

Faculty of English

**Twin Stars: Shakespeare  
and the Idea of the Theatre  
in the Eighteenth Century**

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## **Declarations**

This dissertation does not exceed the regulation length, including footnotes, references and appendices but excluding my bibliography and translations.

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as specified in the text.

This dissertation is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University of similar institution.

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## Abstract

This thesis draws the line of a rise and a fall, an ironic pattern whereby the English stage of the long eighteenth century, in its relation to Shakespeare in particular, first acquired powerful influence, and then, through the very effects of that power, lost it. It also shows what contemporary literary criticism might learn from the activities that constitute this arc of evolution.

My first chapter interrogates the relationship between text and performance in vernacular writings about acting and editing from the death of Betterton in 1710 to the rise of Garrick in the middle decades of the century. From the status of a distinct tradition, performance comes to rely on text as a basis for the intimate, personal engagement with Shakespeare believed necessary to the work of the sentimental actor. Such a reliance grants the performer new potential as a literary critic, but also prepares a fall. The performer becomes another kind of reader, and so is open to accusations of reading badly.

My second chapter analyses the evolving definition of Shakespeare as a dramatic author from Samuel Johnson onwards. An untheatrical definition of the dramatic (Johnson's) is answered by one which recognises the power and vitality of the stage, especially in its representation of sympathetic character (Montagu and Kenrick). Yet that very recognition leads to a set of altered critical priorities in which the theatre is, once more, relegated (Morgann and Richardson).

My third and fourth chapters consider the practices and critical implications of theatrical performance of Shakespeare during Garrick's career. I focus on the acting of emotion, the portrayal of what Aaron Hill called 'the *very Instant* of the *changing Passion*', and show that performance of this time, attentive to the striking moment and the transitions that power it, required from the actor both attention to the text and preternatural control over his own emotions. In return, it allowed Garrick and others to claim a special affinity with Shakespeare and to capture the public's attention, both in the theatre and outside it. Yet this situation, that of 'twin stars', does not last. French and German responses to English acting, the concern of my last chapter, show its decline particularly well. They also, however, show the power that existed in such a union between page and stage, and equal weight is given in both my third and my fourth chapter to how the theatrical-literary insights of eighteenth-century critical culture might also illuminate modern approaches.

## **A Note on Texts, Typography and Translation**

This dissertation quotes from a variety of editions of Shakespeare's plays, as recorded in its footnotes. Where there is good reason to refer to an eighteenth-century or earlier edition, I do so. Where there is not, I use the text found in:

William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by G. R. Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007).

I have retained the original spelling, typography and punctuation of all my sources throughout, replacing only the long s (ſ) with the short wherever it occurred.

Unattributed translations throughout are my own.

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## Introduction: Twin Stars

Sometimes it is best to begin at the end. High on one wall of Westminster Abbey and opposite its Shakespeare monument, stands a memorial to David Garrick. Installed in 1797, it depicts the actor stepping out from behind a pair of curtains, and bears verses praising him as one who rescued the forms that Shakespeare drew, and with his ‘Actor’s genius’, ‘made them breathe anew’. Thanks to such efforts, the poem concludes, ‘Shakespeare and Garrick like twin stars shall shine, | And earth irradiate with a beam divine’.<sup>1</sup>

This is a remarkable prophecy. Its author, the actor Samuel Jackson Pratt, has reworked an astrological idea of skyey influence previously used in the commendatory verses Ben Jonson contributed to the First Folio. These conclude with a vision of Shakespeare alone in ‘the hemisphere | Advanc’d, and made a constellation’, a ‘star of Poets’ who will now, like other celestial bodies, ‘with rage | Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage’ thanks to the power of print.<sup>2</sup> Pratt’s verses answer Jonson’s celebration of the Folio publication by claiming that it is only because of Garrick’s labours that the Shakespeare preserved on its pages has been able to ‘chide or cheer’ the eighteenth-century stage. The actor thus also merits astral rank, and, as Pratt promises, the joint forces of Shakespeare and Garrick, the ‘twin stars’, will now irradiate not just the theatre but, like all great art, the entire earth.

Mapping the literary critical culture that gave rise to Pratt’s poem is the aim of this thesis. Such a task demands a sensitivity to what lies between our time and that of the twin stars, for Pratt’s prophecy did not come to pass. Instead a powerful, alternative vision of Shakespeare, and the literary culture he crowned, arose, one that accorded neither the actor nor the theatre the strength they were once thought to possess. This view has come to be associated with what we now call Romantic writers, and must be acknowledged, both to neutralise its enduring hostility to a culture illuminated by the double stars of page and stage and to contextualise my own enquiry. The case of Shakespeare is in fact typical of a wider phenomenon, what David Francis Taylor has

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1 ‘David Garrick’, *Westminster Abbey Website* <<http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/david-garrick>> [accessed 29 June 2015].

2 Ben Jonson, ‘To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author Mr. William Shakespeare: And What He Hath Left Us’, in *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies: Published According to the True Originall Copies* (London: Blount and Jaggard, 1623), sigs πA4r – πA4v (sig. πA4v).

recently called the ‘unfortunate irony’ of the Georgian theatre: that it ‘ultimately laid the foundations for the occlusion of its own complex vitality’.<sup>3</sup> It is thus only with a little knowledge of what came to occlude the Georgian theatrical Shakespeare that the material offered in the chapters ahead, describing the doomed vitality of what was once a twin star, can be fully understood. Sometimes, it is best to begin at the end.

Charles Lamb used a glimpse of Garrick’s funeral monument to open an essay published in 1812, entitled ‘On Garrick and Acting; and the Plays of Shakespeare, considered with reference to their fitness for Stage Representation’.<sup>4</sup> Admitting that he ‘was not a little scandalized at the introduction of theatrical airs and gestures into a place set apart to remind us of the saddest realities’, he then provides a transcript of Pratt’s poem, which he calls a ‘farrago of false thoughts and nonsense’.<sup>5</sup> Lamb can only wonder ‘how people should come thus unaccountably to confound the power of originating images and conceptions with the faculty of being able to read or recite the same when put into words’ and ‘what connection that absolute mastery over the heart and soul of man, which a great dramatic poet possesses, has with those low tricks upon the eye and ear, which a player by observing a few general effects [...] can easily compass’ (86). There are no grounds here for identifying player and playwright as twin artists. The former is very much of this world, for even if ‘the instantaneous nature of the impressions’ made in the theatre may eclipse the ‘slow apprehension’ of reading and ‘sink the play-writer in the consideration we pay to the actor’, the thrill of the spectator soon fades into the realisation that ‘we have only materialised and brought down a fine vision to the standard of flesh and blood’ (87). Only Shakespeare’s art is divine. Garrick’s confines his author’s conceptions ‘to the measure of strait-lacing actuality’, and so evacuates all the subtle presentation of ‘the internal workings and movements of a great mind’, since it ‘comes not under the province of acting’ (87-88).

Lamb states that ‘the plays of Shakespeare are less calculated for performance than

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3 David Francis Taylor, ‘Introduction’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre 1737-1832*, ed. by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1–7 (p. 2).

4 Given its aims, it seems fitting that Lamb’s text was republished in 1818 shorn of titular reference to Garrick and acting.

5 Charles Lamb, ‘On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation’, in *Lamb as Critic*, ed. by Roy Park, The Routledge Critics Series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 85–101 (pp. 85–6). Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

those of any dramatist whatever' (88). He then notes how their 'delicacies delightful in the reading' are 'sullied and turned from their very nature by being exposed to a large assembly' (88-89). *King Lear* offers only the cruel spectacle of an 'old man tottering about the stage with a walking stick' (96), and *Cymbeline*'s Imogen is no more than a hired woman whose 'courtship, though nominally addressed to the personated Posthumus, is manifestly aimed at the spectators, who are to judge of her endearments and her returns of love' (89). These are some of the strongest lines in Lamb's essay, and it is, as Roy Park has demonstrated,<sup>6</sup> important to remember that such judgements do not spring from a general anti-theatrical prejudice: Lamb later informs us clearly that he 'is not arguing that *Hamlet* should not be acted, but how much *Hamlet* is made another thing entirely by being acted' (89). More than any moral qualms about the stage, this aesthetic non-identity is the core of Lamb's essay: the theatre is no longer part of what Shakespeare is, but 'another thing entirely', and certainly no twin.

Lamb's writing crystallises attitudes found in many of his contemporaries. William Hazlitt, reviewing Edmund Kean's *Richard II*, laments, for instance, that 'all that appeals to our profounder feelings, to reflection and imagination, all that affects us most deeply in our closets, and in fact constitutes the glory of SHAKESPEARE, is little else than an interruption and a drag on the business of the stage'.<sup>7</sup> In Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), he claims that the 'reality' of Shakespeare's tragedies in particular 'is in the reader's mind', so that, famously, 'It is *we* who are Hamlet'.<sup>8</sup> When Samuel Taylor Coleridge spoke of *Hamlet*, he, like Hazlitt, also turned inward, claiming that in order to understand the Danish prince, 'it is essential that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds'. He also sets the will of the dramatist against the traditions of the theatre, arguing that those managers who have chosen to portray Claudius as an irredeemable villain ignore the fact that 'Shakespeare never intended us to see the king with Hamlet's eyes'. With a similar emphasis on the wishes of the author, William Blake railed against current performances of the witches in *Macbeth* as being 'not as Shakespeare intended'.<sup>9</sup>

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6 Roy Park, 'Introduction', in *Lamb as Critic*, by Charles Lamb, ed. by Roy Park, The Routledge Critics Series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 1–42 (p. 17).

7 William Hazlitt, *A View of the English Stage; or, A Series of Dramatic Criticisms* (London: Stodart, 1818), p. 97.

8 William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Reynell, 1817), p. 104.

9 Quoted in: Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 16, 18, 127.



This survey could continue, but its emphasis on the insufficiency of a stage experience seen as more physical than mental and, consequently, on the divorce between theatrical understanding and literary study is already clear. A precise analysis of the place of Shakespeare in the English Romantic imagination is beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>10</sup> Instead, my aim here is to present the key aspects of a prejudice formed in the wake of the eighteenth-century theatrical Shakespeare, and set against the literary critical priorities symbolised in Pratt's constellation of twin stars. This prejudice has endured well beyond Lamb and Hazlitt, much to the detriment of Garrick in particular. Bernard Shaw named both the actor-manager and his predecessor, Colley Cibber, as 'mutilators of Shakespeare' in his 1901 definition of 'bardolatry'. Joseph Knight, in his 1894 biography of Garrick, had already accused the actor of posing 'as the great defender of Shakespeare' when all he had was a 'kitchen dredge of a muse'. Frank Hedgcock, in 1912, called Garrick's *Hamlet* 'the most celebrated' of all the actor's 'nefarious attempts on Shakespeare's pieces'. Even Carola Oman, in her major twentieth-century biography of Garrick (published 1958), silently enacted such attitudes by paying scarce attention to his adaptation of Shakespeare.<sup>11</sup>

All these examples of post-Romantic prejudice are drawn from the introduction to Vanessa Cunningham's *Shakespeare and Garrick*, one of the most recent of a series of attempts to restore Garrick's literary worth that began with the labours of George Winchester Stone as editor, critic and biographer in the 1930s. In her book's defence of 'Garrick the writer',<sup>12</sup> Cunningham offers an authoritative study of how what Jane Marsden calls the period's unity of page and stage was maintained despite all the forces ranged against it, forces which eventually triumphed in the writings of Lamb, Hazlitt and others.<sup>13</sup> Cunningham, Marsden and Stone are far from the only critics, however, who have stepped – as I hope to step here – behind and beyond Romantic paradigms to explore the place of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century. Michèle Willems's *Genèse du mythe shakespearien* is one of the earliest and most important accounts of attitudes to Shakespeare at this time, providing a narrative of a waning

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10 See: Bate, *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*.

11 This summary comes from: Vanessa Cunningham, *Shakespeare and Garrick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 8–9.

12 Cunningham, p. 52.

13 Jean I. Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995).

literary *rationalisme* from 1660 to 1780.<sup>14</sup> In his book of 1992, Michael Dobson, focussing on the period 1660-1760 and using both adaptations and other cultural phenomena (such as the influence of the Shakespeare's Ladies Club), also gives a clear account, to set alongside Willems's, of the making of a 'national poet' during the Restoration and eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

As for the latter decades of the Georgian period, Reiko Oya's *Representing Shakespearean Tragedy* (2007) follows the careers of Garrick and his theatrical successors, emphasising throughout the necessity of understanding such figures with respect to their performances and 'contemporary criticism, playwriting, painting and other art forms'.<sup>16</sup> This approach shares with Cunningham's and Marsden's an important attention to the actor as a significant figure, yet goes even further, recognising each of these performers as what I have called a 'twin star', a centre of gravity in an entire culture's relationship with Shakespeare.

Yet Oya's work, in its marriage of broader cultural phenomena and the most important theatrical figures from Garrick on, has been accused of 'unsteadiness' and lacks a strong central argument.<sup>17</sup> This thesis aims to provide just such an argument, albeit for a slightly different time-frame. From the dawn of the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, I draw the line of a rise and a fall, an ironic pattern whereby the English stage, in its relation to Shakespeare in particular, first acquires powerful influence, and then, through the very effects of that power, loses it. This is the pattern identified by Taylor, who remarked that the Georgian theatre 'ultimately laid the foundations for the occlusion of its own complex vitality'.<sup>18</sup> I will thus aim to show how such an arc of evolution was both a cause and an effect of Shakespeare's place in British and European culture in the eighteenth century.

My first chapter begins with the death of Betterton in 1710 and ends with the rise of Garrick in the middle decades of the century. These fifty years saw the rapid growth of both vernacular acting theory and vernacular editorial theory, with each art paying

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14 Michèle Willems, *La Genèse du mythe shakespearien* (Rouen: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979).

15 Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

16 Reiko Oya, *Representing Shakespearean Tragedy: Garrick, the Kembles, and Kean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 3.

17 Richard Schoch, 'Representing Shakespearean Tragedy: Garrick, the Kembles, and Kean by Reiko Oya', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 60 (2009), 104–6 (p. 105).

18 Taylor, eds. Swindells and Taylor, p. 2.

particular attention to Shakespeare. By setting these two disciplines of page and stage alongside each other, I give a shape to the relation between text and performance at this time, one which begins the ironic line of rise and fall. From the status of a distinct tradition, performance comes to rely on text as a basis for the intimate, personal engagement with Shakespeare believed necessary to the work of the sentimental actor. Such a reliance grants the performer new potential as a literary critic, but also prepares this artist's fall. The actor is no longer in a class of his or her own: instead the performer has become another kind of reader, and so is open to accusations of reading badly.

My second chapter covers critical responses to Shakespeare from Samuel Johnson onwards. Again, the same pattern emerges. Johnson's 'Preface', a little out of step with its time, offers an Aristotelian, literary understanding of drama, soon attacked by those, like William Kenrick and Elizabeth Montagu, who consider the stage as a far more vital, emotional arena. Yet the very emphases of Johnson's detractors on the powerful sentimental experience of the theatre, again prepare a fall. They inspire the work of character critics, like Maurice Morgann and William Richardson, who, while beginning with the theatre, focus on emotion above all and thus soon move beyond the theatre, first to the verbal nuances of the text and then to the depths of human nature itself.

The third and fourth chapters consider the practices and critical implications of theatrical performance of Shakespeare during Garrick's career. What gave the performer such power at this time? I show that part of the answer lies in the acting of emotion, the portrayal of what Aaron Hill calls 'the *very Instant* of the *changing Passion*'.<sup>19</sup> This style of performance, simultaneously attentive to the striking moment and the transitions that power it, requires from the actor both a sharp attention to the text and a preternatural control over his or her own emotions. In return, it allows performers like Garrick to claim a special affinity with Shakespeare and to capture the public's attention, both in the theatre and outside it. As before, though, this method, in its 'complex vitality' of adaptation, transition and mediation, also prepares its own 'occlusion'. French and German responses to English acting, the concern of my fourth chapter, show this particularly well.

Yet it would be a mistake to emphasise too much the fading of the Georgian theatre. As this thesis follows the rise and fall of the twin stars, it also looks to all that such a

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<sup>19</sup> Aaron Hill, *The Prompter* (66), 27 June 1735, p. 2.

constellation can illuminate. There is a new reading of Shakespeare's eighteenth-century reception to be made in its light, which prompts revision of our own modern critical approaches to both this playwright and the literary culture of the eighteenth century. Much that endures today was born under twin stars.

# 1. Text and Performance

## Introduction: ‘A Second Part’

*Wee wondred (Shake-speare) that thou went'st so soone  
From the Worlds-Stage, to the Graues-Tyring-roome.  
Wee thought thee dead, but this thye printed worth,  
Tels thy Spectators, that thou went'st but forth  
To enter with applause. An Actors Art,  
Can dye, and liue, to acte a second part.  
That's but an Exit of Mortalitie;  
This, a Re-entrance to a Plaudite.*<sup>20</sup>

James Mabbe wrote these lines as part of one of the First Folio's commendatory poems, turning to a conceit familiar from Shakespeare's own works to offer a portrait of the dramatist's afterlife, both printed and staged, as continuous re-performance, something alive, and not, as other such verses claim, even more immutable than 'Brasse and Marble'.<sup>21</sup> Since the pioneering work of Jerome McGann in the 1990s on the status of text as event,<sup>22</sup> editorial and performance theory have often discovered unexpected affinities between themselves, retracing the ideas contained in embryo in Mabbe's verses.<sup>23</sup>

In the introduction to his *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*, William B. Worthen begins his account of twentieth-century theatrical practice with an analysis of recent editorial theories, arguing that Shakespeare has long stood 'at the centre of two articulate and contentious traditions – of reading and the criticism of texts; of performance and the staging of scripts', and so 'Shakespearian theatre affords a powerful way to bring questions of authority and performance into view'.<sup>24</sup> Worthen

20 James Mabbe, 'To the Memorie of M. W. Shake-Speare', in *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies: Published According to the True Originall Copies* (London: Blount and Jaggard, 1623), sig. πA5r.

21 Jonson, sig. πA4v.

22 'Literary production is not an autonomous and self-reflexive activity; it is a social and an institutional event.' Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992), p. 100.

23 In Jonathan Bate's 1995 edition of *Titus Andronicus*, Peter Holland saw, for example, 'the Shakespeare editor [...] revealed in a totally new guise as a theatre director whose medium is the page not the stage'. George Walton Williams, 'To Edit? To Direct? Ay, There's the Rub', in *In Arden: Editing Shakespeare - Essays In Honour Of Richard Proudfoot*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Gordon McMullan (London: Thomson Learning, 2003), pp. 111–24 (p. 11).

24 William B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge

also offers here a brief history of how Shakespeare came to occupy such a place, locating the eighteenth century as the key moment of his installation at the heart of theatrical and textual tradition. Between 1700 and 1800, the sense of performance as an ‘independent tradition’ of Shakespearian authority – as something that ‘could speak in theatrical terms, often with only indirect reference to the mediating specificity of an authoritative text’ – waned, giving way, as Worthen sees it, to a nineteenth-century emphasis on the playwright’s writing, with the attendant inauguration of playwright as an author, someone protected by copyright, and a member of a professional body.<sup>25</sup>

Worthen’s observation is just, but demands further elaboration. How did the tradition of performing Shakespeare lose its independence in the eighteenth century, especially when this period hardly lacked great performers? Part of the answer lies in the study of eighteenth-century acting theory, which – simultaneously with vernacular editing theory – underwent unprecedented development between 1700 and 1800. *Acting theory*, as befits a nascent domain, is here taken in its largest sense, covering a diverse group of poems, biographies, manuals, periodical comments and reviews that all aimed to offer insight into the process of performance.<sup>26</sup> When such work is set alongside the labours of Shakespeare’s editors, new insights into both cultural phenomena appear. Such a juxtaposition is inspired by the work of McGann and Worthen, and their modern reading of text as performance or event, yet it is far from anachronistic.

Not only do editorial and acting theory both grow in the eighteenth century, they also intertwine. On a conceptual level, they come to share many similarities. With regard to Shakespeare, both seek to find and abstract principles from his writing, as previous scholars had from Aristotle or Homer. Those principles, whether applied to the page or the stage, are always understood as guiding an effort to give (theatrical or printed) form to Shakespeare’s intention, for both editors and actors see themselves at this time as agents of the author’s will. Further to this, and because both performers and scholars act on Shakespeare’s orders, they also cast themselves as agents of his transmission. Filiation and tradition, the inheritance and the loss from one

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University Press, 1997), pp. 2–3.

25 Worthen, pp. 25–31.

26 James Boswell lists just such a variety of documents when writing about ‘literary productions relative to the art of acting’. See: James Boswell, ‘On the Profession of a Player - Essay III’, *London Magazine* (London, October 1770), pp. 513–17.

performance to another, from one edition to the next, is thus a central concern of both those who write of editing and those who write of acting. This leads to the question of one's ability, or indeed, worthiness to carry on and carry out Shakespeare's wishes. Both editors and actors are frequently urged to study and to cultivate themselves. The theatre must be purified of vulgar influences as must a corrupted text. The actor must become an upstanding citizen, while the editor must resist partiality and venality. The morality of both figures is frequently an issue, in part because both acting theory and editing theory inherit substantially from theology: the former from writing about preaching, and the latter from methods of biblical exegesis.<sup>27</sup>

These conceptual connections are important, but only in the measure that they can be grounded in the cultural activities of the eighteenth century. The current chapter will do this, revealing both the parallels between eighteenth-century understanding of page and stage, and a small cast of writers active in both spheres. Insisting on this mingled growth of theatrical and editorial tradition around Shakespeare casts light on how he came to be so central to both spheres, as well as on the origins of the uneven relation between these two domains, a relation which entails, on one hand, the loss of the independence of performance from text and, on the other, the gain of new, fragile powers for the performer as textual agent.

## I. Raising Authorities

On 28 April 1710, Thomas Betterton, the undisputed 'tragedy king' of Restoration London, died.<sup>28</sup> The son of an under-cook to Charles I, he was buried in Westminster Abbey on 2 May. The funeral itself was the occasion for a *Tatler* article by Richard Steele, describing how, as he walked in the cloisters before the ceremony, he thought of the dead actor 'with the same Concern as if I had waited for the Remains of a Person who had in real Life done all that I had seen him represent'.<sup>29</sup>

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27 For the influence of biblical exegesis on eighteenth-century vernacular literary edition, see: Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing: The Beginnings of Interpretative Scholarship*, Cambridge Studies in Eighteenth-Century English Literature and Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

28 'Tragedy king' is the coinage of Joseph Roach, who writes that Betterton 'never ceased playing the role of the great English Shakespearean, the tragedy king, a magnetically attractive part, undimmed by age or infirmity (or rather, strengthened by them) pointing to an offstage life of its own steeped in history and aglow with patina, the It-Effect of hallowed memory'. Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), pp. 133–34.

29 Richard Steele, *The Tatler (167)*, 4 May 1710, p. 1.

First and foremost amongst Betterton's representations were those of Shakespeare's plays: Steele mentions 'the Circumstance of the Handkerchief' in *Othello*, the 'Difference' between '*Brutus* and *Cassius*', the unfortunate 'Gallantry' of Hotspur and 'the Mirth and good Humour of *Falstaff*'.<sup>30</sup> Collapsing distinctions between the world and the stage, Steele admits that he is one of those who 'look upon the Distinctions amongst Men to be merely scenical' and so, when an actor is interred beside kings, will state that 'there is no Difference in the Grave between the Imaginary and the Real Monarch'.<sup>31</sup> Steele makes this provocative point as part of a piece that argues for the importance of the stage at a time when too many of 'the Gentry of his Nation' have 'little Relish' for the theatre, preferring 'Operas' which, unlike the art of the departed Betterton, 'leave no trace behind them that can be of Service to the present Moment'.<sup>32</sup>

While social concerns dominate here, this article also makes one crucial literary point, that unless one has 'as warm an Imagination as *Shakespear* himself', one cannot find 'any but dry and broken sentences' in *Othello*'s murder of Desdemona without the experience of seeing '*Betterton* act it', when it would have been made abundantly clear 'that longer Speech had been unnatural, nay impossible'.<sup>33</sup> In other words, Betterton leaves two traces behind him: one that might encourage social improvement and one which allows the reader to understand *Othello*, thanks to Betterton's implied possession of 'as warm an Imagination as *Shakespear* himself'.

A little later in 1710, Charles Gildon gave paper form to Betterton's remains when he published a book of advice to actors under the title of *The Life of Thomas Betterton*. Moral concerns and aesthetic affinities surface here as well. Dedicating his work to Steele as a fellow improver of the English stage, Gildon presents himself as the 'first, who in *English*, has attempted this Subject, in the Extent of the Discourse before you', having 'laid down such *General and Particular Rules*, as may Raise the Stage from the present Neglect it lies under'.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps because of how unusual and ambitious his project was, Gildon's *Life* unfolds through a set of framing conceits that seek to establish artistic affinities between

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30 Ibid.

31 Steele, 1710, pp. 1–2.

32 Steele, 1710, p. 2.

33 Steele, 1710, p. 1.

34 Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, the Late Eminent Tragedian* (London: Gosling, 1710), pp. vi–vii. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.



actors and authors. The text is, he claims, that of a manuscript written by Betterton, and read to Gildon when he visited the actor in retirement. Such a conceit means that the ‘*General and Particular Rules*’ Gildon gives are thus expressed through Betterton, using and perpetuating the performer’s authority. At the same time, a reprinted epilogue from a benefit performance in 1709 makes it clear that Betterton’s status is also intimately connected with Shakespeare’s. The poem, recited by Elizabeth Barry to open a fundraiser for the retiring Betterton, imagined how an indignant Shakespeare would have risen from the grave if this actor had not been honoured that night, hypothetically asking of an ungrateful audience ‘Why did I write what only he could play?’ (xiv). Gildon’s *Life* is thus conceived as an attempt to raise the stage not just in the name and voice of Betterton but also in those of Shakespeare.

The epilogue Gildon reprints was written by Nicholas Rowe, both Shakespeare’s first eighteenth-century editor, and the first editor, as Sonia Massai notes, to have his name associated with the text, which, in the wake of the Statute of Anne’s new copyright laws, ‘signalled the rise of a self-conscious proprietary stance’ alien to those who produced seventeenth-century printed Shakespeare.<sup>35</sup> Yet while Rowe was a new kind of editor, he was also concerned with establishing a connection to Shakespeare’s time. He did this thanks to Betterton, who travelled into Warwickshire to gather anecdotal evidence about Shakespeare’s life for Rowe’s biography of the dramatist. If, as both Michèle Willems and Michael Caines argue, Rowe’s 1709 edition represents a shift from oral memory of Shakespeare to written transmission, then the actor Betterton, gathering anecdotes for his friend the editor, is one agent of that shift.<sup>36</sup> As a result of this performer’s efforts, one can thus not only read Shakespeare’s plays better (as Steele and Gildon both claim), but also read an authoritative story of Shakespeare’s life in more detail than ever before.

Rowe himself can no more resist praising Betterton’s acting than Steele and Gildon could, and so cannot ‘leave *Hamlet* without taking notice of the Advantage with which we have seen this masterpiece of Shakespear distinguish itself upon the stage, by Mr Betterton’s fine Performance of that Part’.<sup>37</sup> Again, this is due to the same

35 Sonia Massai, *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 190–91.

36 Willems, p. 42; Michael Caines, *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford Shakespeare Topics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 31.

37 Nicholas Rowe, ‘Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. William Shakespear’, in *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, 6 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1709), 1, i – xl (pp. xxxiii–iv).

affinity between actor and author noted by Gildon and Steele, for, in Rowe's view, 'No Man is better acquainted with Shakespear's manner of Expression, and indeed he has study'd him so well, and is so much a Master of him, that whatever Part of his he performs, he does it as if it had been written on purpose for him, and that the author had exactly conceiv'd it as he plays it'.<sup>38</sup> Rowe explains here how the illusion that Shakespeare seems to have been written for Betterton is the result of the actor's labours, his study – analogous to Rowe's own work as an editor – of the author's 'manner of expression'.

Yet this prosaic point is easily lost, for Rowe's choice of *Hamlet* as an example of Betterton's greatness also carries a broader, symbolic meaning. *Hamlet* is, of course, a play that turns on questions of inter-generational responsibility, on fears of broken lineage and lost order. Indeed, the symbolism of *Hamlet* as the play which epitomises the affinity between performer and playwright is realised in the course of Rowe's text: he tells us how Betterton's greatest part was the Danish prince, having revealed, early in his narrative, that 'the top of [Shakespeare's] Performance was the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*'.<sup>39</sup> Shakespeare and Betterton thus come to play father and son both textually and theatrically.

*Hamlet* is not only important for its staging of anxious filiation. It is also a rich mine for those wishing to extract the playwright's thoughts about the theatre. Rowe makes no mention of Hamlet's conversations with the players in his edition, although those who purchased the illicit 'seventh' volume supplement to it (written by Gildon and published in 1710 by the unscrupulous Edmund Curll in an identical format to that used by Rowe's publisher, Jacob Tonson) would have had their attention drawn to such passages. The 'Precepts of Shakespear' contained in these lines, as Gildon calls them in this extra volume, 'are as valuable, as any thing in him, for indeed thoroughly study'd and understood they teach the whole Art of the Stage, which relates to the Representation or the Actors'.<sup>40</sup> He then breaks off his discussion to advertise his forthcoming *Life of Betterton*, where such passages will be explored more fully.

Gildon was not alone in noticing the utility of Hamlet's advice to the players. Steele too, in a *Tatler* article of 1709, promises that he will 'publish Observations from

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38 Rowe, I, p. xxxiv.

39 Rowe, I, p. vi.

40 William Shakespeare and Charles Gildon, *The Works of William Shakespear: Volume the Seventh*, ed. by Charles Gildon (London: Curll, 1710), p. 410.

Time to Time on the performance of the Actors’, and will use Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* as a basis for his judgements, since ‘The great Errors in Playing are admirably well expos’d in Hamlet’s Direction to the Actors who are to play in his suppos’d Tragedy’.<sup>41</sup> He then cites the passage in its entirety, shorn of the Player’s interjections and so transformed from dialogue into the following block of imperatives and examples.

Speak the Speech as I pronounce it to you, trippingly on the Tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of our Players do, I had as lieve the Town-Cryer had spoke my Lines: Nor do not saw the Air too much with your Hand thus; but use all gently: For in the very Torrent, Tempest, and, as I may say, the Whirlwind of Passion, you must acquire and beget a Temperance that may give it Smoothness. Oh! It offends me to the Soul, to see a robustuous Periwig-pated Fellow tear a Passion to Tatters, to very Rags, to split the Ears of the Groundlings, who (for the most Part) are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb Shews and Noise. I could have such a Fellow whipt for o’erdoing Termagant: It out-Herods Herod. Be not too tame neither; but let your own Discretion be your Tutor: Sute [*sic*] the Action to the Word, the Word to the Action; with this special Observance, that you o’erstep not the Modesty of Nature; for any Thing so overdone, is from the Purpose of Playing, whose End, both at the first and now, was, and is, to hold as ’twere the Mirror up to Nature; to shew Virtue her own Feature; Scorn her own Image; and the very Age and Body of the Time its Form and Pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, tho’ it make the Unskilful laugh, cannot but make the Judicious grieve. The Censures of which one, must in your Allowance, o’ersway a whole Theatre of others. Oh! There be Players, that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly (not to speak it prophanely) that neither having the Accent of Christian, Pagan, nor Man, have so strutted and bellow’d that I have thought some of Nature’s Journeymen had made Men, and not made them well, they imitated Humanity so abominably. This should be reform’d altogether; and let those that play your Clowns, speak no more than is set down for them: For there be of them that will of themselves laugh to set on some Quantity of barren Spectators, to laugh too; tho’ in the mean Time, some necessary Question of the Play be then consider’d; that’s villainous, and shews a most pitiful Ambition in the Fool that uses it.<sup>42</sup>

When Gildon quotes from this passage in his *Life of Betterton*, he – like Steele – cuts

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41 Richard Steele, *The Tatler* (35), 30 June 1709, p. 1.

42 Ibid.

the Player's interjections, while also using capital letters and italics to mark passages of particular importance. The first such passage, the advice that '*in the very Torrent, Tempest, and I may say the Whirlwind of Passion, you must acquire and beget a Temperance, that may give it Smoothness*', fits with Steele and Gildon's concern for the moral quality of performers, wise enough to remain '*temperate*' despite their role. He also italicises '*pitiful Ambition*' a little later to similar effect. The second, Hamlet's warning about the 'Judicious' whose '*Censure [...] must in your Allowance o'ersway a WHOLE THEATRE of others*', neatly confirms the critic's own authority and power (81-83).

Gildon follows his edited reproduction of Hamlet's lines with an analysis of them, explaining how 'they are sufficient to instruct a young Player in all the Beauties of *Utterance*, and to correct all the Errors he might, for want of the Art of Speaking, have incurr'd'. Accordingly, 'By speaking it *trippingly on the Tongue*, he means a clear and disembarass'd Pronunciation', and 'His telling the Actor, that he had as lieve the Town-Cryer should speak his Lines, as one that mouth'd them, is very just' (83). In both these sentences, Gildon's use of 'he' is ambiguous, referring either to Hamlet or to Shakespeare. This blending of Shakespeare's voice and that of his character is also a result of Steele and Gildon's cutting of the Player's interjections from the source of these lines. As Gildon's analysis continues, however, Hamlet disappears altogether. We learn, for instance, how 'Art [is] always directing a moderate and gentle Motion, which *Shakespear* expresses by *use all gently*' (83). Further on, the actor Cardell Goodman is found wanting in his performance of Alexander the Great since he 'wanted that agreeable *Smoothness*, which *Shakespear* requires, and which is the perfection of beautiful Speaking' (84).

Once he has abstracted and applied precepts from Hamlet's speech, Gildon then runs through a series of passages from Shakespeare's tragedies to exemplify them. Lear's curse on Goneril, like Hotspur's anger over Mortimer, should 'be spoke with elevated Tone and enraged Voice, and the Accents of a Man all on Fire, and in a Fury next to Madness'. So too should Othello's demand for 'ocular proof' of Desdemona's infidelity, and Old Capulet's ultimatum to Juliet 'To go with Paris to St Peter's Church, | Or I will drag thee in a Hurdle thither' (114-17). Unconcerned with the differences between the various characters, Gildon focusses on the technical aspects of their representation, analysing their words in line with a framework of 'Tone' and 'Voice' he lays out elsewhere in the *Life* (89-111).

When he reaches the speech of Henry V to his troops before the walls of Harfleur, though, Gildon's approach becomes more subtle, as he shows that the discourse of the monarch already provides 'a lively Image of all the Looks and Actions belonging to it' in lines such as 'imitate the Action of the Tyger' and 'lend the Eye a terrible Aspect' (117-18). Here, instead of a testing-ground, the text becomes a sufficient blueprint for performance, for 'If a Player would study this speech, he would find such Looks and Motions would inspire him with more Life in the Representation of such a Character, than he would otherwise feel' (118).

Strikingly, Gildon does not ask why Henry V's words to his soldiers urge them to perform anger, nor what this might say of the monarch's own theatrical bent, his awareness of the power of appearances and the weight of 'ceremony' about a king.<sup>43</sup> Instead, the focus remains on the technical instruction to be abstracted, and Gildon displays a remarkable ability to do so. He concludes his advice by announcing, for example, that he has 'run through the whole Art of Acting, and Speaking, or rather, as Shakespear calls it, of ACTION and UTTERANCE' (137), a distinction which he draws from *Julius Caesar*, where Antony enumerates before the people all that is needful in a speaker by admitting 'I have neither Wit, nor Words, nor Worth, | Action, nor Utterance, nor power of Speech, | To stir Men's Blood.'<sup>44</sup> The passage is well chosen, for it also highlights the affinities between the art of acting and that of public speaking more generally, when Gildon is himself keen to raise the profile of the stage by showing how theatrical performance, far from being a degraded activity, can sit beside religious oratory and legal debate as a sister art.

On top of this, Gildon's citation from *Julius Caesar* is also of a different kind from those examined so far. It is neither an example of a passion (as the quotations from *King Lear* or *Othello* are) nor a text from which 'Precepts' may be extracted (like Hamlet's advice to the players or Henry V's speech at Harfleur) but a translation of Shakespeare's words to a conceptual, structural position. Gildon builds his entire text around the division between 'Action' and 'Utterance', between 'Acting' and 'Speaking', and grounds this choice, through citation, in Shakespeare's own authority.

Hamlet's advice to the players falls in the 'Utterance' section of the *Life*, even if it

43 William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by T.W. Craik, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 429–62 (p. 450) (IV.1.236).

44 William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1709), v, pp. 2272–73.

does allow Gildon to glance back to his thoughts on ‘Action’ as well. Action is, for Gildon, something that ‘can never be in its Perfection but on the Stage’, and so its value is a crucial element of his argument for the worthiness of theatre alongside the other public professions of ‘the Pulpit and the Bar’ (25). Careful thus to distinguish his topic from what Hamlet (and thus Shakespeare) castigates as ‘unexplicable dumb Shews’ (49), Gildon offers a panegyric to the ‘natural Excellence’ of correct physical movement, which, at its best, is on a level with life itself.

Action is Motion, and Motion is the Support of Nature, which without it would again sink into the sluggish Mass of Chaos. Motion in the Various and regular Dances of the Planets surprizes and delights: Life is Motion, and when that ceases, the Humane Body so beautiful, nay, so divine when enlivened by Motion, becomes a dead and putrid Coarse [*sic*], from which all turn their Eyes. The Eye is caught by any thing in Motion, but passes over the sluggish and motionless things as not the pleasing Object of its View. (25-26)

Gildon justifies his claim to the importance of action with a pair of anecdotes from Plutarch. The first tells how Demosthenes, having learnt the importance of using the ‘proper Tone, Mien and Gesture’ from the actor Satyrus, improved as a public speaker (27). The second recounts what Cicero learned from the actors Aesopus and Roscius. Gildon then connects action with character, arguing that ‘the Action of a Player is that, which is agreeable to Personation, or the Subject he represents’. In this way, ‘An *Actor* [...] must vary with his Argument, that is, carry the Person in all his Manners and Qualities with him in every Action and Passion’ (33-34). This pairing of action with passion leads to a discussion of the power of feeling, for it is, in Gildon’s view, only when the actor feels that his action truly becomes ‘Life’ (25).

Gildon’s example for this is Elizabeth Barry, who ‘always enters into her Part, and is the Person she represents’, to the point that she is unable to say ‘Ah! Poor Castalio!’ in Otway’s *The Orphan* ‘without weeping’ (40). The action of her tears, so affecting for an audience, arises from her power to submerge herself in the part she has to play. Not all performers can reach such heights, however, and Gildon offers several means by which ‘the larger share of the Professors of this Art [of Acting]’ could improve their performances (41). These include: an injunction always to be engaged in ‘Observation’ (41), and a list of ready-made movements of the eyes, hands and other limbs, some of them drawn from Quintilian (47-48). Specific actions can be learnt through the use of a looking glass, which, again, has its classical precedent in the

training of Demosthenes (54).

By connecting so much of his advice to classical models, Gildon lends weight to his subject, and, since many of these models, like Demosthenes and Cicero, are drawn from the history of oratory, also connects the stage with more respectable public professions. When advising the actor how best to achieve a ‘Variety of Countenance’ (62), Gildon turns, however, to a different source, an anecdote recorded by the seventeenth-century theologian and astrologer Jacques Gaffarel, which Betterton – able to read French, if not Latin or Greek – is supposed to have encountered in his studies.

I remember that some Years ago, I read a *French* Book written by one *Gaffarel* a Monk; who tells us, that when he was at *Rome* he went to see *Campanella* in the Inquisition, and found him making abundance of Faces; that he at first imagin’d, that those proceeded from the Torments he had undergone in the *Ecclesiastical Slaughter-House*; but he soon undeceiv’d him, by enquiring what sort of Countenance such a Cardinal had, to whom he had just before sent; for he was forming his Countenance, as much as he could, to what he knew of his, that he might know what his Answer wou’d be. (62)

Gildon uses this text to suggest how an actor might also, like Campanella, construct his character from the outside in. To be more specific, he sees the actor using an ‘Account of [the] Features and Looks’ of the ‘Hero’ he is to play as a basis for his impersonation. Once actors mimicked the facial expressions of their models, then, with their ‘very Countenance so chang’d [...] they would not only have other Thoughts, but raise others in the Audience’ (63).

Gaffarel’s description of Campanella had already appeared one year earlier in Gildon’s seventh volume supplement to Rowe’s edition of Shakespeare. In that text, though, Gildon used it as a measure of genius, concluding the anecdote with the observation that ‘if the forming our outward figure cou’d be of such use, as to make us think like another,’ then ‘when the Imagination proceeds by its own Strength, and Force to liken the Soul as well as the Body, it must have a wonderful Effect. But this cannot be done but by a great *Genius*’.<sup>45</sup> The ‘Genius’ in question is, of course, Shakespeare, as the submerged quotation from *Hamlet*’s ‘Hecuba’ speech makes

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45 Charles Gildon, ‘An Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England’, in *The Works of William Shakespear: Volume the Seventh*, ed. by Charles Gildon (London: Curll, 1710), pp. i – lxvii (p. lvi).

clear ('Is it not monstrous that this player here, | [...] Could force his soul so to his own conceit [...] ?'). Yet while Shakespeare is able to create character through the reframing of his soul, the idea that visual representations of a character's features are of use to someone wishing to engage with dramatic text has larger ramifications, especially as regards one much-debated aspect of Rowe's edition: his use of engravings.

Peter Holland, in the introduction to his reissue of Rowe's edition of Shakespeare, presents the standard line that the work's illustrations 'For the most part [...] derive their visual vocabulary from contemporary performance'. In particular, the 'startling image for *The Tempest* [...] is remarkably close to the opening stage-direction for the operatic version of the play by Thomas Shadwell' and that for *Hamlet*, which shows the Ghost appearing to Hamlet during his interview with Gertrude, includes a fallen chair and so alludes to a piece of stage business made famous by Betterton.<sup>46</sup> Holland also, however, concedes that certain images seem to have little to do with the stage: the illustration to *Much Ado* recalls Anthony van Dyck, *Henry VIII's* is indebted to Hans Holbein and *Coriolanus's* to Nicolas Poussin.<sup>47</sup> More recent work on Rowe's edition has emphasised such a distance between the printed images and the stage, focussing instead on the experience of the reader. Stuart Sillars and Iakovos Vasiliou, writing as art historians, argue that while the *Tempest* engraving may 'draw some of its elements from the theatre, and others from earlier painting, it develops them to produce an image that derives meaning from its integrity as a print and its placement within a book'.<sup>48</sup> Either through 'the development of an earlier tradition of allusion' or 'by moving towards narrative realism', all the edition's engravings 'forthrightly reject direct representation of stage action'.<sup>49</sup> J. Gavin Paul offers a similar point to Sillars and Vasiliou in his *Shakespeare and the Imprints of Performance*.

In no way can the engravings be understood to recapture or freeze performance, but what they offer is a kind of portal through which to conceptualize the interpretive space between disparate modes of realisation.<sup>50</sup>

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46 Peter Holland, 'Introduction', in *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), pp. i – xxx (pp. xxi–ii).

47 Holland, 'Introduction', p. xxii.

48 Stuart Sillars and Iakovos Vasiliou, *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709-1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 57.

49 Sillars and Vasiliou, p. 67.

50 J. Gavin Paul, *Shakespeare and the Imprints of Performance*, History of Text Technologies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 89.



Paul's judgment is of a piece with the rest of his reading of Rowe, which sees the editor's many interventions to force Shakespeare's text into conformity with the norms of early eighteenth-century printed drama as resulting in a piquant irony. Rowe's addition of stage directions, regularised speech headings, act and scene divisions, and so on, are all 'strategies for enabling readers to engage with, and imagine, printed playtexts *as drama*' but which also 'gave them a literary form that misrepresented performance in fundamental ways'.<sup>51</sup>

A careful reading of Gildon offers, however, another way of understanding the illustrations to Rowe's edition. The Gaffarel anecdote, on the importance of using visual prompts to identify with (and, for the actor, personate) characters, includes a discussion of the utility of painting.

The studying History-Painting would be very useful on this Occasion, because the Knowledge of the Figure and Lineaments of the Represented (and in History-Pieces almost all, who are represented are to be found) will teach the Actor to vary and change his Figure, which would make him not always the same, as I have said, in all Parts, but his very Countenance so chang'd, that they would not only have other Thoughts themselves, but raise others in the Audience. (63)

Rowe's inclusion of images in his edition – particularly, as Holland and Sillars note, images with a connection to what Gildon calls 'History-Pieces' (Holbein, Poussin, Van Dyck) – may be understood as a way of encouraging his readers to engage with the characters of the plays in the same way as Gildon proposes his actors should. If this is true, then there is a theatrical aspect to Rowe's illustrations. These images represent the kind of pictorial model Gildon's needy actor could use to guide his performance. Rowe's reader is presented thus with what Gildon considered the foundational elements for the study of a part: an image of the hero from which to draw out his character in all its action, and Shakespeare's text for all that figure's utterance.

To put it another way, one might say that Rowe's inclusion of such images offers the kind of image that Gildon, a little later in the 'action' section of the *Life*, would have the actors imitate on the stage.

I would not be misunderstood, when I say you must wholly place your Eyes on the Person or Persons you are engag'd with on Stage; I mean,

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51 J. Gavin Paul, p. 85.

that at the same time both Parties keep such a Position in Regard of the Audience, that even these Beauties escape not their Observation, tho never so justly directed. As in a Piece of History-Painting, tho the figures direct their Eyes never so directly to each other, yet the Beholder, by the Advantage of their Position has a full View of the Expression of the Soul in the Eyes of the Figures. (67)

The play of looks described here is observable in many of Rowe's engravings, including a detail from that which heads Rowe's *Antony and Cleopatra* (see Figure 1), even if its quality is far below that of the works that Gildon uses to illustrate his own point, such as Charles-Antoine Coypel's *Cupid Abandoning Psyche*.

Having established how paintings might guide performers, Gildon continues with other strategies that the actor could employ to further his or her expression of emotions. As before when presenting the importance of action to the speeches of Cicero and Demosthenes, Gildon turns again to classical tradition. First, he tells the story of Polus, who 'oblig'd to act *Electra* carrying the suppos'd Urn of her Brother *Orestes*, [...] went to the Grave of his own beloved Child, and brings his Urn on' (68-69). He then follows this with the example of the 'famous and wealthy Player *Aesopus*' who applied 'his Art to the recalling of *Cicero* from banishment', performing verses on the exile of Telemon with inflammatory power thanks to the way in which 'the real Sufferings of his Friend so affected him' (69). Taken together, Polus and Aesopus show us that the actor 'ought to form in his Mind a very strong Idea of the Subject of his Passion, and then the Passion itself will not fail to follow' (70). This technique, Gildon notes, 'is express'd in *Shakespear's Hamlet* admirably well, and should be often consider'd by our young Players'.

*Ham.* Is it not monstrous that the Player here,  
But in a Fiction, in a Dream of Passion,  
Could force his Soul so to his whole Conceit,  
That from her working all his Visage warm'd,  
Tears in his Eyes, Distraction in his Aspect;  
A broken Voice, and his whole Function suiting  
With Forms to his Conceit? And all for nothing!  
For HECUBA!  
What's HECUBA to him, or he to HECUBA,  
That he should weep for her? What wou'd he do  
Had he the Motive, and the Cue for Passion  
That I have? He would drown the Stage with Tears;

And cleave the general Ear with horrid Speech;  
 Make mad the Guilty and appal the Free;  
 Confound the Ignorant and amaze indeed  
 The very Faculty of Eyes and Ears. (70)

Gildon's first comment on this speech is that it shows 'that our *Shakespeare* had a just Notion of Acting, whatever his Performance was', not least because – as with Hamlet's advice to the players – these lines constitute for Gildon a remarkable compression of acting theory, holding within them 'almost all that can be said of Action, Looks and Gesture' (70-71). Shakespeare is, in other words, an exceptional theorist of acting 'whatever his Performance was'. This trailing doubt about Shakespeare's skill on the stage probably refers back to Rowe's edition and its biography of the dramatist, where he recorded that the Ghost was 'the top of his Performance' and that Shakespeare's 'admirable Wit, and the natural Turn of it to the Stage, soon distinguish'd him, if not as an extraordinary Actor, yet as an excellent Writer'.<sup>52</sup>

As Gildon unpacks the 'Hecuba' speech, he offers both paraphrase and a general reading, all while maintaining once more a careful blend of Shakespeare's thought into Hamlet's through the use of the pronoun 'he'. Thus, 'in the first seven Lines he seems to have expressed all the Duties of a Player in a great Passion' but 'in the following seven he derives a yet stronger Action when the Object of grief is real' (71). The speech's development, from imaginary to real objects, is then positioned as something which 'justifies what the Ancients practis'd in heightning their Theatrical Sorrow, by fixing the mind on real objects'. With this phrase, Gildon does something unusual: Shakespeare's writing comes to *justify* the classical examples of Polus and Aesopus. Shakespeare is placed among the ancient sources as another authority and, indeed, occupies a more prominent position than they in that these lines from *Hamlet* make explicit what was previously implicit in the history of the 'Ancients'.

Classical authority is central to Gildon's use of Shakespeare in general. In a long essay entitled 'The Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England' that forms the bulk of Gildon's supplement to Rowe's edition, he examines each of Shakespeare's plays according to neo-Aristotelian dramatic theory. While the conclusions are hardly surprising – Gildon finds Shakespeare's plots unwieldy but his 'Sentiments' and 'Manners' unsurpassed – Peter Holland identifies that this

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<sup>52</sup> Rowe, I, p. vi.

essay's 'careful attempt to identify the worth of Shakespeare by continual and sustained comparison with the best classical drama' is striking in that it 'does not seek to place Shakespeare in relation to other English dramatists' since 'in this category his supremacy is assured.'<sup>53</sup> The same might be said of Gildon's *Life*, which draws from Shakespeare and classical theorists only, making no mention of, for instance, Richard Flecknoe's *Discourse on the English Stage* (1664), perhaps due to its unavailability.

A distinction between Gildon's two texts, however, lies in the fact that the Shakespeare of volume seven is judged according to an Aristotelian framework, while, in the *Life*, it is Shakespeare (ventriloquised by Betterton, ventriloquised by Gildon) who judges. Gildon's 'Progress of the Stage' divides into sections based on such Aristotelian concepts as 'Fable', 'Action', 'Manners' and 'Sentiment', while his acting treatise is organised around Shakespearian 'Action and Utterance'. Shakespeare is allowed to dictate terms in the *Life*, while Rowe's edition tends to force his work into predefined moulds, whether it be Gildon's neoclassical categories in the seventh volume or the norms of Restoration printed drama adopted by Rowe in the other six. Shakespeare, it would appear, has a different role to play in works for the library and works for the stage. Theatrical tradition is still separate from textual. Yet despite this distinction, there are nevertheless many affinities between these works: both Rowe's edition and Gildon's acting manual see Shakespeare as a writer for the theatre first ('whatever his Performance'), and both raise him to a position of authority – as they raise his ghost and Betterton's – in order to connect the great actor and great author to the contemporary concerns of the early eighteenth-century stage.

## II. Editing Performance

In Gildon's *Life*, and in Rowe's edition (particularly with the supplemental seventh volume), Shakespeare is set apart, elevated over all the other English dramatists, and, in the nascent domain of acting theory, a source not just of good roles to play but also useful 'Precepts' with which to teach how such parts should be performed.<sup>54</sup> To a similar but lesser degree, Betterton is also set apart in Rowe's edition and epilogue, in Steele's *Tatler* article, and in Gildon's various writings. None has Betterton's affinity with Shakespeare, none understood or performed Hamlet as well as he, and no other offered such an impeccable model of social responsibility. But the elevation

<sup>53</sup> Holland, 'Introduction', p. xxvi.

<sup>54</sup> Shakespeare and Gildon, ed. Gildon, p. 410.

of Shakespeare and of Betterton is only one half of the work of these texts. Greatness is defined against mediocrity, or worse. Bad acting and bad writing are as much a concern of editorial and acting theory as more shining examples of performing and versifying, for judgement and instruction entail the balancing of beauties against faults.

In the period following Betterton's death in 1710, the mediocrity of the professional stage was a pressing concern. Gildon's *Life of Betterton* and Steele's *Tatler* articles attest to this, in their efforts to encourage, on one hand, greater aristocratic support for actors and, on the other, a greater sense of theatrical professionalism. As Willems notes, however, the period from 1710 to Garrick's début at the start of the 1740s 'brings nothing new in theatrical terms'.<sup>55</sup> Contemporaries were painfully aware of this. Lewis Theobald, the future editor of Shakespeare, wrote in the eighty-seventh issue of his *Censor* periodical that 'the *Art of Acting* is shrunk to a very low Ebb', since while 'we may boast in this Time, some few of the Profession eminent for their Success in particular Characters', there is none who excels since 'a compleat and accomplish'd *Actor*, like *Proteus*, should be a Master of all Shapes.'<sup>56</sup>

While the stage was at 'a very low Ebb', the 1720s and 1730s in particular saw a great deal of editorial activity. In 1725, Alexander Pope published his edition of Shakespeare's plays. It was subjected to rigorous critique by Theobald in his *Shakespeare Restored* of 1726, a work which won its author both a place in the first edition of the *Dunciad* and a contract with the Tonson publishing house to produce a new edition of Shakespeare, appearing in 1733. Theobald's edition included notes written by William Warburton, who, becoming Pope's literary executor upon the poet's death in 1744, would publish his own edition of Shakespeare in 1747, continuing and expanding work first undertaken with Theobald in the 1730s. Of these three editors, Pope and Warburton share a common prejudice against performance, a suspicion of the influence of actors with regard to the creation and transmission of Shakespeare's text.<sup>57</sup> This approach, hostile to the idea of an independent theatrical tradition, begins with Pope.<sup>58</sup>

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55 '[N]'apporte rien de neuf sur le plan théâtral'. Willems, p. 40.

56 Lewis Theobald, 'Saturday, May 11th (no. 87)', in *The Censor*, 3 vols (London: Brown, 1717), III, 174–82 (p. 176).

57 One might also group the 'Oxford' edition of Thomas Hanmer (1743) with Pope's and Warburton's.

58 For a more detailed version of the following argument, see: James Harriman-Smith, 'The Anti-Performance Prejudice of Shakespeare's Eighteenth-Century Editors', *Restoration and*

Pope's preface to his edition opens with praise of his subject's 'excellencies' before accepting the presence of 'almost as great defects'.<sup>59</sup> These 'defects' are due to the fact that Shakespeare wrote plays, or, to use Pope's term, 'Stage-Poetry'.<sup>60</sup> This peculiar portmanteau word both indicates the editor's textual heritage and his authority – as a poet himself – over the material in hand. For Pope, the defining quality of 'Stage-Poetry' is its being 'more particularly levell'd to please the general populace, and its success more immediately depending upon the *Common Suffrage*' than any other kind of literature.<sup>61</sup> He claims this as a universal quality of all writing for the theatre, albeit one that leads to particular problems for Shakespeare.

Pope alleges that this writer, working at a time when the 'Audience was generally composed of the meaner sort of people',<sup>62</sup> found himself obliged to write badly to please his public's uncultivated taste, at least until 'the encouragement of the Court' gave him more financial stability.<sup>63</sup> According to this logic, the 'Stage-' part of Shakespeare's 'Stage-Poetry' was a limit to his genius, resulting in 'great defects'. This is the core of Pope's editorial anti-theatricality: those passages that are not up to his high standards are claimed as either sops to an uneducated public or, worse, the product of a mind whose own judgment has been corrupted by association with those players who 'live by the majority' and 'know no rule but that of pleasing the present humour'.<sup>64</sup> Recognizing the double existence of a work of drama on stage and page, the former is castigated as an environment that exposes the poet to the dictates of a depraved taste, even to the point that when the plays come to be printed, they reproduce the undesirable results of that association.

