In the scene where Lear asks Regan for shelter and declares he will not return to Goneril, he explains his decision in a speech beginning 'Never, Regan'.<sup>39</sup> This speech includes the words that Goneril

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<sup>34</sup> *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1956) 2, 302.

<sup>35</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, III, iv, 84.

<sup>36</sup> Compare this with Arden, *Henry V*, ed. J.H.Walter, (1993) IV, i, 219; *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Kenneth Palmer, (1991) IV, iv, 70.

<sup>37</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act III, p.165, n.30.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G.B. Hill, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1905) 3, 78.

<sup>39</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act II, p.148, n.19; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 347-50.

'Look'd black upon me' and Theobald emends this to read 'Look'd blank upon me'. He then adds the interesting note, typical of his painstaking research, that the use of the word 'black' in this sense makes 'a Phrase which I do not understand; neither have I any where else met with it' while the word 'blank' creates a known phrase. For the first use of the word 'black' in the sense of 'Of the countenance ... Clouded with anger', OED (10.b.) quotes George Stanhope's *Paraphrase and Comment on the Epistles and Gospels*, IV,190 (1709), 'When the Face of affairs looked blackest', as the earliest example. In the very similar sense of 'to look black: to frown, to look angrily (*at or upon* a person)', the earliest example in the OED (10.c.) is from *Mansfield Park*<sup>40</sup> - both later than *King Lear*. In contrast, for the word 'blank' in the sense 'Of persons: (Looking) as if deprived of the faculty of speech or action; ... now chiefly in *to look blank*', OED (A.adj.5) quotes many examples, the earliest dating from 1542. This evidence suggests that Theobald's research was correct and that the word 'blank' would seem the more accurate choice on grounds of common usage. However, the first quarto gives 'blacke' and although Q2 and Q3 change the word to 'back', this is clearly a misprint and the first Folio restored 'black'. There are no grounds for revising this word further and it is, therefore, probable that Shakespeare was using a common word in an original sense, in this instance the word 'black', in the sense of 'black look', a phrase which is now a commonplace.<sup>41</sup>

In carrying out the second duty of an editor, i.e. 'Explanation of obscure and difficult' passages, Theobald helped clarify some of Mad Tom's lines by pointing out Samuel Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popishe Impostures* (1603) as a source for some of these speeches.<sup>42</sup> The last lines of the mad Tom speech which begins 'Both

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<sup>40</sup> Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, (1814) Chapter 6, 'my brother-in-law ... looked rather black upon me'.

<sup>41</sup> See my article 'Did Goneril look 'back', 'black' or 'blank upon her father?' *Notes and Queries*, September 1995, 322. Johnson (1765) quotes Milton to explain the phrase (6, 68); George Tollet in the Johnson-Steevens edition of 1773 (9, 386) quotes Holinshed 'The bishops thereat repined, and *looked black*'. *The Adventurer*, no.113, 4 December 1753, prints the line 'Look'd bleak upon me'.

<sup>42</sup> It would seem that it was William Warburton, a later editor of Shakespeare, who first drew Theobald's attention to the Harsnett connection. In a letter from Theobald to Warburton, dated 8 April 1729, Theobald thanks Warburton for 'the inclosed explanation of part of Edgar's madness ... I shall see the Book touching these Popish Impostures' - an apparent reference to Harsnett. Quoted in John Nichols, *Illustrations of Literary History*, 8 vols (1817-58) 2, 209. For the use made of Harsnett's work in *King Lear* see Kenneth Muir, 'Samuel Harsnett and King Lear', *Review of English Studies*, NS. vol. 2 (1951) 11-21.



stile and gate, horse-way and foot-path'<sup>43</sup> were not in the Folio but were restored by Pope from the quarto. In Theobald's view, Pope's restoration was 'miserably mangled' and Theobald 'set it right ... by the Help of Bishop *Harsenet's* Pamphlet'. Theobald then quotes from this pamphlet on Flibbertigibbet and other devils named by mad Tom.

Theobald was also successful in identifying sources of *King Lear*. Back in 1715 he had first named Holinshed's *Chronicles* as a source and now notes a further one. He compares Shakespeare's tragic ending with the *Chronicles* 'in which *Lear* is said to be reinstated in his Throne by *Cordelia*'<sup>44</sup> and in his second last note in *King Lear*, contemplates reasons for Shakespeare's tragic ending. He conjectures that Shakespeare changed the *Chronicles's* ending for one of two reasons. It was either to 'heighten the Compassion ... or to vary from another, but most execrable, Dramatic Performance upon this Story ... which none of our Stage-Historians appear to have had any Knowledge of', a reference to *The true Chronicle History of King Leir and his three Daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella* (1605) the anonymous play now recognised as a source for Shakespeare.

The years following the publication of Theobald's edition in 1733 are of most interest for the controversy over this edition and the continuing argument conducted in print between the supporters of Pope and Theobald. On stage, Nahum Tate's *King Lear* was played at the London theatres but without any outstanding success. In 1733 the three London theatres gave a total of six performances of *King Lear*. On 30 April, at the only staging of *King Lear* at Drury Lane this year, John Mills played the role of Lear for the last time although he appeared as Gloucester in 1735, the year before his death. His son, William was cast as Edmund in the 1733 performance, a part he had first played in 1726 and continued in until 1747. According to the author of *An Apology for the Life of Theophilus Cibber*, who did not want 'to take from him the Merit he has', William Mills was a 'useful' actor but 'not excellent in Tragedy'<sup>45</sup> and he is condemned by Thomas Davies as being 'in general a snip-snap speaker'.<sup>46</sup>

Other players of varying success at Drury Lane included Theophilus Cibber, famous

<sup>43</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act IV, p.180 and n.39; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, i, 59-66.

<sup>44</sup> Theobald, *Shakespeare*, 5, Act V, p.217, n.63.

<sup>45</sup> *An Apology for the Life of Mr. T. [Theophilus] C. [Cibber], Comedian*, [attributed to Henry Fielding], (1740) 65 and 140.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 240.

son of a more famous father, who was still in the role of the Gentleman Usher. Hester Booth made her last appearance as Cordelia at the performance on 30 April 1733. Her husband, Barton Booth, died on 10 May of this year but she seems to have kept up a busy schedule dancing and performing throughout the rest of the 1733 season.<sup>47</sup> At the start of the new season, on 22 September 1733, *The Universal Spectator* reported that Mrs. Booth had resolved to leave the stage<sup>48</sup> although she lived on until 1773.

Probably the internal arguments which plagued the Drury Lane company at this time were one of the factors which persuaded Hester Booth, who was now one of the patentees following the death of her husband, to retire. Briefly, the arguments arose because Theophilus Cibber, who promised ‘to be as troublesome as any young Man living’,<sup>49</sup> felt that he was entitled to take over the management of Drury Lane although his father, Colley, sold the patent to John Highmore, ‘a rich and silly amateur actor’.<sup>50</sup> In protest at being, as he felt, ill-used, Theophilus Cibber left Drury Lane taking many of the leading players with him and established himself at the Haymarket Theatre opening there on 24 September 1733.

At this time, the companies at Covent Garden and Goodman’s Fields were also filled with minor names some of whom are remembered for reasons other than their acting ability. For example, at the two *King Lear* performances at Covent Garden that year (1733), the actor, Walter Aston played the parts of the Gentleman Usher on 21 April and Gloucester on 14 November. Aston is chiefly remembered today as the son of Anthony Aston,<sup>51</sup> but he eventually established himself as a competent actor and during the 1730s played Gloucester, Cornwall and the Gentleman Usher at Covent Garden.

At Covent Garden on 21 April 1733, Cordelia was played by an unidentified actress, who is simply listed as a ‘Young Gentlewoman’ but whoever she was, she did not survive in the same role when the play was staged later the same year on 14 November. On this occasion, Mrs. Elizabeth Younger is listed in the part and as she had already

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<sup>47</sup> Highfill (2, 226) claims Hester Booth’s last performance was as Helen in *The Judgment of Paris* at Drury Lane on 6 February 1733 but there are several records of her performing and dancing at later dates - see *The London Stage*, pt.3, vol.1, 270 ff.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Highfill, 2, 226.

<sup>49</sup> Benjamin Victor, *The History of the Theatres of London and Dublin*, 3 vols. (1761-71) 1, 9.

<sup>50</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 2, 22.

<sup>51</sup> See chapter 2.

played this role at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1726 she is unlikely to have been the unidentified 'Young Gentlewoman'. Mrs. Younger had started her career at Drury Lane but left to join Lincoln's Inn Fields, and then Covent Garden, under John Rich. According to Davies, Elizabeth Younger was 'a general actress, and sometimes appeared in tragedy, though, I think, not to advantage'.<sup>52</sup> At this same performance on 21 April 1733, the actor who played Lear was William Paget (fl.1728-56). He played this role only once, at his own benefit which he shared with Mrs. Forrester (fl.1719-36), cast as Regan.<sup>53</sup> The takings for the night were £135.8.0., a very respectable figure for two relatively minor players. William Paget had joined Drury Lane in 1730 but moved between the companies playing middle-ranking parts<sup>54</sup> including Albany at Covent Garden in 1736 and, later, Kent at Goodman's Fields in 1742 and at the minor theatre, the New Wells, also situated at Goodman's Fields, in 1747.<sup>55</sup> Mrs. Forrester, cast as Regan, deserves a place in theatre history because she was among the first players listed to appear at two theatres on the same night, the 'first known example of shuttling on the English stage'.<sup>56</sup> The actor who was cast in the role of Edgar at Covent Garden in 1733, was Lacy Ryan (c.1694-1760). After starting at Drury Lane, in 1718 Ryan settled as a member of John Rich's company where he remained for the rest of his career and 'shared leading roles in tragedy and comedy with James Quin'<sup>57</sup> but without Quin's success. Thomas Davies wrote that Ryan, as an actor, was not 'amongst the first performers'<sup>58</sup> but that he was celebrated for his Edgar.

Goodman's Fields was also still struggling to establish a company of any acting significance. Henry Giffard (1694-1772), the manager, who is remembered today because of his protégé David Garrick, and Giffard's second wife, Anna Marcella, were cast as Edgar and Cordelia and played these roles throughout the 1730s. Philip Huddy,

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 3, 368.

<sup>53</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 42.

<sup>54</sup> Highfill, 11, 147-9.

<sup>55</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 258, 261, 265. Each move would suggest that Paget was becoming less successful over the years. He appeared at Ipswich Theatre with Garrick in the summer of 1741 right at the start of Garrick's career.

<sup>56</sup> See *The London Stage*, pt.3, vol.1, cxxxiv-cxxxvii and A.H. Scouten and Leo Hughes, 'John Rich and the Holiday Seasons of 1732-33', *Review of English Studies*, 21 (1945) 46-52.

<sup>57</sup> Highfill, 13, 148.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1780) 1, 22.

Goodman's Fields' first Lear, had surrendered this part to Dennis Delane and was now playing the lesser role of Kent. Dennis Delane (d.1750) was a leading actor who missed joining the top rank of players. He undertook Lear at Goodman's Fields in all three performances in 1733 and the two in 1734 after which he left Goodman's Fields for Covent Garden. Doran calls Delane 'a graceful and clever actor'<sup>59</sup> but, like Quin and later, Spranger Barry, he was to fall before the genius of Garrick. As Garrick's superiority as an actor became established, Delane was ousted from the great tragic roles and 'took to drinking'.<sup>60</sup> The last time Delane played Lear was on 25 October 1743 at Drury Lane. Finally, in 1748, no doubt bowing to the greater ability of the new star, Delane left Garrick and Drury Lane and returned to Covent Garden where he maintained a heavy schedule of parts, although not in *King Lear*, up until his death in 1750.

**1734-1736** After the upheavals in the summer of 1733 and into 1734, neither Drury Lane nor the short-lived company at the Haymarket under Theophilus Cibber, staged *King Lear* in 1734. Early that year Highmore sold his Drury Lane patent to Charles Fleetwood who managed to reconcile the players and Theophilus Cibber's break-away company returned to Drury Lane in March 1734 albeit with Cibber's aggrieved comment that 'I must again submit to return to the Stage a Servant instead of a Manager'.<sup>61</sup> In 1734 there was only one performance of the play at Covent Garden and two at Goodman's Fields. The casts were largely the same names with Quin, Aston and Mrs. Younger at Covent Garden and Delane, Huddy, Penkethman Jr., Giffard and Mrs. Giffard at Goodman's Fields. 1735 saw an increase in the number of performances to seven. John Rich, who still retained an interest in the old Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, staged one performance of *King Lear* at this theatre on 7 May. During this season, Handel and his struggling opera company 'occupied Covent Garden, usually on two nights weekly'<sup>62</sup> and on these occasions the regular Covent Garden players returned to Lincoln's Inn Fields. On 7 May the opera *Alcina*, with music by Handel, was given at

<sup>59</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 2, 119.

<sup>60</sup> 'Sir Nicholas Nipclose', (Highfill gives this as the pseudonym of Francis Gentleman; 6, 149), *The Theatres. A Poetical Dissection*, (1772) 8, n.5.

<sup>61</sup> *An Apology for the Life of Mr. T. [Theophilus] C. [Cibber], Comedian*, [attributed to Henry Fielding], (1740) 135.

<sup>62</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.3, vol.1, 411.

Covent Garden which explains why *King Lear*, staged on the same night, was at the old Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. In addition to this single performance at Lincoln's Inn Fields, Rich also put on three further performances in 1735 at his theatre in Covent Garden on 10 April, 6 June and 20 December. Of these three performances, the one on 6 June was 'Dismiss'd',<sup>63</sup> and the cast for the performance on 20 December is not known. However, the cast for 10 April is listed and the actor in the role of Lear deserves a mention. During these years, many players shone briefly on the London stage and faded without leaving any permanent mark and one of these was Samuel Stephens (d.1764), the Covent Garden Lear.<sup>64</sup> Stephens was a button-maker who became stage-struck after watching the actor, Barton Booth. John Rich took him on at Covent Garden and his first appearance was as Othello on 19 October 1734. He scored a personal success and, as Doran phrases it, 'For a time the audiences were delighted'.<sup>65</sup> In 1735 he was cast as Lear, appearing on 10 April at Covent Garden and 7 May at Lincoln's Inn Fields. However, his sudden popularity was relatively short-lived. After being relegated to more minor roles, he finally left London in 1744 and managed and acted at theatres in Bath and Bristol. At the performances of 10 April and 7 May 1735 opposite Stephens, Cordelia was played by Mrs. Christiana Horton (1699-1756). In *An Apology for the Life of Mr. T... C....*, the writer claimed that his soul had 'a *Taste or Tendre*' for Mrs. Horton and praised her acting in tragedy as being 'without any equal Competitor'.<sup>66</sup> Of the remaining three performances in 1735, two were at Drury Lane on 27 September and 24 November and one was at Goodman's Fields on 15 February. The Drury Lane cast included Quin and Mills as Lear and Gloucester; Edmund was played by William Mills and Cordelia by newcomer, Elizabeth Holliday. This actress had a long stage career (fl.1723-55) and was highly praised by Aaron Hill poet, playwright, man of letters, dreamer and absurd schemer, but he also commented that she was too 'sweet' for parts demanding 'shining passions'.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* pt.3, vol.1, 497.

<sup>64</sup> Highfill, 14, 261-3.

<sup>65</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 2, 55.

<sup>66</sup> *An Apology for the Life of Mr. T. [Theophilus] C. [Cibber], Comedian*, [attributed to Henry Fielding], (1740) 141-2.

<sup>67</sup> Highfill, 10, 258. Both Shakespeare's and Tate's Cordelia need to be more than 'sweet'. While both need 'shining passions' (Johnson, *Dictionary*, 'to shine ... v.4, To be splendid, 6. To be eminent or conspicuous') for the confrontation with Lear, perhaps Tate's Cordelia also needs them for her love scenes.

The single Goodman's Fields performance of *King Lear* in 1735 was given on 15 February with Delane as Lear; Henry Giffard and his wife, Anna Marcella were Edgar and Cordelia; Charles Hulett (1700?-35) was cast as Gloucester. This actor had started his career at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre but joined Goodman's Fields when the Lincoln's Inn Fields company moved to their new Covent Garden Theatre in 1732. He never achieved more than a moderate success and *The Comedian* in the autumn of 1732 commented that his 'Talents for Tragedy ... want Improvement'.<sup>68</sup>

During 1736, the three performances of *King Lear* at Covent Garden were the only performances of the play staged that year in London. The restless actor Dennis Delane who had moved from Goodman's Fields to Covent Garden in the autumn of 1735, now played the title-role at two of these performances, on 8 January and 8 November. The third performance was on 24 February when Lear was played by Mr. Hyde (fl.1733-9) who had a curious career in that he appeared only in leads, e.g. Falstaff in both parts of *Henry IV*, Othello and Lear. He played his roles once with the exception of the Friar in Dryden's *The Spanish Fryar*, which he played twice; all the performances were his benefits and staged at different theatres. It is possible that he was an amateur player.<sup>69</sup>

**1737-1740** The theatre at this time was in 'a transition period, terminated by the coming of Garrick'.<sup>70</sup> The event of most significance was 'the bill for gagging the stage', the Licensing Act of 1737 when a new 'licenser' was given powers which could prevent a new play from 'entering on a career at all'.<sup>71</sup> This attempt at censorship arose from the Government's dread of 'satire or censure',<sup>72</sup> and audiences showed their displeasure at this interference by 'hissing the [new] permitted plays'.<sup>73</sup> The managers turned to the old plays, including Shakespeare's, and to his comedies in particular. Thus, a revival of interest in Shakespeare's plays, which had begun in the 1730s, was sustained<sup>74</sup> partly as a result of the resentment which the Licensing Act had generated.

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<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Highfill, 8, 31.

<sup>69</sup> Highfill, 8, 66-7.

<sup>70</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 2, 55.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 62.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 63.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 65.

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion on the Licensing Act and its implications see *The London Stage*, pt.3, vol.1, xlviii-lx; B. Vickers, *Shakespeare, The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols. (1974-81) 3, 12-4.

The first indications of a revival in the fortunes of Shakespeare's plays had been in 1734<sup>75</sup> and shortly afterwards the curious association known as the Shakespeare Ladies Club was established.<sup>76</sup> In 1735, in the periodical *The Prompter*, Aaron Hill had proposed the formation of 'an Association for the Support of the Stage ... [by] Men of *Quality, Taste, and Fortune*'<sup>77</sup> but without mention of Shakespeare or, indeed, of Ladies. The Shakespeare Ladies Club was probably established at the end of 1736. In 1737 the prologue to *The Independent Patriot* by Francis Lynch contained the lines 'And Shakespear smiles to be with tender Care, / Old as he is, supported by the Fair'<sup>78</sup> with a footnote added: 'Alluding to the Ladies Subscription, this Winter, for the Revival of *Shakespear's Plays*'. This comment may be simply another version of the frequent comment on play-bills that a play is performed at the request of 'ladies of quality' but was probably a reference to the Shakespeare's Ladies Club. By May 1737 the Club was established and on 26 May *The Daily Advertiser*, in a letter purporting to come from 'William Shakespear', notes that 'the Ladies of Great Britain ... form'd themselves into a Society, and reviv'd the Memory of the forsaken Shakespear'. By 1738 a member of the Club, Mary Cowper, cousin of the poet William Cowper and wife of William de Grey, later Lord Walsingham, could write: '*Shakespear lives again by their Command*'.<sup>79</sup> Thus, the Ladies, together with the difficulties brought about by the Licensing Act of 1737, can claim a share of the credit for the revival of interest in Shakespeare's plays before the arrival of Garrick.

Sadly, this rise in the popularity of some of the plays by Shakespeare did not include *King Lear*. It was largely the comedies which prospered. *The London Stage* explains this as partly due to the 'dearth of new comedies' and, by 1740 to a renewed interest in plays with 'breeches' roles.<sup>80</sup> The actress, Margaret (Peg) Woffington as Sir Harry

<sup>75</sup> For further information on this revival of interest in Shakespeare's plays see M. Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet*, (Oxford, 1992) 146-58; Arthur H. Scouten, 'The Increase in Popularity of Shakespeare's Plays in the Eighteenth Century: a Caveat for Interpreters of Stage History', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 7 (New York, 1956) 189-202.

<sup>76</sup> Emmett L. Avery, 'The Shakespeare Ladies Club', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 7 (New York, 1956) 153-8 from which the following information is taken.

<sup>77</sup> *The Prompter*, 30 September, 1735, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Francis Lynch, *The Independent Patriot*, (1737), A4r.

<sup>79</sup> M. Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet*, (Oxford, 1992) 150-1, quoting a MS. poem by Mary Cowper 'On the Revival of Shakespear's Plays by the Ladies in 1738'.

<sup>80</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.3, vol.1, cl.

Wildair in a Covent Garden revival of Farquhar's *The Constant Couple* on 21 November 1740 was an immediate success and this led to the other theatres reviving plays with 'breeches' parts. These included *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* both at Drury Lane where they were well received and enjoyed long runs, unusual at this time.

There were six performances of *King Lear* staged between January 1737 and December 1739. In these six performances, James Quin played the title-role at the two performances at Drury Lane and Dennis Delane at the four performances at Covent Garden. Of the other Drury Lane players, William Mills and Elizabeth Holliday, who became Mills's second wife at about this time, played the roles of Edmund and Cordelia at both the Drury Lane performances, 10 January 1737 and 8 March 1739. Also at both these performances, Theophilus Cibber was still to be seen as the Gentleman Usher and William Milward, the promising young actor who died young, played Edgar, one of his last Shakespearean roles. The remaining names at Drury Lane included Richard Winstone (1699-1787) who was cast as Kent in both of the two performances at Drury Lane in 1737. Doran tells of James Quin's kindness to 'an obscure actor, Dick Winston, lying, - hungry, weary, and disengaged, - on a truckle bed'.<sup>81</sup> Other minor players included Fanny Furnival (fl. 1738-47) who played Goneril at Drury Lane in 1738-9 but after moving to the Smock Alley Theatre, was cast as Cordelia and also played Hamlet in 1742 before returning to Drury Lane in 1746.<sup>82</sup> William Havard (1710-78), described as 'a serviceable actor'<sup>83</sup> with a career spanning nearly forty years, was first cast in *King Lear* as Albany in 1739 at Drury Lane and eventually played Edgar to Garrick's *Lear* when it was said 'he hits off the mad part admirably';<sup>84</sup> Edward Berry (1706-60), though remaining only a minor name was 'a very useful'<sup>85</sup> actor who started in pantomime but progressed to playing Kent at Drury Lane between 1733 and 1735 and then Gloucester, also at Drury Lane, from 1737 until 1758.

The situation was very similar at Covent Garden. Delane was established as the theatre's *Lear*. Of the other parts, at all four of the performances of *King Lear* given at Covent Garden between January 1737 and December 1739, the role of Gloucester was

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<sup>81</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 2, 174.

<sup>82</sup> Highfill, 5, 428.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 7, 184.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Wilkes, *A General View of the Stage*, (1759) 278.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 276.



played by Roger Bridgewater (d.1754) who had started at Drury Lane where his voice was described as ‘a loud Noise’ and ‘Thunder’.<sup>86</sup> On his move to Covent Garden, he was rewarded with ‘weightier roles’ and he stayed at this theatre playing Gloucester up until 1748 even after ill-health made him drop most parts.<sup>87</sup> William Penkethman Jr. , ‘son of the famous Pinkey’,<sup>88</sup> retained the role of the Gentleman Usher; Aaron Hill (c.1715-39), the nephew and name-sake of the editor of *The Prompter*, had a short career here, frequently with poor notices,<sup>89</sup> playing Cornwall first on 21 October 1738.

In 1740,<sup>90</sup> as in 1707, there were no performances of *King Lear* at any of the London theatres. These dull years as far as performances of *King Lear* were concerned, with their string of second-rate players, had reached their nadir.

**1741** There were two *King Lear* performances only in London in 1741, on 7 and 20 January, both at Covent Garden. The minor players included Adam Hallam (d.1768), a member of a large eighteenth-century theatrical family,<sup>91</sup> who had played Edgar at Drury Lane in 1733 and again at Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Covent Garden in 1735, and now Cornwall at Covent Garden in 1741. Hallam, who was unflatteringly described as ‘that pretty-frigging Thing’ whose voice resembled that of ‘a strangling Cat’,<sup>92</sup> moved from company to company but without finding the success for which he was, no doubt, searching; William Gibson (1713-71) who was with Covent Garden for 32 years, played Albany and, later, Gloucester. His large number of roles were ‘a veritable census of minor roles in the eighteenth-century English theatre’ and although he never was more than a second-rate player in London, in Liverpool where he established the Theatre Royal, he was considered ‘a masterful actor, above all competition’;<sup>93</sup> finally,

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<sup>86</sup> *The Theatric Squabble: or, the Patentees*, (1733) 5.

<sup>87</sup> Highfill, 2, 335-6.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 3, 371.

<sup>89</sup> Highfill, 7, 306-7.

<sup>90</sup> Although this was a bad time for stagings of *King Lear*, in the 1740-1 season Shakespeare’s plays overall accounted for one in four of all performances, a record never equalled since; see Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson, eds., *Shakespeare, an Illustrated Stage History*, (Oxford, 1996) 64.

<sup>91</sup> Highfill, 7, 29-33.

<sup>92</sup> *A Letter to a Certain Patentee: in which the conduct of managers is impartially considered*, (1747) 12-3.

<sup>93</sup> Highfill, 6, 181-5.

James Bencraft (d.1765) played a particularly wide range of parts including a Giantess in *The Opera of Operas* and other comic female roles as well as the more traditional part of Burgundy from 1741 to 1746 and later, the part of Cornwall in October 1748.<sup>94</sup>

In spite of this dispiriting display of second-rate talent, three events in 1741 suggested that matters might improve for Shakespearean tragedy. One was the casting of Margaret (Peg) Woffington in the role of Cordelia at the two performances in 1741 when she played opposite Delane. Woffington was the next actress who could fairly claim the title of 'star'. Although she was not entirely successful in tragedy, 'her voice unfitted her for tragic parts',<sup>95</sup> she 'enthralled more hearts than any actress since the days of Elizabeth Barry'<sup>96</sup> and boosted audiences. Apart from her greatest success, as Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's *The Constant Couple*, she was acclaimed in other breeches roles including Rosalind and Viola. The second event was the performance of Charles Macklin, in February of 1741, in the part of Shylock. *The Merchant of Venice* was revived by Drury Lane on 14 February, using Shakespeare's text. Macklin played Shylock as a tragic role rather than as the low comic part usually offered, an interesting interpretation if it is remembered that it was the comedies which were enjoying a revival at this time. Macklin's acting was an important moment in the history of Shakespearean tragedies. His style was of 'the new "natural" school'<sup>97</sup> and a forerunner of Garrick whose performance as Richard III was the third event in 1741, just eight months later.

Although Tate's *King Lear* was still unassailable on stage, the editing of *King Lear* had made important progress during these past years. Theobald's scholarship had introduced new skills and now Garrick was to introduce a new school of acting which helped to raise interest in the theatre and place Shakespeare's plays in the high position they hold today.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 2, 26-7; *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.1, 67.

<sup>95</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 2, 205.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 2, 202.

<sup>97</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.3, vol.1, cli.

Illustration 6



David Garrick as Lear from a painting by Benjamin Wilson (1761),  
taken from *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes, (Arden, 1997)

David Garrick as actor of King Lear

On 19 October 1741, the Goodman Fields Theatre advertised the appearance of a ‘Gentleman (*who never appeared on any Stage*)’ in the title-role of *Richard III* and thus heralded an age which was ‘beyond question the most glorious in English theatrical annals.’<sup>1</sup> The unnamed Gentleman was David Garrick (1717-79) but the statement claiming he had never appeared on any stage is not quite accurate. Garrick’s earliest connection with the professional stage as far as we know was on 15 April 1740 when his first play *Lethe, or Aesop in the Shades* was performed at Drury Lane as an afterpiece.<sup>2</sup> Garrick then joined Henry Giffard’s company at Goodman’s Fields and in March 1741, unannounced to the audience, he took the masked role of Harlequin in a pantomime, *Harlequin Student*, replacing a sick actor.<sup>3</sup>

In May that year (1741) Garrick went with Giffard’s company to Ipswich for the summer season where he acted under the stage name of Mr. Lyddall apparently choosing this name because it was the maiden name of Anna Marcella, the second Mrs. Henry Giffard.<sup>4</sup> A tradition has grown up that Garrick’s first role was the black slave, Aboan, in Southerne’s *Oroonoko*.<sup>5</sup> I have searched the Ipswich newspapers published in the summer of 1741 and can find no record of *Oroonoko* among the advertisements at that time. During the weeks starting 13 and 27 June, no advertisement seems to have been published so it is possible that *Oroonoko* was played unadvertised during these weeks. However, my doubts over the truth of this tradition were further confirmed by an undated newspaper cutting pasted in a book entitled *Drama and Theatres in Ipswich*,<sup>6</sup> which comprises a collection of cuttings and manuscript writings compiled by H.R.

<sup>1</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921)1, 336.

<sup>2</sup> *The London Stage*, pt. 3, vol. 2, 831.

<sup>3</sup> G.W.Stone and G.M. Kahrl, *David Garrick, a Critical Biography*, (Carbondale, 1979) 24; P. Fitzgerald, *The Life of David Garrick*, (1899) 35.

<sup>4</sup> Highfill, 6, 195. ‘Lyddall’ was also the name of the first Mrs. Henry Giffard; it appears that Giffard’s two wives were sisters.

<sup>5</sup> See G.W.Stone and G.M.Kahrl, *David Garrick, a Critical Biography*, (Carbondale, 1979), 24; Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1780) 1, 17; A. Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1801) 1, 18; DNB.

<sup>6</sup> *Drama and Theatres in Ipswich*, compiled by H.R. Eyre, 7 vols. [c.1890] 1, 42 (Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, shelf mark S. Ipswich 792).

Eyre in 7 volumes in c.1890. This cutting also draws attention to the fact that *Oroonoko* is not among the advertised plays staged that summer. The first role bearing Garrick's name at Ipswich was Captain Duratete in Farquhar's *The Inconstant*, which was advertised in *The Ipswich Journal* on 18 July 1741 and played on 21 July.

Two Shakespearean plays are recorded as being staged at Ipswich in the summer of 1741, *Henry IV with the Humours of Sir John Falstaff* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. *Henry IV* is advertised in *The Ipswich Journal* of 4 July which states that the play will be staged on 6 July and gives a partial cast list but the names do not include Garrick's. However, the writer of the newspaper cutting mentioned above, goes on in the same article to argue persuasively that Garrick, although not listed, very likely appeared in *Henry IV*, in a 'subordinate part' because 'this grand play must have required the whole strength' of the company. Towards the end of the season which closed in August,<sup>7</sup> *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was advertised on 25 July as 'Never acted here before', and staged on 28 July.<sup>8</sup> There is no cast list but one line reads 'The Part of CAJUS the French Doctor, by Mr. Lyddall.' The fact that Garrick was singled out for mention in this relatively small part and that no other member of the cast is named suggests that Garrick had scored a personal triumph in some role earlier in the season<sup>9</sup> so that the manager considered it worthwhile to publicise Garrick's appearance, no matter the size of the role.

After the return of the company to Goodman's Fields in the autumn of 1741, Garrick took on his first major Shakespearean role, Richard III. The wording advertising Garrick anonymously, and as never having appeared on any stage was misleading. Several examples survive similarly worded and were probably intended to stimulate the curiosity of the public by proclaiming the merits of an unknown player, (or perhaps in the case of failure, to make this less painful). Most of these would-be stars disappeared without trace; a few struggled on in minor roles. On this occasion the unknown actor succeeded in attracting a large audience to Goodman's Fields and the resulting triumph of David Garrick is well known. The theatre, however, was flouting

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<sup>7</sup> *The Ipswich Journal*, 8 August 1741 advertises the performance given on 11 August as being the 'last night but one' (Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich).

<sup>8</sup> *The Ipswich Journal*, 25 July, 1741 (Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich).

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps Captain Duratete which he had played one week earlier on 21 July.

the orders of the Licensing Act<sup>10</sup> and the unprecedented excitement and full houses attracted the attention of the other theatre managers who applied pressure on the authorities so that Goodman's Fields was closed in May 1742 and never reopened.<sup>11</sup>

Before this happened, Garrick attempted what was to become one of his major roles, Lear. He was just twenty-five<sup>12</sup> when he first played the King on 11 March 1742 and in that year he played the part a total of sixteen times. This number of performances is an astonishing total when it is remembered that only two years earlier, in 1740, there had not been a single performance of *King Lear* at any of the London theatres. At best the total number of performances at all the London theatres combined had never gone above eight or nine in any given year and was more usually only two or three. During his one season at Goodman's Fields, before his move to Drury Lane, Garrick played the role of the King eleven times and he chose this role for his first benefit given on 18 March.<sup>13</sup> The afterpiece on that evening was *The Schoolboy* by Colley Cibber and Garrick played Master Johnny, the title-role, as well as Lear, a combination described as a '*tour de force*'.<sup>14</sup> The first full cast list to survive for these early performances is for 27 March 1742. The actor-manager, Henry Giffard and his wife, Anna Marcella, played Edgar and Cordelia while William Giffard (probably the son of Henry and step-son of Anna Marcella<sup>15</sup>) was cast as Edmund. Another husband and wife pair, Richard and Elizabeth Yates, who had been in Ipswich with Garrick, took the roles of the Gentleman Usher and Regan. Henry 'Dagger' Marr (d.1783), described as 'one of the worst actors that ever exhibited in theatre or in barn',<sup>16</sup> had appeared in Garrick's *Lethe*, both in London and Ipswich<sup>17</sup> and played the part of Burgundy. Other players included James Marshall (d.1773) who played Gloucester. Early in his career Marshall had appeared in the title-

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<sup>10</sup> Only Drury Lane and Covent Garden were licensed to perform plays in London. However the powers of the Licensing Act did not extend to musical productions so that theatres like Goodman's Fields charged for a musical performance, often in the form of an afterpiece, and the main play was performed 'gratis' (*The London Stage*, pt.3, vol. 1, liii.).

<sup>11</sup> Goodman's Fields Theatre, which closed in May 1742, should not be confused with a smaller playhouse, the New Wells at Goodman's Fields, which was operating at the same time.

<sup>12</sup> John Gielgud played Lear in 1931 at the age of 27.

<sup>13</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 63 and 261.

<sup>14</sup> Leigh Woods, *Garrick Claims the Stage*, (Westport, 1984) 101.

<sup>15</sup> Highfill, 6, 205.

<sup>16</sup> Tate Wilkinson, *The Wandering Patentee*, 4 vols. (York, 1795) 2, 55.

<sup>17</sup> Highfill, 10, 98.

role in *Oroonoko* in December 1730 and, like Garrick, was billed as 'a young Actor who never appeared on this Stage before'<sup>18</sup> but, unlike Garrick, Marshall never became more than a mediocre player. William Paget who had played the title-role of Lear at Covent Garden for his own benefit ten years earlier in April 1733, now played Kent at Goodman's Fields.<sup>19</sup> John Dunstall (1717-78), played the minor role of the Physician. 'Old dog-trot Dunstall',<sup>20</sup> a close contemporary of Garrick's, was a second-rate but reliable actor who had also been at Ipswich.

When the Goodman's Fields Theatre was forced to close on 27 May 1742,<sup>21</sup> Garrick moved to Drury Lane with which he was to be associated for most of his career. On 28 May he played Lear for the first time there with Margaret (Peg) Woffington (1714?-60) as Cordelia. This actress was one of the great names of the eighteenth-century theatre but she was not successful in tragedy and only attempted Cordelia this year and again in 1743. During the summer of 1742 Garrick was in Dublin and returned to Drury Lane in the autumn where he played Lear on four more occasions, 26 October, 9 and 24 November and 13 December.

David Garrick's first year as an actor established him immediately as the leading player of the age. His acting genius is well documented and his triumph in a wide range of roles, Shakespearean and others, tragic and comic, is testified in countless books and pamphlets from his own day to the present. In this chapter, I will examine his playing of Lear as described by some of his contemporaries as well as by later writers.

However, to understand the excitement which Garrick's acting aroused in the mid-eighteenth century it is necessary to look first at the acting of some of the other players immediately before Garrick's debut and in the early years of the century.

The earliest players of the eighteenth century of whom Betterton was the greatest, practised a 'restrained and grave'<sup>22</sup> style of acting. Anthony Aston, describing Betterton's acting, writes 'His Actions were few, but just ... his Aspect was serious, venerable, and majestic'.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, with Barton Booth who followed Betterton as the

<sup>18</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.3, vol.1,100.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* pt.3, vol.2, 979.

<sup>20</sup> 'Sir Nicholas Nipclose' [pseud.], (Francis Gentleman?), *The Theatres. A Poetical Dissection*, (1772) 73.

<sup>21</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 463.

<sup>22</sup> Alan S. Downer, 'Nature to Advantage Dressed', *PMLA*, 58 (1943) 1008.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Aston, *A Brief Supplement to Colley Cibber, Esq.*, [1748] 4.

leading tragedian, ‘*Restraint* was still an article of his creed’.<sup>24</sup> Before an important speech, an actor, often gloriously dressed with a ‘huge plume of feathers upon his head’ and therefore ‘forced to hold his neck extremely stiff and steady’,<sup>25</sup> would ‘come forward’ to declaim his lines, as a large number of stage directions tell us.<sup>26</sup> The players after Booth developed a less controlled style. This generation indulged in exaggerated or heightened acting, particularly in tragedy. Arthur Murphy has left a vivid description of the style popular immediately before Garrick’s arrival. He writes, ‘declamation roared in a most unnatural strain; rant was passion; whining was grief; vociferation was terror, and drawling accents were the voice of love’.<sup>27</sup> The method of speaking tragedy was described as ‘*singing and quavering*’<sup>28</sup> and Cibber disapproved of the ‘dangerous Affectation of the Monotone’ but praised the ‘skilful Actor’ with his ‘plaintive Tone of Voice ... slowly graceful Gesture, his humble Sighs of Resignation under his Calamities’.<sup>29</sup> These examples of praise and condemnation suggest that tragic acting in the early eighteenth century was monotonous with contrived, elevated moments of declamation and rant. The result was a completely artificial performance, admired by some as the correct way to present tragedy and condemned by others as ‘*a horrible, Theatric, way of speaking*’.<sup>30</sup> David Garrick changed all this. Writing in 1806, Richard Cumberland, the dramatist, who as a boy had seen Garrick acting, recalled ‘It seemed as if a whole century had been stept over in the transition of a single scene’.<sup>31</sup> Garrick created heroes who were no longer only ‘reasoning, dignified and self-possessed’ but also men ‘of feeling, of impulse, and of the body’.<sup>32</sup> At this moment in ‘a decadent period in tragic acting’,<sup>33</sup> Garrick and his new ‘natural’ style were a revelation.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Alan S. Downer, ‘Nature to Advantage Dressed’, *PMLA*, 58, (1943) 1008.

<sup>25</sup> *The Spectator*, no.42, 18 April 1711.

<sup>26</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952-9) 1, 32.

<sup>27</sup> A. Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1801) 1, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin Victor, *The History of the Theatres in London and Dublin*, 3 vols. (1761-71) 2, 164.

<sup>29</sup> C. Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian*, (1740) 61 and 202.

<sup>30</sup> A. Hill, Dedication in *The Fatal Vision or, the Fall of Siam*, (1716) A1v.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland*, (1806) 60.

<sup>32</sup> Leigh Woods, *Garrick Claims the Stage*, (Westport, 1984) 42.

<sup>33</sup> A. Sprague, *Shakespearian Players and Performances*, (1954) 22.

<sup>34</sup> For a full account of Garrick’s Shakespearean acting see B. Vickers, *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols. (1974-81) vol.4 in which Vickers reprints ‘more accounts of Garrick’s Shakespeare than have ever been assembled’ (29).



However, on examining Garrick's style more closely, it becomes apparent that what was at that time thought by most critics to be 'natural' and preferable to the 'heavy and bombastic'<sup>35</sup> declamation of the earlier players, was by today's standards, still artificial. An enlightening passage in *The Connoisseur* of 19 September 1754<sup>36</sup> describes the 'tragedians of the last age' as priding themselves on '*fine speaking*' and doing 'little more than strutting with one leg before the other'. The writer then adds that the players of his time have gone to 'a contrary extreme' preferring violent attitudes and gestures as though 'afflicted with *St. Vitus's Dance*'<sup>37</sup> which resulted in something as unnatural as the earlier style. These actors included Garrick and there is evidence that his playing was, if not over-extreme, certainly histrionic. He no longer declaimed lines from the front of the stage but he was not afraid of showing powerful emotions if he felt the moment demanded this. However, as I shall show, he was also able to portray gentler moments with a natural subtlety not previously seen on stage.

One of Garrick's most famous and dramatic scenes was Lear's curse on Goneril in the speech beginning 'Hear, Nature, hear; dear goddess, hear'.<sup>38</sup> A critic in 1747 had written 'You fall precipitately upon your Knees, extend your Arms --- clench your Hands --- set your Teeth --- and with a savage Distraction in your Look -- trembling in all your Limbs -- and your Eyes pointed to Heaven ... you begin'.<sup>39</sup> More than twenty years later, a letter printed in *The St. James's Chronicle* of 26 September 1769, signed 'R.B', describes Garrick admiringly during this speech, and apparently quoting the earlier critic, writes: 'he always drops precipitately upon his Knees, as if his Legs were shot from under him - he clenches his Hands, extends his Arms, sets his Teeth ... trembling in all his Limbs, his Eyes pointed to Heaven ... he begins'. Thomas Davies, commenting on the same speech, claims that the audience 'seemed to shrink from it as from a blast of lightning'.<sup>40</sup> Another actor, John Bannister, felt that 'Garrick's very stick

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<sup>35</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952-9) 2, 40.

<sup>36</sup> *The Connoisseur*, vol.1, no.34, September 19, 1754.

<sup>37</sup> See also Tobias Smollett, *Peregrine Pickle*, 4 vols. (1751), vol.2, chapter 55, 140 where the same phrase 'St. Vitus's dance' is used to describe James Quin's acting.

<sup>38</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 267-81; Tate, *King Lear*, Act I, p.12

<sup>39</sup> Samuel Foote, *An Examen of the New Comedy*, (1747) 31.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 280.

acted'.<sup>41</sup> Joseph Pittard wrote that Garrick's acting was so powerful at this moment that he was astonished Goneril still had the 'Power to go off the Stage unblasted at this Imprecation'.<sup>42</sup> This speech comes right at the end of the first act in Tate's version and it is easy to see how Garrick's powerful acting would make Tate's rearrangement an extremely effective closing, no matter how much we may disapprove of tampering with Shakespeare's text.

One other scene in *King Lear* received particular attention from the critics. This was the prison scene<sup>43</sup> which is a Tate invention. After Lear's triumphant fight in which he kills two soldiers who have entered to murder him and Cordelia, he 'fell breathless against the MIDDLE pillar of two high arches'.<sup>44</sup> Garrick then turned his face to the prison wall so that the audience could no longer see his expression. This move is criticised by Hugh Kelly because it meant that Garrick had 'Snatch[ed] every feature strangely from our sight' and the audience could no longer marvel at the 'won'drous workings of his face'.<sup>45</sup> However Kalman Burnim suggests that later actors copied Garrick and that this piece of stage business became the accepted way of acting 'this particular moment' in the play.<sup>46</sup> There is a picture of Spranger Barry in the role of Lear published in *The Universal Museum* of September 1767<sup>47</sup> showing the actor with a sword in his hand, leaning as though exhausted against some arches centre stage. Two bodies can be seen to the left and Cordelia is rising from the ground on the right. Although, unlike Garrick, Barry shows his face, the scene represents the moment when Lear has killed the soldiers and suggests that the 'business' introduced by Garrick was still largely the way this scene was acted. After Lear's fight, an attendant marvels that the King has killed two assailants and Lear responds in Shakespeare's words 'Did I not,

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<sup>41</sup> C.R. Leslie, *Autobiographical Recollections*, ed. Tom Taylor, 2 vols. (1860) 1, 147.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Pittard, *Observations on Mr. Garrick's Acting*, (1758) 13. See B. Vickers (*Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, 4, 316) who argues that Pittard either plagiarised John Shebbeare's *Letters on the English Nation*, Letter 59, (1755) or that Pittard was a pseudonym for Shebbeare.

<sup>43</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act V, p.62.

<sup>44</sup> *The Monthly Mirror*, February, 1802, 124.

<sup>45</sup> [Hugh Kelly], *Thespis: or, a critical examination into the merits of all the Principal Performers belonging to Drury-Lane Theatre*, (1766) 7 and 8.

<sup>46</sup> K. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director*, (Pittsburgh, 1961)150.

<sup>47</sup> Shown in K. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director*, (Pittsburgh, 1961) plate 13.

Fellow?’ These words, as spoken by Garrick, became ‘a touchstone for excellence’<sup>48</sup> when the performance of later players was being considered.

Although Garrick’s acting received high praise, not all critics were pleased. Samuel Foote ‘in general deplored Garrick’s manner of playing King Lear’<sup>49</sup> and could not ‘easily pardon the Tears shed at the Conclusion’.<sup>50</sup> He also found fault with Garrick’s ‘Tears at the End of the Curse’, advising him ‘you need not make use of your Handkerchief ... your Application to your Handkerchief is, perhaps, too minute a Circumstance’.<sup>51</sup> Foote also wrote that for once he was ‘pleased with *Tate’s* Alteration of *Shakespear*’ because it saved him from commenting on ‘Mr. G’s Manner of Dying’.<sup>52</sup> The anonymous *The Theatrical Monitor; or, Stage Management and Green Room Laid Open* claims Garrick ‘never understood, therefore never could speak, King Lear’s curse on Gonneril’.<sup>53</sup> An article in *The Monthly Review* also dislikes Garrick’s acting during this curse and asks whether Garrick ‘might not change his present manner for a better’ and condemns the way he ‘kneels down, clasps his hands, looks upward, and ... utters this rhapsody of passion as a solemn prayer!’<sup>54</sup> Theophilus Cibber managed both to praise and sneer at Garrick in the same sentence: ‘Not to give Praise to the little Gentleman, for his Performance, in some Parts of this Character, were doing him Injustice’. He chides Garrick for ‘too long a Preparation for it [the curse] ...Tis here unnatural’.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, Thomas Davies felt that Garrick’s preparation for the speech was ‘extremely affecting’ although he noted that it was said by ‘certain critics’ that ‘Garrick was too deliberate’ in his acting of this scene.<sup>56</sup>

According to William Cooke, writing in the early nineteenth century, Charles

<sup>48</sup> A. Sprague, *Shakespearian Players and Performances*, (1954) 39.

<sup>49</sup> Leigh Woods, *Garrick Claims the Stage*, (Westport, 1984) 51.

<sup>50</sup> [Samuel Foote], *A Treatise on the Passions*, [1747]17.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Foote, *An Examen of the Comedy*, (1747) 37.

<sup>52</sup> [Samuel Foote], *A Treatise on the Passions*, [1747] 24.

<sup>53</sup> *The Theatrical Monitor; or, Stage Management and Green Room Laid Open*, 24 October 1767, 5.

<sup>54</sup> *The Monthly Review*, August 1769, 143. The criticisms in this article are refuted in *The St. James’s Chronicle* letter of 26 September 1769 already referred to.

<sup>55</sup> Theophilus Cibber, *Two Dissertations on the Theatres*, [1770] pt.2, 30 and 32. Vickers argues that Cibber’s denigration of Garrick as Lear ‘cannot be written off as ... envy or spleen’ and the negative criticisms ‘leave no doubt’ that Garrick ‘was guilty of some of these offences’, (*Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, 4, 29 and 27).

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 279-80.

Macklin, another great 'natural' player of this time, was the first critic of Garrick's *Lear*. Cooke tells that Garrick asked Macklin to comment on his performance on the first night (11 March 1742) and Macklin chose to criticise the two scenes I have discussed above which were to become among Garrick's most famous. Macklin said that in the curse scene Garrick 'began it too low, and ended it too high' and if he had let 'his rage fall off towards the close, and melt itself in the pathetic', Garrick would have achieved a greater effect. Macklin's second point of criticism was for the prison scene where he felt that the actor did not show enough dignity in his playing of the King. Presumably Garrick adapted his performance because when Macklin again saw the play, he was amazed at Garrick's towering performance 'which seemed to electrify the audience with horror'.<sup>57</sup> Violence and passion appear to have been central in Garrick's portrayal of *Lear*. Contemporary descriptions comment again and again on 'the frantic King';<sup>58</sup> 'a savage Distraction' in his expression;<sup>59</sup> a man 'torn to Pieces with the extremity of his Disappointment and Distress'.<sup>60</sup> A Doctor Fordyce writing on 13 May 1763, gives one of the fullest accounts and describes the 'violent starts of amazement, of horror, of indignation, of paternal rage... the deepest frenzy; such a striking correspondence between the tempest in his mind, and that of the surrounding elements ... the very whirlwind of passion and of madness'.<sup>61</sup>

Although his *Lear* showed raging anger at some points in the play, Garrick portrayed the King as a man who was physically weak because of his great age. John Hill writing in *The Actor*,<sup>62</sup> confirms this in his description of the physical appearance of Garrick in the role as a 'little, old, white-haired man ... [with] a tottering gait'. Garrick used the fact of *Lear*'s age to win sympathy for the old King so that 'the Heart-strings of an Audience are torn on every Side'.<sup>63</sup> *Lear* was 'violent, old & weakly fond of his daughters' but in spite of the violence, Garrick felt the part should be acted so that 'ye

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<sup>57</sup> William Cooke, *Memoirs of Charles Macklin, Comedian*, (1804) 105 and 107.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 107.

<sup>59</sup> Samuel Foote, *An Examen of the New Comedy*, (1747) 31.

<sup>60</sup> [T.J.], *A Letter of Compliment to the Ingenious Author of a Treatise on the Passions*, [1747] 20.

<sup>61</sup> *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, ed. James Boaden, 2 vols. (1831-2) 1, 157-9. Perhaps this writer was the Dr. James Fordyce who was Johnson's friend.

<sup>62</sup> [John Hill], *The Actor, or, A Treatise on the Art of Playing*, (1755) 151.

<sup>63</sup> Arthur Murphy, *The Gray's-Inn Journal*, no.65, 2 vols. (1756) 2, 75.

bad parts of him would be forgotten ... & *his distresses* ... would become objects of Pity'.<sup>64</sup> Garrick also stirred this pity by his ability to play calmer and more controlled moments. In contrast to the dramatic interpretation of the curse scene, his acting in the mad scenes was restrained. Arthur Murphy writes that these scenes were played with 'no sudden starts, no violent gesticulation; his movements were slow and feeble; misery was depicted in his countenance'.<sup>65</sup> Others describe the madness as seeming to creep upon the King by slow degrees so that it 'steals so gradually ... grows like a Colour, which runs on from the highest to the darkest Tint'.<sup>66</sup> Commenting on Garrick as Lear in the storm scenes, Thomas Wilkes wrote 'Methink I share in his calamities, I feel the dark drifting rain, and the sharp tempest'.<sup>67</sup> Another of the quiet moments which earned praise was Garrick's interpretation of the line 'Be your tears wet?' at which point he put his fingers on Cordelia's cheek then looked at his fingers before completing the line ' - yes, faith'.<sup>68</sup> John O'Keeffe chose the words 'simplicity' and 'exquisite' in his description of this<sup>69</sup> and Thomas Davies asked if 'this scene of domestic sorrow be not superior' to all others.<sup>70</sup> Other low-key moments in Garrick's interpretation of Lear singled out for comment included the scene in which both daughters reject Lear.<sup>71</sup> The King's bitter response 'I will do such things - /What they are yet I know not' showed 'a sudden and piteous exhibition of helplessness'.<sup>72</sup> O'Keeffe, who described Garrick's acting as 'one of the silken cords that drew me towards a theatre', felt this moment to be 'so pitiable as to touch the heart of every spectator'.<sup>73</sup> Pittard selected Lear's line 'Pray do not mock me' as being spoken 'with such pathetic Simplicity'.<sup>74</sup> Samuel Rogers recalls another moving moment when he tells how the actor John Bannister

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<sup>64</sup> Holograph letter in Folger Library quoted in K. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director*, (Pittsburgh, 1961) 144; Alan Kendall, *David Garrick*, (1985) 146 and others.

<sup>65</sup> Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1801) 1, 27-8.

<sup>66</sup> Joseph Pittard, *Observations on Mr. Garrick's Acting*, (1758) 17.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Wilkes, *A General View of the Stage*, (1759) 234.

<sup>68</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vii, 71; Tate, *King Lear*, Act IV, p.53.

<sup>69</sup> John O'Keeffe, *Recollections*, 2 vols. (1826) 1, 81.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 318.

<sup>71</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 469-70; Tate, *King Lear*, II, p. 23.

<sup>72</sup> P. Fitzgerald, *The Life of David Garrick*, (1899) 253.

<sup>73</sup> John O'Keeffe, *Recollections*, 2 vols. (1826) 1, 81.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Pittard, *Observations on Mr. Garrick's Acting*, (1758) 19; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vii, 59.

remembered that the tones in which Garrick spoke 'O fool, I shall go mad' 'absolutely thrilled him'.<sup>75</sup>

A final example of one of Lear's speeches, as interpreted by Garrick, which many critics selected for some interesting analysis, is the speech beginning 'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;/Age is unnecessary'<sup>76</sup> when the King asks Regan for shelter. Davies describes this moment as a 'touching, though ironical, petition' finely acted by Garrick 'who knew its beauty'.<sup>77</sup> Samuel Foote contradicts Davies and suggests that Garrick misinterpreted these lines and did not speak them ironically but lays the blame on 'that sorry Fellow *Tate* ... you speak as really imploring *Regan*, ... whereas 'tis strong *Irony* ... in your and Mr. *Tate's*, 'tis Spiritless and out of Character'.<sup>78</sup> In Shakespeare's text there is a line 'on my knees I beg' indicating that Lear kneels at this point but Tate cuts the line and in his shortened version there is nothing to suggest that the actor should kneel here. The published edition of Garrick's adaptation (1773) retains the line 'On my knees I beg' and he no doubt restored it earlier in performance as he did other lines.<sup>79</sup> Here was an example of where a great actor appreciated the Shakespearean text of *King Lear*. Garrick had access to editions of Shakespeare's works<sup>80</sup> and appears to have sensed that Shakespeare's words supplied a fine theatrical moment as well as giving an insight into the inverted world of Lear. Thus began the long process (discussed in greater detail in chapter 8) back to Shakespeare's text.

One of Garrick's trademarks was his use of the 'start' and the 'pause' and critics, divided in their opinions, frequently referred to the way he broke up lines and speeches. One wrote that 'no man ever did, nor possibly ever will, speak ... broken sentences ... with such penetrating effect'<sup>81</sup> and another felt that accusations of Garrick 'stopping

<sup>75</sup> Samuel Rogers, *Table Talk*, ed. A. Dyce, (1887) 8. Either Rogers or Bannister is inaccurate in his recollection because, of course, there was no Fool in any of the versions of *King Lear* staged in the eighteenth century. Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 475.

<sup>76</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 343-4; Tate, *King Lear*, Act II, p.20. Tate partially cuts the speech.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 293. Davies notes that some of this speech is 'omitted in Tate's alteration'.

<sup>78</sup> Samuel Foote, *An Examen of the New Comedy*, (1747) 36-7.

<sup>79</sup> See chapter 8.

<sup>80</sup> In the British Library catalogues of Garrick's books (825.kk.24, 643.l.30 and 620.h.32) there are several editions of Shakespeare's works listed including the 1608 *King Lear*, 1623 Folio, and the editions of Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Capell, and Johnson-Steevens (1773) as well as a copy of Tate's adaptation and of the 1605 play *King Leir, and his three daughters*.

<sup>81</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 55.

falsely' were 'groundless'.<sup>82</sup> Less approving comments included one on Garrick's 'unnat'ral start, affected pause'<sup>83</sup> while *The Theatrical Monitor* complained that no other actor 'ever repeated his starts so *often*, or continued his pauses so *long* as Mr. G -'.<sup>84</sup>

Among all that has been written about David Garrick's acting some information survives about his 'stage business' in *King Lear*. I have already noted one of his most famous pieces, the dramatic collapse of the King against the back arches after the fight in the prison cell. Other business included Garrick falling asleep on the heath in Act III, after his line 'we'll to Supper i' th' Morning' and being carried off by Gloucester and Kent.<sup>85</sup> Charles Macklin considered this stage business 'a mere trick', claiming that Garrick introduced it to score off Spranger Barry who, as a large man, 'could not be carried off the Stage with the same ease' as Garrick.<sup>86</sup> In fact the action is suggested by Tate's Gloucester a few lines earlier, 'let's take him in our Arms,/And carry him', although this could be interpreted as simply supporting the King off stage.

In addition to Garrick's dramatic use of the crutch and handkerchief, another stage prop deserves mention. The famous crown of wild flowers which Lear wears and which Cordelia describes, became for Garrick a crown of straw. The first published edition<sup>87</sup> of Garrick's version of the play retains the description as altered by Tate which emphasises the flowers adding 'Berries, Burdocks, Violets, Dazies, Poppies'.<sup>88</sup> In spite of this, several writers refer to the straw crown - 'The straw-made crown, of crazy LEAR'.<sup>89</sup> William Hazlitt also comments on 'the crown of straw which he [Garrick] wore'.<sup>90</sup> According to Samuel Foote, Garrick had 'Straw in your Hand, ... that you

<sup>82</sup> *The Present State of the Stage in Great-Britain and Ireland*, (1753) 20.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Churchill, 'The Rosciad' in *Poems*, 2 vols. (1763) 1, 49-51.

<sup>84</sup> *The Theatrical Monitor; or, Stage Management and Green Room Laid Open*, 24 October 1767, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act III, p.33; Arden, III, vi, 81-5; (Shakespeare: 'I prithee take him in thy arms', line 85).

<sup>86</sup> James Kirkman, *Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1799) 2, 260-1. Barry however did not play Lear until February 1756.

<sup>87</sup> This was John Bell's edition of *Shakespeare's Plays*, 9 vols. (1773-4). The title-page for *King Lear* calls the play 'A Tragedy, by Shakespeare' and adds 'as performed at the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane'. See chapter 11.

<sup>88</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act IV, p.43. John Bell, *Shakespeare's Plays*, 9 vols. (1773-4) 2, IV, i, p.56.

<sup>89</sup> *Garrick's Looking Glass: or, the Art of Rising on the Stage*, (1776) 13.

<sup>90</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) 'A View of the English Stage', 5, 174.

take ... for a *Scepter*'.<sup>91</sup> *A Treatise on the Passions*, attributed to Foote, refers to the straw, although not specifically a crown, and advises Garrick not to 'pull his Rags, play with his Straws' because although Lear is mad, Foote argues that these actions detract from Lear's sense of majesty.<sup>92</sup> There is also a suggestion that Garrick's crown of straw becomes 'the physical emblem' of the King's loss of authority and 'fall from power',<sup>93</sup> in which case the stage business of playing with the straw to underline the King's loss of majesty, would seem valid. However, while a sceptre of straw seems justifiable, it is more difficult to explain a crown of straw if Cordelia's words are retained.

Another detail which Foote condemned in Garrick's physical presentation of the part was during the scene in Act IV where Lear, when his madness leaves him, confesses that 'all the skill I have/Remembers not these garments'.<sup>94</sup> Here Garrick is criticised for wearing the same costume throughout the play and is urged to 'change your Dress'<sup>95</sup> in order to make sense of the line. In Shakespeare's play the Gentleman (or Doctor) has an earlier line 'We put fresh garments on him'<sup>96</sup> but this line does not appear in the Tate or the Garrick (Bell, 1773) versions. However, Lear's line could be taken to indicate the King's loss of memory has caused him to forget what clothes he is wearing. A more interesting comment made in this pamphlet is Foote's condemnation of 'Tate's execrable Alteration' and his appeal to Garrick to 'Read and consider the two Plays seriously and then make the Publick and the Memory of the Author some Amends by giving us *Lear* in the *Original, Fool* and all'.<sup>97</sup> However, as I shall discuss later, although Garrick's adaptation did return more closely to Shakespeare, he did not risk reinstating the Fool.