Actors are at fault in the transmission of Shakespeare's work in other ways as well. Pope accuses the First Folio editors, John Hemmings and Henry Condell, for instance, of making many errors in the preparation of their edition, almost all of them attributable to the fact that they were in fact no more than 'players', whose efforts are marred by the 'ignorance' and 'impertinence' that characterises those who perform 'Stage-Poetry'.<sup>65</sup> As well as during the preparation of the text, Pope also suspects that

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*Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*, 29 (2015), 47–62.

59 Alexander Pope, 'The Preface of the Editor', in *The Works of Shakespear in Six Volumes*, 6 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1725), I, pp. i – xxiv (p. iv).

60 Pope, I, p. v.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Pope, I, p. vii.

64 Ibid.

65 Pope, I, p. xxi.

‘defects’ were introduced in the heat of performance. A footnote to *Henry VI Part 1*, on Bedford’s apparently imperfect line at the end of the first scene (now read as an interruption), examines this possibility.

BEDFORD A far more glorious start thy soul will make  
Than Julius Caesar, or bright—

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I can’t guess the occasion of the Hemystic, and imperfect sense, in this place; ’tis not impossible it might have been fill’d up with—Francis Drake—tho’ that were a terrible anachronism (as bad as Hector’s quoting Aristotle in *Troil. and Cress.*) yet perhaps, at the time that brave Englishman was in his glory, to an English-hearted audience, and pronounced by some favourite Actor, the thing might be popular, though not judicious; and therefore by some Critic, in favour of the author, afterwards struck out. But this is a mere slight conjecture.<sup>66</sup>

Simon Jarvis remarks that this footnote represents a rare moment of editorial conjecture for Pope,<sup>67</sup> but the real interest of these lines lies in their capturing in miniature Pope’s own method with respect to the stage.

The anonymous ‘Critic’ has apparently recognised both the same dangerous connection between ‘Stage-Poetry’ and the desire to please that Pope describes in his preface. By excising the line, the ‘Critic’ has accomplished, ‘in favour of the author,’ a more extreme version of Pope’s own modifications to Shakespeare’s text. These modifications include displacement of inferior passages to the bottom of each page, or – in rare cases – the placement of ‘a mark of reprobation’ (†††) at the head of scenes either ‘written by Shakespear’ or ‘interpolated by the Players’, which are ‘compos’d of the lowest and most trifling conceits to be accounted for only from the gross taste of the age he liv’d in’.<sup>68</sup> As Paul has shown, Pope’s method of distinguishing passages corrupted in performance is rich in irony: Pope’s symbols and rearrangements are continuously drawing attention to that which he would rather exclude entirely.<sup>69</sup>

Pope’s notes and markings also serve another purpose, however. In both his note to

66 William Shakespeare, *The Works of Shakespear in Six Volumes*, ed. by Alexander Pope, 6 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1725), IV, p. 7.

67 Simon Jarvis, ‘Alexander Pope’, in *Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Malone*, ed. by Claude Julien Rawson, *Great Shakespearians* (London: Continuum, 2010), I, pp. 66–114 (p. 90).

68 Shakespeare, ed. Pope, I, p. 157.

69 J. Gavin Paul, p. 94.

Bedford's speech and his equivocation as to whether scenes carrying 'a mark of reprobation' were either 'written by Shakespear' or 'interpolated by the Players', Pope shows how willing he is to use the theatre as a scapegoat for faults otherwise attributable only to Shakespeare. The clearest example of this comes in a comment on *Julius Caesar*.

*1 Pleb.* Methinks there is much reason in his sayings,  
If thoust consider rightly of the matter,  
Caesar has had great wrong.\*

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\* *Caesar* has had great wrong.

*3 Pleb.* *Caesar* had never wrong, but with just cause.

If ever there was such a line written by Shakespear, I shou'd fancy it might have its place here, and very humorously in the character of a Plebeian. One might believe Ben Johnson's remark was made upon no better credit than some blunder of an actor in speaking that verse near the beginning of the third act,

Know Caesar doth not wrong, nor without cause  
Will he be satisfy'd

But the verse as cited by Ben Johnson [*sic*] does not connect with – Will be satisfy'd. Perhaps this play was never printed in Ben Johnson's time, and so he had nothing to judge by, but as the actor pleas'd to speak it.<sup>70</sup>

Here, lines mocked by Jonson in his *Timber* (1630), but nowhere to be found in Pope's copytext, are taken as the 'blunder' of a player, and so proof in miniature once more of how the vagaries of performance have damaged Shakespeare's transmission.

The faults that Pope finds in *Henry VI Part 1*, *Julius Caesar* and elsewhere are part of a phenomenon of interpolation and alteration he identifies in his preface with help from no other source than Shakespeare himself. Arguing that the First Folio contains more errors than the Quartos published before it, Pope quotes from *Hamlet* to make his point.

For whatever had been added since those Quartos by the actors, or had been stolen from their mouths into the written parts, were from thence conveyed into the printed text and all stand charged upon the Author. He himself complained of this usage in *Hamlet*, where he wishes that *those*

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70 Shakespeare, ed. Pope, v, p. 261.



*who play the Clowns wou'd speak no more than is set down for them.*<sup>71</sup>

These are the same lines quoted by Steele and Gildon as a foundation for the judgement and training of actors. Here, though, Hamlet's words serve a different purpose. They do not encourage improvement but rather diagnose a disease. As Jarvis has shown, this is a disease that enables the editor: any line of Shakespeare's text that Pope judges unworthy of him can be attributed to the players and thus opened to the editor's corrections.<sup>72</sup> Shakespeare's Dane thus offers an editorial principle – the presumption of material added in performance – as much as a practical theatrical warning to the clowns.

While Pope presumes the corruption of Shakespeare's text in the theatre, he also locates that corruption in the past. He writes unflatteringly (and inaccurately)<sup>73</sup> of how 'the best Playhouses were Inns and Taverns' and the 'mere Players, not Gentlemen of the Stage'. This is a stark contrast to the 'advantages' actors such as Betterton now enjoy, including 'an intimacy (not to say dearness) with people of the first condition'.<sup>74</sup> This is an important assertion in the context of the 'low Ebb' of English theatre identified by Theobald: Pope's praise of contemporary noble involvement in drama recalls the arguments made by Steele and Gildon a decade earlier for the necessity of aristocratic support for the theatres. Yet this passage also raises a larger concern: the question of whether the stage is itself independently capable of repairing the damage it has caused to the art of writing.

In Pope's preface, actors are responsible for nothing good. '[P]eople of the first condition' have improved the stage from the outside, and editors like himself have recovered Shakespeare's true intentions and corrected damage done by players of the past. This position is not exclusive to Pope. While Theobald critiqued much of his predecessor's work in *Shakespeare Restored*, he does not question this larger point of the stage's dependence on others for correction. Explaining his choice of *Hamlet* as a testing ground for his talents as an editor, Theobald observes that while 'we might

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71 Pope, I, p. xvi.

72 Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearean Textual Criticism and Representations of Scholarly Labour, 1725-1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 53.

73 For a contemporary counter to Pope's portrayal of Shakespeare's actors, see: John Roberts, 'An Answer to Mr Pope's Preface to Shakespear in a Letter to a Friend, Being A Vindication of the Old Actors Who Were the Publishers and Performers of That Author's Plays', in *Shakespeare Restored 1726 and An Answer to Mr Pope's Preface to Shakespeare 1729* (London: Garland, 1974).

74 Pope, I, p. xix.

presume it the most purg'd and free from Faults and Obscurity' because of its frequent performance, it remains 'not without very gross Corruptions'.<sup>75</sup> A play's popularity in the theatre (like its having received Pope's ministrations) is no guarantee of its textual purity. As with *Hamlet*, so with *Macbeth*, whose reference to the 'scorch'd [*sic*] snake', Theobald notes, 'has all along pass'd current thro' the Editions, and likewise upon the stage; and yet, I dare affirm, is not our Author's Reading. What has a snake, closing again, to do with its being scorch'd?'.<sup>76</sup>

Beyond Theobald, the same concerns about the transmission of Shakespeare on the stage appear in an article by William Popple that was published in the *Prompter* in late May 1735. This piece aims to counter contemporary theatrical performance of Polonius as one who 'never *looks* or *speaks* but the Fool *stares* out of his *Eyes*, and is *marked* in the *Tone* of his *Voice*'.<sup>77</sup> With close attention to Shakespeare's text, Popple shows that the character is in fact 'a *Man of most excellent Understanding and great Knowledge of the World*', one 'whose Ridicule arises not from any *radical Folly* [...] but a certain *Affectation of Formality and Method*'.<sup>78</sup> Popple compares the persistence of the clownish Polonius to a kind of pollution: 'A *Character falsified*, like a stream of poisoned Water, instead of nourishing *kills* and *destroys* everything it runs thro''.<sup>79</sup> The article attributes the phenomenon to the fact that actors and managers, lacking 'Penetration enough to dive into the *Truth of Character*', were 'content to receive it from tradition and MISACT it'.<sup>80</sup>

In the examples taken above from Theobald's *Shakespeare Restored*, Pope's preface and notes, and Popple's *Prompter* article, the theatre is considered not with respect to its star performers, but to the mass of other actors and managers. These figures, unlike Betterton, are anonymous, faceless players, whose presence is only felt in terms of an inherited deviation away from Shakespeare's intention. For the more sanguine of these writers, such as Popple, or, before him, Rowe and Gildon, such players can always rise to distinction through the same careful study of the text as Betterton was reputed to undertake, along with – in Popple's case – the cultivation of

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75 Lewis Theobald, *Shakespeare Restored; or, A Specimen of the Many Errors, as Well Committed, as Unamended* (1726), *Eighteenth-Century Shakespeare*, 5 (London: Cass, 1971), p. vii.

76 Theobald, p. 185.

77 Quoted in: *William Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Brian Vickers, The Critical Heritage Series, 6 vols (London: Routledge, 1995), III, p. 24.

78 Vickers, III, p. 23.

79 Vickers, III, p. 21.

80 *Ibid.*

‘Penetration enough to dive into the *Truth of Character*’. For others, however, such improvement was impossible. This less optimistic view appears in Warburton’s editorial work, throughout which the figure of the uneducated actor is repeatedly blamed for apparent damage to the text.

In a note contributed to Theobald’s 1733 edition, Warburton asserted that lines in *Henry VI Part 3* were ‘certainly introduced by some shallow-pated conceited fellow of the scene’.<sup>81</sup> When he came to publish his own edition in 1747, this Popean suspicion of interpolation grew much stronger. The phrase ‘caught the water, tho’ not the fish’ (now accepted by modern editors) in *The Winter’s Tale* is, for example, ‘a most stupid interpolation of some player’;<sup>82</sup> while a gap in a speech in *Henry IV Part I* has been caused by ‘some player’ who, ‘thinking the speech too long, struck it out’;<sup>83</sup> and, in *Henry V*, the King of France’s memory of the Black Prince ‘up in the air crown’d with the golden sun’ is dismissed as ‘a nonsensical line of some player’.<sup>84</sup> The formula is also varied into ‘some senseless player’ (found in a note to *As You Like It*),<sup>85</sup> ‘some foolish conceited player’ (*All’s Well that Ends Well*),<sup>86</sup> ‘some profligate player’ (*Winter’s Tale*),<sup>87</sup> ‘some foolish player’ (*Henry IV Part 2*),<sup>88</sup> and ‘some simple conceited player’ (*Henry VI Part 3*).<sup>89</sup>

All these examples may be read as variations on Pope’s own anti-theatrical attitudes, but the repeated adjectival use of ‘some’, by denying any specificity to the performer, actually extends Pope’s critique. If Pope points out the particular problems of writing ‘Stage-Poetry’ when Shakespeare was alive, he also points to the specific theatrical conditions and performers of that past time. Warburton, on the other hand, keeps his players faceless: they are interchangeable, all vain, all ignorant, and so always – whatever the time or place, whatever the prevailing taste – likely to fail at rendering Shakespeare’s work. The prejudice here is thus much stronger: the staged element is not just a potentially dangerous connection to contemporary tastes, but always an

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81 William Shakespeare, *The Works of Shakespeare in Seven Volumes*, ed. by Lewis Theobald, 7 vols (London: Bettesworth, Hitch, J. Tonson, Clay, Feales, and Wellington, 1733), IV, p. 391.

82 William Shakespeare, *The Works of Shakespear in Eight Volumes*, ed. by William Warburton and Alexander Pope, 8 vols (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1747), III, p. 376.

83 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, IV, p. 119.

84 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, IV, p. 353.

85 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, II, p. 386.

86 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, III, p. 10.

87 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, III, p. 287.

88 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, IV, p. 291.

89 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, V, p. 206.

invitation to corruption of the text and with it, Shakespeare's own intentions. There will always be, to quote a Shakespearian use of 'some', 'some squeaking Cleopatra' to ruin the author's intended effect.<sup>90</sup>

Warburton's earliest note of this kind, imagining lines 'introduced by some shallow-pated conceited fellow of the scene', is not so much a reference to *Antony and Cleopatra* as it is an echo of *Hamlet*. In the 'Hecuba' speech, Hamlet is offended 'to the soul' when he hears a 'periwig pated fellow tear a passion to tatters', and Warburton's additional use of 'conceited' may well also be drawn from the speech's earlier description of an actor forcing 'his soul so to his own conceit'.<sup>91</sup> It would seem that Warburton, like Pope, draws editorial assumptions from Shakespeare's oeuvre. Whether this editor had these lines in his mind in 1733 or not, his own edition of 1747 pays an unprecedented (among editors) attention to Hamlet's exchanges with the players, focussing especially on the joint rendition, by Hamlet and the First Player, of a speech describing 'Priam's slaughter'.

Warburton is concerned here with recovering Shakespeare's intentions. He argues in a long note that both Pope and Dryden were wrong to consider this speech and its subsequent discussion as 'ironical'.<sup>92</sup> Noting that Hamlet describes the source of the player's performance in such a way that it appears 'the justest picture of a good tragedy, wrote on the ancient rules',<sup>93</sup> Warburton then insists on how seemingly successful such drama was at moving Hamlet emotionally, as evinced by the prince's words in his 'Hecuba' speech.

Since Shakespeare has chosen to stage a scene in which apparently classical drama succeeds with both Hamlet and the Player who acts it (while 'the foolish *Polonius* is tired with it'),<sup>94</sup> then Warburton ultimately comes to suggest that the whole sequence proves how Shakespeare was 'desirous [...] of restoring the chastness [*sic*] and regularity of the ancient stage', and that, to do so, he wrote a 'Tragedy on the model of the *Greek* drama'.<sup>95</sup> This long-lost play (the mirror opposite of *Double Falsehood / Cardenio*, published by Theobald in 1728) was the source of the 'Priam's slaughter' speech, which was moved to *Hamlet* as a way for Shakespeare to

90 William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by John Wilders, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 121–60 (p. 157) (V.2.219).

91 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, VIII, p. 178.

92 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, VIII, p. 267.

93 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, VIII, p. 268.

94 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, VIII, p. 269.

95 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, VIII, p. 272.

take ‘revenge upon his Audience’ who had rejected performance of the entire work.<sup>96</sup>

This remarkable conjecture vanishes from the editorial tradition immediately after its appearance. It nevertheless represents a moment of connection between editing and acting theory, for Warburton, as part of his argument, is brought to portray Shakespeare – as Gildon before him had done – in the guise and company of classical authority. Warburton argues, for instance, that Shakespeare would only show Hamlet and the Player moved by the speech if it were more than empty bombast, since ‘Nature and *Horace* both instructed [Shakespeare], *si vis me flere, dolendum est | Primum ipsi tibi [...]*’. Horace’s dictum – that ‘if you wish me to cry, you must first feel grief yourself’, from his *Ars Poetica* – is also Shakespeare’s.<sup>97</sup> The playwright has integrated classical principle into his writing, and, on top of this, a principle found not just in instructions to poets but also in those to actors.<sup>98</sup>

Slightly further on, still justifying the effect of the speech as recorded in Hamlet’s ‘Hecuba’ soliloquy, Warburton claims that ‘*Shakespear* has here shewn the effects which a fine description of Nature [...] had upon an intelligent player, whose business habituates him to enter intimately and deeply into the characters of men and manners, and to give nature its free working on all occasions’.<sup>99</sup> In these lines, Warburton offers a striking description, via Shakespeare, of the ideal actor, something he picks up on in another aside when he remarks that contemporary actors could use Hamlet’s ‘Hecuba’ speech to guide both how the ‘Priam’s slaughter’ speech ‘ought to be spoken, and what appearance *Hamlet* ought to assume during the recital’.<sup>100</sup>

The Hamlet Warburton may have had in mind as he wrote these lines was David Garrick, who kept up a correspondence with the editor over much of his career: a sign that while Warburton did not hesitate to attack the rank and file of the stage, he was still able to appreciate its stars.<sup>101</sup> At the same time, however, perhaps the most salient feature of Warburton’s long note is its eccentricity. It is a note that only Warburton, steeped in the classics and, elsewhere, portraying Shakespeare’s text as

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96 Ibid.

97 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, VIII, p. 269.

98 ‘The Actor, doubtless, is as strongly ty’d down to the Rules of Horace, as the Writer.’ Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian, With an Historical View of the Stage During His Own Time* (London: Watts, 1740), p. 62.

99 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, VIII, p. 270.

100 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, VIII, p. 271.

101 Cunningham, pp. 47–48.

victim to the interpolations of common actors far below the level of the Player described by Hamlet, could make.

Such idiosyncrasy is inevitable in the early editions of Shakespeare. All this period's editors were hired on the basis of their personal cachet: Rowe (and Gildon) were both reasonably successful dramatists, well placed to prepare and comment on the works of a playwright whose fame was still being negotiated. Pope, fresh from the success of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* translations, brought a ready-made audience of subscribers to his edition of 'Stage-Poetry'. Even Theobald's hiring came as a result of the controversy between himself and Pope, which he continues in the pages of his own edition, casting aspersions on his 'sand-blind' predecessors as either 'player' or 'poetical editors'.<sup>102</sup>

The importance accorded to the editor's personal touch leads to an uncomfortable parallel between the page and the stage at this time: Pope is, in many ways, a star editor in the way that Betterton was a star performer, and not a disinterested scholar. Worse, and as Simon Jarvis has shown, the editor could even come to resemble the darker side of the acting profession, to be not so much a Betterton, but yet another person with little talent of his or her own trying to make money through the use of Shakespeare's text. Theobald in particular is targeted by Warburton for this, in a set of comments that focus on his pedantic attention to punctuation. With notes that draw ironic attention to 'A comma set here exactly right, by Mr Theobald', Warburton implicitly compares his predecessor to the first player-editors of Shakespeare, whose only contributions (as Pope had argued) were inconsequential changes to their sources.<sup>103</sup> In the decades following Betterton's death, the 'low Ebb' of acting identified in writing about the theatre thus also has its spectral counterpart in editorial activity: a fear that the editor's own performance may, even as it foregrounds a combat against the deleterious effects of stage transmission, itself be subjecting Shakespeare to the same kind of treatment as that associated with the worst of the players.

### III. Blended Imagination

Faced with the cruces of the old copies of Shakespeare, the editors of the first half of the eighteenth century imagine what could have caused such corruption, frequently

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<sup>102</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Theobald, v, p. 286.

<sup>103</sup> Jarvis, p. 116.

hypothesising the interpolation of players. In a negative vein, they reconstruct the performance history of Shakespeare's work so that faceless generations of actors become both the nemesis and *raison d'être* of the editor. Text must overcome performance. Some of this pessimism occurs in acting theory of the period between Betterton and Garrick as well: actors and theatre managers now need instruction, in the hope that this will give rise to a true 'Proteus' (a term already used by Flecknoe of Richard Burbage),<sup>104</sup> capable of leading a stage desperately in need of patronage and so unable to serve society as it ought.

Such pessimism is, however, balanced by a more constructive use of performance, the idea that, rather than requiring correction and instruction, the world of the theatre can in fact offer it. Theobald, in one of his edition's many hits against Pope, seeks, for instance, to reappraise Shakespeare's association with the players as part of a plea for our 'indulgence'.

The ease and sweetness of his temper might not a little contribute to his facility in writing; as his employment as a player, gave him an advantage and habit of fancying himself the very character he meant to delineate. He used the helps of his function in forming himself to create and express that sublime, which other actors can only copy, and throw out, in action and graceful attitude.<sup>105</sup>

In this passage, Theobald grants the stage a crucial role in Shakespeare's development. His words echo Gildon's description, inspired by the Gaffarell anecdote and Hamlet's 'Hecuba' speech, of how 'Imagination' might proceed 'by its own strength, and Force to liken the Soul as well as the Body', to 'wonderful Effect'.<sup>106</sup> As in Gildon, such an ability to refashion one's character remains, however, the sole property of genius, and Theobald is careful to note that 'other actors can only copy' the 'sublime' which Shakespeare, in a supercharged version of their art, creates.

Yet the crucial point here is that Shakespeare's genius can be understood as nourished by the stage and not (as in Pope and Warburton) hampered by it. That Theobald would make this argument may well be due to the fact that he himself, before turning his hand to editing, had written of and for the London patent theatres

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104 Bate, *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, p. 164.

105 Lewis Theobald, 'The Preface', in *The Works of Shakespeare in Seven Volumes*, 7 vols (London: Bettesworth, Hitch, J. Tonson, Clay, Feales, and Wellington, 1733), I, pp. i – lxviii (p. xvi).

106 Gildon, ed. Gildon, p. lvi.

and would continue to do so throughout his life.<sup>107</sup> Peter Seary uses this practical experience to explain Theobald's ability 'to strip away the veil of print and imagine the nature of the manuscript before a compositor, as well as the kind of misreadings such a manuscript might induce'.<sup>108</sup> Seary is consciously echoing here Fredson Bowers's 1959 call for a better understanding of early printing, in order to 'restore the shape of the original manuscript as we strip away some of the veil of print'.<sup>109</sup> But Seary's point, following Bowers's, does not do sufficient justice to Theobald, whose work in the theatre (as both journalist and author) not only allowed him to imagine the form of long-lost promptbooks, foul papers and fair copies, but also allowed him to imagine performance itself, and, beyond this, to imagine Shakespeare as someone whose genius had been trained in the actor's art of 'fancying himself the very character he meant to delineate'.

If Theobald's Shakespeare wrote with 'the helps of his function', then Theobald himself can evoke performance to guide his emendations of Shakespeare, drawing on his own experience of the stage to validate his conjectures. In a small but significant example of this, he explains his retention of the word 'there' in lines spoken by Polonius to Laertes: 'The Wind sits in the shoulder of your sail, | And you are stay'd for. There; --- | My Blessing with you'. This 'There' is, Theobald argues, no 'dragging idle expletive' but rather a sign that Polonius 'lays his hand on [Laertes's] head, and gives him a second blessing'. This piece of stage business that Theobald discerns behind Bowers's 'veil of print' is 'sure to raise a laugh of pleasure in the audience', something Shakespeare himself, as a master performer, seems to have wanted, since 'the oldest quartos, in the pointing, are a confirmation that thus the poet intended it, and thus the stage expressed it'.<sup>110</sup>

The specificity of Theobald's attitude towards performance becomes clear when his method is set against comments made by Colley Cibber and, thirty years earlier, Steele on the relationship between reading and performance. Colley Cibber, writing in the 1740s, argues for the importance of reading Shakespeare's plays with a

107 Kathryn Prince, 'Lewis Theobald (1688-1744)', in *Eighteenth-Century British Literary Scholars and Critics*, ed. by Frans de Bruyn, Dictionary of Literary Biography (Detroit: Gale, 2010), CCCLVI, 308–19.

108 Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 19.

109 Fredson Bowers, *Textual and Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 81.

110 Shakespeare, ed. Theobald, VII, p. 243. The Q2 passage is: 'you are staid for, there my blessing with thee'.



memory of their performance, with a nostalgic regret for the days of Betterton.

How *Shakespear* wrote, all Men who have a Taste for Nature may read, and know – but with what higher Rapture would he still be *read*, could they conceive how *Betterton* play'd him!<sup>111</sup>

Steele, in his *Tatler* article immediately after Betterton's death, makes a similar point. 'Whoever reads in his Closet' the 'Handkerchief' scene between Desdemona and Othello 'will find that he cannot, except he has as warm an Imagination as *Shakespear* himself, find any but dry, incoherent and broken sentences' in the text, 'But a Reader that has seen *Betterton* act it, observes there could not be a Word added; that longer speech had been unnatural, nay impossible to be uttered in *Othello*'s circumstances'.<sup>112</sup>

There is a superficial similarity between Steele, Cibber and Theobald. All three evoke the ability to imagine stage performance while reading. The difference lies in the fact that Steele and Cibber evoke the use of a specific, remembered performance guiding the reader, while Theobald does not. Instead this editor grounds his reading of Polonius's movements in the 'pointing', the punctuation, which, for him, is the textual trace of Shakespeare's intended performance. Theobald, in other words, seems to have 'as warm an Imagination as *Shakespear* himself', since he does not bring a memory of performance to the text, but rather, merging his own understanding of theatrical effect with Shakespeare's, attempts to extract an ideal stage action from it.

This becomes clear in the way he treats some of Othello's other 'dry, incoherent and broken lines', those spoken on the threshold of Desdemona's chamber. The First Folio text is as follows.

Scoena Secunda.

*Enter Othello, and Desdemona in her bed.*

*Oth.* It is the Cause, it is the Cause (my Soule)  
Let me not name it to you, you chaste Starres,  
It is the Cause. Yet Ile not shed her blood,  
Nor scarre that whiter skin of hers, then snow,  
And smooth as Monumentall Alabaster:

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<sup>111</sup> Cibber, p. 60.

<sup>112</sup> Steele, 1710, p. 1.

Yet she must dye, else shee'l betray more men:  
 Put out the Light, and then put out the Light:  
 If I quench thee, thou flaming Minister,  
 I can againe thy former light restore,  
 Should I repent me. But once put out thy Light,  
 Thou cunning'st Patterne of excelling Nature,  
 I know not where is that *Promethæan* heate  
 That can thy Light re-Lume.  
 When I haue pluck'd thy Rose,  
 I cannot giue it vitall growth againe,  
 It needs must wither. Ile smell thee on the Tree.  
 Oh Balmy breath, that dost almost perswade  
 Iustice to breake her sword. One more, one more:  
 Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,  
 And loue thee after. One more, and that's the last.  
 So sweet, was ne're so fatall. I must weepe,  
 But they are cruell Teares: This sorrow's heauenly,  
 It strikes where it doth loue. She wakes.<sup>113</sup>

Othello's words demand from their reader a measure of theatrical awareness. While the repetition of 'It is the Cause' is one example of this, the interest of not just Theobald but other editors too is captured by the combination of a requirement to imagine action and of the unusual punctuation present in the line 'Put out the Light, and then put out the Light:' slightly further on in the same speech. There is no way of understanding 'Put out the light, and then put out the light:' without imagining the scene unfolding. Theobald alters the Folio punctuation from a colon to a full stop, then offers the following comment.

The players, in all the companies wherever I have seen this tragedy perform'd commit an absurdity here, in making Othello put out the candle, which, 'tis evident, never was the poet's intention. Desdemona is discover'd in her bed, in the dark; and Othello enters the chamber with a single taper. If there were any other lights burning in the room, where would be the drift of putting out his? If there were not others, and that he puts his out, how absurd is it for Desdemona in the dark to talk of his eyes rowling, and his gnawing his nether lip? – This, I conceive to have been the poet's meaning. Othello, struck in part with remorse at the murder he's going to do, thinks it best to do it in the dark; this compunction of nature in the hurry and perturbation of thought, and those

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113 William Shakespeare, *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies: Published According to the True Originall Copies* (London: Blount and Jaggard, 1623), p. 335 (vv4r).

remains of tenderness still combating in his bosom, strikes him into an instant reflection, that if he puts out the light, he can rekindle it; but if he once puts out the light of *her life*, that will be extinguished forever. While he is busied in this contemplation, he throws his eyes towards her; and then sooth'd with her beauteous appearance sets down the light, to go and kiss her. Upon this, Desdemona wakes, and they continue in discourse together till he stifles her.<sup>114</sup>

Here, Theobald draws on a memory of stage performance, albeit negatively. Unlike Cibber and Steele, for whom such memories are a useful guide, Theobald offers a correction of performance based on what he conceives 'to have been the poet's meaning'. That 'meaning' is rich with description of how Othello is struck 'into an instant reflection' then 'throws his eyes towards' Desdemona, so rich, in fact, it borders on the novelistic, stretching the limits of stage representation at this time. This is unsurprising, for such an imagined, ideal performance comes here from the text. No player 'in all the companies wherever I have seen this tragedy perform'd' does this, but rather continues to 'commit an absurdity', and must, like the erring editors before Theobald, be admonished.<sup>115</sup>

The distinction between the point of view exemplified by Cibber and Steele, and that of Theobald is subtle. All three writers recognise Shakespeare's excellence as a dramatist, and (contrary to Pope) his stagecraft as an aspect of his genius rather than a brake to it. They also all recognise the potential for an ideal performance. Yet while Cibber and Steele found in Betterton a way from the stage into a richer imaginative engagement with the page, Theobald goes the other way and finds in the page sufficient material to body forth an ideal stage, against which contemporary performers, working in the 'low Ebb' that followed Betterton's death, are found wanting.

The shift of emphasis identified here, from stage before page to page before stage, can be shown in other ways. In 1734, a publishing war broke out over Shakespeare. Robert Walker, an employee of the Tonson publishing house and 'distributor of patent medicines',<sup>116</sup> began printing individual folio-based editions of Shakespeare's

114 Shakespeare, ed. Theobald, VII, p. 481.

115 Theobald's comments here were ruthlessly mocked twenty years later by Henry Fielding, in a three-way conversation between Betterton, Booth and Shakespeare: Henry Fielding, 'A Journey from This World to the Next', in *Miscellanies*, 2 vols (London: Millar, 1753), II, pp. 1–250 (pp. 65–69).

116 Michael Harris, 'Walker, Robert (c.1709-1761)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004

plays and selling them for a shilling. This undercut Tonson's prices considerably, and the publisher responded with a rival set of single-play editions, priced at fourpence each. Walker then dropped his price to a penny a play, so that the entirety of Shakespeare's drama could be bought for four shillings, a seventh of the cost of Pope's edition.<sup>117</sup>

Needless to say, this price war massively increased access to Shakespeare's works, and constitutes one of the main reasons for this writer's increased cultural prominence in the period. It also, however, serves to illustrate changing attitudes to the relationship between text and performance, for Tonson, in a further effort to discredit Walker, included an 'Advertisement' written by the Drury Lane prompter, William Chetwood, denouncing the rival editions.<sup>118</sup> That Tonson should turn to the theatre, and the authority of its prompter, to judge the superiority of a printed play is an important sign that Shakespeare still remained, for many in 1734, one year after the publication of Theobald's edition, a creature of the theatre first and the closet second. Yet, and no doubt in part because of this sudden availability of Shakespeare's works in printed form, the page was in the ascendant. The value of Chetwood's endorsement would not, for instance, have been accepted by John Hill, who, in his acting manuals of the 1750s, made a point of quoting lines only 'as the author gives them, not as the butcherly hand of a blockhead prompter may have lop'd them'.<sup>119</sup>

In the twenty years from Chetwood to Hill, the distinction drawn between Steele, Cibber and Theobald, is gradually realised. Page has authority over stage, even to the point that the trainee actor should learn from the text of the closet rather than that of the stage. Of course, the idea that the actor should study his text is hardly new. Rowe even praises Betterton for having 'study'd [Shakespeare] so well' in 1709. What has changed is the power accorded to that text. Betterton's study of Shakespeare is of a very different kind from that recommended by Garrick in a letter to William Powell in December 1764.

But above all, never let your *Shakespear* be out of your hands, or your Pocket – Keep him about you, as a Charm – the more you read him, the

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<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64282>> [accessed 6 June 2015].

117 Robert D. Hume, 'Before the Bard: "Shakespeare" in Early Eighteenth-Century London', *ELH*, 64 (1997), 41–75 (pp. 51–54).

118 Carrie Smith, 'Battling over 18th-Century Rights to Shakespeare', *The Collation* <<http://collation.folger.edu/2011/10/battling-over-18th-century-rights-to-shakespeare/>> [accessed 26 June 2015].

119 John Hill, *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing* (London: Griffiths, 1750), p. 67.

more you'll like him, and the better you'll Act him.<sup>120</sup>

Here the text of Shakespeare is fetishised, with the powers of a 'Charm' that improves performance through contact. Steele in the 1720s had written that 'The greatest Effect of a Play in reading it, is to excite the Reader to go see it; and when he does so, it is then a Play has the Effect of Precept and Example'.<sup>121</sup> For Garrick, the 'Effect of Precept and Example' is already present on the page, and the actor must try and imbibe as much as possible in order to act Shakespeare 'the better'.

What Garrick encourages in his letter, and Hill in his disdain for the promptbook, is an intimate, private connection with Shakespeare. This playwright is becoming, as Jean Marsden notes, both 'public institution and private inspiration, a source of universal knowledge as well as individual sentiment'.<sup>122</sup> This is, ultimately, a sentimentalising turn. Theobald, in his 1730s edition, had already shown that text was sufficient to imagine performance in the closet and correct that of the stage; in acting theory of the same decade, such an inward, imaginative turn also occurs. The prime mover here is Aaron Hill, who, with Gildon, stands as one of the major English theorists of acting in the eighteenth century, publishing his thoughts across various periodicals (including, with Popple, in *The Prompter*), and in poems and books. While Garrick himself tended to emphasise the spontaneous and instinctive parts of an acting technique based on personal engagement with Shakespeare, Hill sought to illuminate the internal processes of a performance based on feeling.<sup>123</sup>

A sketch of one of his key ideas appears in *Prompter* 66. Defining an actor as 'the Professor of an *Art that represents to the Eyes and Ears of an Audience, the whole Diversity of Passions*', Hill begins by showing that passions can be represented either visually or orally by the performer. After enumerating the 'SIX *Dramatic Passions*' (joy, sorrow, fear, scorn, anger, and amazement) 'which are capable of being strongly *express'd*, by the LOOK', as well as their combinations, he then explains how an actor

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120 David Garrick, *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. by David M. Little and George M. Kahrl, 3 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 1, p. 345.

121 Quoted in: Robert Stock, *Samuel Johnson and Neoclassical Dramatic Theory: The Intellectual Context of the Preface to Shakespeare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 210.

122 Jean I. Marsden, 'The Individual Reader and the Canonized Text: Shakespeare after Johnson', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 17 (1993), 62–80 (p. 78).

123 I return to the opacity of Garrick's own writings about acting in Chapter Four. See also: Tiffany Stern, '(Re:)Historicising Spontaneity', in *Shakespeare's Sense of Character: On the Page and from the Stage*, ed. by Yu Jin Ko and Michael W. Shurgot (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 99–110 (p. 108).

is to perform them.<sup>124</sup>

THE whole, that is needful in order to impress any Passion on the *Look* is first, to CONCEIVE it, by a strong and intent *Imagination*. – Let a Man, for instance, *recollect some Idea of SORROW*; his EYE will, in a Moment catch the *Dimness of Melancholy*: his Muscles will *relax* into *Languor*; and his whole Frame of Body sympathetically *unbend* itself, into a *Remiss*, and *inanimate Lassitude*. – In such a passive Position of *Features*, and *Nerves*, let him attempt to *speak HAUGHTILY*; and He will find it *impossible*. – Let the *Sense* of the Words be the rashest, and most violent, ANGER, yet the *Tone* of his Voice shall *sound nothing but Tenderness*.<sup>125</sup>

Hill's model has two stages, beginning with the conception of the passion 'by a strong and intent *Imagination*'. This conception then triggers physical changes in the actor, altering his posture and forcing his voice to assume the tone appropriate to the emotion he is to portray. This process means that, for Hill, 'the happiest Qualification which a *Player* shou'd desire to be Master of, is a *Plastic Imagination*.'<sup>126</sup>

In some respects Hill's theories are very close to those Gildon articulates with reference to Polus, Aesopus and Hamlet's 'Hecuba' soliloquy. One difference between the two writers concerns, however, the physicality of the actor. Gildon would accept that his performers may also imitate the physical attitudes of heroes in order to learn their characters, resorting to imaginative labour only as a way of bringing passions to their peak. For Hill, however, everything comes irresistibly from the '*Plastic Imagination*', including the actor's physical appearance, which makes him question whether '*Threshing* is a more *laborious* Exercise than *Acting*' when it is done his way, and not (in a caricature of a style Gildon sometimes recommends) with 'a solemn Silliness of *Strut*, a Swing-Swang Slowness in the Motion of the *Arm*, and dry, dull, drawling *Voice*'.<sup>127</sup>

Hill's ideas were extremely influential, and his emphasis on the actor's ability to imagine performance, the same kind of imaginative construction from text (and dependent on text) that Garrick and Theobald encourage, surfaces in other writing about acting in the middle decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>128</sup>

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124 Aaron Hill, p. 1.

125 Ibid.

126 Aaron Hill, p. 2.

127 Ibid.

128 For another example of Garrick doing this, see his instructions to Francis Hayman on how he should execute engravings for Hanmer's 1747 edition of Shakespeare: Peter Thomson, 'Celebrity

In Charles Churchill's satirical evaluation of actors, *The Rosciad* (1761), William Havard is dismissed as one whose 'easy vacant face proclaim'd an heart | Which could not feel emotions, nor impart'.<sup>129</sup> Henry Woodward, too, suffers from being too superficial, so that 'all his merit enters at the eye' and 'on Reflection's birth, | We wonder at ourselves, and curse our mirth'.<sup>130</sup> In another poem on the subject of the stage, this time by Churchill's close friend Robert Lloyd, Hillian motifs also appear, and all the more strongly given the pedagogical aims of Lloyd's work. With a flair for epigrammatic construction, Lloyd tells aspiring actors: 'To this one Standard make your just Appeal | Here lies the golden secret; learn to FEEL'.<sup>131</sup> There is even a Hillian catalogue of passions in a section describing emotion's manifestation in the eye: 'UP to the *Face* the quick Sensation flies, | And darts its meaning from the speaking Eyes; | Love, Transport, Madness, Anger, Scorn, Despair, | And all the Passions, all the Soul is there.'<sup>132</sup> Finally, Lloyd also connects careful study with such feeling, announcing that 'HE who in Earnest studies o'er his Part | Will find true Nature cling about his Heart'.<sup>133</sup> Of course, once the heart is thus primed, Lloyd then continues, 'All from their Eyes impulsive Thought reveal, | And none can want Expression, who can feel'.<sup>134</sup>

As with Hill, some of these points, particularly the attention to the eyes, are similar to those made by Gildon, and, before him, Quintilian and other classical rhetoricians. Near the start of his poem, entitled *The Actor*, Lloyd also repeats Gildon's method of scouring antiquity for examples of both upstanding actors and technique. Lloyd recounts the martyrdom of Saint Genesius, a Roman actor who converted to Christianity while playing the part of a Christian. Genesius, 'Fill'd with th' Idea of the sacred Part,' we learn, 'felt a Zeal beyond the reach of Art' and so, in the heat of performance, his 'Look, and Voice, and Gesture all exprest | A kindred Ardour in the Player's Breast'.<sup>135</sup> This choice of example betrays Lloyd's concern for the moral standing of performers, but it also measures his debt to Hill and theoretical distance

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and Rivalry: David [Garrick] and Goliath [Quin]', in *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, ed. by Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 127-47 (p. 140); Cunningham, p. 119.

129 Charles Churchill, *The Rosciad*, 3rd edn (London: W. Flexney, 1761), p. 10.

130 Churchill, p. 12.

131 Robert Lloyd, *The Actor: A Poetical Epistle to Bonnell Thornton, Esq.* (London: Dodsley, 1760), p. 4.

132 Lloyd, p. 12.

133 Lloyd, p. 13.

134 Ibid.

135 Lloyd, p. 5.

from Gildon. Again and again in *The Actor*, imagination comes before all. As Lloyd puts it, doubtless as a compliment to the diminutive Garrick, ‘The feeling Sense all other Wants supplies, | I rate no Actor’s Merit from his Size’.<sup>136</sup>

The emphasis on ‘the feeling Sense’ entails a personal, imaginative engagement between the actor and his part. The actor’s identity is submerged in that of the role he assumes. The actor, in addition to this, also comes to achieve a special proximity to the author, thanks to his ability to enter into his creation so fully. Lloyd says of Garrick, for instance, that he was the ‘speaking Comment of his *Shakespear’s* Page’.<sup>137</sup>

This choice of editorial terminology, calling Garrick’s performance a ‘Comment’, indicates a parallel to be drawn here between theories of editing and acting. When both domains emphasise imaginative reconstruction based on text, as is the case for Theobald and for Hill, both are also asserting an increased intimacy with Shakespeare. Theobald supposedly intuits Shakespeare’s own intentions for performance, while Garrick urges Powell to study the plays so intensively that he too absorbs the author’s spirit. Such intimacy can be a powerful weapon. Theobald often uses his capacity to imagine Shakespeare’s desired action as a way of criticising his editorial and theatrical predecessors. Likewise, actors and writers on acting claim an imaginative, intimate affinity to Shakespeare as a way of short-circuiting existing chains of filiation and thus avoiding any unflattering comparisons to their own forebears. This is particularly important for Garrick, whose performances were nothing like those of the actors who had come to prominence before him during the ‘low Ebb’ of the 1720s and 30s.

Such genealogical short-circuiting is new. At the start of the eighteenth century, it was important to be able to trace one’s acting lineage. John Downes’s *Roscius Anglicanus* explains that Betterton’s early performances of *Hamlet* in Lincoln’s Inn Fields ‘got more Reputation’ and ‘Money to the company’ than any other tragedy because they had managed to carry on stage traditions from before the Interregnum.<sup>138</sup>

*Hamlet* being Perform’d by Mr. Betterton, Sir William (having seen Mr

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<sup>136</sup> Lloyd, p. 6.

<sup>137</sup> Lloyd, p. 17.

<sup>138</sup> John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, ed. by Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1987), p. 52.



*Taylor* of the *Black-fryars* Company Act it, who being Instructed by the Author Mr *Shakespear*) taught Mr *Betterton* in every Particle of it; which by his exact Performance of it, gain'd him Esteem and Reputation, superlative to all other Plays.<sup>139</sup>

'Mr Taylor' has long been thought to refer to John Taylor, and so to a performer who died too young for this transmission to be anything but mythical. Katherine Duncan-Jones, writing in the *TLS*, suggests that this actor could, however, have been a Joseph Taylor and not a John, which would mean that Downes's claim may in fact hold water.<sup>140</sup> Whether it does or not, the attraction of this genealogy to Downes is undeniable. A few pages on, the ex-prompter makes the same claim about *Henry VIII*, where Betterton was 'Instructed in it by Sir *William*, who had it from Old Mr *Lowen*, that had his Instructions from Mr *Shakespear* himself'.<sup>141</sup> Such transmission, as with *Hamlet*, also makes for box-office success, this time in the form of being acted '15 Days together with general Applause'.<sup>142</sup>

Filiation becomes problematic in the years following Betterton's death. At this time, Pope's edition, Theobald's pamphlet response, and, later, Popple's article on Polonius, all worry at the inability of an uninspired and unsupported stage to transmit knowledge. When Garrick began his career at the start of the 1740s, the text – enforced by the labours of the editors – was fast becoming the prime vehicle for the transmission of Shakespeare's will, and its alternative, Downes's apostolic transmission of theatrical *savoir-faire*, now meant association with an oft-derided generation of actors whose art was at a 'low Ebb'. Garrick, presenting himself as a new kind of actor, yet still keen to be associated with the founding father of the English stage, thus asserts his proximity to Shakespeare through the text and not his forebears, becoming Shakespeare's 'twin star', his brother and not his great-grandson.

Lloyd and Churchill's poems are also both concerned with theatrical heritage. Lloyd opens his with what reads like an attack on Gildon's obsession with giving the '*General and Particular Rules*' of acting.

ACTING, dear Thornton, its Perfection draws  
From no Observance of mechanic Laws.

<sup>139</sup> Downes, eds Milhous and Hume, p. 51.

<sup>140</sup> Katherine Duncan-Jones, 'A Precious Memento', *TLS*, 25 April 2014, pp. 13–15.

<sup>141</sup> Downes, eds Milhous and Hume, p. 55.

<sup>142</sup> Downes, eds Milhous and Hume, p. 56.

No settled Maxims of a fav'rite Stage,  
 No Rules deliver'd down from Age to Age,  
 Let Players nicely mark them as they will,  
 Can e'er entail hereditary Skill.<sup>143</sup>

Churchill makes the same point in *The Rosciad*, attacking James Quin as the representative of an older school of actors too bound up in over-defined stage business: 'Why must Impatience fall three paces back?' asks Churchill, or, with deliberate awkwardness, 'Why is the right leg too forbid to stir, | Unless in motion semicircular?'<sup>144</sup> As well as attacking inherited, codified acting technique, Churchill and Lloyd both also suggest that theatrical genius is inimitable. Lloyd tells us that 'A Garrick's Genius must our Wonder raise, | But gives his Mimic no reflected Praise',<sup>145</sup> while Churchill goes as far as naming those who copy the style of Foote, Woodward or Garrick, feigning Platonic surprise that 'even shadows have their shadows too!'<sup>146</sup>

By the 1760s therefore, what Worthen calls an 'independent tradition' of performance is fast disappearing, breaking up as part of an increased emphasis on the emotional and imaginative capacities of the individual performer to respond to text. An actor's art cannot be reduced to prescribed, transmissible action, since all action, in Hill's model, depends on personal emotion: Gildon's interest in animation (understood as motion) has been surpassed by an emphasis on *anima*, possession. As John Hill puts it, the actor, in the heat of a successful performance, should feel 'the genius of the poet animating his own soul'.<sup>147</sup>

A corollary of these changes is the way in which writing about acting uses Shakespeare's texts. While often content to quote the same examples that Gildon uses, such as Henry V's injunction to 'stiffen the sinews', writers such as Aaron Hill, Lloyd and Churchill also draw on Shakespeare's work in far more subtle ways. In this they prove their own credentials as readers of Shakespeare and so worthy to instruct the player in his new, non-prescriptive, emotional development based on an intimate engagement with the text.

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143 Lloyd, p. 1.

144 Churchill, p. 30.

145 Lloyd, p. 2.

146 Churchill, p. 13.

147 John Hill, *The Actor; or, A Treatise on the Art of Playing* (London: [n. pub.], 1755; repr. 1972), p. 111.

Take Hill's *Prompter* article, already cited, as an example. His requirement that an actor possess 'a strong and intent *Imagination*' is a variation of a phrase appearing in both *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ('strong Imagination').<sup>148</sup> This is not the article's only Shakespearian parallel. One of the effects on the actor of recollecting '*some Idea of SORROW*' is that 'his whole Frame of Body sympathetically *unbend* itself, into a *Remiss*, and *inanimate*, *Lassitude*.'<sup>149</sup> The unusual verb here seems to come from *Macbeth*, specifically Lady Macbeth's questioning of her husband in the immediate aftermath of Duncan's murder, when Macbeth admits he thought he heard a voice intone 'Macbeth shall sleep no more'.

LADY MACBETH            Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy Thane,  
    You do unbend your noble strength, to think  
    So brainsickly of things.<sup>150</sup>

The lines echoed are apposite, for, just like Hill, Lady Macbeth describes the effect of the triggered emotion over the body. Macbeth's 'brainsickly' thoughts are all the worse because he, like Hill's actor, has 'a strong and intent *Imagination*'.

Unlike Hill, and indeed, unlike the vast majority of writing about acting at this time, Churchill's *Rosciad* has relatively little direct quotation from Shakespeare. Instead, Churchill alludes to situations in the playwright's writings. Take, for instance, the opening of the *Rosciad*, which describes how all ambitious actors will, in their competition for the crown of 'Roscius', 'a suppliant's form assume', just like 'the victorious chiefs of Ancient Rome'.<sup>151</sup> This brings to mind the plot of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, implying that Churchill's eighteenth-century targets will, like Shakespeare's Roman general, both fail to assume the form of a suppliant and each prove to be (as Coriolanus says of himself, elsewhere in the work) a 'dull actor'.<sup>152</sup>

When Shakespeare himself appears in the *Rosciad*, to judge, with Ben Jonson, the actors paraded before him, Churchill continues to avoid direct citation. Holding a 'wand' in one hand (an accoutrement more usually associated with Harlequin), and a 'globe' in the other, Shakespeare – a little like Theseus's poet in a *Midsummer*

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148 Aaron Hill, p. 1.

149 Ibid.

150 William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Kenneth Muir, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 773–800 (p. 781) (II.2.43-5).

151 Churchill, p. 1.

152 William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Philip Brockbank, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 213–52 (p. 248) (V.3.40).

*Night's Dream* – merely looks ‘through nature at a single view’ and gives ‘A loose [...] to his unbounded soul’.<sup>153</sup> When the dramatist eventually comes to speak at the very end of Churchill’s poem, he crowns Garrick supreme with a series of phrases that resemble Lloyd’s *The Actor* more than Shakespeare’s own writing. Garrick will hold the place of Roscius ‘If fewest Faults with greatest Beauties join’d’ and ‘If Feelings, which few hearts, like His, can know, | And no Face so well as His can shew’ deserve ‘the Preference’.<sup>154</sup>

Thus in the *Rosciad*, Shakespeare is a largely absent presence. His *Coriolanus* gives precedent to Churchill’s conceit, but the language of his plays is never drawn on heavily. Perhaps this is because Churchill’s interest lies most in describing the physical peculiarities (and defects) of the performers, the part of their performance most distant from the text. Shakespeare exists thus in the poem as a legitimating presence, but, ultimately a distant one. As Churchill makes clear, no actor, after all, achieved the same affinity with this dramatist as Garrick did.

Lloyd, working at a level of instruction and abstraction above Churchill’s satire, differs from his friend by weaving both Shakespeare’s words and his scenes into the fabric of his poem. Critics have tended to ignore this aspect of his work: Peter Thomson calls *The Actor* ‘little more than a consensual poetic homage to Garrick’,<sup>155</sup> while Denise Bulckaen-Messina misreads citations as empty ‘generalities’.<sup>156</sup> Yet Lloyd is a better writer than this, even when writing encomium.

Arguing that emotion trumps physical appearance, he criticises, for example, those ‘who think the Stature all in all | Nor like the Hero if he is not tall’.<sup>157</sup> The couplet recalls Hamlet’s description of his father as a ‘man, take him all in all, | I shall not look upon his like again’. The following lines, Lloyd’s claim that he will ‘rate no Actor’s Merit from his size’, fit with the Hamlet echo too, for there was no actor more well known for both his Hamlet and his height than Garrick. Other panegyrics to Garrick also coincide with brief quotations from Shakespeare. It is Garrick’s

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153 Churchill, p. 8.

154 Churchill, p. 34.

155 Peter Thomson, ‘Acting and Actors from Garrick to Kean’, in *Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730-1830*, ed. by Daniel O’Quinn and Jane Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 3–20 (p. 8).

156 ‘généralités’. Denise Bulckaen-Messina, ‘Artifices d’acteurs, art de poète? *The Actor* de Robert Lloyd (1760) et *La Rosciade* de Charles Churchill (1761)’, *Bulletin de la société d’études anglo-américaines des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 22 (1986), 19–27 (p. 21).

157 Lloyd, p. 6.

prerogative to ‘lead with more than magic Skill, | The train of captive Passions at thy Will’ and ‘bid the bursting Tear spontaneous flow | In the sweet Sense of sympathetic Woe’.<sup>158</sup> Lloyd knows this because he has felt ‘Through ev’ry Vein [...] a Chilness creep, | When Horrors such as thine *have murder’d Sleep*. | And at the old Man’s Look and frantic Stare | ’Tis *Lear* alarms me, for I see him there.’<sup>159</sup> The juxtaposition of Macbeth and Lear at this point, two of Garrick’s most celebrated roles, makes the mad Lear into a kind of Banquo for an audience of Macbeths. Shakespeare’s situations, as much as his words, indicate the sympathetic absorption of both actor and theatregoer.

With his use of Lear, Macbeth and Hamlet, Lloyd is blending Shakespeare’s thoughts into his own. In this way, Lloyd’s writing itself resembles a union that he finds incarnate in Garrick’s acting.

POET and Actor thus with blended Skill,  
Mould all our Passions to their instant Will;  
'Tis thus, when feeling Garrick treads th’ Stage,  
(The speaking Comment of his *Shakespear’s* Page.)<sup>160</sup>

These verses cap a section of *The Actor* in which Lloyd argues that ghosts should no longer be shown onstage, and that it would be far better to have no spectres rise to distract attention when, in *Macbeth*, ‘The King alone should form the Phantom there, | And talk and tremble at the vacant Chair’ or when, in Otway’s *Venice Preserv’d*, Susannah Cibber, ‘with disorder’d Starts, and horrid Cries, | [...] paints the murder’d Forms before her Eyes’.<sup>161</sup> The ‘blended Skill’ Lloyd refers to is the ability, found in the actor and the dramatist, to imagine the existence of an object with great strength and precision, such that others – readers and theatregoers – believe in its presence too. It is this imaginative act that allows Shakespeare and Garrick to have such an effect on the ‘Passions’ of their audience, but also what connects the actor to the editor, who, like Theobald, must explicate the text and so guarantee the transmission and replication of Shakespeare’s intended effect.

The imagining actor, his skill ‘blended’ with the poet’s, represents the apogee of Lloyd’s poem. Such a figure, able ‘To give to Nature all the Force of Art’ has a moral

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158 Lloyd, p. 2.

159 Lloyd, pp. 2–3.

160 Lloyd, p. 17.

161 Lloyd, pp. 15–16.

benefit, since in performance, this actor ‘charms the Ear to mend the Heart’.<sup>162</sup> To drive this point home, Lloyd gives a couplet rendition of Hamlet’s words on the ‘purpose of playing’.

Tho’ oft debas’d with Scenes profane and loose,  
No Reason weighs against its proper Use.  
Tho’ the lewd Priest his sacred Function shame,  
Religion’s perfect Law is still the same.  
Shall they who trace the Passions from their rise  
Shew Scorn her Features, her own Image Vice;  
Who teach the Mind its proper Force to scan,  
And hold the faithful Mirrour up to Man,  
Shall their Profession e’er provoke Disdain,  
Who stand the formost [*sic*] in the moral Train.<sup>163</sup>

In these verses, Lloyd has wrought Shakespeare’s lines into a style reminiscent of the poetry of one of Shakespeare’s editors: that of Alexander Pope. The rhyme on ‘scan’ and ‘man’ in the couplet describing a performer as one ‘Who can teach the Mind it’s proper Force to scan | And hold a faithful Mirrour up to Man’ recalls, for instance, the opening lines to the second epistle of Pope’s *Essay on Man*: ‘Know, then, thyself, presume not God to scan; | The proper study of mankind is man’.<sup>164</sup> This is not the only Popean note struck by Lloyd. His preceding claim that a great actor ‘charms the Ear to mend the Heart’ repeats the opening of Pope’s *Cato* prologue on the purpose of staged tragedy: ‘To wake the soul by tender strokes of art, | To raise the genius, and to mend the heart’.<sup>165</sup> Elsewhere in *The Actor*, we learn that the inspired Genesisus ‘felt a Zeal beyond the reach of Art’ in a turn of phrase first appearing in Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*, when he explains how ‘Great Wits’ may ‘From vulgar Bounds with brave Disorder part, | And snatch a Grace beyond the Reach of Art’.<sup>166</sup> This sentiment in particular is echoed repeatedly in Lloyd, who writes of the ‘Grace of Art’ and how ‘THE Critic Sight ’tis only *Grace* can please | No Figure charms us if it has not *Ease*’.<sup>167</sup>

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162 Lloyd, p. 18.