All in all, Garrick's interpretation of Lear received more praise than it did adverse criticism. Even the much-maligned ending as contrived by Tate, which shows 'the old king and his matchless daughter, hand in hand, alive and merry',<sup>98</sup> was approved and 'the enthusiasm and delight of the audience knew no bounds' when, at the end Garrick

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<sup>91</sup> Samuel Foote, *An Examen of the New Comedy*, (1747) 35.

<sup>92</sup> [Samuel Foote], *A Treatise on the Passions*, [1747] 21.

<sup>93</sup> Leigh Woods, 'Crowns of Straw', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32 (1981) 74.

<sup>94</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vii, 66-7; Tate, *King Lear*, Act IV, p.52.

<sup>95</sup> Samuel Foote, *An Examen of the New Comedy*, (1747) 36.

<sup>96</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vii, 22.

<sup>97</sup> Samuel Foote, *An Examen of the New Comedy*, (1747) 35.

<sup>98</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 1, 220.



declares 'Old *Lear* shall be/A King again'.<sup>99</sup> The cynical Samuel Foote wondered how Garrick could 'keep your Countenance when you come to the *Spheres stopping their Course, the Sun making halt, and the Winds bearing on their rosy Wings, that Cordelia is a Queen!*'<sup>100</sup> but Garrick's interpretation of *Lear* was considered by many critics to be his finest: whether 'in Anger, in Grief, in Madness, in Revenge, in Weakness, in Contempt, in Joy, all is equally natural and amazing'.<sup>101</sup> Thomas Davies also recognised that *Lear* was 'not agitated by one passion only ... but by a tumultuous combination' and that Garrick was able to convey this as no actor had done previously.<sup>102</sup> These last comments are of particular interest because Davies, remembered today as the bookseller who introduced Boswell to Johnson, was also an actor. He was not particularly successful and was described unflatteringly as an actor who 'mouths a sentence, as curs mouth a bone'<sup>103</sup> but he played Gloucester opposite Garrick's *Lear* in 1761 and 1762.

After the enormous amount of praise and fame which came David Garrick's way after his first appearance in *Richard III* in October 1741, it is no surprise to learn that stories and myths have grown up around him. Whether or not they are true is difficult to know but they make engaging reading and I will discuss those which relate to *King Lear*. One story tells how a guard, positioned by the stage to keep order, was overcome by Garrick's acting as *Lear* and fainted in view of the audience. Garrick rewarded the sensibility of the man with a guinea only to have other guards faint at subsequent performances.<sup>104</sup> Another tale concerns a friend who accidentally dropped his daughter from a first-floor window. The poor father was distraught and lost his senses. Tradition claims that Garrick used the distress of this man when considering the madness of *Lear*.<sup>105</sup> Arthur Murphy testifies to having seen Garrick 'rise in company to

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<sup>99</sup> P. Fitzgerald, *The Life of David Garrick*, (1899) 253.

<sup>100</sup> Samuel Foote, *An Examen of the New Comedy*, (1747) 39.

<sup>101</sup> Joseph Pittard, *Observations on Mr. Garrick's Acting*, (1758) 23.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 279.

<sup>103</sup> Charles Churchill, 'The Rosciad' in *Poems*, 2 vols. (1763) 1, 16.

<sup>104</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 1, 412.

<sup>105</sup> James Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1831-2) 1, xl.

Boaden wonders how this accident 'should teach the mode of representing *Lear*' because of the difference between the anguish of the father and the 'moral wounding' of *Lear* but adds that to a n artist like Garrick any 'great calamity may be serviceable as to ALL'. He also writes that one biographer (unnamed) said the incident occurred in France and apparently without irony, adds that Garrick 'probably varied the locality ... to suit the story ... to his audience'.

give a representation of this unfortunate father'<sup>106</sup> - an interesting contrast with another side of the eighteenth century which found it difficult to accept the harsh tragedy of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, preferring Tate's more harmonised adaptation. A happier story survives of Garrick's pretending to be ill and sending a friend to see the 'understudy' play *Lear*, promising that this actor looked and acted remarkably like Garrick himself. According to the tale, Garrick then rushed to the theatre, performed *Lear* with his usual brilliance and returned to his bed to hear the astonished comments of his friend on the excellence of the 'understudy'.<sup>107</sup> This rather childish prank was no doubt enjoyed by Garrick's contemporaries and perhaps tells us something of Garrick's share of the 'playful spirit which ... suffused all areas of eighteenth-century life'.<sup>108</sup>

**1742** While David Garrick was enjoying greater success than any previous English actor, other players were still performing at other theatres although their appeal was seriously diminished by the new star at Drury Lane. In 1742, the year in which Garrick played *Lear* for the first time, and for a total of sixteen performances in that one year, there were only two other stagings of *King Lear* elsewhere in London, both given at Covent Garden on 15 and 16 December with James Quin in the title-role. Quin had played this role since 1731<sup>109</sup> and his style was of the old school with speeches which in 'manly tides of sense ... roll'd along' and movement which 'Heavy and phlegmatic .. trod the stage'.<sup>110</sup> After Garrick's astounding success, one critic felt that 'continuing to play [*Lear*] ... in opposition to Garrick ... censures his [Quin's] judgment'.<sup>111</sup> Thomas Davies commented that Quin's 'Brutus and Cato will be remembered with pleasure ... [by those who] would wish to forget his *Lear* and Richard'.<sup>112</sup>

Mrs. Susannah Cibber (1714-66), the unfortunate second wife of Theophilus, played Cordelia opposite Quin's *Lear*. Later she was to become one of Garrick's

<sup>106</sup> Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1801) 1, 30.

<sup>107</sup> P. Fitzgerald, *The Life of David Garrick*, (1899) 217; G.W. Stone and G.M. Kahrl, *David Garrick, a Critical Biography*, (Carbondale, 1979) 118.

<sup>108</sup> Leigh Woods, *Garrick Claims the Stage*, (Westport, 1984) 136.

<sup>109</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 254.

<sup>110</sup> Charles Churchill, 'The Rosciad' in *Poems*, 2 vols. (1763) 1, 45-6.

<sup>111</sup> John Doran, *Annals of the English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 2, 168

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1780) 1, 28.

leading ladies and a tragedienne with the 'ability to wring tears from an audience'.<sup>113</sup> A picture of her as Cordelia, by Van Bleeck, is reproduced in Highfill<sup>114</sup> showing her on the heath with her companion, Arante, together with a man armed with a stick, probably one of the ruffians sent to kidnap her. The rest of the cast playing opposite Quin and Susannah Cibber were largely the stalwarts of Rich's Covent Garden company. Henry Woodward (1714-77), cast as the Gentleman Usher, was important in the theatre at this time and his acting in this role was described as 'a fund of exquisite whim'.<sup>115</sup> Player, dancer, manager and playwright, he was said to be 'among stars ... a golden sun'.<sup>116</sup> Mercutio was his most famous Shakespearean role but he won greatest success as a comedian. Edmund was played by Sacheverel Hale, (d.1746), 'a tall and handsome figure, with an extensive and melodious voice'.<sup>117</sup> Earlier he had played the role of Albany but never progressed to leading parts except at his own benefits. Oliver Cashell (d.1747), an Irish player, was cast as Cornwall. Similarly, this actor only played leading roles at his own benefits when he attempted, among others, Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello. These players, with the exceptions of Quin, Susanna Cibber and Henry Woodward were not of the first rank and the company struggled against the glittering success of Garrick at Drury Lane.

**1743** The actor and manager, Henry Giffard also staged *King Lear*. When the Goodman's Fields Theatre had been finally closed in May 1742, Giffard spent the summer months of that year in Dublin at the Smock Alley Theatre and then took the remaining members of his company, now without Garrick, back to the old Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre and attempted to establish his company there, late in 1742. Between November 1742 and April 1743 he staged *King Lear* three times on 10, 24 and 26 January 1743. One point about these three performances was that they were all three billed as being 'presented ... with Restorations from Shakespeare'<sup>118</sup> but no further information survives as to what these restorations were. The words suggest something

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<sup>113</sup> Highfill, 3, 274.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 3, 266.

<sup>115</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 374.

<sup>116</sup> *The Rational Rosciad*, (1767) 29.

<sup>117</sup> Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1801) 1, 54.

<sup>118</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 262-3.

more positive than the meaningless 'Written by Shakespear' of the earlier years and perhaps they were the very first attempts to return to Shakespeare's text. The actor cast as Lear was yet another unidentified 'Gentleman' and no doubt Giffard had hopes that there would be a repeat of Garrick's earlier triumph. Giffard and his wife were again playing Edgar and Cordelia with William Giffard as Edmund and Elizabeth Giffard, possibly William's wife, as Regan. The troublesome Theophilus Cibber resurfaced in the role of Gloucester, the only time he is listed in the part. This short season was a failure and in April Giffard disbanded the company and together with his wife, returned for a second summer to Dublin. Then in the autumn of 1743, the three Giffards joined Garrick at Drury Lane.

Meantime, in the first months of 1743 at Drury Lane, Garrick continued his triumphant career. *King Lear* was staged three times, on 15 January, 1 February and 12 March with Peg Woffington still playing Cordelia. These were to be the last times she appeared in this role and when the Giffards joined Garrick in the autumn of 1743, Mrs. Giffard resumed as Cordelia, Henry Giffard reclaimed Edgar and William Giffard, the part of Edmund. In these autumn months of 1743, hostility developed between Garrick and Charles Macklin. Earlier that year, Garrick and Macklin had organised a strike of actors because the management had not paid their salaries.<sup>119</sup> The settlement of the dispute had satisfied Garrick but not Macklin, who blamed Garrick for deserting him. Until a reconciliation was achieved, Garrick took no part at Drury Lane. The first performance of *King Lear* that season, on October 25, was therefore without Garrick but included the Giffards from Dublin, and on this occasion Lear was taken by Dennis Delane who had first played the role in 1733. The hostility between Garrick and Macklin, although still festering, eventually settled sufficiently for Garrick to continue at Drury Lane. During the remaining weeks of 1743, two further performances of *King Lear* were staged, on 13 and 31 December with Garrick back as the King.

There were four performances of *King Lear* at Covent Garden that year, on 17 January, 8 February, 28 April and 27 December, with James Quin as the King and virtually the same cast as the previous year. An exception was Elizabeth Vincent, who

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<sup>119</sup> For a discussion regarding this strike and the resulting hostility between Garrick and Macklin see A. Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1801) 1, chapter VI; M. Barton, *Garrick*, (1948) 70ff; *The London Stage*, pt. 3, vol. 1, xciii-xcv; G.W. Stone and G.M. Kahl, *David Garrick, a Critical Biography*, (Carbondale, 1979) 62ff.

played Cordelia on 27 December. Mrs. Vincent who had started as a child actress and had a long career largely at Covent Garden, was not of the first rank and was described unflatteringly as having a 'screeching voice'.<sup>120</sup> Quin was brave, perhaps foolhardy, in persevering as Lear in competition with Garrick but he continued in the role until 1748.

Garrick's success and his new natural acting had radically affected the theatre. The stage history of *King Lear* had taken an important step forward and its new popularity rescued it from the stagnation in which it had been stuck. Coincidentally, shortly after this revival of interest in *King Lear* on stage, two new editions of the works of Shakespeare were published within three years of each other, one in 1744, the other in 1747. Neither was to be as significant to the history of Shakespeare's text as Garrick's acting had been to the history of the stage.

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<sup>120</sup>[Charles Churchill], *The Rosciad of C--v--nt-G--rd--n*, (1762)18.

THE  
 W O R K S  
 OF  
 SHAKESPEAR.  
 IN  
 SIX VOLUMES.

Carefully REVISED and CORRECTED  
 by the former EDITIONS.

— *Nil ortum tale.* —

HOR.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. and P. Knapton, S. Birt, T. Longman,  
 H. Lintot, C. Hitch, J. Brindley, J. and R. Tonson and  
 S. Draper, R. and B. Wellington, E. New, and B. Dod.

M D C C X L V.

The title-page of the anonymous Shakespeare (1745),  
 taken from BL 11766.f.32

The editions of Thomas Hanmer (1744)  
and William Warburton (1747)

**1744** The fourth editor of the works of Shakespeare was Sir Thomas Hanmer (1677-1746), country gentleman and one-time Speaker of the House of Commons. His edition, published in 1744 by the Clarendon Press, appeared anonymously and became known as the Oxford Edition but was widely accepted as the work of Hanmer.<sup>1</sup> Most of the plays, including *King Lear*, have a frontispiece by Francis Hayman, engraved by the Frenchman, Hubert Gravelot. The frontispiece to *King Lear* shows, as in so many *King Lear* illustrations, a storm scene with Lear, the Fool, Kent and Edgar as 'Mad Tom' by the hovel on the heath.

Hanmer wrote a short Preface in which he claimed that his edition was '*a true and correct Edition of Shakespear's works cleared from the corruptions with which they have hitherto abounded*'<sup>2</sup> but he also asserted that he had no wish '*to reflect upon the late Editors for the omissions and defects which they left*'.<sup>3</sup> In spite of this lofty claim and veiled snub, Hanmer worked from Pope's edition<sup>4</sup> without acknowledging this indebtedness. He also followed Pope's method of deleting passages he felt were spurious<sup>5</sup> and these lines were '*thrown to the bottom of the page*',<sup>6</sup> a method used by only these two editors. In his Preface Hanmer explains that in his view some lines were '*foisted in by the Players after his [i.e. Shakespeare's] death*'<sup>7</sup> which was sufficient justification to delete them. Thus on page 24 in Act I, sc.xiii of his *King Lear* Hanmer cuts several lines of dialogue between Lear and the Fool,<sup>8</sup> and, presumably judging that they were not by Shakespeare, places them as a footnote without comment.

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<sup>1</sup> D. Nichol Smith, ed., *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1963) 1.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Thomas Hanmer, *The Works of Shakespear*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1744) 1, i; hereafter referred to as Hanmer, *Shakespear*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 1, ii.

<sup>4</sup> Robert M. Ryley, *William Warburton*, (Boston, 1984) 67. Sir Henry Bunbury, a relative of Hanmer's, writing in 1838, claimed Hanmer 'gave preference ... to Theobald's compared with Pope's edition', (*The Correspondence of Sir Thomas Hanmer, Bart ... with A Memoir of his Life*, (1838) 81).

<sup>5</sup> Hanmer did acknowledge this borrowing from Pope adding that he wished more passages had '*undergone the same sentence*', Hanmer, *Shakespear*, 1, iii.

<sup>6</sup> Hanmer, *Shakespear*, 1, iii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 1, iv.

<sup>8</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 133-40; lines 137-48 of this passage appear in Q but not in F.

In his editing of *King Lear*, Hanmer made a total of only sixteen comments, all in the form of footnotes. Among these notes were explanations of passages; for example his first footnote is at Edmund's 'Thou, *Nature*, art my Goddess' speech.<sup>9</sup> Here Hanmer gives a long and rather unhelpful note claiming that Edmund the Bastard is not referring to himself in the opening lines of the speech when he inveighs against the position of younger brothers and bastards, but is making a generalisation '*though he speaks in the first person*'. Another passage explained in a footnote is part of a speech by Kent<sup>10</sup>

Goose, if I had you upon *Sarum* plain,  
I'd drive ye cackling home to *Camelot*.

Hanmer offers a possible explanation for the significance of the word Camelot by explaining that near Camelot, in Somersetshire, geese were bred on the moors and they supplied '*many other places in England ... with quills and feathers*'.

In one passage which attracted critical attention, Hanmer is clear in his interpretation although he adds no explanatory note. This is Lear's speech beginning 'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old'.<sup>11</sup> As I have discussed, David Garrick's interpretation of these lines had aroused contradictory comments and this is explained in part by the fact that Garrick, at least in the early years, was acting Tate's version of this speech which tempers the intended irony by cutting the speech and in particular the line 'on my knees I beg'. However Hanmer appears to see Shakespeare's lines as entirely ironic because he puts the whole plea in italics and adds the stage direction 'The King kneeling'.

At the end of volume 6, Hanmer includes 'A Glossary Explaining The obsolete and difficult Words in the Plays of Shakespear.' This lengthy glossary consists of thirteen pages and there are approximately twenty-five words listed as appearing only in *King Lear*. Hanmer gives the meaning of the word then, if applicable, the foreign word from which it is derived, and finally, where the word '*is used but once ... the Volume and the Page are noted down*'<sup>12</sup> so that the word may be checked in its context. The logic behind this is difficult to follow. If it is desirable to check a word in its context, it seems

<sup>9</sup> Hanmer, *Shakespear*, vol. 3, I, vi, p.15; Arden, *King Lear*, I, ii, I.

<sup>10</sup> Hanmer, *Shakespear*, vol. 3, II, vi, p.39; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 81-2, which gives this passage as 'unexplained'.

<sup>11</sup> Hanmer, *Shakespear*, vol. 3, II, x, p.47; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 343.

<sup>12</sup> Hanmer, *Shakespear*, vol. 6, p.549.



irrelevant whether it appears once or frequently. Perhaps the amount of work entailed if every use of a frequent word was noted, explains Hanmer's reasoning. Among Hanmer's glosses which are generally accepted today is one on the Fool's quibble on 'dolours' and 'dollars'<sup>13</sup> found only in the Folio and on the phrase 'cub-drawn bear', found only in the quarto.<sup>14</sup> However, the word, 'lym' in the phrase 'Hound or spaniel, brache, or lym'<sup>15</sup> which Hanmer lists in his Glossary, is glossed as 'a lime-hound ... [from] an old word signifying a strap or thong with which Dogs are led'.<sup>16</sup> This emendation of the 'him' (F) and 'Hym' (Q) to 'lym' is widely accepted<sup>17</sup> but Arden considers it 'implausible' and retains 'him'.<sup>18</sup>

The general consensus of opinion over Hanmer's lavish edition was not favourable. A pamphlet entitled *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth: with Remarks on Sir T.H.'s Edition of Shakespear* (1745), published anonymously but in fact by Samuel Johnson, sums up the faults in one sentence: 'There is no Distinction made between the antient Reading, and the Innovations of the Editor; there is no Reason given for any of the Alterations which are made; the Emendations of former Criticks are adopted without any Acknowledgment.'<sup>19</sup> and he repeated these comments later in his own edition of Shakespeare's works.<sup>20</sup> Johnson did find some merit in 'that intuition' which Hanmer possessed which sometimes helped him discover 'the poet's intention.'<sup>21</sup>

As well as Johnson's rather restrained approval there was more lavish praise offered. In *Remarks upon a late Edition of Shakespear* (i.e. William Warburton's of 1747) Zachary Grey writes that Hanmer's emendations 'far excel those of Mr. Warburton'.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. vol. 3, ll, viii, p.44; Arden, ll, ii, 244;

<sup>14</sup> Hanmer, *Shakespear*, vol. 3, ll, i, p.53; Arden, *King Lear*, ll, i, 12.

<sup>15</sup> Hanmer, *Shakespear*, vol. 3, ll, ix, p.66; Arden, *King Lear*, ll, vi, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Hanmer, *Shakespear*, vol. 6, Aaaa2r.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. K. Muir, *King Lear*, Arden, 1987; René Weis, *King Lear, a Parallel Text Edition*, 1993.

<sup>18</sup> citing *The Tragedy of King Lear*, ed. Jay L. Halio (Cambridge, 1992); 'him' is also retained in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and others, (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> [Samuel Johnson] *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth*, (1745) 64; it was in this pamphlet that Johnson made his first proposals to edit Shakespeare's works. A large folded leaf was attached to the *Miscellaneous Observations* which set out Johnson's Proposals for a new edition regarding text, various readings, conjectures, omissions, etc.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (1765) 1, D2v; hereafter referred to as Johnson, *Shakespeare*.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 1, D2r.

<sup>22</sup> [Zachary Grey], *Remarks upon a late Edition of Shakespear: with a Long String of EMENDATIONS borrowed ... from the Oxford Edition, without Acknowledgment*, [1755] 4.

The poet, William Collins published *An Epistle: addrest to Sir Thomas Hanmer, on his Edition of Shakespear's Works* in which he praises Hanmer for having 'A Patriot's Hand [which] protects a Poet's Lays'. Collins adds that thanks to Hanmer who 'nurst' Shakespeare's works, the myrtles of the Muse still 'bloom,/Green and unwither'd o'er his [Shakespeare's] honour'd Tomb';<sup>23</sup> rather ponderous but praise nonetheless. More recently Nichol Smith reminds us that it is 'easy to underestimate the value of Hanmer's edition; [and] his happy conjectures'.<sup>24</sup>

During the years between Hanmer's edition (1744) and William Warburton's edition (1747), the huge popularity that *King Lear* had enjoyed at the theatre due to the arrival of David Garrick, diminished considerably. Instead there was a revival of *As You Like It* because two actresses - Peg Woffington of Drury Lane and Hannah Pritchard of Covent Garden - excelled in the role of Rosalind. The success of a particular player in a particular role was a key factor in the popularity of many plays. For example, with Charles Macklin in a company, *The Merchant of Venice* 'was certain to be acted'.<sup>25</sup> Conversely, the absence of a player suited to a particular role meant the exclusion of that play from a company's repertory. The lack of performances of *King Lear* at Covent Garden can be explained in part by the lack of a player good enough to attempt the title-role. James Quin, based at Covent Garden and the leading player after Garrick, did not attempt the role between 1744 and 1747. Garrick's supremacy as the King seems to have temporarily dissuaded Quin from playing in direct competition.

In 1744, Covent Garden staged only one performance, on 13 December, with Christopher Perry, (fl.1741-46) playing Lear at his own benefit. The advertisement proclaims that the role was played by Perry 'by particular desire', but Perry remains virtually unknown.<sup>26</sup> The other players were the standard members of Covent Garden, Roger Bridgewater, Sacheverel Hale, Lacy Ryan, Henry Woodward and Elizabeth Vincent. The playbill for this performance stated that the play included 'restorations from Shakespear'<sup>27</sup> which is the same wording as that found on the Lincoln's Inn Fields

<sup>23</sup> William Collins, *An Epistle: addrest to Sir Thomas Hanmer, on his Edition of Shakespear's Works*, (2nd edition, 1744) lines 2-4.

<sup>24</sup> D. Nichol Smith, ed., *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1963) xxix.

<sup>25</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921)1, 339.

<sup>26</sup> As well as this one appearance as Lear (*Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 263), Christopher Perry is listed once as Othello in 1741 and again in 1746 (Highfill, 11, 269).

<sup>27</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.3, vol.2, 1138.

theatre bills of the previous year. Again, no clue survives as to what these restorations were but these earlier bills are an indication that the total domination of Nahum Tate's text was beginning to weaken. I think we can assume that although the Tate storyline was retained, occasional phrases and words, perhaps those which were particularly successful when acted, were being reintroduced.<sup>28</sup>

Drury Lane staged six performances in 1744, on 14 February, 8 March, 20 April, 24 May and after the summer break on 24 October and 8 December, with David Garrick in the title-role and Henry Giffard and his wife Anna Marcella still in their roles as Edgar and Cordelia. However, William Giffard was no longer cast as Edmund and instead William Mills took his place.

**1745-1747** The following year, 1745, saw the publication of an anonymously edited edition of Shakespeare and it is still uncertain who was responsible for this work. The text, in 6 octavo volumes, was reprinted from Thomas Hanmer's 1744 edition by the Tonsons. One of the chief purposes of this publication was to point out the alterations and also the silent emendations made by Thomas Hanmer<sup>29</sup> and thereby discredit him for using other editors' work without acknowledgment. This was done in footnotes which named the original emender and thus credited Theobald and Warburton with their scholarship. Some claim Warburton was the editor<sup>30</sup> while others felt this suggestion 'must be discarded' and the identity of the editor 'must continue to remain a mystery'.<sup>31</sup>

The three years, 1745-7, show an uninspiring pattern as far as the number of *King Lear* performances is concerned but one or two interesting events connected with *King Lear* did occur during these years. In 1745 Garrick appeared only twice as the King, on 23 January and 14 March at Drury Lane but there were two other performances that year at the New Wells Theatre in Goodman's Fields. This theatre had been established in 1739 by the Hallams, an important theatrical family of the eighteenth century,<sup>32</sup> as a

<sup>28</sup> See chapter 8 for comment on the first known restoration of a Shakespearean line.

<sup>29</sup> *The Works of Shakespear*, 6 vols. (1745) 1, A2r.

<sup>30</sup> Giles Dawson, 'Warburton, Hanmer, and the 1745 edition of Shakespeare', *Studies in Bibliography*, 2 (1949-50) 35-48; Robert M. Ryley, *William Warburton*, (Boston, 1984) 64.

<sup>31</sup> A. Sherbo, 'Warburton and the 1745 Shakespeare', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 51 (1952) 82.

<sup>32</sup> In 1752, after the New Wells Theatre failed, Lewis Hallam, with some of his family, led the 'first complete company of British actors to perform on the American mainland', (Highfill, 7, 35 and 39).

playhouse specialising in pantomimes. Then between 1744 and 1747, plays as well as pantomimes were offered and *King Lear* was staged on 2 and 9 May 1745. The interest of these performances lies in the actor playing Lear. His name was J. Goodfellow (1722-59) and his is the only name given. This actor played a number of lead roles during his first season at the New Wells Theatre, and was then offered parts at Drury Lane during the season 1745-6. However, he failed to make the same impression at Drury Lane and returned to New Wells and obscurity. Although this actor left little mark in the history of the eighteenth-century theatre, he was highly acclaimed during his brief moment of success. A letter in the *Daily Advertiser* of 10 July 1744 claimed that 'if ever a Man was born a Player, this is he'<sup>33</sup> but the letter is signed 'H. Buskins' and Highfill suggests that a friend of the actor, or even the actor himself, may have written it. Perhaps this unknown actor, performing the title-role in *King Lear* at a theatre in Goodman's Fields, hoped to win the same success that Garrick in a similar situation had won some years earlier. Unfortunately it was not to be. Susannah Cibber writing to Garrick in January 1747 noted she had seen 'your rival' but added 'do not be quite dispirited about it'<sup>34</sup> and she was clearly right because the name J. Goodfellow disappeared from the playbills soon after.

In 1746 Garrick moved to the Covent Garden Theatre after a disagreement with James Lacy, the Drury Lane manager. Here he joined James Quin and the two alternated in leading roles. There seems to have been no animosity between these great actors during this joint season and they occasionally appeared together in the same play<sup>35</sup> and 'developed a friendship that lasted for years'.<sup>36</sup> Two years later, in 1748, an anonymous pamphlet claimed, perhaps truthfully, perhaps not, that Quin wanted to act again with Garrick and 'offer'd himself'<sup>37</sup> but Garrick refused the offer. In 1747 Garrick went back to Drury Lane when Lacy offered him a half-share in the theatre; Quin stayed at Covent Garden and the two did not again appear on stage together. Meantime in 1746 at Covent Garden, Garrick appeared as Lear three times, on 11 June

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<sup>33</sup> Highfill, 6, 255.

<sup>34</sup> *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, ed. James Boaden, 2 vols. (1831-2) 1, 49.

<sup>35</sup> For example in *The Fair Penitent* 14 November 1746; *I, Henry IV* 6 December 1746; *Jane Shore* 2 January 1747, (Highfill, 12, 233).

<sup>36</sup> Highfill, 12, 233.

<sup>37</sup> *D--ry L-ne P--yh--se Broke Open. In A Letter to Mr. G---*, (1748) 14.

which was billed as Garrick's '1st time on that stage',<sup>38</sup> 27 October and 4 December and these three performances of *King Lear* were the only ones given in London that year. Susannah Cibber played Cordelia opposite Garrick for the first time on 4 December and when Garrick returned to Drury Lane, Mrs. Cibber went with him.

In 1747 J. Goodfellow tried once more in the role of Lear, on 2 March still at the New Wells Theatre, but with the same lack of success. Playing Cornwall at this performance was the noted comedian Ned Shuter (1728-76) who had made his debut as an actor in 1744 and was later to play the Gentleman Usher at Drury Lane. In 1747 Garrick, back at Drury Lane, gave three performances, on 30 October, 14 November and 23 December. Mrs. Cibber was Cordelia and William Havard, Edgar. Havard had first played Edgar in 1742 and according to one critic 'There is one tragick part wherein his place will not be easily supplied, namely, that of Edgar, in Lear'.<sup>39</sup> A newcomer was Thomas Mozeen (1720?-68) a middle-ranking player who was cast as Albany and who never progressed beyond modest roles. His other Shakespearean parts included Cassio in *Othello*, Paris in *Romeo and Juliet* and Oliver in *As You Like It*. Chetwood described him as 'a very improving Actor: ... join'd to a genteel Education, Judgment, Voice, and Understanding'.<sup>40</sup>

These rather pedestrian *King Lear* years on the stage were matched by the next edition of Shakespeare's works which was unexciting and was attended by the now familiar recriminations and bickering. The editors of Shakespeare during the first half of the eighteenth century were a diverse group of men. A playwright, a poet, a scholar, a retired politician had all attempted the challenge of editing the works and stirred up controversy in the process. Now, in 1747, a clergyman, who had been working on Shakespeare 'off and on for at least forty years'<sup>41</sup> offered his edition.

William Warburton, (1698-1779) Bishop of Gloucester,<sup>42</sup> had the misfortune 'to be over-estimated during his lifetime and to be under-estimated since his death'.<sup>43</sup> Today his edition of *The Works of Shakespear* is not highly regarded and the consensus of

<sup>38</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.3, vol.2,1242.

<sup>39</sup> *The Theatrical Review for the Year 1757, and Beginning of 1758*, (1758) 14.

<sup>40</sup> W.R. Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage*, (1749) 193.

<sup>41</sup> Robert M. Ryley, *William Warburton*, (Boston, 1984) 64.

<sup>42</sup> Warburton was not consecrated Bishop of Gloucester until 1759.

<sup>43</sup> A.W. Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians*, (Oxford, 1932) 1.

views is probably accurately summed up by Robert Ryley who wrote 'Warburton as an editor of Shakespeare can be consigned to a decent, and almost total, obscurity. Almost total.'<sup>44</sup> - the last two words acknowledging the merits that do exist. Warburton's edition was published in 1747 in 8 octavo volumes. On his title-page Warburton claims, with a certain smug self-satisfaction, that 'The Genuine Text ... is here settled: Being restored from the *Blunders* of the first Editors, and the *Interpolations* of the two Last'.<sup>45</sup> This curt dismissal of his predecessors (but not of Pope to whom Warburton goes on to give high praise) was developed in his Preface and was part of the acrimonious allegations which flourished among the Shakespearean editors in the first half of the eighteenth century. Warburton's copious correspondence with Theobald and Hanmer<sup>46</sup> over Shakespearean texts ended in recriminations and after quarrelling with both men, Warburton changed to supporting Pope,<sup>47</sup> who was to remain a close friend. The reason for the quarrel between Warburton, Theobald and Hanmer is complex. The debate over whether Warburton used Hanmer's notes or Theobald's wide knowledge without consent, or whether the theft was vice-versa with Hanmer and Theobald the guilty parties, was hotly contested in the eighteenth century and continues today.<sup>48</sup>

In his Preface Warburton, like the editors before him, lists his ambitious aims which include 'restoring the Poet's genuine Text', 'Explanation of the Author's Meaning', and a 'critical explanation of the Author's Beauties and Defects'.<sup>49</sup> He deals dismissively with three of the earlier editors. Of Rowe, he writes 'he did not even collate or consult the first Editions'.<sup>50</sup> Theobald and Hanmer were scorned as 'a poor Man' and 'a poor Critic' respectively who 'left their Author in ten times a worse Condition than they found him'.<sup>51</sup> When writing on Pope, however, who was now dead, Warburton was fulsome in his praise claiming that Pope's edition was 'the best Foundation for all

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<sup>44</sup> Robert M. Ryley, *William Warburton*, (Boston, 1984) 74.

<sup>45</sup> William Warburton, *The Works of Shakespear*, 8 vols. (1747) 1, A1r; hereafter referred to as Warburton, *Shakespear*.

<sup>46</sup> Robert M. Ryley, *William Warburton*, (Boston, 1984) 64.

<sup>47</sup> John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, 6 vols. (1812) 5, 641.

<sup>48</sup> For further information on the accusations and counter-accusations between Theobald, Hanmer and Warburton see Robert M. Ryley, *William Warburton*, (Boston, 1984).

<sup>49</sup> Warburton, *Shakespear*, 1, xiv-xvii.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 1, viii.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 1, x.

further Improvements'.<sup>52</sup> Warburton continues: 'dear Mr. POPE ... was willing that his Edition should be melted down into *mine*'.<sup>53</sup> In fact, Warburton based his own edition on Theobald's text<sup>54</sup> and it was not a revised edition of Pope's as he inferred. Although Warburton's praise sounds fawning to our ears, Nichol Smith explains it as 'Warburton's just pride in Pope's friendship - a pride which he took every opportunity of gratifying and parading'<sup>55</sup> even after Pope's death.

After his own Preface, Warburton printed Pope's Preface and Rowe's Life, all of which 'helps a little to swell out Mr. Warburton's edition'.<sup>56</sup> His preliminary matter also included 'A Table of the Several Editions of *Shakespear's* Plays ... made use of, and collated for this Edition by Mr. *Pope* and Mr. *Warburton*.'<sup>57</sup> The editions listed for *King Lear* are the 1608 and 1655 quartos and the folios of 1623, 1632 and 1664. A list of the plays follows divided into two groups, Comedies and Tragedies with each group subdivided into Classes I to 4 to suggest an 'estimate'<sup>58</sup> of the play. In the tragedies, *King Lear* is placed in Class I, listed third with, curiously, the two parts of *Henry IV* ahead. This innovation is of little merit other than 'the glimpse' it gives us of the difference between eighteenth and twentieth century opinions of Shakespeare's plays.<sup>59</sup>

Warburton's editing of *King Lear* is full of detailed footnotes. Two such footnotes whose 'incongruity immediately condemns'<sup>60</sup> will suffice as examples. The line of Cornwall's, 'twenty silly-ducking observants',<sup>61</sup> Warburton declares 'cannot be right'. He emends the line to read 'twenty silky ducking observants' and claims this 'alludes to the *garb* of a court sycophant'. A second example of Warburton's arbitrary emendation can be seen at Lear's line, 'here I stand, your slave'.<sup>62</sup> Of this line Warburton asks 'why

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 1, ix.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 1, xix.

<sup>54</sup> Ronald B. McKerrow, 'The Treatment of Shakespeare's Text by his Early Editors, 1709-1768', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 19, (1933) 113.

<sup>55</sup> D. Nichol Smith, ed., *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1963) liii.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Edwards, *A Supplement to Mr. Warburton's Edition of Shakespear. Being the Canons of Criticism, and Glossary*, (1748) 4. See B. Vickers, ed., *Shakespeare, the Critical Heritage*, 6 vols. (1974-81) 3, 16-7 for further comment of Edwards's *Canons of Criticism*.

<sup>57</sup> Warburton, *Shakespear*, 1, d3v.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 1, d8v.

<sup>59</sup> Robert M. Ryley, *William Warburton*, (Boston, 1984) 68.

<sup>60</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 1, D3r.

<sup>61</sup> Warburton, *Shakespear*, 6, Act II, vi, p.51; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 101.

<sup>62</sup> Warburton, *Shakespear*, 6, Act III, ii, p.73; Arden, *King Lear*, III, ii, 19.

so?’ and goes on ‘We should read, - *here I stand your BRAVE*’, then chastises the earlier editors for their ‘blunder’. A contemporary of Warburton’s ridicules this, writing ‘When I read this I could scarce believe my own eyes’.<sup>63</sup> However, not all Warburton’s emendations are disregarded by today’s editors. He gives a long explanatory footnote on a line in Kent’s speech: ‘I do profess to be no less than I seem ... to fight when I cannot choose; and to eat no fish’<sup>64</sup> and writes, in part, that in Queen Elizabeth’s time ‘the proverbial phrase of, *He’s an honest man and eats no fish* [was used] to signify he’s a friend to the Government and a Protestant’. Arden acknowledges this explanation as one possibility but an earlier writer is scathing about it demanding ‘But where, I beg leave to ask, did you meet with this *Proverbial Phrase*? I am apt to believe it is a *Proverb* of your own making. It is well known, that *Fish Days* were as strictly observed then by *Protestants*, as *Papists*’.<sup>65</sup>

Among the spate of adverse criticism directed at Warburton was Benjamin Heath’s comment that ‘The licentiousness of his criticism overleaps all bounds or restraint’ and leads him ‘into the most improbable conjectures’<sup>66</sup> but probably the most severe critic was Thomas Edwards in his 62-page pamphlet, *A Supplement to Mr. Warburton’s Edition of Shakespear. Being the Canons of Criticism, and Glossary* (1748). Writing in a heavily ironic tone, Edwards offers a total of twenty-one rules or canons which Warburton’s emendations and glosses are said to have followed. The references to *King Lear* include one in Canon VI in which he writes: ‘As every author is to be corrected into all possible perfection, and of that perfection the profess’d critic is the sole judge; he may alter any word or phrase, which does not want amendment, or which will do, provided he can think of any thing, which he imagines will do better.’<sup>67</sup> Then, as an example, Edwards selects Lear’s line ‘That under covert and convenient

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin Heath, *A Revisal of Shakespear’s Text*, (1765) 338. Although it was not published until 1765, Heath had begun work on *A Revisal* shortly after the publication of Warburton’s edition in 1747. See A. Sherbo, *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1956), 32ff for a discussion on the years that Heath and Johnson were both working on Shakespeare, and Johnson’s use of Heath’s work; and Arthur M. Eastman, ‘In Defence of Dr. Johnson’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 8, (1957), 493-500 for a different view on the subject.

<sup>64</sup> Warburton, *Shakespear*, 6, Act I, xii, p.27; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 13-7 and note.

<sup>65</sup> [Zachary Grey], *Remarks upon a Late Edition of Shakespear*, [1755] 24.

<sup>66</sup> Benjamin Heath, *A Revisal of Shakespear’s Text*, (1765) vii.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Edwards, *Canons of Criticism*, (1748) 23.



seeming'<sup>68</sup> about which Warburton had written 'I rather think the poet wrote, 'That *under COVER OF convivial seeming*'. Edwards dismisses Warburton's emendation with ridicule: 'Were not Mr. W. known to be of a different character, one might imagine him very fond of convivial doings'.<sup>69</sup> Under Canon XII, Edwards appears to encourage the editor to '*find out a bawdy, or immoral meaning in his author, where there does not appear to be any hint that way.*'<sup>70</sup> As an illustration, Edwards chooses Regan's line 'Which the most precious square of sense possesses'.<sup>71</sup> This line Warburton had glossed as referring to 'the four nobler senses ... For a young lady could not, with decency, insinuate that she knew of any pleasures which the *fifth* [i.e. touch] afforded.' Edwards scoffs at Warburton's gloss accusing him of finding double entendres where they do not occur<sup>72</sup> but in fairness to Warburton, this line is one of the cruces in *King Lear*. In Canon XX Edwards comments on notes which are '*not so much to explain the author's meaning, as to display the critic's knowledge*'.<sup>73</sup> He then cites Warburton's explanation of the phrase 'Unbolted villain'<sup>74</sup> as 'Metaphor from the bakehouse' and the phrase 'Will not be rubb'd nor stop'd'<sup>75</sup> which Warburton glosses as 'Metaphor from bowling', as examples of this excessive display of knowledge.

Although the critics were largely hostile towards Warburton and his 'muddy brains',<sup>76</sup> some looked more kindly on his efforts. Johnson wrote that Warburton's notes show 'perverse interpretations, and sometimes improbable conjectures' but adds that his emendations are 'often happy and just'.<sup>77</sup> The most lavish praise however, came after Warburton's death, in the writings of Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, a friend of Warburton who edited his works. Hurd described Warburton's *Shakespear* as 'this fine edition of Shakespeare [which] must ever be highly valued by men of sense

<sup>68</sup> Warburton, *Shakespear*, 6, Act III, iii, p.75; Arden, *King Lear*, III, ii, 56.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Edwards, *Canons of Criticism*, (1748) 24.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 42.

<sup>71</sup> Warburton, *Shakespear*, 6, Act I, ii, p.6; Arden, *King Lear*, I, i, 74.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Edwards, *Canons of Criticism*, (1748) 42-3.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 53-5.

<sup>74</sup> Warburton, *Shakespear*, 6, Act II, vi, p.50; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 63-4.

<sup>75</sup> Warburton, *Shakespear*, 6, Act II, vii, p.53; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 152 which uses both Warburton's glosses in the notes.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Heron [pseud.] (John Pinkerton), *Letters of Literature*, (1785) 307.

<sup>77</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 1, D3r.

and taste',<sup>78</sup> an opinion which was then and remains today very much in the minority.

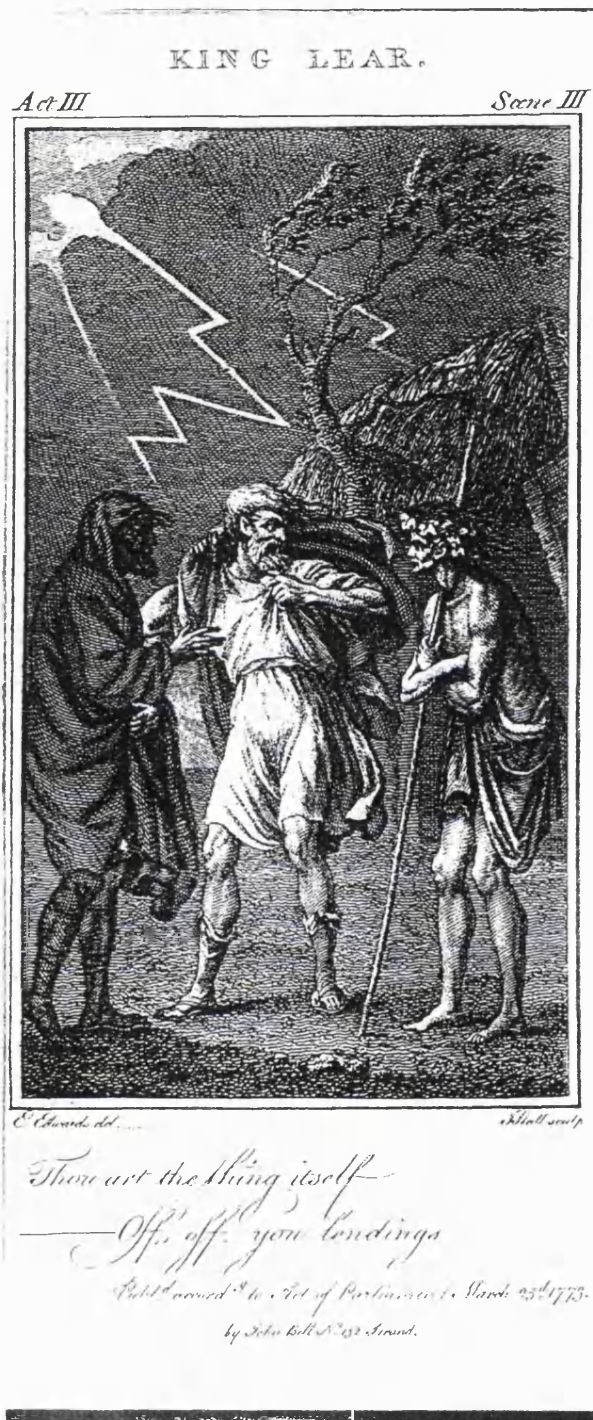
Neither of the two editors, Thomas Hanmer and William Warburton, contributed significantly to Shakespeare's texts. Both offered glosses which were indeed 'happy conjectures' but their arbitrary emendations often added a further layer of muddled thinking on both cruces and obscure passages. Nonetheless, as Johnson put it when writing of his predecessors, 'not one has left *Shakespeare* without improvement'.<sup>79</sup> Johnson's own edition was to be the next published, but not until 1765. Meantime, during these intervening years the stage was to see the first tentative returns to the text of Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

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<sup>78</sup> Richard Hurd, *A Discourse by way of General Preface to the Quarto Edition of Bishop Warburton's Works*, (1794) 54-5.

<sup>79</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 1, D5r.

Illustration 8



Frontispiece from Bell's *King Lear*, (1773-74) the first published edition of Garrick's adaptation, taken from BL 82.c.1-9

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CHAPTER 8

**David Garrick as adaptor of *King Lear*,  
together with performances between 1748 and 1756**

**1748** The dwindling number of *King Lear* performances appears to have been noticed by some members of the public. The anonymous *Drury Lane Performance Broke Open* refers to the complaint that Garrick appeared in 'Characters of little Consequence' and seldom in the 'greater' parts including *Lear*.<sup>1</sup> There seems some justification in this criticism for the years 1746 and 1747 but in 1748 Garrick played the role of *Lear* five times, on 1 March, 23 April, 8 and 26 October and 31 December; perhaps the pamphlet of 1748, if published early in that year, had some effect on his choice of roles. The newcomers with Garrick at Drury Lane included Sybilla Minors (1732-1802) who was described as being 'happy in ... the whole girlish cast'<sup>2</sup> but in 1748, aged about 16 years she played *Regan* and not until some years later, in 1756-7, *Arante*. Howard Usher (d.1802), cast as *Albany*, had a career spanning sixty years. His roles included *Cornwall* and *Lear* which he attempted at his benefit in Bristol but it seems that although he was 'a respectable player', roles in *King Lear* were 'certainly too much for him'.<sup>3</sup>

At Covent Garden, Quin played *Lear* twice in 1748, on 3 and 5 October, with a new name, Mrs. Ward, cast as *Cordelia* and advertised as appearing for the first time in London. Sarah Ward (d. 1771), married to a minor player Henry Ward, enjoyed a very successful first season at Covent Garden. The following year she was wooed to Drury Lane where she played *Cordelia* opposite Garrick's *Lear* on 13 October 1749 but with less success. Writing in 1755, John Hill said that she 'has a great deal of merit, [but is] quite cold and unfeeling' as *Cordelia*.<sup>4</sup> The forthright George Anne Bellamy was more dismissive describing Ward's figure as 'vulgar to a degree ... it might be imagined that she had formerly carried milk-pails' and added that in spite of this and 'being pregnant into the bargain' she appeared as *Cordelia* but [without] ... any degree of merit'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Drury Lane Performance Broke Open*. In *A Letter to Mr. G.*, (1748) 20-1.

<sup>2</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 214.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Everard, *Memoirs of an Unfortunate Son of Thespis*, (Edinburgh, 1818) 57.

<sup>4</sup> [John Hill], *The Actor: or, A Treatise on the Art of Playing*, (1755) 200. See chapter 3, footnote 23.

<sup>5</sup> George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life*, 5 vols. (1785, 2nd ed.) 1,199 and 2, 3. Bellamy was the successor of Ward in the affections of the actor, West Digges.

Among many comments on Ward's performances is the astonishing remark that 'Shakespear has thrown into the mouth of this lady [Cordelia] expressions, as full of love for *Edgar*, as those he has given to *Juliet* for *Romeo*',<sup>6</sup> a remark which makes clear that by the mid-eighteenth century, four editions of Shakespeare's works had done little to disentangle the confusion between Tate and Shakespeare on stage. In spite of this increase in the number of performances in 1748, these years were not exciting ones as far as the staging of *King Lear* was concerned. With Garrick back at Drury Lane, the productions of *King Lear* settled into the rather dull routine of no more than five performances a year at Drury Lane and only two at most at Covent Garden over the next eight years. Although Garrick remained the leading actor, the first intense excitement generated by his portrayal of Lear had largely subsided. The most popular Shakespearean plays during these years were *Much Ado About Nothing* with Garrick triumphing in the role of Benedick, and *Romeo and Juliet* which was played in both Theophilus Cibber's and Garrick's adaptations.<sup>7</sup>

Outside the two licensed theatres, records survive of the occasional performance of *King Lear* in London. In 1748 there was one performance at the New Theatre at Bowling Green, Southwark. This theatre had been in use regularly from 1743 and plays were staged there until 1756 after which date its history becomes obscure.<sup>8</sup> There was one performance of *King Lear* on 24 October 1748 but no details of the cast remain. As the occasion was announced as being a benefit for Mrs. Morgan<sup>9</sup> (Henrietta Maria Morgan fl.1721-58) and as this actress had played the role of Regan at Goodman's Fields in 1733, it is possible she played the same role at her benefit on 24 October 1748 in spite of the fifteen-year gap.

**1749-1750** The years 1749 and 1750 saw three (10 May, 13 October and 8 November) and two (25 January and 1 November) performances respectively of *King Lear*, all staged at Drury Lane. The noted comedian Edward (Ned) Shuter was cast as the Gentleman Usher for some of these Drury Lane performances although he spent most of his career at Covent Garden. One critic, with a greater understanding of the

<sup>6</sup> [John Hill], *The Actor, or, a Treatise on the Art of Playing*, (1750) 119.

<sup>7</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 1, 341-7.

<sup>8</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 1, 266 and 465.

<sup>9</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.1, 70.

role of the Gentleman Usher, described Shuter in this part as 'a singing, dancing Fribble; ... contrary ... to the apparent meaning of the author'.<sup>10</sup> An actor of 'some degree of merit', John 'Gentleman' Palmer (1728-68) played Edmund but with 'too much levity of figure and deportment' in this role.<sup>11</sup> As already noted, 13 October 1749 was the first appearance of Sarah Ward as Cordelia opposite Garrick's *Lear*, following her exciting debut the previous year at Covent Garden..

The opening of the 1750-1 season at Drury Lane was on 8 September 1750, when *The Merchant of Venice* was staged. Garrick is not listed as one of the players but he spoke a new prologue in which he urged the public to support 'our Lears and Hamlets' because otherwise serious plays would disappear from the stage and only 'Harlequin' and spectacle shown,<sup>12</sup> strongly echoing the sentiments of the *Drury Lane Prologue Broke Open* of 1748. At the start of this season the actor, Spranger Barry 'flew from his articles & engag'd with Mr. Rich'<sup>13</sup> [i.e. the Covent Garden Theatre] together with Susannah Cibber. Spranger Barry (1717-77) was to become one of the leading players of his age. It is possible that there was some jealousy in the early days between Garrick and Barry, and Barry may have felt restricted at Drury Lane under the dominance of Garrick. For whatever reason, in 1750 Barry joined Covent Garden along with Mrs. Cibber. As one replacement, Garrick engaged George Anne Bellamy (c.1727-88) who was to become an important actress in the second half of the eighteenth century. She had been cast as Cordelia in Dublin in 1746 and now, in November 1750, played opposite Garrick's *Lear*. Her first role with Garrick was Juliet in September 1750 and this sparked off one of the most famous theatrical 'wars' of the eighteenth century. Both theatres staged productions of *Romeo and Juliet* with Garrick and Bellamy, starring at Drury Lane and Spranger Barry and Susannah Cibber at Covent Garden. This rivalry continued for twelve consecutive nights at which point 'Mrs. Cibber weakened, Covent Garden capitulated and Drury Lane triumphantly added a thirteenth performance'.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Frances Brooke, *The Old Maid*, no. 18, 13 March 1756, 148. Brooke presumably means Shakespeare by 'the author' because she had a poor opinion of Tate's version. 'Fribble', a coxcomb, was a character played by Garrick in his own play *Miss in her Teens*, (1747).

<sup>11</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 374. 'Levity' is a curious choice of word to describe Edmund. Perhaps the actor displayed too much 'Trifling gaiety' (Johnson, *Dictionary*, n.5) in his scenes with Goneril and Regan.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1801) 1, 191.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Cross MS. diary, quoted in *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.1, 205.

<sup>14</sup> K. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director*, (Pittsburgh, 1961) 130.

**1751-1752** Covent Garden did not stage *King Lear* in 1751 in spite of having attracted two leading players from Drury Lane. Garrick, after a visit to the Continent in May, was back at Drury Lane for the opening of the season in September and the only performance of *King Lear* was given on November 2. According to Richard Cross, the Drury Lane prompter, actor and playwright, ‘The King sent Word at 4 oClock he’d come to ye play - he staid the whole performance’.<sup>15</sup> Again, George Anne Bellamy played Cordelia opposite Garrick’s Lear. Her Cordelia is described as ‘engaging by virtue of her beauty and assumed innocence’<sup>16</sup> but, although often very successful, she was unreliable. If she had applied herself to the ‘necessary studies ... she would have few equals’<sup>17</sup> but her private life interfered with, and complicated, her stage life.

1752 followed the familiar pattern with five performances at Drury Lane and Garrick in the title-role on four of the dates - 17 January, 3 March, 3 and 20 November; the fifth performance, on 6 April, was a benefit for John Lee (1725-81) and he elected to play Lear.<sup>18</sup> Lee had joined Drury Lane in 1747, the first year of Garrick’s management, and his usual role in *King Lear* was Edmund. In 1749 he deserted Garrick for Covent Garden where he was cast in major roles such as Romeo (just before Spranger Barry claimed the part) and Richard III, chances he would not have had under Garrick.

Covent Garden at last attempted *King Lear* in 1752, on 16 and 17 October with William Giffard, who had appeared with Garrick at Goodman’s Fields and Ipswich, in the role of Lear. The two 1752 performances are the only times this actor is known to have played the title-role and the production was dismissed as ‘wretchedly acted’.<sup>19</sup> In the same cast for these two performances was another actor playing a role for the only time. Luke Sparks (1711-68) played Gloucester and although he was faintly praised as being ‘extremely respectable’<sup>20</sup> in the role, he does not appear to have played it again.

**1753-1754** In the following year, 1753, Charlotte Lennox (1720-1804) a

<sup>15</sup> Richard Cross MS. diary, quoted in *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.1, 270.

<sup>16</sup> Highfill, 2, 19.

<sup>17</sup> *The Inspector*, no.122, (1753) 195.

<sup>18</sup> Lee had first played Lear at Richmond Theatre in the summer of 1749 (Highfill, 9, 202.)

<sup>19</sup> Tate Wilkinson, *Memoirs of His Own Life*, 4 vols. (York, 1790) *The Mirror; or, Actor’s Tablet* bound at end of vol.4 of *Memoirs*, 173.

<sup>20</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 373-4.

miscellaneous writer and failed actress,<sup>21</sup> published *Shakespear Illustrated*, in three volumes, with a Dedication to the Earl of Orrery written by Samuel Johnson. Lennox's work is of interest because it was the first to gather together the sources of more than half of Shakespeare's plays. In it, she gives an outline of both the source's story and Shakespeare's version, pointing out the differences. In volume 3, writing about *King Lear*, she quotes 'From *Holingshed's Chronicle*', then gives the 'Fable of the Tragedy of King Lear', (i.e. Shakespeare's story) followed by notes. In these, Lennox comments that Shakespeare's version is 'much more improbable than the Original'<sup>22</sup> and takes particular exception to the fact that the King of France is not present at the division of the Kingdom so that he does not hear Cordelia's answer to Lear which is a 'shining Instance of her Greatness of Soul, and inviolable Regard to Truth'.<sup>23</sup> Lennox also disapproves of the cliff scene claiming that Gloucester, 'though deprived of Sight', could not 'possibly suppose, when he fell gently on that Plain, that he had precipitated himself from an immense Height to the Margin of the Sea'.<sup>24</sup> Like many writers of the eighteenth century, Lennox approved Tate's wretched version rather than the tragedy of Shakespeare, declaring 'Had *Shakespear* followed the Historian, [i.e. Holinshead] he would not have violated the Rules of poetical Justice; ... in the Play one Fate overwhelms alike the Innocent and the Guilty'.<sup>25</sup> As well as her comments on the Holinshead connection, Lennox also points out that the underplot of Gloucester and his two sons, plus the episode concerning a blind old father being led by his son during a storm, are 'borrowed' from Sidney's *Arcadia* and 'the Hint of *Cordelia's* Manner of Death' from Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>26</sup>

Lennox finishes her notes on *King Lear* by naming a further possible source, a twenty-three verse ballad, 'A Lamentable Song of the Death of King Leir and his three Daughters' published in a collection in 1726. The editor of the collection asserts that the

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<sup>21</sup> Horace Walpole, writing on 3 September 1748 about a visit to Richmond Theatre, mentions 'a Miss Charlotte Ramsay, [later Mrs. Lennox], a poetess and deplorable actress', (*The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis, 48 vols. (1937-83) 9, 74).

<sup>22</sup> Charlotte Lennox, *Shakespear Illustrated*, 3 vols. (1753-4) 3, 286.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 288.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 300.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 290-1.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 3, 291-2.



ballad was written 'some Years before the Play of *Shakespear*' but refuses to give the source for this information because it would make his introduction too long. Lennox rightly observes that to know the source would be 'of infinitely more Consequence than any thing else he [the editor] has said' because the ballad and Shakespeare's story are so 'close' that Shakespeare must have 'copied it ... if indeed it be true, that it was written before that Tragedy'.<sup>27</sup> However, the majority of her comments are not highly regarded and it seems to be generally agreed that her <sup>condemnations</sup> 'commendations' (notably ... *King Lear*), tend to overshadow her praise'.<sup>28</sup> Her contemporary Garrick claimed she 'betray'd a greater desire of Exposing his [Shakespeare's] Errors than of *illustrating* his Beauties'.<sup>29</sup>

It was also in 1753 that the first known return to Shakespeare's text of *King Lear* was made. According to Joseph Warton in *The Adventurer* of December 1753, Garrick spoke the line 'O me! my heart, my rising heart! - but, down!'<sup>30</sup> and by the manner in which he spoke this 'single line, [showed] the inexpressible anguish of his [Lear's] mind, and the dreadful conflict of opposite passions'.<sup>31</sup> The significance of this is that the line is Shakespeare's and is not in Tate's version. If Garrick had reintroduced this one line from Shakespeare's text, it is a fair assumption that he was making other quiet amendments to the text, before his own self-proclaimed revision of 1756 which I will discuss shortly. However, it will be recalled that the phrase 'With Restorations from Shakespear' had appeared on playbills at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1743 and Covent Garden in 1744, both without Garrick in the cast. This might suggest that although Garrick is generally credited with the first tentative returns to Shakespeare's text,<sup>32</sup> others were thinking along the same lines at the same time.

In 1753 and 1754 Covent Garden did not stage a single performance of *King Lear* and Drury Lane only staged it on 15 and 22 November 1753 and 18 February 1754.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 3, 301-3. The book Lennox refers to is *A Collection of Old Ballads*, (1726) 8-17. The British Library has this (238.h.18, 2nd. edition) and gives Ambrose Philips as the possible editor. Johnson also considers the ballad a source; see chapter 9.

<sup>28</sup> Duncan Isles, 'The Lennox Collection', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 19 (1971) 41, n.63.

<sup>29</sup> Letter by Garrick to Lennox dated 12 August 1753 quoted in 'The Lennox Collection' by Duncan Isles, *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 19, (1971) 40-1.

<sup>30</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 310; as in Folio.

<sup>31</sup> *The Adventurer*, 4 December 1753, no. 113, 255.

<sup>32</sup> But see chapter 10 and Arthur J. Harris, 'Garrick, Colman, and *King Lear*: A Reconsideration' in *The Shakespeare Quarterly*, 22, (New York, 1971) 57-66 who argues that it was George Colman, the elder, who started the return to Shakespeare's text.

The players in these Drury Lane performances included a number of bit-part actors and actresses. For example, the role of Kent was taken by Astley Bransby (d.1789), an actor who in spite of playing almost nightly, never progressed to roles bigger than Kent, which was probably the high point of his career. Thomas Davies claimed that he 'happily expressed that affectionate humanity which is the brightest part of Kent's character'<sup>33</sup> but Francis Gentleman wrote that in this role Bransby 'puts us in mind of a reduced<sup>34</sup> life-guard-man, [rather] than a disguised peer'.<sup>35</sup> It is probably Bransby who is represented in Benjamin Wilson's famous picture of Garrick as Lear in the storm.<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Cowper (fl.1748-60) made her debut at Drury Lane in October 1753 and became known for light comedy roles although she 'shifted her line startlingly' by playing Regan the same year.<sup>37</sup> Thomas Jefferson (1732-1807) joined Drury Lane in 1753 and played Burgundy in November that year. Thereafter, he appeared at many different theatres around the country, before returning to Drury Lane in 1767 where he remained for eleven years. He never achieved great success, playing supporting roles for most of his career but he was the founder of a large theatrical family.<sup>38</sup>

**1755** This year saw five performances of *King Lear*, all at Drury Lane, on 4 and 11 March, 23 May and 4 and 9 December. The actress playing Cordelia, opposite Garrick, at some of these 1755 performances was Susannah Davies (1723-1801) the wife of Thomas Davies, bookseller, author and actor. Mrs. Davies was noted mainly for her exceptional beauty, a beauty comparable to '*Milton's Description of Eve*'.<sup>39</sup> She remained at Drury Lane for eleven years playing many leading roles but never quite attained the elusive star position. David Ross who was later to achieve some success as Lear at Covent Garden, played Edgar. This year was the last in which Tate's adaptation was performed without competition; from 1756 Garrick's version, announced as 'With

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 290.

<sup>34</sup> As well as explaining 'reduced' as 'impoverished' (2.b), OED also gives 'of officers on half-pay' (2.a). One of Johnson's meanings for 'reduce' is 'To degrade' (v.5).

<sup>35</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 374.

<sup>36</sup> Highfill, 2, 310-2; see the illustration for chapter 6. There are many paintings of famous players in scenes from *King Lear* but I have not treated them in any detail because of the volume of material.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 14.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 8, 143-7.

<sup>39</sup> *The Present State of the Stage in Great-Britain and Ireland*, (1753) 29.

Restorations from Shakespear',<sup>40</sup> was played at Drury Lane although Covent Garden remained loyal to Tate's version until 1768.

**1756** As early as 1711 *The Spectator* had argued for a return to Shakespeare's *King Lear*.<sup>41</sup> In 1747 Garrick had been urged to abandon Tate's 'execrable Alteration' and to stage '*Lear* in the *Original, Fool* and all'.<sup>42</sup> He considered this possibility with Henry Woodward as the Fool but hesitated to 'hazard so bold an attempt'.<sup>43</sup> In 1748 Samuel Richardson had written in the Postscript to volume 7 of *Clarissa Harlowe* that 'if it [i.e. Shakespeare's *King Lear*] were ever to be tried, Now seems to be the Time'.<sup>44</sup> Shortly before Garrick's revision appeared on stage, novelist and playwright Mrs. Frances Brooke writing in March 1756, expressed 'great astonishment' that the two theatres 'have given Tate's wretched alteration ... [in] preference to Shakespear's excellent original'.<sup>45</sup> Then, on 28 October 1756, Garrick presented his own version, 'striking out the sophistications of Tate and using Shakespeare's own language, wherever it was practicable to do so'.<sup>46</sup> The takings for this important night in the history of *King Lear*, and for the following performance on 30 October which staged the same version, were £200 on each occasion. It is difficult to judge if this was a significant increase as has been suggested.<sup>47</sup> The figure of £200 was higher than the takings for the seven Shakespearean offerings immediately preceding. However, the takings for the two performances of *King Lear* at Drury Lane earlier the same year (12 February and 19

<sup>40</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.2, 626.

<sup>41</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>42</sup> Samuel Foote, *An Examen of the New Comedy*, (1747) 35.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 267.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in *Shakespeare, The Critical Heritage*, ed. Brian Vickers, 6 vols. (1974-81) 3, 326. See Tom Keymer, *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader*, (Cambridge, 1992) 200. Keymer argues that Richardson 'had ulterior motives of his own' concerning the ending of his own work, *Clarissa*. Once the novel's tragic ending was decided and published, the postscript note was withdrawn.

<sup>45</sup> Frances Brooke, *The Old Maid*, no.18, 6 March 1756, 149.

<sup>46</sup> *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, ed. James Boaden, 2 vols. (1831) 1, xxxii.

<sup>47</sup> G.W. Stone, 'Garrick's Production of *King Lear* : A Study in the Temper of the Eighteenth-Century Mind', *Studies in Philology*, 45 (Chapel Hill, 1948) 91. Stone argues that the takings 'shot up' because these two performances were of the new revision by Garrick. See also G.W. Stone and G.M. Kahrl, *David Garrick, a Critical Biography*, (Carbondale, 1979) 260 for the same argument.

May) were £210 and £190 respectively.<sup>48</sup> This would seem to suggest that it was Garrick as Lear that the public came to see rather than his version of the play.

So what did Garrick achieve in his version of *King Lear*? He kept much of Tate's story line including a shortened version of the love interest between Cordelia and Edgar, the attack upon Cordelia by the ruffians on the heath, the happy ending, and Arante, Cordelia's companion. Gloucester's blinding takes place off-stage<sup>49</sup> but the audience hears his cries and he is lead back on almost immediately. The Fool, as already noted, is still omitted. Although Garrick retained much of Tate, he did banish some of Tate's additional scenes. For example, he cut the scene which opens Tate's Act IV showing Edmund and Regan 'seated amorously' in a grotto. Garrick probably recognised the unintentional comedy in some of the lines which might have raised unwelcome laughter from the audience. He also cut some of Tate's more extreme lines and reinstated Shakespeare's original text. For example, Garrick deletes some of Tate's wilder fancies in the speech by Gloucester in which Gloucester urges Edmund to seek out Edgar:<sup>50</sup>

That I may bite the Traytor's heart, and fold  
His bleeding Entrals on my vengefull Arm.

Another example of Garrick pruning some of Tate's least successful lines is in the exchange between the sisters and Lear over the number of servants to be retained.<sup>51</sup> Tate added lines in which Lear conjures up 'Leaprosies and bluest Plagues! ...Hell to belch her Horrors up ... Whips and Snakes -' which Garrick cuts. However, he did not restore the fine opening lines of Lear's following speech, 'Oh reason not the need'. Instead this speech begins 'You see me here, you Gods, a poor old man' which leads to an important moment in Garrick's acting - the line 'I will do such things /What they are yet I know not'.<sup>52</sup> Garrick also moved speeches from the position allocated to them by

<sup>48</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 14-5.

<sup>49</sup> It is not certain when the blinding was first moved off-stage. Perhaps at this time in 1756; perhaps later, nearer the time of the first publication of Garrick's *King Lear* in 1773. Colman's version (1768) has the blinding off-stage. See chapter 10, 160, footnote 56.

<sup>50</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act I, p.9; Arden, *King Lear*, I, ii, 97.

<sup>51</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 390-452; Tate, *King Lear*, Act II, pp.22-3.

<sup>52</sup> See chapter 6. Earlier in this scene, in Lear's speech beginning 'Never Regan./She hath abated me of half my train', Garrick retains 'Looked blank upon me' as first introduced by Theobald. Pedicord's *The Plays of David Garrick*, 7 vols. (Carbondale, 1980-2) adds the note 'error for *black?*' (3, 457) apparently not recognising Theobald's emendation; see chapter 5.

Tate, back to their original place, for example, Edmund's soliloquy 'Thou, Nature, art my goddess' which opens Tate's play, is returned to its original position. Garrick restored many important speeches which Tate had retained but had spoilt by well-intentioned alterations. For example, Lear's powerful first speech on the heath in Act III which begins 'Blow winds and crack your cheeks!'<sup>53</sup> is rescued from Tate's tampering as is the division of the kingdom scene which 'once more shines in Shakespeare's language'.<sup>54</sup>

Garrick's version of *King Lear*, although played in 1756 was not published until 1773.<sup>55</sup> Another edition was printed in 1786, after Garrick's death in 1779. This second version has more Tate deletions and more Shakespearean restorations than the 1756 first edition.<sup>56</sup> Although a later critic complained that Garrick had 'removed but half of the filth with which Tate has disfigured Shakespeare',<sup>57</sup> it seems that Garrick continued gradually to infiltrate Shakespeare's text back into Tate's version over many years,<sup>58</sup> starting in the early 1750s right up until his retirement in 1776 although he retained the broad outlines of Tate's adaptation.

Drury Lane continued to stage David Garrick's version of *King Lear*. Covent Garden retained Tate's version and Spranger Barry, who had defected from Drury Lane in 1750, played Lear for the first time at Covent Garden on 26 February 1756. His success in this role resulted in seven performances of the play being given - the highest number at one theatre since Garrick in 1742. In the role of Cordelia for the first time was Maria Isabella Nossiter (c.1735-59) who had made her debut as Juliet opposite Barry's Romeo, in the autumn of 1753 to great acclaim. Other players appearing in new roles included Luke Sparks, the minor player who had played Gloucester earlier. Now he took on Kent in which he showed 'considerable merit'<sup>59</sup> so that the audience would 'wish in vain for a better Kent'.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, III, ii, l.

<sup>54</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 1, 378.

<sup>55</sup> See chapter 11.

<sup>56</sup> G.W. Stone and G.M. Kahrl, *David Garrick, A Critical Biography*, (Carbondale, 1979) 261.

<sup>57</sup> Genest, 4, 475.

<sup>58</sup> See H.W. Pedicord, 'Shakespeare, Tate, and Garrick: New Light on Alterations of *King Lear*', *Theatre Notebook*, 36 (1982) 14-21 for further information on Garrick's restorations which 'were made most gradually indeed', 20.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 290.

<sup>60</sup> *The Theatrical Review for the Year 1757, and Beginning of 1758*, (1758) 35.

The rivalry between Garrick and Barry which had started over the role of Romeo, continued with *Lear*. Where Barry had received the higher praise for his Romeo, Garrick was judged the better *Lear*. One critic wrote that Garrick ‘gained additional strength, lustre, and fashion’ as *Lear* while Barry as the King ‘was not attractive’<sup>61</sup> and *The Theatrical Review*, writing some years later, felt that Barry was ‘a very faint apology’ as the King when compared with Garrick.<sup>62</sup> Two doggerels went round the town in 1756 both giving Garrick the higher praise: ‘To *Barry*, they give loud Huzza’s, / To *Garrick* only Tears’<sup>63</sup> and, while Barry is ‘every inch a king’, Garrick is ‘every inch King *Lear*’.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, Barry was judged a great player and received considerable praise as *Lear*. One critic, while acknowledging Garrick as the better, wrote of Barry that ‘in the pathetic scenes, [he] had infinite merit’.<sup>65</sup> Another wrote that ‘his whole action is of a piece; and the breaks in his voice, which are uncommonly beautiful, seem the effect of real, not personated, sorrow’;<sup>66</sup> and again that Barry brought a ‘well-applauded tenderness to *Lear*’.<sup>67</sup> Theophilus Cibber, who was not however, impartial and wrote acidly of Garrick on many occasions jeering at his lack of inches rather than commenting on his acting, declared: ‘must we not give the Preference to Mr. *Barry*, not only in majestic Department, and Gracefulness of Action, but also in his Manner of imprecating the Curse, ... against his unnatural Daughter?’<sup>68</sup>

Also in 1756, the Haymarket put on one performance of *King Lear*, presumably Tate’s adaptation because Drury Lane would have had a monopoly on Garrick’s version. The exact date of this one performance is unknown and Highfill suggests that it was an

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<sup>61</sup> Tate Wilkinson, *Memoirs of His Own Life*, 4 vols. (York, 1790) *The Mirror, or, Actor’s Tablet* bound at end of vol.4 of *Memoirs*, 225 and 232.

<sup>62</sup> *The Theatrical Review, or, New Companion to the Play-House*, 2 vols. (1772) 1, 218.

<sup>63</sup> Theophilus Cibber, *Two Dissertations on the Theatres*, [1770] second dissertation, 43. Cibber writes ‘A pretty Conceit; but how if it is not quite true!’ and goes on to accuse Garrick of writing the lines himself. John Taylor in his *Records of my Life*, 2 vols. (1832) 1, 325 and 326 note, claims Richard Berenger, ‘deputy master of the horse’, wrote the lines.

<sup>64</sup> William Cooke, *Memoirs of Charles Macklin, Comedian*, (1804) 161-2.

<sup>65</sup> Tate Wilkinson, *Memoirs of His Own Life*, 4 vols. (York, 1790) *The Mirror; or, Actor’s Tablet* bound at end of vol.4 of *Memoirs*, 221.

<sup>66</sup> Frances Brooke, *The Old Maid*, no.18, 13 March 1756, 147.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Churchill, ‘The Rosciad’ in *Poems*, 2 vols. (1763) 1, 43. This phrase no doubt refers particularly to the final scene of Tate’s adaptation when *Lear* gives Cordelia to Edgar in marriage, a moment much enjoyed by the audiences.

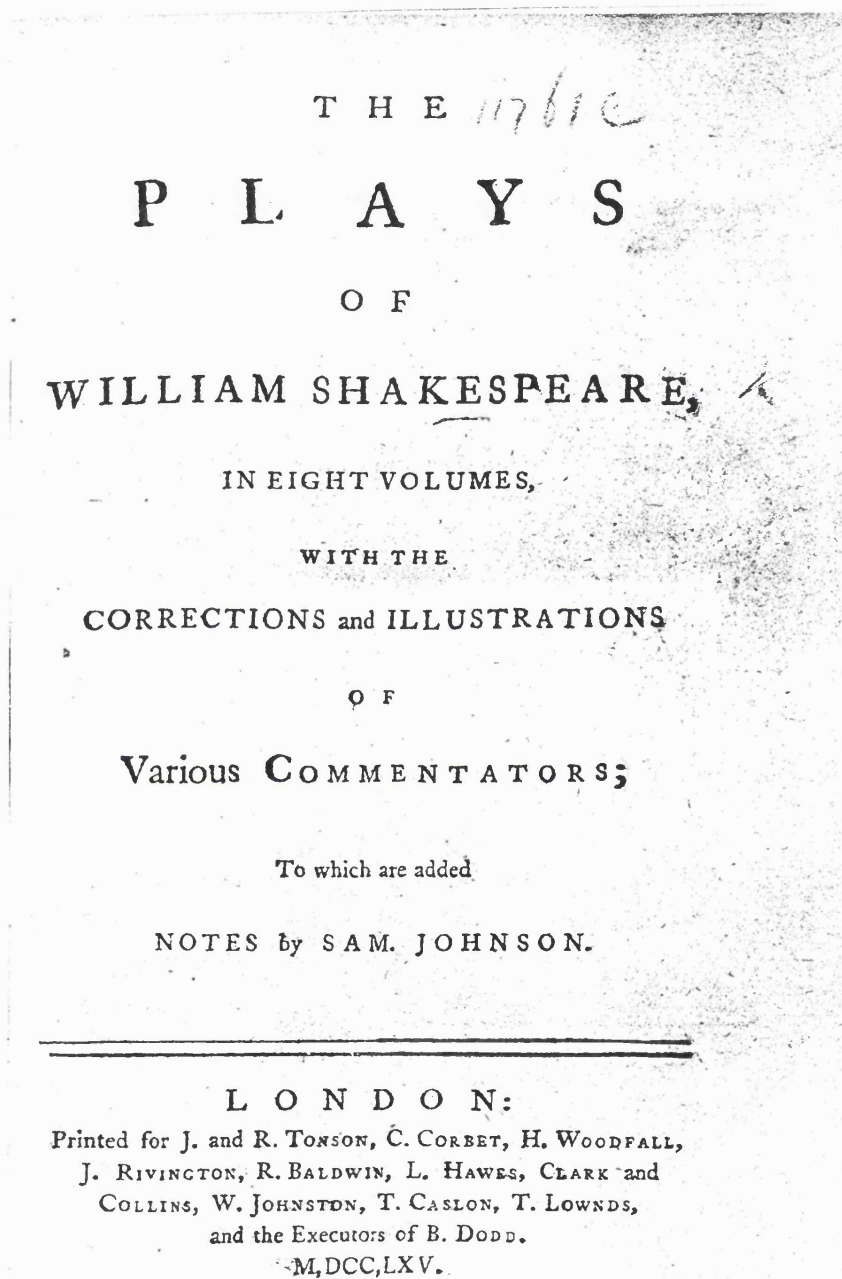
<sup>68</sup> Theophilus Cibber, *Two Dissertations on the Theatres*, [1770] second dissertation, 31-2.

amateur performance. Its significance lies in two of the actors, William Parsons (1736-95) who played Kent and William Powell (1735-69), Edmund. Parsons, who became a noted comedian, was at first 'allowed to be the better tragedian of the two'.<sup>69</sup> He joined Garrick at Drury Lane in 1762 and Powell followed in 1763. However, Powell quickly superseded Parsons in importance, acting as Garrick's stand-in, both managing the theatre and playing many of Garrick's roles with outstanding success while Garrick was abroad between 1763 and 1765.

The year 1756 therefore saw a new interest develop in *King Lear* with rivalry between the two leading players in the role of the King. More importantly, Garrick had begun the slow return to Shakespeare's text. Although other playwrights, actors and managers were to follow his initiative over the following years and George Colman was to be responsible for the first return to a plot closer to that of Shakespeare's, it was Garrick who first started to clear away some of Tate's verbiage and meddling.

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<sup>69</sup> Thomas Bellamy, *The Life of Mr. William Parsons, Comedian*, (1795) 9.



The title-page of Samuel Johnson's edition of 1765,  
taken from BL 11761.c.15



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CHAPTER 9

**Samuel Johnson's edition of Shakespeare (1765)  
together with the performances between 1757 and 1765**

**1756** The first notice that Samuel Johnson gave to the world of his intentions to edit the works of William Shakespeare had been in 1745 in the pamphlet *Miscellaneous Observations on Macbeth*, published anonymously. Then, in June 1756, under his own name, Johnson published another pamphlet, *Proposals for Printing ... The Dramatick Works of William Shakespeare* and named two of his objectives - 'to correct what is corrupt, and to explain what is obscure'.<sup>1</sup> In discussing his first objective, Johnson gives an account of ways in which a text, particularly that of a play, may become corrupt. The text is 'immediately copied for the actors, ... vitiated by the blunders of the penman, ... changed by the affectation of the player, ... enlarged to introduce a jest, ... mutilated to shorten the representation; and printed at last without the concurrence of the authour'. After publication, the text would suffer further through 'the ignorance and negligence of the printers'. Next Johnson discusses his second objective, explanation of obscurities. Obscurities may be 'partly imputed to his [the author's] age' because 'Every age has its modes of speech ... [which] become sometimes unintelligible' to succeeding ages. To solve the two problems of corruption and obscurity, Johnson writes that he will collate and study 'the oldest copies'. Only then, will he begin 'the task of critical sagacity' to settle outstanding problems. Johnson stresses that he will always note any alteration he makes and warns that emendation 'is always hazardous' especially when an editor is 'not particularly versed in the writings of that [i.e. the author's] age'. At the beginning of this 1756 pamphlet, Johnson writes that his edition would appear on or before Christmas 1757 but he failed to meet this deadline by a wide margin. His edition was published in October 1765 and I discuss it later in this chapter.

**1757** During the years from 1757 to 1765 while Johnson was labouring on his Shakespearean edition, *King Lear* on stage was not enjoying the same degree of excitement generated by either Garrick's early years or by the later rivalry between

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Proposals for Printing ... The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, (1756) in *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol.7, ed. Arthur Sherbo, (1975) 51-8, from which the following quotations are taken.

Garrick and Barry. During 1757 Drury Lane staged *King Lear* three times, 10, 12 and 17 November; the text used was Garrick's version. Garrick played Lear and Susannah Cibber, Cordelia. Apart from these two, there were no players of the first rank. John 'Gentleman' Palmer (1728-68) was cast as Edmund. This actor is sometimes confused with John 'Plausible Jack' Palmer (1744-98) who played Edmund ten years later.

At Covent Garden in 1757 there were three performances of Tate's adaptation, on 1 and 21 March (a benefit for Spranger Barry) and on 5 December. In the two March performances, Cordelia was played by Maria Isabella Nossiter but the excitement of her early promise was diminishing. George Anne Bellamy took over as Cordelia on 5 December and *The London Chronicle* of 3-6 December noted that Bellamy 'was received with universal Satisfaction', Barry with 'Acclamation' and that the audience was 'gratefully agitated ... with a Variety of Passions'. Next year Nossiter's most celebrated role, Juliet, was also taken over by Bellamy. After an exceptional start, Nossiter lost the fickle audience's approval and died in 1759 aged only twenty-four.<sup>2</sup> Also at Covent Garden was Mary Elmy (1712-92) as Regan. Her long career started slowly but in the late 1740s she began to acquire better parts<sup>3</sup> including Gertrude and Desdemona. Another player with a long career but small reward was John Anderson (d.1767) cast as Cornwall in 1757. He played some thirty-six Shakespearean roles<sup>4</sup> but was damned rather obscurely for his '*stupid* words [which] flow from his *stupid* heart'<sup>5</sup>

**1758** During the year 1758 *King Lear* was staged once at Drury Lane and three times at Covent Garden. The Drury Lane performance was on 25 October with Garrick who was suddenly taken ill during the performance although he managed to go 'thro the part'.<sup>6</sup> The three performances of *King Lear* at Covent Garden in 1758 were on 10

<sup>2</sup> Highfill, 11, 64-7; according to Bellamy in *An Apology for the Life*, 5 vols. (2nd ed., 1785) 3, 62, Nossiter was killed by 'the cold breath of disappointed love' for the uncaring Barry.

<sup>3</sup> Highfill, 5, 72.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 1, 78.

<sup>5</sup> [Charles Churchill], *The Rosciad of C-v-nt-G-rd-n*, (1762) 10; however, Tom Davies claimed that Churchill praised only a few of the actresses and 'not one man, except Mr. Garrick, escaped his satirical lash', (*Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1780) 1, 307.)

<sup>6</sup> Winston MS. 8, quoted in *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol. 2, 690. James Winston, proprietor of the Haymarket Theatre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, left a vast collection of documents relating to the London theatre including a 16-volume MS entitled 'A Dramatic Register ... from the most remote period to the present' (1803) in the Folger Library.

January, 18 February and 7 April with Spranger Barry playing the King for the last time before his departure in the autumn to manage the new Crow Street Theatre in Dublin.

With Barry in Ireland, Covent Garden staged no further performance of *King Lear* until May 1764. The only other event in 1758 which has significance to this thesis was the death by drowning on 27 October of Theophilus Cibber, with other members of a theatrical troupe, in a storm in the Irish sea. Cibber had been an irksome member of the theatrical world for many years and although he did not achieve any lasting fame as an actor, he played the role of the Gentleman Usher continuously over fifteen years, a record only matched by the elder Penkethman.

**1759-1763** Garrick was now alone in playing Lear in London and he gave no more than three performances in any one year during Barry's absence. In 1759 there were three, on 10, 15 and 28 November; in 1760 there was one on 5 January 'By Command of the Prince of Wales'<sup>7</sup>; in 1761 two performances were staged on 28 May 'By his Majesty's Command'<sup>8</sup> and 23 December, 'Last play till after the Holidays'<sup>9</sup>; 1762 offered three on 17 April, 19 November and 31 December and in 1763 there was one on 12 May 'for the last time this season'. The play is also noted for 5 May but as this was a thanksgiving day, the theatre would have been closed.<sup>10</sup> During these years there were no significant changes to the cast. At all ten performances staged between 1759 and 1763, Garrick was always cast as Lear and Susanna Cibber as Cordelia. Goneril was played by Elizabeth Bennet (1714-91) who had first played this, her only part in *King Lear*, back in 1742; Regan was taken by Hannah Haughton who had been with Garrick during his brief time at Covent Garden. The roles of Edgar and Albany were acted by William Havard and John Hayman Packer respectively. John Hayman Packer (1730-1806) joined Drury Lane in 1758 and played Albany for the first time that same season. Later he took on Gloucester but never progressed to major roles although he stayed with

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<sup>7</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.2, 766.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* pt.4, vol.2, 870.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pt.4, vol.2, 909. 1761 saw the longest run of any Shakespearean play in the eighteenth century. On 13 November, Covent Garden Theatre staged *Henry V* in connection with the Coronation of George III which had taken place on 22 September that year and this play then ran up to and including 9 December 1761, twenty-three consecutive performances.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pt.4, vol.2, 994-5. This may be an error for a performance advertised for 6 May but cancelled owing to the indisposition of Mrs. Cibber.

Drury Lane for forty-five years.<sup>11</sup> It was during these years (1759-62) that Thomas Davies, the actor/ bookseller, played Gloucester opposite Garrick. Later Davies, writing of himself as Gloucester, said that ‘the candour of the audience gave him much more encouragement than he expected’<sup>12</sup> but he remained only a small-time player.

**1764** While Barry was in Ireland, Covent Garden had been without an actor prepared to attempt the taxing role of Lear. Then, in 1764 the play was again staged and advertised as ‘not acted these 6 years’.<sup>13</sup> David Ross (1728-90) who had played Edgar in 1755, was now promoted to playing the King and made his first appearance in the role on 7 May 1764. It was said of Ross that ‘His person was pleasing, and his address easy; his manner of speaking natural; his action well adapted to the gravity’.<sup>14</sup> However, he appeared to lack the will to achieve stardom and displayed a certain negligence<sup>15</sup> and ‘his indolence, and love of conviviality ... [made it impossible for him] to shine on the stage’.<sup>16</sup> Francis Gentleman wrote that the role of Lear was ‘too ponderous<sup>17</sup> a weight for his [Ross’s] abilities to sustain with just grace’.<sup>18</sup> In spite of these comments, Ross must have achieved some degree of success because the play was staged five times during 1764 (7 May, 29 October, 27 November, 3 and 31 December) with Ross playing the title-role each time and he held the part until 1778. The actress playing Cordelia for the first time<sup>19</sup> on 29 October was Isabella Hallam (1746-1826, later Mrs. George Mattocks). She played the same part at the following two performances but then yielded to George Ann Bellamy who on 31 December took over as Cordelia, a role she had first played in 1750 at Drury Lane.

It was now Drury Lane which did not stage *King Lear*. On 15 September 1763 Garrick had left for a lengthy continental tour so the situation was reversed and it was Drury Lane which was without an actor of sufficient stature to tackle the part of Lear.

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<sup>11</sup> Highfill, 11, 139-43.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 305.

<sup>13</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.2, 1057.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1780) 1, 160.

<sup>15</sup> [Hugh Kelly], *Thespis, ... Book the Second*, (1767) 12.

<sup>16</sup> George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy*, 5 vols. (1785, 2nd ed.) 2, 130.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Important, momentous’ (Johnson, *Dictionary*, adj.2).

<sup>18</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 373.

<sup>19</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.2, 1080.

The newcomer in the Drury Lane company, William Powell was not yet ready to attempt this demanding role. In 1763 Garrick had employed and coached Powell who, it will be recalled, had earlier worked at the Haymarket where one of his roles had been Edmund (1756).<sup>20</sup> Within days of Garrick's departure in September 1763, George Colman, joint-manager with Garrick but now with the responsibility of running Drury Lane, presented Powell in *Philaster*<sup>21</sup> on 8 October, the billing claiming with common inaccuracy that it was Powell's 'first appearance on any stage'.<sup>22</sup> Powell scored a personal triumph and with Garrick away, became 'the main pillar of Drury-Lane'.<sup>23</sup> Horace Walpole wrote on 17 October 1763 'there is come forth within these ten days a young actor, who has turned the heads of the whole town'.<sup>24</sup>

**1765** On 2 January 1765, shortly before Garrick's return from Europe, Powell took the title-role in *King Lear* for the first time in London<sup>25</sup> and 'surprised and charmed the town, by his exquisite pictures of SHAKESPEARE'S Lear'.<sup>26</sup> He continued in this role for all ten performances given at Drury Lane during 1765, even after the return of Garrick. However, Powell appears to have grown over-confident and did not sustain his first triumph as I will discuss in the following chapter. The ten performances of the play at Drury Lane during 1765 were given on 2, 5, 9, 12 January, 1 February, 25 March, 17 April, 23 May, 22 October and 23 November. Among the cast were many small-time players including Edmund Burton (d.1772) in the role of Gloucester, who had joined Drury Lane in 1747 where he remained for the rest of his undistinguished career.<sup>27</sup> He first played Gloucester, probably his most important Shakespearean role, in 1762 but his abilities were dismissed by Francis Gentleman who wrote ' - oh heav'ns! - he [Gloucester] is in the feeble hands of Mr. BURTON at Drury Lane'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 338 and chapter 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Philaster* by Beaumont and Fletcher was offered in an adaptation by Colman.

<sup>22</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.2, 1011.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1801) 2, 9.

<sup>24</sup> *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed.W.S.Lewis, 48 vols. (1937-83) 22, 176.

<sup>25</sup> Powell had played Lear at Bristol in August 1764 (Highfill, 12, 135).

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Bellamy, *The Life of Mr. William Parsons, Comedian*, (1795) 9. Note the persisting reference to Shakespeare.

<sup>27</sup> Highfill, 2, 435-6.

<sup>28</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 374.

Richard Griffith (d. c.1799), a provincial actor who had made three attempts to find success on the London stage, was cast as the Gentleman Usher. Garrick had seen him act and wrote that he had too much ‘*Affectation*’ to succeed but, nevertheless, while Garrick was overseas, Griffith was taken on at Drury Lane where he again failed to make his mark.<sup>29</sup> William Parsons, once considered a competent tragedian, was cast as Cornwall for the performance on 1 February but it was in comedy that Parsons, who was ‘born to ... set mankind a tittering’,<sup>30</sup> found greater success. The actress who played Cordelia on just one occasion this year, on 23 November, was Hannah Palmer (d. 1781), wife of John ‘Gentleman’ Palmer and daughter of the great Hannah Pritchard who had starred in many Shakespearean roles, but not Cordelia. At the performance on 25 March Mary Ann Yates played Cordelia for the first time. Mrs. Yates was to become one of the leading actresses of her time and will be discussed further in the next chapter. David Garrick returned to London on 25 April 1765 but did not seem to be in any hurry to return to the stage.<sup>31</sup> On 14 November, ‘By Command of their Majesties’, who ‘called forth *Roscious* from his retreat’,<sup>32</sup> he appeared in *Much Ado About Nothing* as Benedict, after a two-year absence. He did not take on *Lear* again until 21 February 1770, apparently content to let William Powell continue in the role.

Covent Garden, which was performing Tate’s adaptation and was unable to match Powell’s sensational success at Drury Lane, gave five performances of the play in 1765, on 7 January, 19 March, 2 May, 23 September and 19 December. David Ross was still *Lear* and George Anne Bellamy played Cordelia. Thomas Davis (d.1795, whose real name was Thomas Dibble and is sometimes confused with Thomas Davies, d.1785, the actor/bookseller) played Albany on 19 December. Dibble Davis took small parts at Covent Garden but later played at the Haymarket where his roles improved.<sup>33</sup> He was never more than a secondary actor and was dubbed ‘a sing-song man of little worth’.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Highfill, 6, 372-3.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 3, 136.

<sup>31</sup> Garrick had written from Paris to Colman on 10 March 1765 ‘do the Town in general really wish to see me on ye Stage? ... I have no maw for it at all’, *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. David M. Little and George M. Kahrl, 3 vols. (1963) 2, 449.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1801) 2, 21.

<sup>33</sup> Highfill, 4, 227

<sup>34</sup> Sir Nicholas Nipclose, pseud. [Francis Gentleman?], *The Theatres. A Poetical Dissection*, (1772) 51.

William 'Gentleman' Smith (1730-1819) played the role of Edgar. Smith had taken on many of the major roles at Covent Garden while Spranger Barry was in Ireland.<sup>35</sup> He had a long career in the theatre and will be referred to again.

Apart from the excitement which Powell had generated, 1765 is notable for the purposes of this thesis, for the publication of Samuel Johnson's *The Plays of Shakespeare*, in 8 octavo volumes.<sup>36</sup> Before commenting on this, another book which was published shortly before Johnson's work, must be examined. This was Benjamin Heath's *A Revisal of Shakespear's Text* which appeared in February 1765, while Johnson's *Shakespeare* was published in the October. Heath praises Theobald to whom the public owe 'real and considerable obligations' and Pope who 'hath a just, though not an equal, share of merit',<sup>37</sup> but his main purpose was to attack Warburton's edition of 1747 as I have noted in chapter 7. Heath's comments on *King Lear* not aimed specifically at Warburton include the less-than-happy emendation of 'her smiles and tears/Were like, a better way'.<sup>38</sup> Heath considers '*a wetter May*', '*a better day*' and concludes that Shakespeare intended '*an April day*'.<sup>39</sup> Another of Heath's notes is on

Turn all her mother's pains and benefits  
To laughter and contempt,<sup>40</sup>

In this instance he expresses himself 'greatly astonished' that Thomas Edwards, the author of *Canons of Criticism*, whom he usually approves, takes these lines to indicate the sex of Goneril's child rather than the mother's maternal cares.

Closely following Heath's book, on 10 October 1765, Samuel Johnson, perhaps goaded by jibes such as Charles Churchill's

He for *Subscribers* baits his hook,  
And takes their cash - but where's the Book?<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Highfill, 14, 173-87.

<sup>36</sup> It is worth noting that Johnson, a keen but critical theatre goer, is known to have seen *King Lear* at least once. According to Arthur Murphy, he and Johnson stood in conversation 'near the side of the scenes during the tragedy of King Lear' and were chided by Garrick for destroying his 'feelings', (*Johnsonian Miscellanies*, ed. G.B. Hill, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1897) 1, 457).

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin Heath, *A Revisal of Shakespear's Text*, (1765) vi-vii.

<sup>38</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, IV, iii, 18-9.

<sup>39</sup> Benjamin Heath, *A Revisal of Shakespear's Text*, (1765) 344.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 328; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 278-9.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Churchill, *Poems*, (1763) 'The Ghost' in 4 books, bk.3, 261.

finally published his long-awaited edition of the works of Shakespeare. On the title-page of volume I, Johnson outlines his objectives which were that ‘the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators’ were to be used together with ‘added Notes by Sam. Johnson’. Then follows his own lengthy Preface (A-E5r), famously described by Adam Smith as ‘the most manly piece of criticism’. This Preface has been the recipient of an enormous body of comment but what is relevant to this thesis is how Johnson achieves his editorial intentions as set out in his Preface, in relation to *King Lear*. In part of his Preface Johnson gives an account of the work achieved by past editors, and acknowledges their improvements but castigates them for not showing to each other the same ‘candour’ with which he has treated them. He discusses his use of other editors’ notes where he feels these are correct or where he can offer nothing better; his own notes which he endeavours to make ‘neither superfluously copious, nor scrupulously reserved’;<sup>42</sup> his lack of diligence in commenting on either ‘poetical beauties or defects’;<sup>43</sup> and the difficulties and dangers of emendation and conjecture.

The texts of the plays, with Johnson’s notes, follow and I will examine those on *King Lear* in the light of his intentions as laid down in his Preface. After listing the *Dramatis Personae*, Johnson adds a note at the foot of this page<sup>44</sup> naming three editions of the play, 1608 quarto, 1623 Folio, and the 1655 quarto which he notes as ‘of no value’. To the text of *King Lear* Johnson adds over three hundred numbered footnotes and, as he alerted us in his Preface, some are his own notes, many are the comments of earlier editors to which Johnson adds, and some the notes of earlier editors which are printed without comment but with an acknowledgment of the editor’s name. In an analysis of Johnson’s footnotes, Arthur Sherbo suggests that in *King Lear* Johnson’s edition offered a total of 304 notes but that Johnson’s own ‘emendations and conjectural readings’ added only sixteen footnotes.<sup>45</sup> Johnson made it clear that the work of earlier editors was to be used but so few new notes is a disappointing element of his edition.

Bearing in mind what Johnson had written in his Preface, the following is a selection of the footnotes from *King Lear*. Although Johnson makes use of an earlier editor’s note where he approves it, when he feels it is unsatisfactory, he will say so and often

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<sup>42</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 1, D6r.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 1, D6v.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 6, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1956) 135.



add a dry comment. Warburton's emendation of Cornwall's line 'twenty silly-ducking observants' to 'silky ducking observants'<sup>46</sup> gets short shrift. Johnson writes 'The alteration is more ingenious than the arguments by which it is supported.' Another example of Johnson's judgment, this time between the notes of two earlier editors, is at Edmund's line 'Edmund the base/Shall be th'legitimate'.<sup>47</sup> Warburton had written scathingly of Hanmer's emendation 'toe th'legitimate' but Johnson comes to Hanmer's defence<sup>48</sup> writing that Hanmer's emendation 'will appear very plausible to him that shall consult the original reading' i.e. the first quarto which reads 'shall tooth'legitimate'. Johnson goes on 'The word *be* has no authority' which is curious because he keeps this in his own edition where the line reads 'Shall be th'legitimate'. When Johnson approves a previous editor's work he is generous in acknowledging this. For example, the Fool's speech beginning 'This is a brave night to cool a courtezan'<sup>49</sup> earned a long note from Warburton and of this Johnson writes 'The sagacity and acuteness of Dr. Warburton are very conspicuous in this note'. This praise from Johnson echoes his comment in the Preface that Warburton's 'interpretation of obscure passages [was] learned and sagacious.'<sup>50</sup>

Although Johnson wrote in his Preface he had 'not been very diligent'<sup>51</sup> in observing poetical beauties in the plays, he did select Edgar's speech beginning 'How fearful/And dizzy',<sup>52</sup> commenting 'This description has been much admired ... The description is certainly not mean, but I am far from thinking it wrought to the utmost excellence of poetry'. He then argues that the mention of the birds and men seen below the cliff top hinders the sense of great 'emptiness and horror' through which one might fall.<sup>53</sup>

Some of Johnson's particularly interesting footnotes are ones in which he attempts

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<sup>46</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, II, vi, p.57. n.5; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 101.

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, I, vi, p.20, n.8; Arden, *King Lear*, I, ii, 20-1, 'Shall top the legitimate'.

<sup>48</sup> As does Benjamin Heath in his earlier *A Revisal of Shakespear's Text*, (1765) 319.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, III, iii, pp.84-5, n.7; Arden, *King Lear*, III,ii, 79ff which does not accept the Warburton proposal.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 1, D3r.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 1, D6v.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 6, IV, vi, pp.123-4, n.2; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vi, 11-2.

<sup>53</sup> Compare this with *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. G.B.Hill, rev. L.F.Powell, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1964) 2, 87. Boswell records a conversation on 16 October 1769 when someone praised the description of the cliff at Dover. Johnson replied 'No, Sir; it should be all precipice, - all vacuum. The crows impede your fall.'

to, as it were, see into Shakespeare's mind when trying to understand some lines or words. One example of this is in the scene where Oswald resists Regan's attempt to take Goneril's letter from him.<sup>54</sup> Johnson wonders at this point 'I know not well why *Shakespeare* gives the Steward, who is a mere factor of wickedness, so much fidelity.' A similar moment is in the opening scene where Johnson ponders on the 'obscurity or inaccuracy' of this scene. He comments that Kent and Gloucester already seem to know how the kingdom is to be divided, as is made clear by their first lines, and suggests that perhaps Shakespeare's intention was that 'Kent and Gloucester only were privy to his [Lear's] design'.<sup>55</sup> Johnson also felt that '*Shakespeare* makes his *Lear* too much a mythologist'<sup>56</sup> and draws attention to Lear's exclamations using the names of gods. Elsewhere he objects that 'Our authour by negligence gives his heathens the sentiments and practices of christianity.'<sup>57</sup>

Sometimes Johnson is baffled by a phrase and frankly acknowledges his bafflement. For example at Kent's attack on Oswald beginning 'Thou whoreson zed! thou unnecessary letter!'<sup>58</sup> Johnson writes 'I do not well understand how a man is reproached by being called *Zed*, nor how *Z* is an *unnecessary letter*'. Johnson offers possible alternatives but ends 'But all the copies concur in the common reading.' Another example is at Edmund's 'Thou, Nature, art my goddess' speech. Commenting on the phrase 'Wherefore should I/Stand in the plague of custom,'<sup>59</sup> Johnson quotes Warburton who had declared the expression 'absurd' and offered the alternative 'plage' in the sense of 'the place, the country, the boundary of custom'.<sup>60</sup> Johnson then adds 'The word *plague* is in all the old copies: I can scarcely think it right, nor can I yet reconcile myself to the emendation proposed, though I have nothing better to offer' and he lets 'plague' stand.

A number of Johnson's notes of explanation, and many of his stage directions,<sup>61</sup> are accepted in today's editions of *King Lear*. For example, Kent's lines 'answer my life

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, IV, v, p.121; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, v.

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, I, i, p.3.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 6, I, ii, p.12, n.4.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 6, V, viii, p.151, n.3.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 6, II, vi, p.54, n.8; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 62.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, I, vi, pp.18-9 and n.6; Arden, *King Lear*, I, ii, 2-3.

<sup>60</sup> Warburton, *Shakespeare*, 6, I, vi, p.15, n.8.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 190; II, ii, 301; IV, i, 27, 29, 39, 55, 57, etc.

my judgment,/Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least'<sup>62</sup> Johnson explains as '*Let my life be answerable for my judgment, or I will stake my life on my opinion*' and Arden agrees: 'I stake my life on (the validity of) my judgment'. However some of Johnson's explanations are discarded; for example his gloss on 'Age is unnecessary'<sup>63</sup> as 'old age has few wants' is rejected and is generally explained as meaning that old people are useless and not needed.<sup>64</sup> One of Johnson's explanations of a phrase drew disagreement and a long comment from the bookseller and actor Thomas Davies. The phrase is Goneril's line 'One way, I like this well'<sup>65</sup> spoken after she has heard of the death of Cornwall. Johnson explains that Goneril is 'well pleased' because Cornwall was preparing for war against her. Davies quotes Johnson but disagrees, explaining that Goneril means that she thinks that the death of Cornwall will make it 'no difficult matter' for her to take Regan's 'dominions' from her now that her husband is dead.<sup>66</sup>

In the main body of the text, lines reinstated from the quarto are printed in italics and Johnson notes the name of the editor responsible for the addition. For example, the short scene between Kent and an unnamed Gentleman discussing the King of France's departure and Cordelia's grief<sup>67</sup> was reinstated by Pope. Johnson also includes the scene, prints Pope's note and adds 'This scene seems to have been left out only to shorten the play ... It is extant only in the quarto ... I have therefore put it in *Italicks*.' Similarly, the scene showing the mock trial has large sections printed in italics including Kent's speech starting 'Opprest Nature sleeps' to the end of Edgar's speech finishing 'Lurk, lurk!'.<sup>68</sup> These passages were restored from the quarto by Pope and Theobald. Johnson includes them in italics, acknowledges the earlier editors and adds 'The omission ... in the folio is certainly faulty.' Another passage also restored by Theobald which Johnson gives though not in italics, is part of a scene between Lear and his Fool. This passage contains the Fool's line 'if I had a monopoly on't [out], they would have

<sup>62</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, I, ii, p.10, n.8; Arden, *King Lear*, I, i, 152-3.

<sup>63</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, II, xi, p.68, n.6; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 344.

<sup>64</sup> Lear's line summarises what J. Halio calls 'Gonerill's and Regan's Darwinian outlook', *The Tragedy of King Lear*, (Cambridge, 1992) 2, iv, 147n.

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, IV, ii, p.115, n.2; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, ii, 84.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 308-9. Arden follows Davies more closely.

<sup>67</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, IV, iii, pp.116-9, n.3; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, iii, 1-56.

<sup>68</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, III, ix, pp.95-100, n. 3, 6; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vi, 94-112.

part on't'<sup>69</sup> and Johnson's note suggests that this passage is 'omitted in the folio, perhaps for political reasons, as it seemed to censure monopolies', an observation already made by Warburton. This refers to the practice of James I, who in spite of the passing of an act forbidding it, granted monopolies to his courtiers.<sup>70</sup>

Because of his dictionary, published in 1755,<sup>71</sup> there is a special interest in studying Johnson's occasional definition of a word. Following the example of some twentieth-century critics,<sup>72</sup> I have, on occasion, referred to the Dictionary when examining his definitions. For example, in Lear's curse of Goneril starting 'Hear, Nature, hear', there is the phrase 'cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks'.<sup>73</sup> Warburton emended the word 'cadent' to 'candent'. Johnson quotes Warburton and adds 'This emendation, if *candent* be a word any where to be found, is elegant, but not necessary.' The curiosity of this comment lies in the fact that in his dictionary Johnson has the word 'candent' which he explains as 'Hot' from the Latin *candens* and gives 'Brown'<sup>74</sup> as an earlier user. He also has the word 'cadent' defined as 'Falling down'. Both words make sense in the context of Shakespeare's phrase but as Johnson rightly says, there is no need for an emendation. While Johnson could not be expected to remember all the words defined in his dictionary, it is odd that he did not check his dictionary to see whether or not the word 'candent' is 'any where to be found'. Another word explained by Johnson is 'corky' which Cornwall uses to describe Gloucester's arms in the blinding episode.<sup>75</sup> In his dictionary Johnson gives the obvious meaning of 'Consisting of cork' and cites the *King Lear* phrase. His footnote in *King Lear* broadens this to 'Dry, withered, husky' while Arden has 'dry, withered', quoting Harsnett.

At the end of most of the plays, including *King Lear*, Johnson adds what he calls in

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<sup>69</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, I, xiii, pp.36-7, n. 6; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 145-6.

<sup>70</sup> See Arden, *King Lear*, Introduction, 130.

<sup>71</sup> In his Dictionary Johnson 'seems to quote' about 1200 times from *King Lear* but not from Tate's adaptation; 'all the Tate quotations come from his contributions to Dryden's translation of Juvenal's satires'. This information is from Dr. G.W. Nicholls of the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum who stresses in a letter to me dated 31 March 1998 that it is tentative as no extensive research has been carried out on the source of the quotations in the Dictionary. The CD-ROM edition, ed. Anne McDermott, (Cambridge, 1996) will be helpful on further work.

<sup>72</sup> E.g. Arthur Sherbo, *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1956) 64ff; Jean H. Hagstrum, *Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism*, (Minnesota, 1952) 5, 18, 24, 50, etc.

<sup>73</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, I, xv, p.41, n.4; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 277.

<sup>74</sup> Sir Thomas Browne, *Enquiries into Vulgar Errors*, (1646).

<sup>75</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, III, xi, p.101, starred note; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vii, 29.

his Preface, ‘short strictures, containing a general censure of faults, or praise of excellence’.<sup>76</sup> On *King Lear*<sup>77</sup> he writes that ‘There is perhaps no play which keeps the attention so strongly fixed; which so much agitates our passions and interests our curiosity.’ Johnson accepts and explains the cruelty of the daughters as being ‘an historical fact’ but is unable to justify the blinding of Gloucester which ‘seems an act too horrid to be endured in dramattick exhibition’. Having said this, Johnson then suggests that the Elizabethan audience was more prepared to accept this sort of violence on stage, writing ‘Yet let it be remembered that our authour well knew what would please the audience for which he wrote’. What is interesting is that Johnson continues that although *King Lear* is like ‘human life’, a play which follows ‘the observation of justice’ is to be preferred and that ‘the audience [the eighteenth-century audience] will ... rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue’. Thus Johnson, no doubt ‘conditioned and limited by his neo classical principles’,<sup>78</sup> points out the change in sensibilities between Shakespeare’s age and his own and explains, in part, the success of Tate’s adaptation. He then makes his famous comment that he was unable to endure re-reading ‘the last scenes of the play’ until he came to edit them himself. At the end of these notes on *King Lear*, Johnson prints 17 out of 23 verses of ‘an old historical ballad’,<sup>79</sup> which he argues was published before the play and was therefore a source for Shakespeare. Johnson reasons that the ballad is earlier than the play because it ‘has nothing of *Shakespeare*’s nocturnal tempest, which is too striking to have been omitted’<sup>80</sup> if the ballad was copying the play.

Johnson added an Appendix of additional notes, all supplied by others, to the end of his final volume. He introduced this Appendix by acknowledging ‘remarks from learned Friends, which came sometimes too late for insertion’.<sup>81</sup> Among these he particularly refers to ‘just remarks’ from Heath’s *Revisal* and some ‘valuable illustrations’ from Zachary Grey. Although Johnson does not mention him by name in

<sup>76</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 1, D7r. Now usually referred to as the General Observations.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 6, 158.

<sup>78</sup> *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. A. Sherbo, vols. 7 and 8 (Yale, 1968) 7, Intro. by Bertrand H. Bronson, xxix. These ‘neo classical principles’ are discussed in greater detail in chapter 15.

<sup>79</sup> The same ballad discussed by Charlotte Lennox, *Shakespear Illustrated*, 3 vols. (1753-4). See chapter 11 for the identification of this ballad in the Johnson-Steevens edition of 1773 which prints the ballad in full and adds further comments on the source.

<sup>80</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, 160.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 8, Hh6r.

his introductory paragraph, many remarks by George Steevens, who was shortly to take an important part in the editing of Shakespeare, are also included and carry his name. The Appendix gives a total of fourteen extra notes for *King Lear*, of which Steevens contributed seven. The chief note, which Johnson attributes to Grey, is a long one on the letters written by Goneril and Regan.<sup>82</sup> Grey suggests that Regan's line 'Therefore I do advise you take this note'<sup>83</sup> should read 'Therefore I do advise you, *take note of this*'. Arden agrees with the sense that this wording gives but prefers to let the original order stand.

On the whole, Johnson carried out the intentions expressed in his Preface. This Preface was then, and is today, generally approved. It has often been commented on as a separate entity from the rest of his *Shakespeare*. Indeed, some of his contemporaries 'did not even wait to examine the edition as a whole'<sup>84</sup> but rushed into print basing their remarks on the Preface alone. These included George Colman the elder writing in the *St. James's Chronicle* on the day of publication, 10 October 1765. Colman, pretending to quote 'some little Witling', first made a sly comment stressing the delay in the publication of the edition - 'JOHNSON's Shakespeare! published! when? - this Morning - What, at last! ... I know a Friend of mine that subscribed in Fifty-six' but goes on to say that any work by Johnson 'come when they will, like an agreeable Guest, we are sure to give them a hearty Welcome'. Extracts from the Preface only are printed over the next several days. *The London Chronicle* praises the edition as 'this very valuable work' and quotes from the Preface.<sup>85</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* first quotes from and comments favourably upon the Preface but later quotes large sections from the General Observations, spread over two months.

The edition received rougher treatment than the Preface alone and its reputation has wavered over the years. At first, it was subjected to the established custom of being attacked, often by lesser contemporaries. This was a fate suffered by the previous editors and it was unlikely that a man of Johnson's stature would escape. William Kenrick, 'whose chief claim to remembrance ... resides in the unbridled fury with which he descend upon Johnson ... and in the name he bestowed upon his son,

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 8, Kk5r and v.

<sup>83</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, IV, v, 31.

<sup>84</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1956) 47.

<sup>85</sup> *The London Chronicle*, 10-12 October 1765, 354.

William Shakespeare Kenrick',<sup>86</sup> wrote of 'the outrage he [Johnson] hath committed on Shakespeare'.<sup>87</sup> As he had done in a censorious article in *The Monthly Review* of October and November 1765,<sup>88</sup> Kenrick accused Johnson of plagiarism<sup>89</sup> but the vehement comments<sup>90</sup> in his book did not include anything specifically on *King Lear*. Another critic, although more restrained, was Thomas Tyrwhitt who wrote that he had 'not been gratified'<sup>91</sup> by Johnson's emendations but, again, there is little on *King Lear*. In his last comment Tyrwhitt repoints a passage between Lear and the Fool,<sup>92</sup> reassigns a line from the King to the Fool following the Folio, and adds, with a theatrical flourish, his final line, 'Alas, poor Shakespeare!'<sup>93</sup> Other comments critical of Johnson's work include 'Much had been expected ... little now appeared'<sup>94</sup> and James Barclay, writing in defence of Johnson against Kenrick's venom, acknowledged that the edition 'incurred the public censure'.<sup>95</sup>

Twentieth-century critics are, on the whole, kinder, some claiming it as 'the best which had yet appeared'<sup>96</sup> but some censure remains. Ronald McKerrow notes that Johnson 'printed from the text of Warburton, and his edition contains misprints taken over by Warburton from Theobald's second edition' but he acknowledges the merit of

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<sup>86</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1956) 30.

<sup>87</sup> William Kenrick, *Review of Doctor Johnson's new edition of Shakespeare: in which the ignorance, or inattention, of that editor is exposed*, (1765) xv.

<sup>88</sup> *The Monthly Review*, November 1765, 388.

<sup>89</sup> William Kenrick, *Review of Doctor Johnson's new edition of Shakespeare*, (1765) 36-7. For a discussion on Johnson's alleged plagiarism and the validity, or otherwise, of Kenrick's accusations, see Arthur Sherbo's *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare*, (Urbana 1956) chapter 3; and *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Arthur Sherbo, (Yale, 1975) 7, xxxvii-xxxviii.

<sup>90</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* of November 1765, in its review of Kenrick's book, wonders at the 'malignity' with which it is written; 529.

<sup>91</sup> [Thomas Tyrwhitt], *Observations and conjectures upon some passages of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1766) 2.

<sup>92</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 217-27.

<sup>93</sup> [Thomas Tyrwhitt], *Observations and conjectures upon some passages of Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1766) 54.

<sup>94</sup> John Hawkins, *The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. together with His Life*, 11 vols. (1787) 1, 441.

<sup>95</sup> James Barclay, *An Examination of Mr. Kenrick's Review of Dr. Johnson's Edition of Shakespeare*, (1766) iii; quoted in Arthur Sherbo, *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1956) 49.

<sup>96</sup> D. Nichol Smith, ed., *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, (Oxford, 1963) xxxi. For a discussion on the fluctuating reputation of Johnson's *Shakespeare* see *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Arthur Sherbo, (Yale, 1975) 7, xxxiv-xxxvi.

the Preface and, more significantly, ‘the illuminating common sense’ of the notes.<sup>97</sup> Arthur Sherbo writes that ‘Johnson promised much more than he fulfilled, and his collation leaves much to be desired’.<sup>98</sup> Bertrand H. Bronson, in the Yale edition of *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, writes that ‘Despite all legitimate subtractions, ... in our century Johnson’s reputation ... has been amply’ redeemed.<sup>99</sup> A final quotation, from *The Annual Register* of 1765 is worth noting: ‘notwithstanding the long delay ... and his [Johnson’s] not complying altogether with the expectation of the public, the public will be found considerably indebted to him’.<sup>100</sup> This summing-up is an eighteenth-century opinion which probably comes close to today’s opinion of Johnson’s *Shakespeare*.

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<sup>97</sup> Ronald B. McKerrow, ‘The Treatment of Shakespeare’s Text by his early Editors, 1709-1768’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, (1933)114.

<sup>98</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1956) 43-4.

<sup>99</sup> *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Arthur Sherbo, 9 vols. (Yale, 1975) 7, xxxvi.

<sup>100</sup> *The Annual Register or, A View of the History, Politicks and Literature for the Year 1765*, (1766) 312.



Illustration 10

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEAR .**

*From an Original Picture by Cornelius Jansen in the Collection of C. Jennens Esq.*

*R. Tatham fecit*

The so-called Shakespeare portrait in Charles Jennens's *King Lear* (1770),  
taken from BL 80.i.23(1)

**George Steevens, George Colman the Elder and Edward Capell,  
1766-1773 and the performances between those dates**

**1766** In 1766 George Steevens, who had had many of his notes printed in Johnson's Appendix (1765), offered his first edition of Shakespeare's works. Called *Twenty of the Plays of Shakespeare, Being the whole Number printed in Quarto During his LIFE-TIME, or before the RESTORATION*, it appeared in January in four volumes. In volume 1 Steevens includes an 'Advertisement to the Reader'<sup>1</sup> in which he condemns 'The past editors' who although qualified, 'wanted industry' and who 'published catalogues ... of a greater number of old copies than ever they can be supposed to have had in their possession' but he exempts Johnson from this last criticism. Steevens also argues in favour of the quartos over the folio as a text. He then refers to 'a tragedy of KING LEIR, published before that of SHAKESPEARE, which is not improbable he might have seen'<sup>2</sup> and he prints this *History of King Leir* (1605) at the end of the last volume. Also in volume 1 Steevens gives 'A List of the Old Editions of Shakespeare's Plays'<sup>3</sup> and under *King Lear* notes two copies of the 1608 Butter edition plus one of Jane Bell's of 1655, but in volume 2 he gives it as his opinion that the second copy of the 1608 edition and the Bell edition are 'but a Copy from the First, and retains even the Printer's Errors'.<sup>4</sup> Apart from these briefest of comments, *King Lear* was entirely without notes or commentary. The reception of this edition was, on the whole, favourable; *The Critical Review* wrote 'We have long earnestly wished for such a publication as this before us'.<sup>5</sup>

Shortly after this, Steevens wrote a proposal in *The London Chronicle* of 1-4 February 1766, advocating a Variorum edition of Shakespeare's plays and arguing that 'it is become necessary to apply to the Public' for their help in supplying notes and old copies. This proposal was a trailer for the work published in 1773, known as the first Johnson-Steevens edition and which I discuss in the following chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> George Steevens, *Twenty Plays of Shakespeare*, 4 vols. (1766) 1, 5-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 16, (see footnote 88).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 21-4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 2, G4v. The two 1608 quartos are now known to be 1608 and 1619 (Q1 and Q2) and 1655 is Q3.

<sup>5</sup> *The Critical Review*, 21, January 1766, 26.

Apart from this hint of important works to come, there was little excitement during the next few years in the history of *King Lear* although another step was to be made towards the return to Shakespeare's tragedy. In 1766 there were few new actors of lasting significance at either main playhouse. Drury Lane staged four performances of Garrick's adaptation on 11 January, 5 and 29 April and 29 October. Garrick, although playing many of his old roles again, still did not perform in *King Lear* and William Powell continued in the title-role. One change in casting was Sophia Baddeley (1745-86), probably the foremost newcomer, playing the role of Cordelia for the first time on 29 April. This performance was a benefit for her and her husband, Robert Baddeley<sup>6</sup> (1733-94) a small-part actor who was cast as the Gentleman Usher. According to her memoirs Baddeley's debut as Cordelia was earlier, in 1764, when she replaced a sick actress at short notice and read the part. Never having seen the play performed, she fainted in terror at the appearance of Mad Tom and for this demonstration of sensibility was rewarded 'by the thunder of reiterated applause'.<sup>7</sup> This unlikely-sounding story is made more improbable by the fact that there is no recorded performance of *King Lear* at Drury Lane in 1764.<sup>8</sup> Sophia Baddeley was described as 'an agreeable actress ... [who] pleads the part of chastity in her characters, with so much grace ... we might without a doubt, imagine it to be her natural qualification',<sup>9</sup> a dubious compliment. Another newcomer at Drury Lane was Robert Bensley (1742-1817), cast as Edmund. On 28 August 1766, before the start of the new season, Garrick wrote to Bensley 'Pray look over the parts of ... the *Bastard* in *Lear* ... [which] will be wanted first'.<sup>10</sup> Bensley played this role for the first time on 29 October and was faintly praised as being 'just' in the part.<sup>11</sup> He then moved to Covent Garden in 1767 where he continued as Edmund,<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Highfill, 1, 196-202. Robert Baddeley is best remembered for his will which provided a sum of money for cakes and ale to be enjoyed by the actors of Drury Lane on each Twelfth Night, a custom still observed today.

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Elizabeth Steele, *Memoirs of Sophia Baddeley*, 6 vols. (1787) 1, 7-8.

<sup>8</sup> According to *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (2, 202) Baddeley's debut was as Ophelia on 27 September 1764; the memoirs may have confused the two parts.

<sup>9</sup> William Hawkins, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, (1775) 27-8.

<sup>10</sup> *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. D. M. Little and G. M. Kahrl, 3 vols. (1963) 2, 535-6.

<sup>11</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770), 1, 374.