163 Ibid.

164 Alexander Pope, ‘An Essay on Man in Four Epistles’, in *The Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 270–309 (p. 281).

165 Alexander Pope, ‘Prologue to Mr. Addison’s Tragedy of Cato’, in *The Works of Alexander Pope Esq.*, ed. by William Warburton, 9 vols (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1751), I, pp. 269–71 (p. 269).

166 Alexander Pope, ‘An Essay on Criticism’, in *The Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 17–40 (p. 23).

167 Lloyd, pp. 5, 19.

Pope's presence is also discernible in Churchill's *Rosciad*. Again, the poet adapts Pope's *Essay on Criticism* to describe, in lines spoken by a figure representing Lloyd, how 'SHAKESPEAR'S muse aspires | Beyond the reach of Greece'.<sup>168</sup> Churchill also draws on *Eloisa to Abelard* ('All my loose soul unbounded springs to thee') when he describes Shakespeare giving 'A loose [...] to his unbounded soul'.<sup>169</sup> Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Churchill's satirical parade of performers also owes a great deal to Pope's *Dunciad*: the poem's invocation to the muse drops into the bathetic couplet 'But give, kind Dullness, Memory and Rhime, | We'll put off Genius till another time',<sup>170</sup> and 'Dullness' soon becomes a repeated motif of Churchill's work, as he writes, for instance, of how Islington is the place 'Where city swains in lap of Dullness dream',<sup>171</sup> or how Quin is 'Too proud for tenderness, too dull for rage'.<sup>172</sup>

The mix of Shakespeare and Pope in Lloyd and Churchill exemplifies the complexity with which Shakespeare is incorporated into writing about acting in mid-century texts. More broadly, however, it also indicates an emphasis on Shakespeare's work as poetry, a valuing of text over performance. Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, present in both Lloyd and Churchill, was not originally concerned with the stage, and, by importing its dicta, Churchill and Lloyd emphasise Shakespeare's identity as poet over his work as dramatist. In other words, they might be said to see Shakespeare as Pope had done, as stage-poet. They recognise that Shakespeare has a deep and abiding connection to the stage, which at the same time can exist beyond it too. Pope's edition sorts Shakespeare's text into his own words and those 'interpolated by the Players'; Churchill separates Shakespeare by having him sit silent through most of the *Rosciad*, a kind of Harlequin Rhadamanthus. It is Lloyd, however, who, having observed the power present when author and actor appeared with 'blended Skill' to 'Mould all our passions to their instant Will', stages the most remarkable separation of Shakespeare from the stage, letting him emerge, through citation of his text, as a kind of immortal being that no actor could hope to become.

This process already begins in Lloyd's lines about the 'blended Skill', which pun on Shakespeare's name: 'the instant Will' refers literally to the combined effect of actor

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168 Churchill, p. 6.

169 Alexander Pope, 'Eloisa to Abelard', in *The Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 137–46 (p. 143); Churchill, p. 8.

170 Churchill, p. 9.

171 Churchill, p. 19.

172 Churchill, p. 28.

and author, but – as a shortened version of William – emphasises the poet’s part over the player’s with the kind of quibble Shakespeare himself was notoriously fond of. Shakespeare emerges even more distinctly at the poem’s end, where the actor’s limits are described. The tone changes here too, and becomes the same melancholic strain as that with which Pope concluded his *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* (‘Poets themselves must fall, like those they sung...’) and *Rape of the Lock* (‘When those fair suns shall set, as set they must, | And all those Tresses shall be laid in Dust...’).<sup>173</sup>

YET, hapless Artist, tho’ thy skill can raise  
 The bursting Peal of universal Praise,  
 Tho’ at thy Beck, Applause delighted stands,  
 And lifts *Briareus*’ like her hundred Hands.  
 Know Fame awards Thee but a partial Breath,  
 Not all thy Talents brave the stroke of Death.  
 Poets to Ages yet unborn appeal,  
 And latest Times th’ eternal Nature feel.  
 Tho’ blended here the Praise of Bard and Play’r,  
 While more than Half becomes the Actor’s share,  
 Relentless Death untwists the mingled Fame,  
 And sinks the Player in the Poet’s Name.  
 THE pliant Muscles of the various Face,  
 The Mein that gave each sentence strength and Grace,  
 The tuneful Voice, the Eye that spoke the Mind,  
 Are gone, nor leave a single Trace behind.<sup>174</sup>

Throughout this final passage, echoes of Shakespeare ring out, as if the poem were enacting the very process it describes, and having Shakespeare’s voice emerge from Lloyd’s more mundane concerns about educating thespians. The ‘blended skill’ cannot last: ‘Relentless Death untwists the mingled Fame, | And sinks the Player in the Poet’s Name’ as we find the poet’s own words everywhere in lines intended for the actor. Only poets, through the medium of print, can ‘to Ages yet unborn appeal’ as Cassius standing over the body of Julius Caesar imagines the ‘lofty scene [...] acted over | In states unborn and accents yet unknown’.<sup>175</sup> The very ‘Muscles of the various Face’ are less durable than the memorable verses Shakespeare wrote for

173 Alexander Pope, *The Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 100, 149.

174 Lloyd, pp. 19–20.

175 William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by David Daniell, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 333–60 (p. 347) (III.1.112-3).



Prospero, for they will not ‘leave a single Trace behind’, and so be like the magician’s famously ‘insubstantial pageant faded’ and ‘leave not a rack behind’.<sup>176</sup>

One might name this as the price of the actor’s new proximity to Shakespeare. Rather than drawing their authority from traditions of practice, or from a classical, codified style of display, the actor claims the same power as an editor like Theobald, the ability to imagine Shakespeare’s intention and give it form. The performer’s authority thus depends on Shakespeare, and so returns to him, as shown in the extent to which Shakespearian quotation and echo riddle the final lines of Lloyd’s verses. Text becomes both the starting point for a new kind of powerful, emotional acting and, simultaneously, the sign of future oblivion.

### **Conclusion: A Special Reader**

Marcus Walsh, in his survey of the eighteenth-century editing of Shakespeare and Milton, writes that the scholarly labours of this period must be seen as more than ‘an accommodation of the past to the values of a later culture’, more than ‘their solipsistic appropriation to personal and subjective tastes’. Eighteenth-century editing was also ‘an informed, coherent, and self-conscious attempt at genuine understanding of the communications of the great authors of an English literary history’.<sup>177</sup> So too, one might say, was eighteenth-century acting, particularly by the middle of the century, when Aaron Hill and others emphasised the need for the actor to grasp the nuances of Shakespeare’s characters to the point that, after much study, they became them, acting from the inside out.

Such a style of acting entailed a greater attention to the text of this writer, encouraged by Garrick and exemplified in the innovative incorporation of Shakespearian motifs and lines into the poems of Lloyd and Churchill. Yet, this development, while it justified, for the greatest actors, a freedom from the constraints of following a sullied theatrical tradition, also cut them loose from a distinctive identity of their own. What came to be known as ‘Garrick’s school’ staked its authority on the skill of its actors to bring Shakespeare’s written words to life,<sup>178</sup> while Betterton, in contrast, could trace the origin of his performance back to Shakespeare’s own instructions to

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<sup>176</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 1071–96 (p. 1090) (IV.1.155-6).

<sup>177</sup> Walsh, p. 201.

<sup>178</sup> Sir George Howland Beaumont, ‘To William Smith’, 29 January 1805, OSB MSS 57, Beinecke.

Burbage. What Worthen calls an ‘independent tradition’ of performance thus crumbles.

Ultimately, acting theory and editorial theory both share a common attitude to performance in this period. They seek to understand it and discipline it, and use Shakespeare’s authority to do so. Early editions and early acting theory codify: Rowe fits the irregular pages of printed Shakespeare to the norms of Restoration drama, Gildon makes Shakespeare lay down ‘Precepts’ like classical authority. Later writings in both domains, in the context of a ‘low Ebb’ of theatrical achievement, attempt to strip the stage of the ability to possess and transmit independently any distinct knowledge about Shakespeare: Pope’s and Warburton’s players do nothing but harm, and Popple and Theobald paint a picture of a theatre perpetuating manifest corruption in Shakespeare’s creations. Players must now, as Aaron Hill advised, go to the text, and train their imaginations and their feelings in an effort to achieve intimately the full potential of a play. They must act from the inside out.

This is a tenuous position for the performer, but also one that is rich with potential. The truly great actor, such as Garrick, can use his or her imaginative and emotional abilities to go from text to performance and so represents a very special kind of reader, the kind Theobald tried, in his edition’s critique of both contemporary performance and text, to assume the status of. As Robert Lloyd put it with a revealing use of the definite article, Garrick is ‘The speaking Comment of his *Shakespeare’s* Page’: the best performer and the best reader of his time. The danger here lies in the fact that the actor’s merit – based on his use of Shakespeare’s text – now depends on something that is not exclusive to the theatre: other readers could and would challenge claims that the best actors of the 1700s had a privileged access to Shakespeare’s intentions. Yet, at the same time, the power of a theatre newly interested in the text should not be discounted. As subsequent chapters will show, such power, freshly disciplined and focussed in an increasingly sentimental model, stands at its zenith in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, with much to teach all those who would better understand Shakespeare and the drama.

## 2. Dramatic Shakespeare

### Introduction: Defining Drama

DRA'MA. N.s. [*δραμα*] A poem accommodated to action; a poem in which the action is not related, but represented; and in which therefore such rules are to be observed as make the representation probable.<sup>179</sup>

For modern criticism, which tends to use drama and its cognates to emphasise Shakespeare's connection with theatrical practices and experience, Samuel Johnson's clipped definition of 1755 poses several problems. These words define drama without mention of the stage. Compare, for instance, the relevant entry in the current *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'A composition in prose or verse, adapted to be acted upon a stage, in which a story is related by means of dialogue and action, and is represented with accompanying gesture, costume, and scenery, as in real life; a play.' The echoes of Johnson's 'accommodated to' are visible here in the use of its eighteenth-century synonym 'adapted to',<sup>180</sup> but *poem* has become 'A composition in prose or verse' and *action* 'acted upon a stage'. Finally, Johnson's specification that the 'action' is not 'related' but 'represented' becomes a question of how the 'story' is on one hand 'related by means of dialogue and action' and on the other 'represented with accompanying gesture, costume, and scenery'.

The differences between modern and eighteenth-century English further occlude what little connection this definition has to public spectacle. 'A poem accommodated to action', for example, probably uses *action* in all Johnson's various senses of 'The quality or state of acting', 'An act or thing done; a deed', and, crucially, 'Gesticulation; the accordance of the motions of the body with the words spoken; a part of oratory'.<sup>181</sup> Even here, though, the *action* is explicitly the orator's and not that of the neighbouring profession, acting. *Representation* also offers a similarly tenuous link: it is first and foremost used here to mean 'Image; likeness' but also includes the secondary sense of 'Act of supporting a vicarious character', which at least suggests theatrical practice.<sup>182</sup>

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179 Samuel Johnson, 'DRA'MA, N.s.', *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Knapton; Longman; Hitch and Hawes; Millar; and Dodsley, 1775).

180 Samuel Johnson, 'To ACCO'MMODATE, V.a.', *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1775).

181 Samuel Johnson, 'A'CTION, N.s.', *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1775).

182 Samuel Johnson, 'REPRESENTA'TION, N.s.', *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1775).

The stage is as faintly present in Johnson's illustrative citations to drama and its cognates as it is in his definitions of them. *Dramatist* is illustrated with a quotation from Thomas Burnet's 1684 cosmogony, *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, which uses the theatre metaphorically: 'The whole theatre resounds with the praises of the great *dramatist*, and the wonderful art and order of the composition.' The same is true for *dramatick* and *dramatical*, illustrated in Richard Bentley's phrase 'great *dramatic* poem of nature' from his sermon 'Matter and Motion cannot think' (1692). In contrast to this, the *OED* offers several eighteenth-century references for its own, more theatrical, definition of drama and its cognates: *dramatic*, as an adjective, contains an extract from Charles Gildon's *Life of Betterton* (1710) and one from Samuel Foote's *Trip to Calais* (1778); as a plural noun meaning 'Dramatic compositions or representations; the drama' (a usage not recorded by Johnson), the *OED* also cites Lord Shaftesbury's *Soliloquy* (1710) and George Colman's *Iron Chest* (1796). Even by contemporary standards, Johnson's definition and examples seem idiosyncratic.

A clue to Johnson's way of defining drama lies in the quotation he chooses to illustrate the noun itself. It is taken from John Dryden's dedication of his *Aeneid*. Again, this is a text with no connection to the stage. Its selection does, however, indicate that Johnson's definition of drama draws on critical thought of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, for the quotation from Dryden is both potted etymology and recapitulation of Johnson's key points and prejudices.

Many rules of imitating nature Aristotle drew from Homer, which he fitted to the *drama*; furnishing himself also with observations from the theatre, when it flourished under Eschylus, Euripides and Sophocles.  
*Dryden's Aen. Dedicat.*

That Aristotle took his rules from Homer, merely furnishing them with 'observations from the theatre' means that the only explicit mention of the stage in all those pages of *The Dictionary* devoted to defining drama is as an adjunct, whose critical utility is located firmly in fifth-century Athens. Evoking the 'rules' of Aristotle sends us to seventeenth-century prescriptive readings of the *Poetics*, and so to a body of thought also present in Johnson's own definition of drama as something 'in which such rules are to be observed as make the representation probable'. Similarly, Johnson's view that what is *dramatical* or *dramatick* is that which is 'represented by action; not narrative' also follows an Aristotelian distinction between drama and epic: the

former, to quote Elizabeth Montagu's summary, 'is an imitation of the actions of men, by the means of action itself'; the latter, also 'an imitation of the actions of men' but rather by means of 'narration'.<sup>183</sup>

The Aristotelian roots of Johnson's definition of drama help explain its minimisation of theatrical practice. The Greek philosopher has long been recognised as standing at the head of a critical tradition that is hostile to performance. Nathalie Crohn Schmitt argues that Aristotle's work is, like 'virtually all so-called theatre theory', a 'theory of dramatic texts'.<sup>184</sup> Building on the work of Paul Oskar Kristeller, David Osipovich also suggests that 'Just as Plato famously banished poets from the just city, so Aristotle banished performance from any serious consideration of tragedy'.<sup>185</sup> While this reading of the *Poetics* as fundamentally anti-theatrical (insofar as it is anti-performance) has been challenged recently,<sup>186</sup> any eighteenth-century criticism that followed Aristotle, especially the more prescriptive readings of the *Poetics*, tended to enforce its anti-performance, anti-theatrical potential.

Three passages from the *Poetics* show such a tendency clearly. Johnson was certainly able to read them in the original Greek, but, until the late 1780s, the only English versions of Aristotle were translations of translations:<sup>187</sup> either Thomas Rymer's 1674 version of René Rapin's text, or the anonymous Englishing of André Dacier's 1692 *Poétique d'Aristote*, first published in 1705 and much reprinted thereafter, with a copy of the 1775 edition listed in the bills of sale for David Garrick's library.<sup>188</sup> These French translations and their English derivatives divide the *Poetics* into twenty-seven chapters, each preceded with a short summary and succeeded by detailed analysis, keyed to individual phrases. More than a reproduction of the original fragmentary text, the scale of editorial intervention present means that these editions are better

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183 Elizabeth Montagu, *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespear, Compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets: With Some Remarks upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. de Voltaire* (London: Dodsley, 1769), p. 25. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

184 Natalie Crohn Schmitt, 'Theorizing about Performance: Why Now?', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 6 (1990), 231–34 (p. 231).

185 David Osipovich, 'What Is a Theatrical Performance?', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 64 (2006), 461–70 (p. 461).

186 See: Gregory Scott, 'The Poetics of Performance', in *Performance and Authenticity in the Arts*, ed. by Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 15–48.

187 George Whalley, 'On Translating Aristotle's "Poetics"', in Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1997), pp. 3–35 (p. 29).

188 Robert Saunders, *Auction Catalogue: Books of David Garrick, 23 April to 3 May 1823* (London: Saunders, 1823), p. 12.

understood as seventeenth- and eighteenth-century interpretations of Aristotle. The first passage that separates spectacle from poetry occurs in Chapter Six of Dacier's text.

La Décoration est aussi fort divertissante, mais elle ne regarde pas proprement l'art du Poëte, et ne fait point partie de la Poësie car la Tragédie ne laisse pas de conserver toute sa force, sans représentation et sans acteurs. Et d'ailleurs tout ce qui regarde la décoration, est bien plus du ressort des Ouvriers et des Ingenieurs, que de celuy des Poëtes.<sup>189</sup>

The English translation of 1705 follows the French closely, albeit with one significant change.

The Decoration is also very diverting, but that does not properly regard either the Art of the Poet, nor make a part of the Poesie. For poetry keeps all its force without Representation or Actors. And moreover, all that regards the Decoration, is more the business of Workmen and Engineers, than the Poet.<sup>190</sup>

While both the English and French Aristotle agree in the idea that neither 'representation' nor 'actors' are necessary, they differ with regard to their object: Dacier has 'Tragédie' (for the Greek 'ἡ γὰρ τῆς τραγωδίας δύναμις')<sup>191</sup> but the English has 'poetry'. This expansion from tragedy to poetry replaces a term visibly connected to ancient theatrical tradition with one far broader. It also anticipates Johnson's definition of drama as a 'poem accommodated to action'. Dacier's French moves from 'poésie' to the subset 'tragédie', but the English text turns this development into a repetition. While it might be surprising that even tragedy works without performance, it is redundant to say that poetry does not need representation if it has already been stated that decoration makes no part of it. By thinking of tragedy as dramatic poetry, an approach familiar enough for this anonymous English translator to submit one term for the other, performance is minimised with ease.

Two other passages in the *Poetics* concern the superfluity of performance. In the first of these, Aristotle argues that the theatre is not a reliable place to test whether a

189 Aristotle, *La Poétique d'Aristote, traduite en français, avec des remarques*, trans. by André Dacier (Paris: Barbin, 1692), p. 75.

190 Aristotle, *Aristotle's Art of Poetry Translated from the Original Greek according to Mr. Theodore Goulston's Edition*, trans. by Anon (London: Brown and Turner, 1705), p. 74.

191 Aristotle, *Aristotle's Ars Poetica*, ed. by R. Kassel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), sec. 1450b <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0055>> [accessed 4 March 2015].

tragedy succeeds at provoking fear and pity. Such emotions, after all, ‘may be produced by the show, and the Decoration’, so that the ‘Master strokes’ of the poet proper are only discernible in feelings ‘produced by the Series of Incidents’. Indeed, ‘the Fable must be composed in such a manner; that he who understands the things which happen, altho’ he see them not, yet tremble at the Recitation of them and feel the same Compassion’.<sup>192</sup>

This principle underwrites the final part of Aristotle’s argument to be cited here. Tragedy, the philosopher argues, is superior to epic, not because of its use of crowd-pleasing spectacle, but rather because the essential dramatic poem of a tragedy itself possesses ‘the evidence of an Action, for both in the representation and reading, it sets all things before the Eyes of the Spectator’.<sup>193</sup> The use of ‘Spectator’ here, a departure from the Greek,<sup>194</sup> should not mislead us, for the weight of the preceding arguments on the superiority of showing over telling overwhelms it. Aristotle’s *Poetics* defines drama as based on representation through action. The importance of action might well lead us to value the living, tangible bodies of performance in the theatre, but we are soon dissuaded from this: the action contained in a great dramatic poem should be as vivid on the page as it is on the stage.

Returning to Johnson’s definition of drama, the Aristotelian influence is clear. To call drama ‘A poem accommodated to action’ does not entail performance. Rather, the dramatic is that which is ‘represented by action’ in the sense that its characters do things rather than narrating them. This means that dramatic text can be performed, but does not have to be: we can imagine action as we read, and be just as affected by the plot. Performance has no claim to a place in the definition of drama. Indeed, its exclusion leads to a clearer appreciation of the author’s work. Thus in Johnson’s definition, and in the eighteenth-century understanding of Aristotle that stands behind it, there appears a separation between drama and what Johnson calls ‘A place in which shows are exhibited’: the theatre.<sup>195</sup>

What then of Shakespeare? There is a long tradition of subjecting him to neo-Aristotelian strictures: Rymer, the translator of Rapin’s version of the *Poetics*, was insistent in his critique of Shakespeare’s failure to follow those rules that should

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192 Aristotle, trans. Anon, p. 234.

193 Aristotle, trans. Anon, p. 495.

194 Aristotle, ed. Kassel, sec. 1462a.

195 Samuel Johnson, ‘THE’ATRE, N.s.’, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1775).

make a drama probable,<sup>196</sup> while Gildon's 'Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage' makes similar points in a more balanced account of Shakespeare's faults and beauties.<sup>197</sup> Yet as well as criticism that focusses on Shakespeare's apparent inability to maintain the unities and other decorums, another approach emerges from the above reading of Aristotle, rooted in the notion that *dramatic* did not necessarily mean 'of the theatre' or 'theatrical'. A 'dramatic Shakespeare' could be set against 'theatrical Shakespeare', for the experience of reading a dramatic poem was either the same or better than that of watching a theatrical performance. Pope, in his 1725 edition of Shakespeare, may argue that applying rule-based neo-Aristotelian criticism to this writer is 'like trying a man by the Laws of one Country who acted under those of another', but his definition of Shakespeare as a writer of 'Stage-Poetry' employs a dramatic-theatrical distinction rooted in the *Poetics*.<sup>198</sup> Shakespeare's faults, we are told, are the result of the stage; they are 'less to be ascribed to his wrong judgment as a Poet than to his right judgment as a Player'.<sup>199</sup> To put it another way, Pope wishes that Shakespeare, like Homer, had been free to write his dramatic poems without the requirements of the theatre.

Pope's editorial prejudices recur in many subsequent editions.<sup>200</sup> These include William Warburton's, which was the text that Johnson used for his *Dictionary*.<sup>201</sup> Further, in his own *Proposals for Printing, by Subscription, the Dramatick Works of William Shakespeare* (1756), Johnson himself writes in a Popean vein of how the texts of this author 'were immediately copied for the actors, and multiplied by transcript after transcript, vitiated by the blunders of the penman, or changed by the affectation of the player'.<sup>202</sup> Nine years after the *Proposals*, Johnson's edition of Shakespeare's plays appeared, and its preface and notes continued to raise the dramatic qualities of Shakespeare over the theatrical.

Beginning, then, with Johnson's 'Preface', the following chapter charts the evolution of approaches to Shakespeare with respect to what makes his works and genius

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196 Thomas Rymer, *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693) (Menston: Scolar Press, 1970).

197 Shakespeare and Gildon, ed. Gildon, p. xxxviii.

198 Shakespeare, ed. Pope, I, p. v.

199 Shakespeare, ed. Pope, I, p. vii.

200 See Chapter One.

201 Robert DeMaria, *Johnson's Dictionary and the Language of Learning* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 17.

202 Samuel Johnson, *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. by Arthur Sherbo, 2 vols (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 52. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.



dramatic. From Johnson's use of the term to create a stable basis for his criticism, we move to its use by William Kenrick and Elizabeth Montagu. In the former's review of Johnson's edition and the latter's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*, both writers challenge Johnson's untheatrical approach, with an increased emphasis on emotional engagement in a drama. This results in a broader definition of the dramatic that recognises the vitality and power of the stage. Yet Montagu and Kenrick also differ. Montagu's appreciation of dramatic, theatrical vitality leads to an equally strong sense of character. In her analysis, dramatic character is no longer, as in Kenrick, simply a representation of a person but rather of a consistently distinctive kind of person, with a morally instructive bedrock, created by Shakespeare's superlative genius. Such a notion leads to a third shift in the usage of 'dramatic', found in the work of Maurice Morgann and William Richardson, where character is the central concern and the specificities of theatrical experience only secondary.

The three sections of this chapter thus trace an ironic line of development. An untheatrical definition of the dramatic is answered by one which recognises the power and vitality of the stage, especially in its representation of sympathetic character. Yet that very recognition leads to a set of altered critical priorities in which the theatre is, once more, relegated. The five writers chosen here to illustrate this pattern are bound to each other by their use of the adjective *dramatic*. Johnson proposes publishing the 'Dramatic Works' of Shakespeare; Kenrick and Montagu both accuse Johnson of not considering the 'dramatic' qualities of Shakespeare or his text; and Richardson and Morgann both publish essays on what they call 'dramatic character'. Considered together, these critics serve to raise questions about our own sense of what was (and is) dramatic in Shakespeare's work, and, indeed, what was (and is) dramatic and/or theatrical about Shakespeare the writer.

## **I. Dramatic Exhibition**

The opening five paragraphs of Johnson's 'Preface' do not mention Shakespeare. Instead they elaborate a theme that governs the entirety of his approach, that of lifting his author out of time. This temporal move has important consequences for Johnson's understanding of the dramatic.

The 'Preface' begins with the dangers of unthinking veneration of the dead, and the observation that the only true test of value is endurance, since 'what has been longest

known has been most considered and what is most considered is best understood' (60-61). Only after this statement of the clear judgement that comes when works are detached from their original context does Johnson turn to Shakespeare, who 'may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration' (61). Shakespeare, having 'long outlived his century', is now, like Homer or Pythagoras, eternal. Those aspects of his work which originally connected him to his contemporaries have faded: 'Whatever advantages he might once derive from personal allusions, local customs, or temporary opinions, have for many years been lost', and 'The effects of favour and competition are at an end'. Shakespeare is without the 'artificial life' of a specific context and his works are now forever 'read without any other reason than the desire of pleasure', while receiving 'new honours at every transmission' (61).

The retrospective panorama offered here evokes the activity of each generation only to highlight their similarity. Each wave of critics has done the same thing: heaped honours on Shakespeare. There is another similarity, however. Each critical generation has also not seen but 'read' Shakespeare. The plays are not appreciated in performance nor transmitted through the stage but rather 'read without any other reason than desire of pleasure'. The opening of the 'Preface', as it lifts Shakespeare out of time, also lifts him out of performance. This is one way in which Johnson's text deals with the dramatic Shakespeare more than the theatrical. The distinctiveness of the theatrical event, the way in which every night is different and impossible to reduce to a script in advance or afterwards, forms the core of many arguments for the particular value of performance as an art in time.<sup>203</sup> Yet Johnson is not interested in 'temporary opinions', and instead portrays Shakespeare's works as having passed beyond such ephemeral phenomena as 'The effects of favour and competition'. Shakespeare assumes the 'dignity of an ancient', achieving a kind of stability necessary to the 'best' understanding and hostile to the contingency of the theatrical world.

This emphasis on the stable, eternal, dramatic Shakespeare (both work and man), rather than the contingent, ephemeral, theatrical one, continues throughout the 'Preface', in Johnson's thoughts on the genre, style, and passions of the playwright's creation (66, 69-70). Yet while this portrayal of the 'adamant' playwright (70) tends to exclude certain contingent, theatrical aspects of his work, it does not eclipse the

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203 See: Osipovich.

stage completely. As Johnson himself admits, Shakespeare's work was not 'designed for the reader's desk' (97).

This statement does not, however, concede as much as it might seem to. For Johnson, in the 'Preface' and elsewhere, describes performance in such a way that, even if Shakespeare wrote for the theatre, the experience of seeing his plays acted must always fail to offer privileged insight into his creation. This is as true of eighteenth-century acting as it is of that in Shakespeare's time. Regarding the former, Joan Klingel has argued that such notorious remarks as 'Many of Shakespeare's plays are the worse for being acted' (recorded by Boswell) are not proof of Johnson's 'incapacity of judging plays *qua* plays' but rather a way of 'passing judgment on the contemporary theatre based on the high standards he had set'.<sup>204</sup> In support of this interpretation, one might also point to Garrick's absence from Johnson's 'Preface',<sup>205</sup> or to the text's melancholy observation about contemporary theatregoers, who are such that none of Shakespeare's plays 'would be heard to the conclusion' if performed unaltered (91).

Klingel, though, concentrating on Johnson's relationship with the eighteenth-century stage, does not note that the theatre of the past is also denigrated in the 'Preface'. Heminges and Condell, as 'players' preparing the First Folio, are said to have had no very 'exact or definite ideas' about the distinctions between comedy and tragedy (68). Other actors down the ages were perhaps responsible, along with uneducated 'copiers', for the 'mutilated' state of some speeches, not least because they 'seldom understood them' (93). Turning from performers to the audience, Johnson argues, as Pope had before him, that Shakespeare's errors stem in part from a desire to please fickle and mercenary tastes, as he wrote 'plots [...] crowded with incidents, by which the attention of a rude people was more easily caught than by sentiment or argumentation' (74). This thread then develops into a critique of Shakespeare's personal failings, as one who 'rejects those exhibitions which would be more affecting, for the sake of those which are more easy', and who, 'when he found himself near the end of the work', 'shortened the labour to snatch the profit' (71-72).

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204 Joan E. Klingel, 'Backstage with Dr. Johnson: "Punch Has No Feelings"', *Studies in Philology*, 77.3 (1980), 300-18 (p. 318).

205 See: Tiffany Stern, "'I Do Wish That You Had Mentioned Garrick": The Absence of Garrick in Johnson's Shakespeare', in *Comparative Excellence: New Essays on Shakespeare and Johnson*, ed. by Eric Rasmussen, *Studies in the Eighteenth-Century*, 52 (New York: AMS Press, 2007), pp. 71-96.

With these remarks, Johnson's 'Preface' enforces his separation between the ideal dramatic and the contingent and capricious theatrical aspects of Shakespeare's work.<sup>206</sup> Even if Shakespeare did not write for the 'reader's desk', all that is available for Johnson in the theatre is, at best, the opportunity 'to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation' (77). This gives a strikingly neutral model of performance: it neither adds to nor diminishes the text, nor is it particularly dependent on its context.

Klingel makes three points about this definition. First, she suggests that it demands a high level of understanding from the performer, adumbrating a figure who cannot just feel his way into a part but must rather deliberate over what gesture is 'just' and what modulation 'elegant'. Second, she notes that this description of acting as recitation accords with accounts of Johnson's own readings from Shakespeare. Finally, she discerns a connection between Johnson's idea of performance and Hamlet's advice to the players, 'Fit the action to the word and the word to the action'.<sup>207</sup> This last point finds support in another passage in the 'Preface', unnoted by Klingel but also inspired by the Danish prince's thoughts on acting. This is Johnson's description of Shakespeare as one who is 'the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror [*sic*] of manners and of life' (62). This phrase echoes Hamlet's definition of 'the purpose of playing', much quoted by Aaron Hill and Gildon in their acting handbooks ('to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature'), but differs from it in its emphasis on the author and readers rather than actors and performance.<sup>208</sup> That Johnson speaks of Shakespeare communing with his readers rather than of performers actively showing 'virtue her own feature' (*ibid.*) transfers interest from player to poet, from theatrical to dramatic, and is symptomatic of the wider portrayal of performance in the 'Preface' as of no other interest than recitation.

The hierarchy identified here – dramatic Shakespeare over theatrical – is apparent at other points in the 'Preface' where Johnson mentions performance. When criticising act divisions present both on the page and on the contemporary stage,<sup>209</sup> Johnson suggests that 'plays ought to be exhibited with short pauses, interposed as often as

206 Tiffany Stern suggests that Johnson's hostility may well be due to the reception of his own play, *Irene*, at Drury Lane. See: Stern, ed. Rasmussen, pp. 85–6.

207 Klingel, pp. 309–10.

208 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Harold Jenkins, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 291–332 (p. 311) (III.2.20-25).

209 Apart from the 1622 edition of *Othello*, there are, of course, no act divisions in the quartos.

the scene is changed, or any considerable time is required to pass' (107). This suggestion is justified with reference to an Aristotelian definition of drama as imitation by action, for 'In every real, and therefore in every imitative action, the intervals may be more or fewer' according to the duration of each activity (107). The operative word here is 'exhibited'. Johnson's idea about stage practice is presented as a suggestion about how 'plays ought to be exhibited', a turn of phrase which implies a separation between dramatic poem and theatrical performance, the latter being no more than a way of exhibiting, of showing the ideal drama which exists independently of it. The concept of exhibition occurs in the *Dictionary's* definition of a theatre ('A place in which shows are exhibited'),<sup>210</sup> and returns elsewhere in the 'Preface', appearing most notably in the statement that 'A dramattick exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that encrease or diminish its effect' (79).

Johnson seems on occasion sensitive to what would work best in a theatre. He criticises elsewhere, for example, Shakespeare's use of 'a disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution' in narration, since it makes the already 'naturally tedious' effect of diegesis in 'dramattick poetry' even worse (73). Yet this critique does not in itself refer to performance: it is a fault of 'dramattick poetry', which may be felt in either the study or the stage. There are better examples of performance sensitivity in the notes, where Peter Holland has shown Johnson to be less stringent in his separation between dramatic and theatrical concerns. In the notes to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, for instance, Holland observes various ways in which Johnson recognises that a scene 'deserves testing in performance, that performance taste is not the same as reading taste, and that plot is not necessarily the determinant for value in the experience of theatre'.<sup>211</sup> That such footnotes, written over years, should diverge from the 'Preface's' position is not necessarily surprising, for they remain in the minority, counterbalanced by many others. When, for example, the Chorus opens *Henry V* with a plea that the audience 'Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts', Johnson notes 'Nothing can be represented to the eye but by something like it, and *within a wooden O* nothing very like a battle can be exhibited'.<sup>212</sup>

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210 Johnson, 'THE'ATRE, N.s.'

211 Peter Holland, 'Editing for Performance: Dr. Johnson and the Stage', *Ilha do Desterro: A Journal of Language and Literature*, 49 (2005), 75–98 (p. 87).

212 William Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare in Eight Volumes*, ed. by Samuel Johnson, 8 vols (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1765), IV, p. 362.

The 'Preface' is Aristotelian not only in its treatment of performance, act divisions and narration but also in regard to Shakespeare's characterisation. Johnson's claim that 'Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion' effects an elision, collapsing the stage into the dramatic, which mirrors life, imitating action by action (64). In this sentence, the scene of Shakespeare is 'occupied by men' whose actions do not require exhibition in performance, since they 'act and speak' as a 'reader' should do himself in such a situation. Shakespeare is dramatic in that he is mimetic. As Johnson puts it: 'He that will understand Shakespeare, must not be content to study him in the closet,' but rather 'must look for his meaning sometimes among the sports of the field, and sometimes among the manufactures of the shop' (86). Although reading Shakespeare is shown to be insufficient here, the possibility of seeing him performed is not even mentioned: the alternative to the closet is not the stage but the 'field' or the 'shop', and Johnson's emphasis on mimesis leads not to living bodies of actors but to the lived experience of human life.

This last point, while repeating a move found in the *Poetics*' comparison of tragedy and epic,<sup>213</sup> nevertheless also contains the germ of Johnson's less orthodox approach to Shakespearian mimesis. Such thinking constitutes the main way in which the 'Preface' breaks from its classical heritage, for it is through reference to 'delusion', the supposed effect of Shakespeare's theatrical representations, that Johnson attempts to demolish a pillar of dramatic theory that later critics had raised from Aristotle's *Poetics*: the unities.

Johnson begins his attack on the unities by summarising the position of those who would use them to criticise Shakespeare. He tells us that 'The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible'. When the unities are broken by the presentation of 'an action of months or years [...] in three hours', or the movement of ambassadors 'between distant kings', 'The mind revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force' because 'it departs from the resemblance of reality'. Since Johnson then describes this line of argument as an example of 'the triumphant language with which a critick exults over the misery of an irregular poet', it is clear that such a position is being set up for a fall (76). What is remarkable, however, is how that fall is engineered.

213 In that Aristotle at first leads us to connect tragedy's dramatic mimesis to the actor's physical presence and then denies it as having no part to play in establishing the value of an author's work.

First, Johnson makes the obvious riposte: ‘Delusion, if delusion be admitted, has no certain limitation’. ‘There is no reason’, he writes, ‘why a mind thus wandering in extasy should count the clock, or why an hour should not be a century in that calenture of the brains that can make the stage a field’ (77). Yet the language in which this reply is couched, particularly the unflattering description of the theatregoer as deluded, suffering from ‘calenture [overheating] of the brains’, indicates that Johnson is far from finished with his argument. Not only is the staunch supporter of the unities attacked here, so too are the critics who preach the power of theatrical illusion, for Johnson indicates that he is by no means ready to join them and admit delusion.

The next paragraph thus opens with a twist to the argument, the claim that ‘The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players’ (77). These rational theatregoers are there only ‘to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation’. Performance adds nothing to the dramatic poem, for there is no mimetic illusion. This, of course, means that the unities (themselves most often evoked as a way of conceptualising performance) have no purpose. Performance never resembles reality enough to delude the spectator, regardless of whether the unities are observed or not. As Johnson puts it, ‘it is false that any representation is mistaken for reality; that any dramattick fable in its materiality was ever credited, or, for a single moment, was ever credited’ (76). The description of performance as ‘dramatic fable in its materiality’ here is symptomatic of Johnson’s distinction between the theatrical and the dramatic, the former a material, inferior instantiation of the latter; and one, as he now claims, that provokes no specific emotional response from spectators, who are as much ‘in their senses’ as readers.<sup>214</sup>

The experience of such rational spectators poses a problem for Johnson, which his ‘Preface’ soon moves to answer. ‘It will be asked’, he acknowledges, ‘how the drama moves, if it is not credited’. Johnson’s response, with a striking repetition of ‘drama’, is the claim that ‘It is credited with all the credit due to a drama’: in other words, ‘It is credited, whenever it moves, as a just picture of a real original; as representing to the auditor what he would himself feel, if he were to do or suffer what is there

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214 Johnson wavers from this point in his footnotes. He writes, in his comment on *King Lear*, that ‘the extrusion of Gloucester’s eyes [...] seems an act too horrid to be endured in dramattick exhibition, and as such must always compel the mind to relieve its distress by incredulity.’ Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VI, p. 159.

feigned to be suffered or to be done'. A tragedy makes us weep because it makes us 'rather lament the possibility of than suppose the presence of misery' (78). This idea is then expanded in the following paragraph.

Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind. When the imagination is recreated by a painted landscape, the trees are not supposed capable to give us shade, or the fountains coolness; but we consider, how we should be pleased with such fountains playing beside us, and such woods waving over us. We are agitated in reading the history of Henry the Fifth, yet no man takes his book for the field of Agencourt. A dramattick exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that encrease or diminish its effect. Familiar comedy is often more powerful on the theatre, than in the page; imperial tragedy is always less. (79)

What is remarkable about this paragraph is that it is able to operate above distinctions of medium. Johnson writes here of 'imitations' of all kinds, which operate in the same way by bringing 'realities to mind'. The subject of the 'Preface' has become what Jean-Marie Schaeffer calls 'l'expérience esthétique',<sup>215</sup> and any specifically theatrical concerns (such as the playhouse or the actors) have been left behind. In a 'dramatic exhibition' such representational necessities are mere 'concomitants' whose effect is not worth consideration. It is thus unsurprising that Johnson follows this paragraph's parallel references to history book, painting and play with his assertion that 'A play read affects the mind like a play acted' (79). Both play read and play acted, like a painting seen or a history book perused, affect us only in the way that they 'bring realities to mind'.

Shakespeare, then, is for Johnson a dramatic author in that he brings realities to mind through poetry 'accommodated to action'. Such a definition does not need material 'exhibition' in the theatre, for Shakespeare, whose 'drama is the mirror [*sic*] of life' and who 'engaged in dramattick poetry with the world open before him', appears in the 'Preface' as operating above particular time and circumstance. The theatrical is of the moment, but the dramatic is not: Shakespeare's dramatic poetry is that of the eternal constants of human life.<sup>216</sup> It requires, in Johnson's view, reflection on the part of readers (and actors), and its impact on spectators and readers alike can be studied and explained as part of the stable and just evaluation of the poet across time.

<sup>215</sup> Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *L'Expérience Esthétique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), p. 11.

<sup>216</sup> On such constants, see: G. F. Parker, *Johnson's Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 44-50.



## II. Dramatic Sympathy

Johnson's 'Preface' made a considerable impression in literary circles of the mid-eighteenth century. Robert Stock argues that its critique of the unities, even if derivative,<sup>217</sup> nevertheless hastened their downfall,<sup>218</sup> while Antonia Forster, writing in 2012 on Shakespeare and eighteenth-century periodicals, charts the extent to which the publication of Johnson's edition constituted a major reviewing event. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, whose book reviews were rarely of any great length, devoted ten pages to it; the *Critical Review* had forty-two pages of response from William Guthrie; and the *Monthly Review* assigned thirty-three, for a piece by William Kenrick which spanned two issues.<sup>219</sup>

Of all these pieces, Kenrick's review stood out for its 'rare amalgam of malice, envy, bad manners, and sound, temperate criticism'.<sup>220</sup> Much of the bile present in the work stems from the fact that Kenrick had himself been under contract to produce an edition of Shakespeare's plays for Jacob Tonson, only to see his work gazumped first by Johnson from 1757 to 1765, and then by news of the hiring of George Steevens as his successor (Steevens's proposals appearing in 1766). Kenrick's anger resulted in his *Review of Dr Johnson's New Edition of Shakespeare: in which the Ignorance, or Inattention of that Editor is Exposed* (1765), a longer and more bitter piece published shortly after his work for the *Monthly*. Apart from his personal animus, however, Kenrick nevertheless remained an obvious choice to review Johnson's work for other reasons: by the 1760s, he was already well-known as a keen amateur Shakespearian and would soon gain some fame both for his imitation, *Falstaff's Wedding: A Comedy, being a sequel to the Second Part of the Play of King Henry IV* (1766), and his lectures on Shakespeare (published in 1774 as *Introduction to the School of Shakespeare*).<sup>221</sup> Christian Deelman also notes that Kenrick was one of the few to attend the ball at Garrick's 1769 Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford-upon-Avon in costume, coming disguised as the ghost of Old Hamlet and thus as the character

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217 See: Edward Tomarken, *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare: The Discipline of Criticism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), p. 15.

218 This point was first made in the 1920s. Compare: Stock, p. 103; Thomas M. Raysor, 'The Downfall of the Three Unities', *MLN*, 42 (1927), 1–9.

219 Antonia Forster, 'Shakespeare in the Reviews', in *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Fiona Ritchie and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 60–77 (p. 63).

220 Paul Fussell, 'William Kenrick, Eighteenth-Century Scourge and Critic', *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, 20 (1957), p. 57.

221 See: Fussell.

Shakespeare was supposed to have played himself.<sup>222</sup>

Kenrick's article cannot capture the range of responses provoked by this publication. Johnson's work had a long afterlife: the 'Preface' and many of his notes were reprinted in all eighteenth-century editions of Shakespeare, and were also much referenced in subsequent writing on Shakespeare in this period. Johnson's shadow lies particularly heavily on the work of Elizabeth Montagu, who was already composing her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* at the time of the edition's publication.<sup>223</sup> Montagu's text may be read alongside Kenrick's review for a fuller picture of how those thinking about Shakespeare in the wake of Johnson responded to his arguments, and in particular to his understanding of drama and the dramatic.

Writing to her friend the classicist Elizabeth Carter, in July 1766, Montagu remarked that Johnson had clearly not examined 'the peculiar excellencies of Shakespeare as a Dramatick poet'.<sup>224</sup> Three months later, she again makes the 'dramatic' a significant term in her critique of Johnson (he ignored 'the dramatick genius of Shakespeare') and paints an unflattering portrait of him as an editor, noting that even though he clearly 'found the piddling trade of verbal criticism below his genius' he nevertheless 'persisted in it, through y<sup>e</sup> course of so many volumes'.<sup>225</sup> Montagu's letters to Carter echo, with their focus on the nature of drama and the role of the editor, criticism made publicly by Kenrick in his review. On the subject of editing, Kenrick classes Johnson with those who 'in the piddling task of adjusting quibbles and restoring conundrums, [...] have neglected the illustration of characters, sentiments and situations'.<sup>226</sup> This is not the worst of it, though, for such editing is in Kenrick's eyes guilty of something far more serious.<sup>227</sup> By trapping themselves in textual minutiae, quibbling editors end up trapping Shakespeare in them too, making his works 'of no other use than to employ the sagacity of antiquarians and philologers' (286). This

222 Christian Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee* (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 251.

223 Fiona Ritchie, 'Elizabeth Montagu: "Shakespears Poor Little Critick"?' , *Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakespeare Studies and Production*, 58 (2005), 72–82 (p. 75).

224 Quoted in: Elizabeth Eger, "'Out Rushed a Female to Protect the Bard": The Bluestocking Defense of Shakespeare', *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 2002, 127–51 (p. 134).

225 Quoted in: Eger, "'Out Rushed a Female to Protect the Bard": The Bluestocking Defense of Shakespeare', p. 134.

226 William Kenrick, 'Johnson's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays', *Monthly Review* (London, October 1765), pp. 285–301 (p. 286). Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

227 Note that both Kenrick and Montagu echo Alexander Pope's mention of 'piddling Tibbalds'. See: Alexander Pope, 'Epistle to Arbuthnot', in *The Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 332–49 (l. 164).

broader accusation, born in part of Kenrick's own frustrated editorial aspirations, also reads as a criticism of Johnson's treatment of Shakespeare as an 'ancient', whose work stands outside time. Rather than making Shakespeare eternal, Kenrick suspects that Johnson has left Shakespeare dead.

Kenrick discerns such deadness in Johnson's commentary on Shakespeare as well as his editorial priorities. He, like Montagu, also accuses Johnson of being deaf to the dramatic in Shakespeare. Summarising those paragraphs of the 'Preface' in which Johnson first lists Shakespeare's faults and then defends the playwright's departure from the unities, Kenrick remarks that Johnson appears to be as 'indifferent a pleader for Shakespeare as he hath proved against him'. This, as Kenrick promises to show, is because 'Dr Johnson [was] too little acquainted with the nature and use of the drama, to engage successfully in a dispute of so much difficulty as that which relates to the breach of observation of the dramatic unities' (295).

Although Montagu and Kenrick thus share a similar opinion of Johnson's work – that it was too caught up in criticism and insufficiently concerned with what they believed to be the dramatic qualities of Shakespeare – they also differ in important respects. As a woman, Montagu could not give her judgement of Johnson as publicly as Kenrick. Montagu's *Essay* was published anonymously in 1769, and although many guessed its author, it was only printed with her name from the fourth edition (1777) onwards.<sup>228</sup> Other pieces of correspondence from Montagu attest to the risks she took in publishing her literary criticism. A letter sent to her nephew Matthew Robinson in September 1790 describes 'a general prejudice against female Authors especially if they invade those regions of literature which the Men are desirous to reserve to themselves'. It then goes on to name the Shakespeare criticism of Johnson, Pope and Warburton as an obstacle to her literary endeavours, since 'there was a degree of presumption in pretending to meddle with a subject they had already treated tolerably well'.<sup>229</sup> Despite such barriers, though, Montagu wrote and published on Shakespeare, not so much avoiding Johnson 'at all costs' as Reiko Oya argues,<sup>230</sup> but instead carefully constructing her work so as to keep critique of the English male literary establishment in the margins of her *Essay*.

The overt aim of Montagu's work is clear from its full title: *Essay on the Writings*

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228 Ritchie, p. 78.

229 Quoted in: Ritchie, p. 78.

230 Oya, p. 40.

*and Genius of Shakespeare, Compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets: With some Remarks upon the Misrepresentation of Mons. de Voltaire.* As both Elizabeth Eger and Fiona Ritchie have shown, a patriotic attack on Voltaire serves as groundwork for many of Montagu's arguments. More importantly for the present purposes, though, it also serves to cloak and shield her views on English literary criticism.<sup>231</sup> Her choice of Voltaire as principal target may be read as a response to Johnson, who had casually dismissed the Frenchman's writing in the 'Preface', along with that of Rymer and John Dennis, as 'the petty cavils of petty minds' (66). More generally, while Johnson's writing attempts to rise above contemporary debate, Montagu is keen to show why her *Essay* is particularly important now. In her introductory comments on Voltaire, she writes urgently of how 'Ridiculously has our poet, and ridiculously has our taste been represented, by a writer of almost universal fame and through the medium of a universal language' (17). A little earlier, she describes the process whereby 'Shakespeare's felicity has been rendered compleat in this age' (15). This is thanks to 'those learned commentators' but also to 'Mr Garrick', who – as Johnson refused to say – acts 'with the same inspiration' as that with which Shakespeare wrote (15-16).

Montagu's interest in the Shakespeare of 1769 is one way in which she diverges from Johnson. Two other passages also reveal the careful distinctions made in the shadows of her *Essay*. The first of these corrects glosses made by the 'last two commentators' (Johnson and Warburton) on a line in *Macbeth*. The second is far more direct. Deep in an argument against those who, like Voltaire, would judge Shakespeare by neo-Aristotelian rules, Montagu remarks that she need not defend Shakespeare's apparent abuse of the unities. This is because, 'happily for Shakespeare, Mr Johnson, whose genius and learning render him superior to a servile awe of pedantic institutions [...] has greatly obviated all that can be objected to our author's neglect of the unities of time and place' (14). Such an explicit reference to Johnson would be unremarkable, were it not for the fact that Montagu refuses to detail exactly how Johnson has removed the problem of the unities. The passage just quoted ends a paragraph, and the next opens with a change of topic. As already discussed, Johnson's attack on the unities entails a denial of theatrical illusion and the proposal of an undifferentiated aesthetic experience equally valid for playgoers, readers and viewers of paintings. Montagu, it would seem, feels that there is no place for such an understanding of the dramatic in her essay and so passes over it. This omission implies a larger

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231 Ritchie, pp. 77–78.

disagreement with Johnson over ‘delusion’, a term Montagu goes on to rehabilitate in a new, theatrically inspired understanding of what is dramatic, which follows and strengthens a line of critique already delineated by Kenrick’s review of the ‘Preface’.

Kenrick held that ‘Dr Johnson [was] too little acquainted with the nature and use of the drama to engage successfully in a dispute of so much difficulty as that which relates to the breach of observation of the dramatic unities’ (295). He devotes a large part of his review to proving this with a well-developed argument for the utility of the unities. This argument turns on the idea that far from being irrelevant, the unities are actually necessary, since they are required ‘to support the *apparent probability*, not the *actual credibility* of the drama’ (298). Kenrick’s italics draw attention to a nuance not present in Johnson: what happens onstage can be *apparently* probable if not *actually* credible; the unities help us to accept what is happening before us without mistaking it for reality. Such nuance depends on recognising the particular experience of the theatregoer:

A spectator, properly affected by a dramatic representation, makes no reflections about the fiction or the reality of it, so long as the action proceeds without grossly offending, or palpably imposing on the senses.  
(298)

This description of the unthinking, passive spectator differs greatly from Johnson’s model of how plays (or paintings or books) ‘bring realities to mind’. Kenrick’s spectator ‘makes no reflections about the fiction or the reality’ of ‘dramatic representation’; Johnson, meanwhile, would base all aesthetic experience on the way in which imitation is constantly reminding us of reality.

Kenrick’s portrait of the unreflecting spectator draws on the writings of Henry Home, Lord Kames, and specifically the concept of the ‘waking dream’ as expounded in his *Elements of Criticism* (1762). Following David Hume and Adam Smith, Kames explains how, by creating an ‘ideal presence’ in our minds we can be affected by any of our thoughts as part of a ‘waking dream’ in which nothing seems inferior to daily life.<sup>232</sup> When discussing drama in particular, the phrase appears to describe the ‘perfection of representation’, which is ‘to hide itself, to impose on the spectator, and to produce in him an impression of reality, as if he were a spectator of a real

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<sup>232</sup> Peter Jones, ‘Introduction’, in *Elements of Criticism*, 2 vols (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), 1, pp. 1–26 (p. 14) <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1860>> [accessed 29 June 2015].

event'.<sup>233</sup> As with the vulnerability of Kenrick's unreflecting spectator to anything 'grossly offending or palpably imposing on the senses', Kames's 'waking dream' is also defined by its potential collapse, for 'any interruption annihilates that impression, by rousing him out of his waking dream, and unhappily restoring him to his senses'.<sup>234</sup>

Kenrick elaborates his Kamesian critique of Johnson's 'Preface' with pointed use of Garrick. Reformulating his point about what the unquestioning theatregoer will accept, he re-emphasises the theatrical part of the dramatic:

The image of Mr Garrick, it is true, is painted on the retina of his eye, and the voice of Mrs Cibber mechanically affects the tympanum of his ear: but it is true also that [at a performance of Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*] he sees only the transports of Jaffeir and listens only to the ravings of Belvidera. (299)

The phrasing of this passage makes the doubleness of the spectator's position clear. Kenrick is distinguishing between subjective, imaginative perception of a play and the rational-empirical report of the senses. In his own words, 'The spectator is unquestionably deceived; but the deception goes no farther than the passions, it affects our sensibility but not our understanding, it is by no means so powerful a delusion as to affect our belief' (299). In this model, the unities are necessary to maintain the state of cognitive dissonance, the waking dream whose delicate balance would collapse if exposed to reflection.

As the review in the *Monthly* goes on, Kenrick continues to repeat this twofold point: 'That the judgment never mistook any dramatic representation we readily admit; but that our senses frequently do, is certain, from the effect it hath on our passions' (300). Unlike Johnson, who describes how feeling accompanies realities brought to mind, the passions of Kenrick's theatregoer are touched in a much more immediate manner. He describes, for instance, how contrary to the assumptions of the 'Preface' spectators are 'moved by mechanical motives; they laugh and cry from mere sympathy at what a moment's reflection would very often prevent them from laughing or crying at at all' (300). In other words, when we are at the theatre, 'our imagination hath nothing to do with the immediate impressions whether of joy or

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233 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, ed. by Peter Jones, 2 vols (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), II, p. 418 <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1860>> [accessed 29 June 2015].

234 Lord Kames, ed. Jones, II, p. 418.

sorrow', and 'we are in this case merely passive, our organs are in unison with those of the players on the stage, and the convulsions of grief or laughter are purely involuntary' (300-301). The kind of feeling here is sympathetic, 'mere sympathy', in that it entails the involuntary participation of the audience in the emotions of the performers. That the actors should themselves be feeling what they are acting and not concentrating on achieving Johnsonian 'just gesture and elegant modulation' is central to Kenrick's ideas about performance as a whole, and marks another difference between the two critics.

In his lectures on Shakespeare, Kenrick also writes of actors who feel rather than think, dedicating a portion of the work to criticism of the calculating performer in an attempt (following in the footsteps of Aaron Hill and others) 'to explode *the mechanical emphasis* as altogether improper'.<sup>235</sup> By emphasising sympathy, the unconscious emotional absorption found in both theatregoers and the best actors, Kenrick offers a distinctive, contemporary theatrical model of dramatic engagement, relevant to those in the pit and on the stage. Sympathy, so vivid in the theatre, is as crucial to Montagu's *Essay*, and its sense of the dramatic, as it is to Kenrick's critique of Johnson.

Montagu was no stranger to the Kamesian philosophy that underwrites Kenrick's critical alternative to Johnson. She was even invited to contribute a chapter to *Elements of Criticism*.<sup>236</sup> Further, when her *Essay* appeared, both Kames and Hugh Blair praised it highly.<sup>237</sup> Like Kenrick, and like Kames, Montagu also believes that drama, particularly Shakespeare's, cannot just be appreciated rationally. However, she does not merely repeat this earlier point, but adds a moral dimension to it as well. In this, she runs counter to both Kenrick and Johnson. In the 'Preface', the 'first defect' of Shakespeare is that 'He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose' (71). Kenrick takes issue with Johnson's method (if not his conclusion) and, asking 'Is every writer *ex professo* a parson or a moral philosopher?', claims that Shakespeare 'did not know that the rules of criticism required the drama to have a particular moral; nor did he conceive himself bound, as a *poet* to write like a *philosopher*' (291). Montagu agrees with Johnson in that she believes that drama should have a moral purpose, but differs from him and Kenrick in her view that

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235 Quoted in: Fussell, p. 53.

236 Oya, p. 41.

237 Ritchie, p. 75.

Shakespeare meets this criterion. In order to show how such a thing is possible, she incorporates Aristotelian dogma into the models of theatrical sympathy found in Kenrick and Kames.

The first section of Montagu's *Essay* is entitled 'Of the Drama, or on Dramatic Poetry'. It begins with a definition of drama that repeats many well-worn critical adages, sprinkled – like much of the text as a whole – with footnote references to such seventeenth-century French critics as Bossu, Fénelon, and Brumoy. These lines also accord with the definition of drama given in Johnson's *Dictionary*. First Montagu, citing Aristotle's *Poetics*, distinguishes between the two 'imitations' of epic poems and tragedies: epic 'imitates by narration', while 'the dramatic is an imitation of the actions of men by the means of action itself' (25). The fact that Homer uses the 'dramatic manner', and is praised by Aristotle for it, indicates its superiority over epic narration. Montagu's next point is that 'the general object of poetry, among the ancients, was the instruction of mankind'. We thus find in Homer's *Iliad* a 'moral fable [...] adapted to the political state of Greece' and in the *Odyssey* one fitted 'to the general condition of human nature' (27). Aristotle, when he praised Homer, praised him for his union of moral instruction and dramatic manner, what Montagu calls 'the powerful agency of living words, joined to moving things' (28).

The *Essay* now turns to tragedy. Montagu reminds us that Aristotle prefers tragedy to epic, and explains that this is because tragedy is 'composed of ingredients of such efficacy as to subdue the violent distempers of the mind'. The 'epic poem is too abstruse for the people', but 'the drama' is 'happily constituted' for tracing 'the consequences of ill governed passions, or erroneous principles' (28-29). It is in this passage that Montagu's definition of drama begins to blur a little: she is still clearly thinking of the 'dramatic manner' (the showing, not telling, found in Homer), but is also evoking theatrical experience through an increasing emphasis on the tangibility of tragedy that constitutes its superior moral efficacy. Hence the following definition, which reverses several of Johnson's key terms:

A tragedy is a fable exhibited to the view, and rendered palpable to the senses; and every decoration of the stage is contrived to impose the delusion on the spectator, by conspiring with the imitation. It is addressed to the imagination, through which it opens to itself a communication to the heart, where it is to excite certain passions and affections; each character being personated; and each event exhibited, the attention of the audience is greatly captivated, and the imagination so far aids in the



delusion as to sympathize with the representation. (29-30)

Johnson had used the idea of ‘dramatic exhibition’ to distinguish the essential work of Shakespeare from the ‘concomitant’ theatrical context. Montagu writes instead of how tragedy is itself defined by the act of showing, ‘exhibited to the view’, and therefore incorporates into it the very materiality the ‘Preface’ treats so slightly. Further, such materiality, the ‘palpable’ experience of the theatre, succeeds in imposing ‘delusion’ on the audience, in creating an imaginative state, not far from that of the ‘waking dream’, where the artwork can communicate with the heart through sympathy.

This definition is capped with a quotation from Pope, ‘When Cato groans who does not wish to bleed?’ (30). The choice of a line from the theatrical prologue to Addison’s play, which draws attention to the unwritten, unscripted parts of theatrical performance (the extra-metrical groans), shows the extent to which Montagu, although starting from Aristotelian premises not dissimilar to Johnson’s, nevertheless manages a strong emphasis on the theatrical in her definition of the dramatic. What is theatrical – the ‘decoration of the stage’ and the personation of the actors – is defined as ‘conspiring with the imitation’, reinforcing the play’s moral reach. It does so through sympathy: Pope’s prologue is after all an observation of the sympathetic attachment of the audience to the acted Cato, even if Johnson wondered ‘what voice or what gesture can hope to add dignity or force to the soliloquy of Cato’ (79).

If this is how Montagu understands the ‘dramatic’, then grounds for her criticism of Johnson’s inattention to Shakespeare’s ‘dramatic genius’, and for the exclusion of his anti-performance attack on the unities from her essay, are already evident. For Montagu, dramatic genius must use (and not be limited by) the vital, palpable experience of the theatre for moral ends: a dramatic writer, as someone who aims to purge pity and fear, must have the ability to join ‘living words’ to ‘moving things’. Johnson, when he names the ‘first fault’ of Shakespeare as his being ‘so much more careful to please than to instruct’ thus misunderstands how this playwright’s drama distinguishes itself as drama (71).

Yet the ‘Preface’ is more complicated in its assessment of Shakespeare’s moral utility than this. It admits, for instance, that ‘From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally’, although this presumes a distinctly untheatrical means of access to the moral content of the drama,

unlikely to satisfy Montagu's insistence on the tangibility of tragedy (71). Further, Johnson follows this grudging recognition with further aspersions: Shakespeare's 'precepts and axioms drop casually from him', he 'makes no just distribution of good or evil', and he never shows 'in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked'. Overall, this playwright 'carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance' (71). Such an assessment opposes Montagu's interest in Shakespeare's morality, and her *Essay's* section on Shakespeare's history plays offers counterarguments to it, while serving to reinforce her integration of the moral into the dramatic by emphasising the tangible vitality of theatrical experience.

Ritchie suggests that Montagu's treatment of the history plays constitutes her 'greatest contribution to Shakespearian scholarship'.<sup>238</sup> One of Montagu's key points here is that history makes good drama because it invites sympathy. While all stories can interest us, she argues, we are more readily attached by sympathy to those, like histories, where we 'have any relation to people concerned' (57). Further, history plays benefit from another advantage. Their imitation of the often chaotic events of the past permits a more flexible structure than that of a tragedy. Such looseness allows for the inclusion of more moral episodes and of a greater range of characters (58). With this greater variety come more opportunities for audiences to sympathise with the drama. As for the way in which moral instruction is included once sympathetic attachment has been established, Montagu replies to Johnson's assertion that Shakespeare's 'axioms drop casually' under cover of Euripides.

The Greek tragedian, while 'highly esteemed for the moral sentences with which he has interspersed the speeches in his tragedies', is inferior to the English playwright. Euripides merely 'collects general opinions into maxims' while Shakespeare eschews such narrative procedure and dramatically 'extracts [...] new observations from characters in action' (60). Montagu identifies this in lines spoken by the Archbishop of York in *Henry IV Part 2*: 'An habitation giddy and unsure | Hath he that buildeth on the vulgar heart' is both an axiom and a pragmatic argument for accelerating the rebellion. When Shakespeare gives a maxim it thus, for Montagu, 'seems forced from him by the occasion' (61). Johnson wrote that Shakespeare 'seems to write without any moral purpose' with precepts and axioms that 'drop casually from him'. This is not what Montagu means. Johnson's use of 'seems' refers to how Shakespeare

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238 Ritchie, p. 78.

the author appears, in his view, to have failed. Montagu's use of 'seems' refers to how the play has been so well constructed by Shakespeare that such axioms have the air of being necessary. Johnson has, in other words, missed Shakespeare's skill, the way he carefully 'unfolds his characters, and prepares the events of this play' (89).

This portrait of a Shakespeare who carefully constructs his plays so as to incorporate moral teaching, channelled through sympathetic attachment to the characters and events shown to us in the theatre, constitutes a central theme of Montagu's *Essay*.<sup>239</sup> It also contradicts Jean Marsden's description of the later eighteenth century as a time when a 'structural view of morality', associated with the stage, 'had broken down so completely that most critics no longer considered it a subject worthy of critical attention'.<sup>240</sup> Such an approach is alive and well in Montagu's discussion of *Henry IV Part 1*, where she shows how Hotspur's rebellion is made to arise naturally, and so is a case of how, 'by connecting former transactions with the present passions and events', Shakespeare generates 'an interest and a sympathy which a cold narration or a pompous declamation could not have affected' (90).<sup>241</sup> Thanks to Shakespeare's artistry, the audience does not come to hate the rebellious and violent Hotspur, but is instead able to sympathise with him, and so receive moral improvement. Montagu makes this point repeatedly in her work, picking up potentially rebarbative characters – such as Hal, Macbeth and Brutus – and showing how, with extraordinary dramatic skill, Shakespeare's characterisation invites a sympathy for these figures and guarantees the salutary moral effect of their actions.

Such an approach to character goes beyond anything written by Kenrick. The *Monthly* review of Johnson's 'Preface' only concerned itself with character as a fourth unity, another requirement for preserving the enjoyable sympathetic absorption of the spectator. For Montagu, Shakespeare requires engaging character to be a moral philosopher, a truly 'dramatic genius'. This is what is at stake in her defence of Hotspur's naturalness. It is also present in her observation of how, in the character of Prince Henry, the 'disposition of the hero is made to pierce through the idle frolics of the boy' (104), and in her reading of the moral instruction present in *Macbeth*, whose hero's emotions are the 'struggles of conscience' and thus 'lessons of justice' (178). Such lessons include, for example, the truth that the 'most terrible

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239 See, for example, her definition of tragedy quoted above.

240 Marsden, 'The Individual Reader and the Canonized Text: Shakespeare after Johnson', p. 67.

241 Note the echo and reversal here of Johnson's opinion that Shakespeare 'In narration [...] affects a disproportionate pomp of diction' (p. 73).

object to a man of courage is the person he has injured', transmitted through the sympathy we feel as Macbeth speaks in a terrified, disordered manner before the ghost of Banquo (192).

The appearance of Banquo's ghost is just one of many striking moments from Shakespeare's plays that Montagu picks out for her readers, recognising both the theatrical force of each and their moral content. Another is the speech in which Macbeth recounts how he 'could not say amen', repeatedly referenced throughout the *Essay* (36, 182, 190), but also well known to any theatregoer: it was a high point of Garrick's own performance of the part, captured in paintings by Henry Fuseli and Johann Zoffany, and perhaps also performed at Montagu's own *soirées*. Other such moments include Constance telling Pandulph that 'He talks to me that never had a son' in *King John* (36), and Lear's behaviour in the storm (77). Both scenes also had an impressive stage tradition. Thomas Davies records the 'succeeding changes of grief, anger, resentment, rage, despondency, reviving courage, and animated defiance, incidental to Lady Constance'.<sup>242</sup>

To return to *Macbeth*, there are further observations to be made that complicate the easy equation of theatrical showstoppers and moral instruction. Montagu's analysis concludes by naming the play as a whole as 'one of the best of Shakespeare's compositions', full of the 'strong and original beauties' which only 'powerful genius' could have produced (203). This summation is not just the recognition of the work as an assembly of theatrical striking moments, but also postulates a distinctive moral bedrock of individual experience that runs beneath such instants, that of Macbeth as the 'man of courage' throughout the play. The same configuration appears in Montagu's analysis of the *Henry IV* plays, which recognises the charm of the Hal-Falstaff scenes, but also finds, beneath it all, that the prince has, throughout, 'the disposition of a hero'. There is a strong definition of character emerging here, which goes beyond Kenrick, whose interest in character is tied only to the captivating moment of theatrical performance. Montagu, for her part, registers a more complex vitality in Shakespeare's creation, both its dazzling scenes and the core virtues they bring out.

There is space for spectator and reader in such a model. Montagu's essay moves easily between theatre and closet. Along with the oft-performed characters of Macbeth, Hal and Hotspur, Montagu writes, for example, of Brutus in *Julius Caesar*,

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<sup>242</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, 3 vols (Dublin: Wilson, 1784), I, p. 20.

a play she was unlikely to have seen performed. As before, Montagu's analysis emphasises (*contra* Johnson) Shakespeare's skill at provoking sympathy for the hero.<sup>243</sup>

To obtain, from the English spectator, the same reverence for him [Brutus], it was necessary we should be made to imbibe those doctrines, and to adopt the opinion by which he himself was actuated. We must be in the very capitol of Rome [...]. To the very scene, to the very time, therefore, does our poet transport us: at Rome, we become Romans; we are affected by their manners; we are caught by their enthusiasm. But what a variety of imitations were there to be made by the artist to effect this! And who but Shakespeare was capable of such a task? (247)

The language of this paragraph has been chosen carefully. It seeks to rehabilitate 'delusion' as something other than the sickly 'calenture' of Johnson. In order for a spectator to sympathise with Brutus, something extraordinary must occur, a 'delusion' so strong that Roman 'doctrines' are adopted by the audience. Shakespeare's artistry induces this with its 'variety of imitations'. These imitations are celebrated by Montagu, to the point that she surpasses Kenrick's balanced view of Shakespeare's characterisation and its role in maintaining a suitable emotional state. In part, this is because she is writing as a patriot, analysing *Julius Caesar* to disprove Voltaire's assertion that the play was inferior to Corneille's *Cinna*. At the same time, though, such celebration also, once more, extends dramatic experience to something more than the theatrical moment. It creates an entire world, 'the very capitol of Rome'. On top of this, the passage enacts the very sympathetic attachment it describes, as it slips from using the 'English spectator' to repetitions of 'we'. This 'we' eliminates distinctions between media: the world of Rome, realised in all its particular manners, is, as a work of Shakespeare's genius, both of the theatre and beyond it.

It is essential at this point to stress the balance of Montagu's *Essay*. It shares with Kenrick a sense of the power of performance. At the same time, Montagu's recognition of vitality also leads her into a mode of criticism that, as it appreciates Shakespeare's genius, relaxes its adherence to the medium of the stage. Above all, it is sympathy that is the key to Montagu's work. She famously portrays Shakespeare

<sup>243</sup> Johnson admitted in his notes on the play that he had 'never been strongly agitated' when 'perusing' *Julius Caesar*, blaming the 'cold and unaffected' nature of the work on an 'adherence to Roman manners', which 'seems to have impeded the natural vigour' of Shakespeare's 'genius.' Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VII, p. 102.

himself as one who ‘seems to have had the art of the Dervise, in the Arabian tales, who could throw his soul into the body of another man, and be at once possessed of his sentiments, adopt his passions, and rise to all the functions and feelings of his situation’ (37). On one hand, this is a description of Shakespeare as the perfect, sympathising performer described by Aaron Hill; on the other, it attributes to Shakespeare’s creation a depth of human understanding that merits study as much as performance.

Montagu’s image of Shakespeare as dervish may be set against Johnson’s description of the poet holding the mirror up to nature as a representational diptych of how Shakespeare criticism developed in the wake of the ‘Preface’. Unlike the holder of the mirror, the dervish is alive with all the theatrical, performing energy that Johnson excluded from his understanding of the dramatic Shakespeare. Montagu’s definition of ‘dramatic genius’, following Kenrick and Kames before her, is rich with an interest in theatrical affect. But, as Montagu rehabilitates the vitality of theatrical creation, and is led by her moral concerns to focus on character in particular, a new problem emerges. It is the problem of dramatic character.

### III. Dramatic Character

The shift from Johnson to Montagu, from mirror to dervish, should not be overstated. It is easy to find passages in Johnson’s own notes to Shakespeare’s plays that display a great deal of sympathy and an interest in character. The observations on the performability of *King Lear* are an obvious example, but one might also turn to his long comment at the end of *Henry IV Part 2*. The note begins in line with the position of the ‘Preface’. Ignoring a vibrant stage tradition, including a famous double act in the 1740s of James Quin as Falstaff and Garrick as Hotspur, Johnson starts by informing us that ‘None of Shakespeare’s plays are more read than the First and Second Parts of Henry the Fourth’.<sup>244</sup> He then proceeds to analyse first Hotspur then Hal as examples of Shakespeare’s ‘just representations of general nature’: the character of Hal is, for instance, ‘great, original, and just’.<sup>245</sup>

‘But *Falstaff* unimitated, unimitable *Falstaff*, how shall I describe thee?’<sup>246</sup> here the tone of Johnson’s note changes completely. The abrupt move into the second person and the use of a question give the unusual impression of the editor both meeting

<sup>244</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, IV, p. 355.

<sup>245</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, IV, p. 356.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

sudden resistance and feeling new attraction. The following sentences, which offer a description of Falstaff, grow increasingly complex, registering more and more nuances in an attempt to freeze the character. First he is a ‘compound of sense and vice’, but only of sense ‘admired but not esteemed’ and of vice ‘despised but hardly detested’. Then a ‘character loaded with faults’, one ‘corrupt and despicable’, but also possessed of ‘the most pleasing of qualities, perpetual gaiety’, a wit ‘not of the splendid or ambitious kind’ but consisting of ‘easy escapes and sallies of levity’. In each phrase, Johnson weighs the contraries of Falstaff with the precision of a lexicographer, nuancing each aspect in an attempt to blend them into a portrait. His next move, in spite of his prefatory concerns about finding Shakespeare’s ‘moral purpose’, is to propose ‘The moral to be drawn from this representation’:<sup>247</sup>

no man is more dangerous than he that with a will to corrupt, hath the power to please; and that neither wit nor honesty ought to think themselves safe with such a companion when they see *Henry* seduced by *Falstaff*.

This not only concludes Johnson’s long note, but characterises it too, for the editor’s own struggles to define the fat knight in the preceding paragraph are themselves proof of the danger Falstaff poses even to critics who would think themselves safe with him. In the course of all this, Johnson’s choice of terms has become more evocative of the theatre: the ‘representation’ of Falstaff might mean either Shakespeare’s writing or the specific representation of ‘dramatic exhibition’, performance; similarly, it is when wit and honesty ‘see’ the Falstaff scenes that they must not think themselves safe. The proof of a complex, potentially instructive, attachment to a character and a couple of terms evocative of the experience of the audience all combine to show Johnson, in a footnote, as himself sensitive to the vitality of Shakespeare’s characters.

As for Montagu, her treatment of Falstaff is relatively brief. She first presents the character as an important adjunct to the young prince, whose ‘wit and festivity in some measure excuse the Prince for admitting him into his familiarity’, and who, once there, serves as a scapegoat for the ‘follies’ of the future Henry V (102). Montagu is thus free to exclaim, of the Gadshill episode, ‘How skillfully [*sic*] does our author follow the tradition of the Prince’s having been engaged in a robbery, yet make his part in it a mere frolic to play on the cowardly and braggart temper of

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

Falstaff!’ (103). A few pages later, Montagu admits that one may appreciate Falstaff as either ‘adapted to encourage and excuse the extravagancies of the prince, or by [himself]’, but in either case he must be admired (106). She then sketches Falstaff’s character in more overtly theatrical terms than Johnson’s, pointing out that, as ‘mirth is the source of Falstaff’s wit’, he is ‘the best calculated to raise laughter of any that ever appeared on a stage’ (106). At the same time, though, Montagu also does her own Johnsonian balancing of ‘drollery of humour’ against ‘Gluttony, corpulency, and cowardice’ (107). But her weighing of Falstaff produces far less disturbing conclusions. Shakespeare has a free hand with Falstaff: ‘As the contempt attendant upon these vices and defects is the best antidote against any infection that might be caught in his society’ (107). ‘The admirable speech upon honour’ is thus worthy of praise even when it ‘would have been both indecent and dangerous from any other person’ (107). Falstaff joins Brutus, Macbeth, Hal and Hotspur as proof of how Shakespeare’s theatrical artistry creates parts sufficiently attractive to exert a moral influence.

At least one critic of the late eighteenth century was dissatisfied both with Montagu and Johnson’s assessments of Falstaff. This was Maurice Morgann, a colonial administrator and amateur Shakespearian, whose *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (1777) offers a reading of the fat knight that differs greatly from those before it. In so doing, Morgann also continues to innovate with regard to what constitutes the dramatic qualities of Shakespeare’s work. While praising Montagu for ‘her genius and virtues’, as one who has ‘given to the world a very elegant composition’ and whose ‘manners’ and ‘mind are yet more pure, more elegant than your book’, Morgann also lays the foundation for his critique: Montagu was too polite to inspect the ‘gross’ and ‘infirm’ fat knight adequately.<sup>248</sup> Morgann, by contrast, is unhampered by feminine refinement, and offers an unprecedented level of attention to Falstaff, delving into the depths of his character in an attempt to understand its enduring vitality.

For all its fine detail, Morgann presents his essay as a *jeu d’esprit*, a little something enlarged and published at the urging of his friends, who recognised its novelty. The aim of the work is to show that Falstaff does not deserve ‘to bear the character so generally given him of an absolute Coward’, which is to say, given that this critic is as much interested in dramatic artistry as in its product, that Shakespeare never

<sup>248</sup> Maurice Morgann, *An Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (London: Davies, 1777), pp. 111–112. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.



‘meant to make Cowardice an essential part of his constitution’ (2). This is an extremely unorthodox view in the eighteenth century, and Morgann well knows ‘how universally the contrary opinion prevails’ (2). Johnson and Montagu both emphasise Falstaff’s cowardice, while the origins of this interpretation lie in the theatrical tradition, where Falstaff’s pusillanimity makes an excellent example of a paradigm described by Michèle Willems, in which distinctive performances of Shakespeare’s characters (aided and abetted by extensive adaptation of the text) formed iconic images in English culture, creating the first affinities between audience and character.<sup>249</sup> Falstaff was much performed as a coward and so as a coward he was, to all save Morgann, generally known.

Yet while the stage tradition of Falstaff is important in establishing Morgann’s wider context, it must be nuanced with regard to the specific moment in which he wrote. Nancy Mace has shown that, of all those acting Falstaff in the eighteenth century, the most iconic was James Quin, who, better known for his tragic heroes, nevertheless earned critical esteem for his portrayal of Sir John.<sup>250</sup> One piece of evidence for this, not cited by Mace, is the 1750 edition of John Hill’s *The Actor*, which uses Quin’s Falstaff as a famous illustration of its precepts.<sup>251</sup> Quin retired from the stage in 1751, and, as Mace points out, no actor rivalled his success as Falstaff for the remainder of the century.<sup>252</sup> By the 1770s, the powerful definition of the character impressed on audiences by Quin’s performance was thus weakening: Falstaff was still generally accepted to be a coward, but there was no strong rendition of the part in this line to refute Morgann. The character, no longer tied so tightly to the stage, was ripe for an analysis, which, while partly inspired by theatrical vitality, would soon go beyond it.

To show that Falstaff is not simply a coward requires considerable methodological sophistication. Morgann’s first step is to propose that ‘Cowardice *is not* the *Impression*, which the *whole* character of *Falstaff* is calculated to make on the minds of an unprejudiced audience’ (4). This is in spite of the fact that there is ‘a great deal of something in the *composition* likely enough to puzzle, and consequently to mislead the Understanding’ (5).

Morgann’s assertion here rests on a distinction between ‘mental Impressions’ and

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249 Willems, p. 122.

250 Nancy A. Mace, ‘Falstaff, Quin, and the Popularity of the “Merry Wives of Windsor” in the Eighteenth Century’, *Theatre Survey*, 31 (1990), 55 (p. 2).

251 John Hill, *The Actor*, p. 92.

252 Mace, p. 64.

‘Understanding’. The former he explains as ‘certain feelings or sensations of mind, which do not seem to have passed thro’ the Understanding’ but which produce ‘feelings and passions’ in us, often contrary to what we have understood consciously (5). This is because ‘Impressions’ arise from the most minute circumstances, ignored by the ‘Understanding’ which ‘delights in abstraction and general propositions’ (6). A novel like Voltaire’s *Candide*, argues Morgann, pleases by appealing to our understanding and not to our impressions, offering a ‘clear perception’ which is ‘the principal defect’ of many ‘novels and plays’ (8-9). Shakespeare, however, is able to ‘make a more perfect draught of real nature, and steal such Impression on his audience, without their special notice, as should keep their hold in spite of any error of their Understanding’ (9). This explains what has occurred with Falstaff: by treating Shakespeare’s writing as they treat the work of other authors, readers, actors and theatregoers have ignored his ability to make use of ‘mental Impressions’ and, indeed, balance them against the workings of the understanding.

Morgann’s distinction between ‘Impressions’ and the ‘Understanding’ is based on a distinction between feeling and thinking that is similar to Kenrick’s Kamesian portrait of the passive spectator, whose sympathetic engagement is menaced by ‘reflection’. Morgann, however, departs from Kenrick in three ways. First, he separates Shakespeare as uniquely able to produce a ‘draught of real nature’ so perfect that it works on us, as reality itself does, by impression. Second, he differs from the way in which Kenrick, like Kames before him, opposes theatrical absorption and reflection. Morgann considers an audience to be both thinking and feeling, even if they are wrong, with Shakespeare’s Falstaff, to have relied on their ‘Understanding’ too much. Last but by no means least, Morgann’s argument is not as exclusively about performance as Kenrick’s. Morgann compares the poor performance of Shakespeare’s plays to Voltaire’s tale of *Candide*, even if his emphasis on the way the plays should function as ‘they steal such Impression on the audience’ is most visibly associated with an ideal theatre and its ‘unprejudiced audience’. Further to this, the very bent of Morgann’s argument, his labour to explain what causes impressions, drives him to the text as the only environment in which ‘the most minute circumstances’ can be studied in sufficient detail to reveal ‘the *whole* character of *Falstaff*’.

Morgann’s essay on Falstaff’s ‘Dramatic Character’ thus makes mixed use of the theatrical. On one hand, he is inspired by the impression a play should make in

performance; but, on the other, his effort to explain that impression, and so re-evaluate Falstaff, entails a move away from theatrical experience, back to the text that Shakespeare wrote as a blueprint for it. This is the irony of dramatic character, discernible in embryo in Montagu's praise of Shakespeare as dervish: the creations of such a writer are often too dramatically alive, too real, for current performance to render them adequately. Such a standpoint, at once theatrical and anti-theatrical, is most visible in those parts of Morgann's text that deal unflatteringly with contemporary stage practice. First, with regard to the Gadshill episode.

The very Players, who are, I think, the very worst judges of Shakespeare, have been made sensible, I suppose from long experience, that there is nothing in this transaction to excite any extraordinary laughter; [... and...] hold themselves obliged to supply the vacancy, and fill it up with some low buffoonery of their own. Instead of the dispatch necessary on this occasion, they bring Falstaff, stuffing and all, to the very front of the stage; where with much mummery and grimace, he seats himself down, with a canvas money bag in his hand, to divide the spoil. In this situation, he is attacked by the Prince and Poins [...] until the Player Falstaff, who seems more troubled with flatulence than fear is able to rise; [...] with the assistance of one of the thieves [...] for this friendly purpose; after which, without any resistance on his part, he is goaded off the stage like a fat ox for slaughter by these *stony-hearted* drivers in *buckram*. I think he does not *roar*; --- perhaps the player had never perfected himself in the tones of a bull-calf. (127)

This detailed description of eighteenth-century stage business criticises players as 'the worst judges' of Shakespeare's intention. By playing this scene for laughs, they have not only added unnecessary material to the play but, to use Morgann's own distinction, allowed the audience's understanding to triumph over their impressions. In other words, the actors have made the scene too obvious, too one-dimensional and so too detached from the original 'draught of perfect nature'.

Crucially, Morgann does not say, with Johnson, that Shakespeare has little to gain from the 'concomitants' of performance, but rather indicates how actors have, like all those critics who call Falstaff a coward, misunderstood the situation. A better representation could proceed with more 'dispatch' and not bring Falstaff 'to the very front of the stage'. Indeed, as Morgan goes on to propose, the performance of this entire scene might be improved by having 'the whole transaction [...] shewn between the interstices of a back scene' (128). This is because 'The less we see in

such cases, the better we conceive' (128). In other words, contemporary practice – praised for its immediacy and enchantment by writers such as Montagu and Kenrick – now works too obviously by appealing to the understanding without recourse to the subtler, more Shakespearian art of 'mental Impressions'.

The words italicised in Morgann's description of contemporary performances of the Gadshill episode – the '*stony-hearted*' drivers in '*buckram*', the question over whether Falstaff had been able to '*roar*' – are all quotations from Shakespeare's text. The implication, of course, is that this text should have served as the blueprint for performance: the 'assistance' of the thief who helps Falstaff rise is at odds with his 'stony hearted' nature, and Falstaff's unresisting departure does not accord with Poins's wonder at 'How the fat rogue roared'.<sup>253</sup> Shakespeare, for Morgann, wrote with performance in mind, as a theatrical practitioner as much as a dramatic poet, and this should not be ignored. The same essential point is made when Morgann evokes performance elsewhere in his essay, this time with regard to Falstaff's mock death at the battle of Shrewsbury, a moment all too easily taken as proof of the fat knight's cowardice.

It is a transaction [...] also aggravated by the idle tricks of the Player, [...] more ambitious, as it should seem, of representing a Caliban than a Falstaff; or indeed rather a poor, unwieldy miserable Tortoise than either. – The painful Comedian lies spread out on his belly, and not only covers himself all over with his robe as with a shell, but forms a kind of round Tortoise-back by I know not what stuffing or contrivance; [...] There is no hint for this mummery in the Play: whatever there may be of dishonour in Falstaff's conduct, he neither does or says any thing on this occasion which indicates terror or disorder of mind. (24-25)

Again, the actors have made the scene too obvious, and appealed merely to the understanding of the audience with a caricature of Falstaff, stifling more subtle impressions. The gravity of the players' error is measured by their departure from Shakespeare's original intentions as encoded in the text. When Morgann writes of 'Falstaff' in the last sentence of this passage, he writes of the Falstaff Shakespeare wrote, one without hint of the 'mummery', which makes the player more like 'a Caliban'.

In these two passages, Morgann turns to contemporary theatrical performance to

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<sup>253</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 1*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by A.R. Humphreys, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 361–92 (p. 370) (II.2.110).

strengthen his argument. His method is negative: he shows the errors of the stage in departing from the text and exaggerating (or adding) proofs of Falstaff's cowardice. In many respects, this is reminiscent of Johnson's critique of performance as an inferior medium for the dramatic poem. Yet, at the same time, Morgann does not deny that Shakespeare's work is meant for the stage. Indeed, his very criticism of contemporary actors is that by failing to realise the theatrical intention of the text, by failing to 'steal' their 'Impression' on the audience, they make their performance too like the printed play that is open for study and reflection, too like the faulty modern 'novels and plays' which appeal only to the understanding.

By treating a work's mental impressions as a valid part of its effect as drama, Morgann is then spurred to greater analysis of that work, only possible through concentration on the text: 'if Shakespeare meant sometimes rather to impress than explain, no circumstances calculated to this end, either directly or by association are too minute for notice' (47). One such minute circumstance is Falstaff's mention of a pension in the line, 'It is no matter if I do halt, I have the wards for my colour and my pension shall seem the more reasonable' (56). This throwaway comment indicates that the fat knight had sufficient merit to be awarded a stable income: 'The mention *Falstaff* here makes of a pension, has I believe been generally construed to refer rather to *hope* than *possession*, yet I know not why: For the possessive MY, *my pension* (not *a pension*) requires a different construction' (56). This is just one example of many of an attention beyond normal reading or watching of a play, intended to reveal the essential Falstaff as one who is not, at root, contemptible.

The problem with Morgann's method is that, in attempting to make the implicit explicit, he risks obscuring other sources of the 'mental Impressions' of performance. Like a good lawyer, he chooses, for example, to present his argument for Falstaff's bravery in a specific order, assembling scattered proofs of courage before eventually trying to dismantle the problematic implications of Gadshill and Shrewsbury. He justifies such rearrangement of Shakespeare's narrative as necessary for exposing the hidden sources of impressions (108). At the same time, however, his reorganisation also fails to consider the potential impression made by Shakespeare's chosen sequence of events. Morgann's effort to give us the '*whole* character' of Falstaff entails the flattening of time, or as Willems puts it, 'dramatic time, the only one which concerns the dramatist, is transformed into historic time'.<sup>254</sup> One might well

254 'Le temps dramatique, le seul dont le dramaturge s'inquiète, est transformé en temps historique' (Willems, p. 282).

ask of Morgann, as Hal of Falstaff himself, ‘What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day?’.<sup>255</sup> Such a weakness of critical method was not unnoticed in the eighteenth century either. A similar line of attack is most forcibly taken in the period by John Philip Kemble who, in a pamphlet of 1786, argued that one of Morgann’s near contemporaries, Thomas Whately, was wrong to call Macbeth a coward, since the first impression Shakespeare gives of the Thane is of his bravery.<sup>256</sup>

Yet, despite such weakness, Morgann’s method has its roots in an understanding of dramatic character that surpasses that offered by Kenrick and Montagu. In these earlier works, character is still often used in its weak sense, to denote an object of sympathy. What Morgann adds to this is an understanding of how such sympathy is engaged. He does this in a long footnote on ‘dramatic character’. It begins by offering a strong definition of character, pointing out that Shakespeare creates characters like no other writer, characters who affect us like real human beings, through mental impression: ‘there is a certain roundness and integrity in the forms of *Shakespeare*, which give them an independence as well as a relation, which, tho’ perfectly felt, cannot be sufficiently explained in words, without unfolding the whole character of the speaker’ (58).

Such characters are created by Shakespeare through an ingenious combination of ‘certain qualities and capacities, which he seems to have considered as first principles; the chief of which are certain energies of courage and activity, [...] different degrees and sorts of sensibilities, [...] discernment and intelligence’ and ‘an atmosphere of surrounding things’ (59-60). Thus a line like Othello’s ‘I will kill thee and love thee after’ is ‘fit only to be uttered by a *Moor*’ because it is, in Morgann’s view, both racially typical and specific to a situation (60). In order to combine general principles with specific atmosphere Shakespeare is – in a version of Montagu’s ‘dervish’ model – required to be the sympathetic actor-poet *par excellence*, to ‘have felt every varied situation, and have spoken thro’ the organ he had formed’ (61). This way of writing means that while ‘the point of action or sentiment [...] is always held out for special notice’ there is also a felt hinterland, a sense of ‘the relish of the whole’ (61). On a technical level, this is achieved by the fact that Shakespeare ‘frequently [...] makes a character act and speak from those

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255 Shakespeare, ed. Humphreys, p. 364 (1.2.6).

256 John Philip Kemble, *Macbeth, and King Richard the Third: An Essay, in Answer to Remarks on Some of the Characters of Shakespeare (1786, 1817)*, ed. by Arthur Freeman, *Eighteenth-Century Shakespeare*, 19 (London: Cass, 1970), p. 14.

parts of the composition, which are *inferred* only, and not distinctly shewn'. This creates 'a wonderful effect; it seems to carry us beyond the poet to nature itself, and gives an integrity and truth to facts and character, which they could not otherwise obtain' (62).

Morgann understands Shakespeare's dramatic genius as one that allows and invites 'inference'. This builds upon an earlier emphasis on theatrical sympathy, the engagement with striking moments, the 'point of action or sentiment [...] held out for special notice', but has absorbed it into a much broader and deeper understanding of the dramatic. If one is to write about the scope of available inference to explain the impressions made on the stage, then one must descend below the surface of text or performance. Such is the ironic consequence of a new appreciation of theatrical vitality: it treats the theatre as, in Marsden's words, 'an interpretative dead end'.<sup>257</sup> Morgann justifies his method as follows, and with a return to Johnsonian vocabulary of 'exhibition'.

With a stage character, in the article of exhibition, we have nothing more to do; for in fact what is it but an Impression [...] we may venture to applaud or condemn as such, without further inquiry or investigation? But if we would account for our Impressions, or for certain sentiments or actions in a character, not derived from its apparent principles, yet appearing, we know not why, natural, we are then compelled to look farther, and examine if there be not something more in the character than is *shewn*; something inferred, which is not brought under our special notice: In short, we must look to the art of the writer, and to the principles of human nature, to discover the hidden causes of such effects. (152-153)

The last sentence expands the critic's purview to the 'art of the writer', and then from this 'to the principles of human nature'. A similar move occurs at the conclusion of Morgann's essay.

So ended this singular buffoon; and with him ends an Essay, on which the reader is left to bestow what character he pleases: An Essay professing to treat of the Courage of *Falstaff*, but extending itself to his Whole character; to the arts and genius of his Poetic-Maker, Shakespeare; and thro' him sometimes, with ambitious aim, even to the principles of human nature itself. (185)

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<sup>257</sup> Marsden, 'The Individual Reader and the Canonized Text: Shakespeare after Johnson', p. 70.

In these lines Morgann's essay claims for itself a greater status than that of a *jeu d'esprit*, a mere argument for the bravery of a character so universally believed contemptible. The study of Falstaff's 'dramatic' character entails the study of the 'principles of human nature'. The inference required to understand theatrical effect leads to an inflation of the dramatic beyond mimesis and into the human: 'unimitated, unimitable Falstaff' indeed.<sup>258</sup>

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The 'ambitious aim' of Morgann's work, 'the principles of human nature', constitutes the central object of another, late eighteenth-century study of 'dramatic character': that undertaken by William Richardson, Professor of Humanities at Glasgow University, in a series of works published between 1774 and 1812. The first of these, *A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters*, the only volume not to use the phrase 'Dramatic Character' in its title, begins in a way reminiscent of Montagu's *Essay*, drawing on the Aristotelian distinction between dramatic and narrative representation to prove Shakespeare's superiority to Corneille.<sup>259</sup> Richardson soon, however, makes an effort to distinguish himself from his predecessor.

It is obvious that my design by no means coincides with that of the ingenious author of the *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*, whose success in rescuing the fame of our poet from the attacks of partial criticism, and in drawing the attention of the public to various excellences in his works which might otherwise have escaped the notice they deserve, gives her a just title to the reputation she has acquired. My intention is to make poetry subservient to philosophy, and to employ it in tracing the principles of human conduct. (40)

Stanley Stewart, in a chapter of his *Shakespeare and Philosophy* (2010) devoted to Richardson, draws attention to the fact that this compliment is lukewarm at best. What is the merit of rescuing Shakespeare from mere 'partial criticism'? Similarly, Montagu's ability to draw attention to Shakespeare's 'various excellencies' seems minor when set beside the intention to employ the playwright's oeuvre 'in tracing the principles of human conduct'. Richardson, as Stewart shows, is hostile to Montagu's

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<sup>258</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, IV, p. 356.

<sup>259</sup> William Richardson, *A Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters* (London: Murray, 1774), pp. 26, 31. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.



‘belletrist’ aims.<sup>260</sup> Writing in the aftermath of the successful prediction of Halley’s comet, Richardson has scientific, not literary ambitions: he wants to join ‘the growing ranks of scientists, by establishing the mechanisms – the origins, the cause and effect “system”– of “human conduct”’, by making ‘poetry subservient to philosophy’.<sup>261</sup>

Richardson’s philosophical concerns represent another evolution of the dramatic, for they inherit much, like Morgann, from the sympathetic-theatrical redefinition of Shakespeare promulgated by Kenrick, Montagu and others against Johnson’s ‘Preface’. Such shared heritage is visible in the use all these writers make of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy. Richardson favours in particular the thought of Hume, and turns to the essay ‘Of Tragedy’<sup>262</sup> during his own analysis of Sir John Falstaff (1789) in order to explain the popularity of the Fat Knight as a conjunction of ‘different and even opposite feelings’.<sup>263</sup> Having given this hypothesis, Richardson then proceeds to illustrate it with examples from the play.

Richardson’s approach to Falstaff is typical of much of his writing. While he shares an interest in theatrical effect with Morgann, Montagu and Kenrick, this – along with analysis of Shakespeare’s craft – is secondary to his main object of illuminating the ‘principles of human nature’. Falstaff is first and foremost an important test case for the attraction of depravity, whether that attraction is exercised in the theatre or the tavern. Richardson’s process is founded on the identity of representation and reality. Later in this essay, he treats Falstaff as a person who epitomises the various kinds of human wit enumerated by Kames in his *Elements of Criticism*.<sup>264</sup> At the conclusion of the piece, Hal’s judgement of Falstaff from within the world of the play is taken to be the same as that given by those outside Shakespeare’s creation, whether reader or spectator: ‘I appeal to every candid reader, whether the sentiment expressed by Prince Henry is not that which every judicious spectator and reader is inclined to

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260 Stanley Stewart, *Shakespeare and Philosophy*, Routledge Studies in Shakespeare (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 57–58.

261 Stewart, pp. 59–60.

262 David Hume, ‘Of Tragedy’, in *Essays, Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. by Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987)  
<<http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Hume/hmMPL22.html#Part%20I,%20Essay%20XXII,%20OF%20TRAGEDY>> [accessed 29 June 2015].

263 William Richardson, *Essays on Shakespeare’s Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff, and on His Imitation of Female Characters* (London: Murray, 1789), p. 7.

264 Richardson, *Sir John Falstaff*, pp. 28–29.

feel. "I could have better spared a better man".<sup>265</sup> Other examples of this collapse between drama and reality abound in Richardson's work, justified most explicitly in his *Philosophical Analysis* with a comparison between the plays of Shakespeare and the specimens of a natural scientist.

Richardson begins outlining his distinctly scientific technique with the standard observation that 'The genuine and original Poet, peculiarly favoured by nature, and intimately acquainted with the constitution of the human mind' is able 'by immediate intuition' to display 'the workings of every affection' (1). This is the foundation of the social utility of the poet, how he 'teaches us to know ourselves, inspires us with magnanimous sentiments, animates our love of virtue, and confirms our hatred of vice' (ibid.). After this portrait of the poet, Richardson then turns to philosophical concerns. The problem with moral philosophy is that 'experiments, made by reflecting on our own minds, or by attending to the conduct of others, are liable to difficulty, and consequently to error' (23). What is needed is some way of seizing, 'during the continuance of a violent passion [...] a faithful impression of its features, and an exact delineation of the images it creates in us' (ibid.). Such 'a valuable copy' would then 'guide the philosopher in tracing the perplexed and intricate mazes of metaphysical inquiry' (ibid.). Where better to find such a copy, he concludes, than in the writings of poets? Shakespeare's drama, since he 'imitates' rather than 'describes', is particularly well suited to this (26). Accordingly, Shakespeare's characters become Richardson's chosen subjects, the world of his plays, as Willems has argued, a parallel world, a laboratory for the experiments of moral philosophy.<sup>266</sup> Hal can be a simulacrum of human responses to mixtures of vice and virtue; Falstaff himself an inexhaustible specimen of the potential attraction of depravity.

Even if Richardson treats Shakespeare's plays as a laboratory, he does so as a consequence of a particular understanding of Shakespeare's imitative dramatic genius. This means that, although reality and representation are frequently collapsed by Richardson, the theatrical never disappears entirely from his writing. Rather, it has been absorbed. Traces of it can still be discerned in Richardson's writing, especially in his analysis of the character of Macbeth. This section begins by noting the apparent contrasts in Macbeth's character, identifying how he is first 'exhibited to us valiant, dutiful to his sovereign, mild, gentle, and ambitious [...] ambitious without guilt', but then later appears 'false, perfidious, barbarous, and vindictive'. Thus 'all

<sup>265</sup> Richardson, *Sir John Falstaff*, p. 56.

<sup>266</sup> Willems, p. 303.

the principles in his constitution seem to have undergone a violent and total change' (45). Richardson's aim, in his analysis, is to explain that change, and so provide a rational narrative that connects the apparently contradictory states of Macbeth. The hypothesis he proposes is that such a change is the result of how 'ambition [...] rising to undue pretensions [...] seems to have vanquished and suppressed every amiable and virtuous principle'. What follows is a demonstration, where 'we shall consider how the usurping principle became so powerful; how its powers were exerted in its conflict with opposing principles; and what were the consequences of its victory' (48).

This demonstration, too long to detail here, offers an explanatory narrative responsive to Macbeth's contemporary theatrical form. The very shape of Richardson's approach to *Macbeth*, its attempt to join those striking moments (as Morgann says) 'held out for special notice' (61) seems to carry the traces of eighteenth-century performance of Shakespeare. Richardson is building his philosophical analysis around the show-stopping instants of a play, taking an interest – as audiences of this period also did – in the question of how the emotions of such moments were or could be connected to one another. Garrick had been famous for his 'beautiful transitions',<sup>267</sup> as many of his successors still were, and Richardson provides such transition with a new rationale, attempting to resolve it into an underlying unity of a character's psychology. Before studying Macbeth, the philosopher had, for example, already praised 'The transition from admiration to abhorrence' that occurs when Hamlet confronts Gertrude (145).

This is not the only time when traces of the absorbed theatrical emerge in Richardson's work. Richardson can be found, for instance, repeating the same judgement of *Hamlet* as that made by Garrick at the end of his career.<sup>268</sup> The actor became notorious for his extensive cuts to the play's last act, but Richardson, one feels, would not have censured him, for he also found the ending of *Hamlet* uninteresting: it exhibits 'nothing new in the characters' and a better catastrophe would have the hero 'perish immediately' (149).

Both these connections to Garrick, through studied transition and through suggested abbreviation, turn on the topic of a character's sensibility, and so continue the turn

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267 Francis Gentleman, *The Dramatic Censor; or, Critical Companion*, 2 vols (London: Bell and Etherington, 1771), I, p. 357.

268 Cunningham, p. 157.

towards sympathy and shared emotion articulated by Kenrick and Montagu in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, itself paralleled by contemporary developments in acting theory. Such a turn is theatrical in that such emotions, as Morgann also well knew, are most vivid in the course of a performance, but it is by no means exclusive to the stage. Montagu moves easily between media, and Richardson is also indifferent to this question, for his focus remains on Shakespeare's equal talent for playing on the nature of his audience and readers and for elaborating that of his characters.

Indeed, for all his distaste of belletrist approaches, Richardson, in his methodological reliance on Shakespeare as the pre-eminent poet of nature, occasionally approaches them. With regard to Imogen, this time in a later essay on Shakespeare's women, he first offers the conclusion of a moral philosopher, that we see in her how 'persons of real mildness and gentleness of disposition, fearing or suffering evil, by the ingratitude or inconstancy of those on whose affection they had reason to depend, are more solicitous than jealous'.<sup>269</sup> This is then however followed by the admission that 'While [Shakespeare] "holds up a mirror", in which we recognize the features and complexions of many powers and principles in the human mind, we must admire that fine polish by which they are reflected'. If we do so, the relationship between poetry and philosophy becomes far more equal.

Thus the moralist becomes a critic: and the two sciences of ethics and criticism appear to be intimately and very naturally connected. In truth, no one who is unacquainted with the human mind, or entertains improper notions of human conduct, can discern excellence in the higher species of poetical compositions.<sup>270</sup>

This passage, with its echo of Johnson's 'Preface' in the description of how Shakespeare (and not Hamlet's actor) 'holds a mirror' up to nature, drifts back towards mid-century, and earlier, appreciation of drama as 'poetical composition'. Yet it remains apart from it for its emphasis on 'the human mind' and 'human conduct': critic and moralist only meet as a result of an emphasis on complex character. It is the identity between dramatic character and human character that Richardson takes as his founding principle. Such identity has its roots in a new appreciation for the power of performance to inspire emotional engagement in an actor's assumption of an individual part, yet now surpasses the bounds of the theatre

<sup>269</sup> Richardson, *Sir John Falstaff*, p. 89.

<sup>270</sup> Richardson, *Sir John Falstaff*, p. 92.

entirely.

This leads to a subtle distinction between Morgann and Richardson, for Morgann chooses to end his essay with a return to the stage. In the course of his work, this critic was led to infer the birth, youth and general traits of a '*Falstaff* of Nature'. Yet, at his conclusion, Morgann recognises that, in extracting the 'whole character' of Falstaff, he has found the '*Falstaff* of Nature' ('the very stuff out of which the *stage Falstaff* is composed') to be a 'disagreeable draft' (172). It is only in the theatre that Falstaff truly shines, and so he must be returned there.

A character really possessing the qualities which are on the stage imputed to Falstaff, would be best shown by its own natural energy; the least compression would disorder it, and make us feel for it all the pain of sympathy: It is the artificial condition of Falstaff which is the source of our delight; we enjoy his distresses, we *gird at him* ourselves, and urge the sport without the least alloy of compassion; and we give him, when the laugh is over, undeserved credit for the pleasure we enjoyed. (175)

For both Morgann and Richardson, the dramatic becomes even more deeply associated with questions of character, and the reality of that character, than it did with Montagu and Kenrick, leading to an almost total assimilation of theatrical concepts. Yet, while Richardson, taking theatrical imitation for reproduction, ultimately considers dramatic character to be a simulacrum for reality, Morgann hesitates. Dramatic character is, for him, founded on a deep understanding of nature, but the adjective reminds us that it is not the same as character, and may even be best appreciated theatrically too.

### **Conclusion: 'A Distinct Being'**

The extracts chosen to illustrate Johnson's definition of drama and its cognates come either from Dryden's prefatory material or from religious works – not from works about the theatre. The meaning of *dramatick* appears in the phrase 'In the great *dramatic* poem of nature' and *dramatist* in 'The whole theatre resounds with the praises of the great *dramatist* and the wonderful art and order of the composition'. In quoting these two phrases at my conclusion an irony becomes apparent: both, at the end of the critical development discussed in this chapter, might well now seem to be phrases written in praise of Shakespeare rather than of God. After all, the Shakespearian criticism discussed in this chapter appears (and partakes) in the increasing adulation of Shakespeare that occurred throughout the second half of the

eighteenth century. In her *Essay*, published in the same year as Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee, Montagu is already offering resounding praise of the clever construction of Shakespeare's drama, the 'art and order of the composition' found in the way he carefully 'unfolds his characters, and prepares the events of this play' (89). Similarly, both Morgann and Richardson find in Shakespeare a quasi-Newtonian understanding of the principles of human nature that may well make his work into 'the great *dramatic poem of nature*'.<sup>271</sup>

The curious overlap between the *Dictionary* illustrations and the later dramatic Shakespeare is good evidence both for the lingering presence of neoclassical tenets and for what is at most a subsidiary attention to the theatre in the work of Morgann and Richardson. This overlap, though, can be taken too far: Shakespeare's characters do not inhabit a moral laboratory for Johnson, and no writer captures like Morgann the importance of inference as a way of explaining our sympathetic engagement with plays. The large narrative behind such differences is the tale of how neoclassical attention to action gives way to an emphasis on character and a proto-romantic interest in psychological depth. What should, however, be added to such an account is a greater attention to performance, to the varying definition of what I have called dramatic Shakespeare in these decades of the eighteenth century. This definition follows an ironic course, as the revitalisation of theatrical experience in terms of character gives birth to an understanding of dramatic character that cannot always be contained on a stage. Ultimately, the notion of what is dramatic comes to steal the idea of performance away from the reality of performance.

Johnson's 'Preface' may be taken as standing on the very edge of neoclassical consensus, aware of both its strengths and its limitations.<sup>272</sup> As shown above, his attack on the unities exposes an obvious weakness, while his understanding of performance as the material exhibition of a dramatic poem reworks an Aristotelian theme. The 'Preface' is full of provocations, and both Kenrick and Montagu respond to them, drawing new philosophical insights into the experience of the spectator to question Johnson's understanding of the dramatic. Montagu and Kenrick emphasise sympathy, and the characters it attaches to; Montagu does so particularly in her effort to show what Elizabeth Eger calls Shakespeare's 'capacity to dramatise a moral language'.<sup>273</sup>

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271 For more on Shakespeare and Newton, see: Caines, pp. 46–49.

272 This is the conclusion found in: Stock, p. 55.

273 Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism*

Montagu is succeeded by Morgann and Richardson, both of whom are interested in character above all else, whether it emerges in the theatre or not. Their work owes a great debt to those theories and practices of sympathy that the stage inspired. Such a debt is partly inherited from Montagu, Kames and Hume, and partly connected to other objects, such as a general period interest in the abruptness of emotional shifts in Shakespeare's characters, a preoccupation brought to the fore by Garrickean acting styles that were both dependent on transition and supposedly in tune with Shakespeare's own intentions as a playwright. Not normally considered in connection with the stage, both Morgann and Richardson would not have written of 'dramatic character' as they did without it. They sometimes even seem to build upon an observation Garrick made in a letter of 1769, when asked by his correspondent to give his own thoughts on performance. The letter begins with a comparison between England and France, asserting that, in the land of King George III, 'every Man is a distinct Being, and requires a distinct study to Investigate him' and, because of this 'great Variety', 'our Comedies are less uniform than the French, and our Characters more strong and Dramatic'. The labours of Morgann and Richardson constitute 'distinct study' into Shakespeare's 'strong and Dramatic' characters, which are (as many patriotic critics here would say) English in their 'great Variety'.<sup>274</sup>

All of the authors discussed here deal with a dramatic Shakespeare, but what dramatic means to each of them is unique, and in no way containable in the pages of either Johnson's *Dictionary* or a modern equivalent. For the Johnson of the 'Preface' (if not of the notes) a hard, Aristotelian separation between dramatic and theatrical is not only possible but encouraged in order to enable just and stable evaluation of Shakespeare's writing. For Kenrick, the dramatic is the theatrical, and the dramatic unities can only ever be misunderstood by someone who writes that 'a play read affects the mind like a play acted'. For Montagu, dramatic genius entails the ability to create theatrical illusion of such force that a sympathetic bond forms between characters and spectators (and sometimes readers), along which moral influence may travel.

For Morgann, the dramatic character is one who lives on impression and the encouragement of inference, who can thus – ironically – be understood only through textual extrapolation and at the price of his theatrical attraction. Last, but not least, Richardson's dramatic character is one who, at the pinnacle of imitation, has come to

(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 133.

274 Garrick, eds Little and Kahrl, II, p. 635.

inhabit a parallel reality, a perfect research subject for uncovering the principles of human nature, whether such principles are operating in a theatre, a study or the entirety of human civilisation.



### 3. Transition

#### Introduction: ‘Heavens, what a transition!’

Amongst the hundreds of descriptions of David Garrick’s acting, there is perhaps none more famous, nor more often cited, than that of Richard Cumberland, who recalled in his memoirs a childhood visit made to Drury Lane some sixty years previously. On that day in the early 1740s, Garrick was playing Lothario in Nicholas Rowe’s *The Fair Penitent*, while the current head of the acting world, James Quin, starred as Horatio.

[W]hen after long and eager expectation I first beheld little Garrick, then young and light and alive in every muscle and in every feature, come bounding on the stage, and pointing at the wittol Altamont and heavy-paced Horatio – heavens, what a transition! – it seemed as if a whole century had been swept away, and a new order at once brought forward, bright and luminous, and clearly destined to dispel the barbarisms and bigotry of a tasteless age, too long attached to the prejudices of custom, and superstitiously devoted to the illusions of imposing declamation.<sup>275</sup>

Much of the attraction of this passage lies in the precision – of the kind which only comes with hindsight – it employs when describing the shift in acting styles brought about by Garrick. Cumberland calls this new dawn a ‘transition’, a word which Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* associates, through its choice of illustrative citations, with the spheres of science and of literature. Johnson’s definition of *transition* as a ‘change’ draws, for instance, on the unlikely pairing of *The Rape of the Lock* and John Woodward’s *Natural History of the Earth*. Its meaning of ‘removal’ or ‘passage’ has three illustrations from scientific texts, while that of ‘Passage in writing or conversation from one subject to another’ is backed up with quotations from John Milton and John Dryden.<sup>276</sup> Yet the quotations chosen for Johnson’s *Dictionary*, while they point up some of the interdisciplinary reach of the word, do not capture it all. Transition had a specific meaning in the theatre, where it described the way in

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275 Richard Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland, Written by Himself, Containing An Account of His Life and Writings, Interspersed with Characters of Several of the Most Distinguished Persons of His Time with Whom He Has Had Intercourse and Connection* (Philadelphia: Bradford, 1806), p. 40.