<sup>12</sup> Highfill, 2, 36-43. I can find no contemporary comment on whether the players, moving between the theatres and, therefore, between the different adaptations of *King Lear*, experienced any problems with the changes in their parts. At the end of his career Garrick, perhaps wisely, refused to play Shakespeare's Lear for fear that he would not be at ease in the new role after so many years in his own adaptation; see chapter 11.

and returned to Drury Lane in 1775. Although Bensley studied his parts 'with unremitting diligence and care'<sup>13</sup> and played a huge variety of roles during his long career, he never attained the top rank. Garrick is supposed to have dubbed him 'Roaring Bob' because he appeared to promote a style of acting which Garrick had long since banished from the stage.<sup>14</sup> James Dodd (c.1740-96) played the Gentleman Usher at two of the performances this year (1766). This actor had started his career in the autumn of 1765 and over the next few years established himself as one of the leading actors of fops and coxcombs. His Shakespearean roles were relatively few but he was a successful Andrew Aguecheek.<sup>15</sup>

The situation was very similar at Covent Garden which also staged *King Lear* four times during 1766, on 4 March, 23 April, 19 and 24 November. Lear was played by the leading actor of the company, David Ross who, like Powell at Drury Lane, was now well-established in this part. At the first two performances, George Anne Bellamy was Cordelia but for the two performances in November another newcomer, Mary Wilford (1748-92; later Bulkley and then Barresford) took on Cordelia for the first time. It would be interesting to know why Bellamy did not play the part on these two dates. Perhaps this was an occasion when her complicated private life interfered yet again with her stage commitments.<sup>16</sup> Whether or not there was any dispute between Bellamy, Mary Wilford and the management on this occasion, there was to be a notable clash between them over the part of Cordelia in the following year. John Cushing, sometimes spelt Cushion (1719-90), who had first played the Gentleman Usher at Covent Garden in 1748, was still in this role. He had started his career at the London fairs, then moved to Goodman's Fields in 1744 before joining Covent Garden where he remained as a journeyman actor (i.e. he was paid on a daily rather than a weekly basis) for thirty-one of his forty-one years on the stage.<sup>17</sup> The actor cast as Edmund for the performance on 23 April was William Gardner (d.1790). Gardner was a supporting actor at Covent Garden and his other roles included Cornwall and Kent in later years. During most summers he was at the Haymarket where his roles tended to be more important. His

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<sup>13</sup> William Hawkins, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, (1775) 47.

<sup>14</sup> Highfill, 2, 41.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 432-40.

<sup>16</sup> See C.H. Hartmann, *Enchanting Bellamy*, (1956).

<sup>17</sup> Highfill, 4, 101-3.

final performance, at the end of his long career, was as the physician in *King Lear* on 11 January 1790 and he died in May the same year.<sup>18</sup>

A new development this year 1766, was the staging of plays at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket,<sup>19</sup> normally the home of opera. Spranger Barry was lately returned from his failed theatre in Dublin where he had had 'the poor satisfaction of ruining his rival [at Smock Alley] only to be at last devoured himself'.<sup>20</sup> Now he staged plays at the King's during the summer of 1766 and these included two performances on 25 and 29 August, of Tate's *King Lear*. Barry himself was Lear and the actress playing Cordelia was Ann (sometimes Anne) Dancer. Dancer had first played Cordelia in York in 1752 and married the actor, William Dancer who had been her Lear. From there she moved to Dublin where she played Cordelia, opposite Spranger Barry and, now a widow, she eventually married her Lear for a second time.<sup>21</sup> She returned from Ireland with Barry in 1766, first to the King's, Haymarket and then to Drury Lane where she was to become a leading actress. The King's company included several players from the two main houses which were closed during the summer. Richard Hurst (d.1805) came from Drury Lane and played Cornwall which he had attempted at Drury Lane in October 1765 on first joining that company. During his near-fifty years on the stage Hurst never played lead roles and was condemned for being a 'laborious, imitative drudge'<sup>22</sup> and for speaking all his roles in an 'extravagantly loud' tone.<sup>23</sup> Francis Aickin (1736-1812) who had joined Garrick in 1765, was engaged at the King's during the summer of 1766 where one of his roles was Kent. A contemporary of Aickin wrote that his 'forte seems to lie mostly in the impassioned declamatory parts of tragedy'<sup>24</sup> and he was probably best described as 'diligent, not brilliant'.<sup>25</sup> Starting his career at this time was John

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 5, 460-3.

<sup>19</sup> Not to be confused with the Haymarket Theatre, sometimes referred to as the Little Theatre, where for many years Samuel Foote staged plays during the summer months.

<sup>20</sup> Richard. J. Smith MS. 'Collections on the Drama', 2 vols. (1817) 2, 128v. (BL Add. MSS. 38,620-1).

<sup>21</sup> The marriage was sometime between December 1767 and February 1768. ( Highfill, 1, 333).

<sup>22</sup> Sir Nicholas Nipclose [pseud.] (Francis Gentleman?), *The Theatres. A Poetical Dissection*, (1772) 49.

<sup>23</sup> [Hugh Kelly], *Thespis*, (1766) 26.

<sup>24</sup> William Hawkins, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, (1775) 9.

<sup>25</sup> Highfill, 1, 47.

Quick (1748-1831) who first played Burgundy on 29 August at the King's, Haymarket. Quick spent most of his career at Covent Garden where he took modest roles until his personal triumph as Tony Lumpkin in the first production of *She Stoops to Conquer* in March 1773.<sup>26</sup> The actor cast as Gloucester this summer season is given as 'Johnston' in *Shakespeare in the Theatre* but there are claims that 'Johnston' was the actor Peter Bardin (d.1773) who, during this summer, acted at the King's, Haymarket under a false name.<sup>27</sup> Highfill offers a further alternative that Bardin played Gloucester the following year (1767) at the other Haymarket Theatre, on 15 July, under the name of Thompson. The mysterious Bardin, 'a contentious man ... [whose] performances were disrupted by verbal exchanges between him on the stage and opponents in the gallery',<sup>28</sup> acted in 'the formal school which Garrick so completely overturned'.<sup>29</sup> It is unclear why he took an assumed name, whether Johnston or Thompson, having earlier played the roles of Kent and Albany, among others, under his own name. One writer claims Bardin had 'offended the audience so much that he deemed it necessary to quit the theatre'<sup>30</sup> but offers no explanation of the offence.

**1767** The year 1767 saw four performances of *King Lear* at Drury Lane, 23 April, 20 May, 21 and 24 October with a number of changes in the cast. Mrs. Baddeley again played Cordelia but at the first performance only; then Hannah Palmer took over on 20 May. Powell, who was at the end of his career at Drury Lane, played Lear on 23 April and 20 May, his last appearance at that theatre. For the final performances that year (October 21 and 24) he surrendered the role to Barry who had returned in triumph to Drury Lane, after a break of ten years. Barry and his second wife, Ann Dancer, 'his fair heroine carried all before them'<sup>31</sup> and Powell moved to Covent Garden. Here he was co-manager with George Colman<sup>32</sup> and again played Lear until his unexpected death

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 12, 217-25.

<sup>27</sup> John Taylor, *Records of my Life*, 2 vols. (1832) 1, 374.

<sup>28</sup> Highfill, 1, 287-8.

<sup>29</sup> John Taylor, *Records of my Life*, 2 vols. (1832) 1, 374.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 1, 57.

<sup>31</sup> Richard J. Smith MS. 'Collections on the Drama', 2 vols. (1817) 2, 130r (BL Add. MSS. 38,620 -1).

<sup>32</sup> Colman left Drury Lane and Garrick in 1767. For an account of this and the following events, see E.R. Page, *George Colman the Elder*, (Columbia, 1935) chapters 4 and 5.

in 1769. Powell had started his career with great promise but may have grown over-confident and allowed himself to slip into lazy and out-dated ways of acting. In spite of his initial success he did not achieve the fame of Garrick, perhaps because of his early death aged 33 years. Francis Gentleman felt that as Lear, Powell was 'far, far beneath Mr. GARRICK' but that in 'the tender strokes and feebleness of expression ... he was excellent'<sup>33</sup> and another critic wrote 'He was a pleasing, rather than a great actor - but he was *very* pleasing'.<sup>34</sup> On February 8, 1767 Garrick wrote forcefully to his brother George, that Powell's 'bouncing, strutting, Striding, straddling, thumping, grinning, Swaggering, Staggering all be shit'.<sup>35</sup> Did Garrick fear that the old ranting style of acting was making a return<sup>36</sup> or was there a touch of jealousy at his own protégé's outstanding success?

Immediately before his return to Drury Lane in the autumn of 1767, Spranger Barry assembled a cast for the summer as he had done the previous year. He appeared this year at the theatre in the Haymarket, known as the Little Theatre or, simply the Haymarket, to distinguish it from the King's Haymarket and *King Lear* was staged on 15 July, the first time since 1756. Barry 'played Lear very well. His broken voice is appropriate to that character'<sup>37</sup> and as Cordelia, Ann Dancer was 'irresistibly affecting'.<sup>38</sup> However, one critic felt that in this role she 'rather over-figures the Character', a phrase meaning presumably 'over-acts'.<sup>39</sup> The other players included Thomas Barry (c.1743-68), the son of Spranger by his first wife.<sup>40</sup> Thomas played Edgar and a member of the audience that night wrote of him 'Young Barry was tolerable in some parts of Edgar, but very inanimate in ye last scenes'.<sup>41</sup> The Gentleman Usher was played by Thomas

<sup>33</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 372.

<sup>34</sup> *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, ed. J. Boaden, 2 vols. (1831-2)1, xviii.

<sup>35</sup> *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. D. M. Little and G. M. Kahrl, 3 vols. (1963) 2, 557.

<sup>36</sup> Compare Garrick's name for Robert Bensley, 'Roaring Bob', p.155 above.

<sup>37</sup> Sylas Neville, MS. transcript of diary, (Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, MC7/1, 395x1, section 4).

<sup>38</sup> John Taylor, *Records of My Life*, 2 vols. (1832) 1, 355.

<sup>39</sup> *The Theatrical Review; or, New Companion to the Play-House*, 2 vols. (1772) 1, 219. Francis Gentleman uses an almost identical phrase to describe Mrs. Barry as Cordelia when he writes that she 'feels it extremely well, but rather outfigures it', (*The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 376). For one meaning of the word 'figure', OED gives 'to be conspicuous ... to show off' (v.14b).

<sup>40</sup> Highfill, 1, 351-3.

<sup>41</sup> Sylas Neville, MS. transcript of diary, (Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, MC7/1, 395x1, section 4).

Weston (1737-76) one of the finest actors of low comedy. Surpassed only by Edward Shuter, it was said of Weston that he was 'nature's own comedian'.<sup>42</sup> He played at Drury Lane in 1766 and 1767 and at the Haymarket in the summer seasons.

At Covent Garden there were three performances of Tate's adaptation in 1767, 19 January, 9 March and 13 May, all before the arrival of William Powell in the autumn. Until the establishment of the new but short-lived Powell and Colman management, David Ross still retained the role of Lear although condemned some years later as being 'very unequal to the task'.<sup>43</sup> The rest of the cast was largely unchanged but on 19 January, Miss Wilford, who had played the role twice in 1766, was again Cordelia. According to George Anne Bellamy,<sup>44</sup> Bellamy's name had been announced 'in the bills' but the deputy manager gave the part to Wilford. Bellamy protested, declaring 'play the character *I will*' and won the audience's support so that the unfortunate Miss Wilford was forced to withdraw although she had already made her entrance.

**1768** In 1768, only the two major theatres staged *King Lear*. Barry, re-established at Drury Lane, played Lear at the one performance, a benefit for the veteran, William Havard on 8 April, with Ann Dancer as Cordelia. Another member of Barry's family at Drury Lane at this time was Jane Osborne (1739-71) married to William Barry, brother of Spranger, and now cast as Goneril. She started her London career at Drury Lane in 1766 where she played Juliet but she never established herself as a major actress and was eclipsed by her sister-in-law, Ann Dancer.<sup>45</sup> Samuel Reddish (1735-85) played Edgar, a role in which he gave 'considerable pleasure';<sup>46</sup> another critic claimed he was 'very respectable [as Edgar] ... his Master-Piece' and excelled in the mad scenes.<sup>47</sup>

It was at Covent Garden, managed by Colman and Powell, that on 20 February

<sup>42</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 2, 154.

<sup>43</sup> *The Theatrical Review; or, New Companion to the Play-House*, 2 vols. (1772) 1, 334.

<sup>44</sup> George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy*, 5 vols. (1785, 2nd ed.) 4, 145-7.

<sup>45</sup> Highfill, 1, 353-5.

<sup>46</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 373.

<sup>47</sup> *The Theatrical Review; or, New Companion to the Play-House*, 2 vols. (1772) 1, 218. The critic also praises Reddish's speaking of Edgar's lines about his 'hopes of some blest minute to oblige/ Distrest Cordelia' - this passage is Tate's invention (Act III, p.35) but it was retained by Garrick in his revision (*Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays*, 9 vols. (1773-4) vol.2, III, p.49).



1768 Colman first staged his adaptation of *King Lear*<sup>48</sup> which was another step closer to Shakespeare. Colman had complained that Garrick had not ‘attempted to execute my projected plan of altering *King Lear*’<sup>49</sup> and he now went ahead on his own.<sup>50</sup> The major alteration by Colman was the elimination of the love interest. He writes that the love affair between Edgar and Cordelia ‘diffused a languor and insipidity over all the scenes ... from which Lear is absent’ and he ridicules ‘the embraces of Cordelia and the ragged Edgar.’<sup>51</sup> However, he feels that Tate’s adaptation ‘would probably have quitted the stage long ago’ without the happy ending<sup>52</sup> which he partly retains by keeping Lear and Cordelia alive. Cordelia is still married to the King of France and Lear declaims that he, with Kent, ‘in sweet tranquillity/Will gently pass the evening of our days’,<sup>53</sup> a fate similar to the ‘cool cell’ Tate allots his Lear. Colman also admits to having ‘had once some idea of retaining the character of *the fool*’<sup>54</sup> but, in the event, did not do so.

Other revisions by Colman were less happy. He cut Gloucester’s leap and altered the blinding. Of the leap, he wrote that he omitted it ‘without scruple,’; of the blinding, that it was ‘so unpleasing a circumstance, that I would have altered it’ but because it was ‘so closely interwoven with the fable’,<sup>55</sup> he compromised and, like Garrick, had the actual blinding take place off-stage. Thomas Davies confirms that ‘Gloster’s losing his eyes is so essential to the plot, that Mr. Colman found it impossible to throw it out.’<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Colman’s *King Lear* was published on the same day, 20 February 1768.

<sup>49</sup> George Colman, *A True State of the Differences subsisting between The Proprietors of Covent-Garden-Theatre*, (1768) 41.

<sup>50</sup> In 1768 a dispute between Colman and the other patentees flared up, partly over a £65 advance sent to Colman in connection with the staging of his revised *King Lear*. For a discussion on this see E. R. Page, *George Colman the Elder*, (Columbia, 1935) chapter 5.

<sup>51</sup> *The History of King Lear. As it is performed at The Theatre Royal in Covent Garden*, adapted by George Colman, (1768) ii-iii; hereafter referred to as Colman, *Lear*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* iii.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* Act V, p.71.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* v.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* iv-v.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 304. In the 1773 edition of Garrick’s *King Lear*, the blinding of Gloucester is off-stage (Act III, p.52) but it is possible that Garrick moved it off-stage earlier. Garrick was pruning Tate’s text and reintroducing odd lines of Shakespeare’s as early as 1756 (see chapter 8) and perhaps he made his more major revisions for example moving the blinding of Gloucester off-stage, at the same time. In ‘Garrick, Colman, and *King Lear*: A Reconsideration’, *The Shakespeare Quarterly*, 22 (New York, 1971) 57-66, Arthur J. Harris makes a strong case that Colman made the first major returns to Shakespeare’s text. Of course, whoever introduced it first, placing Gloucester’s blinding off-stage was moving further away from Shakespeare.

There are two other possibilities which excite attention concerning Colman's *King Lear*. First, did Colman try out the play with the tragic Shakespearean ending, i.e. the death of Lear and Cordelia? Second, although he cut the love scenes, did Colman later reinstate them, perhaps bowing to audience's pressure? There was reference in 1769 to Colman's adaptation 'heighten[ing] the distress of the catastrophe'.<sup>57</sup> Again, referring to a performance of *King Lear* at Covent Garden on 30 December 1771, Colman was criticised for restoring 'the original distressed Catastrophe ... [which] is now, rather too shocking to be borne'.<sup>58</sup> Both these comments seem to make it clear that Lear and Cordelia die. Is it, therefore, possible that in 1768 Colman first staged the play as he had printed it, with Cordelia and Lear surviving? Then, between at least 1769-71, did Colman attempt the Shakespearean tragic ending as seen by the two critics quoted above? Regarding the second point, the reinstatement of the love scenes, Colman's edition printed in 1768, is without these scenes and the cast lists for the years 1768, 1769 and 1770 all include the character of the King of France who, of course, is needed as Cordelia's husband if Cordelia and Edgar are no longer lovers. The cast lists for the three following years, 1771, 1772 and 1773, the last time Colman's adaptation was staged, do not list France. Was Colman's play, therefore, acted for three years with no lovers, as it was printed, and then because his play was not successful at the box office, did Colman restore the love interest between 1771 and 1773 during which time the character of France disappears from the cast lists?<sup>59</sup> All this remains speculation, but it is possible that Colman experimented with *King Lear* and perhaps attempted a return closer to Shakespeare's story than just the cutting of the love theme.

Colman's adaptation, with or without the love interest and with or without the death of Lear and Cordelia, was not a financial success because it did not offer 'that mixture

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<sup>57</sup> *The Theatrical Register or the Complete List of Every Performance at the Different Theatres for the Year 1769*, quoted by George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 1, 381, who discusses the possibility of Colman trying out Shakespeare's tragic ending but not the possibility of the re-introduction of the love interest together with the disappearance of 'France' from the cast lists.

<sup>58</sup> *The Theatrical Review, or, New Companion to the Play-House*, 2 vols. (1772) 1, 334. These comments echo Johnson's remarks, (1765, vol.6, 158-60).

<sup>59</sup> Against this possibility is a reference to Colman's rejection of 'the loves of *Edgar* and *Cordelia*' in *The Theatrical Review, or, New Companion to the Play-House*, 2 vols. (1772) 1, 334. Nonetheless, it is an odd coincidence that France does not appear on the cast lists between 1771-3 after which Colman's adaptation was no longer staged.

of pathos and sentiment, which [the audiences] ... were accustomed to in tragedy'.<sup>60</sup> According to Genest, Arthur Murphy wrote that Colman 'with an unhallowed hand, defaced the "Tragedy of King Lear"' and he takes Murphy to task for his 'silly remark' and later wrote that 'Colman's alteration of Lear was not so successful as it deserved to be'.<sup>61</sup> Colman's version was praised elsewhere as having 'many judicious restorations from the original copy' but this same critic, displaying the eighteenth-century preference for the marriage of hero and heroine after suitable trials, wrote 'I heartily wish [Colman] had not taken such a dislike to the passion of Edgar for Cordelia'.<sup>62</sup> James Boaden also noted the eighteenth-century concern for the reward of virtue and wrote 'In compliance with the general taste, he [Colman] has preserved both Lear and Cordelia' but Boaden is content that this is achieved 'without disturbing her union with the King of France'.<sup>63</sup>

Francis Gentleman, writing in *The Dramatic Censor* (1770) gives a comparison between Tate's and Colman's versions of the play and decides that 'a *third* alteration' is desirable.<sup>64</sup> He suggests having Lear divide his kingdom according to his approval of his daughters' husbands which would put this scene in 'a much better light'.<sup>65</sup> He prefers the Tate opening to Colman's return to Shakespeare; like most of the eighteenth-century writers and audience, he approves the love interest claiming that it explains Cordelia's 'barren, churlish answer'<sup>66</sup> to her father; and he enjoys Tate's ending when Cordelia received 'the highest reward of temporal happiness', marriage to 'the man of her heart'.<sup>67</sup> Colman is praised because he 'preserved several passages' between Kent and the Steward which contrasts 'Kent's honest, sarcastical bluntness ... [with] the courtly water-fly's supple nothingness' but Gentleman continues 'we heartily agree that Kent deserves some punishment' (presumably for insulting a Duke rather than the Steward both of whom suffer Kent's 'sarcastical bluntness'). He regrets the 'farcical' stocks and is 'amazed when alteration was on foot' that this was allowed to remain.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols. (1974-81) 5, 9.

<sup>61</sup> Genest, 5, 201n., 240.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 261.

<sup>63</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, 2 vols. (1827) 2, 237.

<sup>64</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 368.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 353.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 353.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 367.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 356.

Before this comparison was published, Colman's version of the play was staged five times at Covent Garden in 1768, on 20 February, 7 March, 28 April, 17 November and 20 December and with a sixth performance scheduled for 21 April but cancelled owing to the illness of the actor playing Kent.<sup>69</sup> William Powell, newly arrived from Drury Lane, was Lear; William 'Gentleman' Smith who had played Edgar in Garrick's version in 1763, now took on the same role in Colman's adaptation but in the view of one critic, he failed because he was 'injured as a performer by Mr. COLMAN's palpable mutilation of the part, in his alteration'.<sup>70</sup> Smith was praised elsewhere as 'deserving of much commendation' as Edgar<sup>71</sup> and 'gradually, with little or no permanent competition at Covent Garden',<sup>72</sup> Smith built up his position and became an established favourite. Although his talent was modest and he was criticised because he was 'liable to the reproach of distorting his features',<sup>73</sup> he was a leading actor over many years, playing various Shakespearean roles including Edgar and, earlier, Edmund. Matthew Clarke (d.1786) who had, in 1764, taken the part of Edmund, was now cast as Kent which he then played for nearly twenty years until illness forced his retirement from the stage. Kent seems to have been one of Clarke's most successful roles and contemporary criticism said that his portrayal 'hits off the cynical roughness well'<sup>74</sup> and that he was 'a very respectable representer of Kent's honest fervour and generous fidelity.'<sup>75</sup> Another minor player who deserves mention was Thomas (Dibble) Davis who was cast as Albany in 1765 but now played the first King of France since before 1681. Charles Lee Lewes (1740-1803), cast as Burgundy, played a series of small roles until, like John Quick, he had a personal success in *She Stoops to Conquer* after which his lot improved. Lewes is remembered today as the grandfather of G.H. Lewes who had a brief career as an actor before turning to a literary career.<sup>76</sup>

At the last two *King Lear* Covent Garden performances in 1768, Cordelia was taken by Mary Ann Yates (1728-87; the second Mrs. Richard Yates). One of the leading

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<sup>69</sup> *The London Stage*, pt. iv, vol. 3, 1325.

<sup>70</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 373.

<sup>71</sup> *The Theatrical Review; or, New Companion to the Play-House*, 2 vols. (1772) 1, 334.

<sup>72</sup> Highfill, 14, 177.

<sup>73</sup> *The Theatrical Review: for The Year 1757, and Beginning of 1758*, (1758) 31.

<sup>74</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 374.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols. (1783-4) 2, 291.

<sup>76</sup> Highfill, 9, 269-76.

tragediennes of her time, she specialised in ‘the loftier tread of imperial Tragedy’<sup>77</sup> but when she first played Cordelia at Drury Lane in 1765, she was praised for the ‘magic softness she displays’,<sup>78</sup> a characteristic more important in Tate’s adaptation than in Shakespeare’s. Now the deaths of Susannah Cibber (d.1766) and Hannah Pritchard (d.1768) gave her career an additional impetus.<sup>79</sup> At Drury Lane during 1766 and 1767, Mrs. Yates had grown exorbitant in her demands<sup>80</sup> so that Garrick did not re-engage her or her husband at the end of the season, taking on Spranger and Ann Barry instead. Richard and Mary Ann Yates went to Covent Garden where Mary Ann played leading parts but remained ‘haughty’, a word which appears frequently in contemporary descriptions of her. One of the stalwarts of Covent Garden at this time was the actress of the ‘screeching voice’,<sup>81</sup> Mrs. Richard Vincent, née Bincks (b. c.1708). This actress had played Cordelia in William Giffard’s ill-fated production in 1752 as well as Regan between 1764 and 1767. She had only a modest talent but continued on the stage until ‘much advanced in years’, still playing youthful roles such as Nerissa.<sup>82</sup> She played Goneril between 1768 and 1773 when she was finally sacked by Colman.<sup>83</sup> Also in Colman’s adaptation was the actor and dramatist, Thomas Hull (1728-1808) as Albany. In spite of a long career and a very large repertoire of parts including Edgar and Gloucester in which role he was faintly praised as being ‘very respectable’,<sup>84</sup> Hull was never more than a minor player. His boast was that he had missed ‘the prompter’s call but once in fifty-four years’.<sup>85</sup>

The other important event in 1768 was the publication of Edward Capell’s *Mr. William Shakespeare, his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, published in 10

<sup>77</sup> Richard J. Smith MS. ‘Collections on the Drama’, 2 vols. (1817) 2, 130r (BL Add. MSS. 38,620 -1).

<sup>78</sup> [Hugh Kelly], *Thespis*, (1766) 38.

<sup>79</sup> Highfill, 16, 326.

<sup>80</sup> The diarist Sylas Neville wrote that Mrs. Yates refused to appear as Cordelia at a benefit for a minor theatre employee because ‘she is become a great woman’ (MS. transcript of diary in Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, MC7/1,395x1, section 3). Mrs. Yates refused on at least one other occasion to play in a benefit, this time for George Anne Bellamy on 28 March 1769. Bellamy and Yates were rivals for the lead roles at Covent Garden at the time.

<sup>81</sup> [Charles Churchill], *The Rosciad of C-v-nt-G-rd-n*, (1762) 18.

<sup>82</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 298.

<sup>83</sup> Highfill, 15, 173.

<sup>84</sup> *The Theatrical Review; or, New Companion to the Play-House*, 2 vols. (1772) 1, 335.

<sup>85</sup> Highfill, 8, 34; as well as acting, Hull also tried his hand at adapting Shakespeare, e.g. *The Comedy of Errors* (twice) and *Timon of Athens*.

volumes, octavo. In his long Introduction Capell announces that because the 1744 Hanmer edition caused him 'no little astonishment', he 'resolv'd himself ... to save from further ruin an edifice ... which *England* must for ever glory in'.<sup>86</sup> To achieve this, he 'possess'd himself of the other modern editions, the folio's, and as many quarto's as could presently be procur'd ... [and] fell immediately to collation, - which is the first step in works of this nature'. He then decided 'to stick invariably to the old editions, (that is, the best of them<sup>87</sup>), which hold now the place of manuscripts.'

Also in his Introduction, Capell writes on the '*Origin of Shakespeare's Fables*' and refers to the 'silly old play'<sup>88</sup> of *King Leir* dated 1605. Other material Capell prints before he starts on the actual texts, is a table of quarto and folio editions.<sup>89</sup> His *King Lear* copies were two Nathaniel Butter editions dated 1608. The first of these he marks as '*best Edit.*'; the second as one of twelve quartos 'the compilers of former tables had no knowledge of' and Capell points out some of the differences between the true 1608 edition and the one we now know to be the 1619 edition printed with a false date: 'The first of these "Lears" is printed upon eleven sheets; the second, but upon ten and a quarter: signature, next the title-page, of the first, A.2; of the second, B.' From this it seems Capell considered the '*best Edit.*' was the 1619 edition because the true 1608 is printed on fewer sheets and the text starts at B while the 1619 text starts at A2. Other copies collated by Capell were the 1655 quarto and the 1623, 1632 and 1664 folios. There are few footnotes in the text and they are mostly brief, just two or three words giving variants offered by the earlier editors. Occasionally there is the footnote 'v. note' and this directs the reader to Capell's *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare*. The first part of this work was published in 1775 but the volume containing the notes on

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<sup>86</sup> [Edward Capell], *Mr. William Shakespeare, his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 10 vols. [1768] 1, 19-20 for the following quotations; hereafter called Capell, *Shakespeare*.

<sup>87</sup> Capell had noted that in *King Lear*, there are 'great variations' between the quartos and the Folio (*Shakespeare*, 1, 3).

<sup>88</sup> Capell, *Shakespeare*, 1, 55. It is difficult to be certain who first named the play *King Leir* as a source (Theobald mentions it but not by name). Steevens names and prints it in his 1766 edition; Capell names it in his 1768 edition but as Capell writes that he did not see Johnson's 1765 edition until his own was virtually complete and 'printed too in great part' (1, 18n) perhaps he did not see Steevens' edition of 1766 either. John Collins in *A Letter to George Hardinge, Esq.*, dated September 1774 and published 1777 claims Capell noted the *King Leir* and *Arcadia* sources first and that Steevens took Capell's comments and 'distributed [them] ... among his notes' (29n.bb). Mrs. Lennox noted the *Arcadia* source in *Shakespeare Illustrated*, as early as 1753, see chapter 8.

<sup>89</sup> Capell, *Shakespeare*, 1, f6v-f8v.

*King Lear* appeared in 1779-80, part of a three-volume edition with the notes for all the plays. Although, chronologically, this work should be examined later, it is more logical to look at the *King Lear* notes at this stage. There are fifty pages of 'Notes'<sup>90</sup> plus just over twenty-one pages of 'Various Readings'<sup>91</sup> which relate to *King Lear*, all printed in volume 1 and I have selected a representative small sample. Some of the 'Notes' are explanations of words or phrases. For example, Capell selects Kent's line 'If I had thee in *Lipsbury* pinfold'<sup>92</sup> and writes 'It is not come to knowledge, where that "*Lipsbury*" is ... but this we may know, and with certainty, - that it was some village or other, fam'd for boxing; that the boxers fought in a ring or enclos'd circle, and that this ring was call'd - *Lipsbury pinfold*'.<sup>93</sup> Other Capell notes are literary criticism. For example, on Lear's lines to Cordelia starting 'Now, our joy,'<sup>94</sup> Capell comments that the passage from the quarto has 'great advantages, in simplicity, tenderness, and it's diction's propriety, over the folio'.<sup>95</sup> However, after praising this passage, Capell then adds that he feels it necessary to mend 'it's imperfections (which are only of measure) by two black-letter words'<sup>96</sup> and he revises one line to read 'your **two** sisters' and another to read 'Go to, go to; mend **me** your speech a little'.<sup>97</sup> Capell also approves 'The oaths given to Lear ... [which] are admirable for their solemnity, and are taken from out the creed of his times as fables have given it'<sup>98</sup> which is in direct contrast to Johnson's complaint that the use of these oaths makes Lear seem too much of a mythologist.<sup>99</sup>

Capell has been described as 'one of the most acute, sensible, and learned, of all Shakespearean critics'<sup>100</sup> but the initial reception of his edition was not appreciative. No

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<sup>90</sup> Capell, *Notes and Various Readings*, 3 vols. (1779-80) 1, pt.2, 140-89.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 1, pt.2, 4D1-4F3.

<sup>92</sup> Capell, *Shakespeare*, vol.9, II, ii, p.38; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 9.

<sup>93</sup> Capell, *Notes and Various Readings*, 3 vols. (1779-80) 1, pt.2, 155-6.

<sup>94</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, I, i, 82.

<sup>95</sup> Capell, *Notes and Various Readings*, 3 vols. (1779-80) 1, pt.2, 142; the quarto does not include the lines about 'the vines of France and milk of Burgundy'. Lear's love is thus made more personal, focused only on his love for Cordelia.

<sup>96</sup> Capell uses the curious method of printing in black letter, words 'added without the authority of some ancient edition' (1, 48) and these words are found scattered through the texts.

<sup>97</sup> Capell, *Notes and Various Readings*, 3 vols. (1779-80) 1, pt.2, 142.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 1, pt. 2, 142.

<sup>99</sup> See chapter 9.

<sup>100</sup> J.O. Halliwell, *A Few Words in Defence of ... Edward Capell*, (1861) 9.

doubt enjoying the chance to attack a Shakespearean editor, Warburton wrote ‘Of all the Idiots ... who have scribbled upon Shakespear ... the most consummate, sure, is one Capel’.<sup>101</sup> Johnson’s comment that Capell’s abilities ‘were just sufficient to select the black hairs from the white, for the use of the periwig makers’,<sup>102</sup> was amusing but inaccurate. Johnson was nearer the mark when he complained ‘he doth gabble monstrously’<sup>103</sup> on paper because it is true that Capell’s prose is difficult, filled as it is with a profusion of clauses.<sup>104</sup> A defender of his work, writing nearly a hundred years after Capell’s *Shakespeare* was published, claimed that lack of appreciation was due to ‘the extremely obscure manner in which his commentary is written’.<sup>105</sup> Appreciation of Capell, ‘the great eighteenth-century editor’,<sup>106</sup> and his importance to Shakespearean studies has grown. A critic of this century wrote that while Capell’s edition ‘was somehow a failure’, it has been ‘greatly used by the editors who came after him’;<sup>107</sup> another goes further claiming that while Johnson’s edition was ‘the last of the old school of editing Capell’s was the first of the new ... based on a thorough examination of variant readings in early texts’ which earned him ridicule from his contemporaries.<sup>108</sup>

**1769** This year saw what should have been a major theatrical event, the Shakespeare Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon, conceived and planned by Garrick, staged between 6 and 8 September and years later, referred to by him as ‘that foolish hobby-horse of mine’.<sup>109</sup> The preparations were months in the planning and *King Lear* had a small part in these celebrations. The windows of the Town Hall at Stratford were decorated with scenes from the plays and ‘On the right, [was] King Lear, in the act of cursing his

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<sup>101</sup> Written in Warburton’s hand in a copy of his own *Shakespeare*, (see *Notes & Queries*, 1893, 8th series, vol. 3, 141).

<sup>102</sup> J.O. Halliwell, *A Few Words in Defence of ... Edward Capell*, (1861) 8.

<sup>103</sup> *Boswell’s Life of Johnson*, ed. G.B. Hill, rev. L.F. Powell, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1964) 4, 5.

<sup>104</sup> For an example of this see Capell’s *Shakespeare*, 1, 10-11, ‘Let it then be granted ... invalidate their testimony.’

<sup>105</sup> J.O. Halliwell, *A Few Words in Defence of ... Edward Capell*, (1861) 9.

<sup>106</sup> S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare’s Lives*, (Oxford, 1991) 48.

<sup>107</sup> R.B. McKerrow, ‘The Treatment of Shakespeare’s Text by his Early Editors 1709-68’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 19, (1933) 117.

<sup>108</sup> Alice Walker, ‘Edward Capell and his Edition of *Shakespeare*’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 46, (1960) 131.

<sup>109</sup> *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. D.M. Little and G.M. Kahrl, 3 vols. (1963) 2, 678.



daughters'.<sup>110</sup> At the Masquerade on 7 September, Joseph Cradock had 'my face made up like Garrick's for Lear'.<sup>111</sup> Among the famous who flocked to Stratford was Boswell who wrote that 'the number of nobility and gentry and of the learned and ingenious assembled to do honour to Shakespeare ... gave me much satisfaction'.<sup>112</sup> However, there were plenty of 'carping critics'<sup>113</sup> and these killjoys seemed vindicated when, on 7 September, torrential rain forced the grand pageant and procession to be cancelled. Garrick salvaged something from the resulting chaos by the concert held in the specially-erected Rotunda and where he spoke 'so exquisitely' his celebrated Ode.<sup>114</sup>

In order to recoup some of his financial loss, Garrick arranged for the cancelled Jubilee procession to be staged at Drury Lane later that year and two plates survive depicting the scene. One, labelled 'The principal Characters ... in the Jubilee at Drury Lane Theatre' and dated 1 November 1770,<sup>115</sup> shows winding rows of Shakespearean characters, some carrying banners identifying the plays. Henry VIII, Othello and Falstaff are recognisable but the 'K. Lear' group, in the top row, has no identifiable character. The other plate, 'The Procession at the Jubilee' is a caricature of various Shakespearean characters. The only one from *King Lear* is Edgar as Tom o'Bedlam, portrayed with what looks like a bundle of sticks perched on his head but is, perhaps, intended to be dishevelled hair, and who is saying, in a bubble, 'Tom's a Cold'.<sup>116</sup>

The first Drury Lane Jubilee was staged on 14 October 1769 as an after-piece. The presentation included songs, dancing and dialogue plus 'bells ringing, fifes playing, drums beating, and cannon firing' and in the Procession, Garrick appeared as Benedict. *King Lear* was represented by 'Edgar in the mad dress with a staff, King Lear, [Samuel Reddish], Kent, Cordelia' accompanied by 'Thunder and Lightning'.<sup>117</sup> This spectacle

<sup>110</sup> Christian Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee*, (1964) 203. See this book for a full account of the Stratford Jubilee.

<sup>111</sup> Joseph Cradock, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, 4 vols. (1828) 1, xviii.

<sup>112</sup> *Boswell, In Search of a Wife 1766-69*, ed. F. Brady and F.A. Pottle, (Yale, 1957) 298.

<sup>113</sup> Christian Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee*, (1964) 136.

<sup>114</sup> C. Dibdin, *A Complete History of the English Stage*, 5 vols. [1797-1800] vol.5, book X, 239.

<sup>115</sup> M.W. England, *Garrick and Stratford*, (New York, 1962) 33.

<sup>116</sup> This plate which appeared in *The Oxford Magazine*, (1769, p.102) purported to be of the Jubilee Procession but, of course, the Procession was rained off and never took place at Stratford; see Christian Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee*, (1964) 213ff.

<sup>117</sup> *The Plays of David Garrick*, ed. H.W. Pedicord and F.L. Bergmann, 7 vols. (Carbondale, 1980) 2, 98-126.

was outstandingly successful and ran for ninety performances in the single season of 1769-70, thereby achieving the record run for any piece on the London stage during the entire eighteenth century.<sup>118</sup> Incidentally, it more than recouped Garrick's losses at Stratford. Shortly before the great Procession was staged at Drury Lane, there was one performance of *King Lear* at Drury Lane that autumn. On 7 October Spranger and Ann Barry were coaxed into appearing in *King Lear* although they had both pleaded sickness to avoid appearing at the Jubilee.<sup>119</sup> Spranger played Lear, (perhaps Garrick felt in need of a rest after his exertions at Stratford), Ann, Cordelia and Jane Osborne, Spranger's sister-in-law, Regan.

Covent Garden staged four performances in 1769, on 11 and 21 January, 12 April and 1 May. Among the new names in the cast was Miss Morris (d.1769) who played Cordelia at the performances on 11 and 21 January but died later that year. Her early death prevented Morris from rivalling George Anne Bellamy who therefore wrote generously of her, 'This fair flower, like a lily, reared awhile her head ... [but] she soon dropped, and charmed no more'.<sup>120</sup>

**1770** In 1770 Charles Jennens (1700-73) published an edition of *King Lear* which he 'Collated with the Old and Modern Editions'. This was one of five tragedies of Shakespeare edited by Jennens. The other four were *Hamlet* (1773), *Othello* (1773), *Macbeth* (1773) and *Julius Caesar* (1774). The obligatory grumbles by each new editor condemning the work of his predecessors continued in Jennens's Preface to his *King Lear*<sup>121</sup> where he wrote 'Great were the hopes that Mr. *Capel's* edition would have at length gratified their [i.e. the public's] curiosity ... But ... we are only farther led in the dark thereby'. Jennens continued that his own *King Lear* was 'faithfully collated, line by line, with the old as well as modern editions; the different readings whereof are given with notes at the bottom of the page'. At the end of his *King Lear* Preface he added 'This play is published as a specimen, which if approved of, the work will be pursued (health and opportunity permitting) through the whole of *Shakespeare's*

<sup>118</sup> *The London Stage*, pt. iv, vol. 3, 1419.

<sup>119</sup> Highfill, 1, 334.

<sup>120</sup> George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy*, 5 vols. (1785, 2nd ed.) 4, 153.

<sup>121</sup> [Charles Jennens], *King Lear. A Tragedy*, (1770) vii-xi.

dramatic works'. As we have seen, five plays were published but as Jennens died in 1773 and *Julius Caesar* was published posthumously in 1774, it appears that death, rather than discouragement at the reception of his work, prevented Jennens from continuing with his aim of editing all Shakespeare's plays.

After his Preface, Jennens lists 'Editions Collated' and these include two 1608 quartos which, like Capell, he notes 'appear to be different editions'. The variations he lists include the more detailed title-page of the true 1608 quarto; 'different readings'; and pages which 'do not tally together' and he surmises correctly that the quarto with the detailed title-page 'is the older edition of the two'. He also lists 'The four folios' and the 'modern editions' i.e. the editions of Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, Warburton and Johnson whose notes he identifies by their initials.<sup>122</sup> Jennens then prints the *Dramatis Personæ* and laboriously lists the acts and scenes in which each character appears. Then follows 'A Sketch of the Play' outlining the story by act and scene. Finally comes the text with detailed textual notes listing variants in the first and second quartos and the four folios, and the emendations of the earlier editors.

One of the most hostile criticisms of Jennens's *King Lear* appeared in *The Critical Review*, December 1770. Written by George Steevens, it draws attention to Jennens's detailed footnotes, and claims that this edition 'is so minutely exact in respect of its collations, as even to appear ridiculous'.<sup>123</sup> Steevens pinpoints the waste of effort expended by Jennens on collating the second, third and fourth folios which 'are of no authority at all'<sup>124</sup> and adds that the exercise is just a 'waste [of] time and paper'.<sup>125</sup> Steevens's final stab is to suggest that the Shakespeare portrait, labelled 'From an Original Picture by Cornelius Jansen' and used as the frontispiece of *King Lear*, cannot be of Shakespeare because Jansen first painted in England about 1618 (after the death of Shakespeare) and the frontispiece is dated 1610.<sup>126</sup> No doubt smarting from this hostile reception, Jennens published in 1772 *The Tragedy of King Lear, ... Vindicated from*

<sup>122</sup> For example in II, v, 1 (Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 1) in the scene between Kent and the steward, (Oswald), Jennens gives the first line as 'Good even to thee, friend' and adds a footnote against the word 'even': 'So the qu's; P. and T. evening; W. downing; the rest dawning.'

<sup>123</sup> *The Critical Review*, 30, December 1770, 436.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* 437n.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* 437.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* 439n.

*the Abuse of The Critical Reviewers*. His censures are directed at Johnson and Steevens and he complains that their 'great objection' is that 'the editor is *too exact* in his collations'.<sup>127</sup> He finishes with a splenetic attack, 'farewel, thou great and wondrous *Brobdingnagian*, Dr. *Samuel Lexiphanes*, whose mighty pen can *make fritters of English*, and nonsense of sense. Farewel, thou co-partner of his learned labours, most diminutive native of *Lilliput*, little *George*, who peepest out of his pocket'.<sup>128</sup>

If the editing of Shakespeare's plays was disappointing in 1770, the theatre at least saw the return of David Garrick, after a break of almost seven years, to what was perhaps his greatest role, *King Lear*. Spranger Barry played the part on 15 January that year at Drury Lane with his wife, Ann as Cordelia and then on 21 February, Garrick reclaimed the title-role, with Ann Barry remaining as Cordelia. The rest of the cast was largely unchanged but Jane Barry again took the role of Regan. There was a total of five performances of *King Lear* at Drury Lane that year, 15 January with Barry as Lear; then 21 February, 8 March (attended by the King and Queen<sup>129</sup>), 13 March and 31 October all with Garrick in the title-role.

At Covent Garden, still using Colman's adaptation which was not proving popular, there was only one performance in 1770, staged on 29 October with David Ross as Lear. The cast was largely the same as the year before but with one or two new members worth noting. The actress playing Cordelia was a Miss Miller (fl.1770-74) who took this role four or five times at Covent Garden before disappearing from the cast lists. Miller was unfortunate to be a rival for the parts usually played by the strong-spirited George Anne Bellamy who said of Miller that there was 'nothing to recommend her but the acting managers favour'. When Miller played Cordelia in place of Bellamy, Bellamy wrote scathingly that 'this *puppet* was ... a very, very indifferent substitute'.<sup>130</sup> Another new player was the actor cast as France. His name was John Evans (d. 1793) but he adopted the more melodious stage-name of Charles Clementine Du Bellamy. He had started his career at Norwich then joined Barry at the King's, Haymarket. Although

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<sup>127</sup> [C.Jennens], *The Tragedy of King Lear ... Vindicated from the Abuse of The Critical Reviewers*, (1772) 6.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

<sup>129</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.3, 1459.

<sup>130</sup> George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy*, 5 vols. (1785, 2nd. ed.) 4, 171.

more important in singing roles, he tackled secondary Shakespearean parts such as Horatio in *Hamlet* and Florizel in an adaptation of *The Winter's Tale*.<sup>131</sup> His wife, Frances Maria (d.1773) was cast as Regan from 1768 to 1771.

The Haymarket Theatre, still under the management of Samuel Foote, performed Tate's version of *King Lear* on 18 June and 11 September, 1770 which meant that London was offered three versions of *King Lear* in one year but not Shakespeare's. Ross played Lear on both occasions but the interesting casting on these two occasions was Francis Gentleman (1728-84) as Gloucester. This actor, called by Garrick 'only Gentleman by name!'<sup>132</sup> never achieved fame as a player but he wrote several books including his *Dramatic Censor*, (1770), which is important for its information on eighteenth-century theatre and from which I have quoted extensively.<sup>133</sup> The cast at the Haymarket this season was made up of a large number of bit-part players (Smyth, John Dancer, John Lings, Knowles, William Hamilton, Horatio McGeorge, Charles Farrell, J. Griffith, William Pearce, Miss Trowell, Thomas Robson (1737-1813) who was cast as Edmund and later Burgundy at Covent Garden in 1778 but did not establish himself in London). Their Cordelia, Mrs. Jefferies (fl.1764-78) remains without a first name.

**1771-1773** 1771 saw only three performances of *King Lear*, one at Drury Lane on 23 November and two at Covent Garden on 14 January and 30 December. 1772 had just one at Covent Garden on 21 May. The Drury Lane Lear was again Barry.<sup>134</sup> The other players did not include any exciting newcomers. James Aickin (c.1735-1803), brother of Francis, played Gloucester. This actor was at Drury Lane for the main seasons during his entire career, moving to the Haymarket for the summer. He did not progress beyond secondary roles and was faintly praised as having 'natural ease'.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Highfill, 4, 478-81.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* 6, 149.

<sup>133</sup> Like other writers at this time, Gentleman appears confused over Shakespeare's and Tate's text. He writes that no one drew 'a character of more importance and variety' than Shakespeare did with Lear and goes on to discuss Garrick's performance as the King as a 'more powerful ... piece of acting' than any other, the whole passage suggesting that Garrick was acting Shakespeare's Lear, (*The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 371.

<sup>134</sup> At this time, Garrick was playing fewer roles and in the 1771-2 season he appeared less than twenty times. During November 1771 he was ill with gout which probably explains his absence from the part of Lear on 23 November, (Highfill, 6, 50).

<sup>135</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 2, 491.

Mrs. Egerton, née Ambrose (fl.1739-1813),<sup>136</sup> who was cast as Regan, remained second-rate and at the end of 1773 left the London stage for 'love and enjoyment'.<sup>137</sup>

At Covent Garden, David Ross played Lear; William Smith, now in a strong position following the early death of William Powell in 1769, was Edgar; Miss Miller was still Cordelia and remained briefly in the limelight although condemned as failing in 'the tender parts of tragedy ... such as Juliet, Cordelia &c.'<sup>138</sup> Robert Owenson (1744-1812) started his career at Covent Garden in 1771 when his debut was dismissed as 'one of the grossest insults upon common sense'.<sup>139</sup> In 1772 he was cast as Albany before moving to Ireland where he achieved 'substantial fame'.<sup>140</sup> William Gibson was just completing thirty-two years at Covent Garden. He played Gloucester on 14 January 1771 and died later that year. The critics thought little of his acting and one wrote that the role of Gloucester 'incumbers the tottering abilities of Mr. GIBSON at Covent-Garden'.<sup>141</sup> Isabella Pearce (Mrs. Joseph Poussin, fl.1760-91) who played Regan on 21 May, had started her career at Drury Lane and moved to Covent Garden with Colman in 1767. Here she remained for twenty-one years and was typical of the small-part versatile player 'depended upon heavily by managers'.<sup>142</sup>

George Colman saw the final performances of his *King Lear* adaptation when Covent Garden offered the play twice, on 25 January and 8 May 1773. Thereafter Covent Garden returned to Tate's adaptation. At Drury Lane, in 1773 Barry and Garrick shared the title-role, Barry playing on 2 February and Garrick on 17 and 19 February and 26 May after a three-year absence. Garrick's continuing excellence in this part is illustrated by comments of William Hopkins, the Drury Lane book-keeper. Against the two performances in February, Hopkins wrote 'Mr. G. very happy in Lear. great Applause' and 'Mr. G. never better. monstrous Applause'.<sup>143</sup> The others were the regular actors of *King Lear*. One actress, Elizabeth Younge (1740-97, later the first

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<sup>136</sup> Highfill, 1, 71-3.

<sup>137</sup> William Hawkins, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, (1775) 29.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 59.

<sup>139</sup> *The Theatrical Review, or, New Companion to the Play-House*, 2 vols. (1772) 1, 163.

<sup>140</sup> Highfill, 11, 128.

<sup>141</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 374.

<sup>142</sup> Highfill, 11, 244. Although according to *The London Stage*, Isabella Pearce played Regan in 1771, 1772 and 1773 and Goneril in 1774, these roles are not mentioned in Highfill and are listed under J.Pearce in *Shakespeare in the Theatre*.

<sup>143</sup> Quoted in *The London Stage*, pt. 4, vol.3, 1695 and 1696.

wife of the actor Alexander Pope) became a leading member of Drury Lane. She had already had success as Viola, Imogen, Rosalind, Miranda and Desdemona before appearing for the first time as Cordelia opposite Garrick on 26 May 1773.

The great era of Garrick, which had been responsible for a fundamental change in the style of acting, was nearing its end. Garrick had also initiated the return to Shakespeare's *King Lear* and others had begun to think along the same lines. As I have shown, the new players in these last years of Garrick's reign were largely second-rate although some, like Elizabeth Younge, 'among the first performers',<sup>144</sup> achieved a limited stardom. The next truly memorable names, the Kembles including Sarah Siddons, were waiting to make their mark on stage history. Meantime the textual history of *King Lear* fared better with the publication in 1773 of the first Johnson-Steevens edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare* and I will examine this edition in the following chapter.

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<sup>144</sup>[F.G. Waldron], *Candid and Impartial Strictures on the Performers*, (1795) 60.

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32. *The London Prodigal*, 1605.

There is good ground for thinking that *The London Prodigal* was written long before 1605; but not affording any marks to ascertain the precise time of its composition, and not deserving any very minute inquiry, it is here ascribed to that year, in which it was published.

Shakspeare's name is printed in the title page of this play, as well as in three other contested pieces;—*Pericles*, *Sir John Oldcastle*, and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. But how little the booksellers of that time scrupled to avail themselves of his name, in order to procure a sale for their publications, appears from its being prefixed to two of Ovid's *Epistles*, (which have ever since been published among his poems) though they were translated by Thomas Heywood; and printed (as Dr. Farmer has observed) in a work of his entitled *Brytaine's Troy*, fol. 1609<sup>a</sup>, before they were ascribed to Shakspeare.

## 33. KING LEAR, 1605.

The tragedy of *King Lear* was entered on the books of the Stationers' company Nov. 26, 1607, and is there mentioned to have been played the preceding Christmas, before his majesty at Whitehall. But this, I conjecture, was not its first exhibition. It seems extremely probable that its first appearance was in 1605; in which year the old play of *K. Lear*, that had been entered at Stationers' hall in 1594, was printed by Simon Stafford, for John Wright, who, we may presume, finding Shakspeare's play successful, hoped to palm the spurious one on the publick for his<sup>b</sup>.

Our author's *King Lear* was not published till 1608. Harfnet's *Declaration of Popish Impostures*, from which Shakspeare borrowed some fantastick names of spirits, mentioned in this play, was printed in 1603.

## NOTES.

<sup>a</sup> "These two epistles, being so pertinent to our historie, I thought necessarie to translate."—*Bryt. Troy*, p. 211.

<sup>b</sup> Shakspeare has copied one of the passages in this old play. This he might have done, though we should suppose it not to have been published till after his *K. Lear* was written and acted; for the old play had been in possession of the stage for many years before 1605.

## 34. MACBETH,



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CHAPTER 11

The Johnson-Steevens editions 1773, 1778 and 1785,  
and the performances between 1774 and 1785

**1773** The first Johnson-Steevens edition of Shakespeare (1773) was largely Johnson's text but with copious new notes added. The edition, *The Plays of William Shakespeare to which are added notes by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens*, was published in ten volumes, octavo. It will be remembered that George Steevens, back in 1766, had asked for help for the new variorum edition he proposed. Among those who responded were Thomas Percy, Sir John Hawkins and Richard Warner all of whom contributed notes to *King Lear* which I will look at shortly. In volume 1 Steevens added an 'Advertisement to the Reader'<sup>1</sup> in which he writes that 'It is not pretended that a complete body of various readings is here collected; or that all the diversities which the copies exhibit, are pointed out'.<sup>2</sup> Also in this Advertisement, a passage between Lear and Kent is quoted

*Lear*: No.  
*Kent*: Yes.  
*Lear*: No, I say.  
*Kent*: I say, yea.

and Steevens continues 'Here the quartos add: *Lear*: *No, no, they would not. Kent*: *Yes, they have*' which adds nothing to 'the spirit or beauty' of the passage.<sup>3</sup> In fact, this exchange is important, not because of its beauty but because it shows a second person defying the King and for this reason is to be preferred. Another reference to *King Lear* suggests that the 'evils of our civil war' were responsible in part for the neglect of Shakespeare. Steevens writes 'How little Shakespeare himself was once read, may be understood from Tate, who, in his dedication to the altered play of *King Lear*, speaks of the original as of an obscure piece, recommended ... by a friend'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In volume 1, Steevens reprints his 'Advertisement to the Reader' (K5r-L3r) which first appeared in his edition of twenty plays of Shakespeare (1766) and this should not be confused with the new 'Advertisement' (E2v-7v) now under discussion.

<sup>2</sup> *The Plays of William Shakespeare ... [with] notes by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens*, 10 vols. (1773) 1, E3r; hereafter called Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare* (1773).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 1, E3r; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 205-8. These lines were reinstated in the Johnson-Steevens edition of 1778.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare*, (1773), 1, E5v-6r. In his dedication to Thomas Boteler, Tate writes 'by your Advice, I attempted the Revival of it [*King Lear*] with Alterations' but does not suggest that the play is 'obscure' (A2v).

Of the scholars who responded to Steevens' appeal for help, Thomas Percy contributed a note, enlarged from the earlier edition of 1765, on Edgar's lines

*But mice, and rats, and such small deer  
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.*<sup>5</sup>

Percy had written in the Appendix to Johnson's 1765 edition, that these two lines are to be found in 'an old black-letter'd romance'<sup>6</sup> on Sir Bevis of Hampton. This information was now moved to the main body of the 1773 edition<sup>7</sup> and an enlarged note put in the 1773 appendix.<sup>8</sup> The enlarged note draws attention to Warburton's revision of *deere* to *geer*,<sup>9</sup> to Zachary Grey's revision to *cheer* and then restates the Sir Bevis connection. Two new notes are offered, one by Sir John Hawkins on 'the furniture of a fool'<sup>10</sup> including the coxcomb and bauble or 'truncheon' and the other by George Tollet who identifies an early use of the phrase 'looked black' in Holinshed: 'The bishops thereat repined, and *looked black*'.<sup>11</sup> A note by Richard Warner is more in the field of literary criticism and includes a judgment on Edmund. Warner dislikes Warburton's suggestion that Edmund's line 'and pat he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy' was 'a compliment ... on the natural winding up of the plot in the comedy of the ancients'. He considers that this does 'not at all suit with the character of Edmund' and that the line was 'intended to ridicule the very awkward conclusions of our old comedies'.<sup>12</sup>

The new notes by Johnson and Steevens for this 1773 edition include the following. The first is by Steevens on sources of the play, and *King Lear* as well as *The Mirror of Magistrates* and Sidney's *Arcadia* are mentioned.<sup>13</sup> Steevens also writes that 'according

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 9, III, iv, p.412; Arden, *King Lear*, III, iv, 134-5.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, (1765) 8, Kk5r.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare*, (1773) 9, III, iv, p.412, n.6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 10, Nn5r. There are actually two appendices in the 1773 edition and Appendix II, consisting largely of a letter from Richard Farmer, explains that these notes came 'too late to be inserted in their proper places in the foregoing Appendix' (10, Oo1r). There are ten notes on *King Lear*.

<sup>9</sup> Hanmer, *Shakespeare*, (1744) had also revised 'deere' to read 'geer' (3, III, vii, p.62) as Johnson points out (Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 1765, 6, III, vii, p.92).

<sup>10</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare*, (1773) 9, I, iv, p.346, n.4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 9, 2, iv, p.386, n.3; see chapter 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 9, I, ii, pp.337-8, n.7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 9, p.311; the identification of sources has already been discussed in earlier chapters.

to the old historians' Cordelia lives after the first battle which restored Lear to the throne but died later 'miserably in prison' at the hands of Regan's and Goneril's sons. In Shakespeare's play, Cordelia also dies because Shakespeare would not permit her 'to outlive the time allotted her in the construction of his play' in spite of 'the filial piety of this lady'.<sup>14</sup> This comment, this time by an editor, further underlines the eighteenth-century interest in the rewarding of virtue and the punishment of vice although both 'history' and Shakespeare had Cordelia dying 'miserably'. Another note by Steevens is a gloss on Lear's line 'To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes'. Steevens gives Johnson's note from the 1765 edition which glossed 'sizes' as 'allowances' and then enlarges, 'A *sizer* is one of the lowest ranks of students at Cambridge, and lives on a stated allowance'.<sup>15</sup> Among the new notes offered by Johnson are the following two examples. At the Fool's line 'That's a sheal'd peascod', Johnson, in his 1765 edition, had added the stage direction '*Pointing to Lear*'.<sup>16</sup> Now he clarifies further by adding 'The outside of a king remains, but all the intrinsic parts of royalty are gone'.<sup>17</sup> Edgar's line 'False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand' carries Warburton's earlier note explaining 'light of ear' as 'credulous' but Johnson adds 'Not merely *credulous*, but *credulous of evil*, ready to receive malicious reports'.<sup>18</sup> At the end of *King Lear* is printed the ballad *A lamentable SONG of the Death of King Leir and his Three Daughters*. A footnote adds that this is taken from 'an ancient copy in *The Golden Garland*, black letter'<sup>19</sup> and from this information it is possible to identify the ballad as almost certainly the one printed in Richard Johnson's *The Golden Garland of Princely pleasures and delicate delights* (1620).<sup>20</sup>

This edition's reception was on the whole favourable. The letter by Richard Farmer, printed as part of the second appendix in volume 10 (see footnote 8), had claimed that the edition 'approaches much nearer to perfection, than any that has yet appeared; and

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 9, V, iii, p.484, n.6.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 9, II, iv, p.387, n.7; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 364.

<sup>16</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, (1765) 6, I, xiv, p.38.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare*, (1773) 9, I, iv, p.350, n.5; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 190.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare*, (1773) 9, III, iv, p.408, n.8; Arden, *King Lear*, III, iv, 90 which offers Johnson's explanation as a possibility.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare*, (1773) 9, 491.

<sup>20</sup> The 1620 edition has 'The third time Imprinted' on its title page but there is no record of an earlier surviving edition.

... will be the standard of every future one.'<sup>21</sup> *The Monthly Review* of December 1773 'recommended [the edition] to the public under the sanction of the two respectable names which appear in the title-page' [i.e. Johnson and Steevens] 'whose abilities for a work of this kind are so well known, and so generally admitted'.<sup>22</sup> *The Critical Review*, writing over two months, also gave it warm approval and in December commented on the mad scenes in *King Lear*. In his gloss of Edgar's lines starting 'says suum, mun, nonny',<sup>23</sup> Steevens had quoted from a 'very old ballad' and the reviewer writes approvingly that 'the sense of an author may be elucidated by an acquaintance with the writings of his cotemporaries'.<sup>24</sup> The review ends 'On the whole, this edition ... is the most elaborate and explanatory of any that has hitherto been published'.<sup>25</sup> Certainly this first Johnson-Steevens edition contributed considerably to the clarifying of Shakespeare's text, offering 'parallels ... restoration of old readings, and ... explication of various passages'.<sup>26</sup>

There was another edition of Shakespeare's works published in 1773 and 1774, *Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays* in nine volumes, 6mo., which prints the texts as they were performed at that time, with Francis Gentleman responsible for the notes.<sup>27</sup> In volume 1 is an 'Advertisement' with a dogmatic statement that all Shakespeare's faults 'may justly be attributed to the loose, quibbling, licentious taste of his time' and that he 'wrote wildly, merely to gratify the public'.<sup>28</sup> To demonstrate what he considered to be a barbaric age, Gentleman writes 'it is a matter of great question with us, whether the fool, in *King Lear*, was not a more general favourite, than the old monarch himself' and to purge Shakespeare of this so-called barbarity, Gentleman prints the texts 'after

<sup>21</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare*, (1773) 10, Oo2v.

<sup>22</sup> *The Monthly Review*, December 1773, 421-2.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare*, (1773) 9, III, iv, p.409; Arden, *King Lear*, III, iv, 97.

<sup>24</sup> *The Critical Review*, 36, December 1773, 409.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 416.

<sup>26</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *The Achievement of George Steevens*, (New York, 1990) 4.

<sup>27</sup> Hereafter referred to as Bell, *Shakespeare*. Odell writes that 'As an edition of Shakespeare, it is ... the worst imaginable' (*Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 2, 16); B.Vickers in a discussion on 'critics of all shades' places Gentleman with 'men of the theatre' at one end and 'more obviously academic critics' at the other (*Shakespeare, The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols. (1974-81) 6, 9). In defence of Bell's edition, as well as being of interest in any study of 18th century theatre, in my view it also contains some comments on *King Lear*, which I discuss in the main text, which are acute and in line with today's thinking.

<sup>28</sup> Bell, *Shakespeare*, 1, 5.

their regulations', i.e. the adaptations.<sup>29</sup> Also in volume 1 is an 'Essay on Oratory'<sup>30</sup> which refers to *King Lear* in its paragraphs on 'Breaks'. Lear's lines 'tell the hot Duke that - /No - but not yet, may be he is not well'<sup>31</sup> are used as an example of 'Breaks in Impetuous Rage'. Similarly, part of Lear's speech beginning 'I prithee, Daughter, do not make me mad'<sup>32</sup> are quoted as an example of 'pauses of grief swelling slowly'.

The title-page of Bell's *King Lear*, states that it is 'as performed at the Theatre-Royal, Drury-Lane'. The frontispiece shows, as so often, Lear, Edgar as 'Mad Tom' and Kent in the storm, (see illustration to chapter 8). The dramatis personæ lists the casts from Drury Lane and Covent Garden with Garrick and Ross respectively as Lear. This text appears to be the first printed edition of Garrick's adaptation<sup>33</sup> although a version had been first acted as far back as 1756. In the short 'Introduction' Gentleman, in keeping with many of the critics, writes that by '*judiciously blending ... TATE and SHAKESPEARE*' the play is made '*much more agreeable than Mr. COLMAN's late alteration*'<sup>34</sup> which was performed for the last time during this year, 1773.

Gentleman does include some footnotes on the text but the main interest for this thesis lies in his notes on the appearance of the characters and the staging of the performances. Gentleman considers that Edmund should have 'a bold, martial figure, a genteel, but confident deportment, with a full, middle-toned, spirited voice' while Edgar should have 'features without effeminacy; of an amorous cast; his voice silver-ton'd'.<sup>35</sup> Gentleman compares the two characters of Kent and Gloucester (a role he played in 1770 at the age of about 42) and concludes that 'An unaffected, blunt mode of utterance is the leading requisite for *Kent*' but that '*Gloster* should be more venerable in look'.<sup>36</sup> He also comments on Kent's speech 'If but as well I other accents borrow' writing 'From this speech, and his situation, *Kent* should change his expression, nearly as

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 1, 6-7.

<sup>30</sup> Part of this Essay is identified as a reprint of '*a pamphlet, written by Mr. GENTLEMAN, some few years since*', (1, 24).

<sup>31</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 293-4.

<sup>32</sup> Bell, *Shakespeare*, 1, 46-7; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 407.

<sup>33</sup> The first edition of Garrick's *King Lear* printed as a separate volume appeared in 1786.

<sup>34</sup> Bell, *Shakespeare*, 2, 3. Gentleman is, of course, referring to the reinstatement of the love affair between Cordelia and Edgar, the version preferred by the audiences of this time.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 2, Act I, p.5n.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 2, Act I, p.4n.

much as his appearance: a point not sufficiently attended to by performers'.<sup>37</sup> Kent is again mentioned in the scene where he upbraids the Steward<sup>38</sup> and then attacks him. Gentleman dislikes this scene but the actor in him recognises that 'it tells well in action; at least for Gallery Critics'.<sup>39</sup> Another scene which draws 'a wretched laugh from the upper Gallery' is where Regan and Cornwall exit leaving Kent in the stocks. At this point, Gentleman complains 'A strange piece of buffoonery is sometimes admitted on the stage, which is the steward's making two or three passes at *Kent*',<sup>40</sup> stage business of which Gentleman disapproves. A speech which also 'seldom fails to gain the performer applause' but which Gentleman this time approves, is Edgar's soliloquy beginning 'I heard myself proclaimed'.<sup>41</sup>

Other *King Lear* scenes which Gentleman praises include Cordelia's and Arante's encounter with the ruffians and the rescue by Edgar. Gentleman writes that this scene is 'too pleasing and proper, to be slightly regarded'.<sup>42</sup> But Gloucester's blinding, he thinks 'should have been consigned to oblivion'<sup>43</sup> while a large part of Act III, which includes the blinding episode off-stage, 'is merely food for the plot'.<sup>44</sup> Gloucester's leap on Dover cliff is praised because, in Gentleman's perceptive view 'imagination works with peculiar strength, on a despairing mind'.<sup>45</sup> Gentleman, who like others in the eighteenth century, felt uncomfortable at mixing tragedy with comic elements such as the presence of a clown, approved Tate's omission of the fool. He noted the moment in the play where the Shakespearean Fool first enters and wrote 'Sure fools must have been much in fashion, in his [Shakespeare's] day, he has so often introduced them'.<sup>46</sup> Gentleman is less in tune with the majority of his contemporaries in his view on Lear's survival. He approves the survival of Cordelia and her marriage to Edgar but adds, with an understanding that deserves to be more generally remembered, that 'true tragic

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 2, Act I, p.15n; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, I.

<sup>38</sup> Tate's Gentleman Usher becomes the Steward in Colman's (1768) and Garrick's (1773-4) adaptations.

<sup>39</sup> Bell, *Shakespeare*, 2, Act II, p.23n; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii.

<sup>40</sup> Bell, *Shakespeare*, 2, Act II, p.29n; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 149.

<sup>41</sup> Bell, *Shakespeare*, 2, Act II, p.30n; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 172-92.

<sup>42</sup> Bell, *Shakespeare*, 2, Act III, p.47n.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 2, Act III, p.50n.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 2, Act III, p.53n.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 2, Act IV, p.60n.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 2, Act I, p.17n.

feelings ... would, in our view, have been better maintained, by making him [i.e. Lear] fall a sacrifice to his obstinate pride and frantic rashness',<sup>47</sup> another perceptive comment and one which puts Gentleman among the few eighteenth-century critics who saw, in part, the tragic greatness of Shakespeare's play.

**1774** The performances of *King Lear* between 1774 and 1785 continued without any excitement to equal the acting of David Garrick some thirty years earlier, although Sarah Siddons was to create a considerable stir in other roles. In 1774 there were five performances in total, three at Drury Lane which staged Garrick's adaptation, and two at Covent Garden which had now abandoned Colman's version and reverted to Tate's. The Drury Lane performances were on 12 March, 25 April and 17 May. At the first two of these, Spranger Barry and his wife played Lear and Cordelia, supported by only minor players. At the third performance, staged on 17 May, Garrick, now nearing the end of his career, played Lear with Elizabeth Younge again as his Cordelia.<sup>48</sup>

In the autumn of 1774, the Barrys left Garrick, with whom they had had an uneasy relationship,<sup>49</sup> and moved to Covent Garden where they were a major attraction. There were two performances of Tate's<sup>50</sup> *King Lear* at Covent Garden, on 24 and 26 November, with Barry in the lead role and Ann, as Cordelia. John (1752-1814) and Mary Whitfield (d.1795), another husband and wife team, were also cast in these two 1774 performances, John playing Albany and his wife, Regan. They both joined Covent Garden in 1774, moved to Drury Lane for Garrick's final season in 1775-6, and thereafter moved frequently between the two houses.<sup>51</sup> Both players had their main roles in comedy but John Whitfield also attempted a string of Shakespearean parts including Laertes, Horatio and Orsino. He seems to have been a competent actor and one critic argued that 'this gentleman has not been brought forward in the manner to

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 2, Act V, p. 79n.

<sup>48</sup> The takings from this performance were donated to the Theatrical Fund set up to aid distressed players, which Garrick had been instrumental in establishing; see letter by Garrick to Peter Fountain, 16 May, 1774 (*Letters of David Garrick*, ed. David M. Little and George M. Kahrl, 3 vols. 1963) 3, 933-4.

<sup>49</sup> Highfill, 1, 334-6.

<sup>50</sup> These two performances at Covent Garden list Arante in the cast; therefore the text used must have been either Tate's or Garrick's. However, presumably Barry would have had to return to Tate's version as Garrick was still appearing at Drury Lane in his own adaptation.

<sup>51</sup> Highfill, 16, 39-44.

which his respectable talents entitle him'.<sup>52</sup> Mary Whitfield was less successful. Her roles included Phoebe and Emilia as well as Regan where, no doubt, her 'countenance ... better suited for the haughty dame',<sup>53</sup> would have helped her performance. The actor cast as Edgar was William Thomas Lewis (c.1746-1811) who joined Covent Garden in 1773 and played there for thirty-five consecutive seasons. He rose to be deputy manager, a position he held for twenty-one years, and he also developed into a sound comic actor well praised by his contemporaries.<sup>54</sup>

**1775-1776** *King Lear* was not staged in London during 1775. However in the following year at Drury Lane, Garrick appeared three times as Lear, on 13 and 21 May and then on 8 June he made his last appearance in this role and his second last on any stage. Several accounts survive describing these final appearances as Lear. On 13 May, Hopkins, the book-keeper at Drury Lane wrote in his diary 'Mr. G. was never happier in Lear - the Applause was beyond description ... many Cry'd out Garrick for Ever'<sup>55</sup> and he made an equally excited comment for 21 May, 'Human Nature cannot arrive at greater Excellence in Acting than Mr Garrick possess'd of this Night ... The Applause was unbounded'.<sup>56</sup> The other performers were also affected by the occasion and 'Even the unfeeling Regan [Mrs. Hopkins] and Gonneril [Miss Sherry], forgetful of their characteristic cruelty, played through the whole of their parts with aching bosoms and streaming eyes'.<sup>57</sup> Another comment drew attention to the crowds. Signing himself Stock Fish, this critic wrote 'I am one of those who have survived being in the *Black Hole at Calcutta*, and I do assure you, the Play-house Passage at Drury-Lane, Yesterday Evening, was full as bad'.<sup>58</sup> On 6 June, it was announced that Garrick would appear as Lear 'on Saturday next ... (Being the last Time of his appearing in that Character)'.<sup>59</sup> This event, on 8 June, was an occasion of high emotion and after the performance

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<sup>52</sup> [F. G. Waldron], *Candid and Impartial Strictures on the Performers*, (1795) 26.

<sup>53</sup> [Joseph Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green Room*, 2 vols. (1793) 2, 296.

<sup>54</sup> Highfill, 9, 281-92.

<sup>55</sup> MS. diary in the Folger; quoted in *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.3, 1977.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 1980.

<sup>57</sup> *The London Chronicle*, 21-23 May 1776, 493.

<sup>58</sup> *The Public Advertiser*, 18 May 1776. Black Hole of Calcutta, June 1756; stock fish is a fish that is dried and flattened.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 6 June 1776.



Elizabeth Younge, who played Cordelia, 'threw herself gracefully upon her knees' and begged Garrick for 'a father's *blessing*' which he gave 'with great energy ... Then, raising his eyes to the rest of the Performers, he solemnly added, "And may God bless you all!"'.<sup>60</sup> So David Garrick's remarkable career ended and generated a hysteria equal to that following his first performances at Goodman's Fields in 1741.

Garrick, of course, never played Lear as Shakespeare had written the part and some felt that had he done so 'the distress would have been more than any audience could bear'.<sup>61</sup> Before Garrick's last season, according to George Steevens, he had urged Garrick 'to give the genuine text of Lear, which he rejected ... as he feared ... he might make some mistake'<sup>62</sup> after so many years with the adaptations. It is also possible that Garrick was undecided over the issue of the final catastrophe. Although we know he had been reintroducing Shakespearean lines, he was probably afraid to tamper drastically with Tate's highly successful version. As an actor-manager, success at the box office was no doubt more important to him than accuracy of text. If Garrick refrained, probably wisely, from trying a new text so late in his career, he did allow the 'considerable improvement' of having the players 'judiciously habited in old English dresses'<sup>63</sup> for these final performances according to one source. Another source, Joseph Cradock writes that Garrick said he would play his last Lear 'in my new Richard dress'. Cradock tried to dissuade him but Garrick was determined 'and with grey locks (I recollect no other alteration) he took his leave in Lear'.<sup>64</sup>

At Covent Garden another fine actor was quietly nearing the end of his career. Spranger Barry was billed to appear as Lear on 22 and 27 February 1776 and he appeared on 22 February but the playbill for the second performance announced that

<sup>60</sup> Richard J. Smith MS. 'Collections on the Drama', 2 vols. (1817) 1, 201r. (BL Add. MSS. 38,620-1).

<sup>61</sup> John Downes, *Roscus Anglicanus*, (1789) with additions by Thomas Davies who added the above note (43).

<sup>62</sup> Joseph Cradock, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, 4 vols. (1828) 4, 250.

<sup>63</sup> *The London Chronicle*, 21-23 May 1776, 493. Exactly what is meant by this phrase is unclear. According to G.W.Stone, Jr. and G.M. Kahrl in *David Garrick, a Critical Biography*, (Carbondale, 1979) 329-31, ' "Old English" costume as understood by Garrick and most of his generation was a vague term' which included 'ruff, trunk hose, slashed pants' (i.e. vaguely Elizabethan) and Garrick 'approximated "early English dress" [for his Richard III] as the Hogarth painting shows'. See also *The London Stage*, pt.4, vol.1, cix-cxvi.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Cradock, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, 4 vols. (1828) 4, 249. See footnote above.

'Mr. Barry being taken ill, the Tragedy of *King Lear* is obliged to be deferred'.<sup>65</sup> He did not play Lear again and his final performance on stage was on 28 November later that year.<sup>66</sup> On 23 March, at the only other performance of *King Lear* at Covent Garden this year (1776), John Lee who had attempted the title-role once before in London in 1752 at his own benefit, took over the part of Lear, again for his benefit, on this one occasion only.<sup>67</sup> Lee's acting was described as 'hardly above mediocrity'<sup>68</sup> and he was accused of wanting 'to be placed in the chair of Garrick'.<sup>69</sup> The Cordelia playing opposite Lee and described simply as 'A Young Gentlewoman',<sup>70</sup> was probably Harriet Lee (1757-1851) one of John Lee's five daughters.<sup>71</sup> Neither he nor his daughter was destined for stardom in the theatre although Harriet achieved a measure of success as a novelist.<sup>72</sup>

Two other players made their 'first appearance on the stage' in 1776, described merely as 'A gentleman' and 'A young lady'. This was in a performance of Tate's *King Lear* given on 16 September<sup>73</sup> at the China Hall, Rotherhithe, a new theatre which had opened this year for the summer months only. However, it was burnt down in June 1778, rebuilt, only to be blown down shortly afterwards when no further attempt was made to re-open it.<sup>74</sup> The anonymous newcomer playing Cordelia on 16 September was perhaps a Mrs. Carolina Marklew (d.1778)<sup>75</sup> whose benefit this was but neither of the unknowns appear to have been successful in their attempt on the stage. The rest of the roles were filled by minor players. Samuel Russell (1747-1808), who played the Gentleman Usher, became the manager of the China Hall<sup>76</sup> and took many of the leading comedy roles, including Mercutio, himself. Philip Lewis (d.1791), uncle of the more

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<sup>65</sup> Quoted in *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 60.

<sup>66</sup> Highfill, 1, 336.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 9, 201-9.

<sup>68</sup> Isaac Reed, *Biographia Dramatica*, 3 vols. (1812) 1, 447.

<sup>69</sup> *The Thespian Dictionary*, (1805).

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 351.

<sup>71</sup> Highfill, 9, 195.

<sup>72</sup> *A Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 1660-1800*, ed. Janet Todd, (1987)193-4.

<sup>73</sup> This performance, 16 September 1776, is listed in *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 352. However it does not appear in *The London Stage* and Highfill also seems unaware of this performance because none of the roles is credited to the players.

<sup>74</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 721.

<sup>75</sup> Highfill, 10, 96.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 13, 136-7.

successful William Thomas Lewis, was cast as Gloucester. His name is sometimes confused with his nephew and with Charles Lee Lewes who spelt his name 'Lewis' early in his career. Philip Lewis is known to have appeared at the China Hall in September and October 1776<sup>77</sup>; little information survives about him but he was condemned because he 'was continually whimpering over the past and the present ... [and] took pleasure in being miserable.'<sup>78</sup> In the summer and autumn of 1776 there were three players called Smith at the China Hall. William (?) Smith (fl.1776-1829) played Cornwall<sup>79</sup> and was perhaps the actor who went on to appear in major roles at the Haymarket;<sup>80</sup> J. Smith (fl.1766-76) as Edmund; and a Mrs. Smith (fl.1769-76) as Regan but it is not known what relationship, if any, there was between these players.

**1777** Following Garrick's retirement in 1776, Drury Lane did not stage *King Lear* at all during 1777 or 1778 but Covent Garden performed Tate's adaptation four times in both these two years and the Haymarket put on one performance in 1778. The Covent Garden performances in 1777 were on 6 and 13 October, 10 November and 29 December. Without Spranger Barry, David Ross played Lear on all four occasions, returning to the role after five years, but the majority of the other actors were the same as in the previous year. However, there was change among the actresses although no new star proved to be amongst them. The role of Cordelia was played by Elizabeth Hartley (1750?-1824) who had first played this role at Edinburgh.<sup>81</sup> Hartley's main attraction was her exceptional beauty. Garrick wrote that he had never seen 'a finer creature than Mrs. Hartley',<sup>82</sup> and others described her as 'the idea of a Greek beauty'<sup>83</sup> and 'the finest figure on the London stage'.<sup>84</sup> At the last of the four performances of *King Lear* that year, 29 December, the role of Cordelia was taken by a newcomer to the role, Hester Jackson (1751-1806).<sup>85</sup> Jackson was another beauty but her abilities on

<sup>77</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 352; Highfill, 9, 280.

<sup>78</sup> John Bernard, *Retrospections of the Stage*, 2 vols. (1830) 2, 186.

<sup>79</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 352.

<sup>80</sup> Highfill, 14, 188-9.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 7, 156.

<sup>82</sup> *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. David M. Little and George M. Kahrl, 3 vols. (1963) 3, 936, Garrick to Peter Fountain, c. 25 May 1774.

<sup>83</sup> *The London Magazine*, October 1773, 472.

<sup>84</sup> William Hawkins, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, (1775) 52.

<sup>85</sup> Highfill, 8, 116-20.

stage were not outstanding. Her Shakespearean roles included Juliet, Gertrude and Lady Macbeth and she was described by one critic as ‘that useful actress’<sup>86</sup> and by another as ‘a disagreeable actress’.<sup>87</sup> At the last three performances, Thomas Death (1739-1802) took the part of the Gentleman Usher. This actor had played in the provinces for many years and finally, after several attempts, he won a position at Covent Garden in 1777. His career here did not last long after he failed to turn up to perform at a benefit for John Quick on 27 April 1778. This ‘defection cost him dearly’ because he was dropped from the company at the end of the season.<sup>88</sup>

**1778** In 1778 the four Covent Garden performances were on 5 February, 28 September, 19 October and 9 November. Ross was again cast as Lear on 5 February but in the two following performances, a new name, West Digges (1720?-86), appeared in the role. Before discussing Digges’s career, which was a relatively important one, I will look at small-time player, Francis Rundell (d. 1791) who enjoyed only a short career on the London stage but merits a brief mention. Rundell played Lear at the final performance at Covent Garden this year, on 9 November 1778, billed as ‘A Gentleman’. He played several important and lead roles, always anonymously, but he did not find success in London and eventually left for India where he ‘made an ample fortune by managing the Theatre in Calcutta.’<sup>89</sup>

The more important new player this year, West Digges, was one of the few names of note to emerge at this time; the majority of the established players were minor names and most of the newcomers failed to make any lasting mark in theatre history. Digges had started his career in Ireland where he had played Lear with great success.<sup>90</sup> After a long career in Ireland and the provinces, in 1777 he appeared at the Haymarket, aged about 57 and continued at this theatre during the next four summers although he moved to Covent Garden for the main seasons. He was described as being ‘built upon Booth, Quin, and the stile of their day’<sup>91</sup> but in spite of his dated manner, he played leading

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<sup>86</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 3 May 1777.

<sup>87</sup> Genest, 6, 99.

<sup>88</sup> Highfill, 4, 248-51.

<sup>89</sup> [Joseph Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green Room*, 2 vols. (1793) 2, xv.

<sup>90</sup> Highfill, 4, 401-11.

<sup>91</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 15 August, 1777.

Shakespearean roles including Falstaff, Macbeth and Shylock. Digges first played Lear in London on 17 September 1778, at his own benefit and the only performance of *King Lear* at the Haymarket that year. In the provinces, Digges as Lear had won praise for showing 'the Variety of Passions natural to the human Frame'.<sup>92</sup> Gentleman approved his playing of 'the madness in particular' but found the rest 'rather tedious and unaffecting upon the whole'.<sup>93</sup> Digges's appearance in the role of Lear is said to have been captured in a painting by Runciman which represents the actor 'muffled in an immense white beard, which mingled with a copious white periwig'.<sup>94</sup>

With Digges at this benefit performance on 17 September 1778 were the usual list of minor players who included Thomas Wade West (1745-99) in the role of Edmund.<sup>95</sup> Highfill places West as a member of the ill-fated China Hall troupe of 1776 and 1778 when he played Edmund, with Edward Everard as Lear and George Cooke as Edgar,<sup>96</sup> both of whom I discuss later. After these unsuccessful few years in London, West, with his wife Margaretta (d.1810) who had been with him at the China Hall, as well as playing Regan on 17 September 1778 at the Haymarket, moved to America where they were to become important in developing the theatre in the southern states. The role of Gloucester at this performance on 17 September 1778 was taken by Colin Mitchell (d.1789), 'a good sound actor'<sup>97</sup> but he never found lasting success. The Cordelia was Mrs. E. Massey (fl.1776-83) who had appeared with some success at the Haymarket the previous year and been called 'by far the best' player in the company.<sup>98</sup> She

<sup>92</sup> *The Present State of the Stage*, (1753) 52.

<sup>93</sup> [Francis Gentleman], *The Dramatic Censor*, 2 vols. (1770) 1, 373.

<sup>94</sup> Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, quoted in Highfill, 4, 411. It is difficult to identify this picture. There were two Runcimans, Alexander (1736-1785) and John (1744-1768). Sharpe's description fits neither John Runciman's famous painting, 'King Lear in the Storm', which now hangs in the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh, nor Alexander Runciman's pen drawing 'King Lear on the Heath', also in Edinburgh. Both pictures include the Fool. Digges was acting in Edinburgh in the 1750s so it is possible the Runcimans, as young men, saw him there.

<sup>95</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 353.

<sup>96</sup> Highfill, 15, 374. This may be a confusion with the performance on 17 September 1778 at the Haymarket when West is listed in *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (2, 353) and *The London Stage* (pt. 5, vol.1, 202) as playing Edmund. The only contemporary mention of the performances at the China Hall in August 1778 I have found is in Everard's *Memoirs* which do not refer to West as Edmund.

<sup>97</sup> Edward Everard, *The Memoirs of an Unfortunate Son of Thespis*, (Edinburgh, 1818) 77; see footnote 103.

<sup>98</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 5 September 1777.

appeared in occasional performances during the summer season until 1781 but never found employment at the two main houses.<sup>99</sup> William Dimond (1750-1812) playing Edgar, had started anonymously at Drury Lane in the role of Romeo in 1772. Now, in 1778 *The Morning Chronicle* of 15 September, singled Dimond out for a puff by announcing that he had ‘kindly consented ... to perform the part of *Edgar*.’<sup>100</sup> Dimond was associated with the theatres at Bath and Bristol for many years as manager and actor and his final acting role was as Edgar at Bath.

At the start of the new season in 1778, Digges moved to Covent Garden where he first appeared as Lear on 28 September. Other players at Covent Garden in 1778 were all established, if small-time performers. One newcomer, John Brunsdon (fl.1774-81) who took over the role of the Gentleman Usher from Thomas Death, had first appeared in London in 1774 at the Haymarket. He joined Covent Garden in 1778 but was never more than a mediocre player, acting mainly in small comedy roles.<sup>101</sup>

The unlucky China Hall, which burnt down in June 1778, was being rebuilt and meantime, its company contrived as best they could in a temporary booth. Three performances of *King Lear* were staged at this booth in August although the exact dates are not known.<sup>102</sup> The title-role was taken by Edward Everard (b. 1755) and Edgar was played by George Cooke (1756-1812) but there is no certain information about the rest of the company.<sup>103</sup> Writing of himself as Lear, Everard said ‘how little I appeared in my own eyes, while I remembered in the same part, a Garrick, Barry, Powell, and Ross’ but nevertheless he was gratified that they played *King Lear* ‘to full and genteel houses, no less than three times’.<sup>104</sup> Everard had first appeared as a child actor but failed to find success as an adult and he himself described his acting at Drury Lane as ‘unprofitable, humiliating, and fatiguing’.<sup>105</sup> After his one summer as Lear, he left London and for the next thirty-nine years was an itinerant actor wandering throughout England and

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<sup>99</sup> Highfill, 10, 128-30. Highfill refers to a Mrs. Massey, member of the China Hall company in 1776, but considers that this was another actress (10, 130).

<sup>100</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 15 September 1778.

<sup>101</sup> Highfill, 2, 374

<sup>102</sup> *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, 2, 67.

<sup>103</sup> Colin Mitchell, who played Gloucester at the Haymarket in September 1778, may have played this same role at the China Hall in August the same year. Everard writes in his *Memoirs* (77) that Mitchell was with him at the China Hall in 1778.

<sup>104</sup> Edward Everard, *The Memoirs of an Unfortunate Son of Thespis*, (Edinburgh, 1818) 78.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 58.

Scotland with very occasional returns to London in minor roles. The player taking the part of Edgar, George Cooke, finally won much greater success. He has been described as ‘one of the very great actors of the English stage’ but his reputation for drunkenness overshadowed his achievements.<sup>106</sup> After these appearances at the China Hall booth, Cooke returned to the provinces and was not able to find employment in London again until 1800 when he was taken on at Covent Garden and I will discuss his career in the following chapter.

This year, 1778, saw the textual history of *King Lear* make another step forward when the second edition of the 1773 Johnson-Steevens edition of Shakespeare was published. This edition<sup>107</sup> was, according to its title-page, a ‘Revised and Augmented’ edition of the 1773 Shakespeare and the new material consisted largely of additional notes contributed by other scholars. In addition to these new notes, some of which I shall look at shortly, it also contained Edmond Malone’s *An Attempt to Ascertain the Order in which the Plays attributed to Shakspeare were Written*,<sup>108</sup> the first attempt to do so. Malone acknowledges that ‘The materials for ascertaining the order ... are indeed so few, that ... probability alone is pretended to.’<sup>109</sup> Out of a total of forty-three ‘Shakespeare’ titles listed chronologically, Malone puts *King Lear* at thirty-three. He also names sixteen of the plays, including *King Lear*, which were ‘published in our author’s life-time’. There are lengthy ‘Notes’ at the foot of most pages and one on *King Lear* comments that ‘the publication [of *King Lear*]... was probably hastened by that of the old play with the same title, in 1605’ and Steevens suggests the same date (1605) for *King Lear*. In a later comment<sup>110</sup> he writes that the play was entered at the Stationers’ Company on 26 November 1607 and a performance was given at Whitehall ‘the preceding Christmas’, i.e. 1606. Malone then conjectures that *King Lear*’s ‘first appearance was in 1605; in which year the old play of *K. Leir* ... was printed’.

There is little other new material in the preliminary matter of this 1778 edition which

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<sup>106</sup> Highfill, 3, 449.

<sup>107</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *The Plays of William Shakspeare*, 10 vols. (1778); hereafter referred to as Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778).

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 269-346.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 271-4 from which the following quotations are taken. See Peter Martin, *Edmond Malone, Shakespearean scholar*, (Cambridge, 1995) especially pp. 30 and 33 for methods used by Malone to establish the dates of the plays.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 322.

relates to *King Lear*. A list of plays 'alter'd from Shakespeare' includes the *King Lear* adaptations made by Nahum Tate in 1681 and George Colman in 1768 but there is no mention of Garrick's version although it had been published in 1773 in John Bell's edition.<sup>111</sup> The list, which has a total of twenty-eight Shakespearean titles, several with more than one version, makes informative reading, showing at a glance how far the eighteenth-century preference for Shakespearean adaptations had been taken.

Among the new notes on *King Lear* a curious one, assigned to 'Amner', comments on Edgar's line 'thy hand out of plackets'.<sup>112</sup> The word 'placket' is glossed as 'the aperture' in a petticoat and goes on to suggest 'some deeper meaning', quoting the same word in a phrase from *The Winter's Tale* (IV, iv). Amner has been identified as the Reverend Richard Amner (1737-1803), one of two men whose names Steevens attached to notes of a possibly ribald nature. The second man was John Collins (1741-97), a clergyman whose name was assigned to a note on Lear's lines 'But to the girdle do the gods inherit,/Beneath is all the fiends'<sup>113</sup> which expounds on Venus and her 'letcherie'.<sup>114</sup> Another more certain contributor was Thomas Percy who offered several new notes referring specifically to Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (1603) and Shakespeare's use of this work in *King Lear*. One example is the word 'corky' which Cornwall uses to describe Gloucester's arms.<sup>115</sup> Percy points out that Harsnett used the same word when describing a possessed woman in the phrase 'an old *corkie* woman'.

In the second appendix of the 1773 edition of the Johnson-Steevens, a note by Farmer had drawn attention to the number of variants and comments the few lines of Mad Tom's chant starting 'Swithin/St. Withold footed thrice the wold',<sup>116</sup> had attracted. These included one by 'Mr. Colman [who] has it in his alteration of *Lear*, *Swithin*

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. 1, 247.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 9, III, iv, p.468, n.4; Arden, *King Lear*, III, iv, 94-5.

<sup>113</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, IV, vi, p.524, n.6; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vi, 122-3.

<sup>114</sup> Steevens continued to use Amner's name in later editions. See A. Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, (Michigan, 1986) chapter 5 for an account of Steevens's use of the names Collins and Amner for notes which were 'bawdy or sniggeringly suggestive', (65) as well as the possibility that Ritson collaborated with some of these notes.

<sup>115</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, III, vii, p.488 and n.6; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vii, 29.

<sup>116</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakespeare*, (1773) 10, Qq4r.



footed thrice the *world*'. Now, in the 1778 edition, in which Farmer's earlier footnote is reprinted, Colman, five years after the last performance of his own version, adds a note indignantly refuting Farmer, 'I have ever been averse to capricious variations of the old text, ... *World* was merely an error of the press'.<sup>117</sup> In a final comment in the 1778 edition, Steevens reprints Johnson's long note from 1765 in which Johnson had written, in part, 'In the present case the publick has decided, Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity'.<sup>118</sup> Steevens goes on 'Dr. Johnson should rather have said that the managers of the theatres-royal have decided, and the public has been obliged to acquiesce in their decision' - not an entirely fair criticism because managers are partly guided by the box office and if the public had stayed away, Tate's version would not have survived. Steevens does add, rather condescendingly, 'The altered play has the upper gallery on its side'.<sup>119</sup>

The critics were, on the whole, kind in their reception of this second edition of 1778. *The Monthly Review* wrote it was 'an improved and truly valuable edition', praised Johnson for being 'in the first rank' and declared Steevens's name as 'the only one that deserved to be united with Dr. Johnson's in an edition of Shakspeare'.<sup>120</sup> *The Critical Review* acknowledged that while the 1773 edition had been praised as the most 'explanatory' of any previous edition, this latest edition 'is introduced to the world with yet superior advantages'.<sup>121</sup> The reviewer decides 'to lay before our readers one new note from each play, that they may be enabled to form some idea of the numerous improvements in the present edition'.<sup>122</sup> The single *King Lear* note appears in the March issue and is on 'Come o'er the broom/ bourn Bessy, to me'. It gives the variants of the word 'broom', via Johnson's 'brook' to Steevens's 'bourn' and quotes from the Elizabethan song which contained this line.<sup>123</sup>

This 1778 edition did not entirely escape censure. Joseph Ritson's *Remarks Critical and Illustrative on the Text and Notes of the Last Edition of Shakspeare*, an aggressively

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<sup>117</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, III, iv, p.472, n.3.

<sup>118</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, (1765) 6, 159.

<sup>119</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, 566, footnote.

<sup>120</sup> *The Monthly Review*, January 1780, 12-3. The April number of *The Monthly Review* (1780) continues with further comments on this edition but there is nothing on *King Lear*.

<sup>121</sup> *The Critical Review*, February 1779, 129-36.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* February 1779, 131.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* March 1779, 181.

critical work, was published in May 1783. In his Preface, he writes 'The text of his [Johnson's] own edition, the notes of Mr. Steevens, and, in some respect, the remarks in the following sheets, will prove that he never collated any one of the folios, - no not for a single play ... So much for Dr. Johnson'.<sup>124</sup> Steevens is castigated for the 'abuse of that confidence and credit which the public naturally place in an editor of rank and character' and accused of 'indolence and temerity'.<sup>125</sup> Numerous notes, including some on *King Lear*, follow. On Edgar's line 'Let us exchange charity'<sup>126</sup> Ritson quotes Johnson's comment that Shakespeare gave 'heathens the sentiments ... of christianity' and querulously asks 'Does the learned critic mean to insinuate that benevolence, or a forgiveness of injuries could not subsist without a belief in christianity? That *heathens* could not act like *men*?'<sup>127</sup> Steevens receives Ritson's disapproval in a note on Edgar's line 'Sessy; come, march to wakes and fairs'.<sup>128</sup> Ritson glosses 'sessy' as 'cessez' being French for 'to be quiet, stop', following and acknowledging Johnson on this. He then adds 'Mr. Steevens would have it to mean *Sissy* (*Cecilia*) which is certainly wrong'.<sup>129</sup> Ritson was less successful over a note on Edgar's lines starting 'Come o'er the bourn, *Bessy*, to me'. After amending *ourn* to *urn*, he quotes nine lines which he claims are 'from an ancient MS. in the writers possession'.<sup>130</sup> However, by 1788, Ritson has second thoughts on this note. In his *The Quip Modest*, (an attack on the 1785 Johnson-Steevens edition but because it has only this one note on *King Lear*, is more conveniently examined here) Ritson writes 'I have printed what I at the time hastily took to be the original song; but I believe [it] is a puritanical parody; and as such I freely dedicate it To the Critical Reviewers'.<sup>131</sup>

**1779-84** Edmond Malone, whose pioneering work on the dating of the Shakespeare plays had first appeared in the 1778 edition of the Johnson-Steevens *Shakspeare*, now

<sup>124</sup> Joseph Ritson, *Remarks, Critical and Illustrative*, (1783) iii-iv.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* iv-v.

<sup>126</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, V, iii, p.555; Arden, *King Lear*, V, iii, 164.

<sup>127</sup> Joseph Ritson, *Remarks, Critical and Illustrative*, (1783) 173.

<sup>128</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, III, vi, p.483; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vi, 71.

<sup>129</sup> Joseph Ritson, *Remarks, Critical and Illustrative*, (1783) 170-1.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* 169; Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, III, vi, p.479; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vi, 25.

<sup>131</sup> Joseph Ritson, *The Quip Modest*, (1788) 32.

published his two-volume *Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays published in 1778* (1780) and included seventeen notes on *King Lear*.<sup>132</sup> For example, in the line 'Shall top (toe) the legitimate', Malone prefers 'top' and points out that this expression is found in *Macbeth*.<sup>133</sup> He also cites contemporary literature on Mad Tom's line 'Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me' and names *The Court of Conscience* (1607) which refers to 'beggars, idle rogues, and counterfeit madmen' two of whom are called Besse and Tom.<sup>134</sup> Three years later, Malone published *A Second Appendix to Mr. Malone's Supplement*, (1783) which it is convenient to examine now. This work contains twenty-four notes on *King Lear* of which the following is an example. For the word 'intrinsicate' in the phrase 'Too intrinsicate t'unloose',<sup>135</sup> Malone notes that 'The word ... was but newly introduced into the language, when this play was written' and offers a comparison with a line in Marston's *Scourge of Villanie* (1598). As in his 1780 Supplement, several of Malone's notes offer parallel passages from both Shakespeare and contemporary or earlier works, which help clarify the sense.

Meantime, in 1779, at Drury Lane a new actor had taken on the challenge of Lear raising hopes of better things to come. There were three stagings of *King Lear* at Drury Lane this year and John Henderson (1747-85) played the King on all three occasions. Henderson had established a career at Bath, playing twenty major roles in his first season there in 1772-73 and where he was dubbed the Bath Roscius.<sup>136</sup> Garrick saw him in April 1775 at Bath and wrote 'he is a dramatic Phoenomenon' but went on 'he has a manner of [r]aving ... that is ridiculous, & must be chang'd'.<sup>137</sup> Henderson came to London in 1777, and appeared at the Haymarket and then at Drury Lane where he

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<sup>132</sup> The last 3 notes being offered by Steevens. Edmond Malone, *Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays Published in 1778*, 2 vols. (1780) 1, 259-61.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 259; Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, I, ii, p.372, n.2; Arden, *King Lear*, I, ii, 21; *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir, (Arden, 1988) IV, iii, 57.

<sup>134</sup> Edmond Malone, *Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays Published in 1778*, 2 vols. (1780) 1, 260-1.

<sup>135</sup> Edmond Malone, *A Second Appendix to Mr. Malone's Supplement*, (1783) 49; Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, II, ii, p. 419; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 73, 'intrince'.

<sup>136</sup> Highfill, 7, 251.

<sup>137</sup> *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. David M. Little and George M. Kahrl, 3 vols. (1963) 3, 1002, to Colman dated 15 April 1775. Was Garrick, now at the end of his career, perhaps envious of the new, successful and young actor, or was Henderson's acting reminiscent of the old style which had long been out-of-date?

first played *Lear* in London on 22 March 1779 for his own benefit and again on 14 April and 4 May. Henderson 'won a reputation for himself as a fine speaker'<sup>138</sup> and also received praise for his 'attention to character ... [which] was never exceeded by the great Roscius himself'<sup>139</sup> but there were some less complimentary criticism that 'his powers were unequal to *Lear*'.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, at his first appearance as the King 'he looked like Falstaff sitting as Henry the Fourth; ... and excited a titter'.<sup>141</sup> The one interesting actress among the roll-call of minor names at Drury Lane with Henderson was Mary Robinson (1758-1800)<sup>142</sup> who played Cordelia on 14 April and 4 May 1779. This actress and writer was a protégée of Garrick's and he had intended her debut (in 1776) to be as Cordelia but, in the event, she did not appear in this part until April 1779.<sup>143</sup> Her name had also been on a playbill as Cordelia a year earlier for a performance on 30 April 1778 but, for some unknown reason, the play was cancelled and she played Lady Macbeth instead. During her career, Mary Robinson took many lead roles including Anne in *Richard III*, Ophelia, Viola, Rosalind and Perdita, her most famous role. Her stage career was brief and little criticism about her acting survives although verse and comments about her beauty, 'thy lovely perfect face',<sup>144</sup> and her private life, under the protection of the Prince of Wales, abound.

In the autumn of 1779 John Henderson moved permanently to Covent Garden with an increased salary.<sup>145</sup> Covent Garden had put on no performances of *King Lear* in the early months of 1779 but when Henderson was lured away from Drury Lane at the beginning of the autumn season, Covent Garden staged *King Lear* on 19 November. Henderson had been billed to play on 2 November but due to his 'infirm state of

<sup>138</sup>Bertram Joseph, *The Tragic Actor*, (1959) 178.

<sup>139</sup>[Thomas Davies], *A Genuine Narrative of the Life and Theatrical Transactions of Mr. John Henderson*, (1777) 46.

<sup>140</sup>Genest, 6, 81.

<sup>141</sup>James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 1, 76.

<sup>142</sup>Highfill, 13, 30-47.

<sup>143</sup>According to *Biographia Dramatica, or, A Companion to the Playhouse*, ed. D. Erskine Baker, (1782) 2 vols., 'before the night fixed upon for her performance [as Cordelia], [Mary] became acquainted with Mr. Robinson ... who prevailed upon her to marry him, and relinquish her design of appearing on the stage', (1, 371). See *Memoirs of The Late Mrs. Robinson, written by herself*, 4 vols (1801) for an account of how she was persuaded into marriage, thus delaying her appearance as Cordelia, through the 'gross deception' of her husband (1, 76).

<sup>144</sup>J. Burgoyne, *The Dramatic and Poetical Works*, 2 vols. (1808) 'To Mrs. Robinson', 2, 236

<sup>145</sup>Highfill, 7, 256.

health', the performance was cancelled.<sup>146</sup> The defection of Henderson from Drury Lane in the autumn of 1779 and the lack of another actor qualified to play Lear appears to have been responsible for the dropping of *King Lear* from Drury Lane's repertory until 1788. During this time, Covent Garden was the only theatre to stage the play which it did three times in 1780 (3 January, 21 February and 27 December); four times in 1781 (22 January, 26 March, 31 October and 14 November); three times in 1783 (1 January, 24 February and 20 October); and once in 1784 (5 January). There were no performances of *King Lear* in 1782 or 1785, the year of Henderson's early death.

With the exception of John Henderson, the company at Covent Garden during these years was made up largely of minor players, and the newcomers, including two Lears, were unable to establish themselves as stars. The first new Lear was a luckless actor named Bludrick who attempted this role on 21 February 1780 and was advised against another attempt as 'disgrace must be the inevitable consequence'.<sup>147</sup> The second was Richard Wroughton (1748-1822) who played the role on 14 November 1781. James Boaden wrote of him that he 'kept a respectable station in tragedy, and I have seen him bold enough to touch, after Garrick, that hopeless part, King Lear'<sup>148</sup> but others felt 'The weight of *Lear* [he was] unable to sustain'<sup>149</sup> and he was demoted to Edgar. Wroughton (whose real name was Rotten but 'altered *euphonia gratia*'<sup>150</sup>) acted in over two hundred major roles and although not of the top rank, was associated with the London stage for thirty-seven years. His other Shakespearean parts included Florizel, Laertes, Hotspur, Othello and Romeo in which he was badly mocked by the critics.<sup>151</sup> Popular with audiences who supported his benefits generously, Wroughton 'by persistence, placed himself among the greatest favourites of the town'.<sup>152</sup>

There were also three newcomers as Cordelia but only Elizabeth Satchell (later Mrs. Stephen Kemble; c. 1763-1841) found any success. This actress first played Cordelia on 20 October 1783 during her first season at Covent Garden. She was also cast as

<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Highfill, 7, 257.

<sup>147</sup> *The Morning Post*, 22 February 1780.

<sup>148</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 1, 72.

<sup>149</sup> [Joseph Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green-Room*, 2 vols. (1795) 1, 122.

<sup>150</sup> Note by J.P. Kemble on a playbill (Highfill, 16, 297).

<sup>151</sup> Highfill, 16, 297-305. Highfill does not list Lear among Wroughton's major roles.

<sup>152</sup> [Joseph Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*, 2 vols. (1790) 1, 23.

Juliet, Lady Anne, Ophelia, Perdita and Desdemona and was compared favourably with Sarah Siddons, her sister-in-law: 'modest, tender Mrs. Kemble ... always *enacting*, whether in speech or not ... more even than Mrs. Siddons'.<sup>153</sup>

Similarly, three actors played the Gentleman Usher for the first time during these years. Christopher Berry (fl.1776-81), praised as 'a lively Performer in Fops and airy Gentlemen',<sup>154</sup> took the role on 27 December 1780. Little is known about William Bates (d.1813?), cast as the Gentleman Usher on 31 October and 14 November 1781, other than that he was probably the brother of another minor actor, James Bates who was playing Burgundy at around this time. William is remembered mainly in Harlequin roles and from 1793 to his death in 1817, he acted in the United States.<sup>155</sup> The third new Gentleman Usher was Ralph Wewitzer (1748-1825) whose first attempt at the role was on 1 January 1783. Wewitzer had joined Covent Garden in May 1773 at the start of his career which spanned forty-four years. He was a middle-ranking actor who did play important roles but these were not Shakespearean.

**1785** There were no performances of *King Lear* at the London theatres in 1785 but during all these dull *King Lear* years on stage, the editors continued work on the text of Shakespeare's plays. Although Samuel Johnson died in December 1784 and George Steevens wrote he would 'never ... appear Again as Editor of Shakespeare',<sup>156</sup> the Johnson-Steevens edition was still being revised. The third edition was published in December 1785,<sup>157</sup> but before looking at this edition, another work must be examined. In 1785 John Monck Mason published *Comments on the last Edition of Shakespeare's Plays* but it is unclear which 'last Edition' he is referring to. Arthur Sherbo infers that it is the 1785 edition<sup>158</sup> but I think it is the 1778 edition and give my reasons below.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>153</sup> *The Gazetteer*, 29 August 1791, quoted in Highfill, 8, 406.

<sup>154</sup> The actor Joseph Austin, quoted in Highfill, 2, 60-1.

<sup>155</sup> Highfill, 1, 386-8 which makes no mention of the Gentleman Usher.

<sup>156</sup> Letter to Malone in Folger, dated 28 November 1782, quoted by W. C. Woodson, 'Isaac Reed's Variorum Shakespeare', *Studies in Bibliography*, 39 (1986) 222.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* 224.

<sup>158</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, (Michigan, 1986) 126.

<sup>159</sup> My reasons for thinking Monck Mason is writing about the earlier 1778 edition are as follows: Monck Mason's work was reviewed in May 1785 but the 1785 Johnson-Steevens edition was not published until December 1785; Monck Mason's page references correspond to the 1778 edition and not to the 1785 edition. See chapter 13 for a final comment on this.

Monck Mason's book was reviewed unfavourably in *The Critical Review* of May 1785 which judged that he 'has not improved the state of the text'<sup>160</sup> although many of his notes were to re-appear in the 1785 Johnson-Steevens edition which was well received in *The Critical Review*.

Monck Mason's book is divided into two parts, the main section being the Comments, with twenty-one pages on *King Lear* (338-58). The second section, 'Additional Comments', is bound in at the end and includes six further notes on *King Lear* (57-60).<sup>161</sup> Many of the notes were to appear in the 1785 edition, published on 15 December but there are some which do not and the following are two examples from *King Lear*. Writing on the Fool's line 'Cry you mercy! I took you for a joint stool'<sup>162</sup> Monck Mason says 'A joint stool is not here a proverbial expression, but part of the furniture of the farm house, which Lear mistook for Goneril'. Recent editors<sup>163</sup> suggest that it is a proverbial expression meaning insultingly and deliberately to overlook someone, which gives greater strength and offence to the Fool's line. The second example is on the lines

Then she shook  
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,  
And clamour moisten'd her.

Monck Mason argues for deleting the final 'her' which 'will improve both the sense and the metre'<sup>164</sup> and also writes 'I cannot reconcile myself to Johnson's interpretation of this passage'. Johnson's interpretation, reprinted from his 1765 edition, explains simply that Cordelia's 'outcries were accompanied by tears'. *King Lear* notes in the 'Additional Comments' at the end of the volume include Monck Mason's disagreement with Malone's gloss of the word 'intrinsic'. In his 1783 *Second Appendix* Malone had

<sup>160</sup> *The Critical Review*, May 1785, 344. In *The Critical Review*, January 1787 Monck Mason is praised as 'a careful and attentive commentator' (25) and his gloss of Edmund's line 'Hardly shall I carry out my side' (Arden, *King Lear*, V, i, 62) as an allusion to 'a party of cards', is selected for praise. Arden explains simply as 'fulfil my side of the agreement'.

<sup>161</sup> There are two copies of Monck Mason's *Comments* in the British Library, both dated 1785 (82.e.25 and 642.d.9). Only the first contains the 'Additional Comments', (starting with p.3, signature B2 which suggests a separate pamphlet) bound in at the end of the volume.

<sup>162</sup> Monck Mason, *Comments on the Last Edition*, (1785) 350; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vi, 51.

<sup>163</sup> R.A. Foakes, III, vi, 51; R. Weis, III, vi, 48; K. Muir, III, vi, 51.

<sup>164</sup> Monck Mason, *Comments on the Last Edition*, (1785) 353; Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1778) 9, IV, iii, p.509. Arden, *King Lear*, IV, iii, 30-2 gives 'mastered' which seems to make the best sense of the line.

explained the word as 'newly introduced ... when this play was written' but Monck Mason suggests the word 'intricate' as 'a more natural expression'.<sup>165</sup>

In December 1785, the third Johnson-Steevens edition of *The Plays of William Shakspeare* was published with textual changes which marked a 'measurable advance' over the earlier editions.<sup>166</sup> Isaac Reed (1742-1807) had taken over the task of editor but was identified on the title-page only as 'the Editor of Dodsley's Collection of Old Plays'. Among the reprinted material was Malone's *Attempt to Ascertain the Order* now slightly revised. Six titles, including *Pericles*, were deleted and thirty-six plays listed chronologically, with *King Lear* moved to number 27 but the date 1605 retained. The edition, like its predecessors, was well received on the whole. Although there was mild criticism that the text remained 'faulty', *The Critical Review* wrote that while there was 'still farther room for retrenchment', there were 'fewer deviations from the original copies than in the former editions' and the edition was 'the best that we have seen'.<sup>167</sup>

For this thesis, the most interesting new material in the 1785 edition are the notes submitted by the actor John Henderson on *King Lear*. In his curse on Goneril, *Lear* has a line 'And be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her!'<sup>168</sup> and Henderson glosses *thwart* as 'a noun adjective [which] is not frequent in our language' and quotes a parallel passage from a 1578 publication. Similarly, he offers a parallel passage from William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566) to explain *Lear*'s line 'Do you but mark how this becomes the house'.<sup>169</sup> These, together with the fact that he submitted a total of sixty-two notes,<sup>170</sup> suggest that Henderson, 'one of the most learned in his profession',<sup>171</sup> was well educated and widely read, exceptionally so for a player.

Another contributor in 1785 was John Monck Mason. His notes became available to Reed rather late for inclusion and appear in the last volumes only, including volume 9

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<sup>165</sup> Monck Mason, *Comments on the Last Edition*, (1785) 'Additional Comments', 58-9; Edmond Malone, *A Second Appendix to Mr. Malone's Supplement*, (1783) 49; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 73 which keeps 'intrince' explaining it as an abbreviation of 'intrinsicate'.

<sup>166</sup> W.C. Woodson, 'Isaac Reed's Variorum Shakespeare', *Studies in Bibliography*, 39, (1986) 225.

<sup>167</sup> *The Critical Review*, November 1786, 322-3.

<sup>168</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *The Plays of William Shakspeare*, (1785) 9, I, iv, p.432, hereafter referred to as Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1785); Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 275.

<sup>169</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1785) 9, II, iv, p.473, n.9; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 342.

<sup>170</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, (Michigan, 1986) 118.

<sup>171</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 1, 220.



with *King Lear*.<sup>172</sup> Monck Mason's notes include one on Goneril's line 'You are much more at task for want of wisdom'.<sup>173</sup> Two earlier notes are reprinted, Johnson's which had approved this wording citing the common phrase 'I'll take you to task' and Steevens's which had claimed that two of the quartos read 'alapt' for 'to task' and went on 'A late editor of *King Lear*, says, that the first quarto reads 'attask'd'; but unless there is a third quarto which I have never seen or heard of, his assertion is erroneous'.<sup>174</sup> Monck Mason argues for 'task', writing 'The word *task* is frequently used by Shakspeare, and indeed by other writers of his time in the sense of *tax*'.<sup>175</sup> Another Monck Mason note is on Kent's lines when in the stocks,

... and shall find time  
From this enormous state - seeking to give  
Losses their remedies.<sup>176</sup>

Steevens had written 'I confess I do not understand this passage' but suspected that Kent is reading Cordelia's letter, and this footnote is now reprinted. The Johnson explanation<sup>177</sup> that when Cordelia has time from 'the enormous care of seeking her fortune' she will help Lear, is cut and Monck Mason writes 'Dr. Johnson's explanation ... cannot be right, for ... she is queen of France, and has no fortune to seek'.

A final example of a new note in the 1785 edition is one from Sir Joshua Reynolds<sup>178</sup> who comments on Lear's line 'And my poor fool is hang'd!'.<sup>179</sup> He writes 'I confess, I am one of those who *have thought* that Lear means his *Fool* and not *Cordelia*' and goes on to say that 'it ought to be known what became of him' [i.e. the Fool] although he

<sup>172</sup> W. C. Woodson, 'Isaac Reed's Variorum Shakespeare', *Studies in Bibliography*, 39, (1986) 223.

<sup>173</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1785) 9, I, iv, p.435; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 339 which gives the line as 'You are much more attasked for want of wisdom'.

<sup>174</sup> Steevens did not know of the Q uncorrected and Q corrected.

<sup>175</sup> See *King Lear, a Parallel Text Edition*, ed. René Weis (1993) I, iv, 320 and note. Weis, quoting Greg, comments on the interchangeability of the two words *tax* and *task*.

<sup>176</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1785) 9, II, ii, p.459; Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 166-8.

<sup>177</sup> Johnson's note, which had appeared in his 1765 edition and was reprinted in 1778, went on 'This is harsh; perhaps something better may be found' (6, Act II, p.60). See R. Weis *King Lear, a Parallel Text*, (1993) II, ii, 159-61 for a likely solution to these lines.

<sup>178</sup> Arthur Sherbo is incorrect in claiming that Reynolds's note 'first appeared in Malone's edition of 1790', (*The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, 134).

<sup>179</sup> Johnson-Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1785) 9, V, iii, pp.607-8, n.6; Arden, *King Lear*, V, iii, 304.

acknowledges that 'Shakspeare is not always attentive' to such details.

These Johnson-Steevens editions, based largely on Johnson's edition of 1765, but with the added benefit of Steevens's scholarship, considerably advanced the editing of Shakespeare's texts with many new notes. The next editor was Edmond Malone who, after the publication of his Supplements, offered his own edition in 1790. Then, in spite of his declaration that he would not again edit Shakespeare's works, George Steevens changed his mind and was 'ready for another editorial venture' in which he 'gave fullest expression to his views on Shakespeare's plays'<sup>180</sup> in an edition (1793) usually known as Steevens's edition. These two editors, Malone and Steevens, were responsible for further improvements in Shakespeare's texts and their works will be examined in the following chapter together with the establishment of the Kembles as the new leading players.

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<sup>180</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, (Michigan, 1986) 140.

Illustration 12



*Kemble*

Portrait of John Philip Kemble,  
taken from BL 2407.e.7

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CHAPTER 12

**Edmond Malone's edition 1790; George Steevens' edition 1793;  
John Kemble's adaptation;  
and performances between 1786 and 1802**

During the last years of the eighteenth century, *King Lear* did not enjoy any outstanding good fortune on stage. The two leading players were John Philip Kemble (1757-1823) and his sister, Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), and although they played in *King Lear* with success, they won greater acclaim in other Shakespearean roles.<sup>1</sup>

**1786** In 1786 there was yet another newcomer to the role of Lear. William Farren (1754-95) attempted the part only once, on 6 March at Covent Garden in Tate's adaptation,<sup>2</sup> with several other new players appearing with him. Farren played many Shakespearean roles including Macduff, Tybalt and Paris, progressed to Hotspur and Othello and 'proved himself a useful performer'<sup>3</sup> but one critic wrote that 'He ne'er will rise beyond a *decent Lear*'.<sup>4</sup> Opposite Farren on 6 March, in the role of Cordelia, also for the first time, was the actress Anne Brunton (1769-1808; later Mrs. Merry and then Mrs. Wignell).<sup>5</sup> Brunton as Cordelia, rather than Farren as Lear, won the attention of the critics, one of whom wrote that in 'the impassioned' she was successful but 'The gentle ... and tenderness never add to her credit.'<sup>6</sup> Described as 'a sluttish indolent girl',<sup>7</sup> it was also said of her 'Here will be another Siddons'<sup>8</sup> but although her career started well, she was never a serious challenge.

Also appearing in London for the first time in *King Lear* on 6 March 1786 was perhaps the most interesting of the minor players, Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821) cast as Regan. Her other Shakespearean roles included Hermione, Mrs. Page and Nerissa and earlier, she had played Cordelia opposite her husband's Lear, at Bristol. Inchbald was a moderately talented actress who had overcome a severe speech impediment in

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<sup>1</sup> Siddons as Lady Macbeth and Kemble as Coriolanus.

<sup>2</sup> Highfill, 5, 178.

<sup>3</sup> *The Thespian Dictionary*, (1805).

<sup>4</sup> [H.J. Leigh], *The New Rosciad*, (1787) 19.

<sup>5</sup> Highfill, 16, 67.

<sup>6</sup> *The Public Advertiser*, 10 March, 1786.

<sup>7</sup> [J. Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*, 2 vols. (1790) 2, 39.

<sup>8</sup> John Bernard, *Retrospections of the Stage*, 2 vols. (1830) 2, 68.

order to try for success on the stage.<sup>9</sup> She was also a novelist and playwright and is remembered chiefly for her two novels *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796) which were well-received on publication. Later she wrote the prefaces to the twenty-five volume *The British Theatre* (1806-9) which I will examine in the following chapter. Another new actor, Joseph Holman (1764-1817), who had made a promising start as Romeo at Covent Garden in 1784, took on the part of Edgar on 6 March. One critic wrote that in 'the stronger passions ... his genius shines forth with the most astonishing power';<sup>10</sup> a second that his extravagant style of acting 'served Holman well in the feigned madness of Edgar',<sup>11</sup> and a third, 'there were very sanguine hopes that he would leave a name in the art'.<sup>12</sup> However, he failed to find sustained success in London and moved to America in 1812.

**1787-1788** As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 1787 John Henderson died unexpectedly and in this year there were no performances of *King Lear* at any London theatre. Then, in 1788, two players who could claim the title 'star' appeared as Lear and Cordelia. Announced as 'Not acted these 9 years',<sup>13</sup> *King Lear* was staged at Drury Lane six times in 1788 and the reason was, no doubt, the casting of John Kemble and Sarah Siddons in the lead roles. Kemble was appointed manager of Drury Lane in 1788<sup>14</sup> and he and Sarah Siddons dominated the London stage at this time. The first performance at Drury Lane with Kemble as Lear and Siddons as Cordelia was on 21 January and was a benefit for Siddons as well as, perhaps, being the first staging of Kemble's adaptation of *King Lear*;<sup>15</sup> the other performances were on 24, 29 January; 1, 8 March and 15 May 1788. *Lear* was not to be one of Kemble's major successes. Leigh Hunt complained that he 'seemed to throw a general coldness over the whole ... He personated the king's majesty perfectly well, but ... he will never, as long as he

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<sup>9</sup> Highfill, 8, 78-9.

<sup>10</sup> *The Monthly Mirror*, May 1809, 315.