276 Samuel Johnson, ‘TRANSITION, N.s.’, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Knapton; Longman; Hitch and Hawes; Millar; and Dodsley, 1775).

which passions were performed in sequence.<sup>277</sup> Cumberland, himself a dramatist, therefore writes the history of the theatre in the language of the theatre. He recounts a transition from Quin's *Horatio* to Garrick's *Lothario*, 'from one subject to another' in the progress of the play and the history of the stage, but also – in his choice of words – reminds his reader of why Garrick's acting represented a sea change in acting styles: Garrick, not Quin, was famous, as Vanessa Cunningham notes, for being 'an actor who specialised in swift transitions between conflicting emotions'.<sup>278</sup>

Transition represents a distinctively eighteenth-century approach to artistic endeavour. In part, this is because, like much aesthetic thought of the period, it does not, as already suggested, belong to a single medium or discipline. In December 1771, Sir Joshua Reynolds made use of the word, for example, in his fourth 'Discourse on Art', as part of an inquiry into colour, based on a comparison between painting and music.

Perhaps these distinct colours strike the mind more forcibly, from there not being any great union between them; as martial music, which is intended to rouse the noble passions, has its effect from the sudden and strongly marked transitions from one note to another, which that style of music requires; whilst in that which is intended to move the softer passions the notes imperceptibly melt into one another.<sup>279</sup>

Transition – a concept which crosses media and modern disciplinary distinctions, finding illuminating connections between them – concerns both the in-between and the object, whether the latter is a musical note, a gesture of pain or a shade of blue. Thinking in terms of transition is necessarily dynamic: it forces us to recognise that nothing exists in complete isolation, but rather occupies a place in relation to other elements of the artwork. Garrick's lively performance was so 'bright and luminous' precisely because it was preceded by Quin's 'imposing declamation' and 'the barbarisms and bigotry of a tasteless age' it stood for.

When eighteenth-century writing about the theatre focusses on transition, it can come to some surprising conclusions. Francis Gentleman, the actor, teacher and writer – whose criticism has been called 'pretentious', 'unlearned', and 'suspiciously insistent

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<sup>277</sup> Shearer West, *The Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representation in the Age of Garrick and Kemble* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), p. 107.

<sup>278</sup> Cunningham, p. 125.

<sup>279</sup> Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009), p. 78.

on [...its...] impartiality'<sup>280</sup> – stated, for instance, that ‘the transitions of Lear are beautiful’.<sup>281</sup> This may well be easily dismissed as empty, sycophantic praise for Garrick’s performance of the mad king, and yet another example of Gentleman’s ‘competent but mediocre literary output’,<sup>282</sup> but it might also be something far more rich and strange, redolent of a way of understanding drama particularly attuned to the aesthetic interests of the period.

Those whose criticisms of Gentleman I have been quoting do, after all, also praise his work as not just ‘an invaluable testimony to critical fashions in mid-to-late eighteenth-century London’,<sup>283</sup> but even a significant attempt to ‘adjudicate between scholarly criticism and the demands of popular taste’.<sup>284</sup> Further, observations of ‘transition’ are everywhere in Gentleman’s writing about Shakespeare, both in the essays collected as *The Dramatic Censor* in 1771 and in his work as the editor of *Bell’s Shakespeare* (published 1773-74). The latter project provided an extremely popular ‘performance edition’ of the author’s works, using – where available – contemporary promptbooks as its copytexts, and including notes and prefatory materials by Gentleman, both of which paid unprecedented editorial attention to the performance of Shakespeare, and, accordingly, the critical paradigms (such as transition) in which such theatrical work was to be judged.<sup>285</sup> Gentleman’s writings, supplemented by other pieces of acting theory and theatrical testimony, form the basis of what follows. First, an exploration of transition in the theatre of the eighteenth century, its power and its limitations, and, second, a few readings of some of Shakespeare’s works, as a demonstration of what transition-based reading can offer modern approaches to both the adapted and original versions of this author’s plays.

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280 Philip H. Highfill, Kalman A. Burnim and Edward A. Langhans, ‘Gentleman, Francis’, in *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, 16 vols (Carbondale, Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), VI, p. 147.

281 Gentleman, I, p. 357.

282 Robert Shaughnessy, ‘Gentleman, Francis (1728-1784)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10525>> [accessed 8 August 2014].

283 Highfill, Burnim and Langhans, VI, p. 147.

284 Shaughnessy.

285 For a study of some of the ‘performance editions’ which precede Gentleman’s (such as William Davenant’s 1676 *Hamlet*, and that produced collaboratively by John Hughs and Robert Wilks), see: Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 34; Henry N. Paul, ‘Mr. Hughs’s Edition of Hamlet’, *MLN*, 49 (1934), 438–43.

## I. The ‘very *Instant of the changing Passion*’

Transition in the theatre concerns the portrayal of emotion, for the early modern theatre, as Blair Hoxby puts it, was a space in which the passions constituted ‘dramatic units of crucial significance’.<sup>286</sup> It had been since well before Garrick’s début in 1741. John Dryden argued in 1668 that a play ‘ought to be a just and lively Image of Human Nature, representing the Passions and Humours, and Changes of Fortune to which it is subject; for the Delight and Instruction of Mankind’, and Charles Gildon, in the voice of Thomas Betterton, called for the stage to become ‘the seat of *Passion*’ in 1710.<sup>287</sup> Yet Garrick’s style of acting, felt by Cumberland to be so different from that of his predecessors, shifted, through his use of transition, the way in which the passions of a play were understood as units of meaning.

Ray Sutton, in a recent article, describes his attempts to reconstruct the performance styles of Quin and Garrick. He tells, however, of encountering an immediate difficulty in that none of the eighteenth-century writers he turned to did more than ‘skirt round a discussion’ of how actors kept up ‘a continual shifting from one passion to another’.<sup>288</sup> Yet the scarcity of detailed description is only half of Sutton’s problem. His account lacks an attention to the relationship between performer and audience, and to the audience’s understanding of drama as a collection of passions.

The eighteenth-century audience was, to put it briefly, undisciplined. Garrick, in a prologue to his *Clandestine Marriage* (1766) describes the ‘crowds of city folk! – so rude and pressing!’ before him, and their ‘horse-laughs, so hideously distressing!’.<sup>289</sup> Noisy laughter was, however, the least of the actors’ problems: cabals of spectators would form to bring down plays, and violence (sometimes escalating to full-blown riots) between different sections of the audience was always a possibility. Even a relatively well-behaved house would have no end of distractions available to it, from the prurient observation of other spectators to the consuming of various foodstuffs, including on one occasion in 1775 a ‘hard piece of cheese of nearly half a Pound

286 Blair Hoxby, ‘What Was Tragedy? The World We Have Lost, 1550–1795’, *Comparative Literature*, 64 (2012), 1–32 (p. 20).

287 Blair Hoxby, ‘Passions’, in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. by Henry S. Turner, Oxford 21st Century Approaches to Literature Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 556–86 (pp. 557–58).

288 Ray Sutton, ‘Re-Playing Macbeth: A View of Eighteenth-Century Acting’, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 30 (2010), 145–56 (p. 147).

289 Quoted in: Elizabeth Bolton, ‘Audience, Theatre’, ed. by Gary Day and Jack Lynch, *The Encyclopedia of British Literature 1660 - 1789* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), pp. 64–67 (p. 65).

Weight' which fell 'from one of the Galleries [...] and greatly hurt a young Lady'.<sup>290</sup> In such an environment, the performance, and its passions, had to impose itself.

The various ways of achieving this allow for a comparison between Quin and Garrick. Cumberland, when he recalls the 'illusions of imposing declamation', names a technique and style of audience control particularly associated with actors such as Quin. Both Garrick and Quin could also draw attention in other ways, however. Vanessa Cunningham has written of how staged patriotism could engage the minds of theatregoers,<sup>291</sup> while Joseph Roach has described the 'mesmerizing interplay' of what he calls a performer's 'charismata' and 'stigmata', the pairs of attractive and repulsive attributes that grant a star performer the elusive 'It'.<sup>292</sup> Garrick's flashing eyes and short stature were, for example, one such pair, as were Quin's powerful voice and static stage presence.

While 'imposing declamation' defines Quin's attention-grabbing portrayal of the passions, the technique of control most favoured by Garrick, and closely identified with him, was the transitional performance of the passions. Such performances entailed not only the striking portrayal of each individual 'dramatic unit' of feeling but the contrasts and connections between them as well. Cunningham describes, for instance, how this actor, as Macbeth or as Romeo, was able to 'engage the sympathies of the audience in the swiftly changing emotions' of his character.<sup>293</sup> Contemporary accounts of Garrick's acting testify to this ability. Georg Christoph Lichtenberg's famous description of the scene in which the Ghost first appears to Hamlet on the battlements of Elsinore, as well as providing details of the actor's transitions, also notes that 'die ganze Versammlung von einigen Tausenden wird so stille, und alle Gesichter so unbeweglich, als wären sie an die Wände des Schauplatzes gemalt; man könnte am entferntesten Ende des Theaters eine Nadel fallen hören' ('The whole audience of several thousand became as still, and all their faces so unmoving, as if they were painted on the walls of the stage; one could hear a pin drop from the furthest end of the theatre').<sup>294</sup>

Garrick's successful use of performed passion to control audience attention, as

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290 Quoted in: Ian McIntyre, *Garrick*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), p. 227.

291 Cunningham, pp. 25–8.

292 Roach, *It*, pp. 36–7.

293 Cunningham, p. 68.

294 Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, 'Briefe aus England', in *Aufsätze und Streitschriften* (Berlin: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), pp. 18–52 (p. 25).

recorded by Lichtenberg, may be explained with reference to the writings of Aaron Hill. In the same issue of *The Prompter* as that in which he describes the performer's 'Plastic Imagination' and the requirement to act from one's emotions, this writer also observes that, for such a practice, 'the Sensation it expresses, chains and rivets our *Attention*, to the *Passions we are mov'd by*'.<sup>295</sup> The italics here are Hill's, and draw attention to the fact that it is not a single passion, but a collection of '*Passions*' that absorbs the audience. Such collections require transition, and the article, in its next paragraph, goes on to make this very point with a description of how the various emotions of a single scene should be brought out and sequenced.

In one Part of a *Tragic speech*, the Conscious Distress of an Actor's Condition stamping *Humility* and *Dejection*, on his FANCY, strait, His *Look* receives the Impression, and communicates Affliction to his *Air*, and his *Utterance*. – Anon, in the same Speech, perhaps the Poet has thrown in a Ray or two, of HOPE: At This, the Actor's *Eye* shou'd suddenly *take Fire*: and invigorate with a *Glow of Liveliness*, both the *Action*, and the *Accent*: till, at a *Third* and *Fourth* Variety appearing, He stops short, upon *pensive* PAUSES, and makes *Transitions*, (as the Meanings vary) into *Jealousy*, *Scorn*, *Fury*, *Penitence*, *Revenge* or *Tenderness!* All, *kindled* at the *Eye*, by the Ductility of a *Flexible Fancy*, and APPROPRIATING *Voice* and *Gesture*, to the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*.<sup>296</sup>

Hill's description makes it clear that there is much for the spectator to see and hear here, and thus much to compel attention. Further, it also captures the particular dynamism of such performance, its union of arresting moment and temporal flow, in the way its final phrase – 'the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*' – emphasises both the specificity of the 'very *Instant*' and the fluid process of '*changing Passion*' it contains.

The hypothetical example of *The Prompter* can be supported, and enriched, with other eighteenth-century accounts of performance. Garrick's style of acting, although presented as a watershed by Cumberland, was in fact anticipated by his mentor Charles Macklin, especially in the part of Shylock. Macklin's own recollections describe how his performance of this role was 'well listened to' and 'made [...] a silent yet forcible impression on [his] audience'.<sup>297</sup> Again, transition was key to such

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295 Aaron Hill, p. 2.

296 Ibid.

297 Quoted in: Caines, p. 75.

an effect, albeit not this time, as Hill described it, in a single speech but rather in a dialogue that soon became famous. This dialogue is the exchange between Shylock and Tubal, during which, as Macklin put it, the former undergoes ‘the contrasted passions of joy for the Merchant’s losses, and grief for the elopement of Jessica’. As the innovative, veteran actor well knew, this scene opened ‘a fine field for an actor’s powers’.<sup>298</sup> His judgement is confirmed by Gentleman, who remarks on the beauty of the scene in *The Dramatic Censor*.

[N]ever were transitions from one passion to another better supported than in this scene: distraction, grief, and malevolence succeed and cross each other admirably, nor can any thing be more happily conceived than the Jew’s justification of his own cruelty upon the common rights and sensations of nature, equally incident to his tribe and Christians.<sup>299</sup>

A similar comment appears in *Bell’s Shakespeare*, where Gentleman calls this passage a ‘rhapsody’, containing ‘some of the finest transitions for an actor, that ever were penned’ and so more than able, in a submerged quotation from *Hamlet*, to ‘harrow up attention, when properly expressed’.<sup>300</sup>

Gentleman had printed the lines in question as follows.

*Tub.* Your daughter spent in *Genoa*, as I heard, one night, fourscore ducats.

*Shy.* Thou stick’st a dagger in me; I shall never see my gold again; fourscore ducats at a sitting! Fourscore ducats!

*Tub.* There came diverse of Anthonio’s creditors in my company to Venice, that swear he cannot chuse but break.

*Shy.* I am glad of it, I’ll plague him, I’ll torture him; I am glad of it.<sup>301</sup>

When Macklin’s and Gentleman’s comments are set alongside the performed text, a further aspect of transition, implicit in Hill’s account, is opened up: its asynchronicity. It is clear from the above quotation that Tubal’s part in this exchange is to trigger Shylock’s ‘rhapsody’ as he swings from one emotion to another. This means that the actor must perform his transition as Tubal speaks, and not during his own lines, when he must already be in the required emotional state. Transition

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298 Ibid.

299 Gentleman, I, p. 283.

300 William Shakespeare, *Bell’s Edition of Shakespeare’s Plays*, ed. by Francis Gentleman, 9 vols (London: Bell, 1773-74; repr. 1969), II, p. 194.

301 Ibid.

precedes verbalisation.

This accords with the *Prompter's* own advice, which sketched a process whereby 'the Conscious Distress of an Actor's Condition' first stamps 'Humility and Dejection, on his FANCY,' then 'strait, His Look receives the Impression, and communicates Affliction to his Air, and his Utterance'. Similarly, accounts of Garrick performing passions describe the timing of such transition ahead of his lines and not, as Bernard Shaw would later wish it, 'on the line and to the line, with the utterance and acting simultaneous, inseparable and in fact identical'.<sup>302</sup> The dramatist and critic Arthur Murphy, recalled, in 1801, how, when Garrick played *Richard III*, 'the passions rose in rapid succession, and, before he uttered a word, were legible in every feature of that various face'.<sup>303</sup> Lichtenberg too, in his description of the ghost scene, places both transition and its effect on the audience ahead of enunciation: 'in seiner Miene ist das Entsetzen so ausgedrückt, daß mich, noch ehe er zu sprechen anfing, ein wiederholtes Grausen anwandelte' ('terror is so imprinted in his face that a repeated shuddering, even before he began speaking, came over me').<sup>304</sup>

In addition to a sense of the timing of transition, the testimony of Gentleman, Macklin, Murphy and Lichtenberg also highlights another aspect of the *Prompter* article: the extent to which particular passions remain distinct. Hill is able to evoke 'Transitions, (as the Meanings vary) into Jealousy, Scorn, Fury, Penitence, Revenge or Tenderness', while Gentleman lists a similarly precise set of emotional coordinates when he describes how 'distraction, grief, and malevolence succeed and cross each other admirably' in Shylock's dialogue. Murphy too, although he refrains from naming them, also remarks on how 'legible' the passions of Garrick's Richard III were 'in every feature of that various face'. Such precision and legibility is important. Transition serves both to bridge and frame emotion. This means that there should be no such thing as a general 'transition-state' since transitions must always take their identity from the passions they connect. Hill's phrase remains, in its italicised balancing of distinctive instant and flowing emotion, the clearest articulation of this paradoxical dynamism for which both Garrick and Macklin were famous: the actor's compelling expression of 'the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*'.

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302 George Bernard Shaw, *Shaw on Shakespeare: An Anthology of Bernard Shaw's Writings on the Plays and Productions of Shakespeare*, ed. by Edwin Wilson (London: Cassell, 1961), p. 87.

303 Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, 2 vols (London: Wright, 1801), I, p. 21.

304 Lichtenberg, p. 25.



Transition was clearly a powerful tool in the eighteenth-century theatre. Yet it was not without its critics. Amongst the most vocal of these was the actor-manager Samuel Foote, who was, like Garrick, a former pupil of Macklin, although he never reached the same heights as his near contemporary. In 1747, Foote published his own views on stage emotion, and on Garrick's acting, in a pamphlet entitled *A Treatise on the Passions*. The work takes issue with the star's portrayal of Macbeth, arguing that Garrick's shifts between emotion in this role are no more than a claptrap (a moment designed to elicit applause) intended to appeal to the lowest common denominator. Foote holds that it is because 'The Transition from one Passion to another, by the suddenness of the Contrast, throws a stronger Light on the Execution of the Actor', that those 'drawn in to applaud' are not the 'Judicious' but 'the Groundlings, who are caught more by the Harmony and Power of the Voice than Propriety'.<sup>305</sup> The ease with which applause is won devalues it. Foote advises that the practice of spectacular transition, no more than a cheap 'Trick', should now be discontinued for 'We all know how the Shilling came under the Candlestick'.<sup>306</sup>

Yet even Foote's critique of Garrick's acting eventually gives way to grudging praise. In Lear's 'Recovery from Madness, and Recollection of *Cordelia*', 'The Passions of Joy, Tenderness, Grief and Shame are blended together in so masterly a Manner, that the Imitation would do Honour to the Pencil of a *Rubens*, or an *Angelo*'.<sup>307</sup> For this compliment, which draws on the overlap between art and acting theory, Foote, once more, enumerates distinct passions even as he describes Garrick's ability to join them. He is no longer concerned with the possibility of claptrap. Instead, he shows that, when used correctly, transition becomes the mark of a great artist as much as a measure of audience control.

To explain why transition could be a sign of artistic excellence, it is necessary to turn to the writings of John Hill (no relation to, though often confused with, Aaron Hill), who translated and anglicised Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine's 1747 acting treatise, *Le Comédien*, as *The Actor*, publishing it first in 1750 and then, in an updated and expanded version, in 1755.<sup>308</sup> In the later text, Hill, like Foote, criticises Garrick for

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305 Samuel Foote, *A Treatise on the Passions so Far as They Regard the Stage; with a Critical Enquiry into the Theatrical Merit of Mr. G-K, Mr. Q-N, and Mr. B-Y* (London: Corbet, 1747), p. 18.

306 Ibid.

307 Foote, p. 23.

308 For further discussion of the origin and influence of Hill's translations, see: James Harriman-Smith, '*Paradoxe-Actor-Comédien*: The Anglo-French Sources of Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le*

drawing attention to himself when performing, but then, again like Foote, cannot help but find in favour of this performer's transitions too.

[H]ow readily does he run through the several artful transitions which the author of the *Stratagem* has thrown into his character, from one passion to another, most foreign, nay, sometimes, most opposite ones! And how does he devote himself to each in its turn, as if no other, of whatever kind, had ever claimed any power over him!<sup>309</sup>

This is praise for Garrick's performance of Archer in *The Beaux' Stratagem*. Transition is still a mark of excellence, but, in an addition to the French text he is adapting, Hill also hints at why. Garrick is able to change one passion to another 'most foreign' or indeed 'opposite to it', yet, despite such transformation, appears 'as if no other [...] had ever claimed any power over him'. To repeat my earlier observation that transition both bridges and frames, the transitions of a great actor prove him to be such because they both bridge extremity and frame distinct emotion. To use Aaron Hill's formulation, the process of '*changing Passion*' is preternaturally extended, while the '*very Instant*' remains untainted by neighbouring emotion.

The greatest transition can thus both connect extremes and have no memory. This is high praise because it means that the actor must be able both to trigger emotion and to curtail it. Garrick is a model of self-control, a theatrical gentleman with a total mastery over his own emotions, and the ability to use such mastery to discover new aspects of the text he is performing. John Hill continues his praise of Garrick's Archer by saying that 'Till this performer play'd this part, we never knew what beauties it was capable of, in the sudden transitions from passion to passion'.<sup>310</sup>

Hill finds (but does not name) 'beauties' in the transitions of Garrick as Archer, in their extremity and their distinction, in their ability to push to its limit the dynamic, tensile union of a '*changing Passion*' enclosed in the '*very Instant*'. Yet these beauties are not Garrick's alone: as Hill notes, the transitions were first 'thrown into' this character by 'the author of the *Stratagem*', George Farquhar. What Garrick has done is to show an audience what the author's creation 'was capable of'. Any credit must go to both actor and author, for transitions are written before they are performed. This is an important point. All the examples given so far – Macklin's

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*comédien*', *Theatre Journal*, 67 (2015), 83–96.

309 John Hill, *The Actor* (1755), p. 22.

310 *Ibid.*

Shylock, Garrick's Richard or Garrick's Hamlet – may be read as praise for Shakespeare's ability to give performers such opportunities as much as panegyrics to a performer's execution. Transition, as a means of engaging the audience, concerns both actor and author, and nowhere is this clearer than in John Hill's discussion of the phenomenon in the 1750 edition of *The Actor*:

Hill begins by arguing that 'good understanding' is 'necessary to the player', in order to distinguish 'the different steps thro' which his author means to lead the passions and the imaginations of his audience; and by which he is to carry himself from opposite to opposite affections'.<sup>311</sup> The actor here is the servant of the author: by studying the text, he learns which emotions to trigger in himself in order to achieve the author's goal of engaging the 'passions and the imaginations' of those in the audience. Yet in order to comprehend the author's intention, the actor must, as Hill recognises, also share some of the author's skills. Notably, the actor must be just as discerning as the author when it comes to the emotions he is to portray. Hill demonstrates such similarity in an unwieldy comparison of both poet and player to a painter, in which the objects of a painting represent the passions of a drama.

As the painter often gives us a prospect of an extensive country in a very little piece, the poet sometimes in the compass of a few lines, gives his actor a multitude of different impressions: in this case the one as well as the other is to exert his skill in distinguishing to us, that things tho' placed near to one another in the small bounds of the representation, are not neighbours to each other in the one case in the heart, or in the other in the prospect which is the subject of the picture. The player ought to have as strict an attention to these differences, and as nice a judgment in them, as the poet; he must no more than the painter, confound those things together between which nature has plac'd a vast distance, because they are to be seen in a small compass: But then he must very nicely conduct himself in those sudden transitions, thro' which he is to make one passion succeed to another; and that perhaps its contrary.<sup>312</sup>

The key phrase here is that 'The player ought to have as strict an attention to these differences, and as nice a judgment in them, as the poet'. Both poet and player must be good judges of emotion, able to use transition (either in their writing or their acting) to frame and bridge passions 'in a small compass' even when 'nature has

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<sup>311</sup> John Hill, *The Actor*, p. 6.

<sup>312</sup> John Hill, *The Actor*, pp. 6–7.

plac'd [them at] a vast distance'.

To speak of transition in the light of John Hill's reflections is to be aware that it allows one to speak simultaneously of actor and of author, of the ability of both to understand and manipulate emotion. This is borne out in particular by *Bell's Shakespeare*, which presents itself as a 'Companion to the theatre', and so endeavours to give its readers not only a sense of Shakespeare's 'leading beauties' and his 'imperfections', but also 'the requisites for representing every character of importance' and 'the mode of performance essential for scenes especially capital'.<sup>313</sup> These latter objectives are further supplemented by end-of-act footnotes that provide summary judgement on the preceding scenes, of the kind that could well begin a conversation during the many intervals of an eighteenth-century performance. Act Two of *Macbeth* is 'very interesting, more so than any other in the play',<sup>314</sup> and Act Five contains 'an unusual share of fire',<sup>315</sup> the fourth act of *As You Like It*, unfortunately, 'labours under the inconvenience of being in many places too intricate for general apprehension';<sup>316</sup> and so on. Such comments even extend to plays not performed during Gentleman's lifetime, which although lacking cast lists (according to Catherine Alexander, 'the most tangible link with performance')<sup>317</sup> nevertheless retain other paratextual material concerning contemporary theatrical practice: Aaron, in *Titus Andronicus*, would have to be played, for instance, by 'an actor of strong ideas, and adequate powers of execution',<sup>318</sup> while the first act of *The Comedy of Errors* 'must act well',<sup>319</sup> were neither ever staged.

Gentleman's comments on transition cover the full range of his edition's aims, applying sometimes to Shakespeare, sometimes to the actor, and sometimes to both. A note to Ophelia's mad scenes warns the reader that although 'The transitions of this young lady's frenzy, are extremely well conceived for representation, and render her a very interesting object', there remains a risk that the actress go too far: 'too

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313 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 8.

314 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 30.

315 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 71.

316 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 136.

317 Catherine Alexander, 'Province of Pirates: The Editing and Publication of Shakespeare's Poems in the Eighteenth Century', in *Reading Readings: Essays on Shakespeare Editing in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Joanna Gondris (London: Associated University Presses, 1998), pp. 345–65 (p. 358).

318 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, VIII, p. 55.

319 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, VIII, p. 90.

much extravagance, or a figure too much dishevelled, should be avoided'.<sup>320</sup> Here, Shakespeare has written transition well, but the actress can abuse the opportunities offered to her by the text. Elsewhere in *Bell's Shakespeare*, though, Gentleman singles out passages where Shakespeare himself has erred and created transitions that should not be performed. Othello's cry 'Whip me, ye devils, | From the possession of this heav'nly sight' is, for instance, marked as undesirable with marginal commas reminiscent of Pope and Warburton's editorial practices. Gentleman's note observes mildly that 'Tho' the marked lines afford a fine transition of expression,' they also 'convey very horrid ideas'.<sup>321</sup>

Transition, like any powerful artistic technique, can thus also be dangerous for actor and for author. One reason for this is suggested by a passage from an 'Essay on Oratory', which Gentleman penned and included (under a veil of anonymity) among the unusually wide-ranging prefatory materials to his edition.<sup>322</sup> The main task of this essay is to establish a critical vocabulary with which to enumerate the oratorical capacities actors would require to play Shakespeare's various characters, but it also includes a small digression on the differences between the stage and the rostrum.

Stage delivery (for theatrical expression cannot be styled oratory) including more variety, and more force of passion is consequently more difficult. It requires the finest and most significant feelings in the performer, to create, by sympathy, proper sensations in the audience.<sup>323</sup>

The emphasis here on 'variety' and 'force of passion', as well as the 'finest and significant feelings', is of a piece with the generally sentimental understanding of acting propounded by Aaron and John Hill (among others) a decade or so before Gentleman. What this comparison also brings to light, however, are two further ways of understanding transition: 'sympathy' and the question of what is 'proper'. The two are interrelated, and taken together, explain Gentleman's marking of transition as an aspect of a drama in which both actor and author may be judged to fail.

First, 'sympathy'. That the aim of acting is 'to create, by sympathy, proper sensations in the audience' echoes Elizabeth Montagu's moral understanding of theatre in her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*, and arguably also reworks a line

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320 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, III, p. 61.

321 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 230.

322 Murphy, p. 118.

323 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 22.

of theatrical theory that goes back to Aristotle's *Poetics*.<sup>324</sup> Gentleman, however, brings his own nuance to this definition when he elaborates on what he means by 'sympathy' a little later in the 'Essay'. For him, sympathy is of two kinds: 'sympathy of compulsion' and 'sympathy of election'. The former occurs 'when irresistible motives arrest the heart', and the latter 'when it becomes interested by choice'.<sup>325</sup> The former is most pertinent to my enquiry here, since it describes the mesmerising effect of transitional passion over an otherwise unruly audience, the way in which this practice, to quote Aaron Hill, 'chains and rivets our *Attention*'.<sup>326</sup> Indeed, Gentleman himself also associates transition (both acted and written) with compulsive sympathy. A description of Garrick's performance of *Hamlet*'s highly transitional ghost scene in *The Dramatic Censor* records that 'every heart must feel',<sup>327</sup> while Shakespeare's muse, in the Bell edition of *Richard II*, 'leads us to pity where we should condemn',<sup>328</sup> and, in *Othello*, 'with [...] irresistible force' takes 'possession of our hearts'.<sup>329</sup>

The passage Gentleman cuts from *Othello* might be called a moment of compulsive sympathy, one which draws on the power of transition to cause the audience to feel. Gentleman marks it for excision, however, because the sensations it would awake are improper, 'horrid ideas'. This is the other aspect of Gentleman's understanding of the aim of 'stage delivery' as 'to create, by sympathy, proper sensations in the audience'. The concern for what is a 'proper' audience response, manifest in the criticism of *Othello*'s invocation of 'devils' (or, elsewhere, in those passages of *Macbeth* containing 'sentiments which inculcate principles that favour predestination')<sup>330</sup> has caused Gentleman to be crowned the first bowdleriser of Shakespeare.<sup>331</sup> This anachronistic title is, however, a little misleading. Bowdler edited Shakespeare for those reading the plays to families in the privacy of the home. Gentleman recommends (but never makes) changes based on the turbulent dynamics of an eighteenth-century public audience. Transition, in particular, could compel attentive

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324 See Chapter Two.

325 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 22.

326 Aaron Hill, p. 2.

327 Gentleman, I, p. 33.

328 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, VII, p. 55.

329 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 151.

330 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 15.

331 See, for example: Noel Perrin, *Dr. Bowdler's Legacy: A History of Expurgated Books in England and America* (London: MacMillan, 1970), p. 92; Colin Franklin, *Shakespeare Domesticated: The Eighteenth-Century Editions* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1991), p. 137.

sympathy to certain passages, but to emphasise ‘horrid ideas’ in such a way would, he feels, jeopardise any social good the stage might achieve.

Gentleman was not alone in his concern for ‘proper sensations’, and propriety is a frequent motif in many discussions of transition, not least because the technique represented the potential for so many freedoms, chances for a star either to shine its brightest or to degrade the spectacle from selfish aims. Samuel Foote’s criticism of claptrap thus deplores those performers who use ‘Transition from one Passion to another’ to catch the public ‘more by the Harmony and Power of the Voice than Propriety’.<sup>332</sup> As for John Hill, his requirement that ‘The player [...] have as strict attention to these differences [between the passions], and as nice a judgment in them, as the poet’ is also a point made to place a limit of propriety on transition. The player especially must, as he says, ‘very nicely conduct himself in those sudden transitions’.<sup>333</sup>

The propriety of transition, like transition in general, concerns actor, author and audience. It is evoked as a controlling measure, a way of establishing whether writing, acting or feeling is correct in terms of pre-established notions of morality and beauty. Yet *propriety*, as well as ‘Accuracy’ or ‘Justness’, also meant ‘Peculiarity of possession, exclusive right’.<sup>334</sup> Both senses of the word are arguably present in Gentleman’s praise of Shakespeare’s characters in *The Dramatic Censor*.

There is no point of excellence in which Shakespeare has more distinguished himself than in the variety and propriety of his characters: if we look through many pieces, especially those of the last twenty years, we shall perceive a disgustful sameness of style; lords and valets, ladies and chambermaids, maintain nearly the same dialogue; such insipidity Shakespeare’s good sense, knowledge of nature and powerful genius disdained.<sup>335</sup>

A character’s ‘propriety’ seems here to mean both the correctness of Shakespeare’s creation (drawing on his ‘good sense and knowledge of nature’) but also the peculiarity of that figure, its specificity, Shakespeare’s exclusive power that distinguishes, in Gentleman’s eyes, his writing from the ‘insipidity’ of ‘the last

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332 Foote, p. 18.

333 John Hill, *The Actor*, pp. 6–7.

334 Samuel Johnson, ‘PROPRIETY, N.s.’, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Knapton; Longman; Hitch and Hawes; Millar; and Dodsley, 1775).

335 Gentleman, II, p. 320.

twenty years' of theatre writing. In addition to this, 'propriety' is paired with 'variety' here, a word which might also be understood in two ways: either Shakespeare's characters are always varied, always distinct from each other, or they are always varied in that they are always in movement, always feeling a variety of emotions. Both possibilities may of course be true. This paragraph occurs in Gentleman's discussion of *Much Ado About Nothing*, a popular play of the eighteenth century, not least because of Garrick's performance as Benedick, a character at once distinct from his peers and one whose trajectory might be seen as one long series of transitions, from determined bachelor to besotted lover, and from fast friend to moral judge.

Another, and far larger, question, arises here, however, in that Gentleman is evoking 'propriety and variety' with respect not to transition (as has so far been the case in this chapter) but to 'character'. Is transition synonymous with character? This is a difficult question to answer, for it is unclear what is meant by 'character' in this context. Gentleman wrote these lines at a time, as Dror Wahrman and others have observed, when the understanding of identity was changing, and, with it, the literary understanding of character. Transitional performance of emotion, in that it still takes the passions as 'dramatic units of crucial significance', belongs mainly to the sense of self that prevailed prior to the late eighteenth century, that of a performed, malleable self, one that is 'socially turned'.<sup>336</sup> In this paradigm, transition can generate a character, and the propriety that it achieves is one concerned mainly with what Wahrman calls 'identity', the accurate, if loose, fit of the person to a larger social category.<sup>337</sup>

Yet the modern sense of self, which 'presupposes an essential core of selfhood characterised by psychological depth, or interiority, [...] the bedrock of unique, expressive experience',<sup>338</sup> also stands in relation to the phenomenon of transition. After all, the 'propriety' of a transition also concerns what uniquely belongs to the character as an individual. In Chapter Two's discussion of Maurice Morgann and William Richardson's early character criticism, I showed how their attempts at analysing the psychological depth of Shakespeare's creations as though they were real, modern (in Wahrman's sense) selves, nevertheless betrayed a distinctly theatrical interest in contrasting passions. Based on this evidence, it seems reasonable

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336 Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 168.

337 Wahrman, p. xii.

338 Wahrman, p. xi.



to suggest that techniques of fluid transition, in the style of acting associated with Garrick and the second half of the eighteenth century, were, ironically, both the pinnacle of the ‘socially turned’ self and, in the interest they drew to emotions in sequence, preparing the way for the modern, interior self. Eighteenth-century theatre, in the way it came to perform emotion so compellingly and subtly, thus also prepared its fall, creating conditions propitious for the rise of a more psychological understanding of character that critics such as Hazlitt or Lamb would then use to belittle the medium of the stage.

To return to Garrick’s time, however, there is one further point to be made regarding character. It is that while transition creates character, it does not create characters. To put this another way, transition is the art of the star. The art of performing sequential emotion, so as to compel audience sympathy and (it is to be hoped) arouse proper sensation, results in theatrical cynosure. An audience cannot watch what Cymbeline, in one of Shakespeare’s most complex denouements, calls the ‘counterchange [...] severally in all’.<sup>339</sup> Lichtenberg sees only Hamlet on the battlements; Gentleman Shylock but not Tubal, Othello not Desdemona. Attention is riveted to a single figure at a time, as Gentleman’s own account of *Cymbeline*’s last act also makes clear.

Imogen moves her father to question Jachimo; this being granted, she asks him concerning a ring he wears; terms of compulsion are used to draw an answer from him; this brings on gradually an explanation of Posthumus’s worth, Imogen’s innocence, and Jachimo’s villainy; the circumstances related, though already known to the audience, bear repetition very well; what Jachimo relates, works upon Posthumus’s grief and warmer passions so strongly, that he abruptly discovers himself, and solicits punishment for the destruction of his wife.<sup>340</sup>

The focus of this paragraph moves like a spotlight, illuminating first Imogen’s petition, then Jachimo’s collapse, and moving ultimately to the agitation of Posthumus’s ‘grief and warmer passions’. Posthumus was Garrick’s role, and Gentleman’s sycophantic description of his acting in it is equally redolent of the way the practice of transition narrows attention.

[W]e are bold to affirm, that considering an actor must make the part, not the part an actor, his astonishing talents were never more happily exerted;

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339 William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by J.M.

Nosworthy, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 253–90 (p. 290) (V.5.398-9).

340 Gentleman, II, p. 94.

this affection becomes more evident, by considering the falling off from him to any other person who has since done it, is greater than in any other character; the tenderness of his love, the pathos of his grief, the fire of his rage, and the distraction of his jealousy, have never been surpassed, and possibly, in Posthumus, will never be equalled.<sup>341</sup>

The traces of transition – its clarity, its contrasting variety – are visible here in the rhythms of the phrase recalling ‘the tenderness of his love, the pathos of his grief, the fire of his rage, and the distraction of his jealousy’. Also visible, in the repetition of the possessive article, is how such emotions are, like the paper part itself, the inalienable property of Garrick. Both senses of ‘propriety’ are accordingly active here: in the happy (because accurate) exertion of the actor’s talents and in the focus on the single owner of this role.

Gentleman introduced his description of Garrick’s Posthumus with his belief that ‘an actor must make the part, not the part the actor’. This is an important counter-argument to other writers’ insistence on the study of the text, and, particularly in Hill, the supremacy of the author in matters of variety and propriety. With regard to Garrick, and especially the Garrick whom transition isolates from all the other performers on the stage, actor and author can in fact become easily identifiable with one another, even to the point that Shakespeare, in both *Bell’s Shakespeare* and *The Dramatic Censor*, seems sometimes to be formed in the actor’s image.

The Ghost is most admirably written; and according to the idea I form of supernatural utterance, adapted to the supernatural appearance. Mr QUIN has never been excelled nor by many degrees equalled; solemnity of expression was his excellence in tragedy, and, if I may be allowed the remark, his fault. Tho’ not directly to my purpose at present, I cannot help observing that Shakespeare’s fame as an actor, was disputed only because he wrote, as plainly appears, for the mode of speaking, Mr GARRICK, by most excellent example, has established; he certainly, as a judge and lover of nature, despised the titum-ti, monotonous sing-song then fashionable, and indeed equally admired, till within less than these last thirty years; for this reason, he was judged to be but a middling performer, except in the Ghost; and there, with propriety, no doubt, he assumed pomposity, which, on other occasions, less commendable, would have rendered him a very popular actor.<sup>342</sup>

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341 Gentleman, II, p. 97.

342 Gentleman, I, p. 36.

This passage comes from *The Dramatic Censor*, and answers a long-standing tradition, discussed in my first chapter, that ‘the top of [Shakespeare’s] Performance was the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*’.<sup>343</sup> Rather than see this tradition as proof that Shakespeare was a pompous actor, the kind Cumberland disparaged as a wielder of ‘imposing declamation’, Gentleman instead describes the playwright as a Garrickean figure, varying – with a delicate sense of ‘propriety’ – his act to the part, so as to be pompous in the Ghost but elsewhere, and much to the disappointment of his ignorant contemporaries, to perform and ‘write [...] for the mode of speaking’, transitions and all, brought in by Garrick.

To summarise: transition, a term with roots in science, music, painting and rhetoric, is employed in theatre criticism of the eighteenth century to describe sequences of emotion capable of capturing audience attention. It does this by presenting a dynamic, tensile union of a ‘*changing Passion*’ enclosed in the ‘very *Instant*’, a phenomenon most powerful when most extreme, and in the creation of which both actors and authors (particularly Shakespeare and Garrick) prove their greatness, their masterful understanding of emotion’s beginnings and ends, on the page or stage. Because discussion of transition entails consideration of both performer and playwright, it represents a flexible critical approach, which avoids any page-stage divide, particularly when judging the propriety of a drama. Propriety – in both its eighteenth-century senses of accuracy and ownership – is a key aspect of transition: it acts as a limit on potentially dangerous improvisation, but also indicates the extent to which such emotions are the property of an individual, be that person author or star performer. In these two senses of propriety there also lies a complex connection between transition and character, where transition may be understood as a final flourishing of early modern notions of selfhood that nevertheless prepares the way for a more modern emphasis on interior life. Finally, the power of transition tends to be concentrated in a single character, and as such creates *cynosure*: the audience is compelled to focus attention (and, for some, sympathy) on the star of a performance, and this focus only supported further the identification of Garrick with Shakespeare, of actor with author as figures both various and proper.

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343 Rowe, I, p. vi.

## II. The Beautiful Transition

What, then, of the ‘beautiful’ transitions Gentleman found in *Lear*? To seek them, one must draw on the insights contained in *The Dramatic Censor* and elsewhere to provide a foundation for an evaluation of eighteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare’s works. This can, in its turn, support new inquiry into Shakespeare’s own writing and so further instruct modern critical methods.

The first task, however, is to establish how to read with transition in mind. John Hill, in an original addition to his 1750 translation of Sainte-Albine, provides an example of how this was done in the eighteenth century. The seventeenth chapter of Hill’s work is devoted to variety in acting. He begins by criticising those actors who wrongly suppose that ‘they are under no necessity of varying their play, when they perform the same kinds of parts’.<sup>344</sup> Instead of this, Hill recommends that the performer ‘decompose his parts and regulate himself by the several subordinate passions, of which the grand one that makes his character is form’d’.<sup>345</sup> The French that Hill was translating here contained only the injunction ‘qu’il analyse chacun de ses rôles qui paroissent à peu près semblables’ (‘that he analyse each of his roles which seem quite similar’),<sup>346</sup> meaning that Hill adds three things: the focus on diversity within a role (instead of just between them), the idea of ‘decomposing’ a part, and an attention to both the relation between ‘subordinate passions’ of each transition and the over-arching ‘grand one’ that forms the *dramatis persona*. Whether described in French or English, this technique is particularly useful in parts ‘which have a general resemblance’.

[L]et him examine separately every subordinate passion in whichever of them he is to act, and he will naturally and necessarily, provided that he determines to act with truth, fall into a diversity of playing in them, which will in many cases quite deface the general resemblance; and give his audience variety where they will be glad of it, tho’ they did not expect it.<sup>347</sup>

The emphasis on the actor’s understanding is a leitmotiv of Hill’s *The Actor*, while the presumption of the clarity with which passions can be discerned and, at least in

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344 John Hill, *The Actor*, p. 290.

345 John Hill, *The Actor*, p. 291.

346 Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine, *Le Comédien* (Paris: Desaint & Saillant, 1747), p. 293.

347 John Hill, *The Actor*, p. 291.

part, conveyed, fits with the idea, explored by Richard Sennett, that the eighteenth-century stage was particularly adept at transmitting emotion through highly legible physical signs (as opposed to, say, ultra-naturalistic mimicry).<sup>348</sup> To illustrate these ideas, Hill makes a comparison of how the well-known English tragedian Lacy Ryan performed madness, first as Edgar in Tate's version of *King Lear* and then as Orestes in Ambrose Philips's *The Distressed Mother*.

Both plays are adaptations. Philips's play, written in 1712, translated and reworked Racine's *Andromaque*, while Nahum Tate's *King Lear*, first performed in 1681, provided a much larger part for Edgar than Shakespeare offers in either the Folio or Quarto versions of the work. Gloucester's legitimate son saves Cordelia from bandits on the heath, and, at the end of the play, marries her with her father's blessing. Gentleman approved of both Tate's romantic subplot and his happy ending, and even suggested in *The Dramatic Censor* that Shakespeare, as a 'competent and liberal judge of human nature', would have been in favour of it too.<sup>349</sup> Hill offers no comment on the question of adaptation, appearing to take Tate's play – as many of his contemporary theatregoers no doubt did – for Shakespeare's authentic version.

Hill begins by describing the insipid show put on by an anonymous actor, impossible now to identify, who performed both 'The raving of Orestes and the pretended madness of Edgar' in exactly the same way.<sup>350</sup> Ryan, on the other hand, played each part so as to make visible the distinction between them.

In the character of Orestes, we read in him a heart torn to pieces with anguish and with rage, and which gives room in his ravings for no other thoughts: In the other we read a settled sorrow thro' all the fancy'd wildness of his deportment, and can see that it is but put on, and that all the while some other passion wholly possesses his heart.<sup>351</sup>

That we 'read in' Ryan's Orestes the specific nature of the character's madness is a further example of how close text and performance are in these theories. As for what is read in Ryan's Edgar, this only becomes fully clear when we decompose the part and think in terms of transition, of connected and distinct emotions. Edgar's sorrow at his recent expulsion from his home allows Ryan to set off the pretended madness with contrasting flashes of sadness. On top of this, though, and unlike other actors

348 Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Knopf, 1977), p. 80.

349 Gentleman, I, p. 362.

350 John Hill, *The Actor*, p. 292.

351 *Ibid.*

who, for Hill, ‘bestow all their care and attention on the mad part’,<sup>352</sup> Ryan also clearly paid attention to what was after as well as what had come before: the fast-approaching moment when Edgar meets Cordelia.

There is not perhaps on the stage a more moving scene than that of Edgar’s discovering himself to Cordelia, Shakespear [*sic*] meant the mad things that precede it principally as foils to it; and ’tis in this sense that the player we are commending in the part performs it.<sup>353</sup>

Once more, a transition between two contrasting states makes the moment emotionally arresting. Ryan’s performance, by paying attention not just to the passion of the moment, ‘the very *Instant*’, but also to how that passion is a ‘*changing*’ one, part of a sequence of transitions, has succeeded on the stage and, for Hill, retraced Shakespeare’s (or rather, Tate’s) own intentions, since the playwright, well aware of the emotional dynamics of performance, ‘meant the mad things [...] principally as foils’ and so made his Edgar fundamentally different from Philips’s thundering Orestes.

These are the real beauties of the part of *Edgar*: the galleries may be affected by noise, and a series of frantick actions, which neither they nor the person who exhibits them understand; but ’tis the change to reason, the contrast of these passionate and affecting speeches alone, that charms the more judicious part of an audience; and the making the madness not the principal part of the character, but subservient to these, is the great secret of that difference for which we are applauding Mr Ryan for making between the raving of *Edgar* and that of *Orestes*.<sup>354</sup>

Audience, actor and author are layered over each other in this passage, which, with its concern for theatrical propriety, serves as a conclusion to Hill’s comparison. Shakespeare’s choice of making Edgar a rational madman, retained and extended by Tate, is enriched and made proper by Ryan who has used his own reasoning skills to explore the passions of the part and distinguish how it differs from senseless raving. Finally the audience is clearly divided into two: those who merely appreciated the spectacle of madness, and those thinkers who, like Ryan, glimpsed the nuances of Tate-Shakespeare’s creation.

In this section of *The Actor*, reading with transition involves a double movement. On

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> John Hill, *The Actor*, p. 293.

<sup>354</sup> John Hill, *The Actor*, pp. 294–95.

one hand, the part must be ‘decomposed’ into its individual, identifiable passions; on the other, however, everything must be connected, since these passions cannot exist in a vacuum: Lacy Ryan must set off sorrow with folly, all while readying the shift into infatuation. This is ultimately a logic of contrasting variety – of ‘foils’ – that Tate has written with particular force into his version of *King Lear*, enough to make the transitions of Edgar beautiful. Other adaptations of Shakespeare operate in a similar way, even those written by David Garrick, as a reading of first his adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* and then, finally, the transitions of his *Lear*, reveals.

### *Romeo and Juliet*

David Garrick’s adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* is printed in the second volume of *Bell’s Shakespeare*. This edition is more or less the version used at Drury Lane during the famous ‘battle of the Romeos’ in the 1750-51 season,<sup>355</sup> when Garrick’s Romeo went up against that of Spranger Barry at Covent Garden.<sup>356</sup> The general opinion was that Barry was the better lover, but Garrick the more moving tragedian, meaning that some audience members would watch the first half of the play at Covent Garden, before enjoying Garrick’s rendition of the closing scenes at Drury Lane. It is in the final act of the adapted *Romeo and Juliet* that the greatest change was made, the decision to follow both Shakespeare’s source in Bandello and Thomas Otway’s rewrite of the Romeo and Juliet tale as *Caius Marius* (1679) by having Juliet awake before Romeo succumbed to poison. This change, described by a quotation from Garrick in *Bell’s Shakespeare* as ‘an endeavour to supply the failure of so great a master’ with a scene of ‘more nature, terror and distress’ than originally present,<sup>357</sup> is clearly constructed with transition and the proper sensations such display could awake in mind.<sup>358</sup>

The first line of additions to the tomb scene is itself a moment of transition.

Arms, take your last embrace: and lips, do yourself

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355 In a neat irony, many of the other changes this version makes to Shakespeare’s texts are based on the markings of beauties and supposedly player-made errors found in Alexander Pope’s edition of the play. See: Nancy Copeland, ‘The Source of Garrick’s *Romeo and Juliet* Text’, *English Language Notes*, 24 (1987), 27–33.

356 George C. Branam, ‘The Genesis of David Garrick’s *Romeo and Juliet*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 1984, 170–79 (p. 170).

357 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 84.

358 Garrick’s argument here is far from unique. Both Eliza Haywood and Ned Ward make the same point. See: Charles Harold Gray, *Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 99.

The doors of breath seal with a righteous kiss ---  
Soft --- she breathes, and stirs?<sup>359</sup>

At this point the resolution of Garrick's *Romeo* (which runs on, for instance in the Folio: 'The doores of breath, seale with a righteous kisse | A datelesse bargaine to ingrossing death')<sup>360</sup> wavers and transitions into wonder. As Gentleman notes, this transition like so many others, is a key moment for actor, author and audience: it 'affords a fine and extensive scope for capital powers', does 'great credit' to Garrick's skill as a writer, and 'gives an opportunity of working the pathos to its tenderest pitch'.<sup>361</sup> This is because, as Blair Hoxby has shown, wonder was a particularly useful emotional state for the performer, since he or she could smoothly move from it to the display of a whole range of other feelings.<sup>362</sup> That the next passions to be read in *Romeo* will be powerful indeed is clear from Juliet's first lines upon waking, which do much to raise the emotional stakes as, obviously confused, she exclaims, 'Where am I? Defend me!'.<sup>363</sup>

Romeo's response to this strikes the ear strangely.

She speaks, she lives: and we shall still be bless'd!  
My kind propitious stars o'erpay me now,  
For all my sorrows past---rise Juliet,  
And from this cave of death, this house of horror,  
Quick let me snatch thee to thy Romeo's arms,  
There breathe a vital spirit in thy lips,  
And call thee back to life and love. [*Takes her Hand.*]<sup>364</sup>

In a passage heavy with tragic irony, Romeo, transported by joy, has forgotten that it is he who has just swallowed poison, and so also that it is he, not Juliet, who needs to be called back 'to life and love'. That his impending death should be driven from Romeo's mind might seem strange to modern eyes, but there is a twofold argument for it. First, it is easy to claim that such amnesia measures the strength of the young Montague's joy; and, second, such an extreme shift from suicidal resolution to solicitous bliss answers a theatrical need for a spectacular transition, when, as John Hill said of Garrick's *Archer*, the best transitions have no memory, allowing the new

359 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 148.

360 Shakespeare (F1), p. 75.

361 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 148.

362 Hoxby, ed. Turner, p. 575.

363 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 148.

364 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 149.



passion to operate upon the actor ‘as if no other, of whatever kind, had ever claimed any power over him’.

If the revolution in emotion is accounted for here, there remains the strangeness with which Garrick’s Romeo responds to Juliet’s cries. Instead of comforting her, he offers a summary of what this might mean for the future of the couple: ‘She speaks, she lives: and we shall still be bless’d!’.<sup>365</sup> These lines seem calculated to govern audience attention. By speaking in such a way of Juliet, the woman becomes visible through Romeo, as an extension of his emotional state. Because of this, the focus remains resolutely on the young man, with his beloved offering at best what Cunningham calls a ‘counterpoint’.<sup>366</sup> It is he, according to this edition, who makes the first overt physical movement when he takes Juliet’s hand, and in the subsequent exchange, Juliet’s confused state persists while it is Romeo who ‘*Brings her from the tomb*’ and who, shifting passions once more, gives first an exclamation of ‘Joys unutterable’ and then a rousing declaration of how ‘I am that Romeo | Nor all the powers of earth or man, | Shall break our bonds, or tear thee from my heart’.<sup>367</sup>

At this point in the scene, things change. Romeo falls silent, and Juliet, recovering her senses, has a short speech. Yet the focus remains very much on her beloved.

I know that voice --- its magick sweetness wakes  
 My tranced soul --- I now remember well  
 Each circumstance --- Oh my lord, my husband ---  
   [*Going to embrace him.*]  
 Dost thou avoid me, *Romeo*? Let me touch  
 Thy hand, and taste the cordial of thy lips ---  
 You fright me --- speak --- oh let me hear some voice,  
 Besides my own, in this drear vault of death,  
 Or I shall faint -----support me----<sup>368</sup>

As the poison works its effect on Romeo, it is not hard to imagine the kind of physical display Garrick could put on. Thomas Davies tells us, with gentle mocking, that this actor ‘excelled in the expression of convulsive throes and dying agonies’, and so ‘would not lose any opportunity that offered to shew his skill in that part of his profession’.<sup>369</sup> Reputed also as able to go pale at will, Garrick, more than any

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Cunningham, p. 68.

<sup>367</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 149.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Davies, II, p. 73.

other performer, would make the most of the many silences indicated by this edition's heavy use of dashes to trace each step of his decline through Juliet's speech.<sup>370</sup> Yet as well as being staccato prompts to the dying lover, these lines also provide little new information, for the most part merely repeating Romeo's earlier mood-setting phrases. Where he had spoken of the 'spirit of thy lips', the lady asks to taste 'the cordial of thy lips'; and the awful locale of Romeo's 'cave of death' becomes Juliet's 'drear vault of death', with both phrases themselves indebted to Shakespeare's soliloquy for Juliet on the point of drinking the Friar's potion. Even the sudden failing of Juliet's strength, her desperate 'support me' is immediately trumped by Romeo's 'I cannot'.<sup>371</sup> As noted earlier, in scenes of high emotional contrast, there is only one figure on whom transition concentrates. That figure here, for all Juliet's emotion, is Romeo.

The rest of the tomb scene follows a similar pattern. There are more lines of explanation, as Romeo tells Juliet that the 'transports that I felt, to hear thee speak' held back the progress of the poison, but that now "'twixt death and love I'm torn'. The agony of Romeo also continues to dominate the scene: Juliet only ever speaks a few lines at a time, while her lover, apparently losing his grip on reality, raises the tempo of his transitions right up to the moment of his collapse.

She is my wife ----- our hearts are twin'd together---  
 Capulet, forbear --- Paris, loose your hold ----  
 Pull not our heart-strings thus-----they crack----they break---  
 Oh, Juliet! Juliet! [*Dies*.<sup>372</sup>

Continuing the debt of Garrick's adaptation to Restoration tragedy, this speech is reminiscent of the death of Belvidera at the end of Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*, who also sinks to the ground claiming that the recently dead 'pull so hard' on her.<sup>373</sup> On top of this, the use of dashes, common to all the lines inserted by Garrick, is at its most extensive here. Such punctuation hints at the amount of physical action present in this scene, as well as its emotional content. In the 'Lessons' of James Burgh's

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370 See the homophobic attack on Garrick's pallor by Nathaniel Lancaster: Nathaniel Lancaster, *The Pretty Gentleman; or, Softness of Manners Vindicates from the False Ridicule under the Character of William Fribble, Esq. (1747)*, ed. by Edmund Goldsmid (Edinburgh: Privately Printed, 1885), pp. 25–26.