<sup>11</sup> Highfill, 7, 385.

<sup>12</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 1, 218.

<sup>13</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.5, vol.2, 1036.

<sup>14</sup> Kemble took over the management of Drury Lane in the autumn of 1788 'fortunately for the interests of the drama', James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 1, 403.

<sup>15</sup> This is discussed again later in the chapter.

lives, be able to act any thing mad unless it be a melancholy mad statue'.<sup>16</sup> James Boaden, however, who saw Kemble on 21 January at his first attempt at the role, wrote 'The curse, as he then uttered it, harrowed up the soul' but Boaden qualified this by adding that Kemble never again achieved this perfection.<sup>17</sup> Kemble found Lear a difficult part and complained that 'in Lear an audience quite unsettled him; the noise ... routed all his meditated effects'.<sup>18</sup> This concern of Kemble's over the role of Lear is significant when read alongside a remark by James Boaden that Kemble 'seemed to take a delight in shewing how ... he could make a *sign* and sometimes *speak* to a friend near him, and yet seem to carry on the action and the look of the character'.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps Kemble did not dare risk this in the demanding role of Lear. In spite of the six performances in 1788, Kemble did not appear again as Lear until 1792, partly because Siddons left the stage for eighteen months 'to avail herself ... of a variety of invitations'<sup>20</sup> and also perhaps because he was not outstandingly successful as Lear, although dubbed 'FIRST TRAGEDIAN OF THE BRITISH STAGE'.<sup>21</sup>

Siddons, who had scored a tremendous success back in 1782, was similarly described as 'indisputably the first Tragic Actress in Britain - perhaps in the world'.<sup>22</sup> She first appeared in London under Garrick's management in 1775 but it was not until her second attempt in 1782 that she triumphed. Siddons in the role of Cordelia was admired, particularly in the final Act where she spoke her part 'with a filial tenderness, an ardour and a piety highly impressive'<sup>23</sup> but the same critic also wrote that Cordelia, 'a character of no great power', (presumably in comparison with Lady Macbeth, Siddons' most successful part) did not particularly suit Siddons' style.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless the takings at her benefit on 21 January 1788 as Cordelia was 'the greatest sum that had ever been taken in that theatre [£347. 10s.] except at her first benefit', as Lady Macbeth.<sup>25</sup> With

<sup>16</sup> Leigh Hunt, *The Examiner*, 22 May, 1808, 333.

<sup>17</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 1, 378.

<sup>18</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, 2 vols. (1827) 2, 376.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 289-90 who adds that Siddons never erred in this way - 'no, not for a moment'.

<sup>20</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 2, 2.

<sup>21</sup> [F.G. Waldron], *Candid and Impartial Strictures on the Performers*, (1795) 5.

<sup>22</sup> [J. Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*, 2 vols. (1790) 1, 21.

<sup>23</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, 2 vols. (1827) 2, 237.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 234.

<sup>25</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 1, 379. *Shakespeare in the Theatre* gives £343.12.6 as the takings for that night (2, 85.)

one exception, John Whitfield cast as Albany which he had played in 1774, all the other players at these Drury Lane performances were new, either to their part or to the play. William Barrymore (1759-1830) who started at Drury Lane in 1782 in minor roles, progressed to playing Edmund in 1788 but never reached the top rank<sup>26</sup> although he gradually built up his position and when other players left Drury Lane, this 'concurred still farther to his advancement, which he accelerated by an obsequious demeanour'.<sup>27</sup> The actress cast as Goneril, Margaret Cuyler (1758-1814), had joined Drury Lane in 1777 where her Miranda was dismissed as 'a mere piece of *still life*'.<sup>28</sup> Her career seems to have been divided between the stage and society and if she achieved little success in one, she was more fortunate in the other where she attracted a series of rich protectors.<sup>29</sup> Philip Lamash (d.1800), a newcomer to the role of the Gentleman Usher, had been engaged and coached by Garrick in 1774 but did not achieve much success. He was described as 'naturally a fop ... he could not assume the gentleman, but the gentleman's gentleman fitted him like his clothes'<sup>30</sup> and he played the small part of Trip in the first performance of *The School for Scandal* in 1777. Charlotte Tidswell (1760-1846), playing Arante, joined Drury Lane in 1783 and remained for thirty-nine years but did not 'figure in the first line upon the boards'.<sup>31</sup> Her significance in a history of the theatre is that she cared for the great tragedian Edmund Kean (1787-1833) when he was a child. Robert Benson (1765-96), cast as Burgundy, had made his debut at the Haymarket in 1778 and joined Drury Lane in 1786 where his roles included Cornwall as well as Burgundy. The reviews of his performances were poor; one critic wrote that he was the 'complete mutilator of blank verse'<sup>32</sup> and another that 'an actor he is not' and then added faint praise that he was 'sober and industrious',<sup>33</sup> but when aged only 31 years, he was 'afflicted with the brain-fever'<sup>34</sup> and committed suicide in May 1796.

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<sup>26</sup> Highfill, 1, 355-8.

<sup>27</sup> [J. Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green-Room*, 2 vols. (1795) 2, 150.

<sup>28</sup> *The London Magazine*, January 1777, 7.

<sup>29</sup> [J. Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green Rooms*, 2 vols. (1790) 1, 250. Highfill makes no mention of Goneril in the list of Cuyler's roles.

<sup>30</sup> John Bernard, *Retrospections of the Stage*, 2 vols. (1830) 1, 318-9.

<sup>31</sup> [J. Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green-Room*, 2 vols. (1795) 1, 288.

<sup>32</sup> [F.G. Waldron], *Candid and Impartial Strictures on the Performers*, (1795) 68.

<sup>33</sup> [J. Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green Room*, (1792) 1, 182-3.

<sup>34</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1796, 445.

**1789** Covent Garden did not stage *King Lear* in 1788 and gave only one performance in 1789. This was Tate's adaptation staged on 23 November and a player new to the title-role in London was tried. George Davies Harley (d.1811) had attempted *Lear* at his own benefit at Norwich in 1788 and was brought to London where he played *Lear* in 1789 and in the two following years<sup>35</sup> and one critic said he 'represented ... *Lear* with tolerable *eclat*'.<sup>36</sup> Others said that Harley 'was (as usual) cold and uninteresting' as *Lear*<sup>37</sup> and that his features were 'little adapted to the grief-worn, parental visage of a *Lear*'.<sup>38</sup> Garrick, when aged twenty-five, had managed triumphantly to play the old King, but Harley, at about the same age, failed. One writer commented that 'it was rather the grandson of *Lear* ... than the good old King himself';<sup>39</sup> Anthony Pasquin wrote that Harley's voice as *Lear* was a 'whine' and that he copied Henderson who had copied Garrick so that he was 'but the shadow at best of a shade'<sup>40</sup> but Pasquin was rarely kind about any player. In 1794 Harley was demoted to play Kent but nonetheless enjoyed a respectable London career. Edmund at this performance in November 1789 was taken by James Fennell (1766-1816), also a newcomer to the role, and one of the 'genuine eccentrics' of the stage.<sup>41</sup> He had started in Edinburgh where he played *Othello* very successfully in the summer of 1787. He then came to Covent Garden where he played *Othello* later that same year but like many of the players at this time, he seemed unable to consolidate his initial success. After trying in France, he went to America and his final performance there was as *Lear* when his senility 'was all too apparent'.<sup>42</sup>

John Bernard, an actor who left an interesting memoir, *Retrospections of the Stage*, (1830) was cast as the Gentleman Usher. Bernard (1756-1828) had started his career as a strolling player in the provinces and Ireland, often in leading roles, before finally joining Covent Garden in 1787.<sup>43</sup> He was accused of picking up many bad habits

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<sup>35</sup> Highfill, 7, 106.

<sup>36</sup> [J. Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green-Room*, 2 vols. (1795) 2, 240.

<sup>37</sup> *The Biographical and Imperial Magazine*, May 1790, 3, 319.

<sup>38</sup> [F.G. Waldron], *Candid and Impartial Strictures on the Performers*, (1795) 50.

<sup>39</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, quoted in Highfill, 7, 106.

<sup>40</sup> Anthony Pasquin [pseud.] (John Williams), *The Children of Thespis*, (1792) 218.

<sup>41</sup> Highfill, 5, 215.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 5, 220.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 55; see John Bernard's *Retrospections of the Stage*, 2 vols. (1830) particularly 2, chapter IV.



because he had been 'too long accustomed to a strolling life'.<sup>44</sup> His attempt at the Gentleman Usher shows that this role was still being played partly for laughs. A critic wrote that although he 'did ample justice to the Steward; ... he carried his buffoonery too far ... [and] an unnatural quaintness of voice and gesture make his death a matter of merriment'.<sup>45</sup> The part of Arante was taken by Elizabeth Rowson (d.1790) who had started as a dancer in 1781. She joined Covent Garden in 1785 where she had a modest career until her sudden death in 1790<sup>46</sup> when *The Gentleman's Magazine* mourned the loss of this 'beautiful and interesting girl'.<sup>47</sup>

The role of Cornwall in November 1789 was taken by a newcomer to the part, William Macready (1755-1829) a middle-ranking actor of interest to this thesis as the father of William Charles Macready, the reinstater of Shakespeare's *King Lear* some years hence. Macready senior had started at Covent Garden in 1786 and stayed with this company for the next eleven years.<sup>48</sup> He played the role of Cornwall on a number of occasions and also Edmund in 1790 and 1791. This last role seems to have brought him little success, one critic writing that the 'Bastard ought not to be given to such a player as Macready'<sup>49</sup> but without stating any particular reason for the criticism.

**1790** Covent Garden performed Tate's adaptation of the play eight times in 1790, on 4, 11 and 18 January, 1 and 15 February, 19 April, 11 October and 22 November. Harley was again Lear at all the performances and there were no new names of significance in the cast. In spite of this sudden flurry of performances at Covent Garden in 1790, the year is of greater interest because of the edition of Shakespeare published in November. This was Edmond Malone's 11 volume *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare* with volume 1 in two parts. Malone made some revisions to earlier material including his *Attempt to ascertain the order of Shakespeare's Plays* from which

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<sup>44</sup> [F.G. Waldron], *Candid and Impartial Strictures on the Performers*, (1795) 58.

<sup>45</sup> *The Biographical and Imperial Magazine*, January 1790, 3, 69. Highfill (2, 57) claims that Bernard played the role of Cornwall's servant but I think the use of the word 'Steward' in *The Biographical and Imperial Magazine* together with the use of the word 'buffoonery' makes it clear that the role is the Gentleman Usher; *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (2, 357) agrees.

<sup>46</sup> Highfill, 13, 121-2.

<sup>47</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1790, 961.

<sup>48</sup> Highfill, 10, 40.

<sup>49</sup> *The Biographical and Imperial Magazine*, January 1790, 3, 69.

he deleted eight titles, including *Pericles* and *Titus Andronicus*, leaving a total of thirty-five with *King Lear* moving to number 26 and retaining the date 1605.<sup>50</sup> By cutting some of the earlier matter and shortening existing notes, Malone 'made room for his own lengthy notes and additions to his earlier notes'<sup>51</sup> and 'there are few new notes by anybody other than Malone himself'.<sup>52</sup> One new note and one extended old note in *King Lear* will suffice as examples. On Edgar's words, 'Edgar I nothing am', in his 'I heard myself proclaimed' speech,<sup>53</sup> Malone suggests 'Perhaps the meaning is, As poor Tom, I may exist: appearing as Edgar, I am lost' a meaning close to Arden. An extended Malone note is one originally from his *A Second Appendix to the Supplement to Shakespeare*, on Kent's lines 'None of these rogues and cowards/But Ajax is their fool'.<sup>54</sup> He reprints his original note and adds 'Since the first publication ... I have observed that our poet has elsewhere employed the same phraseology' and quotes from *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Henry VIII*. The small amount of material contributed by others included Sir Joshua Reynolds on 'Edmund the base/Shall toe the legitimate'.<sup>55</sup> According to Malone, Reynolds claimed that in Devonshire 'to *toe* a thing up, is to tear it up by the roots'. Reynolds felt that the phrase was particularly apt because of Edmund's following words, 'I *grow*, I prosper,' presumably because both offer the imagery of plants.

The 1790 edition met with fiercely antagonistic criticism in an anonymous publication, *Cursory Criticisms on the Edition of Shakspeare published by Edmond Malone* written by Joseph Ritson. This work appeared in 1792 and, as well as being an attack on Malone, it was also a defence of Ritson's earlier work, *The Quip Modest* (1788). Ritson first accuses the 'Monthly and Critical Reviewers' of passing judgment on *The Quip Modest* after reading only its title 'in a newspaper, or through a shop-window' before punishing it with 'virulent abuse',<sup>56</sup> and he then discusses Malone's

<sup>50</sup> Edmond Malone, *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare*, 11 vols. (1790) 1, pt. i, 266-7; hereafter referred to as Malone, *Shakspeare*.

<sup>51</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, (Michigan, 1986) 126.

<sup>52</sup> Arthur Sherbo, 'George Steevens's 1785 variorum Shakespeare', *Studies in Bibliography*, 32 (1979) 244.

<sup>53</sup> Malone, *Shakspeare*, 8, ll, iii, pp.556-7, n.6; Arden, *King Lear*, ll, ii, 172-92.

<sup>54</sup> Malone, *Shakspeare*, 8, ll ii, p.551, n.4; Arden, *King Lear*, ll, ii, 122-3.

<sup>55</sup> Malone, *Shakspeare*, 8, l, ii, 507, n.1; Arden, *King Lear*, l, ii, 20-1, 'top the legitimate'.

<sup>56</sup> [Joseph Ritson], *Cursory Criticisms on the Edition of Shakspeare published by Edmond Malone*, (1792) iii.

editing. There are two notes on *King Lear*. One scoffs at Malone for being 'incapable of distinguishing history from romance' and for quoting Geoffrey of Monmouth's writing as "'an historical fact'"<sup>57</sup> and also for not knowing that Nero 'never existed'.<sup>58</sup> The second attacks Malone on the scanning of 'Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave you all'. Malone had suggested 'father' was sometimes used by Shakespeare as a monosyllable but Ritson is dismissive. He points out 'The folios read: Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all'<sup>59</sup> and adds 'The poetical reader will judge which line is most likely to have fallen from Shakspeare'.<sup>60</sup> Ritson finishes with an all-out attack on Malone: 'His pages abound with examples of *profound ignorance, idle conjectures, crude notions, feeble attempts at jocularity, slender criticism, shallow, half-informed, fond, skill-less, tasteless and unfounded remarks*'.<sup>61</sup>

However, all critics were not so rancorous. One complimented Malone on his 'uncommon care' and wrote that the edition was 'superior to any that has hitherto appeared'.<sup>62</sup> Another drew attention to Malone's 'assiduity, and the great pains which he has taken to give a *genuine text* of all his author's writings.'<sup>63</sup> Edmund Burke, writing to Malone, c. 29 November 1790, praised 'your valuable work' and 'your able, exact and interesting History of the Stage'.<sup>64</sup> This History of over three hundred pages, outlines stage history from earliest times to Garrick and 'critics of every class have rendered [it] high praise'.<sup>65</sup> In it, Malone writes that Garrick's genius resulted in 'the frequent representation of his [i.e. Shakespeare's] plays in nearly their original state',<sup>66</sup> but this is inaccurate as far as *King Lear* is concerned. Although Garrick's version was closer to Shakespeare than was Tate's, it could not be called near to its 'original state'.

<sup>57</sup> Malone does this in 8, 583, n.2.

<sup>58</sup> In 8, 601, n.5 Malone states that Nero lived 'above 800 years' after the time of Lear. *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* gives Nero's dates as AD37-68.

<sup>59</sup> Q reads 'your old kind father/Whose frank heart gave you all'; F 'Your old kind father whose frank heart gave all'.

<sup>60</sup> [Joseph Ritson], *Cursory Criticisms on the Edition of Shakspeare published by Edmond Malone*, (1792) 93-4; Arden, *King Lear*, III, iv, 20.

<sup>61</sup> [Joseph Ritson], *Cursory Criticisms on the Edition of Shakspeare published by Edmond Malone*, (1792) 103.

<sup>62</sup> *The Critical Review*, December 1791, 369.

<sup>63</sup> *The Monthly Review*, September 1793, 57.

<sup>64</sup> *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. A. Cobban and Robert A. Smith, 10 vols. (Cambridge, 1967) 6, 181.

<sup>65</sup> James Prior, *Life of Edmond Malone*, (1860) 167.

<sup>66</sup> Malone, *Shakspeare*, vol.1, pt.2, 283.

**1791-1792** After the eight performances of the previous year, in 1791 Covent Garden staged *King Lear* only twice, on 10 January and 4 November. The cast was largely unchanged but Regan was played for the first time by Susan Fawcett (d.1797) on 4 November who, in spite of playing several good roles including Regan and Emilia, was sneeringly dismissed as ‘only a third or fourth-rate Actress ... [who] has been the Heroine of the Provincial Corps’.<sup>67</sup> Joseph S. Munden (1758-1832), also new to his role, the Gentleman Usher, had joined Covent Garden in 1790 after ten years in the provinces.<sup>68</sup> Munden developed into an important actor with over two hundred roles to his credit. He specialised in comic parts and on his retirement one critic lamented that ‘the king of broad comedy is dead to the drama’.<sup>69</sup>

In the summer of 1791 Drury Lane was closed for extensive rebuilding. The new theatre reopened in March 1794 and in the intervening years the Drury Lane company performed chiefly at the King’s Theatre, Haymarket and occasionally at the Haymarket Theatre. During this time, the company staged *King Lear* only twice, once on 6 March 1792 at the King’s Haymarket, advertised as ‘Not acted these 4 years’<sup>70</sup> and again on 16 February 1793 at the Haymarket, while a performance billed for 27 February 1792 was cancelled.<sup>71</sup> Kemble and Siddons played Lear and Cordelia and Richard Wroughton, Edgar for the first time since 1788. Newcomers included Thomas Caulfield (1766-1815) as Burgundy, ‘lugged out neck and heels from the shades of obscurity’,<sup>72</sup> who had started his career with Drury Lane at the King’s Haymarket in 1791. He did not take ‘sufficient pains to improve in his profession’<sup>73</sup> and although he occasionally played large roles, his Shakespearean parts were secondary and included Rosencrantz and Tybalt. Robert Palmer (1757-1817), cast as the Gentleman Usher, was described by one critic as a ‘very useful actor, decent in fops’<sup>74</sup> but another complained that he was ‘thrust into ... foppish parts’.<sup>75</sup> This actor was the brother of ‘Plausible Jack’ and

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<sup>67</sup> [J. Haslewood], *Secret History of the Green Room*, 2 vols. (1793) 1, 199.

<sup>68</sup> Highfill, 10, 380.

<sup>69</sup> *The London Magazine*, July 1824, 89.

<sup>70</sup> *The London Stage*, pt.5, vol.2, 1434.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* pt.5, vol.2, 1431.

<sup>72</sup> [F.G. Waldron], *Candid and Impartial Strictures on the Performers*, (1795) 31.

<sup>73</sup> [Walley Oulton], *Authentic Memoirs of the Green-Room*, 2 vols. [1806] 1, pt. 1, 67.

<sup>74</sup> *The Thespian Dictionary*, (1805).

<sup>75</sup> [F.G. Waldron], *Candid and Impartial Strictures on the Performers*, (1795) 25.

William Palmer, all sons of Robert Palmer senior, a lowly employee at Drury Lane.<sup>76</sup>

The cast list for the 1792 performance includes some very minor roles such as Esquire, Attendant and Captain. *The London Stage* suggests 6 March 1792<sup>77</sup> as the first staging of Kemble's adaptation but quotes from Kemble's prompt copy of 1808 (which lists 30 additional parts plus 10 principals). It is difficult to be certain but because this long list of extra characters, including the servant Edward named by Kemble, does not appear in the playbill until 20 November 1795, I would hazard that the first performance of Kemble's adaptation, which I discuss later in the chapter, was on this date.<sup>78</sup>

**1793** In spite of his earlier insistence that he was no longer interested in editing Shakespeare, George Steevens changed his mind and brought out an edition under his editorship alone. The reason for his change of mind is not certain. Perhaps it was simply that he could not keep away from this line of scholarship and he 'was more than ready for another editorial venture'<sup>79</sup> or perhaps it was for a less admirable reason and he published 'in order to annoy' Malone, whom he 'now considered ... an intruder',<sup>80</sup> and 'prevent reissue'<sup>81</sup> of Malone's 1790 edition. For whatever reason, the fourth Johnson-

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<sup>76</sup> Highfill, 11, 182.

<sup>77</sup> *The London Stage*, pt. 5, vol. 2, 1434.

<sup>78</sup> There is disagreement over the date of the first performance of Kemble's adaptation. A. Nicoll in *A History of English Drama, 1660-1900*, (Cambridge, 1952-9) 3, 57 and 278 and Highfill (8, 344) suggest that 21 January 1788. J. Boaden in *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) writes that Kemble's version was staged for Siddons's benefit on 21 January 1788 but also that 'Mrs. Siddons acted the Cordelia of Tate' meaning, perhaps, that Kemble's version was similar to Tate's (1, 378-9). H. Baker claims that the benefit was 'Tate's hoary old version' (*John Philip Kemble, the Actor in His Theatre*, (Harvard, 1942) 117). *Shakespeare in the Theatre* (2, 358) suggests 1792 and Charles Shattuck agrees (*John Philip Kemble Promptbooks*, 11 vols. (Charlottesville, 1974) 5, *King Lear*, i). George C. Branam (*Eighteenth Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy*, (Berkeley, 1956) 186) prefers 1800. H. Child in *The Shakespearian Productions of John Philip Kemble* (1935) 9, writes 'Having begun by using Garrick's version ... Kemble went back, in 1809, to a great deal of the Tate stuff'; G. Odell agrees using very similar words, (*Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, (1921) 2, 55). As mentioned in my main text, the first playbill to give a notably different cast is for 20 November 1795 which seems to suggest 1795 as the year for the first staging.

<sup>79</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, (Michigan, 1986) 140.

<sup>80</sup> James Prior, *Life of Edmond Malone*, (1860) 206; for an account of the complex, bitter and sometimes vindictive nature of George Steevens, 'one of the best known, ablest, and probably the most hated editor of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century' (Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, 27), see A. Sherbo, *The Achievement of George Steevens*, (New York, 1990); P. Martin, *Edmond Malone*, (Cambridge, 1995) xii, 29 and 42-4.

<sup>81</sup> W. C. Woodson, 'The 1785 Variorum Shakespeare', *Studies in Bibliography*, 28 (1975) 320.

Steevens edition, *The Plays of William Shakspeare*, with Steevens as the sole editor, appeared in 1793 in 15 volumes.<sup>82</sup> The title-page tells us, as did the title-page of the 1785 edition, that this edition is 'revised and augmented' by 'The Editor of Dodsley's Collection of Old Plays' [i.e. Isaac Reed]. Steevens keeps his fragile anonymity although 'it was an open secret that this *was* Steevens's edition'.<sup>83</sup> The new notes in *King Lear* include Steevens's comments on two quartos of *King Lear* thought to have been published in 1608. He writes 'it appears to me that some of the quartos ... must have been partially corrected while at press. Consequently the copies first worked off, escaped without correction'.<sup>84</sup> New notes by others include one by John Vaillant of the Inner Temple.<sup>85</sup> On the Fool's line 'How now, nuncle?' Vaillant suggests that 'nuncle' is a term of respect and adds 'the lower people in Shropshire call the Judge of assize - "my *nuncle* the Judge"'.<sup>86</sup> Another new note is by Francis Douce on Lear's line 'There's your press-money'.<sup>87</sup> Douce writes that this 'has not been properly explained. It means the money which was paid to soldiers when they were retained in the King's service'. Joseph Ritson also contributed 'rather extensively' to this edition<sup>88</sup> and there are some fifteen notes by him on *King Lear*. One appears after the reprinted ballad 'A lamentable SONG of the Death of *King Leir* and his Three *Daughters*' which had been first included by Johnson in 1765. Now, in 1793, Ritson dismisses the ballad as a source, writing 'This ballad, which by no means deserves a place in any edition of Shakespeare, is evidently a most servile pursuit ... of Holinshed's Chronicle'.<sup>89</sup>

Steevens's 1793 edition, 'dominant into the mid-nineteenth century',<sup>90</sup> was on the whole well received. A letter in *The Gentleman's Magazine* by F. C. of Stockport commented that the edition was 'elegantly and correctly printed' and praised Steevens

<sup>82</sup> Hereafter referred to as Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1793).

<sup>83</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, (Michigan, 1986) 140.

<sup>84</sup> Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1793) 14, I, iv, pp.75-6, n.4; an interesting remark in view of our present knowledge on the two 1608/1619 quartos and on Q, corrected and uncorrected.

<sup>85</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, (Michigan, 1986) 141.

<sup>86</sup> Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1793) 14, I, iv, p.56, n.6; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 103-4.

<sup>87</sup> Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1793) 14, IV, vi, p.233, n.4; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vi, 86-7.

<sup>88</sup> Arthur Sherbo, 'George Steevens's 1785 variorum Shakespeare', *Studies in Bibliography*, 32 (1979) 244.

<sup>89</sup> Steevens, *Shakspeare*, (1793) 14, pp.316-7. For one meaning of the word 'pursuit' OED (1, obs.) gives 'ill-treatment' which is presumably Ritson's meaning here.

<sup>90</sup> W. C. Woodson, 'Isaac Reed's Variorum Shakespeare', *Studies in Bibliography*, 39 (1986) 229.

for shedding light 'on innumerable passages'.<sup>91</sup> There was some adverse criticism. Lord Charlemont wrote on 28 Oct.1793, 'I have lately seen - for Heaven forbid that I should have bought! - Steevens's last edition of Shakspeare'<sup>92</sup> but as he was writing to Malone, the remark is not surprising.

**1794-1795** 1794 saw the re-opening of the new Drury Lane Theatre but it did not stage *King Lear* this year. Covent Garden gave five performances of Tate's version on 6, 20 and 31 January, 21 April and 12 May. Lear was played by Alexander Pope (1762-1835) for the first time. Pope had started his career at Covent Garden in 1785 and during his first few seasons his roles included Wolsey, Richard III, Leontes, Romeo, Othello, Hotspur and then Lear in 1794. In spite of this impressive list of roles, Pope was never a star of the company and it was said of him that he 'attained to that point, which he will never surpass - *mediocrity*'.<sup>93</sup> His career, nevertheless, was a long and worthwhile one. Opposite Pope, in the role of Cordelia was Harriet Esten (1765?-1865). Esten had had a successful career in Scotland and the provinces before joining Covent Garden in 1790. There is little information about her performance as Cordelia but in another part she was praised for 'entering into the deep pathos of sentiment and affection ... she has acquired the power to touch the tender chords of the heart'.<sup>94</sup> Edmund was taken by James Middleton (c.1769-99) who had first appeared at Covent Garden in 1788 as Romeo and his other Shakespearean roles included Florizel and Laertes. However, he failed to sustain his success and died young at the age of 30, due to his heavy drinking habits.<sup>95</sup> George Harley, cast as Lear back in 1791, now played Kent, and one critic wrote rather cuttingly that this was a suitable level for his talents and that he should have 'stopt somewhere about Kent'.<sup>96</sup>

In 1795 *King Lear* was staged only once at the new Drury Lane Theatre which had reopened in March the previous year. This single performance was given on 20 November and its long cast list naming four knights, as well as ruffians, servants,

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<sup>91</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1797, 194.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in James Prior, *Life of Edmond Malone*, (1860) 206.

<sup>93</sup> Thomas Dutton, *The Dramatic Censor*, no. 15, 12 April 1800, 27.

<sup>94</sup> *The Biographical and Imperial Magazine*, October 1790, 4, 278.

<sup>95</sup> Highfill, 10, 215-9.

<sup>96</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 2, 7.

pages, an officer, a captain and Edward (Cornwall's servant), confirm Kemble's version.<sup>97</sup> Kemble and Siddons were again cast as Lear and Cordelia; Charles Kemble (1775-1854), younger brother of John and Sarah, was Cornwall. The other players included Samuel Thomas Russell (1769-1845) as the Gentleman Usher. Russell had been a strolling player before joining Drury Lane in 1795 where he 'gradually carved out for himself a varied repertoire of rogues, countrymen, and eccentric servants.'<sup>98</sup>

Kemble's adaptation reinstated much of Tate's material and the opening of the play was described disapprovingly as being 'not as Shakspeare, not as Garrick, not as Colman but as Tate'.<sup>99</sup> Kemble also followed Colman in some respects, omitting the cliff leap (which Tate and Garrick had retained) and placing the blinding off-stage. However the love interest, cut by Colman, is reinstated. It is curious that Kemble chose to act much of Tate's version which had been slowly whittled away since Garrick's start in 1756. One explanation is that Kemble was first and foremost an actor without 'the scholar's concern for an uncorrupted text; his one concern was to compound the most effective acting version'<sup>100</sup> and he therefore reinstated the love interest because it was still preferred by the audiences. Genest disliked Kemble's version and after criticising it severely, wrote 'in a word Kemble's alteration ... is decidedly worse than Garrick's' and went on 'When Shakspeare met John Kemble in the Elysian fields, he said to him ... "what could induce you to restore such passages of Tate, as even Garrick had rejected when he revised *King Lear*?" ' but he does not give Kemble's reply.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> As well as the uncertainty over the first performance of Kemble's *King Lear*, the date of its first publication is also unclear. The Kemble prompt copies at the Garrick Club include an undated Lowndes edition of *King Lear* marked for the role of Lear. On a typed list kept with these books, '1794' has been written, with a question mark, against *King Lear*. A copy of this Lowndes edition at the Birmingham Public Library has '1810' on the title-page in pencil. Jaggard lists a Lowndes edition c.1800 at Birmingham but this is missing or, perhaps, is the one pencilled '1810'. Charles Shattuck suggests 1795 (*John Philip Kemble Promptbooks*, 11 vols. (Charlottesville, 1974) 5, ii; see also vol. 1, General Introduction); George C. Branam (*Eighteenth Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy*, (Berkeley, 1956) 186) gives 1800 as the first publication and performance date of Kemble's *King Lear*, 1808 as the date of publication and performance of a 'similar version' by Kemble, and a third version, 'a strange reversion to Tate's *Lear*' published, n.d. 1810? See also Charles Shattuck, *The Shakespeare Promptbooks*, (Urbana, 1965).

<sup>98</sup> Highfill, 13, 141.

<sup>99</sup> Genest, 8, 132. Genest made this comment when writing of the performance on 27 February 1809 which he claims was the first performance of Kemble's adaptation.

<sup>100</sup> George C. Branam, *Eighteenth Century Adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedy*, (Berkeley, 1956) 17. This explanation could apply equally to David Garrick.

<sup>101</sup> Genest, 8, 131-4.



The three performances at Covent Garden in 1795, on 19 January, 17 February and 28 September, were still Tate's adaptation. Alexander Pope was again Lear and the rest of the cast was the same as in 1794 with the exception of Tryphosa Jane Wallis (1774-1848), a new Cordelia. The critics had mixed views about this player, one writing she may 'become a star of considerable magnitude',<sup>102</sup> another that she was a 'useful second rate actress'.<sup>103</sup> Anthony Pasquin, as so often, attacked her, claiming her voice was 'monotonous, and incapable of giving any great effect' in her Shakespearean roles.<sup>104</sup>

**1796** There were no performances of *King Lear* at Drury Lane in 1796 and only two at Covent Garden, on 25 April and 10 October, with virtually the same cast as the previous years but with a newcomer as the Gentleman Usher. Charles Farley (1771-1859) was a minor player who rarely rose above the smallest parts but 'by the end of his long career he may have amassed more roles than anyone in the theatre of his time, if not in the history of the theatre'.<sup>105</sup> Farley's acting was not entirely a case of quantity over quality. John Doran said of him that 'he displaced old actors from favourite parts' and then cites the Gentleman Usher as an example and John Bernard as the displaced actor.<sup>106</sup> On 10 October John Waddy (1751-1814) played Kent and one critic felt that in 'some blunt and vulgar characters, he is respectable'<sup>107</sup> but another wrote that he did not hold 'a good opinion' of Waddy as Kent.<sup>108</sup>

1796 also saw the culmination of the William Henry Ireland affair. Ireland (1775-1835), who was 'a day-dreaming child of the eighteenth century ... when the neoclassic temper had already largely yielded to romanticism',<sup>109</sup> claimed he had been sent by a mysterious 'Mr.H.', manuscripts of plays, letters and documents in Shakespeare's hand and among these was a copy of *King Lear*. The papers were also said to include a Deed of Gift, dated 1604, again in Shakespeare's hand, in which the playwright gives 'mye

<sup>102</sup> [J. Haslewood], *The Secret History of the Green-Room*, 2 vols. (1795), 2, 376.

<sup>103</sup> [F.G. Waldron], *Candid and Impartial Strictures on the Performers*, (1795) 63.

<sup>104</sup> Anthony Pasquin [pseud.], (John Williams), *The Pin Basket. To the Children of Thespis*, (1796), 53n.

<sup>105</sup> Highfill, 5, 153.

<sup>106</sup> John Doran, 'Charles Farley', *Notes and Queries*, 7, 19 February 1859, 143.

<sup>107</sup> *The Thespian Dictionary*, (1802).

<sup>108</sup> *The Monthly Mirror*, October 1796, 367.

<sup>109</sup> S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, (Oxford, 1991) 140.

writtenn Playe of Henrye fowrthe Henrye fyfthe King John King Leare'<sup>110</sup> to a William Henry Ireland<sup>111</sup> who had saved him from drowning. The 'discovery' of these papers generated great excitement in the literary world and Samuel Ireland, the forger's father, who seems to have been unaware of his son's duplicity, exhibited them at his home where several important literary figures, including James Boswell the elder, James Boaden and George Chalmers pronounced the papers genuine.<sup>112</sup> Boswell, on seeing the documents, knelt down and gave 'thanks to God that I have lived to see them!';<sup>113</sup> Boaden wrote 'the conviction produced upon our mind, is such as to make all scepticism ridiculous'.<sup>114</sup> Samuel Ireland published the papers, *Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments under the Hand and Seal of William Shakspeare ... including the Tragedy of King Lear* in 1796. In his Preface, he writes that 'the recovery of the original [of *King Lear*] ... [is] an important accession to the Literature of his [i.e. Shakespeare's] Country'.<sup>115</sup> One of these 'original' passages is a version of Kent's final lines. In the second quarto (which William Ireland was using) these read:

I haue a iourney sir, shortly to go,  
My master cals, and I must not say no.<sup>116</sup>

In his forged version, Ireland extends them to seven lines which read in part:

Thanks Sir butte I goe toe thatte unknowne Land  
Thatte Chaynes each Pilgrim faste within its Soyle ...  
Kente livd mouste true Kente dyes mouste lyke a Manne.<sup>117</sup>

Ireland writes in his *Confessions* that he thought Shakespeare's two lines 'a jingling and

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<sup>110</sup> Ireland had access to a quarto which was probably the 1619 edition, which he used as 'copy text'; see Bernard Grebanier, *The Great Shakespeare Forgery*, (1966) 114.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* 146.

<sup>112</sup> Of these three, Boswell died before the forgeries were detected; Boaden in *A Letter to George Steevens, Esq.* (1796) and Chalmers in *An Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare-Papers* (1797) admitted they had been tricked. See Bernard Grebanier, *The Great Shakespeare Forgery*, (1966) and S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, (Oxford, 1991) 130-68 for a full account.

<sup>113</sup> W. H. Ireland, *Confessions*, (1805) 96.

<sup>114</sup> *The Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 16 February 1795.

<sup>115</sup> Samuel Ireland, *Miscellaneous Papers*, (1796) 6.

<sup>116</sup> William Shakespeare, *His True Chronicle History of ... King Lear, and his three Daughters*, [1619] L4r; Arden, *King Lear*, V, iii, 320-1.

<sup>117</sup> Samuel Ireland, *Miscellaneous Papers*, (1796) 107.

unmeaning couplet'<sup>118</sup> which he felt justified in altering. In the critics' mitigation, it should be remembered that the eighteenth century had become accustomed to the adaptations. Many of Tate's lines were even less felicitous; for example the Queen's lines in his *Richard II*, 'For ever will I clasp these sacred Knees,/Tear up my Brest and bind them to my Heart!'<sup>119</sup> and all the adaptors claimed to be making 'improvements'. Perhaps the acceptance of these 'improvements' on stage had dulled the judgment of some but not all, of the critics. Ritson and Steevens, and above all, Malone were never convinced and Malone, in *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Certain Miscellaneous Papers and Legal Instruments* (1797) was largely responsible for exposing William Henry who eventually admitted his responsibility and later wrote his *Confessions*.

**1797-1802** 1797 saw only one performance at Covent Garden and both *Lear* and *Cordelia* were attempted by newcomers. The performance was on 20 November and *Lear* was played by Charles Murray (1754-1821) whose first London season had been at Covent Garden in 1796. *The Monthly Mirror* commented on Murray's *Lear* that 'On the whole, we were highly pleased, sometimes astonished, with the performance'.<sup>120</sup> Maria Anne Spencer (1775-1803; the second wife of Alexander Pope) took the part of *Cordelia*. This actress had made her debut in 1797 and *The Monthly Mirror* said of her *Cordelia* that 'Every additional appearance of this lady confirms and increases the good opinion we at first entertained of her abilities'.<sup>121</sup> Spencer enjoyed some success but died young without achieving the high standing of Elizabeth Younge, the first Mrs. Pope.<sup>122</sup> Samuel Simmons (c.1773-1819), cast as the Gentleman Usher, had started as a child actor. He was highly praised by William Hazlitt as 'a real actor. He did not play *himself*, nor play tricks, but played the part the author had assigned him'.<sup>123</sup>

The number of performances of *King Lear* during the final years of the eighteenth

<sup>118</sup> W. H. Ireland, *Confessions*, (1805)117-8. It is the oddity of the spelling which first strikes today's reader. For example, in Act I of *King Lear* are the following words: clamour spelt clammourre; answered spelt annesweredde, untender spelt unnetenedre, and so on.

<sup>119</sup> Nahum Tate, *The History of King Richard the Second ... the Sicilian Usurper*, (1681) V, ii, p.49.

<sup>120</sup> *The Monthly Mirror*, December 1797, 364.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* 364.

<sup>122</sup> Highfill, 12, 77.

<sup>123</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) *The London Magazine*, January 1820, 18, 275.

century fell considerably. In 1798 there was none at all and only one in 1799, on 29 October at Covent Garden. The version used was Tate's, with Lear and Cordelia being played by Alexander Pope and his wife, Maria Anne, respectively. The majority of the roles were taken by established members but Goneril was played by newcomer Ann Dibdin (d.1828) who had made her first London appearance at a main house in the 1799-1800 season. She never achieved much success and ended her career in charge of the ladies' wardrobe at the Haymarket Theatre.<sup>124</sup> Her husband, Thomas, was a member of the Dibdin family, important at this time for their musical compositions.

1800 saw no performances of *King Lear* and in 1801 there were none at Covent Garden but Drury Lane offered seven, on 3, 8, 10, 17, 24, 31 January and 7 February. According to the playbills, the play was 'received by a very crowded and brilliant Audience with the highest applause'<sup>125</sup> and Boaden wrote that Kemble 'revived his *King Lear* with every care of management, and it was productive of both fame and profit to the theatre'.<sup>126</sup> Kemble was still Lear, Sarah Siddons, Cordelia and the rest of the players were the established members of the company.<sup>127</sup> William Barrymore, who had played Edmund for the first time back in 1788, attempted Edgar and Charles Kemble, having started as Cornwall in 1795, now played Edmund.

In 1802 John Kemble and Sarah Siddons left Drury Lane after disagreements with Richard Sheridan over management of the theatre and joined Covent Garden. Before their arrival, a single performance of *King Lear* was staged at Covent Garden on 8 January 1802 with Lear played by George F. Cooke for the first time in London.<sup>128</sup> This actor was one of the great players in the early years of the nineteenth century, although not in the role of Lear, but he was 'conquered by the Tuscan grape'<sup>129</sup> and became so unreliable, failing to turn up at the theatre or failing to complete his part, that the London managers stopped employing him and he left for the provinces in 1810.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Highfill, 4, 388-9.

<sup>125</sup> These playbills, and those referred to in the following chapters, are preserved at the Garrick Club. They are filed chronologically in bound volumes and there are no shelf marks.

<sup>126</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 2, 289.

<sup>127</sup> Genest, 7, 500.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 7, 552.

<sup>129</sup> *The Thespian Dictionary*, (1805).

<sup>130</sup> See William Dunlap, *Memoirs of George Fred. Cooke, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1813) for an account of Cooke's troubles.

Comments on Cooke's interpretation of *Lear* are not particularly good. Although his *Lear* 'did not sink' in comparison with Kemble, he 'was not the rival of Garrick';<sup>131</sup> and, again, '*Lear* was not one of Cooke's good parts'.<sup>132</sup> Two other players attempted *King Lear* roles for the first time at this performance. Henry Siddons (1774-1815) took on Edgar and Harriet Murray (1783-1844), later Mrs. Henry Siddons, was 'very pleasing' as Cordelia.<sup>133</sup> Henry Siddons, eldest child of Sarah, made his London debut as an adult at Covent Garden in October 1801 and played Hamlet later that same month. He had 'a weight and a solemnity in his deportment, very suitable to tragedy'<sup>134</sup> but did not enjoy any outstanding success in London, and spent a large part of his adult life in Edinburgh. His wife, Harriet Murray, was a member of a minor theatrical family of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. She first appeared at Covent Garden as Perdita in 1798 and played several leading Shakespearean roles including Juliet, Portia, Viola, Rosalind and Desdemona before settling in Edinburgh with her husband.

Drury Lane did not offer *King Lear* in 1802. A playbill dated 12 February, announced that on 19 February 'will be acted the Tragedy of KING LEAR' but for an unknown reason it was not staged. The number of *King Lear* performances were now relatively few and the madness of George III was soon to be responsible for a complete ban. The text of the play fared better and the Variorum editions of Shakespeare's works were shortly to be published. I shall now look at the effect that the King's madness had on the staging of *King Lear* and also examine the play in the Variorum editions.

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 164-5.

<sup>132</sup> Genest, 7, 552.

<sup>133</sup> *The Monthly Mirror*, February 1802, 135. This date is given in Genest (7, 552) as the first time Harriet Siddons (née Murray) played Cordelia.

<sup>134</sup> *The Monthly Mirror*, October 1801, 261.

Illustration 13



*King Lear in The British Theatre* (1806-1809) with a frontispiece showing Cordelia dead in Lear's arms but with a text in which Cordelia survives, taken from BL 1507/312 (5)

**The Variorum editions 1803-1821  
and the performances between those dates**

**1803** The edition, *The Plays of William Shakspeare ... With the corrections and illustrations of various commentators*, known as the First Variorum was published in 1803 in twenty-one volumes. Although it and the Second Variorum (1813) are important editions, it was the 1793 Johnson-Steevens edition that provided the basic text<sup>1</sup> and on its title-page the First Variorum is referred to as 'The Fifth Edition' (i.e. of the Johnson-Steevens). George Steevens had been working on the First Variorum at the time of his death in 1800 and the editing was taken over by Isaac Reed who had been involved with the 1785 and 1793 editions. The first three volumes contain the preliminary matter, much of it reprinted from the earlier editions. This includes the 'List of Plays Altered from Shakspeare' and again the only two plays noted under *King Lear* are Tate's and Colman's adaptations with no mention of Garrick's or Kemble's.<sup>2</sup>

A main new contributor to this edition was William Harris, librarian of the Royal Institution of Great Britain,<sup>3</sup> who offered two comments on Cordelia's lines starting 'Crown'd with rank fumiter, and furrow weeds'. Harris explains 'fumiter' as '*fumitory*: by the old herbalists written *fumittery*'; and that '*Harlocks*, must be a typographical error for *charlock*, the common name of *sinapis aroensis*, wild mustard'.<sup>4</sup> New notes by Reed include one on Lear's line 'where the greater malady is fix'd,/The lesser is scarce felt'.<sup>5</sup> Steevens had noted a parallel in *The Faerie Queene*, contemporary with Shakespeare and now Reed comments that the phrase is 'an aphorism of

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<sup>1</sup> See W.C. Woodson, 'The 1785 Variorum Shakespeare', *Studies in Bibliography*, 28 (1975) 318-20.

<sup>2</sup> *The Plays of William Shakspeare ... With the corrections and illustrations of various commentators*, 21 vols. (1803) 2, 164; hereafter referred to as Reed, *Shakspeare*, (1803). Seven of Kemble's adaptations of Shakespeare are noted in this 'List of Plays Altered from Shakspeare' which might suggest that Kemble's version of *King Lear* had not yet been performed or published. Against this is the fact that Garrick's *King Lear* which was first performed in 1756 and published in 1773, is not listed either although six other of his published Shakespearean adaptations are.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Sherbo, *The Birth of Shakespeare Studies*, (Michigan, 1986) 157.

<sup>4</sup> Reed, *Shakspeare*, (1803) 17, IV, iv, p.527, n.1 and 2. Foakes and others emend to 'Burdock' but charlock is listed as the common name for a type of wild mustard with a slight variation in the spelling of the Latin name which is given as *Sinapis Arvensis*, (W. Keble-Martin, *Concise British Flora*, (1974) plate 9); Arden, *King Lear*, IV, iv, 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Reed, *Shakspeare*, (1803) 17, III, iv, p.459, n.9; Arden, *King Lear*, III, iv, 8-9.

Hippocrates' and adds another parallel, this time from a 1793 work and therefore contemporary with the 1803 edition.<sup>6</sup>

This First Variorum of 1803 was commented on by E.H.Seymour in his *Remarks, Critical, Conjectural, and Explanatory, upon the Plays of Shakspeare* (1805) in two volumes. The unfortunate Seymour had intended his work to be a commentary on 'that [edition] produced by Mr. Steevens, in 1793' but the 1803 edition forestalled him and he 'often found himself anticipated' and therefore had to revise his work to cover the 1803 edition.<sup>7</sup> In his Advertisement Seymour writes that he fears he has '*overstepped the timid bounds which, in the Introduction, he had prescribed to himself ... most conspicuously ... in King Lear*'.<sup>8</sup> Any bold moves which Seymour feels he has made in his comments on *King Lear* are not immediately apparent. His main obsession seems to be with metre and he opines that 'every poetic ear must be offended by metrical dissonance' and that 'these faults abound without even a comment in the last edition'.<sup>9</sup> Over and over again, through fifty-two pages of notes on *King Lear*, Seymour attempts to 'repair the metre', 'reject the superfluous', cut 'the exuberance' and the 'unnecessary hypermeter'.<sup>10</sup> Another example of Seymour's pedantic notes includes one in his 'Notes on the Introduction' in which he corrects Goneril's line 'I wou'd breed *from* hence, occasion, and I will'.<sup>11</sup> Seymour removes the word 'from' and adds a long note on the offensive practice 'of placing the preposition, "from" before the words hence, thence, whence', etc. He also has an attempt at the crux 'her smiles and tears/Were like a better day'<sup>12</sup> and writes dispiritedly 'I wish there were any authority for "an April day", which would be exactly congruous'.

On stage *King Lear* was not performed at Drury Lane between 1802 and 1819. At Covent Garden, with John Kemble as manager and leading actor, things were little

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, (1596) Book 1, canto vi, stanza 37, line 9; F.Sayers, *Disquisitions, Metaphysical and Literary*, (1793) 68.

<sup>7</sup> E. H. Seymour, *Remarks, Critical, Conjectural, and Explanatory, upon the Plays of Shakspeare*, 2 vols. (1805) 1, vii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 1, viii.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 86, 92, 95, 121, etc.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 18; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iii, 25.

<sup>12</sup> E.H. Seymour, *Remarks, Critical, Conjectural, and Explanatory, upon the Plays of Shakspeare*, 2 vols. (1805) 2, 123; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, iii, 18-9, 'better way'.



better. There were no productions between 1803 and 1806,<sup>13</sup> but thereafter the play was staged each year up to 1811 when the ban, which I shall discuss shortly, came into force and kept *King Lear* off the London stage until 1820.

**1804-1807** While the fortunes of *King Lear* on stage were at a low ebb, Covent Garden's takings experienced a sharp increase through the phenomenon of Master Betty. For one season only, 1804-5 this young boy, aged about 13 years, was the darling of the London audiences playing many leading Shakespearean roles including Romeo, Richard III and Hamlet but, mercifully, not Lear. His success was so great that Kemble was ousted from the Covent Garden stage and Siddons refused to appear opposite him 'maintain[ing] a cold reserve upon the subject'.<sup>14</sup> Master Betty revived 'that unnatural way of speaking, that musical cadence approaching towards recitative, which had prevailed on the stage (more or less) from about 1710 to 1740'.<sup>15</sup> It is an interesting coincidence that also at this time, the presence of members of the audience on the stage was again, briefly, allowed. At a benefit for Robert Elliston, who will be discussed later in this chapter, on 10 September 1804 at the Haymarket, the auditorium was so crowded that some of the audience was allowed on stage so that 'when the curtain drew up, the stage was filled with people ... as in former times'.<sup>16</sup> Fortunately, neither practice survived.

The fortunes of Drury Lane were also low and the theatre was without the bizarre success of Master Betty to help its finances. When Kemble and Siddons left in 1802, although Drury Lane 'had maintained a superiority over its rival from 1714 to 1802 ... [it] now sunk into a state of inferiority'<sup>17</sup> and 'gruesome melodrama and spectacle'<sup>18</sup> held the stage. In fact, the London theatre was in a situation very similar to that immediately prior to the arrival of Garrick in 1741. The need was for a fresh talent to revitalise these years but it was not until 1814 that Edmund Kean, the new star, appeared.

Meantime, in 1807 *King Lear* was performed twice at Covent Garden, on 21 May

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<sup>13</sup> Neither Genest nor the playbills at the Garrick Club list a performance of *King Lear* during these years.

<sup>14</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, 2 vols. (1827) 2, 350.

<sup>15</sup> Genest, 7, 660-1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 7, 635.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 7, 565.

<sup>18</sup> *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll, (Oxford, 1951) 204.

which was a benefit for George Frederick Cooke, and again on 1 June, the first performances in London since 1802. Cooke was enjoying considerable success at this time in spite of his frequent drunkenness, and played many leading roles including Iago, Macbeth, Richard III and Shylock, although he never triumphed as Lear. He wrote of himself in the role 'I acted very bad'.<sup>19</sup> The cast in 1807<sup>20</sup> consisted largely of established players in their usual roles. Charles Kemble was still Edgar and John Brunton (1774-1848; brother of Anne) still Edmund. This last-named actor played several leads including Hamlet and Romeo 'but his powers were not deemed adequate to those parts',<sup>21</sup> and he never achieved the top rank. One newcomer was Sarah Smith, (1783-1850; later better known as Mrs. Bartley) as Cordelia. She had started her career well and it was claimed that she might 'uphold the serious interests of the Tragic Muse' after Sarah Siddons was 'ejected by the rude hand of Time'<sup>22</sup> but, although she was an important actress for some years, Sarah Bartley failed to leave any lasting mark.

Also in 1807 the textual history of *King Lear* took an unexpected twist when *The Family Shakespeare* in four volumes, edited by Thomas Bowdler and containing twenty of Shakespeare's plays, was published. In his Preface, Bowdler writes that he has deleted 'any thing that can raise a blush on the cheek of modesty' and goes on 'Many vulgar, and all indecent expressions are omitted'. Although he cut lines which he felt were unsuitable for modest minds, he was proud that '*not a single line is added*'.<sup>23</sup> One example of Bowdler's editing of *King Lear* will suffice. In the first scene when Gloucester and Kent discuss Edmund's illegitimacy, Bowdler has Gloucester say only 'His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazened to it'<sup>24</sup> and cuts the remaining lines. Oddly, Bowdler leaves Edgar's line 'Pillicock sat on pillicock's hill'<sup>25</sup> unaltered; perhaps the bawdy connotation was too obscure for 'the cheek of modesty'.

<sup>19</sup> William Dunlap, *Memoirs of George Fred. Cooke, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1813) 1, 334.

<sup>20</sup> Some of the performances in 1807, which were of Kemble's adaptation, in addition to still naming Cornwall's servant 'Edward', also name the Captain as 'Hubert'.

<sup>21</sup> *The Thespian Dictionary*, (1802).

<sup>22</sup> *The Dramatic Censor ... for the Year 1811*, ed. J.M. Williams, 302.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Bowdler, *The Family Shakespeare*, 4 vols. (1807) 1, vii. Bowdler published another edition in 10 volumes in 1818.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 183; Arden, *King Lear*, I, i, 8-10.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Bowdler, *The Family Shakespeare*, 4 vols. (1807) 4, 238; Arden, *King Lear*, III, iv, 75.

Another edition of *King Lear*, this one an acting edition, now appeared as part of *The British Theatre* (1806-9) which had 'Remarks' added by Elizabeth Inchbald. The *King Lear* title-page [1807] states that the text, based on Kemble's,<sup>26</sup> was 'performed at the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Printed under the Authority of the Managers from the Prompt Book'. Inchbald, a devout Catholic, writes that even those who feel 'it was right to drive King James [the Catholic James II] from the throne' should regret his treatment at the hands of his children. She draws parallels between Lear and his daughters and James II and his daughters. On learning that his younger daughter had joined her sister in an attempt to overthrow him, James 'wept and tore his hair'. Inchbald goes on 'Lear exposed on a bleak heath, suffered not more than James ... King Lear was only pelted by a storm, King James by his merciless subjects'.<sup>27</sup> The frontispiece in this edition, dated 1807, shows Lear with the dead Cordelia in his arms whereas, of course, in this version Cordelia survives to marry Edgar.<sup>28</sup>

**1808-1809** 1808 saw some improvement in the fortunes of *King Lear* on stage with five performances, on 18, 23, 26, 30 May and 6 June, all at Covent Garden. Lear was played by Kemble after a break from this role of eight years.<sup>29</sup> The performance on 18 May was a benefit for Charles Kemble who was again Edgar. Although John Kemble was now well established as the leading player, his Lear was still not approved. Leigh Hunt wrote 'I must confess I was disappointed in the performance ... the grave actor went through his gentle speeches with the dull calmness of a schoolboy' but Hunt praises Charles Kemble as Edgar noting that he 'shone with great lustre'.<sup>30</sup> The cast was largely unchanged from the year before except that George Cooke relinquished Lear and had to settle for Kent. A critic wrote of him in the new role 'What there is of *Kent* is good; ... but Kent soon ceases to be thought of'.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 2, 16.

<sup>27</sup> *The British Theatre. King Lear; A Tragedy ... by William Shakspeare ... Remarks by Mrs. Inchbald*, vol. 5 [1807] 5, 4.

<sup>28</sup> In another copy (1808) in the British Library, (shelf mark 1345.a.1-25) the frontispiece is replaced by one dated 1817, depicting Cordelia, the Doctor and the sleeping Lear, (vol.4).

<sup>29</sup> Covent Garden playbill at Garrick Club dated 18 May 1808.

<sup>30</sup> Leigh Hunt, *The Examiner*, 22 May 1808, 332-3. Hunt also refutes the objection that *King Lear* does not offer poetic justice arguing that 'real nature required such a catastrophe'.

<sup>31</sup> William Dunlap, *Memoirs of George Fred. Cooke, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1813) 2, 59.

Later that same year, in September 1808, Covent Garden Theatre burnt down and a few months later, in February 1809, Drury Lane suffered the same disaster. The Covent Garden company moved to the King's Theatre, Haymarket and in December to the smaller Haymarket Theatre<sup>32</sup> until the new Covent Garden opened in September 1809, only one year after the destruction of the old theatre. After the Drury Lane fire in February 1809, the company followed Covent Garden to the King's Theatre, Haymarket until the end of the 1809 season, then to the Lyceum from the autumn of 1809 to May 1812. The new Drury Lane did not open until 1812, three years after their fire and the company did not stage *King Lear* during these intervening years.

In contrast Covent Garden staged *King Lear* seven times in 1809. Before the opening of its new theatre, Covent Garden advertised a performance at the Haymarket on 13 February<sup>33</sup> and again on 20 and 27 February with Kemble as Lear. These performances were extremely successful judging from the playbill for 27 February which comments on 'the very great overflow' of the audience but at this time the 'puff' was much in evidence. Although most of the cast were established members, there were a few changes. Cordelia was played by a newcomer, Louisa Maria Bristow (fl.1805-10), whose mother, brother and sisters were all minor players in the first decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Arante was taken by Maria Theresa de Camp (1774-1838) an Austrian actress and playwright married to Charles Kemble, and Goneril by Mrs. Humphries of whom Leigh Hunt wrote 'Mrs. HUMPHRIES is a pretty woman, who masticates a blank verse just as she might a parsnip'.<sup>35</sup> In February 1809 the playbills carried a note that 'the Tragedy of KING LEAR, printed in exact conformity with the performance, will be to be had *at the Theatre* this Evening'.<sup>36</sup>

There were further performances of *King Lear* in 1809, on 6 and 20 March and another advertised for 20 April but this last was cancelled with no explanation. The

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<sup>32</sup> Genest, 8, 128.

<sup>33</sup> Genest claims that this performance was cancelled (8, 131) but the playbill dated February 13 can be seen in the collection of playbills at the Garrick Club and there is nothing to suggest another play was substituted at the last minute.

<sup>34</sup> Highfill, 2, 341.

<sup>35</sup> Leigh Hunt, *The Examiner*, 15 January 1815, 39.

<sup>36</sup> Playbills at the Garrick Club. Kemble published his version of the play 'in pamphlet form to be sold at the box office', (*John Philip Kemble Promptbooks*, ed. C. Shattuck, 11 vols. (Charlottesville, 1974) 1, xiv; Shattuck's facsimile of *King Lear* in the *Promptbooks* (vol.5) appears to be one of these pamphlets. Its title page, dated 1808, is priced 'Eighteen pence'.

final *King Lear* performances of 1809 were staged at the newly-built Covent Garden Theatre on 22 and 29 December. Before these could take place however, Covent Garden suffered from what have come to be known as ‘the O.P. Riots’. The initials O.P. stand for ‘old price’ and the cause of these riots was the raising of the prices when the new theatre opened. The riots ‘began on the first performance and lasted till the 67th night’<sup>37</sup> and the noise made by the rioters in the audience, ‘barking shouting groaning, catcalls, cries of off! off! off!’,<sup>38</sup> prevented any play being heard until eventually the theatre was closed down. The affair was finally settled after Kemble compromised and reduced the prices in the pit to the old prices.

*King Lear*, staged on 22 December, was one of the first plays to be performed without interruption. This performance was important because of the manner in which Kemble dressed the play. Up to this year, Kemble had been guilty of playing Lear in ‘a flowered satin night-gown ... [and] a straw crown as large, massive, and elaborately constructed as a bee-hive’.<sup>39</sup> Now, at the end of 1809, Kemble set his production in ‘times [that] were Saxon, and the scenery and appendages were generally of the Saxon character. This was enough - More would have hurt the effect of the scene’.<sup>40</sup> Walter Scott, writing some years later in *The Quarterly Review* agreed, pointing out that although in Lear’s time ‘the British were probably painted and tattooed’,<sup>41</sup> this would have been inappropriate for a stage production. Attempts to stage historically accurate productions were gaining support and the use of contemporary eighteenth-century costume was now being superseded by a degree of historical accuracy. This shift towards realism will be discussed again in my final chapter.

**1810** *King Lear* during the first decade of the nineteenth century had had mixed success. Drury Lane abandoned the play altogether but Covent Garden had staged it seven times in 1809 and in 1810 offered thirteen performances, on 5, 12, 19 January; 26 February; 5, 12, 19, 26 March; 23 May; 14, 28 June and 13, 29 October and two

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<sup>37</sup> Genest, 8, 169.

<sup>38</sup> Richard J. Smith MS. ‘Collections on the Drama’, 2 vols. (1817) 1, 230r (BL Add. MSS. 38,620-1).

<sup>39</sup> Edward Mangin, *The Parlour Window*, (1841) 123.