371 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 149.

372 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 150.

373 Thomas Otway, *Venice Preserved*, ed. by Malcolm Kelsall (London: Arnold, 1969), p. 96 (V.4.30).

acting manual, *The Art of Speaking* (1761), dashes are also used, for example, to mark moments of extreme transition,<sup>374</sup> while it is significant that a footnote from Gentleman in *Bell's Shakespeare* praises the gaps in these speeches as 'breaks'.

The breaks, throughout this scene are exceeding fine. An actor requires such uncommon powers in this scene, that unless he naturally possesses them, laborious attempts must fall short, and be very disagreeable.<sup>375</sup>

In the critical vocabulary laid out in his 'Essay on Oratory', Gentleman distinguished a 'break' from a 'pause' by saying that only the latter has a 'tone of continuance'. A break therefore constitutes an especially sharp transition, hence the danger that a less than excellent actor would run when attempting this scene. In the dying speech of Romeo alone, it is easy to identify a series of rapid shifts across the breaks, running from loving pride ('she is my wife'), to anger ('Capulet, forbear') and finally despair. Any 'laborious' rendition of this could only ever be 'disagreeable'.

With its breaks, extreme shifts of emotion and a focus on the part of Romeo, Garrick's additions to *Romeo and Juliet* are clearly written with transition, and the practices of performing emotion on the eighteenth-century stage more generally, in mind. Yet these inserted lines have another use too, for they do not simply sit uncomfortably after dialogue written by Shakespeare, but rather seek to connect themselves to the original fabric of the play. This is why, for example, Juliet and Romeo's lines describing the tomb as a 'cave' or 'drear vault of death' recall the words of Shakespeare's Juliet, as she imagines waking 'stifled in the vault'.<sup>376</sup> Garrick's insertions respond to elements that he identifies in Shakespeare, and so may be used to reveal aspects of the play to which an eighteenth-century public was more sensitive than we are now.

One such aspect is transition. Although not marked with dashes, it is not hard to see – as a Drury Lane theatregoer may have seen – the rapid shifts in Romeo's mood even before we reach Garrick's insertions. Addressing Balthasar before opening the monument, Romeo first threatens to 'tear' his servant 'joint by joint' should he return, then softens enough to dismiss him with a blessing.<sup>377</sup> When Paris appears, Romeo speaks to him softly, 'Good, gentle youth, tempt not a desp'rate man', but

<sup>374</sup> James Burgh, *The Art of Speaking* (London: [n. pub.], 1761), p. 213.

<sup>375</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 150.

<sup>376</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Brian Gibbons, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 1007–40 (p. 1033) (IV.3.33).

<sup>377</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 147.

then, as Paris tries to arrest him, gives in to his desperation, and fights with a cry of ‘have at thee, boy’.<sup>378</sup> No sooner is Paris dead than Romeo, recognising his interlocutor, is overtaken by remorse and promises to bury him ‘in a triumphant grave’.<sup>379</sup> He does not linger over the prince long, however, and instead begins a love-filled blazon of Juliet immediately upon opening the tomb.

All these changes in Romeo appear in Shakespeare’s text and in Garrick’s adaptation. Shakespeare’s Romeo, for an eighteenth-century audience, is here a desperate youth of contrary, rapid passions. To bring this aspect of the character out more clearly, the edition of Garrick’s version of the play in *Bell’s Shakespeare* contains a number of cuts made to the lines preceding Juliet’s awakening. There are, for example, no lines from Romeo recalling Paris’s betrothal to Juliet, nor his grim joke about ‘Death, lie thou there, by a dead man interr’d’, both of which would, had they been included, have slowed the transition from remorse to lovestruck wonder and burdened it with indecorous puns.<sup>380</sup> Even Romeo’s blazon of Juliet is cut down to the essential image of ‘beauty’s ensign’ holding back ‘death’s pale flag’.<sup>381</sup> Many of these cuts coincide with the dashes of Bell’s edition, meaning that such ‘breaks’ are also breaks in the original text, and so, where Shakespeare had a lengthier speech, Garrick prefers a shorter, sharper version of Romeo’s passions. The variety and the power so valued on the stage of this time was thus present already, but it here emerges in a distinctive, decorous way, aided by cuts and punctuation, even before the inserted dialogue begins its own, more obvious, attempt at continuing such an emotionally volatile atmosphere.

### *King Lear*

The passage from *The Dramatic Censor* in which Gentleman calls Lear beautiful runs in full as follows.

The transitions of Lear are beautiful; from passion he falls to condescension and tenderness, mingled with grief; then flames again, while the two unnatural hags, as he justly calls them, alternately stab a dagger in his aged heart.<sup>382</sup>

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378 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 148.

379 Ibid.

380 Shakespeare, ed. Gibbons, p. 1037 (V.3.87).

381 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 148.

382 Gentleman, I, p. 357.

This is praise of the part over the play, and so fits with the tendency of transition-based reading to focus attention on a single performer. Lear, for Gentleman, is Garrick, who not only gave the indisputably definitive performance of the role throughout his career, but also adapted Tate's version of the play in 1756, adding many lines from Shakespeare back into the work.<sup>383</sup> Despite these restorations, the Fool was as absent from Garrick's text as he had been from Tate's, a choice that, when added to Cordelia's involvement with Edgar, as Leigh Woods notes, makes Lear appear far more isolated.<sup>384</sup> Of course, such isolation helps concentrate attention on Lear himself, and his own powerful emotions. Much contemporary commentary records this.

Thomas Davies, in his *Dramatic Miscellanies* (1784), writes of Lear in terms of both the power and the variety of the role.

We should reflect that Lear is not agitated by one passion only, that he is not moved by rage, by grief and indignation singly, but by a tumultuous combination of them all together, where all claim to be heard at once, and where one naturally interrupts the progress of the others.<sup>385</sup>

Such tumult requires the exceptional transitional skills of Garrick.

Garrick had displayed all the force of quick transitions from one passion to another: he had, from the most violent rage, descended to sedate calmness; had seized, with unutterable sensibility, the various impressions of terror, and faithfully represented all the turbid passions of the soul; he had pursued the progress of agonizing feelings to madness in its several stages.<sup>386</sup>

The praise of Garrick here, following on from the description of Lear's 'tumultuous' passions, has something of the process of rationalisation about it: the actor, without losing any of the force or variety inherent in the (adapted) text, has nevertheless created an eminently legible 'progress of agonizing feelings to madness in its several stages'. Transition here has 'faithfully represented' Lear's emotions, which is to say not that Garrick is mimicking madness with fidelity, but that he has made madness

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383 For a full account of the evolution of the performance text of this play in the eighteenth century see: Cunningham, pp. 128–131.

384 Leigh Woods, 'Crowns of Straw on Little Men: Garrick's New Heroes', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 1981, 69–79 (p. 74).

385 Davies, II, p. 279.

386 Davies, II, p. 279.

representable while staying faithful to the varied emotional content of the play, when – as Gentleman noted elsewhere of Ophelia’s delirium – such mad scenes risked breaking decorum. Other accounts support this sense of self-conscious mastery. James Fordyce, writing a letter to the actor in 1763, could not resist marvelling at the control Garrick displayed.

What struck me most, and will ever strike me on reflection, was the sustaining with full power to the last, a character marked with most diversified and vehement sensations, without ever departing once [...] even in the quickest transitions and fiercest paroxysms from the simplicity of nature, the grace of attitude, or the beauty of expression.<sup>387</sup>

The part of Lear, isolated in Tate’s and in Garrick’s adaptations, was one of ‘diversified and vehement sensations’. Yet the successful performance could still have propriety, and exhibit ‘simplicity of nature’, ‘grace of attitude’ and ‘beauty of expression’. To do so, great skill was needed, particularly in the transitions, noted by Fordyce for their speed, which distinguished and bridged the several ‘stages’ of Lear’s ‘progress of agonizing feelings to madness’.

One speech of Lear’s, more than any other, attracts critical attention, not least for the opportunity it provides, at the conclusion of the adaptation’s first act, to show the force and variety of the part. This is Lear’s curse on Goneril. Gentleman, in *The Dramatic Censor*, names it as a high point of Garrick’s performance, a moment when ‘his face displays such a combination of painful enraged feelings, as scarce any countenance but his own could describe’. This results in a total capture of the audience’s sympathy, for, witnessing this act, ‘the dullest mind must conceive and feel’.<sup>388</sup> Even Foote – as noted earlier, an enemy elsewhere to claptrap portrayals of emotion – recognised that in such moments as these Garrick stands head and shoulders above the rest of his colleagues.

No Actor does the Poet so much justice, nor is he less successful in tincturing all the passions with a certain Feebleness suitable to the Age of the King, the Design of the Author, and the raising of the Audience a stronger feeling, and compassion for Lear’s suffering.<sup>389</sup>

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387 David Garrick, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick with the Most Celebrated Persons of His Time Now First Published from the Originals, and Illustrated with Notes, and a New Biographical Memoir of Garrick*, ed. by James Boaden, 2 vols (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1831), I, p. 157.

388 Gentleman, I, p. 370.

389 Foote, pp. 22–23.

Foote's mention of the 'Design of the Author' reminds us that, even in cases of adaptation as complex as *King Lear*, the performer was still felt to be connecting with the intentions of the author, and the author's design available to be judged through the stage's rendition of it. Such connection is present in some of Gentleman's most outrageous praise of Garrick's *Lear*, occurring when he prophesises that 'as no man will ever draw a character of more importance and variety than Shakespeare's *Lear*, so we apprehend no person will ever show a more powerful, correct, affecting, original, and chaste piece of acting than Mr GARRICK's performance of him has done'.<sup>390</sup>

In *Bell's Shakespeare*, Gentleman presents *Lear's* curse on Goneril not as a moment of brilliance, but as a moment of potential, requiring 'great abilities to give it force', and susceptible to two different styles of performance, either 'beginning low, as if the speech were benumbed; and rising to the conclusion' or 'commencing with a burst of passion, and repressing a swell of grief, till the two last lines' and only then 'melting into a modulated shiver of utterance, watered with tears'.<sup>391</sup> Gentleman's note tells us that he prefers the latter, which suggests the following arrangement, using the text of *Bell's Shakespeare* with my interpolation of Gentleman's footnoted suggestions.<sup>392</sup>

[*Commencing with a burst of passion:*]  
 Hear Nature! Hear, dear goddess, hear a father!  
 If thou didst intend to make this creature fruitful,  
 Suspend thy purpose.  
 Into her womb convey sterility!  
 [*Repressing a swell of grief:*]  
 Dry up in her the organs of encrease,  
 That from her derogate body never spring  
 A babe to honour her! If she must teem,  
 Create her child of spleen, that it may live,  
 And be a thwart, disnatur'd torment to her!  
 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;  
 With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks;  
 Turn all her mother's pains and benefits,  
 To laughter and contempt;

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390 Gentleman, I, p. 371.

391 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 20.

392 Thomas Davies gives a description of the stage action immediately before these lines: '[Garrick's] preparation for it was extremely affecting; his throwing away his crutch, kneeling on one knee, clasping his hands together, and lifting his eyes towards heaven, presented a picture worthy the pencil of a Raphael.' Davies, I, p. 181.

That she may curse her crime, too late; and feel,  
 [Melting into a modulated shiver of utterance, watered with tears:]  
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,  
 To have a thankless child! -- Away, away.<sup>393</sup>

By setting Gentleman's recommendations for performance into the text of the speech in question, something akin to John Hill's method of 'decomposing' discourse appears. Like Lacy Ryan with Edgar, one might think of Garrick here identifying the passions of this speech as sorrowful regret and anger. Beginning with the burst of anger, and deciding to finish on sorrow, gives the above three-step arrangement: anger followed by repressed grief followed by overwhelming sorrow.

To match the disposition of passions in this speech, there have been four slight alterations to the text. Compared with Johnson's 1765 edition of *King Lear*, 'hear a father!' has been added to the first line; the order of the second and third lines has been inverted so that the phrase finishes on the potent imperative 'suspend thy purpose'; 'Into her womb convey sterility!' has been made into an exclamation; and – most strikingly of all – the words 'that she may curse her crime' inserted into the last line before the 'melting' peroration.<sup>394</sup> Each of these changes might be connected to the stage: some, like the mention of a 'father' and Goneril's 'crime', make the text clearer; others, like the changes in syntax and addition of exclamations, allow the speech to fall into a neater, tripartite model of transitioning passion, beginning with 'a father' and ending with 'a thankless child'. Such careful construction is in line with the use of dashes to mark out contrary feelings in *Romeo and Juliet*, and, although not employed in this speech, other famous set pieces from *King Lear* are peppered with this punctuation mark. When Lear begs for an audience with Regan and Cornwall, for instance, his speech contains what Gentleman calls 'the noblest breaks we recollect', along with 'numerous transitions', all 'most masterly' and each marked with a dash.<sup>395</sup>

Whereas Lear's curse is only slightly modified with respect to Johnson's text, there are many passages in this adaptation which greatly depart from what modern

393 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 20.

394 Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VI, pp. 41–42. Note that Johnson's edition is chosen here as the closest in date to *Bell's Shakespeare* of which Gentleman could have been aware, George Steevens's work only appearing a few months before his edition.

395 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, pp. 32–33. Cunningham offers further evidence for this when she notes that Garrick's 1753 restorations used lines that would 'appeal [...] to an actor who specialised in swift transitions between conflicting emotions' (125).



audiences know as Shakespeare's. As well as the love scenes between Edgar and Cordelia on the heath, the other substantial change occurs at the play's conclusion, when Lear successfully defends Cordelia and himself from their executioners, and so survives to reclaim his throne and marry his youngest daughter to her lover. In this final sequence of scenes, passages from Tate and Garrick sit alongside Shakespeare's writing, interacting with it in a variety of complex ways. Two moments in particular stand out. The first is Lear's boast about his fighting skill.

*Gent.* Look here, my lord, see where the generous king  
Has slain two of 'em.

*Lear.* Did I not, fellow?  
I've seen the day, with my good biting faulchion  
I cou'd have made them skip: I am old now,\*  
And these vile crosses spoil me; out of breath!  
Fie, oh, quite out of breath, and spent.<sup>396</sup>

Gentleman annotates these lines with the observation that, at the point marked with an asterisk, 'This speech affords a transition, which often furnishes, as audiences have experienced, an admirable stroke for acting merit'.<sup>397</sup> This is, then, one of the beauties of Lear. The passage achieves its beauty through a marriage of original text and emotion.<sup>398</sup> The lines spoken by the monarch are, for instance, remarkably close to what is printed in Johnson's edition.

*Lear.* Did I not, fellow?  
I've seen the day, with my good biting faulchion  
I would have made them skip: I am old now,  
And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you?  
Mine eyes are none o'th'best – I'll tell you strait.<sup>399</sup>

The adapted *Lear* differs only from Johnson's texts for the last line and a half. At this point, the exclamation 'out of breath!' and the simple words that follow it make allowance for some kind of stage business to accompany a clear appeal to the audience's sympathies, even though Lear has, of course, been successful in his fight with the executioners. This piece of information, the survival of Cordelia, transforms the entire content of these lines, even if the words remain Shakespeare's. With

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396 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 77.

397 Ibid.

398 For a counter-reading of this text, emphasising its inauthenticity, see: Oya, p. 18.

399 Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VI, p. 156.

Cordelia dead, the transition that occurs at the words ‘I am old now’ is yet another terrible recognition of Lear’s impuissance, another step towards his imminent death. In the adaptation, with Cordelia alive, the transition registers something far more sentimental, a father giving his all in defence of his daughter and succeeding, in spite of the cost to himself. The adaptors of this scene have not removed Lear’s change in emotion, but, by altering the facts on which it is based, have altered its effect, making it, as Gentleman claims of the role in general, beautiful.

Another example of the interplay between adaptation and original is the final speech of the play.

*Glo.* Now, gentle Gods, give *Gloster* his discharge.  
*Lear.* No, *Gloster*; thou hast business yet for life;  
 Thou, *Kent*, and I, retir’d from noise and strife,  
 Will calmly pass our short reserves of time,  
 In cool reflections on our fortunes past,  
 Cheer’d with relation of the prosp’rous reign,  
 Of this celestial pair; thus our remains  
 Shall in an even course of thoughts be past,  
 Enjoy the present hour, nor fear the last.  
 [*Ex. Omnes.*]<sup>400</sup>

Tate’s (and Garrick’s) positive ending to this tragedy was contentious. In *The Dramatic Censor*, Gentleman accepts that Lear’s madness is sufficient punishment for his actions as ‘a rash and rigid father’, so calls the play’s ending ‘happily conceived by TATE’, as it ‘atones for all the unreformed irregularities’ of Shakespeare’s version.<sup>401</sup> When editing *Bell’s Shakespeare*, however, Gentleman argues that ‘poetical justice, would, in our view, have been better maintained’ by having Lear ‘fall a sacrifice to his obstinate pride and frantic rashness’.<sup>402</sup> Regardless of his opinion, Gentleman’s fidelity to the promptbook entails the printing of this speech, which picks up some of its motifs from Shakespeare’s pen: Lear’s wish to be ‘retir’d from noise and strife’ recalls his plan to be, with Cordelia, ‘we two alone’; and his mention of ‘our short reserves of time’ is a sweeter version of the original closing lines ‘The oldest have born most; we that are young, | Shall never see so much, nor live so long’.<sup>403</sup>

400 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 80.

401 Gentleman, I, p. 377.

402 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 79.

403 Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VI, p. 158.

As for the couplet on which the adaptation finishes, it might be taken as a way of understanding the play as a whole.

[T]hus our remains  
 Shall in an even course of thoughts be past,  
 Enjoy the present hour, nor fear the last.<sup>404</sup>

These lines, for all their Drydenic overtones, are Garrick's addition to Tate's version. They are the final iteration of a discernible (even beautiful) pattern in which this *King Lear* provides no reason for its characters or audience to 'fear the last'. Cordelia, assaulted on the heath, is saved by Edgar; and, when executioners come to the prison, Lear finds the strength to defend himself and his daughter. Everything, it seems, will be all right in the end, and moments of terrible fear will trigger a transition towards a happier mode.

This is very far indeed from the atmosphere that pervades Shakespeare's version of the story, yet still shares with it a fascination with ending. While Garrick's Lear promises the ability to meet an end calmly, Shakespeare's characters are desperate to arrive there. When Lear enters with Cordelia dead, Kent asks, 'Is this the promised end?', not, we feel, because such finality heralds a better state but rather because, upon reaching that point, things can at least no longer worsen. This is the point of Edgar's reply to Kent – 'Or image of that horror?' – which registers both how awful the current situation is and still suspects that, as a vision, the sense of reaching a nadir may once again prove illusory.<sup>405</sup>

After all, Lear's entry is just one more instance of a terrible concatenation present throughout the play: in the first scene, Lear does not just banish Cordelia, but Kent too; later, Cornwall's servant may interrupt the gouging of Gloucester's eyes, but does not prevent it; on the heath, Edgar has no sooner calmed his suicidal father than Lear enters mad. The list might go on, summed up in Edgar's own words as 'the worse is not, | So long as we can say, this is the worst'.<sup>406</sup> a downturn is always possible, and is indeed made so by observing the horror of the current moment. Such a pattern of descent from bad to worse in Shakespeare's play meets its contrary in the pattern of salvation in Garrick's and Tate's adaptation, yet this does not mean that these two rewriters were deaf to Shakespeare's emotional rhythms. Rather, both are

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404 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 80.

405 Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VI, p. 155.

406 Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VI, p. 108.

so sensitive to the sequence of passions in the earlier text that they must invert it in order to produce with propriety a stageable drama.

This reopens the question of a transition's effect on the audience. Although it is legitimate to follow eighteenth-century practice and name only the actor's ability to display sequences of emotion as transition, it is also possible to suggest that every transition in the performer triggers, through Gentleman's 'sympathy of compulsion', a kind of transition in the playgoer. As emotions change onstage so new feelings arise in the mesmerised audience. A central pillar of the 'emotionalist', sentimental approach to acting, articulated by both Hill and Sainte-Albine *inter alia*, is that of the 'contagion' of passion: the actor feels an emotion, which is then spread and amplified amongst those watching him.<sup>407</sup> To apply this to *King Lear*, it is not too hard to see Garrick's (and Tate's) audience being pleurably swept along by the swift changes between powerful emotions, with such moments as Edgar's wooing of Cordelia serving as a convenient moment of calm.

Such occasional *détente* was necessary to maintain an easily distracted audience's attention. Henry Home, Lord Kames, writes that 'seasonable respite' is a crucial part of theatrical illusion, for it is able to 'relieve the mind from its fatigue; and consequently prevent a wandering of thought'.<sup>408</sup> John Hill, in 1750, also notes how a good dramatist 'suspends for a few moments the rage, or the misery of the principal characters' to better engage the theatregoer in what follows.<sup>409</sup> In the same vein of what is proper in theatre, there is also what the last couplet of the adaptation offers to the audience as much as to the remains of Lear's court: not just 'respite' but a concluding atmosphere of emotional stability – what Cunningham calls the play's participation in a 'theatre of reassurance' – projected from the monarch's promise to 'Enjoy the present hour, nor fear the last'.<sup>410</sup>

As in its adaptations, the final lines of Shakespeare's *King Lear* also seem to vocalise the situation of the audience as much as that of the characters. Here, however, it is not a question of contentment but rather of exhaustion: 'The oldest have borne most, we that are young | Shall never see so much, nor live so long'.<sup>411</sup> To a certain extent, what the characters of this play bear is a relentless and draining kind of transition. In

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407 See Chapter Fourteen of John Hill's 1755 edition of *The Actor* for further discussion of this idea.

408 Lord Kames, ed. Jones, II, p. 421.

409 John Hill, *The Actor*, p. 20.

410 Cunningham, p. 42.

411 Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VI, p. 158.

the final moments of the drama, every person on the stage except Lear reaches a point where they can no longer respond to events: this is another aspect to Kent's question, 'Is this the promised end?'. He, Albany and Edgar can no longer summon up fresh passion, but rather must, as Albany says, 'Fall, and cease'. As their monarch soon observes, they become 'men of stone'.

Shakespeare's *Lear*, however, goes on, and continues to swing between a whole variety of passions, even as the nature of transition focuses attention all the more strongly on this single character. From screaming 'A plague on you murd'rous traitors all', to whispering 'Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little'; from the repetition of 'Never', to the polite request to 'undo this button', and the final order, 'Look there, look there –'; at every point in these last few minutes, Lear is moving between emotions.<sup>412</sup> But, as Garrick and Tate suspected, the audience, like Kent, Edgar and Albany, have been left behind at this point: they too feel painfully how the play would stretch Lear out longer. The theatregoers, having been moved again and again by all the awful events of the last three hours, now share in the overwhelming emotional exhaustion that covers those around the king and leaves Lear to speak his final words alone. While this was undoubtedly effective in Shakespeare's time, and remains so in our own, such an improper pressure on the theatregoer was not possible for Garrick or Tate. Indeed, Johnson famously notes that he even had difficulty *reading* Shakespeare's conclusion,<sup>413</sup> let alone watching it.<sup>414</sup>

A knowledge of transition allows us therefore to see a central element both of *King Lear*'s eighteenth-century adaptation and of Shakespeare's original work. Garrick and Tate, sensitive to the need for transition, for powerful instants of changing passion, could not have missed the cruel pattern of bad to worse at the heart of Shakespeare's play. Yet such a pattern, especially in the final scenes of the play, had to be changed, for it provides no space for the relief Hill and Kames identify as crucial to the compelling tragic portrayal of the passions in an unruly theatre. In Garrick and Tate, therefore, transition is often made the herald of salvation, and their adaptations' ending offers a final, beautiful cadence to contentment. Shakespeare's conclusion, on the other hand, exhausts his characters and audience, leaving Lear

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412 Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VI, pp. 156–57.

413 Shakespeare, ed. Johnson, VI, p. 159.

414 For further discussion of Johnson's comments, see: Freya Johnston, 'Samuel Johnson', in *Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Malone*, ed. by Claude Julien Rawson, *Great Shakespearians* (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 115–59 (pp. 143, 149, 152).

alone, still torn between a range of emotions, still in transition when all others have ceased, and all the more terrible for it.

## 4. The Striking Moment

### Introduction: The Dagger

In January 1744, David Garrick appeared for the first time in the role of Macbeth.<sup>415</sup> The performance had an immediate and twofold impact on English literary culture.

First, it furthered a new attitude towards the importance of the text used in the playhouse. Advertised on the grounds of being ‘as Shakespeare wrote it’, this production claimed an unorthodox textual superiority over its predecessors,<sup>416</sup> which had been based on William Davenant’s 1674 reworking with its famous flying witches.<sup>417</sup>

Second, it solidified a revolution in English acting style: Garrick’s *Essay on Acting*, published to coincide with his performance of the Thane, used Macbeth’s dagger speech to defend the performer’s unusually lively stage business. It offered a preemptive caricature of Garrick’s own performance to blunt future criticism from those who preferred the more stately demeanour of Garrick’s rival, James Quin. Such caricature appears in the advice that ‘*Come let me clutch thee!* is not to be done by one Motion only, [...but...] like a Man, who out of his Depth, and half drowned in his Struggles, catches at Air for Substance’.<sup>418</sup> A new way of valuing the historic author’s text in the theatre and a new way of performing that text united in this production to powerful effect: Macbeth soon became – with Richard III, Lothario, Romeo and Hamlet – one of Garrick’s most iconic tragic roles.<sup>419</sup>

Yet as well as shifting English theatrical hierarchies, Garrick’s *Macbeth* had an equal significance outside the borders of his country. A performance of the play in the late 1760s was immortalised in the 1779 *Schriften* of Helfferich Peter Sturz, who saw it while accompanying Christian VII of Denmark to London. His account insists on

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415 George Winchester Stone, ‘Garrick’s Handling of *Macbeth*’, *Studies in Philology*, 38 (1941), 609–28 (p. 609).

416 Garrick’s choice of *Macbeth* may have been inspired by Samuel Johnson’s recent work on the play. See: Cunningham, pp. 44–5.

417 Stone, p. 609.

418 David Garrick, *An Essay on Acting: In Which Will Be Consider’d the Mimical Behaviour of a Certain Fashionable Faulty Actor, ... To Which Will Be Added, a Short Criticism on His Acting ‘Macbeth’* (London: Bickerton, 1744), pp. 17–18.

419 For more on Garrick’s addition of Macbeth to his repertoire, see: Paul Prescott, *Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 36–39.

Garrick's expressive physicality.

Was er dadurch, ohne Sprache, zu wirken vermag sah ich neulich im Macbeth. Als er, mit einem zum Mord entschloßenen, satanischen Blick, einen Dolch zu sehen glaubt, und mit einem Griff, wie man nur nach Kronen greift, nach dem Hefte haschte, sank ein Fremder in meiner Loge, der nichts von der Handlung begriff, weil er nicht ein Wort Englisch verstand, vor Entsetzen ohnmächtig zurück.<sup>420</sup>

What he was thus able to do without speaking, I recently saw in Macbeth. When he, with a satanic look, bent on murder, believed he saw a dagger, and with a snatching movement, as one reaches only for crowns, caught at the handle, a stranger in my box, who had grasped nothing of the story, because he did not understand a word of English, collapsed back into a faint from horror.

This description, published in the year of Garrick's death, takes on a life of its own. Its key features reappear five years later in the Viennese journal *Prometheus* as part of a review of the first German production of *Macbeth*, which was staged by Friedrich Ludwig Schröder with a translation by Gottfried August Bürger and Heinrich Voh in the title role.

In dem berühmten Monolog, wo er den Dolch zu sehen glaubt, blieb Vohs hinter Garrick – aber es war ein rühmliches Zurückbleiben. Garrick – sagt die Tradition – begleitete den abgehenden Bedienten bis mitten in den Hintergrund des Theaters, dann kehrte er sich um, ging rasch, mit starrem Blick, fast auf den Fussspitzen schwebend, gleichsam als leite ihn der Dolch, bis mitten aufs Proszenium, und hier mit gradgestrecktem Arm, wie der Tiger seine Beute packt, tat er den Satansgriff, dass ein der Sprache unkundiger Fremder vor Entsetzen in Ohnmacht sank. Vohs hingegen holte den Dolch gleichsam aus der Luft heraus.<sup>421</sup>

In the famous soliloquy, where [Macbeth] believes he sees a dagger, Voh remains beneath Garrick – but it was an honourable falling off. Garrick – according to tradition – accompanied the departing servants to the middle of the upstage area then turned, and moved swiftly, with staring eyes and almost hovering on the tips of his toes, as if the dagger were leading him there, to the middle of the proscenium, and here, with stretched-out arms, like the tiger seizing his prey, he performed the demonic hold, that

420 Helfrich Peter Sturz, *Schriften von Helfrich Peter Sturz* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1786), pp. 11–12.

421 Martin Brunkhorst, 'Garricks Shakespeare-Rollen: Formen Ihrer Produktiven Rezeption in England Und Deutschland', *Arcadia*, 22 (1987), 142–63 (p. 152).



caused a foreigner unable to understand the speech to faint in horror. Voh, however, seemed to draw the dagger out of the air.

Sturz's anecdote has become part of 'die Tradition', a Shakespearian performance legacy that judges Voh and finds him wanting. Voh's performance is not, however, being compared to Garrick's performance, neither to the one the Englishman sketched in his 1744 *Essay* nor the one given before Sturz and Christian VII in 1768. Rather, the reviewer measures Voh against Garrick's anecdotal shadow, a hardened, iconic version of a moment's acting, now a memory grown strong enough to cross Europe. Voh, unsurprisingly, cannot compete.

In the anecdotal version of Garrick's acting of Macbeth, all the aspects of transition, of what Aaron Hill called performing 'the *very Instant* of the *changing Passion*' can still be traced.<sup>422</sup> There is an unrelenting focus on a single figure, and on the way in which such a person's performance totally captures audience attention through its sequence of emotion. Because of this, the dagger speech could well be called, like Garrick's transitions in *Lear*, 'beautiful'.<sup>423</sup> In *Bell's Shakespeare*, Francis Gentleman in fact describes it as 'written all through in a most nervous masterly stile of expression', full of images that 'act powerfully, even in the closet, as well as on the stage'.<sup>424</sup> Yet when this scene is analysed with respect to its international transmission, a new sense of the beauty of transition emerges. Such performance is not just compellingly beautiful on stage or page, but also a detachable gem. It is a 'beauty' of the kind that William Dodd would anthologise in his *Beauties of Shakespeare* (1752).<sup>425</sup> Sturz's account partakes of this too: it presents the effect of this moment on someone who has no idea of its place in the plot. To this anecdotal theatregoer, it is only the instant that matters.

As noted in the previous chapter,<sup>426</sup> transition-based performance such as Garrick's constitutes the last flourish of an aesthetic paradigm in which the passions were 'dramatic units of crucial significance'.<sup>427</sup> Given the priority of the passions, such a reading of the dagger soliloquy as A. C. Bradley provides when he calls it proof of an 'abnormal condition of mind',<sup>428</sup> is alien to much of the eighteenth century. A

422 Aaron Hill, p. 2.

423 Gentleman, I, p. 357.

424 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 22.

425 William Shakespeare and William Dodd, *The Beauties of Shakespear*, 2 vols, 1752, II, pp. 139–40.

426 See p. 119.

427 Hoxby, p. 20.

428 A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on 'Hamlet', 'Othello', 'King Lear' and*

character's part in a play was instead divided into specific moments of performance, and transmitted as such, even if a Garrickean emphasis on the fluidity of changing passions would eventually prepare the way for more modern approaches to the people of Shakespeare's plays.

If we return to Garrick's own *Essay on Acting*, the early modern priority of the beautiful, emotional moment over the character as a whole is clear to see. The text briefly invokes 'Valour and Ambition, the two grand characteristics of Macbeth' to show, with ironic anticipation, how Garrick would himself be unsuited for such a part.<sup>429</sup> It then considers 'the Action, Speaking and Conception of our modern Hero' and delivers the meat of its judgements by moments, abruptly leaving 'The first words of the part' with the announcement that 'I shall now examine the most remarkable scene in the play, which is that of the air drawn dagger'.<sup>430</sup> The treatise moves between the beauties of the play, detaches them for particular analysis as instants in which the actor can, through transitional performance of emotion, capture audience attention.

A theatre of powerful moments was well suited for international transmission. Sturz's anecdote, by selecting only the dagger scene, replicates a focus already present in eighteenth-century English approaches to Shakespeare's plays. Neither Sturz nor the anonymous Viennese reviewer are interested in where the dagger speech sits in relation to Macbeth's psyche, but prefer instead to focus on this passage as a discrete unit. When Garrick performed this soliloquy in the salons of Paris in the summer of 1751, the same priorities obtained there too. The journal of the dramatist Charles Collé records how Garrick's face expressed 'toutes les passions successivement, sans faire aucune grimace, quoique cette scène soit pleine de mouvements terribles et tumultueux' ('all the passions successively, without a single grimace, although this scene is full of terrible and tumultuous movements').<sup>431</sup> Garrick thus performed 'une espèce de pantomime tragique' ('a kind of tragic pantomime') while maintaining propriety: the scene suffices to prove the greatness of his acting in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.<sup>432</sup>

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'*Macbeth*', 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1905), p. 13.

429 Garrick, p. 13.

430 Garrick, pp. 16–17.

431 Charles Collé, *Journal et Mémoires de Charles Collé Sur Les Hommes de Lettres, Les Ouvrages Dramatiques et Les Événements Les plus Mémorables Du Règne de Louis XV (1748-1772)*, ed. by Honoré Bonhomme and Antoine-Alexandre Barbier (Paris: Didot, 1868), I, p. 324.

432 Ibid.

Salon performance and anecdote are just two of the forms in which Garrick's *Macbeth*, along with larger ideas about the shape of Shakespeare and dramatic character, crosses national borders. Portraiture, especially in the form of engravings, is another, with the French ambassador to England, the Duc de Guînes, like many others, able to compare Garrick's performance of *Macbeth* to 'l'estampe où, le poignard à la main, l'œil en feu, les cheveux hérissés, vous m'avez fait frissonner, sans vous avoir jamais vu.' ('The engraving where, with the dagger in your hand, your eye on fire, your hair standing on end, you made me tremble without ever having seen you.').<sup>433</sup>

Last but not least, translation also served as a vehicle for the eighteenth-century *Macbeth*. The following are the words Voh spoke in his attempt at the dagger scene.

Hahhh! – Ist das ein Dolch da vor mir, der Griff gegen meine Hand? Her, daß ich dich packe! – Wie? Nicht? Und doch seh'ich dich immer! Verdammter Spuk! Bist du denn nicht für die Faust, was du für's Auge bist? Etwa nur ein Dolch der Phantasse, nur ein Dampf meines erhitzten Gehirns? Bei Gott! So körperlich als dieser, den ich hier zücke – Ha ha! Willst wohl gar mein Wegweiser sein? Recht so! Deines gleichen gebrauchte ich eben – Entweder meine Augen, oder die übrigen Sinne haben mich zum Narren. – Wie? Immer and immer noch da? Sogar Blutstopfen auf deiner Klinge? Die waren doch vorher noch nicht da! – – – Nein! Es is nichts wirkliches. Der blutige Vorsatz meiner Seele ist's, der so die Augen täuscht. – – Jetzt scheint auf der einen Hälfte der Welt die Natur todt.<sup>434</sup>

Ha! – Is this a dagger there before me, the hilt towards my hand? Here, let me grasp thee! – What? No? And yet I see thee still! Damned apparition! Art thou thus for the fist what thou art for the eye? Only a kind of dagger of the imagination, only a vapour of my overheated brain? By God! As solid as this which now I draw – Ha ha! Will thou not be my signpost? Right! I needed the same thing as thee. – Either my eyes, or my other senses have made a fool of me. – What? still there? Even with drops of blood upon thy blade? They were not there before! – No! It is not real. It is the bloody purpose of my soul which thus deceives my eyes. – Now nature seems dead over one half of the world.

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433 James-Thomas Kirkman and Arthur Murphy, *Mémoires sur Garrick et Macklin: traduits de l'anglais*, trans. by Auguste-Jean-Baptiste Defauconpret, Collection des Mémoires sur l'art dramatique, 9, 1 vol. (Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1968), p. xxviii. For further discussion of the place of portraiture, see my conclusion.

434 Gottfried August Bürger, *Macbeth* (Göttingen, 1784), p. 178.

Wolfgang Ranke has shown that Bürger's translation, commissioned by Schröder in 1784, is unusually theatrical, being filled with pragmatic dashes and exclamations, and markedly different from other translations of the speech by Richard Wagner (1779) and Friedrich Schiller (1800).<sup>435</sup> Bürger's approach doubtless owes much to the influence of *Sturm und Drang* over his work, but one might also make a more specific argument for how *Garrickean* such a text is. Bürger is known to have worked, in part, from *Bell's Shakespeare*, and so from an edition that took the script Garrick performed at Drury Lane as its copytext.<sup>436</sup> Just as Francis Gentleman used dashes to mark those transitional breaks in which Garrick shone, so also Bürger keeps them here as encouragement for the German actor to do something similar.

In addition to this, however, Bürger also departs from Gentleman's, and all other eighteenth-century English editors', versions of this speech by including so many exclamations. The 'Hahhh!' with which the speech opens, has no Shakespearian precedent: rather it may well owe its existence to the fame of Garrick's 'starts', captured in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), and known throughout Europe thanks to the novel's much-reprinted 1750 French translation by Pierre-Antoine de la Place.<sup>437</sup> Similarly, a sense of Garrick's physical performance style is present in the quantity of what Bertholt Brecht would call 'gestic' language in this speech, the transformation, for instance, of 'I have thee not and yet I see thee still' into 'Wie? Nicht? Und doch seh'ich dich immer! Verdammter Spuk!' ('What? No? And yet I see thee still! Damned apparition!'), or 'I see thee yet, in form as palpable | As that which now I draw' into 'Beim Gott! so körperlich als dieser, den ich hier zücke – Ha ha!' ('By God! As solid as this which now I draw – Ha ha!').<sup>438</sup> Yet, like the Viennese reviewer, Bürger is not working with first-hand experience of Garrick's performance. This text has the same hard clarity as Sturz's anecdote: the words Voh speaks represent a Garrickean Shakespeare that out-Garricks Garrick. The memory of a famous performance has taken priority over the original text for that performance:

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435 Wolfgang Ranke, 'Shakespeare Translations for Eighteenth-Century Stage Productions in Germany: Different Versions of Macbeth', in *European Shakespeares: Translating Shakespeare in the Romantic Age: Selected papers from the conference on Shakespeare Translation in the Romantic Age*, ed. by Dirk Delabastita and Lieven Dhulst (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1993), pp. 163–82 (p. 178).

436 Ranke, eds Delabastita and Dhulst, p. 175.

437 Henry Fielding, *Histoire de Tom Jones Ou L'enfant Trouvé, Imitation de L'anglois*, trans. by Pierre-Antoine de la Place, 4 vols (London: Nourse, 1750).

438 Jean-Michel Desprats, 'Translating Shakespeare's Stagecraft', in *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation*, ed. by Ton Hoenselaars (London: A & C Black, 2014), pp. 133–47 (pp. 139–40).

this is *Macbeth* not ‘as Shakespeare wrote it’, but as Garrick anecdotally performed it. The exaggerated action implied by Bürger’s writing might well be that which Garrick himself described in the *Essay on Acting* forty years earlier: stage business ‘like a Man, who out of his Depth, and half drowned in his Struggles, catches at Air for Substance’.

Bürger can be forgiven for this. Writing five years after Garrick’s death, and forty after the first performance of the textually innovative Drury Lane *Macbeth*, his translation has in a certain sense nothing to catch at but ‘Air for Substance’. Jean-François Marmontel said as much in his *Encyclopédie* article on ‘Déclamation théâtrale’, a piece written, as he told Garrick, with the English actor in mind.<sup>439</sup> For Marmontel, great actors have written their lessons ‘dans le vague de l’air’ (‘in the vagueness of the air’) and thus ‘leur exemple s’est évanoui avec eux’ (‘their example has vanished with them’).<sup>440</sup> Their oeuvre is ephemeral. Yet this is only half-right: all the eighteenth-century echoes of the dagger soliloquy gathered here from across Europe indicate that something did remain of particularly important performances, that something was transmitted (and so remembered) in portraits, translations, anecdotes and private theatrical events. What that something is is perhaps best termed the striking moment. This is, at root, the same phenomenon as that analysed in the previous chapter, ‘the *very Instant* of the *changing Passion*’,<sup>441</sup> or Gentleman’s ‘beautiful’ transition.<sup>442</sup> Yet, in the context of the transmission and recollection of performance, the emphasis now shifts to fall less on the decorous balance of variety and power, and more strongly on the independence of such passages. As such, I adopt, in the following analysis, the shorthand ‘striking moment’.

My coinage covers a lot of different phrases, all of which fulfil a similar purpose: to denote those sections of drama, as Maurice Morgann put it, seemingly ‘held out for our special notice’.<sup>443</sup> These moments depend on the shape of performances in which the passions are the dramatic unit of priority, but they also draw new life from the various forms in which they are transmitted. An engraving, like that seen by the Duc

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439 Garrick, ed. Boaden, II, p. 427.

440 Jean-François Marmontel, ‘Déclamation Théâtrale’, ed. by Robert Morrissey, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société de Gens de lettres* (Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, 2013) <<http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/>> [accessed 29 June 2015].

441 Aaron Hill, p. 2.

442 Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, I, p. 22.

443 Morgann, p. 61.

de Guînes, transforms the moment into an icon; an anecdote or a party-piece constrains the action within a small number of intense words or minutes; and even a theatrical translation can, as Bürger's does, redouble the styles of acting encoded in an English performance edition.

These international forms for the transmission of performance and Shakespeare – private theatrical, translation, portraiture and anecdote – constitute the corpus of what follows: an expansion of the previous chapter's study of transition into an investigation of how the theatrical moment shaped the understanding of Shakespeare and the art of the theatre both in England and abroad. This investigation relies on foreign accounts, be they first-hand or at many removes from the English stage, for the clarity they bring to my subject. Struggling with linguistic and cultural boundaries, non-English accounts of eighteenth-century performance of Shakespeare are alive both to physical details and to emotional impact in a way that illuminates English thought and practice. Shakespeare's striking moments here emerge as being full of mystery and mystification, as perpetually recreating themselves, and as being rich objects for deep reflection. Yet such a phenomenon, to the extent that it is a phenomenon of the theatre, is also, as my conclusion will show, fragile.

## I. Mystery and Mystification

Writing the preface to the first volume of his *Théâtre anglois* in 1746, Pierre-Antoine de la Place was faced with a problem of literary multiculturalism: how to establish a foundation from which to compare French and English drama, so that his readers, used to Racine and Corneille and their adherence to the unities and *bienséances*, could appreciate his translations of Shakespeare in the same way that they had appreciated those from Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides in the model for La Place's publication, Pierre Brumoy's recent *Théâtre des Grecs* (1730).<sup>444</sup> To solve his dilemma, La Place sketches, first in the voice of an 'Anglais éclairé' ('enlightened Englishman') and then in his own, a model of the dynamics of performance based around powerful impression.<sup>445</sup> This model, while reminiscent of other accounts of the attention-grabbing stage, is also unusual in that it is indebted, either directly or indirectly, to religious thinking for its ability to give shape to the riddles of theatrical experience and the mysteries of the little-known Shakespearian style, themselves

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444 Pierre Brumoy, *Le Théâtre des Grecs* (Paris: Rollin et Coignard, 1730).

445 Pierre Antoine de La Place, *Le Théâtre anglois*, 6 vols (London [Paris]: [n. pub.], 1746), I, p. xvii. Further references to this preface are given after quotations in the text.

jointly wrapped in the enigma of English taste.

After placating his readers with the observation that English audiences, unlike their French counterparts, require ‘Toutes ces machines qui nous paroissent d’un goût grossier et subalterne’ (‘All those machines which seem to us to be of a rough and inferior taste’) in order to move them when they go to the theatre, La Place then takes the argument of his preface in an unexpected direction (lv). He proposes that all artworks (machinery or no) function by leaving an impression on those who come into contact with them, but that this impression is only valid if the artworks follow immutable laws taken from the nature of things. In drama specifically, these laws can be reduced to truth in all the parts of actions and dialogues. By truth, La Place means ‘vérité de sentiment’, which he then goes on to define as something that must interest or move the spectator.

Ainsi cette vérité théâtrale, que j’appelle *Vérité de sentiment*, n’est ni une vérité réelle qui présente les faits et les personnages tels qu’ils ont été, ni une vraisemblance qui les montre tels qu’ils ont pu être, mais un tableau qui les représente tels qu’il faut qu’ils soient, dans le moment où ils sont présentés, pour faire impression sur le spectateur dans la situation où il les voit ; et le fond de ce tableau doit être puisé dans la nature et autorisé par la raison, ou justifié par les passions. (lv-lvi)

So this theatrical truth, which I call *vérité de sentiment*, is neither a real truth which presents deeds and characters such as they were, nor a verisimilitude which shows them such as they may have been, but a tableau which represents them as they must be – in the moment when they are presented – in order to make an impression on the spectator in the situation he sees them in. And the basis of this tableau must be drawn from nature and authorised by reason, or justified by the passions.

With this sequence of phrases La Place has moved from the portrayal of an English need for sensation in the theatre to a sensationalist foundation for discussing all drama. For this translator, *vérité de sentiment* (roughly, ‘truth of feeling’), offers a criterion with which he can judge Shakespeare and the pillars of the French dramatic tradition in terms both of the impression moments from their plays make on the spectator or reader and of the means they employ to do so.

Accordingly, Théramène’s speech describing the death of Hippolyte in Racine’s *Phèdre* is just one of ‘vingt autres exemples’ (‘twenty other examples’) which disgust the spectators, in spite of being necessary, since they see that ‘ce que disent les

Acteurs dans ce moment, n'est pas ce qu'ils doivent dire, penser, ou entendre, dans la situation où ils se trouvent' ('what the actors say in this moment is not what they must say, think, or hear, in the situation they are in') in order to interest the spectator (lix). At the same time, the opening soliloquy of Shakespeare's *Richard III* constitutes but one of many 'indécences, aussi contraires à la raison, et à la dignité des personnages, que peu nécessaires à l'action, et à l'intérêt' ('indecencies, as contrary to reason and the dignity of the characters as unnecessary to the action and the interest'), which are 'contraires à la vérité du sentiment dans tous les genres' ('contrary to the *vérité du sentiment* in all genres') (lxxvi).

As well as to criticise, La Place also mobilises *vérité de sentiment* to defend certain parts of Shakespeare's plays that might at first disgust his French readers. He writes for instance that 'Quant aux ombres, aux sorciers, aux démons, je ne vois pas de raison qui doive les faire absolument condamner, s'ils sont d'ailleurs dans la vérité du sentiment' ('As for shades, sorcerers and demons, I see no reason to have them totally condemned, if they are still in the *vérité du sentiment*') (lxxix). Episodes with these characters are so striking that they deserve attention. As La Place puts it, with reference to the scene his future translation of *Tom Jones* would help make famous, 'L'apparition du père d'Hamlet produit des beautés dans cette pièce : elle en produirait encore davantage si Shakespeare vivait aujourd'hui et qu'il la traitât de nouveau' ('The appearance of Hamlet's father produces beauties in this play: it would produce even more if Shakespeare was alive today and treated it again') (lxxix). This effort to discern the kind of striking moment, one based on *vérité de sentiment*, that proves Shakespeare contemporary to France as well as England, is evidence for Harold Weinbrot's assessment of La Place's preface as an 'impressive argument on experience and cultural relativism, not on authority and cultural imperialism'.<sup>446</sup>

The second half of Weinbrot's assessment, his view of what La Place is not, refers to the wider context in which the Frenchman's work, the first multi-play translation of Shakespeare into the language of Racine, appeared. At the time of the publication of the *Théâtre anglois*, the most influential portrayal of English drama was that of Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques*, composed following the philosopher's exile in England from 1726 to 1728, where he not only read English plays but frequently

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446 Howard D. Weinbrot, 'Enlightenment Canon Wars: Anglo-French Views of Literary Greatness', *ELH*, 1993, 79–100 (p. 89).



went to see them performed.<sup>447</sup> Although not the first to write of English theatre, Voltaire, as Michèle Willems has shown, ‘crystallised’ French opinion on it.<sup>448</sup> He offered both a balanced assessment of Shakespeare, the ‘Corneille des Anglais’ whose merits had unfortunately ‘perdu le théâtre anglais’ (‘ruined English theatre’)<sup>449</sup> and, of probable utility to La Place, a free translation into alexandrines of Hamlet’s ‘To be or not to be’ speech. Further, Voltaire’s opinion that there were, in Shakespeare, ‘[des] endroits frappants qui demandent grâce pour toutes ses fautes’ (‘striking places which beg mercy for all his faults’)<sup>450</sup> anticipated La Place’s own decision to emphasise those striking moments which can ‘faire impression sur le spectateur’ (‘make an impression on the spectator’).

This specific observation was not unique to Voltaire, however. Antoine-François Prévost, recounting his time as a political refugee in late 1720s London in his *Mémoires et aventures d’un homme de qualité* (1728), recorded that, on the English stage, ‘la beauté des sentiments, soit tendres, soit sublimes’ contained ‘cette force tragique qui remue le fond du coeur, et qui excite infailliblement les passions dans l’âme la plus endormie’ (‘The beauty of the feelings, either tender or sublime [...] contains...] that tragic force which moves the bottom of the heart and which infallibly awakes the passions in the sleepest soul’).<sup>451</sup> Prévost’s opinion, partially inspired by his infatuation with the actress Anne Oldfield, finds an echo in La Place’s preface when he describes, in the voice of the ‘Anglais éclairé’, the English preference for ‘la licence qui me réveille’ (‘the licence which wakes me’) rather than the French ‘exactitude qui m’endort’ (‘the exactness which sends me to sleep’) (xix).

While La Place thus follows the accounts of famous French visitors to London and its theatres when he defends Shakespeare’s striking moments, contemporary conditions still meant that his translation required a lengthy prefatory argument. Such conditions are visible in the notes of the Marquis d’Argenson, once Voltaire’s schoolfellow at the *Lycée Louis le Grand*, and, in later life, a great amateur of the theatre. As published in a modern edition, the eighth and last volume of d’Argenson’s *Notices sur les Œuvres de théâtre* is dedicated to ‘Parodies, théâtre anglais, théâtre

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447 Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques*, ed. by Olivier Ferret and Antony McKenna (Paris: Garnier, 2010), p. 457.

448 Willems, p. 238.

449 Voltaire, eds Ferret and McKenna, p. 138.

450 Voltaire, eds Ferret and McKenna, p. 139.

451 Antoine-François Prévost, *Œuvres*, ed. by Pierre Berthiaume and Jean Sgard (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1978), I, p. 241.

danois', an editorial choice which already implies the relative importance of English drama to this connoisseur.<sup>452</sup> D'Argenson, like most eighteenth-century men of letters, knew no English, and so had only indirect contact with Shakespeare through La Place's translation. He was not convinced by the translator's arguments. Although he reprises an interest in the striking moments of the stage by recording that, in *Hamlet's* most extreme moments, 'On est, dit-on, plus ému d'être présent à ces actions', he then remarks 'mais pour émouvoir l'odorat, faut-il l'odeur du fumier, ou celle des roses et des jasmins, comme l'on voyt dans nos spectacles ?' ('We are, they say, moved more by being present at these actions, but to move our sense of smell, is the smell of manure necessary or that of roses and jasmines, as we see in our plays?').<sup>453</sup> Such observations of English vulgarity are typical and only grow more common as Anglo-French political relations worsen in the Seven Years War, and, later, the American War of Independence. Voltaire, for instance, abandons the balance of the *Lettres philosophiques* and portrays the English as dangerous cultural vandals, when he writes of their 'barbarie' in a letter to the Comte and Comtesse d'Argental in January 1764.

Tant que les Anglais se sont contentés de prendre nos vaisseaux et de s'emparer du Canada et de Pondicheri [*sic*], j'ai gardé un noble silence. Mais à présent qu'ils poussent la barbarie jusqu'à trouver Racine et Corneille ridicules, je dois prendre les armes.<sup>454</sup>

While the English were happy to take our ships and seize Canada and Pondicherry, I kept a noble silence. But now that they push their barbarity to the point of finding Racine and Corneille ridiculous, I must take up arms.

Although unhappy with La Place's efforts to import such barbarism, Voltaire reserved his greatest outcry for the second major translation of Shakespeare into French, that of Pierre Letourneur in the 1770s. Letourneur translated all of the plays into prose, warts and all.<sup>455</sup> La Place's edition, in contrast to this, only provided eight

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452 René Louis de Voyer de Paulmy Argenson (Marquis d'), *Notices sur les Œuvres de théâtre*, ed. by Henri Lagrave, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 52, 2 vols (Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1966), II.

453 Argenson (Marquis d'), ed. Lagrave, II, p. 769.

454 Quoted in: *Voltaire on Shakespeare*, ed. by Theodore Besterman, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 54 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1968), p. 173.

455 William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Traduit de l'Anglais, dédié au Roi*, trans. by Pierre Letourneur, 20 vols (Paris: Mérimot, 1776), I.

plays (*Othello*, *Henry VI Part 3*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*) and, even with these, elided many details by shifting constantly between prose paraphrase, versified free translation and prose summaries. The rest of Shakespeare's oeuvre only appeared in summary form at the conclusion of the third volume.

This third volume also includes a new preface to allow La Place to respond to recent Voltairean criticism of his work from the authors of *Jugemens sur quelques ouvrages nouveaux*. Echoing Voltaire's famous description of Shakespeare's tragedies as 'farces monstrueuses' ('monstrous farces'),<sup>456</sup> La Place's reviewer reminded his readers that 'si vous négligez les quatre unités [...] vous ferez une tragédie monstrueuse, capable néanmoins de plaire dans quelque scènes, comme celles de Shakespeare' ('if you neglect the four unities [...] you will make a monstrous tragedy able, nevertheless, to please in a few scenes, like Shakespeare's'),<sup>457</sup> and called the concept of *vérité de sentiment* a mystification, the work of an 'ingénieux apologiste des Anglais' ('a crafty apologist of the English'),<sup>458</sup> a 'Protée, tantôt anglais tantôt français' ('Proteus, sometimes English, sometimes French').<sup>459</sup> Responding to all this, La Place calmly reiterates his ideas to show that he is as much a critic of Shakespeare as he is an admirer. He also adds the new thought that not only does Shakespeare produce striking scenes, but also these scenes are a rich source of material: 'Une seule scène, une seule situation suffit souvent à un génie véritablement dramatique pour créer une intrigue théâtrale et intéressante.' ('A single scene, a single situation often suffices for a truly dramatic genius to create a theatrical and interesting plot').<sup>460</sup> This is an intuition of the depth of a Shakespearian moment, to which I will return later in this chapter.

La Place's reiteration of *vérité de sentiment* in his preface to volume three indicates the importance of this idea to his understanding of Shakespeare.<sup>461</sup> While an emphasis on striking moments was, for good or ill, a commonplace of French responses to English drama (and particularly of those inspired, like Voltaire's or Prévost's, by performance), La Place is remarkable for the way in which he chooses to portray such moments in terms of truth and feeling. While it is true that, in the

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456 Voltaire, eds Ferret and McKenna, p. 138.

457 *Jugemens sur quelques ouvrages nouveaux*, 11 vols (Avignon: Girou, 1745), IX, p. 5.

458 *Jugemens*, IX, p. 26.

459 *Jugemens*, IX, p. 32.