<sup>40</sup> *Bell’s Weekly Messenger*, 24 December 1809, 415.

<sup>41</sup> *The Quarterly Review*, 34, 1826, 225.

cancelled on 26 January and 10 December. The playbill for 26 March states that *King Lear* and the pantomime, *Harlequin Pedlar*, which was playing with it, 'must positively be withdrawn'. *King Lear* was withdrawn until 23 May, but *Harlequin Pedlar* was back on 2 April. This popular pantomime, which had been staged forty-four times, probably explains in part the increased number of *King Lear* performances. Most of the players in 1810 were established, if not star, names. Among those in new roles was John Fawcett (1768-1837), 'an actor of great original merit'<sup>42</sup> who played Kent on 23 May at his own benefit. Because 'he was new in it, Mr. Kemble rehearsed [this role] ... with him'<sup>43</sup> but he was to find greater 'fame in low comedy'.<sup>44</sup> Two performances in October saw the debut of Mrs. Hamerton as Cordelia. She was first billed for 11 October but this was postponed and she appeared on 13 October announced as a 'Young Lady'. The Garrick Club playbill for 13 October has 'Mrs. Hamerton' added in ink and by 29 October her name was printed on the playbill but she achieved no lasting success.

Many performances in 1810 were billed as '*Shakspeare's Tragedy*'. Writing on the performance of 23 May, Genest complains that 'Kemble, not content with injuring Shakspeare by revising *King Lear*, here thinks proper to insult him, by advertising his own alteration of Tate's *Lear*, as Shakspeare's play - there are no less than five characters in the bill which were not in *King Lear* as written by Shakspeare'<sup>45</sup> and adds that Kemble had 'an absolute rage for christening'<sup>46</sup> new characters. Genest continued to fulminate against billing the play as Shakespeare's, 'the same unpardonable mistake'<sup>47</sup> and 'the Reviser had not as yet found out the difference between Tate and Shakspeare.'<sup>48</sup> However, if the number of performances is a guide, *King Lear*, whether Shakespeare's play, an adaptation or paired with a pantomime, had gained in popularity although Kemble was the only actor prepared to play the title-role. Apart from him and, to a lesser extent his younger brother, Charles, there were no star names among the casts. Then politics brought this successful run at Covent Garden to an end.

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Gilliland, *The Dramatic Mirror*, 2 vols. (1808) 2, 761.

<sup>43</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, 2 vols. (1827) 2, 376.

<sup>44</sup> *The Thespian Dictionary*, 1802

<sup>45</sup> Genest, 8, 185.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 7, 717.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 8, 187.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 8, 224.

**1811-1813** In 1811 the Prince of Wales was named Regent due to the permanent insanity of George III. The public retained a loyal admiration for the King and one newspaper appealed for his re-establishment as head of state as soon as possible, writing 'We would not, like the daughters of *Lear*, cut off one single attendant from the train of the afflicted Monarch'.<sup>49</sup> At about the same time the Lord Chamberlain's office forbade performances of *King Lear* because a play portraying a mad king was deemed unsuitable and this ban was to hold until the King's death in 1820. However, while searching for the actual document which banned *King Lear*,<sup>50</sup> I found three letters in the Public Record Office which make it clear that Drury Lane tried to have this ruling overturned when Edmund Kean first had his outstanding success in the London theatre. The letters are dated 1814, but because I am discussing the banning of *King Lear* it is more convenient to examine the letters now, out of chronological order. The first is by Samuel Whitbread, a member of the governing committee at Drury Lane. The letter, dated 22 November 1814, and addressed to the Lord Chamberlain who at that time was Francis Ingram Seymour, Marquis of Hertford, reads:

My Lord,

The object of my requesting the honour of an Interview with your Lordship, was to enquire whether there would be any objection made to the representation of the Play of *King Lear*, which the Manageners' [sic] of Drury Lane Theatre are very anxious to get up for the display of the great powers of Mr. Kean[.] when consulted on the Matter, I said I did not imagine there could be any objection made, but that I would endeavour to obtain the previous Sanction of your Lordships opinion.<sup>51</sup>

Written on the verso of this letter is a draft of Hertford's reply, dated 26 November 1814 and signed 'In. Hertford', which reads:

Sir,

I was honoured with your letter by Fridays post. I have long understood that the Managers of Drury Lane, had from a delicate attention to the Kings Misfortunes and to the feelings of his family, discontinued the representation of *King Lear*. Under these circumstances I should think it improper to interpose any official opinion in a case to which their own judgment is perfectly competent,

<sup>49</sup> *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 10 November 1811, 356.

<sup>50</sup> I have not been successful in locating this document. Authors writing on this topic simply say that the Lord Chamberlain banned the play but do not give a primary source. The matter is further complicated by the fact that there was no official Lord Chamberlain in 1811 - Lord Dartmouth died in 1810 and Lord Hertford was not appointed until 1812.

<sup>51</sup> Public Record Office, LC7/4, Part 2. The letters are loose papers and not filed together.

especialy [sic] as I am not aware that the previous sanction of the Chamberlain is necessary in any instance but in that of a new work for the Stage.

This rather clever reply, which obviated the necessity of a direct ban which in any case appears to have been illegal, drew a brief answer from Whitbread, dated 28 November:

My Lord,  
I have had the honour to receive your Lordship's letter & to acquaint you that the Play of King Lear will certainly not be brought forward at Drury Lane Theatre.<sup>52</sup>

On 10 October 1812, the new Drury Lane Theatre opened but with 'too many middling actors and too few good ones'<sup>53</sup> to raise it out of the trough into which it had sunk. There was one small event at this time connected with *King Lear*. *The Times* carried announcements on 24, 26 and 27 October 1812 advertising a burletta,<sup>54</sup> *King Lear and his Three Daughters*. It was staged at the Royalty Theatre 'for the benefit of Mr. Vickers', a name I have not found elsewhere. At this time there was something of a vogue in burlettas or burlesques, performed at minor theatres without licence.<sup>55</sup> Many were based on Shakespeare's plays but, although very popular, it could not be claimed that 'any high level of wit is attained in these travesties'.<sup>56</sup>

1813 has a place in this thesis because in this year *The Plays of William Shakspeare ... The Sixth Edition*, known as the Second Variorum, virtually a reprint of the First Variorum, was published. New material includes 'a short Appendix'<sup>57</sup> which is an Addenda, at the end of volume 21. This contains one note on *King Lear*, and that rather doubtful, in which the word 'corky' is glossed by William Harris as 'deceitful'.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Public Record Office, LC7/4, Part 1.

<sup>53</sup> Genest, 8, 351.

<sup>54</sup> A burletta was 'A comic opera; a musical farce' (OED) often staged at minor theatres with sufficient music to escape the laws governing straight plays.

<sup>55</sup> For an account of the struggle to break the monopoly of the two licensed theatres in London see E.B. Watson, *Sheridan to Robertson*, (Harvard, 1926) chapter 2; also W. Nicholson, *The Struggle for a Free Stage in London*, (1906).

<sup>56</sup> See R. Farquharson Sharp, 'Travesties of Shakespeare's Plays', *The Library*, 1, i, 1-20, June 1920, who mentions two *King Lear* travesties, one he dates 1830 but see chapter 14, footnote 51; the other 1855 which is outside the scope of this thesis. He does not list the one performed in 1812 which was perhaps unpublished.

<sup>57</sup> *The Plays of William Shakspeare ... The Sixth Edition*, 21 vols. (1813) 1, i; hereafter referred to as Reed, *Shakspeare*, (1813). The Appendix or Addenda 21, 421-3.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 21, 423; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vii, 29.



Also in 1813 Robert Deverell's *Discoveries in Hieroglyphics, and Other Antiquities* was printed. The history of *King Lear* on stage had been forced virtually to a stop and I refer to Deverell's work to illustrate that matters were little better in print. Deverell attempts 'to show that all the phrases, characters, and incidents in Shakespeare's plays are merely allusions to the appearances of the moon'.<sup>59</sup> DNB quotes a pupil of Deverell who wrote that his works 'decidedly proved insanity'<sup>60</sup> and certainly his *Discoveries* seem to be largely gibberish. The following two notes on *King Lear* are among the more lucid. On Edgar, Deverell writes 'His person in the moon is larger than that of his brother Edmund, which may be the case of his being called *elder*';<sup>61</sup> on Edmund's line 'The wheel is come full circle', Deverell comments 'I take this expression, very remarkable in its kind, to relate to the whole circumference of the moon'.<sup>62</sup>

**1814-1819** After such a low point in the history of *King Lear*, it is a relief to record that on 26 January 1814, the next true star of the London stage burst upon the scene. Edmund Kean (1787-1833) appeared at Drury Lane for the first time as Shylock. His debut was not unlike that of David Garrick in that they were both unknown actors who took London by storm at a time when the fortunes of the theatre were at a low point. Kean, however, had in his personality a wildness quite unlike Garrick and he did not share Garrick's genius for management.<sup>63</sup> In 1814 Kemble was nearing the end of his career and Sarah Siddons had retired in 1812. *King Lear* was still banned and in spite of the attempts I have already discussed to have it staged at Drury Lane, it had to wait six more years before Kean was able to attempt the title-role himself.

There was one small curiosity in 1815 relating to *King Lear*. On 9 March at the Drury Lane Theatre, the actor Richard Wroughton offered a revised version of *Richard II* which was staged with 'appropriate Splendour'.<sup>64</sup> Very successful at first, it played for five consecutive nights and at intervals during the rest of the season. The oddity about this play was that it contained passages from *Henry VI*, *Titus Andronicus*, and

<sup>59</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>60</sup> Letter by Sir Robert Heron quoted in DNB.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Deverell, *Discoveries in Hieroglyphics*, 6 vols. (1813) 2, 187, n.6.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 333, n.80; Arden, *King Lear*, V, iii, 172.

<sup>63</sup> See [B.W. Proctor], *The Life of Edmund Kean*, 2 vols. (1835); Frederick W. Hawkins, *The Life of Edmund Kean*, 2 vols. (1869) and others.

<sup>64</sup> Garrick Club playbill for 9 March 1815.

*King Lear*. In the Advertisement, which is unsigned but presumably by Wroughton, he writes 'Whoever is curious, may find the introduced passages'.<sup>65</sup> The *King Lear* insertion is Lear's last speech over the dead Cordelia and which Wroughton gives to Queen Isabel speaking over the dead body of Richard.<sup>66</sup> These lines are Shakespeare's and are not in Tate or any adaptation in which Cordelia survives. Of greater importance was Wroughton's comments on 'a young Actor, Mr. Kean' in the title-role who 'is deservedly rewarded by the loudest plaudits of a discriminating Publick' and who was to revive the fortunes of *King Lear* after the death of George III.

As the life of the poor mad King dragged on, the London stage survived without *King Lear* but there was still the occasional event of interest. On 23 April 1816, the two-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, both Drury Lane and Covent Garden staged Garrick's Pageant from his *Jubilee* of 1769. Drury Lane performed *Romeo and Juliet* with Garrick's Ode and the Pageant; in the procession five characters from *King Lear* were included, with Alexander Pope as Lear. Whether this was exactly as that staged by Garrick is uncertain but a description of it, written by William Hazlitt, does not suggest that it was a very enlightening display: 'Pope and Barnard come on as Lear and Mad Tom. They sit down on the ground, and Pope steals a crown of straw from his companion: Mad Tom then ... runs off the stage, and Pope after him, like Pantaloon in pursuit of the Clown ... We did not stay to see it out; and one consolation is, that we shall not be alive another century to see it repeated.'<sup>67</sup> Covent Garden staged *Coriolanus*, Kemble's greatest role, with the Pageant in which according to the playbill, the whole company participated. There is no Lear listed<sup>68</sup> but Cordelia was represented by Maria Foote (c.1797-1867) who was to play this role in 1820. It seems the Drury Lane offering was not repeated, but Covent Garden's played for several nights and 'excited the admiration of the most crowded House of the Season'.<sup>69</sup>

In 1816 William Charles Macready (1793-1873) made his London debut at Covent

<sup>65</sup> Richard Wroughton, *Shakspeare's King Richard the Second*, (1815) A2r.

<sup>66</sup> The lines spoken by the Queen are Lear's from the Folio beginning 'Why should a dog' and ending 'Look there!' with minor alterations. V, iv, p.71; Arden, *King Lear*, V, iii, 305-10.

<sup>67</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) 'A View of The English Stage', 5, 302.

<sup>68</sup> By not including a Lear, was Covent Garden observing the Lord Chamberlain's ban closely? Drury Lane, in spite of the letters mentioned earlier, did represent Lear.

<sup>69</sup> Garrick Club Covent Garden playbill dated 25 April 1816.

Garden. Macready was to develop into one of the greatest actors of the English stage. He is important to this thesis for his fine performance as Lear and for his work on the text of *King Lear* and he will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The next three years 1817, 1818 and 1819 are barren years for this thesis. In 1817 John Kemble played Coriolanus for the last time and then retired. His brother, Stephen, who had enjoyed his greatest acclaim outside London, took on the management of Drury Lane in 1818 but without success.

**1820** George III finally died on 29 January 1820 having been permanently insane since 1811. Drury Lane and Covent Garden, which closed at his death, reopened in February and both staged *King Lear* in April. Drury Lane was still eager to offer their lead actor, Edmund Kean, in the title role and Covent Garden also had a new player of promise. Covent Garden's first performances, on 13, 17 and 19 April, were advertised on the playbills as 'Not Acted these Ten Years'. They were billed as 'Shakspeare's Tragedy' but were presumably still Kemble's version although he had retired in 1817. Junius Brutus Booth (1796-1852), an important new actor<sup>70</sup> who at one time rivalled Kean, played Lear. One critic wrote that he saw Booth's performance as Lear 'with great pleasure'<sup>71</sup> but another dismissed him as 'a cautious plodder'<sup>72</sup> in the role. Charles Kemble, John Fawcett and Charles Farley who had all appeared in the play before the 1811 ban, were still in the cast. Players new to *King Lear* included Sarah Booth (1793-1867) as Cordelia but 'a more mediocre effort than her *Cordelia* it has seldom been our lot to discuss';<sup>73</sup> Elizabeth Yates (née Brunton; 1799-1860) cast as Regan, was a good middle-ranking player 'eminently gifted with quiet strength'.<sup>74</sup> The most important newcomer was William Charles Macready as Edmund who was 'gradually gaining ground upon public opinion'.<sup>75</sup> Macready had been urged to attempt Lear at this performance 'in order to anticipate the rival theatre'. He refused to commit himself to

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<sup>70</sup> Booth, a leading player, eventually moved to America where he founded a family of actors who included John Wilkes Booth (1839-65) the assassin of Abraham Lincoln.

<sup>71</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) *The London Magazine*, May 1820, 18, 316.

<sup>72</sup> *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, April 1820, 248.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 250.

<sup>74</sup> W. Marston, *Our Recent Actors*, 2 vols. (1888) 1, 20.

<sup>75</sup> *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, September 1820, 269.

'so rash an experiment' and instead played Edmund 'and lost no credit by it'.<sup>76</sup> His career as it relates to *King Lear* will be looked at in the following chapter.

Towards the end of 1820 Junius Brutus Booth defected to Drury Lane and Covent Garden had once more to stage *King Lear* with a newcomer in the title-role. This actor was John M. Vandenhoff (1790-1861) who first appeared on 9 December, billed as '*From the Theatre Royal, Liverpool*'. Vandenhoff played Lear again on 11 and 16 December and he was to become an important actor on the London stage playing several leading roles including Iago and Hamlet. Although he never reached the top echelons, one critic wrote he 'stamped himself as *the* classical tragedian of his day.'<sup>77</sup> Opposite this new Lear was also a new Cordelia, Maria Foote who was 'only a second-rate actress, ...[but] possesses one quality which genius does not always boast of, ... this is, the power of pleasing by a nameless charm'.<sup>78</sup> Edmund was played by the actor William Abbott (1789-1843) who was a middle-ranking player at Covent Garden for many years. Although never a star, he appears to have been moderately successful and Hazlitt said of him that he 'never acts ill'.<sup>79</sup>

There was one oddity at Covent Garden later in 1820. When *Twelfth Night* was staged on 8 November the playbill stated that 'In the course of the Comedy' songs would be sung, and a glee<sup>80</sup> 'Come o'er the brook' from *King Lear*, was included in Act II. Other songs from *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Henry IV, Part 2* and *The Tempest* were also thrust into *Twelfth Night*, with what effect can only be imagined.

Drury Lane also staged *King Lear* in April 1820 and had a memorable success. The first performance was on 24 April and thereafter on 25-29 April; 1-13, 15-17, 19, 22, 23, 25-27 May; 3 June; 4 July; and 21 and 30 August, the final performance that summer. The adaptation was by Robert Elliston (1774-1831), actor and manager, and on 24 April, Edmund Kean's first night as Lear, the playbill advertised that the text

<sup>76</sup> *Macready's Reminiscences, and Selections from his Diaries and Letters*, ed. F. Pollock, 2 vols. (1875) 1, 206.

<sup>77</sup> George Vandenhoff, *Leaves from an Actor's Notebook*, (1820) 33. However the writer was John Vandenhoff's son so perhaps his praise should be viewed with circumspection.

<sup>78</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 1, 44.

<sup>79</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) 'A View of the English Stage', 5, 333.

<sup>80</sup> The music was by Sir Henry Rowley Bishop (1786-1855) who wrote for many plays and operas including some based on Shakespeare's works. According to DNB, 'his future fame will rest' almost entirely on his glees, a song in parts, strictly without accompaniment.

could 'only be had in the Theatre'.<sup>81</sup> The play was based on Tate's<sup>82</sup> and the title-page claimed 'SOME RESTORATIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL TEXT' but these were slight.<sup>83</sup> Elliston retained the name Edward for Cornwall's servant, a name first foisted on the character by Kemble, and he avoided reinstating Shakespeare's ending. In his Advertisement he justifies this by commenting 'The public taste long ago decided against the sublime, but terrible catastrophe of the original'<sup>84</sup> and in quotes Johnson's dislike of Cordelia's death, in support of his decision. Elliston, the 'Joyousest' of spirits,<sup>85</sup> had been in charge of several provincial theatres with mixed success. In August 1810, at the Surrey Theatre, a minor unlicensed London theatre, he had staged Garrick's *Jubilee*, including the famous Pageant, and appeared as Edgar. His biographer, writing in 1844, said of him that 'Though far short of a *great tragedian*' Elliston was 'without a superior'<sup>86</sup> as Edgar. In the autumn of 1819 he had taken on the management of Drury Lane and now, in 1820, presented Edmund Kean as Lear.

In addition to the excitement of Kean's performance which I will look at shortly, Drury Lane also offered spectacular scenery and costumes and the playbills of the time stress this. Those for *King Lear* refer to 'new Scenery, Dresses and Decorations' and list eleven or so scenes including 'A Land Storm',<sup>87</sup> 'Room of State in Palace', 'View near Dover', 'Valley near the Field of Battle', etc. and give the names of those who designed this scenery and created the new costumes. Elliston was an avid user of the 'puff' and was dubbed 'that Prince of Puffers'.<sup>88</sup> His playbills are full of comments on the 'astonishing success' of the production, the suspension of the Free Lists,<sup>89</sup> the

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<sup>81</sup> Presumably specially printed in pamphlet form, as Kemble had done earlier, (see footnote 36).

<sup>82</sup> R.W. Elliston, *Tragedy of Shakspeare's King Lear*, (1820) title-page.

<sup>83</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 2, 151-2.

<sup>84</sup> R.W. Elliston, *Tragedy of Shakspeare's King Lear*, (1820) v.

<sup>85</sup> *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 6 vols. (1912) 2, 188.

<sup>86</sup> George Raymond, *Memoirs of Robert William Elliston, Comedian*, 2 vols. (1844-5) 1, 223.

<sup>87</sup> Elliston and Kean tried to reproduce the storm effects which Philippe Louthembourg (1740-1812) had first experimented with at an exhibition in the late 18th century. Louthembourg was important in the development of stage effects from 1771, when he first joined Garrick, to about 1781 when he left the theatre to work on his 'Eidophusikon' exhibition; see Christopher Baugh, *Garrick and Louthembourg*, (Cambridge, 1990).

<sup>88</sup> *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, May 1820, 266.

<sup>89</sup> The Free Lists were 'complimentary seats granted by the courtesy of the house to members of the theatrical profession and to people who advertise the fare', Wilfred Granville, *A Dictionary of Theatrical Terms*, (1952) 81.

orchestra area opened up to accommodate the audience, the heavily booked boxes, etc. The name of Edmund Kean is printed in large black letters on the playbills and is often supported by a puff. For example, on the bill for 27 April there is the line 'In the Public opinion ... his (i.e. Kean's) delineation of the aged Monarch, is his master-piece'; on 13 May the words 'continues its triumphant Success!!!' are added in large letters.

Many of the contemporary criticisms of these performances concentrated on the wonders of the production, particularly the storm scenes. Kean, as well as Elliston, was determined to stage the storm with as much magnificence as possible and was 'personally busy'<sup>90</sup> in the preparations. 'The scenic trees were composed of distinct boughs which undulated in the wind, each leaf was a separate pendant rustling with the expressive sound of nature itself.' However this writer then adds 'amidst all the leaves in the forest, not a wreath was to be found to crown the brows of the actor'.<sup>91</sup> *The Times* of 25 April 1820 praised 'the manifestations of genius he [Kean] displayed in the character' but complained that the noise made by the storm meant 'that the performer could scarcely be heard amidst the confusion'. The writer adds with perspicacity that 'it is the bending of *Lear's* mind under his wrongs that is the object of interest, and not that of a forest beneath the hurricane'.<sup>92</sup>

The costumes of these first Kean appearances as Lear were also new. Writing to Elliston on 31 March 1820, Kean asked to 'blend Dramatic effect with Traditional Simplicity'<sup>93</sup> but the end result did not escape the critics' complaints any more than had the scenery. Kean's 'Saxon robe of crimson, and the Saxon cap ... [were] extremely becoming' but the 'absurd accumulation of wig totally spoils the physiognomy'.<sup>94</sup> Burgundy was criticised for his 'Saxon habit', presumably because he was French, and there was disapproval of 'one of the *Pages* [who] wore an Italian tunic'.<sup>95</sup> In his Advertisement to his own edition of *King Lear* (1820) Elliston wrote 'to talk of

<sup>90</sup> George Raymond, *Memoirs of Robert William Elliston, Comedian*, 2 vols. (1844-5) 2, 232.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 2, 232-3.

<sup>92</sup> See J.S. Bratton, 'The Lear of Private Life: Interpretations of *King Lear* in the Nineteenth Century', 127-8 and 137, *Shakespeare and the Victorian Stage*, ed. R. Foulkes, (Cambridge, 1986) for the possible technical skills employed in creating this storm.

<sup>93</sup> Letter in the Folger Library; quoted in Christopher Murray, *Robert William Elliston, Manager*, (1975) 91.

<sup>94</sup> *The London Chronicle*, 25 April 1820, 394.

<sup>95</sup> *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, April 1820, 244, footnote.

correctness or incorrectness [of costume] would be something more than absurd' and goes on to argue that it is better

to choose the costume of any period, not too recent, and adhere to it with fidelity ... In respect to the gold, pearls, and other ornaments ... it may be right to observe, that the costume is borrowed from an early Saxon period, in which such decorations were profusely used.<sup>96</sup>

As with the Covent Garden company, there were a few players in this 1820 Drury Lane production who had appeared in *King Lear* before it was banned in 1811. One such player was Samuel Thomas Russell who was again cast as Oswald which he had first played in 1795; another was Alexander Pope who had been Lear in 1794 but now took on Kent. This successful run at Drury Lane had several changes to the cast. William Downton (1764-1851), of whom it was said 'no man on the stage is more useful to a manager',<sup>97</sup> played Kent later in the season but was 'not at all good'<sup>98</sup> in this role. Barnard (a different actor from John Bernard) was cast as Albany and Edmund and this actor perhaps personified the large number of mediocre players at this time. He played several good size roles but does not appear to have caught the critics' attention and all that was said of him was that he was 'respectable' in his various roles.<sup>99</sup> Charles Holland (1768-1849?) an 'unassuming performer',<sup>100</sup> was described as 'great'<sup>101</sup> in the role of Gloucester. Alexander Rae (1782-1820), billed as appearing for the first time as Edgar, was a middle-ranking actor whose Edgar was described as 'respectable'<sup>102</sup> but he died suddenly in 1820 before establishing his name. After his death, speaking the address at a benefit for Rae's family, Mrs. West, the actress who had played Cordelia opposite Rae's Edgar, asked the audience to 'Pardon Cordelia's tears' and then added 'poor Tom's a-cold'. This tribute received thunderous applause and 'the tears of the

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<sup>96</sup> Robert Elliston, *Tragedy of Shakspeare's King Lear*, (1820) vi.

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Gilliland, *The Dramatic Mirror*, 2 vols. (1808) 2, 735.

<sup>98</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) *The London Magazine*, June 1820, 18, 338.

<sup>99</sup> *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, March 1818, acted 'very respectably' (212); 'very respectable' (216); May 1818, acted 'very respectably' (371).

<sup>100</sup> *The Thespian Dictionary*, 1802.

<sup>101</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) *The London Magazine*, June 1820, 18, 338.

<sup>102</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 2 vols. (3rd ed., 1872) 1, 349.

audience'.<sup>103</sup> Edmund was played by Thomas Hamblin (1800-53) who 'made very rapid strides in his profession'<sup>104</sup> and was to become a leading theatre manager in America; Cornwall by Samuel Penley (d.1832) who had been the 'great creature'<sup>105</sup> in a small company which toured on the Continent, but he had less success in London.

The actresses playing in this revival of *King Lear* seem to have been marginally more successful. Mrs. West (c.1790-1876; née Cooke<sup>106</sup>) who had joined Drury Lane in 1818 'to sustain the leading characters in Tragedy',<sup>107</sup> now made 'an interesting Cordelia, though a moderate actress'.<sup>108</sup> Goneril was played by Julia Glover (1781-1850; née Betterton), a 'direct descendant from the celebrated Betterton'<sup>109</sup> with 'talents ... far above mediocrity';<sup>110</sup> Louisa Phillips, an actress with 'great natural requisites ... power and feeling'<sup>111</sup> played Arante and later was to play Cordelia opposite Macready.

So what of Edmund Kean in the title-role? The production was a resounding success at the box office but I have already noted comments which used the impressive storm sequence to point out Kean's overall failure as Lear. Hazlitt wrote

We had thought that Mr. Kean would take possession of this time-worn, venerable figure ... but he failed ... so, perhaps the genius of no living actor can be expected to cope with Lear.

Hazlitt also condemned Kean in Lear's famous curse on Goneril writing 'he made the well-known curse a piece of downright rant'.<sup>112</sup> Leigh Hunt, too, was disappointed, 'we had higher expectations of Mr. KEAN's *Lear* ... All the imaginative parts, - the whole scene of the storm for instance, - fell as flat as the actor's voice.'<sup>113</sup> Henry Crabb

<sup>103</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 2, 55.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 111.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 186, where his first name is given as Samson.

<sup>106</sup> This actress is always billed as Mrs. W. West. Raymund FitzSimons in *Edmund Kean, Fire from Heaven*, (1976) names her as Sarah West (254); Christopher Murray in *Robert William Elliston, Manager*, (1975) refers to her as Mrs. William West (195).

<sup>107</sup> *The Biography of the British Stage*, (1824) 271.

<sup>108</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 2 vols. (3rd ed., 1872) 1, 349.

<sup>109</sup> *The Biography of the British Stage*, (1824) 83.

<sup>110</sup> Thomas Gilliland, *The Dramatic Mirror*, 2 vols. (1808) 2, 767.

<sup>111</sup> John Adolphus, *Memoirs of John Bannister, Comedian*, 2 vols. (1839) 2, 259.

<sup>112</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) *The London Magazine*, June 1820, 18, 332-3.

<sup>113</sup> Leigh Hunt, *The Examiner*, 1 May 1820, 278.



Robinson, who was at the performance on 26 April 1820, felt differently and wrote 'Kean delighted me much in Lear, though the critics are not satisfied with him. His representation of imbecile age was admirable ... His exhibition of madness was also exquisite'.<sup>114</sup> Others agree, praising 'those bright and sudden touches for which the genius of Mr. KEAN is distinguished',<sup>115</sup> a comment which is not dissimilar to Coleridge's remark that watching Kean act was 'like reading Shakspeare by flashes of lightning'.<sup>116</sup> Some years after the event, *The Quarterly Review* described Kean in the scene where he curses Goneril, as 'the picture of a desolate and withered tree'.<sup>117</sup> Dr. Doran, also writing many years later, refers to 'the grandeur, the touchingness, and the sublimity' of Kean's Lear and adds 'It was throughout thoroughly original in conception and in execution'.<sup>118</sup> It seems that the critic who wrote that Kean was 'a vast favourite ... but he was not an universal favourite'<sup>119</sup> was accurate in his summing up.

In the autumn of 1820 Kean made his first visit to America and Drury Lane was kept open during the month of August for the first time 'since 1761'<sup>120</sup> so that Kean could repeat his lead roles before his departure. *King Lear* was staged on August 21 and 30 and the public were warned that these were Kean's last performances 'before his *Positive* departure for America'.<sup>121</sup> Clearly, in spite of reservations of the critics, Kean's performance and the new wonders on stage delighted the public.

On 15 and 17 November, 1820 without the star attraction of Edmund Kean, Drury Lane staged *King Lear* with Junius Brutus Booth. Booth had played Edgar in the August performances, but now played Lear which he had previously attempted at Covent Garden earlier the same year. Most of the players were those who had appeared with Kean but newcomers included John Cooper (1790-1870) who was billed as Edgar for the first time. Cooper, whose style of acting was of the Kemble school,<sup>122</sup> was to

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<sup>114</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 2 vols. (3rd ed., 1872) 1, 348.

<sup>115</sup> *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, April 1820, 245.

<sup>116</sup> *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Carl Woodring, 16 vols. (Princeton, 1990) 'Table Talk', 27 April 1823, vol.14, pt.2, 41.

<sup>117</sup> *The Quarterly Review*, 49, 1833, 193.

<sup>118</sup> John Doran, *Annals of The English Stage*, ed. R.W.Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 3, 396.

<sup>119</sup> Genest, 8, 413.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 9, 39.

<sup>121</sup> Garrick Club Drury Lane playbills.

<sup>122</sup> John Doran, *Annals of The English Stage*, ed. R.W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 3, 210.

become a leading player. It was said of him that 'His voice and figure admirably adapt him to the personification of lovers and chivalrous characters'<sup>123</sup> but also that 'he is really unequal to ... *Edgar*.'<sup>124</sup>

Without either John Kemble, or Junius Brutus Booth who had joined Drury Lane, Covent Garden did not attempt *King Lear* in the summer of 1820 during Kean's triumph at Drury Lane. The Haymarket Theatre staged the play once, on 14 October,<sup>125</sup> the last night of their summer season which had been a longer one than usual. *Lear* was attempted by Daniel Terry (1780?-1829) for the first time. Terry had started his career in Sheffield in 1803 and was considered equally good as 'yielding, passive, quiet old gentlemen' or a 'techy choleric bachelor'.<sup>126</sup> *Edgar* was acted by a 'Gentleman' making his second appearance at that theatre. He was praised for 'pathos which must have vibrated in the bosom of every person of delicate feeling'<sup>127</sup> but his name is not known.

1820 seems to have been a popular year for acting editions of *King Lear*. In addition to Elliston's version, William Oxberry the elder, a minor actor and manager, published *King Lear*, as part of his 20-volume *The New English Drama*, (1818-25). *King Lear, A Tragedy; Altered from Shakspeare, by Nahum Tate*, (1820) was published with a frontispiece of Mrs. W. West as Cordelia. This version was very like Kemble's with the name Edward retained for Cornwall's servant.<sup>128</sup> 'Remarks' were placed before each play and on *King Lear*, Oxberry comments how the play, set in a 'barbarous' time, nevertheless portrays the 'passions and feelings' still relevant to his own day, 'the race of unjust fathers and ungrateful children is not yet extinct'.<sup>129</sup> There is reference to 'the satire of the fool' and a footnote, 'Now wholly omitted in Representation'<sup>130</sup> but a return to Shakespeare must have been considered because he wrote 'Is not the restoration of *Lear* to felicity, after so much suffering, an anti-climax?'.<sup>131</sup> It was, perhaps, concerns over the possible effect on the takings that prevented him risking Shakespeare's play.

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<sup>123</sup> *The Biography of the British Stage*, (1824) 42.

<sup>124</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 5, 85.

<sup>125</sup> Genest, 9, 65; Haymarket playbills in British Library collection, (Playbills 119/1).

<sup>126</sup> *The Biography of the British Stage*, (1824) 251.

<sup>127</sup> *The Theatrical Inquisitor*, October 1820, 318.

<sup>128</sup> William Oxberry, *The New English Drama, King Lear*, (1820) 10, IV, i, p.44.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* 10, iii.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* 10, iii.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* 10, iv.

Oxberry follows the Elliston/Kean production in some respects. In his list of costumes worn by the players, the male characters wear tunics, as did those in Elliston's version. Further, Lear's and Burgundy's tunics are specified as 'Saxon', following Elliston.<sup>132</sup> Oxberry's edition gives more detailed stage directions than either Kemble or Elliston, for example at the end of I, i, there are directions that '(A Flourish sounds and continues until the Scene changes.) [Exeunt; Cordelia, R.H. and Edgar, L.H.]' There are also a number of footnotes. At Lear's lines 'They flattered me like a dog ... When the rain came to wet me once', Oxberry adds 'This seems to be an allusion to King Canute's behaviour, when his courtiers flattered him as lord of the sea'.<sup>133</sup>

**1821** After the excitement of Kean's debut as Lear in 1820 and his departure to America later the same year, 1821 was without a performance of *King Lear* at any of the playhouses. Kean's return to London was advertised on the playbills of July 1821 in red letters but this summer saw the coronation of the new King, George IV and various spectacles commemorating this event occupied the theatres rather than *King Lear*.

If the theatres temporarily abandoned *King Lear*, 1821 saw the publication of *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare*, in 21 volumes known as the Third Variorum or the Boswell-Malone edition. Edmond Malone, after the publication of his 1790 edition, began work on its revision and, like Steevens, nominated a friend to complete the work in the event of his death. Malone died in 1812 and James Boswell the younger completed the editing and introduced a 46-page 'Advertisement' in which, as might be expected, he praises Malone but also slights Steevens. One example of such an attack is his comment on part of Steevens's own Advertisement in the 1773 edition which is reprinted in this 1821 edition. Steevens had cut two lines from an exchange between Lear and Kent which starts 'Lear: No; Kent: Yes'<sup>134</sup> and questioned whether 'any new idea be gained' by their presence. Boswell argues for the retention of the lines, their 'blunt freedom ... characterizes the faithful Kent', and points out that these lines are in fact reinstated in Steevens' 1778 edition.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>132</sup> And also, of course, Kemble who had put on his first 'Saxon' staging in 1809.

<sup>133</sup> William Oxberry, *King Lear*, (1820) 10, IV, iv, p.53, n.7; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vi, 96-100.

<sup>134</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, II, ii, 205-12; see chapter 11.

<sup>135</sup> *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare*, 21 vols. (1821)1, xii; hereafter referred to as Boswell-Malone, *Shakspeare*.

New material in the introductory matter includes the final version of Malone's *Attempt to Ascertain the Order of Shakspeare's Plays*<sup>136</sup> together with an *Essay on the Phraseology and Metre of Shakspeare and his Contemporaries*.<sup>137</sup> *King Lear* is not mentioned specifically in the essay but examples illustrating Shakespeare's incorrect grammar, as understood at the time, are included from *King Lear*, e.g. Cordelia's line 'my love's /More richer than my tongue' is pointed out as a 'Double comparative'.<sup>138</sup> Boswell adds to the brief 'Preliminary Remarks' printed before each play. In the *King Lear* 'Preliminary Remarks' in volume 10, Boswell gives the remarks already submitted by Steevens, Percy and Malone and then draws attention to the existence of three quarto copies all dated 1608, printed for Nathaniel Butter and points out that there are differences between them.<sup>139</sup>

New notes on *King Lear* include those offered by the Reverend J. B. Blakeway, by Henry Ellis (later Sir Henry; principal librarian at the British Museum) and by James Boswell himself. Among Blakeway's contributions is one on Kent's line 'eat no fish'. Blakeway argues that eating fish is not 'a badge of popery' because Queen Elizabeth preferred not to eat meat in Lent;<sup>140</sup> on 'Come o'er the *bound*, Bessy, to me', he adds 'Mad women who travel about the country' are known as '*cousin Betties*'.<sup>141</sup> One of his notes, on Albany's line to the Herald 'Ask him his purposes, why he appears', is entirely new being the only note on this line. He explains that the line refers to 'the ceremonials of the trial by combat in cases criminal' and quotes a parallel passage.<sup>142</sup> Henry Ellis's notes include one on Mad Tom and he quotes Aubrey who wrote that Toms-a-Bedlam 'Before the civil warrs ... went about begging'.<sup>143</sup> Contributions by Boswell include the suggestion of the word 'hissing' in Lear's line 'red burning spits/Come whizzing in upon them' because one of the quartos has 'hiszing' and he

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 2, 288-96.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 1, 507-85. Malone 'made considerable progress, but ... did not live to complete' this essay. (1, xi)

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 1, 582; Arden, *King Lear*, I, i, 77-8, 'more ponderous'.

<sup>139</sup> No doubt variants of the 1608 plus the 1619.

<sup>140</sup> Boswell-Malone, *Shakspeare*, 10, I, iv, p.50, n.4; Arden, *King Lear*, I, iv, 17. Warburton was the first to comment on this line arguing it implied that the speaker was a loyal Protestant.

<sup>141</sup> Boswell-Malone, *Shakspeare*, 10, III, vi, p.172, n.9; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vi, 25.

<sup>142</sup> Boswell-Malone, *Shakspeare*, 10, V, iii, p.266, n.3; Arden, *King Lear*, V, iii, 116.

<sup>143</sup> Boswell-Malone, *Shakspeare*, 10, II, iii, p.105, n.9.

feels it might be a simple printing error.<sup>144</sup> In Boswell's Addenda, volume 21, he makes one comment on *King Lear*, on Lear's line 'But to the girdle do the gods inherit;/ Beneath is all the fiend's'.<sup>145</sup> He thanks 'Charles Warren Esq, Chief Justice of Chester [who] pointed out to me the following curious illustration of this doctrine in Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History' and he quotes at some length from this book.

This edition of 1821, the Boswell-Malone Shakespeare, is the last to be covered by this thesis. The editing of Shakespeare's works had progressed far from the lone Nicholas Rowe's first attempt in 1709. The acting, too, had changed radically although styles continued to shift according to the skills of the players and the preferences of the audiences. The ban on the play had been lifted at the death of George III and *King Lear* was again seen on stage. During the next two decades the adaptations were to be finally dislodged from their position of strength. Critics were becoming increasingly aware of the unsatisfactory fudging together of Tate and Shakespeare. The Fool was recognised as 'that admirable foil to the King's weakness' and the conclusion was seen as 'tame... the play wound up like a nursery tale'.<sup>146</sup> The next chapter will be concerned with the performances of *King Lear*, particularly that of William Charles Macready, 'of the Kemble school, but with ideas of his own',<sup>147</sup> and the final return to Shakespeare's text leading up to the reinstatement of the Fool in 1838.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 10, III, vi, p.170, n.3; Arden, *King Lear*, III, vi, 15-6, 'hizzing'.

<sup>145</sup> Boswell-Malone, *Shakspeare*, 21, 460-3; Arden, *King Lear*, IV, vi, 122-3.

<sup>146</sup> *The Literary Gazette*, 29 April 1820, 285.

<sup>147</sup> John Doran, *Annals of The English Stage*, ed. R.W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 3, 392.

Illustration 14



Priscilla Horton as the Fool in the Covent Garden performance of January 1838, taken from *King Lear*, ed. R.A. Foakes (Arden, 1997)

William Charles Macready  
and the return to Shakespeare's text

**1822** The performances of *King Lear* in 1822 were the last in the long, unbroken run of the 'happy ending' versions which had held the stage since Nahum Tate's time. Although adaptations of Tate's version were staged intermittently after 1822, they did not again enjoy an unchallenged position. At Drury Lane there were five performances in 1822; at Covent Garden there was just one. Drury Lane, presumably still offering Elliston's version, had Kean in the title-role and the cast was largely the same as in 1820. A newcomer was the actress, Miss Edmiston, who played Cordelia for the first time on 21 January. According to the playbill of the following night, *King Lear* had a 'brilliant reception' but Elliston's notorious use of the puff must be borne in mind. Edmiston played Cordelia again on 25 January, and on 7 and 15 February but she did not appear to have any sustained success and was reported some years later to be 'painfully "strolling"'.<sup>1</sup> On 6 May, at the last Drury Lane performance of 1822, Edmiston was replaced by Mrs. W. West who had first played Cordelia in 1820.<sup>2</sup> A minor actor, Edward Fitzwilliam, (1788-1852) described as 'frittering, frightened, mouthing, and husky'<sup>3</sup> played Oswald.

At Covent Garden's single performance, on 8 May 1822, Charles Mayne Young (1777-1856) played Lear for the first time in London, presumably in Kemble's adaptation. Young had been advertised to appear on 29 April but the performance was postponed '*In consequence of the Indisposition of Mr. YOUNG*'. The play was finally staged on 8 May and, like Drury Lane, most of the players were in roles they had already taken. Young, an important newcomer, was a leading actor whose position on the London stage was limited first by Kean and then Macready. Although Mrs. Piozzi had claimed earlier that she had been 'half in hysterics'<sup>4</sup> after seeing Young as Lear,

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<sup>1</sup> John Doran, *Annals of The English Stage*, ed. Robert W. Lowe, 3 vols. (1888) 3, 398.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Edmiston was twice replaced by Sarah West. The first time was in November 1821, when Edmiston was again leading lady opposite Kean. (Raymund FitzSimons, *Edmund Kean, Fire from Heaven*, (1976) 158-9.)

<sup>3</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 4, 125.

<sup>4</sup> *Autobiography, Letters and Literary Remains of Mrs. Piozzi (Thrale)*, ed. A. Hayward, 2 vols. (1861), letter dated 27 April 1819, 2, 285. Mrs. Piozzi, who died in 1821, saw Young in the provinces, probably Bath. Young did not attempt the role in London until 1822.

Byron is purported to have described him as the ‘quintessence of mediocrity’<sup>5</sup> and he is not one of the most renowned of the English theatre. *The Times* wrote of his Lear ‘we cannot think that he succeeded in embodying any one of the leading traits of this most difficult character’ and added that the last scene was ‘tawdry and unnatural’.<sup>6</sup> This last remark is significant bearing in mind that the long run of the adapted *King Lear* was coming to an end. It would be interesting to know what particular aspect was considered ‘unnatural’. Was it perhaps the light-weight ending to a play whose earlier scenes held a sense of impending tragedy? Not all the critics, however, were hostile. One wrote that Young, as Lear, was ‘doing what I suspect Shakspeare intended’<sup>7</sup> in spite of the fact that it was not Shakespeare’s play, a comment which seems to indicate a continuing confusion in the public’s mind as to what was Shakespeare’s play and what was being offered on the stage.

**1823** Covent Garden did not stage *King Lear* in 1823 but at Drury Lane another step was taken towards the revival of Shakespeare’s text. On 6 February a note appeared on the playbill advertising a performance to be staged on 10 February and stating ‘*In obedience to the suggestion of Men of Literary eminence, from the time of Addison, that the original fifth act of the Tragedy of KING LEAR should be restored; the Proprietor deems it his duty to pay deference to such opinion; and, on Monday next, Mr. KEAN will conclude the character of Lear, as originally written by Shakspeare*’.<sup>8</sup> This ‘epoch-making’<sup>9</sup> event must be judged one of Elliston’s boldest moves at a time when his fortunes were experiencing mixed success.<sup>10</sup> The text used was not Elliston’s earlier version published in 1820 which had retained the happy ending, but was ‘unquestionably’<sup>11</sup> that in John Cumberland’s *British Theatre*.<sup>12</sup> I was able to confirm

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in J.Fitzgerald Molloy, *The Life and Adventures of Edmund Kean, Tragedian*, 2 vols. (1888) 2, 248.

<sup>6</sup> *The Times*, 9 May 1822, which also wrote that Maria Foote as Cordelia played the role ‘far better than the part as altered deserves’ (my italics).

<sup>7</sup> [Edward Mangin], *Piozziana*, (1833) 166.

<sup>8</sup> Drury Lane playbill in the Garrick Club collection.

<sup>9</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 2, 154.

<sup>10</sup> See Christopher Murray, *Robert William Elliston, Manager*, (1975) chapter 5.

<sup>11</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 2, 154.

<sup>12</sup> The John Cumberland *British Theatre* series (n.d.) was published between the 1823-31 (DNB).



this by finding a Drury Lane playbill in *The Theatrical Observer* of 15 February 1827 which carries a note that 'Cumberland's Edition of King Lear' was for sale at the theatre<sup>13</sup> and although this date is a few years later, it is probable that the text in 1823 was the same. The Cumberland edition contains 'Remarks' by D. G. (George Daniel) who in *King Lear*, regrets that Kemble 'did not brush away' Tate and 'restore the original text of Shakspeare'.<sup>14</sup> However, neither did Cumberland 'brush away' Tate. His edition was based on Kemble's for the first four acts with the love affair retained and no Fool. Cumberland's edition is closer to Shakespeare in the final scene but is set in the prison rather than in the camp at Dover. The dead Cordelia is carried on by Lear shortly before his own death but these final moments of the play were not entirely successful. In his last speech, Kean's pronunciation of 'never', which is repeated four times<sup>15</sup> in Cumberland's edition, 'very nearly produced ... a horse-laugh'.<sup>16</sup> Laughter could also have been triggered in part by a nervous reaction from the audience to Cordelia's death. This tragedy at the end of the play no doubt contrasted uncomfortably with the 'mawkish love-scenes'<sup>17</sup> in the first four acts. One critic felt that it was 'a decided failure ... [Kean's] general appearance is likely to excite many feelings, but certainly not that of pity, or respect for misfortune'.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, the reintroduction of the tragic ending was a significant move towards restoration of the full text. The cast included newcomers Powell, dismissed as 'drowsy and stupid',<sup>19</sup> as Gloucester; and Richard Younge as Edmund, known in the early years of the century as a 'celebrated amateur'.<sup>20</sup> The next night's playbill declared in the usual effusive style of Elliston 'The Alteration in the Fifth Act ... [was] sanctioned by the enthusiastic plaudits of a brilliant Audience' and the play was staged again on 24 February, 10 March and 16 June.

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<sup>13</sup> At Victoria and Albert Museum Library (PP.72.A). Oddly, it does not appear on the playbill for the second performance, 14 May; nor is this note carried on the Drury Lane playbills at the Garrick Club.

<sup>14</sup> *King Lear* in John Cumberland's *British Theatre*, (n.d.) 6, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Three times in Q, five times in F.

<sup>16</sup> *John Bull*, 16 February 1823, 54. According to Genest (9, 186) there was also laughter because 'Kean could not carry Mrs. W. West without difficulty'.

<sup>17</sup> *John Bull*, 16 February 1823, 54.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 54.

<sup>19</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 'Theatrical Alphabet', 5, 67. These doggerels in the *Dramatic Biography* make one-line comments on many of the minor players of the time and are often the only references to these now-forgotten names.

<sup>20</sup> *Actors by Daylight; or Pencilings in the Pit*, 2 vols., 26 May 1838, 1, 98.

**1824** The cast of the 1824 Drury Lane company, printed in the Cumberland edition of *King Lear*, is virtually identical to that of 1823. Drury Lane staged the play just once, on 5 April, again with Kean. One newcomer to the cast was to be a relatively important player, James Wallack (1791-1864), who appeared as Edgar. Wallack, who divided his time between America, where he founded a theatrical family, and London, was a successful Edgar giving 'a very correct and beautiful performance'<sup>21</sup> but was awarded the dubious title of the 'fourth tragedian' of the day.<sup>22</sup>

Covent Garden put on performances on 26 January and 2 February. Charles Young was again *Lear* and the cast, which remained second-rate, included the newcomers Mr. Henry, 'a very useful performer ... [who] deserves a situation in theatricals far above his present position'<sup>23</sup> as Cornwall's servant, still Kemble's Edward, and Miss Henry as Arante who was expected to 'get on'<sup>24</sup> in her career but does not appear to have done so. Cordelia was played by Maria Lacy (1803-77, Mrs. Lovell), whose acting 'abounds in feeling ... She always appears as if struggling to *subdue* her tears'.<sup>25</sup>

**1825-1826** In spite of Elliston's boldness in reviving Shakespeare's final act, there were no performances of *King Lear* in London in 1825 and 1826 and the box-office receipts for any production at Drury Lane during Elliston's final months as manager, were poor. Covent Garden also struggled and 'London yawned in complete boredom'.<sup>26</sup> By 1826 Elliston was bankrupt and Drury Lane passed, after a series of unsuccessful and unremembered managers, to Alfred Bunn (1798-1860). Noted for his quarrelsome temperament,<sup>27</sup> Bunn had been stage manager under Elliston and by 1833 was managing Drury Lane and Covent Garden but he too struggled and, like Elliston before him, in 1840 was made bankrupt.

<sup>21</sup> *The Theatrical Observer*, 15 May 1827.

<sup>22</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 5, 190.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Rice, *The London Theatre in the Eighteen-Thirties*, ed. A. Sprague and B. Shuttleworth (1950) 23-4. This comment was made several years later in February 1837 but Henry had still not established himself on the London stage.

<sup>24</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 'Theatrical Alphabet', 7, 71.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 99.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher Murray, *Robert William Elliston, Manager*, (1975) 113.

<sup>27</sup> For an account of Bunn's long-running quarrel with Macready see *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (1912); Alfred Bunn, *The Stage: Both Before and Behind the Curtain*, 3 vols. (1840); J.C. Trewin, *Mr. Macready, A Nineteenth-century Tragedian and His Theatre*, (1955).

**1827** *King Lear* was once more seen in London in 1827 when Drury Lane staged it on 15 February and 14 May and Covent Garden on 17 and 28 May. At Drury Lane Kean as Lear and Mrs. West as Cordelia now received warm praise for their acting, critics writing that Kean's 'delineation of this part [was] perfect' and 'Mrs. West's *Cordelia* was distinguished by pathos and tenderness'.<sup>28</sup> It seems that Kean was still offering the tragic final act but at some point he 'relinquished Shakspeare, and resumed Tate's tragedy ... Alas! alas! from Garrick to Kemble, and from Cooke to Kean, the same story'.<sup>29</sup> It is difficult to determine exactly when this occurred; perhaps in 1828 when Kean moved to Covent Garden which presumably was still staging Kemble's version.

Covent Garden's two performances in 1827 still starred Charles Young as Lear, the performance on 17 May being his benefit. Like Drury Lane, Covent Garden's cast was largely unchanged but the newcomers included James Warde (b.1792) who in 'a very few years will, in all probability, ... [be] the greatest favourite of the metropolis',<sup>30</sup> as Edmund, and Miss Jarman as Cordelia. Jarman, described as 'not a first rate actress, and probably never would be',<sup>31</sup> was just one of the surfeit of mediocre players of this time. Oxberry praised her at the start of her career and wrote that 'Her face has the tragic outline, but its expression ... seems to belong more properly to genteel comedy'<sup>32</sup> but she did not progress. On 14 June, which was a benefit for James Warde, part of the evening's entertainment included a revival of Garrick's *Jubilee*. The Procession of characters from Shakespeare's plays mentions Lear, Edgar and Kent but not the actors' names; Cordelia is identified as Miss Jarman.

Edmund Kean now left Drury Lane and was advertised in the playbills to appear at Covent Garden for the first time as Lear on 26 November. In the event, the performance was 'unavoidably deferred' because of Kean's illness and although he appeared on stage at Covent Garden in December, he did not play Lear until the following spring.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *The Theatrical Observer*, 15 May and 6 February 1827.

<sup>29</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 'Recollections of Kean', May 1834, 59.

<sup>30</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 5, 261.

<sup>31</sup> Genest, quoting 'a gentleman of Bath', (9, 387).

<sup>32</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 7, 155.

<sup>33</sup> Information from the Covent Garden playbills at the Garrick Club.

**1828** 1828 saw the fortunes of *King Lear* still struggling, with Drury Lane dropping the play entirely and Covent Garden offering performances on 10 and 17 March. Kean, appearing as Lear for the first time since his 'severe illness' of the previous winter, was described as 'grand, as imaginative, as poetical, as heart-subduing as the most expectant could wish'<sup>34</sup> but the play was not repeated until 10 November. The established Covent Garden company, including Miss Jarman as Cordelia, played opposite him. James Warde moved from Edmund to the role of Edgar and Charles Bannister Diddear, 'useful but undistinguished',<sup>35</sup> played Edmund. The performance on 10 November had some changes to the cast. Charles Kemble was back as Edgar; Kent was played by George Bartley (1782?-1858) who made a particular success of this role so that it was 'difficult to conceive how this part could be better or more naturally acted'.<sup>36</sup> Bartley was to have his moment of fame in connection with Macready's *King Lear* of 1838.

Elliston, after forfeiting the management of Drury Lane following his bankruptcy in 1826, was now at the Surrey Theatre. To remain within the law, he advertised plays as 'burlettas founded upon' the originals but it seems this entailed merely offering part of the play and adding music.<sup>37</sup> Two performances on 18 and 20 August confirm this. These offered the first act of *King Lear*, the fifth act of *Romeo and Juliet*, songs, hornpipes, a ballet and *Jack Robinson and his Monkey*, a popular piece featuring 'new Music, Scenery, Machinery, and characteristic Dresses'.<sup>38</sup> Lear was taken by David Osbaldiston, who though not a great actor, was 'ambitious, energetic, and capable'.<sup>39</sup>

The Haymarket staged *King Lear* twice in 1828, on 21 and 28 July, with a cast of minor players. Lear was taken by an actor named Gregory,<sup>40</sup> perhaps the same who had played one of the ruffians at Drury Lane in 1827. John Cooper was Edgar which he had played at Drury Lane in 1820 and Miss F. H. Kelly (b.1803) played Cordelia.<sup>41</sup> At the start of her career, one critic wrote that Kelly 'wants power in tragedy ... However

<sup>34</sup> F.W. Hawkins, *The Life of Edmund Kean*, 2 vols. (1869) 2, 319-20.

<sup>35</sup> William Archer, *William Charles Macready*, (1890) 109.

<sup>36</sup> *The Times*, 5 November 1836.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Murray, *Robert William Elliston, Manager*, (1975) 119.

<sup>38</sup> Playbills for the Surrey Theatre at the Theatre Museum, filed under theatre name and year.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Murray, *Robert William Elliston, Manager*, (1975) 124.

<sup>40</sup> Macready refers to 'Gregory' twice, once as 'vermin' (*Diaries*, 16 October 1834, 1, 189) and then as 'vile emulator' of Bunn (*Diaries*, 19 February 1843, 2, 196).

<sup>41</sup> Genest, 9, 436.

she is very young and may be hereafter good in tender characters.<sup>42</sup> She was coached by Macready 'to sophisticate her style of acting'<sup>43</sup> but nevertheless remained in the second rank of players.<sup>44</sup>

**1829-1833** In 1829 it was Drury Lane which offered one performance of *King Lear* and Covent Garden, whose affairs were in 'the utmost confusion',<sup>45</sup> who dropped the play. The performance at Drury Lane, on 30 March, was not a success. Lear was taken by Charles Young who had first played the part at Covent Garden in 1822 and now appeared in it for the 'First Time at this Theatre,' i.e. Drury Lane.<sup>46</sup> Most of the other parts were played by the second-rate stalwarts of the company; newcomers included William Farren (b. 1787) as Kent, condemned as 'one of the most confined actors upon the stage ... who never dream of fitting themselves to a character';<sup>47</sup> Cordelia was taken by Louisa Anne Phillips,<sup>48</sup> described as 'holding first rank' as an actress.<sup>49</sup> The long-established Mrs. W. West took on the more mature role of Goneril and John Cooper came from the Haymarket to play Edgar. The playbills claimed that the performance had been greeted with 'enthusiastic Applause, and will be repeated in the ensuing week'. This claim was reprinted on five following playbills but no second performance was attempted and Genest adds dismissively that it was 'not repeated'.<sup>50</sup>

Neither of the main houses offered *King Lear* in 1830<sup>51</sup> but the Haymarket, with

<sup>42</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *The London Theatre 1811-1866*, ed. Eluned Brown (1966) 7 June, 1823, 102.

<sup>43</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 5, 129.

<sup>44</sup> She should not be confused with Frances Maria Kelly (1790-1882) who had a long and successful career at Drury Lane.

<sup>45</sup> Genest, 9, 511. Covent Garden's parlous financial position was saved by Fanny Kemble, daughter of Charles, who enjoyed enormous success at this time (1829).

<sup>46</sup> Garrick Club playbills.

<sup>47</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 3, 44. Perhaps this actor was related to the William Farren who appeared as Lear at Covent Garden in 1786.

<sup>48</sup> Miss Phillips is named as Louisa Anne Phillips in a footnote in *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (1912) 1, 42, n.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 147.

<sup>50</sup> Genest, 9, 464.

<sup>51</sup> Jaggard lists a burlesque *King Lear and his Daughters Queer* by Hugo Vamp in 1830. In a copy in the British Library Music department (H.1776.h.(10)) one line of the libretto (p. 4) refers to winning a medal 'at the Crimea' which suggests the Crimea War (1853-6); also in this version Cordelia and Lear both die. It is possible that the lyrics were updated after 1830 but I think a publication date later than 1853 is more likely. A. Nicoll in *A History of English Drama 1660-1900*, gives J.R. O'Neil as the true name of 'Hugo Vamp', (4, 602).

Edmund Kean as Lear, staged one performance on 12 July. Miss F. H. Kelly played Cordelia and John Cooper, Edgar. New names included an actor named Brindal as Edmund. This actor's name occurs frequently in respectable roles; in *King Lear* he played three different parts, but he attracted little attention and one critic wrote that if Brindal felt 'confidence in himself, it would be the better for him'.<sup>52</sup>

For the following three years, 1831 to 1833, neither Drury Lane nor Covent Garden staged *King Lear*. The Haymarket staged the play three times in 1832, on 11 and 20 June and 6 August, with Kean in the title-role.<sup>53</sup> Cooper, Younge and Brindal were in supporting roles. Cordelia was played by Harriet Smithson (1800-54) who had had an enormous success in Paris in leading Shakespearean roles some months previously. However, her success was short-lived because she married the composer Berlioz in 1833 and retired from the stage.

There was one possible performance at a minor London theatre, perhaps the New City Theatre at Cripplegate, Milton Street (formerly Grub Street), which was opened in 1831.<sup>54</sup> Kean, now approaching the end of his career, appeared at this theatre in the summer of 1831<sup>55</sup> possibly as Lear<sup>56</sup> but Harold N. Hillebrand claims the City Theatre was closed in June 1831 and that Kean acted at the Coburg (later famous as the Old Vic) on 4 July and during this performance pieces of orange were thrown at the stage which aroused Kean's anger in a curtain speech at the end of the performance.<sup>57</sup> Another obscure production of *King Lear* this time at the Royal Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel, was staged in 1832 where Edward William Elton (1794-1843) played the title-role 'to the no small delight' of the audience for 'his conception of the part [which] was chaste, and his embodying of it masterly'.<sup>58</sup> After 'nearly twenty years ... as a provincial and East-End actor ... [with] no originality of talent',<sup>59</sup> Elton finally found a degree of fame in the main London theatres and was to appear in the memorable production of 1838.

In 1833 Edmund Kean died. In the provinces the next true star of the London stage

<sup>52</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 'The Drama', January 1834, 113.

<sup>53</sup> Haymarket playbills at the Theatre Museum, filed under theatre name and year.