460 La Place, III, p. xix.

461 La Place, III, p. xiv.

passages quoted above, La Place varies between ‘vérité de sentiment’ and ‘vérité du sentiment’,<sup>462</sup> the core idea of both phrases, that of an overlap between cognition and emotion, leads back to the earliest pairing of *vérité* and *sentiment* in French, a set of theological disputes at the very end of the seventeenth century. By briefly studying these debates, which La Place may well have come across (along with a First Folio)<sup>463</sup> during his anglophone education at the Jesuit college of Saint Omer,<sup>464</sup> it is possible to illuminate both the utility of the formula *vérité de/du sentiment* to La Place’s understanding of Shakespeare and performance, and the ambiguities betrayed by La Place’s hesitation between *sentiment* and *le sentiment*.

The Academician Paul Pellisson-Fontanier’s *Réflexions sur les différends de religion*, first published in 1690, contains a scathing attack on the recent *Lettres pastorales* (1686 to 1689) of the Protestant theologian Pierre Jurieu. One of Pellisson-Fontanier’s principal targets is Jurieu’s concept of ‘vérités de sentiment’. Jurieu had claimed that the printing of the Bible in French was as useful for the uneducated as the sophisticated, since even the former could come to an understanding of its truths by following the path of feeling.<sup>465</sup> Pellisson-Fontanier’s response was to observe that ‘vérités de sentiment et voye de sentiment sont des expressions modernes, inventées pour obscurcir’ (‘truths of feeling and path of feeling are modern expressions, invented to obscure’), and then to offer a Cartesian counter-definition: ‘Nous pouvons appeler veritez de sentiment certaines lumières naturelles que Dieu a comme imprimées dans le cœur de tous les hommes [...] le sentiment d’une divinité, d’une Providence, d’une Justice divine.’ (‘We may call truths of feeling certain natural lights that God has in a certain sense impressed in the heart of all men [...] the *sentiment* of a divinity, of a providence, of a divine justice’).<sup>466</sup> In Pellisson-Fontanier’s view, Jurieu’s error had been to mistake a particular ‘vérité de sentiment’ for a general one, a ‘lumières naturelle’. This showed all too clearly how attempts to understand the Bible through one’s own feelings – and without the guidance of priest

462 ‘*Vérité du sentiment*’ is the result of the use of the definite article, ‘*le*’, before ‘*sentiment*’. In French, a contraction occurs when ‘*de*’ is followed by ‘*le*’, producing ‘*du*’.

463 Kim Willsher, ‘Shakespeare First Folio Found in French Library’, *Guardian*, 25 November 2014 <<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/nov/25/shakespeare-first-folio-found-in-french-library>> [accessed 17 January 2015].

464 Jean Sgard, ‘Pierre de La Place’, *Dictionnaire des journalistes* <<http://dictionnaire-journalistes.gazettes18e.fr/journaliste/454-pierre-de-la-place>> [accessed 9 December 2014].

465 Pierre Jurieu, *Lettres pastorales adressées aux fidèles de France qui gémissent sous la captivité de Babylon*, 2 vols (Rotterdam: Acher, 1688), II, p. 43.

466 Paul Pellisson-Fontanier, *Réflexions sur les différends de la religion* (Paris: Mabre-Cramoissy, 1690), pp. 69–70.

or cult – risked error.<sup>467</sup> The intuitions of *sentiment*, in other words, could be dangerously self-authenticating, and needed appropriate checks and balances.

Whether La Place deliberately draws on theological tradition or not in his preface to the writings of a Protestant dramatist like Shakespeare is open to question. By the 1740s, discussion of *sentiment* in Europe is hardly the exclusive preserve of ecclesiastics, even if their writings still dominated dictionary definitions of *sentiment* as ‘persuasion que nous sentons intérieurement, sans que l’on en puisse rendre une raison distincte aux autres’ (‘persuasion that we feel within, without being able to give others a distinct reason for it’).<sup>468</sup> Regardless of La Place’s sources, however, the utility of this concept for his purposes is as great as it was for the seventeenth-century theologians. First, *vérité de sentiment* offers a means of grasping phenomena whose mystery resists rational explanation, whether they be religious precepts or the success of Shakespeare’s barbaric plays. Second, *vérité de sentiment*, as the result of a kind of perception available to all human beings, provides a foundation for dramatic appreciation that is neither specifically French nor English, yet still requires (to follow Pellisson-Fontanier) the presence of some checks and balances in the writing. Third, this term implicitly values popularity: God’s truths can be felt by all, and even the less educated playgoers may be moved by Shakespeare’s writing.

However, if we return to La Place’s preface, and his definition of *vérité de sentiment*, it is also possible to measure an ambiguity absent from the writings of Jurieu and Pellisson-Fontanier.

Ainsi cette vérité théâtrale, que j’appelle *Vérité de sentiment*, n’est ni une vérité réelle qui présente les faits et les personnages tels qu’ils ont été, ni une vraisemblance qui les montre tels qu’ils ont pu être, mais un tableau qui les représente tels qu’il faut qu’ils soient, dans le moment où ils sont présentés, pour faire impression sur le spectateur dans la situation où il les voit; et le fond de ce tableau doit être puisé dans la nature et autorisé par la raison, ou justifié par les passions.

So this theatrical truth, which I call *vérité de sentiment*, is neither a real truth which presents deeds and characters such as they were, nor a verisimilitude which shows them such as they may have been, but a tableau which represents them as they must be – in the moment when they are presented – in order to make an impression on the spectator in

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467 Pellisson-Fontanier, p. 72.

468 Antoine Furetière, ‘Sentiment’, *Dictionnaire universel françois & latin* (Paris: Giffart, 1732).

the situation he sees them in. And the basis of this tableau must be drawn from nature and authorised by reason, or justified by the passions.

On one hand, La Place's view that the onstage tableau – as performed in a theatre or in the mind – should make an impression on the spectator is clearly similar to the originally theological idea that *vérité de sentiment* describes a kind of obscure intimation. On the other hand, this passage seems to associate *vérité de sentiment* with the way the 'tableau' represents 'les faits et les personnages' rather than with what the audience members feel, and that, in this case, it is the scene's use of *vérité de sentiment* (as opposed to verisimilitude) that makes drama striking.

This reading is further strengthened by La Place both hesitating over the use of the article (in *de/du sentiment*) and writing of a singular 'truth' of feeling rather than the plural 'truths' of feeling mentioned by Pellisson-Fontanier and Jurieu. In all this, *sentiment* has acquired a second meaning: it is no longer referring just to an 'impression' but rather a system for feeling, what scientists like Haller and Fouquet would call sensibility (*sensibilité*). Such ambiguity is not unusual.<sup>469</sup> Indeed, a parallel ambiguity to La Place's is present in the work of Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine, whose manual on acting, *Le Comédien*, published around the same time as this preface, also uses *sentiment* in both senses, of impression and of system, to describe the actor's emotional experiences.<sup>470</sup>

Because of this ambiguous use of *sentiment* to describe both what is felt and how it is felt, La Place's use of *vérité de sentiment* blurs the categories of author, character, actor and audience. A passage from later in the preface is typical of this.

En un mot ; c'est la vérité, ou la vraisemblance des choses, et des discours, qui doivent constituer la vérité du sentiment, qui seule peut remplir l'objet du poème dramatique. Une vraisemblance de sentiment ne suffirait pas, parce que nous en découvrirons le vide. Il faut que ce sentiment soit vrai, dans l'acteur, quand il ne serait fondé que sur des vraisemblances ; et ces vraisemblances acquièrent assez de réalité, à nos yeux, pour le rendre tel dans notre âme, et effacer l'idée même des illusions sur lesquelles il est fondé, sans que nous puissions en diminuer l'effet, par la faiblesse du principe.

Il résulte de tout cela, que les règles du poème dramatique ne tendent, et

469 Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion : Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), p. 97.

470 For example: Rémond de Sainte-Albine, p. 31.

ne doivent tendre qu'à rassembler tout ce qui peut intéresser, sans choquer la nature, la raison, et les lois générales ou particulières des bienséances, par rapport aux lieux, aux temps, aux mœurs, au caractère et à la situation des Acteurs, et des spectateurs. (lx-lxi)

In a word, it is the truth or the verisimilitude of things and of speeches that must constitute the *vérité du sentiment*, which alone can achieve the aim of the dramatic poem. A verisimilitude of *sentiment* would not be enough, for we will discover its emptiness. It is necessary that the *sentiment* be true, in the actor, even when it is founded only on verisimilitudes; and these verisimilitudes acquire sufficient reality, to our eyes, to make the *sentiment* real in our soul, and erase even the idea of the illusions on which it is founded, without our being able to diminish the effect through the weakness of the principle.

The result of all this is that the rules of the dramatic poem tend, and must tend only to gather all that can interest, without shocking nature, reason and the general or particular laws of convention, with respect to the places, times, morals, character and situation of the actors and the spectators.

In the light of the precepts outlined here, one might summarise as follows. Characters (and by extension, those writing or playing them) in a striking stage tableau must feel the given situation correctly, according to 'nature', either 'autorisé par la raison, ou justifié par les passions'. Only then will *vérité de sentiment* obtain and leave an impression on the spectator or reader. Given how this summary echoes both the theological hinterland of La Place's terminology and scientific accounts of sensibility contemporary with his work, it is truer to say that La Place's attempt to explain the mystery of Shakespeare's striking stage moment in terms of quasi-spiritual *vérité de sentiment* is also elaborating a quasi-scientific *vérité de sensibilité*.

La Place's use of *vérité de sentiment* has a very specific legacy in the work of his friend Jean-François Ducis, who became, with his *Hamlet* in 1769, the first person to have an overt adaptation of Shakespearian tragedy performed on the stage of the Comédie Française.<sup>471</sup> Unable to read English, Ducis depended exclusively on La Place's translations until the appearance of Letourneur's work in the mid-1770s. Even then, however, John Golder has shown that Ducis continued to return to La

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<sup>471</sup> John Golder, *Shakespeare for the Age of Reason: The Adaptations of Jean-François Ducis, 1769-1792* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1992), p. 4.

Place, borrowing phrases and techniques from the earlier translator for his plays.<sup>472</sup> But Ducis also borrowed from the *Théâtre anglois* elsewhere in his work.

Ducis used the phrase ‘vérité [...] du sentiment’ in a speech he gave upon his election to the Académie Française in 1779. Ducis took the chair left vacant by Voltaire, replacing a figure then seen as a staunch anti-Shakespearian with a writer who had made his name by adapting the works of the English dramatist. In a speech largely devoted to Voltaire’s career and achievements, Ducis was thus also attempting to bridge the gap between himself and his predecessor. To do this, he redescribed Voltaire’s dramaturgy in terms that bring it closer to what Ducis believed to be Shakespeare’s (and his own).<sup>473</sup> After remarking that Voltaire had learnt in England the art of ‘secousses violentes’ (‘violent shocks’ – the same striking style of English theatre identified by La Place and Prévost), Ducis evokes ‘vérité [...] du sentiment’ to defend his predecessor’s own, supposedly irregular, theatrical innovations.

Je demanderai si au théâtre le jugement des pleurs ne l’emporte pas sur celui de la raison ; si le premier talent de cette espèce d’enchanteur qu’on nomme poète n’est pas celui de l’illusion, et la première vérité, celle du sentiment. Je demanderai s’il n’en est pas des grandes productions des arts comme de celles de la nature, où quelquefois une irrégularité heureuse amène une sorte de merveilleux qui en impose, et une magnificence d’effets qui étonne et subjugué l’imagination.<sup>474</sup>

I will ask if, in the theatre, the judgement of tears does not prevail over that of the reason; if the first talent of this species of enchanter that we call poet is not that of illusion, and the first truth that of feeling. I will ask if it is not with the great productions of the arts as it is with those of nature, where sometimes a happy irregularity brings about a kind of imposing magic and a magnificence of effects which surprises and subjugates the imagination.

This is a stronger version of La Place’s thinking, which does not carry the rider that *vérité de sentiment* obtains only when ‘le fond de ce tableau doit être puisé dans la nature et autorisé par la raison, ou justifié par les passions.’ (‘the basis of this tableau must be drawn from nature and authorised by reason, or justified by the passions’).

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472 Golder, p. 59.

473 Mark Ledbury, ‘Visions of Tragedy: Jean-Francois Ducis and Jacques-Louis David’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37 (2004), 553–80 (p. 558).

474 Jean-François Ducis, *Œuvres*, 4 vols (Paris: Nepveu, 1826), I, p. 8.



Rather, Ducis is talking about an overwhelming emotional experience, one that silences reason and subjugates imagination. Further, this description is at odds with Ducis's descriptions of Voltaire's artistry earlier in the speech, where he praises the *Henriade* as a most un-Shakespearian 'palais élevé par une main sage, et décoré d'une manière brillante, dont toute les parties offrent le goût et la fraîcheur modernes' ('palace built with a wise hand, and decorated in a brilliant manner, whose every part offers modern taste and freshness').<sup>475</sup> Such discrepancy suggests that Ducis might be reshaping Voltaire in terms of his own aesthetic of violent shocks and overwhelming sentiments. Whereas La Place and his theological predecessors had described *sentiment* as, at best, an alternative to *raison*, and, even then, as requiring checks and balances, Ducis sees feeling as superior to all, for the 'jugement des pleurs [...] l'emporte [...] sur celui de la raison' ('judgement of tears [...] prevails [...] over that of the reason').

That Ducis should pursue La Place's thinking in such a way is not necessarily surprising. His use of the epiphanic potential of *vérité de sentiment* is of a piece with other spiritual ways in which he describes his own compositional technique. Writing to Garrick about his recent successes with *Hamlet*, Ducis explains that, as he worked, he saw himself as 'un peintre religieux qui travaille à un tableau d'autel' ('a religious painter who labours over an altarpiece').<sup>476</sup> In a letter to his friend Vauchelle, Ducis tells of how he would compose his adaptation of *Roméo et Juliette* 'à genoux devant l'estampe de Corneille, et je dirai à ce grand homme, "inspirez-moi!"' ('on my knees before the engraving of Corneille, and I will say to this great man, "inspire me!").<sup>477</sup> Again to Garrick, this time about *Macbeth*, Ducis describes how his 'âme s'efforce' ('soul struggles') to channel some of Garrick's Shakespearian genius.<sup>478</sup> Besides the self-presentation of his correspondence, Ducis was also painted in 1783 by Adelaïde Labille-Guiard, dressed in a toga and crowned with laurels, his eyes raised upwards as if receiving divine instruction (see Figure 2).

This image, Ducis's speech and the spiritual turn of his letters all participate in an attempt to shape the mystery of Shakespeare's stage effect. On a simple level, appeals to inspiration allow Ducis to recognise the difficulty of his task as adaptor: prevented by language and distance from experiencing Shakespeare first-hand on

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475 Ducis, I, p. 5.

476 Garrick, ed. Boaden, II, p. 559.

477 Golder, p. 74.

478 Garrick, ed. Boaden, II, p. 609.

stage or on page, he must nevertheless capture something quintessentially Shakespearian in a form suitable for the legitimate French theatre. More largely, and as La Place had begun to do with his work on the ‘impression’ that a scene could make, Ducis also uses the language of religion to show how powerful spectacle can be non-rational and yet highly communicative and emotive. Last, but by no means least, Ducis’s talk of souls and altarpieces also breaks the categories of actor, author and appreciator. Ducis – like any translator-performer – occupies a double position: he is both moved by a mediated version of Shakespeare and hoping to move others with his own mediation of this writer’s work.

It is easy to associate spiritual appreciation of the theatre with the failure of critical insight (as Bernard Shaw did when coining ‘bardolatry’).<sup>479</sup> Yet certain eighteenth-century figures, like Ducis and La Place, would beg to differ. In the consideration of theatrical affect, when rational models prove inadequate, the language of epiphany and felt truth transcends the aporia. There is no better example of this than Garrick himself, around whom such thinking proliferates. Ducis’s letters exemplify this, as do those by one of the actor’s other French correspondents, the journalist and Academician, Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard. Playfully listing the pleasures available to Garrick in May 1767, Suard concludes with reference to the Temple to Shakespeare Garrick had erected on his Hampton estate in 1756.

[C]e temple de Shakespeare où vous allez dire chaque jour une prière, où je voudrais bien aller brûler un grain d’encens à votre Dieu, qui n’est pas encore le mien, mais qui le deviendrait, s’il me parloit toujours par votre bouche. On nous dit que Phidias augmenta le culte de Jupiter par la belle statue qu’il fit de ce Dieu, vous êtes le Phidias de Shakespeare.<sup>480</sup>

[T]his Shakespeare temple where you go each day to say a prayer, where I would quite like to go and burn a stick of incense for your God, who is not mine, but who would become so, if he always talked to me through your mouth. It is said that Phidias enlarged the following of Jupiter with the beautiful statue that he made of this God, you are Shakespeare’s Phidias.

Here, with tongue in cheek, Shakespeare is portrayed as Garrick’s God. Not only is Garrick like Phidias (or, indeed, like Ducis the altarpiece maker) glorifying Shakespeare with his art, but he is also a kind of prophet or oracle, since

479 Bernard Shaw, *Three Plays for Puritans* (Chicago: Stone, 1901), p. xxxi.

480 Garrick, ed. Boaden, II, p. 538.

Shakespeare, for Suard, speaks through Garrick's mouth.

This whimsical idea actually corresponds with the supposedly more practical approach found in mid-century methods of acting, which – as they moved from outward motion to inward *anima* – encouraged the actor to study his text until 'he feels the genius of the poet animating his own soul'.<sup>481</sup> In this quotation from John Hill, only the religious model of divine inspiration offers a way of explaining what happens in performance.

Garrick had himself played on the idea of being possessed by Shakespeare when he described himself as an 'enthusiastick missionary' in a letter to Voltaire in 1764. Apologising for the fact that his ill health would prevent a visit to Ferney, Garrick admits that 'No enthusiastick Missionary, who had converted the Emperor of China to his religion would have been prouder than I, could I have reconcil'd the first Genius of Europe to our Dramatic Faith'.<sup>482</sup> Here, although the classical allusions to prophets, gods and sculpture have been switched for Christian missionary work, the attraction of this spiritual approach for presenting both attitudes to Shakespeare and the complex, mediated and mediating position of the actor is hard to ignore.

La Place, Ducis and Garrick, all writing across political and linguistic barriers, do so in an era which sought to rationalise literary creation.<sup>483</sup> Such efforts are, however, balanced by an equally powerful awareness of that which resisted this process: Shakespeare's non-conformity soon became so notorious as to establish its own paradigm, while great acting also demanded fresh analysis. Many were the attempts, in Britain and abroad, to explain Shakespeare's power, and many were those who, like John Hill, tried to treat acting as a 'science'.<sup>484</sup> But the equal, opposite and often contiguous reaction to this, arising most strongly in moments of aporia, such as the powerful yet mysterious impact of a certain scene, was a language of mystery, shared by those studying Shakespeare and those studying acting at this time, and so all the stronger when the two fields of enquiry were brought into conjunction, as is the case for La Place, Garrick, and Ducis.

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481 John Hill, *The Actor* (1755), p. 111.

482 Garrick, eds Little and Kahrl, II, p. 428.

483 Willems, p. 244.

484 John Hill, *The Actor* (1755), p. 1.

## II. Perpetual Creation

The striking moment becomes, in the writings of La Place and Ducis, a locus for the mysteries of performed affect, susceptible to expression in a spiritual mode. Yet such moments were not just contemplated, but also reworked. The adaptations of Ducis in particular exploit and illuminate the powerful tensions inherent in what Hill called ‘the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*’.<sup>485</sup>

Mark Ledbury ranks Ducis alongside Beaumarchais, Diderot, Sedaine and Mercier as a ‘key theatrical innovator of this era’.<sup>486</sup> For Stephen Orgel, the impetus for such innovation lies in this playwright’s desire to ‘complete’ Shakespeare.<sup>487</sup> John Golder, on the other hand, argues that Ducis’s new methods have their roots in La Place. Specifically, Golder believes that La Place’s observation of the depth of Shakespeare’s most striking scenes, that ‘Une seule scène, une seule situation suffit souvent à un génie véritablement dramatique pour créer une intrigue théâtrale et intéressante’ (‘A single scene, a single situation often suffices for a truly dramatic genius to create a theatrical and interesting plot’),<sup>488</sup> was taken literally by Ducis.<sup>489</sup> Ducis clearly reduced the ‘extensive’ dramas of Shakespeare into a more ‘intensive’, Racinian style by focussing on key scenes, and (according to Orgel) completing them.<sup>490</sup> His *Hamlet* turns, for example, on the confrontation between the Prince and his mother, settling the question of Gertrude’s guilt; *Le Roi Léar* contains several scenes in which Lear wakes in the arms of Cordelia; and *Jean Sans-Terre*, Ducis’s three-act revision of *King John*, concentrates only on the plight of Arthur.

This assessment of Ducis’s methodology, however, sits awkwardly with Golder’s characterisation of the writer elsewhere as someone who ‘imitated’ Shakespeare. By ‘imitate’, we are to understand *imitatio*, what John Dryden defined in his preface to the works of Horace as ‘to write, as he supposes that the author would have done, had he lived in our age and in our country’.<sup>491</sup> Ducis may well be limiting Shakespeare’s extensiveness in the belief that a latter-day Shakespeare would have

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485 Aaron Hill, p. 2.

486 Ledbury, p. 556.

487 Stephen Orgel, ‘The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 2007, 290–310 (p. 307).

488 La Place, III, p. xix.

489 Golder, p. 22.

490 Golder, p. 130.

491 Quoted in: Golder, p. 325.

written as Racine had done, but a more solid basis for describing Ducis's intensifying imitation lies not only in La Place's recognition of the depth of Shakespeare's scenes, but also in the concept of *vérité de sentiment*, particularly as strengthened by Ducis himself into the epiphanic aesthetic of overwhelming emotional response. All of Ducis's adaptations aim at such powerful emotion, and make the choice of intensifying Shakespeare to get there, guided by the conviction that the English playwright, if transplanted into eighteenth-century France, would retain this aspect of his dramaturgy: the striking moment that captures the hearts of all those who come into contact with his creation.

In an overview of this playwright's career, Golder has designated *Le Roi Léar*, first performed in 1783, as an important watershed where Ducis shifts from 'what we might call the verbal-Classical towards the spectacular-Romantic'.<sup>492</sup> Alternatively, although the script took a lot of its language from Letourneur's recently published translation (La Place having only provided a summary of the play),<sup>493</sup> it also appears that Ducis's method here becomes more than ever that of *vérité de sentiment* writ large.

So large, in fact, that La Place's concerned nuance that such an effect only occurs when the moment is 'autorisé par la raison' is all but forgotten. Golder points out numerous logical problems in the plot of this *King Lear* adaptation, the most extreme of which is the lack of evidence for Ducis's Regan herself being directly evil.<sup>494</sup> To insist on this or, as Golder also does, on how the play's characters become no more than 'symbolic pawns to be manoeuvred into pleasing situations and relationships on a moral chessboard',<sup>495</sup> is, however, to minimise an underlying logic of felt truth, the author's attempt to inculcate a Rousseauist message of natural familial devotion not through rational circumstance but impressive displays of emotion. Such displays include Léar's first, abortive recognition scene with Cordelia (called Helmonde by Ducis), which, concluding the third act, swerves from emotional extreme to emotional extreme in a series of powerful transitions.

HELMONDE Helmonde est dans vos bras, voyez couler ses larmes.  
LÉAR, *tirant son épée, et voulant s'en percer.*  
Hé bien, puisque tu l'es, voilà mon châtement.

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492 Golder, p. 183.

493 La Place, III, pp. 511–519.

494 Golder, p. 144.

495 Golder, p. 135.

HELMONDE Que faites-vous, grands dieux!

LÉAR

Je te venge.

HELMONDE

Un

moment!

Je vous trompais seigneur; vous n'êtes point mon père.

LÉAR Oses-tu prendre un nom que la vertu révère!

Va, ne m'abuse plus; va, fuis loin de mes yeux.

Helmonde, hélas, n'est plus...et moi, je vois les cieux.

Ces cieux de qui les traits n'ont pas frappé ma tête!

Arbres, renversez-vous! Ecrasez-moi, tempête!

Est-ce bien toi, cruel, dont l'injuste courroux

Proscrit la vertu tremblante à tes genoux?

*(Les bras étendus vers le ciel)*

Ma fille, entends mes cris! Vois le coupable en larmes!

Ma douleur, à tes yeux, peut-elle avoir des charmes?

Va, tes soeurs m'ont puni. Connais encor ma voix;

Je t'appelle en mourant, pour la dernière fois.

Pardonne à ce vieillard que le rémords déchire.

*(Il tombe sans mouvement sur un débris de rocher)*

C'est son coeur qui te venge, et c'est là qu'il expire.<sup>496</sup>

HELMONDE Helmonde is in your arms, see her tears flow.

LÉAR, *drawing his sword, and making to stab himself with it.*

And so, because you are, here is my punishment.

HELMONDE Gods, what are you doing!

LÉAR

I avenge you.

HELMONDE

A moment!

I was deceiving you, my lord, you are not my father.

LÉAR You dare to take a name that virtue reveres!

Go, abuse me no more; go, fly far from my eyes.

Helmonde, alas, is no more ... and I, I see the heavens.

Those heavens whose blows have not struck my head!

Trees, fall! storm, crush me!

Is it really you, cruel one, whose unjust rage,

Banished virtue trembling at your knees?

*(With arms stretched out towards the sky)*

My daughter, hear my cries! see the guilty man in tears!

My pain, in your eyes, may it have its charms?

Go, your sisters have punished me. Know yet my voice;

Dying, I call you, for the last time,

Forgive this old man whom remorse destroys.

<sup>496</sup> Ducis, II, p. 74.

*(He falls without movement onto a fragment of rock)*

It is his heart which avenges you, and it is here that he dies.

This emotional scene is adapted from not just one source but two: it brings together Shakespeare's original waking and Lear's call on the heath to 'Blow winds and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!'<sup>497</sup> What was already a key moment of emotion is intensified with the absorption of another. The hybrid origin for these lines is one factor in what soon becomes an extremely unstable dialogue. Helmonde's split second decision occurs with a cry of 'Un moment!' in the last three syllables of the alexandrine: she preserves her father's life by denying her identity, but also triggers a remarkably exclamatory speech throughout which the force of passion is continuously renewed.

*Le Roi Léar* was a success upon its first performance. Some of Ducis's other adaptations were not so fortunate, and he continued to rework them over decades. One such play is the source of my second example: his version of *Macbeth*. First attempted in 1772, Ducis did not manage a stageworthy version, approved by the Comité de Lecture at the Comédie Française, until 1784.<sup>498</sup> After a successful opening night, attendance soon declined and the text was extensively rewritten before another revival in the 1790s.<sup>499</sup> Because of its tortuous progress towards the stage, Ducis's *Macbeth* is a good example of how Ducis approached Shakespeare in general. Indeed, Ducis himself recognised that the play was something of a superlative object, writing in a preface to the work that it was 'la plus terrible' ('the most dreadful') of all Shakespeare's 'productions dramatiques'.<sup>500</sup>

As Ducis's specific changes to *Macbeth* – including the inclusion and later excision of the dagger scene – have been examined in detail by Golder, the play will only be studied here in terms of its efforts to provide the kind of striking moment identified by La Place and others as quintessential to the performance of such English drama as Shakespeare's.<sup>501</sup> What is interesting about this is that Ducis feels little compunction to remain loyal to Shakespeare's original plot, and instead seeks moments of greater and greater emotional impact as a way of submerging the difficulties of his source

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497 William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by R. A. Foakes, Revised (London: Thomson Learning, 2007), pp. 633–70 (p. 651) (III.2.1).

498 Golder, pp. 163–166.

499 Golder, p. 209.

500 Ducis, II, p. 121.

501 See: Golder, chap. 3.

material. He summarises this approach in a letter to the actor-manager François-Joseph Talma, where he justifies another set of changes to the play's last act by saying: 'Au théâtre, comme en tout, c'est avec l'audace que l'on se tire de l'affaire.' ('In the theatre, as in everything, it is with audacity that one gets out of the situation.')502

The audacity Ducis refers to in this letter to Talma is Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking. Although this has a Shakespearian precedent, the scene alters significantly in the light of Ducis's decision both to overwhelm his audiences with emotion and to portray Macbeth as 'une âme née pour la vertu, mais qui, malheureusement dégradée et comme détruite par le crime, cherche encore avec tant de douleur à se recomposer parmi ses ruines!' ('a soul born for virtue, but who, unfortunately degraded and in a way destroyed by its crime, still seeks with so much pain to recompose itself amongst its ruins!').<sup>503</sup> Because of this, Lady Macbeth, here called Frédégonde (after the violent Merovingian queen), becomes evil incarnate, and, in the climactic sleepwalking scene, mistakes her own child for Malcolm, killing the infant before she awakes to discover her error. Although Ducis cannot decorously show this onstage, what he does offer is a captivating sequence of transitions.

FRÉDÉGONDE

*(Elle entre endormie, un poignard dans la main droite, et un flambeau dans la main gauche. Elle s'approche d'un fauteuil. Levant les yeux au ciel avec l'expression d'une crainte douloureuse)*

Dieux vengeurs!

*(Elle s'assied, pose le flambeau sur une table, remet le poignard dans son fourreau)*

SÉVAR, *bas*.

Un forfait la poursuit.

Écoutons.

FRÉDÉGONDE, *avec joie et un air de mystère*.

Ce grand coup fut caché dans la nuit.

La couronne est à nous. Macbeth, pourquoi la rendre?

*(avec le geste d'une femme qui porte plusieurs coups de poignard dans les ténèbres.)*

Sur le fils à son tour...

SÉVAR

Ciel! Que viens-je d'entendre!

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502 Quoted in: Golder, p. 220.

503 Ducis, II, p. 123.



FRÉDÉGONDE, *en s'applaudissant, et avec la joie de l'ambition satisfaite.*

Oui, tout est consommé, mes enfants règneront.

*(avec la complaisance et le plaisir de la tendresse maternelle)*

Que j'essaie, ô mon fils! Ce bandeau sur ton front.

*(tâchant de rappeler un souvenir vague à sa mémoire.)*

Qui m'a donc dit ces mots: 'Va, le ciel te fit mère'?

*(avec serrement de cœur.)*

S'ils éprouvaient les coups d'une main meurtrière!

*(très tendrement)*

O ciel!

*(portant sa main à son nez avec répugnance.)*

Toujours ce sang!

*(Très tendrement)*

Je verrais leur trépas

*(Avec larmes)*

Moi leur mère!

*(Avec terreur, se grattant la main)*

Ce sang ne s'effacera pas!

*(avec la plus grande douleur)*

O dieux!

*(en se grattant la main vivement)*

Disparais donc, misérable vestige!

*(avec la plus tendre compassion)*

Mon fils! Mon cher enfant!

*(se grattant la main plus vivement encore)*

Disparais donc, te dis-je!

*(se grattant la main avec un dépit furieux)*

Jamais, jamais, jamais!

*(Comme si elle sentait un poignard dans son sein)*

Mon cœur est déchiré!

*(avec de longs soupirs, les plus douloureux, et tirés du plus profond de son cœur)*

Oh, oh, oh!

*(son front s'éclaircit par degrés, et passe insensiblement de la plus profonde douleur à la joie et à la plus vive espérance)*

Quel espoir dans mon sein est rentré?

*(tout bas, comme appelant Macbeth, pendant la nuit, et lui montrant le lit de Malcome qu'elle croit voir.)*

Macbeth! Malcome est là.

*(avec ardeur)*

Viens.

*(croyant le voir hésiter, et levant les épaules de pitié)*  
Comme il s'intimide!

*(décidée à agir seule.)*

Allons.

*(avec joie.)*

Il dort.

*(avec la confiance de la certitude, et dans le plus profond sommeil.)*

Je veille.

*(Elle regarde le flambeau d'un œil fixe, elle le prend et se lève)*

Et ce flambeau me guide.

*(Elle marche vers le côté du théâtre par lequel elle doit sortir. S'arrêtant tout à coup avec l'air du désir et de l'impatience, croyant entendre sonner l'heure.)*

Sa mort sonne.

*(avec la plus grande attention, immobile, le bras droit étendu, et marquant chaque heure avec ses doigts.)*

Une...deux.

*(croyant marcher droit au lit de Malcome.)*

C'est l'instant de frapper.

*(Elle tire son poignard et se retire, toujours dormant, sous l'une des voûtes.)*<sup>504</sup>

Translated in my appendix.

In this long sequence, Frédégonde exemplifies what Ducis praised in Voltaire: proof of how 'une irrégularité heureuse amène une sorte de merveilleux qui en impose, et une magnificence d'effets qui étonne et subjugué l'imagination' ('a happy irregularity brings about a kind of imposing magic and a magnificence of effects which surprises and subjugates the imagination').<sup>505</sup> The effects in question range from the use of objects, particularly the dagger and the torch, to the lighting and decoration of the stage itself. All such things are, however, only accessories to Frédégonde: shifting, as the required stage directions indicate, between emotions, she soon eclipses Sévar, and her unpredictable stops and starts seem calculated to transfix an audience unsure of what she will do next. The line between character, actress and audience blurs: the theatregoers are as much prey to the emotions of Frédégonde as

<sup>504</sup> Ducis, II, pp. 198–201.

<sup>505</sup> Ducis, I, p. 8.

the murderess is herself. As before in *Léar*, the power of the scene evaporates when it is exposed to reason: how likely is it that she would mistake the path to her own son's bedchamber for the way to Malcolm's room? Yet this is not the point: as Ducis has *Frédégonde* herself say, this passage is 'l'instant de frapper', and in such moments, as he told the Academicians in 1779, 'le jugement des pleurs [...] l'emporte [...] sur celui de la raison' ('the judgement of tears [...] prevails over that of the reason').<sup>506</sup>

Apart from their illogicality, there is another point of comparison between the 'moment' of *Léar* and *Helmonde* and *Frédégonde*'s 'instant de frapper'. Both continue to renew attention, stretching out the striking moment by constantly refreshing it. They are passages which emphasise the fluidity inherent in Hill's observation of 'the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*'.<sup>507</sup> *Frédégonde* transitions ceaselessly between violent and protective instincts, just as *Léar* does between regret and rage. This is most visible in the stage directions, which detail the particular emotion behind each of the queen's exclamations: in the space of two lines, *Frédégonde* shifts from 'compassion' to fury, before speaking 'comme si elle sentait un poignard dans son sein.' ('as if she felt a dagger in her breast').

Scenes of mental instability have an especially large scope for such abrupt shifts. At the same time, they are also dangerous. Gentleman warned, for instance, that *Ophelia*'s madness, even if its transitions 'render her a very interesting object', also risk 'too much extravagance'.<sup>508</sup> Ducis's *Frédégonde* goes far further than Shakespeare's *Ophelia*, but this is not to say that there is no control here whatsoever. This whole scene demands a level of conscious mastery from the actress playing *Frédégonde* in order to portray the lady's unconscious action.

One stage direction exemplifies this.

Oh, oh, oh!

*(son front s'éclaircit par degrés, et passe insensiblement de la plus profonde douleur à la joie et à la plus vive espérance)*

Quel espoir dans mon sein est rentré?

Oh, oh, oh!

*(her brow clears slowly, and passes imperceptibly from the deepest*

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> Aaron Hill, p. 2.

<sup>508</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, III, p. 61.

*pain to joy and the strongest hope*  
 What hope has entered my breast?

The facial transformation required here dominates the text, providing a new impetus and focus to the scene as a whole. This is the most complex stage direction of all those here, for it asks for extended, silent transition, the others merely indicating which emotion needs to be readied as an accompaniment to the following line. That this passage would be especially impressive is confirmed by its similarity to a famous performance from Garrick at the salon d'Holbach, described in Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien*. Ducis would not have known Diderot's text, but, as a member of various Parisian literary circles, may well himself have seen or heard tell of the original performance.

Framed in a doorway, Garrick, according to Diderot, displayed his talents by having his face execute a scale of emotion from 'la joie folle' ('mad joy') to 'désespoir' ('despair') before reversing the sequence, from this 'dernier degré à celui d'où il était descendu' ('last degree to that from which he had come down').<sup>509</sup> This scale is the same as that which Ducis required of Frédégonde, from 'la plus profonde douleur' ('deepest pain') to 'la joie' ('joy') and 'la plus vive espérance' ('the strongest hope'). Ducis seems, like Bürger, to adapt Macbeth along Garrickean lines. In a letter to the actor during the composition of this play, Ducis ardently wished he could 'vous voir dans les morceaux terribles de cette admirable tragédie' ('see you in the terrible bits of this admirable tragedy') and explained how, as he wrote, 'Mon âme s'efforce en composant de prendre vos vigoreuses attitudes' ('my soul struggles as I write to take on your vigorous attitudes'),<sup>510</sup> where 'attitudes' has its current technical sense of a 'certain disposition des figures d'un tableau' ('certain disposition of a tableau's figures') or 'sorte de posture' ('kind of posture').<sup>511</sup>

Frédégonde's sleepwalking showstopper, like L'éar's waking, is a striking moment composed of many individual striking instants. The power necessary to retain attention and energy here lies in the techniques of transition and contrasting passion, part of an approach elaborated in the dramatist's letters to Garrick and to Talma. This should not surprise us. Ducis, throughout his career, worked closely with actors. For *Hamlet*, his first adaptation of Shakespeare, he discussed his approach at length in a

509 Denis Diderot, 'Paradoxe Sur Le Comédien', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Herbert Dieckmann and others, 24 vols (Paris: Hermann, 1975), XX, p. 73.

510 Garrick, ed. Boaden, II, p. 609.

511 Antoine Furetière, 'Attitude', *Dictionnaire universel françois & latin* (Paris: Giffart, 1732).

meeting with both La Place and his chosen male lead François-René Molé.<sup>512</sup> This then set a precedent for the play, since it was in collaboration with Talma that Ducis would later return to his adaptation, drawing on Talma's experience of watching Jean Philip Kemble and Sarah Siddons in England and ultimately declaring in a letter to the actor about the play that 'je vous l'ai donné, qu'il vous appartient, que vous en êtes le maître.' ('I have it given it to you, that it belongs to you, that you are the master of it').<sup>513</sup> Indeed, such was Ducis's reliance on Talma in general that it is now difficult to discern whether certain late revisions to Ducis's adaptations were written by the dramatist or the actor-manager.<sup>514</sup>

In addition to his correspondence and his speeches, Ducis offers further methodological reflections in the prefaces to his plays on the importance of actors to his work. These, along with the final iterations of each adaptation, are collected in a posthumous edition of Ducis's *Œuvres*, from 1826. In the prefaces to *Le Roi Léar*, *Macbeth*, and *Jean-sans-Terre*, Ducis goes out of his way to praise those actors who played the principal part in each production. In *Macbeth*, it is not Molé, nor even Talma, for their Macbeths, but the actress Madame Vestris (Françoise-Rose Gourgaud) for her Frédégonde who is honoured as part of the peroration to Ducis's presentation of his play.

Avec quelle sûreté de jeu, quelle supériorité d'intelligence, quelle souplesse et quelle vigueur elle a rendu la brûlante ambition, l'infernale adresse et l'exécrable fermeté de ce personnage! Comme elle a été surtout extraordinaire, au cinquième acte, dans sa scène de somnambule, d'où dépendait le sort de l'ouvrage; dans cette scène singulière, hasardée pour la première fois sur notre théâtre! Comme elle a frappé de surprise et d'immobilité tous les spectateurs! Quelle attention! Quelle terreur! Quel silence! Puissé-je, dans cette scène mémorable où l'actrice française s'est placée à côté de Madame Siddons, si fameuse en Angleterre dans le même rôle et dans la même scène, où le burin nous a conservé ses traits et son attitude; puisse-je avoir fait passer la hardiesse et l'expression du grand poète qui m'en a offert le modèle; de ce poète si fécond, si naturel, si pathétique et si terrible, à qui je rapporte avec tant de reconnaissance et les paisibles jouissances de mon travail, et les marques flatteuses de l'approbation dont le public m'a quelquefois honoré; de ce poète enfin dont je suis l'ouvrage, et chez qui je viens de puiser encore les tragédies

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512 Golder, p. 17.

513 Quoted in: Golder, p. 54.

514 See: Sophie Marchal, "'Je suis un tailleur à qui il a révélé la taille'", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 103 (2003), 309–30.

d'*Othello* et de *Jean-sans-Terre*!<sup>515</sup>

With what certainty in her act, what superior intelligence, what suppleness and what vigour, has she rendered the burning ambition, the infernal skill and execrable resolution of this character! How extraordinary she was especially in the fifth act, in her sleepwalking scene, on which the fate of the work depended; in that singular scene, risked for the first time on our stage! How she struck all the spectators with surprise and immobility! What attention! What terror! What silence! Could I, in this memorable scene where the French actress has placed herself alongside Mrs Siddons, so famous in England in the same role and the same scene, in which the engraver has preserved for us her looks and her attitude... Could I have had accepted the boldness and the expression of the great poet who gave me the model for this scene, of this poet so fecund, so natural, so pathetic and so terrible, to whom I carry back with so much gratitude, both the peaceful pleasures of my work and the flattering marks of the approbation which the public has sometimes honoured me with; of this poet, in the final instance, whose work [oeuvre] I am, and from whom I have just drawn the tragedies of *Othello* and of *Jean-sans-Terre*!

In this passage, Vestris appears as absolutely essential to the success of Ducis's play: on her, 'dépendait le sort de l'ouvrage' ('depended the fate of the work'). Praise of Vestris leads Ducis to praise of Shakespeare. Just as the actress is able to generate 'terreur', 'attention' and 'silence' in the audience, so is the author a fertile source of the 'naturel', 'pathétique' and 'terrible'. Drawing on this connection between actor and author, rooted in those striking moments which most impress an audience, Ducis ultimately portrays himself as dependent on both Vestris and Shakespeare equally. In a neat repetition, he is himself Shakespeare's 'ouvrage' and Vestris has decided the fate of his 'ouvrage'.

Such dependency is not confined to Vestris in *Macbeth*. It is what Ducis, in his letters to Garrick, also wished for between himself and the Englishman. The preface to *Le Roi Léar* also asks the reader to remember the acting of Brizard who, after taking the role of Duncan in Ducis's first attempt at *Macbeth*, here brought his famous onstage dignity to the part of the fallen monarch. As with *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's original is proof once more of the Englishman's 'génie singulièrement fécond, original, extraordinaire, que la nature semble avoir créé exprès, tantôt pour la peindre avec

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515 Ducis, II, pp. 122–3.

tous ses charmes, tantôt pour la faire gémir sous les attentats ou les remords du crime.’ (‘genius, singularly fecund, original, extraordinary, that nature seems to have created expressly either to paint nature with all its charms or to make nature tremble under the attacks or remorse of crime’).<sup>516</sup> Yet Ducis’s frenchification again needed Brizard’s complementary talents to render Shakespeare’s ‘noblesse’ and ‘admirable simplicité [...] puisées au sein même de la nature’ (‘nobility [...]and...] admirable simplicity [...] drawn from the very heart of nature’).<sup>517</sup> The striking scenes of Shakespeare, the poet of nature, joined, for Ducis, Brizard’s own ‘grand talent qui [...] frappe’ (‘great talent which strikes’) the spectator.<sup>518</sup> Together, Shakespeare and the actor inspire the adaptor. Such collaboration was immortalised, as Mark Ledbury points out, in a portrait of Ducis from this time (Figure 2), which is clearly intended as a companion piece to one of Brizard as Léar painted by the same artist (Figure 3).<sup>519</sup>

Upon Brizard’s death, the role of Léar was taken over by Monvel (Jacques-Marie Boutet),<sup>520</sup> an actor who had already impressed Ducis with his interpretation of Hubert in *Jean-sans-Terre*.<sup>521</sup> In the preface to this work, Ducis admits ‘Quelle obligation ne lui ai-je pas dans le personnage d’Hubert!’ (What a debt I owe him in the character of Hubert!).

Cet acteur extraordinaire sent toutes les passions, se transforme dans tous les personnages. Voilà le secret des Dumesnil et des Lekain. Comme eux, il répand de tous côtés, et dans les moindres détails, ce charme d’une création perpétuelle, cette énergie douce ou brûlante de la nature, ce feu de la vie qui le consume lui-même, et dont il anime si heureusement ses propres ouvrages.<sup>522</sup>

This extraordinary actor feels all passions, transforms himself into all characters. This is the secret of the Dumesnils and the Lekains. Like them, he scatters on all sides and into the smallest details, that charm of a perpetual creation, that sweet or burning energy of nature, that fire of life which consumes him and with which he brings his own works to life so happily.

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516 Ducis, II, p. 6.

517 Ibid.

518 Ibid.

519 Ledbury, p. 555.

520 Golder, p. 155.

521 Golder, p. 238.

522 Ducis, II, p. 215.

These lines once more lift the actor to the rank of ‘nature’ occupied by Shakespeare. More than this, however, Monvel is given as the example of a particular kind of creator, engaged in ‘création perpétuelle’ and doomed to consume himself as he brings life to every moment of the play, ‘sans jamais rien faire perdre aux effets les plus larges et les plus frappans de la scène tragique’ (‘without losing anything of the greatest and most striking effects of the tragic scene’).<sup>523</sup> Given Ducis’s own obsessive rewriting of his works (*Jean-sans-Terre* is a particularly extreme case of this, cut down from five acts to three), and another tell-tale use of the word ‘ouvrage’ here, the idea of perpetual creation clearly has a larger significance too.

‘Création perpétuelle’ describes Ducis’s way of writing and its product. When Léar wakes, hears Helmonde beg for ‘Un moment!’, rages, grieves, the whole striking passage demands perpetual creation, unstable oscillation between contrary emotions intended to transfix an audience. The same is true of Frédégonde’s sleepwalk towards the ‘instant de frapper’, which, like a cadenza, demands greater and more complex displays of emotion, each one perpetually recreating the moment, demanding total attention and forcing, over and over, emotion’s triumph over reason. This is a way to illuminate the striking moment, the union of ‘*changing Passion*’ and the ‘very *Instant*’ used in the eighteenth century to designate and shape, according to the dynamics of performance, Shakespeare’s plays. An aesthetic of moments inside moments requires perpetual creation, the (re)writing and acting of complex transition, to maintain its hold over an audience, so that, ultimately, both Ducis’s labour and that of Monvel, Brizard or Vestris appear simultaneously ephemeral and powerful.

### III. Depth

The mystery and the perpetual creation of the striking moment combine to induce fascination: they make the moment appear deep. As La Place puts it, and as Ducis’s writing proves, ‘Une seule scène, une seule situation’ (‘A single scene, a single situation’) from a play by Shakespeare contains sufficient material, is of sufficient depth, to ‘créer une intrigue théâtrale et intéressante.’ (‘create a theatrical and interesting plot’).<sup>524</sup> Equally, great actors, like Brizard, Vestris, Monvel or Garrick, are themselves deep, in possession of extraordinary qualities that they are able to call upon to power the striking moment. Dramatic literature is in this respect akin to what

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<sup>523</sup> Ducis, II, pp. 214–5.

<sup>524</sup> La Place, III, p. xix.



Ezra Pound, in a play on *dichten* (to pack) and *Dichtung* (poetry), found poetry to be: a form of condensation, something ‘charged to the utmost degree’.<sup>525</sup> Behind the moment, there lies a hinterland where this charge comes from, and it is this hidden terrain that fascinated many, both in England and abroad. Such fascination is particularly clear in the writings of German-speaking visitors to England in the eighteenth century.

The Prussian diplomat Baron Jacob von Bielfeld recorded how the English stage disturbed him during his visits of 1737 and 1741. His writing indicates how English stage phenomena (what Richard Cumberland called ‘imposing declamation’)<sup>526</sup> prior to the advent of Garrick also tended to trouble and to fascinate, short-circuiting rational approaches in favour of an emotional response as much from German-speakers as from Francophones like Voltaire, Prévost or La Place.

The first time I saw an English tragedy performed, the gestures of the actors seemed to me grotesque, and the sound of their voices roared frightfully in my ears. But although I still consider their declamation on the whole too extravagant, I am no longer shocked by it. I even discover truthfulness in it sometimes, and invariably an extraordinary power which in the more pathetic passages of the plays is most effective.<sup>527</sup>

Writing of the theatre before Garrick’s début, Bielfeld then echoes criticism often made in English of Betterton and his successor Quin when he wishes ‘that the actors would vary their tone somewhat more, thereby approaching more closely to nature and avoiding a certain monotony in their declamation to which I shall never become accustomed’.<sup>528</sup> Twenty years after Bielfeld’s reflections, at the height of Garrick’s reign, the Hanoverian Friedrich Graf von Kielmansegg also composed an account of the plays he saw whilst in London for the coronation of George III in 1761.<sup>529</sup> For Kielmansegg, now ‘there is no theatre in the world which equals the English in its choice of actors; at Drury Lane, for example, you have the impression that every actor has been expressly made for his part’.<sup>530</sup> Amongst such talent, Garrick’s shines brightest of all, for he – fulfilling Bielfeld’s wishes – is ‘the only one who can

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<sup>525</sup> Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 2010), p. 36.

<sup>526</sup> Cumberland, p. 40.

<sup>527</sup> John Alexander Kelly, *German Visitors to English Theaters in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), p. 20.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>529</sup> Kelly, p. 28.

<sup>530</sup> Kelly, p. 30.

delineate every character with equal skill, from the philosopher down to the fool, and who appears to put on a different face with each character'.<sup>531</sup>

Another German visitor of note, who was clearly drawn to Garrick, is Helferich Peter Sturz. The telling of his famous anecdote about Garrick's performance of the dagger scene in *Macbeth* is just one of many passages in his letters that attempt to satisfy what their second epistle admits to be the main desire of his readership: 'sie verlangen den Mann [Garrick] kennen zu lernen' ('they demand to know the man [Garrick]').<sup>532</sup> At another point, Sturz gives us a glimpse of Garrick in the wings, moments after finishing a performance of *Richard III*.

Ich sah ihn einst nach vollendeter Rolle Richards, wie den sterbenden Germanicus auf Poußins Bilde hinterrücks auf einer Ruhebänk gelehnt, mit zeichender Brust, bleich, mit Schweißtropfen bedeckt, und mit herabgesunkener, behender Hand, ohne Sprache.<sup>533</sup>

I saw him once after he had finished playing the role of Richard reclining on a bench, like the dying Germanicus in Poussin's picture, with heaving breast, pale, covered with perspiration, his hands limp and quivering, speechless.<sup>534</sup>

In part, this letter's comparison between Garrick and a much-reproduced artwork allows for an efficient, understandable description of both the actor's exhaustion and Sturz's intimate viewpoint on it. Yet it also makes a point about the actor's impenetrability, his depth: behind the scenes of one artistic creation, there is another to be studied. The man himself is disappearing under layers of fine art.

Sturz is more direct in his private correspondence with Garrick, soliciting from the actor his only writing on the topic of his own acting technique, the *Essay on Acting* not included. This letter, which begins as a comment on the technique of the French actress La Clairon (Claire-Josèphe L  ris), whom Garrick met and watched in Paris,<sup>535</sup> is remarkable, as Joseph Roach has shown, for its description of an actor's feelings in the moment of performance.

Mad<sup>m</sup> Clairon is so conscious and certain of what she can do, that she

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531 Ibid.

532 Sturz, p. 9.

533 Sturz, p. 15.

534 Kelly, p. 40.

535 David Garrick, *The Diary of David Garrick : Being a Record of His Memorable Trip to Paris in 1751*, ed. by Ryllis Clair Alexander (New York: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 31.

never (I believe) had the feelings of the instant come upon her unexpectedly. – but I pronounce that the greatest strokes of Genius, have been unknown to the Actor himself, 'till Circumstances, and the warmth of the scene has sprung the Mine as it were, as much to his own surprize as that of the Audience –<sup>536</sup>

Garrick's letter, in Roach's analysis, ultimately depends on the idea of sensibility as 'an inherent bodily capacity, differing markedly between individuals, that registers and communicates feeling'. This breaks from previous, Cartesian theories in that 'spirit no longer merely works on matter, spirit emerges from a peculiar organisation of matter' so that 'sensibility operates on a physical plane below conscious thought'.<sup>537</sup> This last point, drawing out the unconscious operation of feeling in the 'instant', connects with some of what phrases such as *vérité de sentiment* endeavour to capture regarding the non-rational or illogical elements of performance, and may also explain Garrick's own reticence on the topic of what happened when he performed: a key factor in its enduring fascination.

Such efforts at explaining Garrick's mysteries – or having him explain them – were not limited to German speakers. Many of the actor's French correspondents also appealed to him for information. Suard, for instance, wrote to him of how his stunning performances of Shakespeare merited an explanation from their maker.

Depuis notre retour ici nous ne faisons que parler de vous. Pour moi, je n'oublierai de ma vie les impressions que m'ont laissé surtout Lear et Richard. Vous m'avez donné des idées de votre art qui étoient au-dessus de mes conceptions; la nature s'est agrandie à mes yeux, et tous ses froids et mesquins imitateurs de nos théâtres ne me paroissent plus que des pigmées. A présent que vous avez quitté la scène, prenez la plume, mon ami, et laissez au monde quelques grandes leçons sur un art où vous avez montré un si grand modèle.<sup>538</sup>

Since our return here we have done nothing but speak of you. For my part, I will never forget for as long as I live the impressions that your Lear and Richard in particular have left on me. You have given me ideas of your art which were above my conceptions; nature grew larger before my eyes, and all its cold and petty imitators in our theatres only seem pigmies to me. Now that you have retired, take up the pen, my friend,

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536 Garrick, eds Little and Kahrl, II, p. 635.

537 Roach, *The Player's Passion*, p. 95.

538 Garrick, ed. Boaden, II, p. 641.

and leave to the world some great lessons on an art in which you have shown such a great model.

While English friends of Garrick were also keen for the actor to offer explanations of his art, the quantity of such requests from abroad is particularly striking. One major reason for this is the fact that the English stage, both in terms of its practices and its repertoire, was so little known, meaning that many letters to Garrick ask not for information about acting technique but rather about English literature in general. This is the case for a broad spectrum of French correspondents: the writer and lawyer Claude-Pierre Patu, the critic Elie-Catherine Fréron, the author Jean-François Cailhava de l'Estandoux, the dramatist Charles-Georges Fenouillot de Falbaire de Quingey, the actress and novelist Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, and La Place, in his role as editor of the *Mercure*.<sup>539</sup>

Requests for Garrick's views on literary history are highly complimentary, and respond to the actor's own efforts, be it in his letters, book-collecting or writing, to present himself as not just an actor but a man of letters. As well as this, however, they also hint at a particular set of assumptions about acting, and the actor's depth. Take Suard's letter as an example. Garrick's performances as Richard and Lear left a powerful 'impression' on this writer. Yet Suard cannot explain this: what he experienced in the theatre was 'au-dessus de mes conceptions' ('above my conceptions'). He thus turns to the only other party involved in the matter, Garrick, and presumes that Garrick must have known what he was doing when he showed Suard 'un si grand modèle' ('such a great model') of the actor's art. This presumption, that behind the cynosure of stage effect there lies a particular kind of knowledge, is as crucial as it is typical of an eighteenth-century, encyclopedic urge to rationalise observed and experienced phenomena.

One might thus reread Sturz's reference to Garrick's backstage Poussin not so much as evasive, pictorial shorthand but rather as a way of informing Sturz's readers that Garrick, in order to act the way he does, must have such a deep knowledge of fine art that he unconsciously mimics it even in the most unguarded moments of fatigue. This would, for instance, fit with Marmontel's prescription in the *Encyclopédie* that an accomplished actor should possess an excellent education, fine technique, and the ability to study at length both classical art and modern originals.<sup>540</sup> Charles Gildon

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539 These letters are all collected under 'Foreign Correspondence' in: Garrick, ed. Boaden, II.

540 Marmontel, ed. Morrissey.

also urged the study of history painting in his *Life of Betterton* (1710). Again and again, both with regard to Garrick and in more general reflections on performance, there is the presumption that behind the striking moment, as the source for its effect, is great knowledge. Behind the impression-making instant lies an actor's deep empire of insight into human nature, waiting to be extracted.

This way of moving between the effect of the moment and the presumption of a deep understanding brings us to the writings of Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. A scientist and man of letters, visiting England in 1770 and 1774, he wrote a series of epistles on the English stage for the *Deutsches Museum* periodical, at the request of its editor Christian Heinrich Boie.<sup>541</sup> These letters were widely read: they influenced Schröder's decision to bring both Shakespeare and Garrickean acting to Vienna,<sup>542</sup> and forced Sturz to admit in his *Schriften* that, as far as Garrick's acting was concerned, 'man kann darüber nicht beßers, als Herr Profeßor Lichtenberg, sagen' ('one can say nothing better than Professor Lichtenberg on this subject').<sup>543</sup> Lichtenberg drew on his medical training to provide extremely detailed descriptions of the most striking scenes of Garrick and other performers. At the same time, such training also led him to meditate on his own methods and position as a foreign observer. It is this pairing of reflection and observation that is important here, for it caused Lichtenberg both to recognise the stunning effects of performance and to search for a deeper meaning within them.

His letters, for example, dream again and again of what he might abstract ('abstrahieren') from the English actors he sees in the theatre. Deep in Garrick's soul and body, there lies an encoded system of acting: 'sich kein solches System von Schauspielertalenten findet, als bei ihm, und einen solchen Mann hat England außer ihm noch nicht gesehen, wenigstens auf seinen Schaubühnen nicht' ('no such system of acting talent is present, than in him, and such a man as he England has not seen, at least not on its stages');<sup>544</sup> Mrs Yates moves her arm so well that 'Mann von dieser Frau allein ein Chironomie abstrahieren könnte' ('from this woman alone a chironomia could be abstracted');<sup>545</sup> and Mrs Abington is 'in mehr als einer Rücksicht so merkwürdige Frau, daß ich Ihnen leicht ein kleines Werk über sie

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541 Kelly, pp. 42–3.

542 Geneviève Espagne, 'Le Shakespeare de Garrick vu à travers le "système" du professeur Lichtenberg', *Revue germanique internationale*, 2007, 165–83 (p. 183).

543 Sturz, p. 9.

544 Lichtenberg, p. 19.

545 Lichtenberg, p. 29.

schreiben könnte' ('in more than one regard so extraordinary a woman that I could easily write you a little work on her').<sup>546</sup> It is, however, when Lichtenberg writes of Charles Macklin that the connection between a specific theatrical moment and a much larger understanding that is presumed to power it appears most clearly.

Die ersten Worte, die er sagt, wenn er auftritt, sind langsam und bedeutend! *Three thousand Ducats*. Das doppelte th und das zweimalige s, zumal das letzte nach dem t, das Macklin so leckerhaft lispelt, als schmeckte er die Dukaten, und alles, was man dafür kaufen kann, auf einmal, geben dem Mann, gleich beim Eintritt, einen Kredit, der nicht mehr zu verderben ist. Drei solcher Worte so, und an der Stelle gesprochen, zeichnen einen ganzen Charakter. In der Szene, wo er seine Tochter zum erstenmal vermißt, erscheint er ohne Hut, mit aufgesträubtem Haar, wovon einiges fingerlang vom Wirbel senkrecht in die Höhe steht, bei dieser Miene wie von einem Galgenlüftgen gehoben. Die beiden Hände sind geballt, und seine Bewegungen kurz und konvulsivisch. Einen sonst ruhigen, entschlossenen Betrüger in solchen Bewegungen zu sehn, ist fürchterlich.<sup>547</sup>

The first words he speaks, when he enters, are slow and full of meaning. *Three thousand ducats*. The doubled 'th' and twofold 's', especially the last one after the 't', which Macklin lisps so deliciously, as if he were tasting the ducats and everything that can be bought with them, at once give to the man, from the moment of his entrance, a credit which is no longer to be doubted. Three such words thus, and spoken at this time, show a whole character. In the scene where he misses his daughter for the first time, he appears without a hat, with disordered hair, from which some strands stand straight up in twists, in such a way as if they were raised on the breeze of the gallows. Both hands are clenched, and his movements short and convulsive. To see such an otherwise calm, resolute swindler in such movements is terrifying.

Macklin's performance as Shylock was one of the most famous pieces of transitional acting of any play in England in the eighteenth century. Lichtenberg's account of it is characteristically detailed, recording the pronunciation of 'Three thousand ducats' so precisely that it is still possible to imagine the Englishman lisp them. On top of this, Lichtenberg is attentive to the emotional effect of such a sequence, praised by Gentleman for containing 'the finest transitions for an actor, that ever were

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<sup>546</sup> Lichtenberg, p. 45.

<sup>547</sup> Lichtenberg, p. 51.

penned'.<sup>548</sup> Just as Gentleman predicted that, 'when properly expressed', this moment would 'harrow up attention',<sup>549</sup> so Lichtenberg records how 'fürchterlich' ('terrifying') Macklin is here. Yet as well as his close attention to the particular moment, Lichtenberg cannot resist the urge also to abstract something from his observations, and informs the reader that 'Drei solcher Worte so, und an der Stelle gesprochen, zeichnen einen ganzen Charakter.' ('Three such words thus, and spoken at this time, show a whole character').

This is a complicated assertion, for it stands on the cusp of modern approaches to dramatic character. On one hand, Lichtenberg suggests that an audience can here feel (what Lady Macbeth calls) 'the future in the instant'.<sup>550</sup> This moment of the play is traceable back to Shylock's psyche and a common character arc. On the other hand, the priority here is clearly on the particular, volatile communication of a character's passions in the moment, and not the confirmation of a stable character trait in the way three words are spoken. The passions remain what Hoxby calls the units of the drama,<sup>551</sup> and the rest of Lichtenberg's paragraph goes into minute detail to describe Macklin's acting of them.

Geneviève Espagne has argued that Lichtenberg's study of Macklin is part of his wider response to the work of the physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater. While inspired by Lavater's observational skills, Lichtenberg rejects the Swiss doctor's ideas about bone structure and internal-external correspondence, and instead focuses on the soft, malleable parts of the human form, analysing the fleeting signs of the passions in his own anti-Lavaterian system.<sup>552</sup> Such a system also occupies an intermediate position between modern character and early modern passion. For Espagne, however, Lichtenberg's attention to the ephemeral physical activities of performance is significant for the way it leads him to value the actor over the author in his letters.

Yet Lichtenberg's scientific preoccupations are better understood as part of a larger remodelling of the relation between actor and author undertaken throughout his writing about the English stage. When writing of Garrick, Lichtenberg takes a different approach, prompted by Boie's request that he offer criticism of the actor and

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<sup>548</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, II, p. 193.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid.

<sup>550</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Muir, p. 778 (I.5.57).

<sup>551</sup> Hoxby, p. 20.

<sup>552</sup> Espagne, p. 181.

not just laudatory description. He considers the actor-author relation to explain why it is so hard to find faults with the star of Drury Lane.

Denn einmal müssen Sie bedenken: er spielt itzt nur Stücke, die er sich völlig eigen gemacht, und über die er nun ein Vierteljahrhundert durch in seiner ausgesuchten Gesellschaft das Urtheil der größten Kenner des Menschen empfangen hat. Selbst den Strumpf, der ihm so herabhängt, kann man denken, hat ihm vielleicht Fielding herabgezogen, und den Hut, der da so schön seitwärts sitzt, Sterne oder Goldsmith zurückgestoßen.<sup>553</sup>

Thus you must think, he now only acts in plays, which he has made fully his own, and on which he has now received for a quarter-century in his exquisite society the judgement of the greatest knowers of men. The mere sock, which hangs from him, one can think, has perhaps been pulled down by Fielding, and the hat, which sits so beautifully sideways, has been knocked back by Sterne or Goldsmith.

In this passage Garrick becomes an embodiment of the culture of his time, an actor who draws on knowledge not only of his own but of the ‘größten Kenner des Menschen’ (‘greatest knowers of men’). Those named here by Lichtenberg – Sterne, Fielding and Goldsmith – have been chosen deliberately: all three were successful literary exports, with Fielding’s name already attached to Garrick’s as a result of the *Hamlet* scene in *Tom Jones*. Sterne, on the other hand, was particularly dear to Lichtenberg, who wrote about the author in his *Beobachtung über den Menschen* (1799) and *Ästhetische Bemerkungen* (1800), after having included him in a particularly whimsical passage from his *Aphorismen* (1772-5), stating that ‘Swiften möchte ich zum Barbier, Sterne zum Friseur, Newton beim Frühstück, Hume beim Kaffee gehabt haben’<sup>554</sup> (‘I would like to have had Swift as my barber, Sterne as my hairdresser, Newton at Breakfast, Hume at Coffee’). In this letter therefore, Garrick is portrayed as bringing together not only contemporary British literary society, but the most successful parts of it on an international scale. Actor and author are irrelevant categories here, for Garrick represents an exceptionally complex combination of national culture and personal experience. As Lichtenberg writes, ‘Tausende nicht alles sehen, was Garrick zu sehen gibt, darin geht es ihm nicht um ein Haar besser, als seinen beiden nahen Geistesverwandten Shakespear und

<sup>553</sup> Lichtenberg, p. 42.

<sup>554</sup> Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Schriften und Briefe*, 5th edn, 4 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1994), I, p. 270.



Hogarth.<sup>555</sup> ('thousands do not see all that Garrick gives to see, in this it is no better for him than for both his near kindred, Shakespeare and Hogarth'). How can he criticise such a person?

Garrick's status, according to Lichtenberg, as the quintessence of his culture, one of the greatest examples of what might be contained in and thus abstracted from an individual, has a remarkable parallel in La Place's writing about Shakespeare some thirty years earlier. In order to justify the quantity of material from this one author in his *Théâtre anglois* La Place resorted to the argument that Shakespeare is himself deep and supposedly panoramic, containing every part of his culture, and that therefore, by studying Shakespeare in translation, his French readership will be able to understand the essential qualities of this era of the English stage.

Shakespeare est, sans contredit, le meilleur Auteur de premier âge; tous ceux qui ont écrit après lui, jusqu'au règne de Charles Second, n'ont fait que l'imiter, sans qu'aucun d'eux l'ait égalé: ainsi Shakespeare suffit pour donner à mes lecteurs une idée complète du goût de la scène anglaise, pendant ce premier âge; et il est inutile de multiplier les volumes.<sup>556</sup>

Shakespeare is, undeniably, the best author of the first age; all those who wrote after him, until the reign of Charles II, have done nothing but imitate him, without any of them having equalled him: thus Shakespeare suffices to give to my readers a complete idea of the taste of the English stage during this first age; and it is useless to multiply the volumes.

A variation on this idea is also found in La Place's observation (so useful for a reading of Ducis) that a single scene of Shakespeare's 'suffit souvent à un génie véritablement dramatique pour créer une intrigue théâtrale et intéressante'<sup>557</sup> ('often suffices for a truly dramatic genius to create a theatrical and interesting plot'). Shakespeare is a rich storehouse, containing both the best of his country's drama during his lifetime and the seeds of future writing. Garrick, as Lichtenberg describes him, is no different: he embodies the teaching of Sterne, Fielding and Goldsmith, and contains within him, if only it could be abstracted, a whole 'System von Schauspielertalenten' ('system of acting talent') for future generations to use. That Garrick could achieve with Lichtenberg the same qualities La Place gives to

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<sup>555</sup> Lichtenberg, I, p. 21.

<sup>556</sup> Pierre Antoine de La Place, *Le Théâtre anglois*, 6 vols (London [Paris]: [n. pub.], 1746), v, p. iv.

<sup>557</sup> La Place, III, p. xix.

Shakespeare is not necessarily further evidence for the idea that actor surpasses author in the writings of the German philosopher. This similarity is more the result of a common trope of praise, the idea that genius is comprehensive, and that its breadth manifests itself in the depth of a particular instance, whether it be the placing of a hat or stocking or the writing of a striking scene. This is seen all the more clearly through the eyes of foreign observers of the English stage, who, alert to the mystery of the striking moment and to its intensive, renewing existence, are fascinated by it. Lichtenberg and Sturz in particular, as they watch Garrick act, recognise the extraordinary richness of Shakespeare in performance.

### **Conclusion: Fragility and Apotheosis**

Foreign observations about Shakespeare and Garrick, and about the qualities of the English theatre more generally, turn – as much native writing also does – on questions of affect, in particular the impression left by what Voltaire called the ‘endroits frappants’ (‘striking places’) of a text or a performance. These moments, perpetually recreating and renewing themselves on the stage, inspire translators like La Place to break into alexandrines, and are exaggerated into an aesthetic of overwhelming emotion in adaptors like Ducis. An emphasis on such moments parallels how an actor’s practice, in contrast to later theatrical practice, created a role in the eighteenth century: not simply as a single character, with a modern, private self, but as a set of powerful, fascinating vignettes, which constitute a figure more ‘socially turned’.<sup>558</sup> These vignettes, the instants of a star’s progress, gave a shape to the original text, making it ripe for transmission, including in those forms most liable to cross cultural and political divides: portraiture, translation, private performance and anecdote. As images of Garrick’s *Macbeth* or Macklin’s *Shylock* travelled through France and central Europe, they would, however, take on a life of their own, inspiring criticism and adaptation at one remove from their originator, as is the case for Garrick in Bürger, Voh and Schröder’s production of *Macbeth*.

That these instants – the dagger-speech, the appearance of Old Hamlet’s Ghost, the news of Jessica’s departure – fascinated foreign observers is beyond doubt. One source of this fascination was the difficulty of finding an explanation for the powerful impression such scenes of changing passion could make on an audience. For La Place and Ducis, religious terminology did not obscure, but rather helped to give shape to the challenges of mediating Shakespeare’s power. For Suard,

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<sup>558</sup> See: Wahrman.

Lichtenberg and Sturz, the existence of a vast quantity of knowledge present – consciously or not – deep in the actor or the author was hypothesised as a potential source of such power. In all the examples here, the way the striking moment is presented – mysterious, perpetual, deep – testifies to a belief in something present in the theatre that connects Garrick and other actors to Shakespeare, and more largely, breaks down the barriers between the categories of audience, actor, author, reader, and role.

Yet this theatrical something is a fragile thing. There is a tension here between what is felt when engaging with a play and how something is felt. This is the ambiguity La Place brings into his defence of English theatre through the concept of *vérite de sentiment*. It is also, albeit less obviously, present in Ducis's reflections on how he writes. What Ducis feels before Shakespeare and Garrick, a sense of mystery surpassing his ability to understand it, is inextricably tied to the epiphanic manner in which he portrays the experience. When speaking about Voltaire's dramaturgy, Ducis also creates a similar tension with regard to the audience: 'la première vérité' is 'celle du sentiment', which is to say either that which is felt through the *sentiment* or that which is contained in a *sentiment* itself.<sup>559</sup> Even Lichtenberg and Sturz's efforts to understand the depths of the actor, to abstract the knowledge incarnate on the stage, have something of this tension about them. The impressive moment of a feeling is for them also proof of a system of feeling that merits investigation: the fact of Macklin's three words is a sign of a deeper, flexible, anti-Lavaterian how.

The existence of this tension of *sentiment* contributes to the fragility of the fusion of Shakespeare and stage. It does so, first, with regard to *sentiment* as something that is felt. The striking moment invites commemoration in a painting, or transformation into the anecdote's own particular kind of social token. Yet in such media, the active, renewing, attention-holding aspect of the striking moment is necessarily flattened into singularity. Perfect replication of the perpetually creative moment of performance was almost impossible. Approximations, though, abounded: Garrick's acting was compared to prints of it, and Voh's Macbeth was judged against hardened anecdotal evidence of the Englishman's practice, but in both cases there are losses and limitations. Voh cannot hope to make people feel the same things Garrick's mediated, anecdotal performance was supposed to have done.

Another kind of theatrical fragility is associated with *sentiment* as a way of feeling.

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<sup>559</sup> Ducis, I, p. 8.

Ducis's plays were scathingly described as having transformed their model into 'leeren Sentimentstram' ('empty sentimentalism') by the German critic Johann Friedrich Schink,<sup>560</sup> and such distaste can be understood as the result of the playwright's increasing emphasis on what is felt onstage rather than how it is felt. If Lichtenberg was sharp-sighted enough to recognise both the depth and the sensation of a single moment on the stage, Ducis's later drama tends to emphasise the latter, the stunning feeling, over the former, the fluid situation, interior and exterior, that gives rise to it. Ducis, in his preface to *Macbeth*, devotes, for instance, a great many words to the emotion Vestris is able to convey as *Frédégonde*. It is only in the very last sentence that he comments on the sensibility of any character, describing how *Macbeth* (and not his wife) is 'une âme née pour la vertu, mais qui, malheureusement dégradée et comme détruite par le crime, cherche encore avec tant de douleur à se recomposer parmi ses ruines!' ('a soul born for virtue, but which, unfortunately degraded and in a way destroyed by its crime, still seeks with so much pain to recompose itself amongst its ruins!').<sup>561</sup>

That Ducis should write this of *Macbeth* at all is in part due to his reading of Pierre Letourneur's translation of the play. The aim of Letourneur's work was to give 'une Traduction exacte et vraiment fidèle [...] une copie ressemblante, où l'on retrouvera l'ordonnance, les attitudes, le coloris, les beautés et les défauts du tableau'<sup>562</sup> ('an exact and truly loyal translation [...] a copy which resembles its original, where one will find the disposition, the attitudes, the colouring, the beauties and the faults of the painting'). This comprehensive approach is, of course, very far from that chosen by La Place, whose work Letourneur calls 'une sorte de travestissement ridicule qui défigurerait ses belles proportions' ('a sort of ridiculous travesty which would disfigure [Shakespeare's] beautiful proportions').<sup>563</sup> Letourneur's gives the entirety of Shakespeare's text to display its most valuable beauties: not the scenes selected by La Place but Shakespeare's rounded characters, for 'jamais [...] homme de génie ne pénétra plus avant que Shakespeare dans l'abîme du cœur humain' ('never [...] did a man of genius penetrate deeper than Shakespeare into the abyss of the human heart').<sup>564</sup> How, this translation asks us, can we know what kind of man *Macbeth* is if

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560 Johann Friedrich Schink, *Dramaturgische Fragmente*, 2 vols (Graz: Widmanstätterschen Schriften, 1781), I, p. 206.

561 Ducis, II, p. 123.

562 Shakespeare, trans. Letourneur, I, p. cxxxv.

563 Shakespeare, trans. Letourneur, I, p. iv.

564 Shakespeare, trans. Letourneur, I, p. ii.

only half the evidence is translated for us to study?

Too much of what is felt risks freezing the dynamic instants of performance into icons. Too much of how something is felt risks complicating character beyond the capacity of a stage to show the changing passions. This is the fragility resulting from the tension of *sentiment*, which runs through so much writing about Shakespeare and performance at this time. There is, however, one actor who rises above such problems, able both to discern the finest movements of a character's emotions and yet also create a powerful impression in his wake: Garrick. Yet even he, with no small irony, is only seen to transcend this theatrical problem by becoming, in accounts of his apotheosis, detached from the stage itself.

In volume eight of Letourneur's Shakespeare, there appears one of many extracts from the writings of Johann Joachim Eschemburg on *Macbeth*. After covering the sources of the play, discussing English and Scottish superstitions and referring to the work of Montagu and Richardson, Eschemburg concludes with Garrick. This actor, like Shakespeare, 's'élève en beaucoup d'endroits au-dessus de lui-même' ('surpasses himself in many places'), especially in a famous scene from *Macbeth*: for who can forget seeing the 'Acteur immortel, avant le massacre de Duncan, reculer à l'idée du poignard qu'il croit voir, sans donner un corps, à la figure effrayante du poignard aérien que voit Macbeth?' ('immortal actor, before the massacre of Duncan, recoil at the idea of the dagger that he believes he sees, without giving a body to the terrifying figure of the air-born dagger Macbeth sees?').<sup>565</sup>

This then leads to a larger reflection on Garrick and the art of acting.

L'art du comédien paroît à la plupart des spectateurs, une disposition mécanique des membres, et un art de débiter comme un perroquet; en effet, c'est-là tout le mérite des Acteurs ordinaires. Mais un grand talent va bien au-delà de ces bornes étroites et vulgaires; il poursuit la nature dans la multiplicité de ses replis, il en pénètre les plus profonds abîmes, et saisit mille beautés, que ni l'art ni la simple méthode n'aperçoivent jamais. Un esprit ordinaire peut apprendre à entrer sur la scène, par un côté ou par un autre, à se placer à telle ou telle place, à élever ici la voix, à l'abaisser là ; mais si les mouvements et le débit ne sont pas dirigés par une connoissance parfaite du monde, et par un sentiment naturellement juste, on n'atteint pas à un plus haut degré de mérite, on n'acquiert qu'une froide régularité.

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<sup>565</sup> Shakespeare, trans. Letourneur, VII, p. ci.

Le génie de *Garrick* n'enchaîne pas seulement notre sentiment fugitif, il laisse encore dans notre âme une impression durable, et pour ainsi dire une substance morale dont elle se nourrit long-temps.<sup>566</sup>

The art of the actor seems to most spectators to be a mechanical disposition of the limbs, and an art of spoken delivery like that of a parrot; indeed, this constitutes the sum merit of ordinary actors. But a great talent goes well beyond these narrow and vulgar limits; it pursues nature in the multiplicity of its depths, it penetrates its deepest abysses, and seizes a thousand beauties, that neither art nor simple method will ever perceive. An ordinary mind can learn to come onto the stage, from one side or the other, to place oneself at such or such a place, to raise the voice here, to lower it there; but if the movements and the delivery are not controlled by a perfect understanding of the world, and by a naturally just feeling, a higher degree of merit is not reached and only a cold regularity is acquired.

The genius of Garrick does not only capture our fleeting *sentiment*, he yet leaves in our soul a durable impression, and, as it were, a moral substance on which it feeds for a long time.

This passage recalls Lichtenberg's praise of Garrick's ability to fascinate: 'er geht und bewegt sich unter den übrigen Schauspielern, wie der Mensch unter Marionetten.'<sup>567</sup> ('he goes and moves amongst the other actors like the man amongst puppets'). Yet there is an unusual emphasis on the everlasting in Eschemburg's writing: Lichtenberg, the physiognomist, would never call Garrick an 'acteur immortel' as the introduction to this eulogy does. That immortality stems from the 'durable' impression Garrick leaves, with its 'substance morale' that can nourish the soul for a long time. This 'substance morale' is very different, in Eschemburg's eyes, from everything that a normal actor does, degradingly described as 'une disposition mécanique des membres', and so lifts Garrick above the practical business of acting. The English Roscius goes 'au-déjà de ces bornes étroites et vulgaires': Garrick's interest lies in what he can either discover, like a great critic, or produce, like a great author, with the material given to him. Garrick is, in short, no longer an actor: his lessons are not, as Marmontel wrote, written in 'le vague de l'air' ('the

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<sup>566</sup> Shakespeare, trans. Letourneur, VII, p. cii.

<sup>567</sup> Lichtenberg, p. 22.

vagueness of the air')<sup>568</sup> but 'durable'. A fascination with such striking moments as the dagger scene, and their ability to capture 'notre sentiment fugitif' has led Eschemburg to minimise the physical reality of an actor. While Lichtenberg also sets Garrick apart, he still writes of how he acts on the stage, how 'er geht und bewegt sich unter den übrigen Schauspielern'. For Eschemburg, Garrick's presence in the theatre is beneath notice: moral affect and the qualities of he who communicates it are so important that they have crushed, in Garrick's European apotheosis as a performer of Shakespeare, what was once so important a connection between them: the stage.

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568 Marmontel, ed. Morrissey.

## Conclusion: Lines

Is there a Shakespeare play that might serve as an emblem of eighteenth-century approaches to this writer and his works? *Hamlet* is a possibility, but so are *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *King John*. Each of these four plays contains many examples of what I have called the striking moments and transitions that shape the broader response to Shakespeare at this time, be they Hamlet's confrontation with the ghost, Macbeth's vision of the dagger, Shylock's 'three thousand ducats' or Hubert's conversations with young Arthur. One other work, however, is not only full of such passages, but also, through its adaptations, editions and reproductions, more emblematic of eighteenth-century Shakespeare than any other. That play is *Richard III*, and this conclusion will turn to it as a way of drawing together the material covered in this thesis, proposing in the process a broad understanding of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century, inspired by a focus on this period's idea of the theatre.

The story of *Richard III* in the eighteenth century begins in the 1699-1700 theatrical season, with Colley Cibber's adaptation. As had been typical of such early adaptors as William Davenant, John Dryden and Nahum Tate, Cibber made radical changes to the text. As well as cutting many lines, most notably the ghosts' appearances before Richmond, Cibber also replaced the play's first act, introducing material from the end of *Henry VI Part 3* to create a work that was far more self-contained, beginning with Richard's murder of King Henry and ending with his death at Bosworth. The new opening regicide was one of the factors that led *Richard III* to fall foul of the Master of the Revels, Charles Killigrew, upon completion in 1700, forcing Cibber to print his text while awaiting his chance to stage it, which eventually came four years later.<sup>569</sup> An edition of 1718 thus carries all the insignia of successful performance, announcing on its title page that it represents the play 'As it is now Acted at the THEATRE ROYAL in *Drury Lane*', and giving the current cast list, with Cibber himself as Richard. In the body of the text itself, are directions adapted for the early eighteenth-century stage mechanics of moveable 'flats'. The appearance of Lady Anne with King Henry's funeral cortège has, for instance, been creatively reimaged for the spatial constraints of Drury Lane, for we read that Richard's wish for an impotent Edward and the coming of his own 'Golden Time' would have been answered as follows:

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<sup>569</sup> Dobson, pp. 99–100.



*SCENE draws, and discovers Lady Anne in Mourning; Lord Stanley, Tressel, Guards and Bearers, with King Henry's Body.*<sup>570</sup>

This kind of 'discovery' is typical of early eighteenth-century stagecraft, and, as Peter Holland has shown, the addition of such scene-shifting is also one of the principal ways that Rowe's 1709 edition fitted Shakespeare's text to contemporary theatrical norms.<sup>571</sup> The similarity between Rowe's edited text and Cibber's adaptation is further proof of how Rowe drew on his own experience as a dramatist to aid him as an editor, and to offer his readers a version of Shakespeare that corresponded to their own idea of theatrical practice.

Cibber's work may also, however, illuminate the nature of later eighteenth-century editions of Shakespeare, which were not produced by practising dramatists. In his first act, he retains a line from *Henry VI Part 3* that, in its original context, was to enrage William Warburton. It is Henry's question, upon being left alone with Richard: 'What bloody scene has *Roscius* now to act?'<sup>572</sup> Warburton, in a note contributed to Theobald's 1733 edition of Shakespeare, believed these words to have been 'certainly introduced by some shallow pated conceited fellow of the scene'.<sup>573</sup> This is because only an uneducated player could find a 'similitude between Richard's murders and Roscius's scenes of death', for it would mean ignoring that 'Roscius was a comedian and not a tragedian'.<sup>574</sup> In his own edition of 1747, Warburton continues to attack this line as a player's interpolation.

Yet as well as proving the historical corruption of Shakespeare's text at the hands of his actors, it could also be argued that Warburton is specifically targeting Cibber's adaptation with these comments, and so continuing both Pope's general anti-theatrical editorial method and the much more pointed attack on 'King Cibber' in the *Dunciad*. After all, as many of those who purchased Warburton's and Theobald's editions would know, Cibber, committed to the theatrical realisation of Shakespeare, had found this line good enough to transfer it to his *Richard III*, even if it meant, in the eyes of some, demonstrating ignorance typical of 'some shallow pated conceited fellow of the scene'.

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570 William Shakespeare and Colley Cibber, *The Tragical History of King Richard III* (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1718; repr. 1969), p. 19.

571 Holland, 'Introduction', p. xv.

572 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, v, p. 206.

573 Shakespeare, ed. Theobald, iv, p. 391.

574 Ibid.

‘What bloody scene has *Roscius* now to act?’ Henry’s question – either in the adapted or original context – can be read two ways: ‘*Roscius*’ can refer to either the fallen monarch or the future one. Like many of Shakespeare’s kings, both are, in their own way, highly theatrical. Warburton, however, reads the line as relevant only to Richard, stating in 1747 that ‘*Roscius* was certainly put for Richard’.<sup>575</sup> Yet this identification of *Roscius* and Richard may well be more than an alliterative opening move for Warburton’s critique of ignorant players (or of Cibber’s own attraction to the line). It might also owe something to the fact that David Garrick – the ‘English *Roscius*’ – was, by this time, now famous for his performance of Richard, having made Cibber’s text into one of his most powerful theatrical vehicles.

Garrick’s official début on the London stage was made as Richard, at Henry Giffard’s Goodman Fields Theatre on 19 October 1741.<sup>576</sup> The choice of play and part was perfect. Cibber’s version of *Richard III* had focussed attention on its eponymous hero, while the antics of the deformed and deceptive Richard gave Garrick the opportunity to demonstrate his striking physicality and rapid emotional transitions to the full. Finally, in Richard’s ambition there was an image of Garrick’s own hopes: the young, diminutive and unorthodox actor had chosen the role of the deformed usurper to launch his challenge to the established figures of the London stage. His success was as great as that of Shakespeare’s villain, but also more durable. Having converted the initial thrill of his début into a place at Drury Lane, Garrick performed the part of Richard there as both actor and manager, unchallenged until his retirement in 1774.

When Francis Gentleman edited the *Bell’s Shakespeare* edition of *Richard III* in 1773, he thus offered praise to both Cibber and Garrick as twin architects of the promptbook version he was using as copytext. Whoever had seen the latter, claimed Gentleman, would ‘feelingly know what are the proper and perfect requisites for this difficult, complicate character’,<sup>577</sup> while the adapted text itself (to which Garrick had done no more than return a few of Shakespeare’s lines)<sup>578</sup> was evidently ‘produced

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<sup>575</sup> Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, v, p. 206.

<sup>576</sup> Heather McPherson, ‘Theatrical Celebrity and the Commodification of the Actor’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Georgian Theatre 1737-1832*, ed. by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 192–212 (p. 206).

<sup>577</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, III, p. 12.

<sup>578</sup> For example, Gentleman comments as follows on Richard’s ‘Now is the winter of our discontent’ speech: ‘Some lines from the original have been judiciously restored in this speech by Mr. Garrick.’ Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, III, p. 12.

from a very extensive and settled knowledge of stage effect'.<sup>579</sup> For Gentleman, the work 'must always read well, but act better'.<sup>580</sup> Garrick and Cibber had thus realised what Elizabeth Montagu, in her 1769 *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*, had argued to be the true potential of the playwright's history plays. Montagu held, in defiance of Johnson, that such works drew on celebrated events of the past to present well-crafted, absorbing and instructive drama.<sup>581</sup> Gentleman retraces such criteria when he finds 'no passage or personage in English History, better chosen for the drama' than Richard's, and in *Richard III* – once adapted – a play whose 'events appear [...] admirably connected with and consequential to each other' and where 'nature speaks in all the characters with plain, intelligible dignity'.<sup>582</sup>

Unlike Warburton, and as if to prove the theatrical success of the lines borrowed from *Henry VI Part 3*, Gentleman's footnote to the dialogue between Richard and Henry makes no mention of the impropriety of referring to Roscius. Rather, it draws our attention to how the scene 'lets us fully and properly into Richard's character'.<sup>583</sup> This comment is one of many in the *Bell's Shakespeare* text that draw attention to those moments where the audience is granted a glimpse into the usurper's mind. Gentleman reserves particularly strong praise for the passage where Richard first welcomes the Lord Mayor and the offer of the English crown with a show of piety and then, once alone, revels in his triumph:

This soliloquy affords a fine transition for acting merit to show itself; from the low spiritless remonstrances of assumed diffidence, to the malicious enjoyment of the fair road his villainous schemes appear to be in.<sup>584</sup>

As is typical of a reading of play and performance based on transition, Gentleman praises both author and performer for their ability to connect opposed passions convincingly. The moment is particularly rich in that the 'acting merit' in question is both that of the performer playing Richard and that of the character of Richard himself. What occurs here is the recursive situation in which an actor, a Roscius, acts acting, which in turn generates the striking moment, and captures the audience's

<sup>579</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, III, p. 68.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> See my discussion of this in Chapter Two. Montagu, p. 57.

<sup>582</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, III, p. B2v.

<sup>583</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, III, p. 14.

<sup>584</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, III, p. 41.

attention.

Such a moment should be set against the most famous scene of *Richard III* and arguably of Garrick too, immortalised by Hogarth but, strangely, not singled out by Gentleman. It is that of Richard's waking from his vision of the ghosts at the dawn of Bosworth. In *Bell's Shakespeare* the passage runs as follows:

[*All the Ghosts sink.*

*Glo 'st.* Give me a horse – bind up my wounds!  
 Have mercy, heav'n! Ha! soft! 'twas but a dream;  
 But then so terrible, it shakes my soul;  
 Cold drops of sweat hang on my trembling flesh;  
 My blood grows chilly and I freeze with horror:  
 Oh, tyrant conscience! How dost thou afflict me?  
 When I look back, 'tis terrible retreating:  
 I cannot bear the thought, nor dare repent:  
 I am but man; and fate, do thou dispose me.  
 Who's there?<sup>585</sup>

This is clearly a moment of transition. First from sleep to waking, then from astonishment to horror, with a brief respite in the belief that 'twas but a dream'. Arthur Murphy, however, offers a more detailed account of the first few lines, as performed by Garrick.

When he started from his dream, he was a spectacle of horror. He called out in a manly tone,  
     Give me another horse;  
 He paused, and with a countenance of dismay, advanced, crying in a tone of distress,  
     Bind up my wounds;  
 and then, falling on his knees, said in the most piteous accent,  
     Have mercy, Heaven!  
 In all this, the audience saw an exact imitation of nature.<sup>586</sup>

Published in 1801, over a quarter of a century after Garrick's retirement, Murphy's recollection still shows, in its careful choice of vocabulary, how Garrick's performance could follow its text into what John Hill's acting manual called 'every subordinate passion'.<sup>587</sup> This is, for Murphy, an 'exact imitation of nature', not a

<sup>585</sup> Shakespeare, ed. Gentleman, III, p. 64.

<sup>586</sup> Murphy, I, pp. 24–5.

<sup>587</sup> John Hill, *The Actor*, p. 291.

photographic reproduction but an intensifying, carefully controlled mirror.<sup>588</sup> It thus resembles many other celebrated scenes analysed in this thesis: the vision of the dagger, the tomb scene of Romeo and Juliet, the appearance of the ghost. It is a striking moment, powered by transition and possessed of its own depth and mystery. Warburton, continuing his critique of how the players (and perhaps Cibber specifically) had ruined this play, objected to the use of ‘tyrant conscience’ (instead of the Folio and Quarto ‘coward conscience’) in this speech, but the alteration is justified if one thinks not – as the editor did – in terms of Richard’s ‘character’ as visible in the text as a whole, but of the theatrical moment, where the conscience of the monarch must appear – at this point – tyrannical in its capricious sway over the emotions.<sup>589</sup>

Murphy goes on to say that Garrick’s ‘friend Hogarth has left a most excellent picture of Garrick in this scene’ (see Figure 4).<sup>590</sup> This painting, like a few other images of Garrick as Hamlet or Macbeth, became famous throughout Europe through engraved reproductions. Within England, it also served as a basis for a series of popular porcelain figures, whose fragile, compressed form transported ‘Shakespeare’s bloody tyrant [...] into the aesthetic realm of the decorative’.<sup>591</sup> The varied afterlife of such an image reminds us that Hogarth’s work, as Shearer West notes, is itself far from being ‘an unmediated reflection of the truth’.<sup>592</sup> It is instead ‘a construction based on critical canons, aesthetic prejudices and commercial motivations’, including Hogarth’s wish to ‘gain credibility for British history painting amongst a nobility who much preferred foreign examples of the type’,<sup>593</sup> and what Lance Bertelsen calls Garrick’s strategy of ‘media saturation’.<sup>594</sup> To read this painting and others like it (not to mention their porcelain replicas), West warns, one must never forget that such pieces are ‘coded responses to the performances which

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588 Note that Murphy’s description follows the punctuated divisions of Cibber’s text. It also, by talking of how Garrick ‘started’, echoes early eighteenth-century stage directions: in Cibber (1700), ‘*Rich. starts out of his sleep*’; in Rowe, ‘*K[ing]. Richard starts out of his dream*’. (William Shakespeare and Colley Cibber, *The Tragical History of King Richard III* (London: Lintott, 1700; repr. 1969), p. 51; William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1709), IV, p. 1709).

589 Shakespeare, eds Warburton and Pope, v, p. 329.

590 Murphy, I, p. 24.

591 McPherson, eds Swindells and Taylor, p. 211.

592 West, p. 2.

593 West, p. 101.

594 Lance Bertelsen, ‘David Garrick and English Painting’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 11 (1978), 308–24 (p. 308).

had as much to do with prevailing tendencies in art as with the minutiae of theatrical presentation'.<sup>595</sup>

Yet this warning is not as limiting as it seems. For, even with West's caveat, such images can further illuminate both the significance of *Richard III* and that of eighteenth-century thinking about performance more generally. This is because the 'prevailing tendencies in art' that West speaks of also prevailed on the stage and page as well as in the pictureframe. As Michael S. Wilson has said, the eighteenth-century theatre was a 'laboratory' for the period's 'inter-arts experiments'.<sup>596</sup> Christopher Balme provides an example of such intermingling when he draws an analogy between Hogarth's mix of the genres of history painting and portraiture and a view of acting articulated by James Boswell in 1770, in which the performer 'must have a kind of double feeling' in order to 'assume in a strong degree the character which he represents, while he at the same time [retaining] the consciousness of his own character'. Just as Hogarth's image is generically double, a portrait of both the contemporary Garrick and the historical Richard, so was Garrick's own performance also double, dependent on both his personal self-control and his possession of the historical king.<sup>597</sup> Compelling as Balme's analogy is, one might also read the picture as a different kind of 'inter-arts experiment': the consummation of the acting style recommended by Charles Gildon in 1710, when he encouraged performers (as aspiring British artists would also be encouraged) to imitate continental masters of history painting like Poussin and Van Dyck in order to improve their own art.<sup>598</sup> In reality, then, Hogarth's portrait of Garrick stands at the crossroads between early- and late-eighteenth-century attitudes towards acting, for the priorities of both models, each part of wider 'tendencies in art', may be projected onto it.

One might also compare Hogarth's compositional choices with those of Cibber and Garrick in their adaptation of the play's earlier texts. Frederick Antal's analysis of the image emphasises its 'deliberate subordination of detail', creating a 'grand, unified composition in which Garrick's conception of Richard III dominates both theme and form'.<sup>599</sup> This is a departure from the crowded painting by Charles Le Brun (*La Tente*

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<sup>595</sup> West, p. 26.

<sup>596</sup> Michael S. Wilson, 'Garrick, Iconic Acting, and the Ideologies of Theatrical Portraiture', *Word & Image*, 6 (1990), 368–94 (p. 394).

<sup>597</sup> Christopher B. Balme, 'Interpreting the Pictorial Record: Theatre Iconography and the Referential Dilemma', *Theatre Research International*, 22 (1997), 190–201 (pp. 195–99).

<sup>598</sup> See my discussion of this in Chapter One.

<sup>599</sup> Frederick Antal, *Hogarth and His Place in European Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul,

*de Darius*, 1660 – see Figure 5) that Hogarth is quoting in his background and draperies, and represents a similar kind of reorganisation to that effected by the adaptors of Shakespeare: both painting and play are star vehicles, focussing – as transition-based dramaturgy was wont to do – on the emotions of a single performer-character.

The most recent reading of Hogarth's painting is that of Peter Sillars, who describes the work as an exploration of 'a significant moment redolent of all that has been and pregnant with all to follow'.<sup>600</sup> He shows how 'The static commentary provided by [...] iconographic allusion' balances 'the painting's enactment of the play's dynamic currency through careful elision of elements temporally separate in the action'.<sup>601</sup> The 'iconographical allusion' includes Hogarth's ironical quotation of Le Brun's painting, which depicts a moment of 'moral strength', free from the pangs of tyrant conscience. It also includes the positioning of Richard's garter (to show only the word 'MAL'), and a composition where Richard literally turns his back on Christ. As for Hogarth's temporal elisions, the soldiers gathered round a fire in the top left of the canvas refer to a preceding scene – borrowed by Cibber from *Henry V* – in which Richard walks incognito through his army to judge their mood, and the note (based on the Folio and Quarto texts) protruding from the armour at Richard's feet is that which he will soon find and read, before choosing to ignore its warning about Stanley's imminent defection.<sup>602</sup> Sillars's detailed reading represents one of the best analyses of Hogarth's painting to date, but his conclusion is less convincing. He finishes his examination of Hogarth's picture with the claim that 'Playfully, the image paradoxically exchanges the temporal natures of theatre and painting', for 'the play's only moment of inactivity is selected for visual treatment, and the apparently static nature of an easel painting is used to foretell the future, so that the usual functions of drama and painting as respectively dynamic and static are reversed'.<sup>603</sup>

This assertion exaggerates the contrast between Garrick's performance and Hogarth's image. As Murphy's account would indicate, Richard's waking was hardly a 'static' moment in performance, but rather a sequence of striking instants, framed and connected with transition. Indeed, it is the only moment of transition (unlike that at

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1962), p. 69.

600 Stuart Sillars, *Painting Shakespeare: The Artist as Critic, 1720-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 46.

601 Sillars, p. 51.

602 Sillars, pp. 48–52.

603 Sillars, p. 52.

the end of the Lord Mayor's visit) when the eighteenth-century Richard III, nowhere near as self-divided as his Quarto and Folio predecessor, experiences a sequence of two contrasting and genuine emotions in the play, from horror into dismay. As for Hogarth's painting, while no photographic reproduction of the performance, it nevertheless imitates its dynamic ability to pack so much into a single scene. The viewer of this image, as much as the theatregoer watching *Richard III*, will be captivated by the figure of Garrick, and will lose himself in the moment as his eye is led 'a wanton kind of chace' [*sic*] through either the actor's physical transformations of passion or the artist's skilful composition of objects that each carry a different affective power.

This description of absorption in an artwork in terms of a 'wanton [...] chace' is from Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty*, first published in 1753, eight years after his portrait of Garrick as Richard III.<sup>604</sup> The work, to quote its title page, was 'Written with a view of fixing the fluctuating IDEAS of TASTE', and did so most famously with its examination of the powers of waving and serpentine lines, naming them, respectively, the line of beauty and the line of grace. There are grounds for using Hogarth's theoretical work both to analyse his most famous theatrical painting, and to frame many of the points made in this thesis as a whole about Shakespeare and the theatre in the eighteenth century. Hogarth himself said of his art that he would wish 'to compose pictures on canvas, similar to representations on the stage; and further hope that they will be tried by the same test and criticised by the same criterion'.<sup>605</sup>

Rather more specifically, a letter from Garrick provides important evidence for dating Hogarth's thinking about beauty, when he wrote to the artist in 1746, a year after sitting for him, and jocularly complained that 'I have been lately allarm'd with some Encroachments of my Belly upon the Line of Grace and Beauty, in short I am growing very fat'.<sup>606</sup> The lines of grace and beauty are themselves everywhere in Hogarth's portrait. The robe worn by Garrick-Richard contains so many of them that it might serve as an illustration for one of the ways Hogarth exemplifies his principle of 'Quantity' in the *Analysis*.

The robes of state are always made large and full, because they give a grandeur of appearance, suitable to the offices of the greatest distinction

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604 William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. by Ronald Paulson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 33. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

605 Quoted in: Brunkhorst, p. 146.

606 Garrick, eds Little and Kahrl, I, p. 86.



[...] when the train is gently thrown aside, it generally falls into a great variety of folds, which again employ the eye, and fix its attention. (36)

To extend Hogarth's thinking from his painting of Garrick to stage practice more generally is also to follow a move made several times in his *Analysis of Beauty*. He turns most explicitly to the theatre in the final chapter, as part of an argument for the utility and effect of the lines of beauty and grace.

From what has been said of habitually moving in waving lines, it may possibly be found that if stage action, particularly the graceful, was to be studied lineally, it might be more speedily and accurately acquired by the help of the foregoing principles than the methods hitherto taken. It is known that common deportment, such as may pass for elegant and proper off the stage, would no more be thought sufficient upon it than the dialogue of common polite conversation, would be accurate or spirited enough for the language of a play. So that trusting to chance will not do. The actions of every scene ought to be as much as possible a compleat composition of well varied movements, considered as such abstractly, and apart from what may be merely relative to the sense of the words. Action consider'd with regard to assisting the author's meaning, by enforcing the sentiments or raising the passions, must be left entirely up to the judgment of the performer, we only pretend to shew how the limbs may be made to have an equal readiness to move in all such directions as may be required. (112)

This is Hogarth's advice to the actor, and Garrick's pose as Richard III, his body turning to form a line of grace, follows it perfectly. This passage also has its parallels in numerous acting manuals of the period, especially in the general idea that theatrical performance requires something larger than life, whether it is based on genuinely felt emotion or not.<sup>607</sup>

In his urging for a 'compleat composition of well varied movements' on the stage, Hogarth uses 'action' to mean the physical movement of the actor, his 'stage action'. This is not, however, the only sense of the word available in eighteenth-century discussions of drama. As analysed in my second chapter, physical action – what the actors do onstage – is not always kept distinct from what might be called Aristotelian 'action', or what the author has chosen to be done in the play. The physical and the conceptual, stage and script, actor and author, can mix, and allowing them to do so is, for instance, one of the merits of Montagu's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of*

607 For example: John Hill, *The Actor*, pp. 147–48.

*Shakespeare*.<sup>608</sup> Hogarth himself, in manuscript drafts of the *Analysis of Beauty*, apparently sees the same affinity between the two kinds of action, the line of a plot and the lines of a performer's body, since he wrote of narrative structure as something also capable of causing the same kind of absorption as intricate visual fields.

With what pleasure doth the mind follow, the well connected thread of a play or novel which ever encreases as the Plot thickens, and ends, when that's disclos'd[.] The Eye hath this sort of enjoyment in winding walks and serpentine rivers. (124)

Paul Hiffernan, in his journal *The Tuner*, also used the line of beauty to talk of neo-Aristotelian action rather than physical presence, providing, in a way, a development of what Hogarth had left in the drafts of the *Analysis*. Proposing to 'observe [...] the Affinity of his Doctrine to the Rules of the Stage', Hiffernan uses Hogarth's categories not to instruct the actor, but to bolster a set of rules about how a dramatist should write.<sup>609</sup> The theatrical equivalent of Hogarth's 'Fitness' is 'the proper Choice of a Subject for the Stage', 'Variety' entails that 'Each Scene shou'd [...] be a separate under-Action', and 'Intricacy' is 'the artful managing of the Plot'.<sup>610</sup>

Hogarth's notes, and Hiffernan's somewhat unwieldy application of the *Analysis* to drama, indicate that the core ideas of this treatise can cover the artistic labours not just of painters but also of actors and authors, performance and writing. This overlap may also be traced in Hogarth's use of Shakespeare, who appears on two occasions in his treatise as the epitome of the skilled observer of physical forms, and, just as in the acting theory of the period, a source of theoretical principle as well as confirmation. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Hogarth notes, for example, that Shakespeare, in lines given to Enobarbus, is attentive to the striking effect of having the Egyptian queen flanked by her attendants, 'their bends adornings' to her (108-09). In *The Winter's Tale*, Hogarth picks up Florizel's comparison of Perdita to a 'wave o'th'sea' as proof of Shakespeare's own 'idea of the beauty of dancing', which he has just himself explained in terms of serpentine and waving lines (109). Finally, when extending the ideas of the *Analysis* to actors at the conclusion of the treatise, Hogarth caps his reflection, as Gildon, Steele, and many more had done before him, with Hamlet.

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608 Montagu, pp. 29–30.

609 Paul Hiffernan, *The Tuner* (London: Cooper, 1754), p. 28.

610 Hiffernan, pp. 28–29.

Where note, that as the whole of beauty depends upon *continually varying*, the same must be observed with regard to genteel and elegant acting: and as plain space makes a considerable part of beauty in form, so cessation of movement in acting is as absolutely necessary; and in my opinion much wanted on most stages, to relieve the eye from what Shakespear calls, *continually sawing the air*. (112)

Hogarth's illustrative constellation of passages from across Shakespeare's works is revealingly echoed in the writings of Hazlitt. This is emblematic of the ironic line of rise and fall that I have traced throughout this thesis.

When Hazlitt writes of Kean's Hamlet, those parts of the play which offer instruction to the actors are of little interest to him. Rather, he observes the superlative difficulty of acting the part of the prince, whose 'character is an effusion of pure genius'.<sup>611</sup> Hamlet's character 'is spun to the finest thread, yet never loses its continuity': 'It has the yielding flexibility of "a wave of the sea"', being 'made of undulating lines, without a single sharp angle'.<sup>612</sup> This appraisal is, in part, clearly Hogarthian. Hazlitt echoes (whether consciously or not) a work he would have known well,<sup>613</sup> in referring to Florizel's praise of Perdita and, through this double quotation, to a system of 'undulating lines' that would not be out of place in *The Analysis of Beauty*.

Yet the similarities between Hazlitt and Hogarth serve best to point out all that changes regarding Shakespeare and the stage between the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Hazlitt uses 'undulating lines' and 'a wave of the sea' to capture the fact that Shakespeare's character exceeds physical representation. Hogarth uses the same words to make the opposite point, to claim for painters and actors the power to create depths in their work. For Hazlitt, the genius of Shakespeare is manifest in 'the wonderful variety and perfect individuality of his characters', they are 'real beings of flesh and blood' and cannot be adequately staged.<sup>614</sup> For Hogarth, such variety is as much the property of acting as it is of painting or writing. After all, the 'whole of beauty depends upon *continually varying*'.

The power of varying is the key to Hogarth's treatise, which was published with the

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611 Hazlitt, *A View of the English Stage*, p. 14.

612 Hazlitt, *A View of the English Stage*, p. 18.

613 For a discussion of the association of Hogarth and Shakespeare by Hazlitt, Lamb and others, see: Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 20-21.

614 Hazlitt, *A View of the English Stage*, pp. 14-15.

word 'variety' and a waving line of grace upon its cover. Such power, as Hogarth was well aware, was also articulated by Shakespeare, in Enobarbus's praise of Cleopatra: 'Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale | Her infinite variety' (10). Hazlitt denies the stage full variety, but Hogarth is more generous and, by founding his aesthetics on the notion of 'variety', is able to move easily out from the world of painting and across the various page and stage definitions of action, to the point that they can be applied to physical, tangible performance (not to mention its pictorial relics) and guide Hiffernan's instructions to a budding dramatist.

Michael Caines, in a recent book on Shakespeare in the eighteenth century, chides those who would try to offer a single reading of the playwright at this time. For him, the situation is fundamentally untidy, and 'the untidiness seems to be largely resistant to neat critical lines of interpretation'.<sup>615</sup> However, there is at least one critical line to be drawn, although Caines is right to say that it is not a 'neat one'. In its focus on the idea of the theatre, this thesis has aimed to draw its own Hogarthian line of interpretation through the eighteenth century. This line is serpentine, various and evolving in all dimensions and media, and offers an account of Shakespeare's place in this period that recognises his 'infinite variety'. It draws a literary critical line of beauty.

This line is often ironic: in each preceding chapter I have shown how the eighteenth-century stage acquired and exercised great power, while, with a new attention to text and to interior feeling, also prepared its own fall. That power was, as Hogarth knew, the power of variety, and could shine, for a while, as much in the actor as in Shakespeare. One of its strongest emblems is that found in the portrait of Garrick as Richard III. This is a painting of a striking moment, an instant possessed of its own dynamic strength. Hogarth's image captures an attraction born from both a new acting style and an attention to the texts. In other words, it represents a conjunction of twin stars.

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615 Caines, p. xxii.

## Illustrations

### **Figure 1: Detail from François Boitard, engraved by Elisha Kirkall: Frontispiece to *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1709**

Shakespeare, William, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. by Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols (London: Jacob Tonson, 1709), VI, p. 4. © Boston Public Library. See p. 25 of thesis.

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**Figure 2: Adelaïde Labille-Guiard, *Jean-François Ducis*, 1782**

Adelaïde Labille-Guiard, *Jean-François Ducis*, 1782, pastel on canvas, 101 x 81cm, Bibliothèque de la Comédie-Française, Paris. © P. Lorette, coll. Comédie-Française. See pp. 160 and 174 of thesis.

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**Figure 3: Adelaïde Labille-Guiard, *Brizard dans le rôle de Léar*, 1783**

Adelaïde Labille-Guiard, *Brizard dans le rôle de Léar*, 1783, pastel on canvas, 98.5 x 80 cm, Théâtre de l'Odéon, Paris. © Théâtre de l'Odéon, Paris. See p. 174 of thesis.

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**Figure 4: William Hogarth, *David Garrick as Richard III*, 1745**

William Hogarth, *David Garrick as Richard III*, 1745, oil on canvas, 190.5 x 250.8 cm, Walker Gallery, Liverpool. © Walker Gallery, Liverpool. See p. 196 of thesis.

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**Figure 5: Charles le Brun, *La Famille de Darius aux pieds d'Alexandre*, 1661**

Charles le Brun, *La Famille de Darius aux pieds d'Alexandre*, 1661, oil on canvas, 298 x 453 cm, Musée national du Château de Versailles, Versailles. © Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Grand Palais. See p. 198 of thesis.

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## Appendix: Translation from Jean-François Ducis, *Macbeth*, 1826

See pp. 167-69 of thesis.

FRÉDÉGONDE

*(She enters asleep, a dagger in her right hand, and a torch in her left. She walks towards an armchair. Lifting her eyes to the sky with the expression of a painful fear)*

Vengeful gods!

*(She sits, lays the torch on a table, puts the dagger back into its sheath)*

SÉVAR, *low*.

A crime pursues her.

Listen.

FRÉDÉGONDE, *with joy and an air of mystery*.

This great coup was hidden in the night.

The crown is ours. Macbeth, why give it up?

*(With the gesture of a woman who makes several stabs in the shadows.)*

The son is next...

SÉVAR

Heavens! What did I just hear!

FRÉDÉGONDE, *applauding herself, with the joy of satisfied ambition*.

Yes, all is over, my children will reign.

*(With the indulgence and pleasure of maternal tenderness)*

May I try – my son! – this band upon your forehead.

*(Trying to bring to mind a vague recollection.)*

Who then said those words to me, “Go, heaven made you a mother”?

*(With a pang)*

If they felt the blows of a murderous hand!

*(Very tenderly)*

O heaven!

*(Carrying her hand to her nose with disgust.)*

Still this blood!

*(Very tenderly)*

I would see their death.

*(With tears)*

I, their mother!

*(with terror, scratching at her hand)*

This blood will not wipe off!

*(With the greatest pain)*

Gods!



It is the moment to strike.

*(She draws her dagger and withdraws, still sleeping, under one of the vaults.)*<sup>616</sup>

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616 From: Ducis, II, pp. 198–201.

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