<sup>54</sup> Erroll Sherson, *London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, (1925) 39-40.

<sup>55</sup> British Library playbills but there is no playbill for *King Lear*, (Playbills 376/3)

<sup>56</sup> Erroll Sherson, *London's Lost Theatres of the Nineteenth Century*, (1925) 40.

<sup>57</sup> Harold N. Hillebrand, *Edmund Kean*, (New York, 1933) 316.

<sup>58</sup> *The Wanderer*, 1 December 1832, 6.

<sup>59</sup> William Archer, *William Charles Macready*, (1890) 109.

was honing his skills in the role of Lear. During the summer of 1833 William Charles Macready (1793-1873) played Lear for the first time, at Swansea. On 29 August, musing on how he had acted the part, he wrote 'how? I scarcely know. Certainly not well - not so well as I rehearsed it; crude, fictitious voice, no point; in short, a failure!'<sup>60</sup> On 11 October, he confided in his diary that he was 'oppressed with the magnitude of the thoughts he [Lear] has to utter'.<sup>61</sup>

**1834** In spite of these doubts, in 1834 Macready appeared at Drury Lane as Lear on 23 May, his own benefit, in his first attempt at the role in London. The playbill claims that the play was 'FROM THE TEXT OF SHAKSPEARE' but it is uncertain what this means.<sup>62</sup> Macready's diary makes it clear that Cordelia and Lear die in the final act,<sup>63</sup> there is a King of France which rules out Cumberland's text; there is no Arante or Edward but there is a minor character, Lochrine which is clearly not Shakespeare; and there is no Fool, an omission censured by at least one critic: 'Ah! Mr. Macready, why did you omit the Fool? ... The Fool is one of the most wonderful creations of the genius of Shakspeare'.<sup>64</sup> This perceptive critic did not have many more years to wait.

The cast for this single 1834 Drury Lane performance consisted of several established players but, as so often, there was a sprinkling of new names none of whom progressed beyond the second rank. These included 'handsome' Joseph (?) Wood (b. about 1802) known mainly as a singer<sup>65</sup> as the King of France and F. Cooke,

<sup>60</sup> *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (1912) 1, 58.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 69.

<sup>62</sup> Charles Shattuck lists a 'preparation' copy as the one used for this performance but does not identify the text (*The Shakespeare Promptbooks*, Urbana, 1965) 211). *Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays* which was not published until c.1848-55, has Lochrine in the printed cast list. In a prompt copy (not Lacy's edition) dated 1848 in ink which claims to be copied from Macready's prompt book, there is a handwritten stage direction at Lear's line 'Call France; - Who stirs?/Call Burgundy' (I, ii) which states 'Lochrine goes up quickly ... Lochrine goes off.' Lochrine's name is also inked in over 'Gentleman attendant on Cordelia' in the cast list and again over the Gentleman's lines with Kent in III, i where Kent gives him the ring for Cordelia, (Theatre Museum, Promptbook S.487-1982) which seems to confirm the continued presence of Lochrine in Macready's version. *Lochrine* was the title of a play by 'W.S.', published in 1595.

<sup>63</sup> *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (1912) 1, 143.

<sup>64</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 'King Lear "as Shakspeare wrote it"', June 1834, 218.

<sup>65</sup> Mrs. C. Baron Wilson, *Our Actresses; or, Glances at Stage Favourites*, 2 vols. (1844) 2, 59-65.

an actor who ‘only wants a good starting character to bring out the ability which is evidently in him’<sup>66</sup> who played Burgundy. George Bennett (1800?-79), a ‘very important member ... [who] at length subsided into secondary parts’<sup>67</sup> and remained ‘undoubtedly in the second rank’<sup>68</sup> played Albany. Established players included John Cooper as Edgar, Louisa Anne Phillips as Cordelia, James Warde as Edmund and Maria Lacy, now Mrs. Lovell, as Goneril; Brindal was demoted to Locrine.

The reviews were mixed. One critic praised Cooper who ‘added to his reputation by his mode of playing *Edgar*’, Warde who ‘gave more than usual importance to *Edmund*’ and Phillips who as Cordelia ‘could not be much better represented ... mild, graceful, modest’<sup>69</sup> but Macready was not singled out. A newspaper clipping preserved at the Theatre Museum which does mention Lear was not enthusiastic and notes that the role is the most ‘difficult one ... in the whole of our drama’ and though Macready ‘went far towards an adequate’ performance, where simplicity was required ‘he is deficient’.<sup>70</sup> Macready himself was not happy with his performance. The first two acts left him feeling a failure; in the third act the audience was ‘interested and attentive’; in the fourth and fifth acts there were ‘loud applauses’ but he felt the ‘last scene went tamely’.<sup>71</sup>

This production was staged once at Drury Lane and Alfred Bunn, who was now managing both theatres, then moved it to Covent Garden for 26 May and 2 June. The first performance was advertised as an ‘EXTRAORDINARY ATTRACTION’ and Macready was a great deal happier with his own acting. He wrote ‘my audience were under my sway’, and added ‘The scene with Cordelia and the death were both better than the first night’.<sup>72</sup> The cast was identical to that at Drury Lane three days earlier. However, on 2 June, Alfred Bunn withdrew Bartley who was a more than competent Kent, and sent him to Drury Lane. Charles Mathews, Snr. (1776-1835) considered by

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<sup>66</sup> Charles Rice, *The London Theatre in the Eighteen-Thirties*, ed. A. C. Sprague and B. Shuttleworth (1950) 23.

<sup>67</sup> W. Marston, *Our Recent Actors*, 2 vols. (1888) 2, 60.

<sup>68</sup> William Archer, *William Charles Macready*, (1890) 109.

<sup>69</sup> John Forster, *The Examiner*, 8 June 1834, 357.

<sup>70</sup> In the playbill collection at the Theatre Museum, filed under the theatre name and year. The clipping, pasted to a Drury Lane playbill dated 23 May 1834, has been badly trimmed so that some of the words are lost.

<sup>71</sup> *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (1912) 1, 140.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 143.



Macready to be unsuitable for the role, appeared as Kent after only one rehearsal.<sup>73</sup>

Mathews, a leading actor particularly in comedy and farce, was praised by many contemporaries and was judged 'himself alone; he never had, and probably never will have, a competitor',<sup>74</sup> high praise which, with hindsight, seems hardly justified.

Although Macready gave only three performances of *King Lear* at the main theatres in 1834, his diary records a performance at Richmond. On 26 August he writes 'Went in a chaise to Richmond, reading as I could the play of the night, *King Lear* ... The rehearsal was most disgraceful; the persons put into the characters below contempt'. Nor was he happy with his performance describing it as tolerable but claiming that he was 'distressed and harassed beyond measure by the imperfect state of the actors'.<sup>75</sup>

**1835-1837** It seems that Macready's first attempts as the King were not particularly successful because Drury Lane gave no performances of *King Lear* in 1835 and Covent Garden, where Macready remained,<sup>76</sup> did not stage the play in 1835, 1836 or 1837. Shakespeare (adaptations or true text) was not popular at this time. Bunn writes that twenty-four performances of Shakespeare's plays (but not including *King Lear*) staged between 1 October 1835 and 29 April 1836 averaged takings of £189 per night while sixteen performances of Michael Balfe's new opera *Maid of Artois*, staged between 27 May and 1 July 1836, averaged £355 per night.<sup>77</sup>

Then on 4 November 1836 Drury Lane announced a production of *King Lear* for the '1st Time these 7 Years'. This statement is not entirely accurate. As just shown, Macready had appeared as recently as 1834 in the role of Lear at Drury Lane in a version which included the death of Lear and Cordelia. This 1836 performance also included the death of Lear and Cordelia as is clear from *The Times* which wrote that 'the last painful scene [was] so painful that it might well be dispensed with',<sup>78</sup> and *The Examiner* which complained that the death of Lear was 'tacked ... very inconsiderately

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 1, 147.

<sup>74</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 5, 16.

<sup>75</sup> *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (1912) 1, 175.

<sup>76</sup> This information is taken from William Archer, *William Charles Macready*, (1890) 104.

<sup>77</sup> Alfred Bunn, *The Stage*, 3 vols. (1840) 2, 70-2.

<sup>78</sup> *The Times*, 5 November 1836.

on Tate's wretched adaptation'.<sup>79</sup> Because of its tragic ending and because the cast list does not include a King of France, the text was probably, but not certainly, the Cumberland version first used by Kean in 1823. The play was staged for a run of eight performances on 4, 7, 9, 12, 16, 18 and 23 November and 7 December, starring the American, Edwin Forrest (1806-72), a successful new actor. Forrest was, at first, a considerable rival to Macready. *The Times* said that he was 'more spirited ... than any other tragic actor now on our stage'<sup>80</sup> and of his Lear 'While he was speaking the most profound silence prevailed'. John Forster 'stood almost alone'<sup>81</sup> in disliking Forrest's Lear and wrote 'Mr. Forrest attempted *Lear* on Friday night, and failed'; Forster goes on to accuse Forrest of startling 'the unthinking part of his audience into occasional applause'.<sup>82</sup> The cast included John Cooper, James Warde and George Bartley in their earlier roles; Mrs. W. Clifford, 'One of the most steady, hard-working actresses'<sup>83</sup> was Regan; Brindal was Albany, his third part in *King Lear*. The newcomers to *King Lear* included Drinkwater Meadows (b. 1799) 'an established London performer',<sup>84</sup> as Oswald; Harriet Taylor (1807?-74, later Mrs. Walter Lacy), dubbed "'merry little Taylor," who could act so well, [but] would frequently act so ill',<sup>85</sup> played Cordelia. The cast remained unchanged during these eight performances save for the part of Goneril which was taken over by the 'delicious'<sup>86</sup> Margaret Somerville (1799-1883, later Mrs. Alfred Bunn) who had only a short career on the London stage. She was deemed better in what 'may be called the heavy tragedy ... She cannot represent what is generally understood by the softer passions'<sup>87</sup> which should have suited her in the role of Goneril. In spite of the success of Forrest's Lear, Drury Lane staged the play only once the following year (1837) on 14 February.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> John Forster, *The Examiner*, 6 November 1836, 712.

<sup>80</sup> *The Times*, 18 October, 1836.

<sup>81</sup> William Archer, *William Charles Macready*, (1890) 172.

<sup>82</sup> John Forster, *The Examiner*, 6 November 1836, 711.

<sup>83</sup> Mrs. C. Baron Wilson, *Our Actresses*, 2 vols. (1844) 2, 282.

<sup>84</sup> Highfill, 7, 81.

<sup>85</sup> Mrs. C. Baron Wilson, *Our Actresses*, 2 vols. (1844) 2, 248.

<sup>86</sup> William Oxberry, *Dramatic Biography*, 7 vols. (1825-6) 'Theatrical Alphabet', 5, 68.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 5, 173.

<sup>88</sup> This performance was billed as 'at Reduced Prices!'

**1838** Finally we reach the year 1838 and the long history of the adaptations of *King Lear* is ended. Drury Lane seems not to have staged *King Lear* during 1838<sup>89</sup> but Shakespeare's text was performed, virtually complete, at Covent Garden on 25 January 1838. As far back as 1834 Macready had considered 'the prudence and practicability of acting the original *Lear*';<sup>90</sup> and had tried a version which included the death of Lear and Cordelia. Now, during the autumn of 1837, after no doubt pondering over the reasons why his earlier efforts had not been entirely successful, he decided to stage the play with the Shakespearean text, thus finally banishing the various versions based on 'Tate's miserable debilitation and disfigurement of Shakespeare's sublime tragedy'.<sup>91</sup> It is not certain which text Macready used. Charles Shattuck gives Charles Jennens's 1770 edition as Macready's text.<sup>92</sup> The T.H. Lacy Acting Edition prints the cast list of this Covent Garden performance on 25 January 1838 but some differences remain between the Lacy and Shakespeare text, for example Gloucester's blinding occurs off stage and out of earshot and he is led on later with bandaged eyes; he does not leap from the cliff but is prevented by the arrival of Lear. In spite of these possible differences, this 1838 production, without the love scenes and with the Fool and the tragic ending, was closer to Shakespeare's play than any staged in over one hundred and fifty years.

At the first rehearsal, on 4 January 1838, Macready cast Drinkwater Meadows as the Fool but felt that the part would 'either weary and annoy or distract the spectator' and that 'we shall be obliged to dispense with it'.<sup>93</sup> On 5 January, in a discussion with George Bartley, now manager and actor, Macready described how he saw the Fool as a 'fragile, hectic, beautiful-faced, half-idiot-looking boy' and Bartley observed that a woman should play it. Macready was 'delighted at the thought' and he chose Priscilla Horton (1818-95) for the role.<sup>94</sup> So, on 25 January at the Covent Garden Theatre Shakespeare's text, with Fool and all, returned to the stage. The play was then staged

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<sup>89</sup> The information for the performances in 1838 is taken from the Theatre Museum's playbill collection, filed under the theatre name and year.

<sup>90</sup> *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (1912) 1, 97.

<sup>91</sup> W. C. Macready, *Reminiscences*, ed. F. Pollock, 2 vols. (1875) 1, 205.

<sup>92</sup> Charles Shattuck, *The Shakespeare Promptbooks*, (Urbana, 1965) 211-2.

<sup>93</sup> *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (1912) 1, 437.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 438.

nine more times in the spring and summer of 1838, on 31 January; 2, 7, 9, 14, 19, 26 February; and 2, 16 May but was not revived later that year after the summer break.

The cast was a strong one. Although many had played in earlier performances of *King Lear* - George Bartley as Kent; George Bennett as Gloucester; James (?) Vining whose 'foppery ... was a little over done' as Oswald;<sup>95</sup> Mrs. W. Clifford as Goneril - there were a number of interesting new names. These included Helen Faucit (1817-98), a distinguished actress who was persuaded to play Cordelia, a role she had been reluctant to attempt.<sup>96</sup> She was praised for her 'pleasing'<sup>97</sup> performance but *The Times* complained that her words were lost 'to those in the boxes';<sup>98</sup> James Anderson (1811-95) playing Edmund, showed 'considerable judgment'<sup>99</sup> in the role; J.D.Serle, an actor of 'some reputation'<sup>100</sup> as Cornwall; Mary Warner (1804-54, née Huddart) 'a remarkable actress, even at the time when Miss Helen Faucit and Mrs. Charles Kean were at the height of their popularity'<sup>101</sup> played Regan. Edward Elton, now at a major London theatre, played Edgar but *The Times* considered his performance 'a mere piece of declamation'.<sup>102</sup> Both *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre* and DNB claim that Elton was particularly successful in the role of Edgar and writing some years after his death, one author stated 'for the space of fifteen years'<sup>103</sup> he was almost unsurpassed as Edgar. This success must have been outside the major London theatres because his first appearance as Edgar in a main London house was in 1838 and he died in 1843. Henry Howe (1812-96) who was to be an important player in the second half of the nineteenth century, played France and was 'already showing in small parts that sterling ability which has earned him the respect of two generations of playgoers'.<sup>104</sup>

Priscilla Horton, 'an universal favourite'<sup>105</sup> was perhaps the most interesting of the

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<sup>95</sup> *The Times*, 26 January 1838.

<sup>96</sup> *The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851*, ed. William Toynbee, 2 vols. (1912) 1, 437-8.

<sup>97</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *The London Theatre 1811-1866*, ed. Eluned Brown, (1966) 157.

<sup>98</sup> *The Times*, 26 January 1838.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> W. Marston, *Our Recent Actors*, 2 vols. (1888) 1, 284.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 275.

<sup>102</sup> *The Times*, 26 January 1838.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Marshall, *Lives of the Most Celebrated Actors and Actresses*, [1848] 158.

<sup>104</sup> William Archer, *William Charles Macready*, (1890) 109.

<sup>105</sup> Mrs. C. Baron Wilson, *Our Actresses*, 2 vols. (1844) 2, 244.

newcomers. *The Times* wrote in some detail on her acting and on the role of the Fool which reads in part

Last night the tragedy was revived in its original form ... Even the Fool was retained; and why should he be omitted? He is not a mere jester, like many of the clowns, simply introduced to relieve the tragedy by his jokes, but he actually stands forth as a moral personage

and that Horton's performance was 'very cleverly acted with a happy mixture of archness and silliness'.<sup>106</sup> Crabb Robinson, a keen theatregoer, had reservations, commenting 'Miss Horton is praised for her performance - I could not relish it'.<sup>107</sup>

Alfred Bunn's paper, *The Age*, which was anti-Macready,<sup>108</sup> wrote that his Lear was 'something between a respectable grunt and a first-rate squeak',<sup>109</sup> but Macready was generally well received and judged a successful Lear and the production praised as 'a credit to all concerned in it'.<sup>110</sup> Crabb Robinson was at the theatre on 14 February and felt 'Macready's Lear is very affecting ... and the fifth act deeply pathetic'.<sup>111</sup> Another critic said 'He has restored to the stage Shakespeare's true *Lear*, banished from it, by impudent ignorance'.<sup>112</sup> Writing some years later, one critic felt Lear was 'his finest achievement in Shaksperian tragedy ... His dawning insanity gleamed out in his almost parental tenderness to the fool, as if he felt instinctively the bond between them'.<sup>113</sup> Macready himself wrote of this first performance 'I scarcely know how I acted ... I did not satisfy myself'.<sup>114</sup>

Following Kean, Macready chose to stage *King Lear* with 'unprecedented scenic effect'.<sup>115</sup> *John Bull* and Crabb Robinson both remarked on the setting. Crabb

<sup>106</sup> *The Times*, 26 January 1838.

<sup>107</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *The London Theatre 1811-1866*, ed. Eluned Brown, (1966) 157.

<sup>108</sup> See footnote 27.

<sup>109</sup> *The Age*, 28 January 1838, 30.

<sup>110</sup> *Actors by Daylight; or Pencilings in the Pit*, 2 vols., 8 December 1838, 1, 328.

<sup>111</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *The London Theatre 1811-1866*, ed. Eluned Brown, (1966) 157.

<sup>112</sup> *The Examiner*, 4 February 1838, 69.

<sup>113</sup> W. Marston, *Our Recent Actors*, (1888)1, 67-9.

<sup>114</sup> W. C. Macready, *Reminiscences*, 25 January 1838, ed. F. Pollock, 2 vols. (1875) 2, 99. For some unknown reason, Toynbee, who generally offers a more complete edition of Macready's *Diaries* than does Pollock, cuts 25-30 January 1838.

<sup>115</sup> William Archer, *William Charles Macready*, (1890) 113.

Robinson commented favourably on the 'Druidical circles and other stones',<sup>116</sup> *John Bull* described the 'heavy, sombre, and solid' castles and the druid circles which 'rise in spectral loneliness on the heath' as well as mentioning the 'verisimilitude' of the storm scenes.<sup>117</sup> *Coriolanus* was 'the great effort of the season'<sup>118</sup> but Shakespeare's *King Lear* had been reintroduced successfully to the London stage and was never again to be ousted. So ended the extraordinary history of *King Lear* in its adapted forms. While the editors attempted to clarify the text where printers' errors had made nonsense of Shakespeare's words or where obscure language needed explanation, the theatre was happy with its adaptations. Virtually every great name of the theatre during these one hundred and fifty-seven years had been associated with either acting in or rewriting the play, or both. In my final chapter, I will further consider why the adaptations were made, why they held the stage for so long while the great eighteenth-century editors were clarifying Shakespeare's text, and why the adaptations finally fell from favour.

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<sup>116</sup> Henry Crabb Robinson, *The London Theatre 1811-1866*, ed. Eluned Brown, (1966) 157.

<sup>117</sup> *John Bull*, 28 January 1838, 45.

<sup>118</sup> William Archer, *William Charles Macready*, (1890) 115.

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Chapter 15

**Conclusion: The editors, the actors and the adaptors of *King Lear*, what they attempted to do, what they achieved, and the links between them**

As I have discussed, between the years 1681 and 1838 significant emendations were made to the text of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and significant changes occurred in its staging and acting. In addition, there was the phenomenon of the adaptations.<sup>1</sup> I will now look further at reasons for the *King Lear* adaptation, its long popularity and its fall from favour and suggest links between the adaptation, acting and editors. Editors continue to study and emend the text, actors continue to experiment with the challenge of *King Lear* by offering different interpretations but the phenomenon of the adaptation is unlikely to be repeated. So why was the play adapted? Put simply, it would seem that there were three main reasons: the political climate; the growing importance of the actress together with the increasing ability to stage spectacle and the audience's interest in both actress and spectacle; the eighteenth century's developing preference for neo-classicism with its clarity, balance, sentiment and poetic justice.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly before Tate's *King Lear* was staged, the Popish Plot (1678-9) followed by the Exclusion Crisis (1679-81) unsettled the authorities, as I have already discussed. Several adaptations made at this time were 'frankly political'<sup>3</sup> and if they did not win the approval of the authorities, they were banned as was Tate's *Sicilian Usurper* (*Richard II*) because it portrayed a politically unstable country. However, in his *King Lear*, the direct succession proceeds in spite of the challenge of a bastard's rebellion. For the audience, this would have had echoes of the machinations of the Duke of Monmouth, bastard son of Charles II, which culminated in the failed Monmouth Rebellion (1685). Tate prudently cut Edmund's line 'Now gods, stand up for bastards!'<sup>4</sup> which might have been considered supportive of Monmouth<sup>5</sup> and gave Albany a line towards the end of

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Hogan lists adaptations for 29 of Shakespeare's plays in the eighteenth century, (*Shakespeare in the Theatre*, Oxford, 1957, 2 vols.)

<sup>2</sup> Although as early as 1711 Addison wrote of poetic justice 'Who ... established this rule I know not', *The Spectator*, no.40, (16 April).

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Spencer, *Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1965) 2.

<sup>4</sup> Arden, *King Lear*, I, ii, 22.

<sup>5</sup> The similarity between *King Lear* and the political situation was recognised in a 1689 lampoon in which Mary, the new queen, is described as being 'worse than cruel lustful Goneril'. See N.K. Maguire, 'Nahum Tate's *King Lear*', *The Appropriation of Shakespeare*, ed. J. Marsden (1991) 29-42.

the play when he refers sympathetically to Lear as 'Thou injur'd Majesty'.<sup>6</sup> The problem of the succession split the country at this time. The Whigs wished to exclude the Catholic James because of their fear of 'Popery' while the Tories favoured James because they believed in the direct succession and feared another Civil War if this was not maintained. Perhaps because of this, Tate's *King Lear* emphasises the horror of a civil war rather than one against a foreign army and in his play those who oppose the King are punished while those who remain loyal in spite of the King's treatment of them, are rewarded. Finally, although Tate's Lear retires, Cordelia, the legitimate heir, succeeds. Whether Tate wrote in this political vein because he was a convinced Tory or whether he was acting pragmatically with an eye on theatrical success, is not certain. Probably it was a combination of both.<sup>7</sup>

By 1681 actresses were well-established on the English stage and love interest, 'so material to French tragedy and the English heroic play'<sup>8</sup> added importance to their roles. Tate followed this trend. In the Edgar and Cordelia love affair, discussed in chapter 1, he introduces a pure love between a traditional hero and heroine, and balances this with an amplified version of the impure love that Shakespeare suggests between Edmund, Goneril and Regan. At the same time the proficiency and sophistication of theatre mechanics were developing. Immediately following the Restoration, simple painted flats were used to suggest rooms or halls, gardens or forests. As staging grew technically more skillful and more lavish, no doubt Tate's *King Lear* made use of this in scenes such as the grotto with the 'amorously Seated' Edmund and Regan, and the castle halls, among others. The first entrance of Lear can be the excuse for an impressive procession<sup>9</sup> and there are the storm scenes which allow opportunities for spectacle and each generation grew more ambitious in the staging of these scenes. Spectacle was responsible in part for increased box office takings which, as I have shown, occurred when a spectacular pantomime was staged with a less popular play.

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<sup>6</sup> Tate, *King Lear*, Act V, p.64.

<sup>7</sup> Although Tate's play contains these political elements, they are not stressed and he is probably more concerned with the domestic angle, primarily the love between Edgar and Cordelia; see M. Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet*, (Oxford, 1992) 80-5. See A. Nicoll, 'Political Plays of the Restoration', *The Modern Language Review*, (Cambridge, 1921) vol. 16, 224-42 on the importance of politics in writings of this time.

<sup>8</sup> C.H. Gray, *Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795*, (New York, 1931) 18.

<sup>9</sup> R.A. Foakes argues 'It is proper that [Lear] ... should make a processional entry ... sit on a throne, and wear royal robes and a crown' (Arden, *King Lear*, 13).



The eighteenth century saw the rise of neo-classicism with its requirements of a single plot offering balance, clarity, sentiment and poetic justice. Shakespeare's *King Lear* violated most of these requirements. It mixed tragedy with comedy; contained two plots, violated all three unities, ignored poetic justice by punishing both vice and virtue and ignored stage decorum by showing Gloucester's blinding on stage. In Tate's adaptation, the Fool was eliminated to remove what was perceived as merely a comic element.<sup>10</sup> Balance and links between the two plots were achieved through the love of Cordelia and Edgar and the sentiment of these love scenes was a major factor in the play's long popularity. The unities remained ignored but English drama had never embraced them with as much fervour as France. Poetic justice, which 'could only tolerate evil when it was unequivocally punished within the literary work'<sup>11</sup> softened the end of Tate's play so that although '*Cordelia, Gloster, Edgar, and Kent, [are] in the most desperate Condition*', love and honour finally triumph and the sins of Goneril, Regan, Edmund and Cornwall 'produce their own Punishment'.<sup>12</sup> So Tate's *King Lear* anticipated many of the requisites of the eighteenth century. The preference for stage decorum was not met until the second half of the century when Garrick banished Gloucester's blinding from the stage and this remained off-stage even after Macready.

Tate's *King Lear*, the story of a wronged father and a stereotypical suffering hero and heroine, was suited to the style of acting prevalent at this time.<sup>13</sup> Tragic acting had its origins in Greek tragedy where there was little movement and much of the speaking was in song. At the time of Thomas Betterton, Tate's first *Lear*, acting in tragedies was still based on dignity, stately movements and a grave and noble bearing. The voice was artificial and rose and fell in swelling cadences.<sup>14</sup> The liking for elaborate costume with plumes and trains, often entirely unsuited to the role, went hand-in-hand with this acting

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<sup>10</sup> In spite of this, with 'the absence of the Fool' the Steward came to be played as 'the zany' and in this sense replaced the Fool (*The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) *The London Magazine*, June 1820, 338. Otway's *Venice Preserved* (1682) and Dryden's *The Spanish Fryar* (1689) also mixed tragic and comic scenes.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Vickers, ed. *Shakespeare, The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols. (1974-81) 4, 9.

<sup>12</sup> *The British Journal*, 12 December 1730 which strongly praises Tate's adaptation.

<sup>13</sup> Although Garrick and others showed that *King Lear* can be played in many styles.

<sup>14</sup> See A. Sprague's 'Did Betterton chant?', *Theatre Notebook*, October 1946, vol. 1, no. 5, 54-5 which argues that Betterton was not guilty of this although other players were and J.H. Wilson, 'Rant, Cant, and Tone on the Restoration Stage', *Studies in Philology*, 52, (Chapel Hill, 1955) 592-8.

and both magnified the player unnaturally. The new proscenium arch also, in part, explained the exaggerated acting. Having appeared on an apron stage surrounded on three sides by the audience, the actor was now performing behind the proscenium,<sup>15</sup> and with a curtain, although initially this was used only at the beginning and end of the play. The arch and the curtain caused the stage to become a separated and enclosed world and the actor may have felt the need to project himself in order to reach the audience which resulted in a change in acting style.

Meantime the first editors of Shakespeare worked on the text apparently unconcerned by the antics of adaptors and actors. Nicholas Rowe generally tidied up the text. It is interesting that it was a playwright who first printed the location of the scenes and noted entrances and exits making the reading of the play more accessible. Alexander Pope, as might be expected from a major poet, was concerned with emendations of metre and language and his choices were often personal. Lewis Theobald, the first scholar editor, initiated the use of footnotes to offer parallel passages to help clarify the language. The next editors, Thomas Hanmer and William Warburton, although not well regarded today were responsible for emendations which, as noted earlier, have survived. Through the eighteenth century, the size of the reading public increased with the growth of population and middle class, and the publishers responded to the demand for books by offering more editions of Shakespeare and other works. The editors aimed to supply a text which was 'easy to read and intelligible'.<sup>16</sup> They wrestled with cruces which had arisen either through the printers' errors or through changes in the language which made meanings obscure. They offered cast lists, clarified stage directions and settings, and attempted to sort verse from prose where printers had jumbled the two together or printed one as the other. They also began to make comments on Shakespeare's language and to establish sources for the play. Shakespeare had become important but, because he was no longer a current writer, he needed explanation.

While these early editors worked to improve the text of *King Lear*, the acting of the

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<sup>15</sup> At first the new theatres had both a proscenium arch and an apron stage. During the eighteenth century this apron was reduced in size until the picture stage became the norm.

<sup>16</sup> R. McKerrow, 'The Treatment of Shakespeare's Text by his Earlier Editors, 1709-1768', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, (1933) 3-4. The 1714 edition of Rowe and the 1728 edition of Pope were both published in duodecimo. In the 1780s Edmond Malone's edition of Shakespeare was published in 7 vols. duodecimo, without critical commentary, as a portable edition suitable for informed readers rather than scholars. See Peter Martin, *Edmond Malone, Shakespearean scholar*, (Cambridge, 1995) 88-9.

play remained locked in the style of an earlier generation. By the death of Betterton in 1710, the playing of tragedy had become static and the old actors such as James Quin continued in the old ways of solemnity, rigidity and mouthing speeches often from downstage by the footlights. Without any actor of outstanding ability, things remained largely unchanged until the arrival of Garrick with his so-called natural style. Garrick 'heralded the Romantic movement'<sup>17</sup> which was to play a part in the return to Shakespeare's *King Lear*. He showed a 'marked strain of sentiment in his interpretative tendencies as an actor'<sup>18</sup> and he also satisfied 'the strong vogue for the pathetic and sentimental'.<sup>19</sup> During the 1750s there was debate in rival journals<sup>20</sup> over whether Lear suffers more from loss of his kingdom or loss of his daughters and Garrick made his view clear by continuing 'to dwell in Imagination upon the Crime of Ingratitude'.<sup>21</sup> Although Garrick's acting was described as 'natural' this must be qualified as I have already discussed. His acting was 'impetuous, sudden, striking, and versatile'.<sup>22</sup> Apart from his natural ability, it was this versatility which set him above all other players of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. His physical appearance did not naturally lend itself to tragedy and yet he triumphed as Lear; he was short and not conventionally good-looking, and yet he was outstanding as the hero in comedy roles such as Benedict. Garrick led a change in the style of acting and personally started the slow return to Shakespeare's *King Lear*. With this came the first tentative thoughts on the position that the adaptations held. Opposition to the adaptation of *King Lear* mounted from the middle of the eighteenth century but the Tate version did not give up without a struggle and favourable comment still appeared into the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

Samuel Johnson, the eighteenth century's greatest man of letters, famously found difficulties with the ending of *King Lear* which he felt were 'contrary ... to the hope of the reader'.<sup>24</sup> At the same time he contributed significantly to the work of editing the

<sup>17</sup> Karl J. Holzknecht, *The Backgrounds of Shakespeare's Plays*, (New York, 1950) 421.

<sup>18</sup> Leigh Woods, *Garrick Claims the Stage*, (Westport, 1984) 66 and chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>19</sup> G.W. Stone and G.M. Kahrl, *David Garrick, a Critical Biography*, (Carbondale, 1979) 260.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Warton in *The Adventurer* and Arthur Murphy in *The Gray's Inn Journal*.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur Murphy, *The Gray's Inn Journal*, 2 vols. (1756) 2, 78.

<sup>22</sup> *The Quarterly Review*, vol. 34, June and September 1826, 214.

<sup>23</sup> At the same time, there seems to have been, as I have noted, continuing confusion in the minds of some writers over what was Shakespeare's play and what was presented on stage.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, *Shakespeare*, 6, 159.

play largely through his critical comments and by noting a particularly large number of textual variants,<sup>25</sup> and his edition was the basis of the first variorum editions. Another scholar, Edward Capell, in spite of his convoluted language, also offered worthwhile 'Notes'. In a move which was 'entirely characteristic of the Enlightenment', Capell turned to the earlier texts and by 'this simple innovation he cleared away ... hundreds, and probably thousands, of unauthoritative readings'.<sup>26</sup> It was during these years that the problems peculiar to the text of *King Lear* were first noted although not yet understood.<sup>27</sup> The differing versions found in the quartos (1608 uncorrected and corrected, 1619 with false date) and the 1623 Folio were recognised and the early editors, from Alexander Pope onwards, conflated these editions, often without pointing out their source.

In the meantime Tate's *King Lear* continued to be published<sup>28</sup> which confirmed its position on stage, although it was now challenged, first by Garrick and then Colman. Colman's adaptation of 1768 was the bolder attempt to return to Shakespeare while at the same time bowing to some of the requirements of the eighteenth century. In the event, Colman satisfied neither criteria. In his plays he made a 'direct attack on sentimentalism'<sup>29</sup> and in *King Lear* he cut the love between Cordelia and Edgar although he retained a happy ending with Cordelia married to France. This was not sufficient for the audiences who still preferred the pathetic and sentimental.<sup>30</sup> As I have discussed, the Garrick adaptation in Bell's edition of 1773 cut some of the more outlandish lines but kept Tate's structural changes: the excised Fool which banished a possibly comic element within tragedy and the added love affair which allowed virtue to triumph thus satisfying the eighteenth-century audiences.

While the adaptations remained firm favourites, the work of George Steevens and

<sup>25</sup> See A. Sherbo, *Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1956) 42.

<sup>26</sup> Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, (1990) 141-2.

<sup>27</sup> 'The priority of Q1 was not established until 1866', S. Wells and G. Taylor, *William Shakespeare, A Textual Companion*, (Oxford, 1987) 509.

<sup>28</sup> Together the British Library and C. Spencer in *Five Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare*, (Urbana, 1965) 442, lists editions in 1681, 1689, 1699, [1702], 1712, 1733, 1736, 1749, 1756, 1761x2, 1775. In addition to these dates, the *A New Variorum Edition*, ed. H.H. Furness (Philadelphia, 1908) also notes 1723, 1759, 1767, 1771 and 1779, (*King Lear*, p.481).

<sup>29</sup> E.R. Page, *George Colman the Elder*, (New York, 1935) 89.

<sup>30</sup> G.W. Stone, 'A Study in the Temper of the Eighteenth-Century Mind', *Studies in Philology*, 45 (Chapel Hill, 1948) 91.

Edmond Malone advanced the editing of Shakespeare to the point where it started to 'reinforce common sense with research'.<sup>31</sup> Further, editing was no longer the work of the solitary scholar but needed 'the Antiquary, the Historian, the Grammarian, and the Poet'<sup>32</sup> and the variorum editions were the result. Editing over these years had progressed far, if spasmodically. It is only when an overall view is taken that the enormous achievements of these pioneer editors can be truly appreciated. Although knowledge concerning the technicalities of printing has made great and recent strides, the groundwork of editing Shakespeare was laid during the eighteenth century.

Although the adaptations were still dominant on stage, the increasing readership was in part responsible for the commissioning of more editors and yet more editions, which in turn helped in further widening the readership. With this increased number of available editions of Shakespeare's plays came an increased interest in his plays on stage. This interest was also fuelled by the developing ability to stage spectacle and the audience's love and expectations of this spectacle. In Shakespeare's plays the sets and props required are relatively simple and not centrally important to the play. In *King Lear*, the sets are rooms within the various castles, the heath with its hovel and another area of heath purporting to be the cliff at Dover, all of which can be very elementary in design. *King Lear* does not lend itself particularly to spectacle when compared with the flying witches of *Macbeth* or the possibilities offered by two masques and the shipwreck in *The Tempest*. Nevertheless, by the time of Kemble, 'an encourager of the inordinate rage for spectacle',<sup>33</sup> even *King Lear* had acquired some trappings of spectacular staging. Kemble's hey-day coincided with the first of the variorum editions which confirmed much of the work of the eighteenth-century editors in establishing Shakespeare's text but Kemble, like the earlier adaptors, was not afraid to tinker with this text. Strangely, however, he reverted to Tate and at the same time, his acting reverted to being somewhat nearer to Betterton and Quin than Garrick. Garrick's acting belonged to the 'school of nature'; Kemble's to the 'school of art'.<sup>34</sup> Kemble was a tall, handsome man whose style was classic and lofty; his range was limited and he did not succeed in comedy. It is interesting that the two steps which might be considered

<sup>31</sup> D. Nichol Smith, *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1928) 55.

<sup>32</sup> George Steevens in *The London Chronicle*, February 1-4 1766, 113.

<sup>33</sup> *The Quarterly Review*, June and September 1826, 231.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 215.

retrograde, returning more closely to Tate's text and Quin's acting, were both undertaken by the same man, more particularly so when it is remembered that the Romantic writers, with their interest in intensity of emotion, were by this time making their ideas felt.<sup>35</sup> Hazlitt thought *King Lear* 'the best of all Shakespear's plays'; Shelley called it 'the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art'; Coleridge 'the most tremendous effort of Shakspeare'.<sup>36</sup> Blake alone seems to have preferred Tate in his illustration entitled 'Lear and Cordelia in Prison' (painted c. 1780) which shows Lear lying on a stone floor with his head in Cordelia's lap while she leans protectively over him.<sup>37</sup>

Kemble's influence nullified the natural approach started by Garrick. His style 'was established as the norm of what high tragedy should be' and on stage 'classicism ... was to continue its majestic and overpowering sway'.<sup>38</sup> Romanticism was established in literature but neo-classicism still flourished in the theatre. Some approved; Leigh Hunt felt that in the theatre, tragedy was 'always a step above nature'<sup>39</sup> but others suggested tragedy had become a thing of 'processions, pageants, battles and explosions'.<sup>40</sup> Without any actor of sufficient ability to suggest otherwise, the audiences simply accepted that Kemble's style was right for tragedy. He achieved a 'conscious grandeur'<sup>41</sup> in his acting at a time when the theatres were being rebuilt with much larger stages and auditoriums which demanded a style bolder even than that seen on the first proscenium stages. The 'vast deserts of the patent houses compelled [acting] ... to become cruder and broader'<sup>42</sup> and Kemble responded, perhaps subconsciously following his instinctive preference or perhaps recognising what the new theatres demanded.

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<sup>35</sup> The episode of the Ireland forgeries also reflects the growing interest in antiquities and if the antiquities did not exist, they were forged.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, (1990) 159.

<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, (Oxford, 1989) 260, n.13. See W. Moelwyn Merchant, 'Blake's Shakespeare' in *Apollo*, April 1964, vol.79, 318-25. Merchant suggests that the picture represents 'a scene which Blake could have seen'.

<sup>38</sup> H. Baker, *John Philip Kemble*, (Harvard, 1942) 276.

<sup>39</sup> Leigh Hunt, *Critical Essays on the Performers of the London Theatres*, (1807) 142.

<sup>40</sup> [Robert Southey], *Letters from England by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella*, 3 vols. (1807) 1, 189.

<sup>41</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) 'A View of the English Stage', 5, 379.

<sup>42</sup> Harold Child, *The Shakespearian Productions of John Philip Kemble*, (1935) 20.

So acting became bolder and spectacle was part of this boldness. The costumes on the whole remained firmly rooted in elaborate eighteenth-century or Elizabethan dress although exceptions occurred, for example, Macklin's *Macbeth*, (1773). In *King Lear* there was no attempt to suggest early Britain until well into the second half of the eighteenth century. While scholars pointed out anachronisms in Shakespeare's text,<sup>43</sup> the theatre remained unconcerned at the anachronism of dressing Lear and his Court in eighteenth-century costume. As I have discussed, Garrick made the 'considerable improvement' of having the players 'judiciously habited in old English dresses'<sup>44</sup> for his final performances in 1773, and then Kemble in 1809 offered his 'Saxon character' staging. However, generally the preference for unsuitable and elaborate costume remained and as late as 1823 the costumes for *King Lear* were still being described as the 'habits of the Elizabethan era'.<sup>45</sup> If Garrick's acting was the harbinger of the Romantics on stage, it was Kemble's stagings which reflected an affinity with this movement through his interest in 'the antiquities of his own and other countries'.<sup>46</sup> He first changed the costumes for the Roman Histories in which he had his major roles. His interest in the authenticity of settings and costume was part of a shift towards realism which culminated, after his death, in a production of *King John* in 1823, staged by his younger brother, Charles and as one writer claimed, 'a complete reformation of dramatic costume became from that moment inevitable upon the English stage'.<sup>47</sup>

The nine-year gap (1811-20) in staging *King Lear*, enforced by the madness of George III, 'wiped ... Tate's version ... off the theatrical map', and the Romantics 'captured [*King Lear*] for the closet'.<sup>48</sup> While access to Shakespeare's text remained, the memories of the staging of the adaptations must have faded. As we have seen, Edmund Kean attempted the tragic ending in 1823 and although it did not meet with success, it was another step towards the ultimate restoration in 1838. In his turn, Kean

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<sup>43</sup> Francis Douce refers to 'a plentiful crops of blunders' in *King Lear* and lists Gloucester's spectacles, holy water, steeples, the french disease as well as Nero which Malone had already noted. (*Illustrations of Shakspeare, and of Ancient Manners: with Dissertations on the Clowns and Fools of Shakspeare*, 2 vols. 1807, 2, 295).

<sup>44</sup> *The London Chronicle*, 21-23 May 1776, 493. See chapter 11.

<sup>45</sup> J.R. Planché, *Recollections and Reflections*, 2 vols. (1872) 1, 53.

<sup>46</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble, Esq.*, 2 vols. (1825) 1, 157.

<sup>47</sup> J.R. Planché, *Recollections and Reflections*, 2 vols. (1872) 1, 57.

<sup>48</sup> J.S. Bratton, 'The Lear of Private Life: Interpretations of *King Lear* in the Nineteenth Century', *Shakespeare and the Victorian Stage*, ed. R. Foulkes, (Cambridge, 1986) 125.

swept away Kemble's style. John Kemble had triumphed for so long because he had no rival until Kean and he retired in 1817 before *King Lear* was again allowed on stage. Byron wrote that Kean's style 'is quite new - or rather *renewed* - being that of Nature'<sup>49</sup> and Hazlitt lamented that he had ever seen Kean because 'He has destroyed the Kemble religion ... in which we were brought up'.<sup>50</sup> Kean was the opposite to Kemble in virtually every way. His voice was 'very bad - his figure was not only diminutive, but insignificant - his natural appearance ... mean'<sup>51</sup> and yet, with 'his fiery soul and pigmy body' he conquered London.<sup>52</sup> The key to his performances seemed to lie in the wildness of his spirit and 'Romanticism was the very essence of Kean's art.'<sup>53</sup> In this lies a further link with the growing wish to see Shakespeare's *King Lear* on stage. The Romantic poets had little time for the adaptations and in 1812, Coleridge 'vindicated the melancholy catastrophe' in a lecture.<sup>54</sup> Charles Lamb wrote 'while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear'.<sup>55</sup> Influenced by the Romantic writers, Kean, a Romantic himself, was persuaded to try Shakespeare's tragic ending. Although he was unsuccessful, he recognised that what the Romantics valued in their reading should be equally valued on a stage.

Each generation had grown more ambitious in its stagings. By the end of the eighteenth century the influence of the Romantic movement, which favoured 'the supremacy of the unfettered imagination', showed itself in the stage effects, particularly of the storm scenes which created 'the best theatrical equivalent ... in an openly emotional response'<sup>56</sup> to the play. As I have already described, by the time of Kean's 1820 production the storm scenes received as much comment as Kean's interpretation

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<sup>49</sup> *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols. (1973-82) 4, 67.

<sup>50</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) 'A View of the English Stage', 5, 345.

<sup>51</sup> Genest, 8, 413.

<sup>52</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) *The London Magazine*, February 1820, 18, 284.

<sup>53</sup> E.B. Watson, *Sheridan to Robertson*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1926) 294.

<sup>54</sup> H. Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 2 vols. (3rd ed., 1872) 1, 192.

<sup>55</sup> *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 6 vols. (1912) 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare', 1, 124. Lamb also wrote that Tate adapted 'this Leviathan [*King Lear*], for Garrick and his followers ... to draw the mighty beast about more easily', (Ibid. 125). Lamb, of course, never saw Shakespeare's *King Lear* on stage.

<sup>56</sup> J.S. Bratton, ed., *Plays in Performance, King Lear*, (Bristol, 1987) 26.



of Lear. However, it was not the Romantics alone who were responsible for this. The theatre manager Robert Elliston was a showman who revelled in spectacle and this was reflected in his productions. During the eighteenth century the audiences had come to expect spectacle whether in Shakespeare or pantomime. This expectation plus the necessity to fill the vast stages on which the single throne or bush would have appeared ridiculous, was met by the increased technical skills and ingenuity of the stage designers. The leading actors too, helped fill this 'era of the massive theatre',<sup>57</sup> Kemble through his lofty and Kean through his impassioned style.

Macready and his fine tragic acting was the next to triumph as Lear. With something of Garrick's ability to manage but without his acting genius, with something of Kemble's majesty but without his limiting 'grandeur', with something of Kean's passion but without his wildness, Macready finally adopted Shakespeare's *King Lear* more or less as we see it today. The re-introduction of the Fool was Macready's most significant contribution to *King Lear*. As I have discussed, actors from Garrick onwards had wrestled with the problem of the Fool. In 1808, Leigh Hunt wrote that the Fool 'is now out of date'<sup>58</sup> but three years later, reflecting the changing perceptions, Coleridge felt 'the contrast of the Fool wonderfully heightens ... some of the most painful situations'.<sup>59</sup> Influenced by the writing of the Romantics, Macready risked the return of the Fool and one critic, commenting some years later, wrote 'No sooner ... did this terrible Fool reappear, than he was heartily welcomed, nor would any manager at the present day dream of leaving him out'.<sup>60</sup> Yet he was seen as a sentimental character, 'a sort of feverish Peter Pan'<sup>61</sup> and remained difficult for some playgoers. Crabb Robinson wrote in 1847, 'I never, I confess with shame understood or felt as others pretend to understand and feel Shakespeare's *fools*'.<sup>62</sup> In contrast Francis Douce, writing before Lear's Fool was again on stage, comments warmly on the 'kindness

<sup>57</sup> H. Baker, *John Philip Kemble*, (Harvard, 1942) 184.

<sup>58</sup> Leigh Hunt, *The Examiner*, 22 May 1808, 331.

<sup>59</sup> *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. T. Raysor, 2 vols. (1930) 2, 73.

<sup>60</sup> *The Cornhill Magazine*, vol.8, July 1863, 57.

<sup>61</sup> Maynard Mack, 'Actors and Redactors' (1965) reprinted in *King Lear Casebook*, ed. F. Kermodé, (1992) 59.

<sup>62</sup> H. Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 3 vols. (1869) 4 December 1847. It seems rather sweeping to lump 'Shakespeare's fools' under one heading.

which Lear manifests towards his fool' and the Fool's 'extreme familiarity' with Lear and cites historical examples of 'reciprocal affection' between fools and their masters.<sup>63</sup>

Macready inherited the huge playhouses with their staging difficulties, and he pleased audiences by transcending his predecessors with sets 'unparalleled upon the English stage'.<sup>64</sup> The 'unscenic'<sup>65</sup> Shakespeare was included in this spectacle and *King Lear* was staged with Druidic stones as already discussed. Macready, unlike Garrick, Kemble or Kean did not have a strongly distinctive new style in acting but he shared something with all three of his predecessors. He offered 'an ease and freedom' on stage which perhaps owed something to Garrick. Like Kean, his 'chief impulse was romanticism'<sup>66</sup> but being of average height and being blessed with a particularly fine voice, he did not have to rely on violent physical acting. Although like Kemble he was 'an actor of intellect rather than instinct',<sup>67</sup> he did not revert to Kemble's classic style. Macready introduced what has been dubbed 'the domestic style of acting'<sup>68</sup> which developed into 'an increasingly naturalistic stage'.<sup>69</sup> Of the five great actors working during the time covered in this thesis, Garrick and Kean, the two greatest, broke into a void when acting had become dull and uninventive and startled the theatre world into new life; Betterton, Kemble and Macready built their success more slowly on a solid base of great ability but probably without genius.

So ended the history of Nahum Tate's *King Lear* with the adaptors, actors and editors in this history all linked together to offer an answer to the 'paradox that the most idolized ... dramatist should have been also the least tolerated in his original form'.<sup>70</sup> George Odell claims that the popularity of *King Lear* 'has gone down since Shakespeare was restored'<sup>71</sup> and it is true that today *King Lear* is not seen every year in London and,

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<sup>63</sup> Francis Douce, *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, 2 vols. (1807) 2, 170-1.

<sup>64</sup> Karl J. Holzknecht, *The Backgrounds of Shakespeare's Plays*, (New York, 1950) 426.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 424.

<sup>66</sup> E.B. Watson, *Sheridan to Robertson*, (Harvard, 1926) 307.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 307

<sup>68</sup> Alan S. Downer, 'Players and Painted Stage', *PMLA*, vol. 61, June 1946, 542.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* 544.

<sup>70</sup> Brian Vickers, *Returning to Shakespeare*, (1989) 212.

<sup>71</sup> George Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1921) 2, 55. Maynard Mack confirms this and claims there were 19 'distinct' productions of *King Lear* in the eighteenth century, 14 productions up to 1845 in the nineteenth century but only 6 between 1858 and 1920 ('Actors and Redactors' in *King Lear Casebook*, ed. F. Kermode, 1992, 49-76).

indeed, Tate's play has been revived from time to time<sup>72</sup> although playwrights today would be wary of tinkering afresh with the God of Garrick's idolatry. *King Lear's* position in the theatre must now be seen as unassailable. Today, work with this play lies in establishing the text, particularly with regard to the differences between the Folio and quartos, while the actors continue to find new ways with the staging and the interpretation, often wrestling with the Folio/quarto issue. Although echoes of *King Lear* are still found in many works,<sup>73</sup> the third chain in this thesis, the adaptations which excluded Shakespeare from the stage, is finally gone.

To summarise, through the eighteenth century the theatre-going public broadened and the influence of the Court waned with the passing of the Stuarts. As the reading public also grew, the editors and their publishers offered the public easily accessible texts. The political reasons which had resulted in many of the adaptations, including *King Lear*, were no longer relevant. The English stage had never been entirely convinced that enforced rules necessarily meant a better play and the neo-classicism of the eighteenth century gave way to the Romantics and their concerns with emotions, nature and imagination. The Romantics were mainly poets who came to idealise Shakespeare as a poet and preferred to read him. William Hazlitt felt that poetry was 'strictly the language of the imagination'<sup>74</sup> and that 'Poetry and the stage do not agree well together'<sup>75</sup> and Charles Lamb claimed that 'the Lear of Shakspeare cannot be acted', writing in the same article that 'the play is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show'.<sup>76</sup> In spite of this, the Romantics influenced the staging of *King Lear* which can be seen in the ancient historical settings and Druidic stones of Kemble, Kean and Macready, although Kemble continued to appear in his flowered satin robe up to 1808.

In turn, as I have shown, the acting styles also altered to reflect changing ideas. With the exception of Garrick's debut as Richard III, and to a lesser extent, Kean's, all this happened gradually through the one hundred and fifty-seven years. Actors, like

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<sup>72</sup> For example Edwin Forrest in March 1845, the Oxford University Players at the Fortune Theatre in 1949 and the Stewart Headlam players at the Toynbee Theatre in May 1966.

<sup>73</sup> See Arden, *King Lear*, 85-9.

<sup>74</sup> *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe, 21 vols. (1930-4) 'Lectures on the English Poets', 5, 4.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 'A View of the English Stage', 5, 276.

<sup>76</sup> *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. E.V. Lucas, 6 vols. (1912) 'On the Tragedies of Shakspeare', 1, 124-5.

editors, were of varying ability and some reverted to a style more in common with an earlier generation. The adaptors also hesitated, shifting towards and away from Shakespeare in their work on the play. The readers and critics, too, differed in their responses to the tragedy. Johnson's sensitivity would not let him re-read the final scenes because the death of Cordelia was too shocking but Keats was able to sit down and 'read *King Lear* once again' in spite of his sensitivity as a leading Romantic.

Thus adaptors raised interest in the play by offering audiences what they wished to see; actors raised interest in the play by their interpretations and by spectacle; editors raised interest in the play by offering accurate and accessible texts; audiences, as they became more educated and their numbers increased, developed interest in the texts and marvelled at the actors and their productions which led to a wish not only to read Shakespeare but also see him on stage. This was all reinforced by the rise of bardolatry during the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century which helped strengthen the public's wish to read what the Bard had written and so encouraged the work of the editors and, finally to see him on stage. The day of the adaptation was over. So, while editors and actors continue to interpret the colossus which is *King Lear*, the monopoly of the adaptors is banished and it is improbable, I would say impossible, that this former stranglehold could be revived.

**Appendix A**

The cast list for the first performance of Nahum Tate's  
*King Lear* in March 1681 at the Dorset Garden Theatre.<sup>1</sup>

## THE PERSONS

King Lear,	Mr. Betterton.
Gloster,	Mr. Gillo.
Kent,	Mr. Wiltshire.
Edgar,	Mr. Smith.
Bastard,	Mr. Jo. Williams.
Cornwall,	Mr. Norris.
Albany,	Mr. Bowman.
Gentleman-Usher,	Mr. Jevon.
Gonerill,	Mrs. Shadwell.
Regan,	Lady Slingsby.
Cordelia,	Mrs. Barry.
Guards, Officers, Messengers, Attendants.	

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<sup>1</sup> From Nahum Tate's *The History of King Lear*, (1681) A4v.

**Appendix B**

The main differences between Shakespeare's and Tate's *King Lear* (These differences are discussed in the text of this thesis but it may be convenient to have them listed here).

Tate worked from the quartos, probably Q2. However, there are many exceptions including the use of lines that are in the Folio but not the quartos.

Tate's Act I opens with Edmund's soliloquy 'Thou Nature'.  
Lear and Court enter; we learn of Edgar's and Cordelia's love in an aside.  
Lear's curse on Goneril 'Hear nature hear' ends the Act.  
No Fool or King of France.

Act II follows Shakespeare except for no Fool and much pruning.  
Edgar flees as in Shakespeare but the emphasis is on him saving his own life so that he will be able help Cordelia 'in distress'.

Act III opens with Shakespeare's scene ii - Lear's first scene in the storm where he is accompanied by Kent in place of the Fool.  
Edmund then has new soliloquy on the love both Goneril and Regan have for him.  
Cordelia in a scene with her companion, Arante, decides to help her father on the heath.  
Edmund overhears and plans her abduction and rape.  
Ruffians attack the women on the heath and they are saved by Edgar disguised as Mad Tom. Cordelia and Edgar reaffirm their love.  
Gloucester is blinded; a servant intervenes and kills Cornwall as in Shakespeare.  
There is no brief scene between the servants as in Q. The scene ends with Gloucester's line 'All dark and comfortless' extended into a soliloquy.

Act IV opens with a new scene in a grotto between Edmund and Regan declaring their love. They learn of the peasants' uprising against them.  
Edgar leads the blind Gloucester as in Shakespeare.  
Tate inserts a scene where Cordelia, Edgar and Kent meet and plan to help Lear.  
Gloucester attempts the leap as in Shakespeare.  
The Act ends with Cordelia wishing she could join the uprising now lead by Kent and she prays that she will be victorious over her sisters.

Act V opens with Goneril declaring her intention to poison Regan.  
Edmund gloats over his position with Regan and Goneril; he learns that Kent is now leading the uprising.  
Cordelia, Lear and Kent are defeated and taken prisoner.  
Goneril rather than Edmund orders the murder of Lear and Cordelia in prison.  
Edgar enters and challenges Edmund. Edmund is wounded.  
Goneril and Regan quarrel over the dying Edmund and we learn they are themselves already poisoned by each other.  
Lear and Cordelia in prison where Lear kills the soldiers sent to kill them.  
Edgar and Albany enter and save Lear and Cordelia.  
Cordelia and Edgar are reunited and will reign.  
Lear, Kent and Gloucester decide to live in retirement.

Appendix C

The main changes made to *King Lear* by the adaptors

	Tate 1681	Garrick 1765/1773	Colman 1768	Kemble 1795?	Kean/Cumberland 1823	Macready/ Lacy/Jennens? 1838
<b>Fool</b>	no	no	no	no	no	yes
<b>France</b>	no	no	yes	no	no	yes
<b>Love interest</b>	yes	yes shortened	no*	yes	yes	no
<b>Blinding</b>	on stage	off-stage	off-stage	off-stage	off-stage	off-stage
<b>Leap</b>	yes	yes	no	no	no	no
<b>Lear and Cordelia die</b>	no Cordelia m. Edgar	no Cordelia m. Edgar	no Cordelia m. France	no Cordelia m. Edgar	yes Cordelia loves Edgar	yes
<b>Arante</b>	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no

\* but see chapter 10

**Appendix D**

Adaptations staged at Drury Lane and Covent Garden (1756-1838) with the name of the adaptor followed by the name of the actor playing Lear (in brackets).

<u>Drury Lane</u>		<u>Covent Garden</u>	
1756-63	Garrick (Garrick)	1756-58	Tate (Barry)
		1759-63	no <i>King Lear</i>
1764	no <i>King Lear</i>	1764-67	Tate (Ross)
1765-67	Garrick (Powell)		
1768-71	Garrick (Barry)	1768-69	Colman (Powell)
1772	no <i>King Lear</i>	1770-73	Colman (Ross)
1773-74	Garrick (Garrick & Barry)	1774	Tate (Barry)
1775	no <i>King Lear</i>	1775	no <i>King Lear</i>
1776	Garrick (Garrick)	1776	Tate (Barry)
1777-78	no <i>King Lear</i>	1777-78	Tate (Ross)
1779	Garrick (Henderson)	1779-81	Tate (Henderson)
1780-87	no <i>King Lear</i>	1782	no <i>King Lear</i>
		1783-84	Tate (Henderson)
		1785	no <i>King Lear</i>
		1786	Tate (Farren)
1788	Garrick (Kemble)	1787-88	no <i>King Lear</i>
1789-91	no <i>King Lear</i>	1789-91	Tate (Harley)
1792-93	Garrick ? (Kemble)	1792-93	no <i>King Lear</i>
1794	no <i>King Lear</i>	1794-96	Tate (Pope)
1795	Kemble (Kemble)		
1796-99	no <i>King Lear</i>	1797	Tate (Murray)
		1798	no <i>King Lear</i>
		1799	Tate (Pope)
1800	no <i>King Lear</i>	1800-01	no <i>King Lear</i>
1801	Kemble (Kemble)		
1802-10	no <i>King Lear</i>	1802	Tate (Cooke)
		1803-06	no <i>King Lear</i>
		1807	Cooke (Kemble)
		1808-10	Kemble (Kemble)
1811-19	<i>King Lear</i> ban	1811-19	<i>King Lear</i> ban
1820	Elliston (Kean and Booth)	1820	Kemble presum. (Booth and Vandenhoff)
		1821	no <i>King Lear</i>
1821	no <i>King Lear</i>	1822	Kemble presum. (Young)
1822	Elliston presum. (Kean)	1823	no <i>King Lear</i>
		1824	Kemble presum. (Young)
1823-24	Cumberland (Kean)	1825-26	no <i>King Lear</i>
		1827	Kemble presum. (Young)
1825-26	no <i>King Lear</i>	1828	Kemble? (Kean)
1827	Cumberland (Kean)	1829-33	no <i>King Lear</i>
1828	no <i>King Lear</i>		
1829	Cumberland presum.(Young)		
1830-33	no <i>King Lear</i>		
1834	similar to Lacy (Macready)	1834	similar to Lacy (Macready)
		1835-37	no <i>King Lear</i>
1835	no <i>King Lear</i>		
1836-37	Cumberland probably (Forrest)		
1838	no <i>King Lear</i>	1838	Lacy (Macready)



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