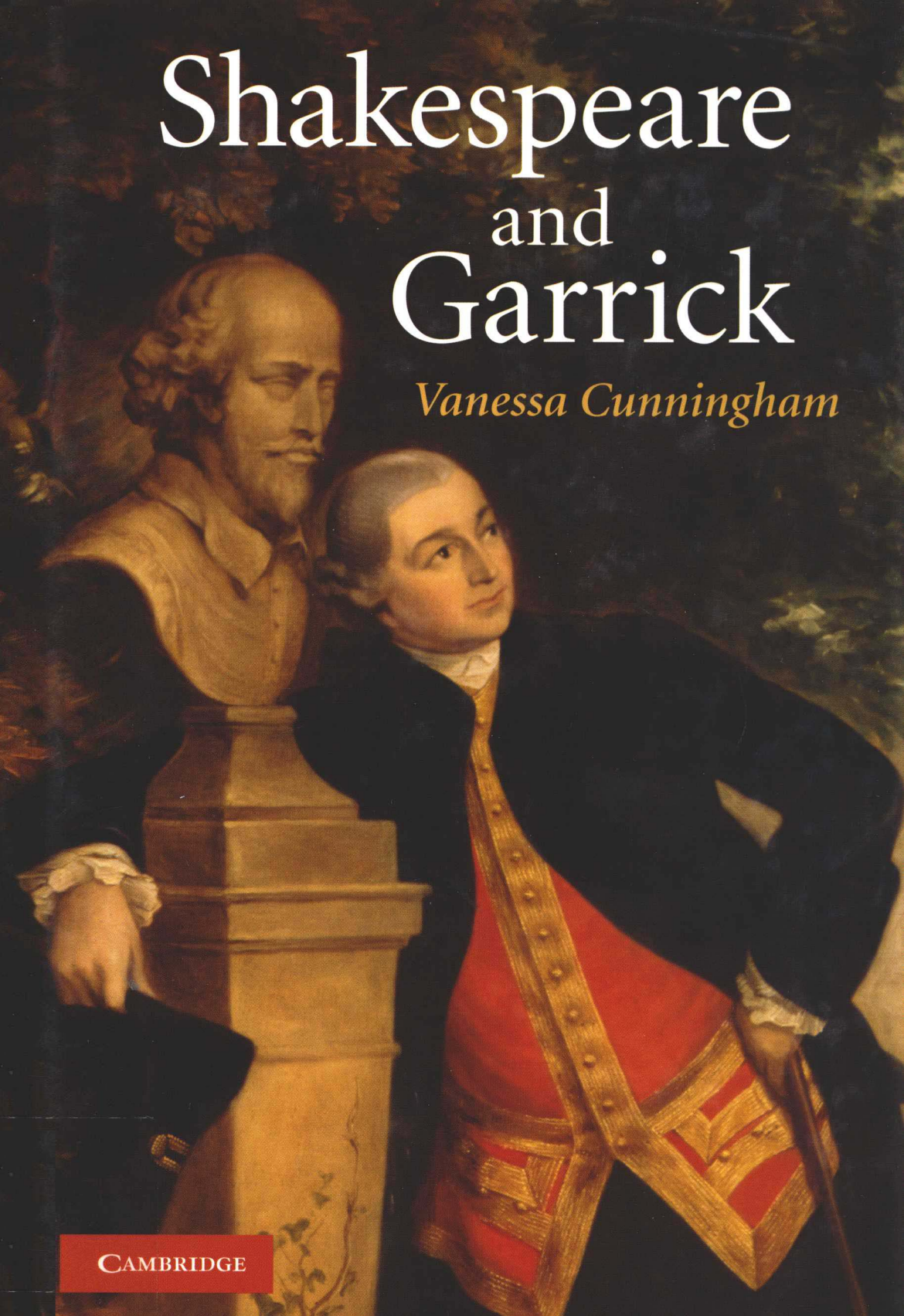


Shakespeare and Garrick

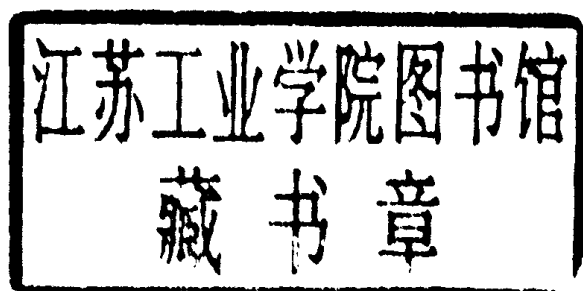
Vanessa Cunningham



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SHAKESPEARE AND GARRICK

VANESSA CUNNINGHAM



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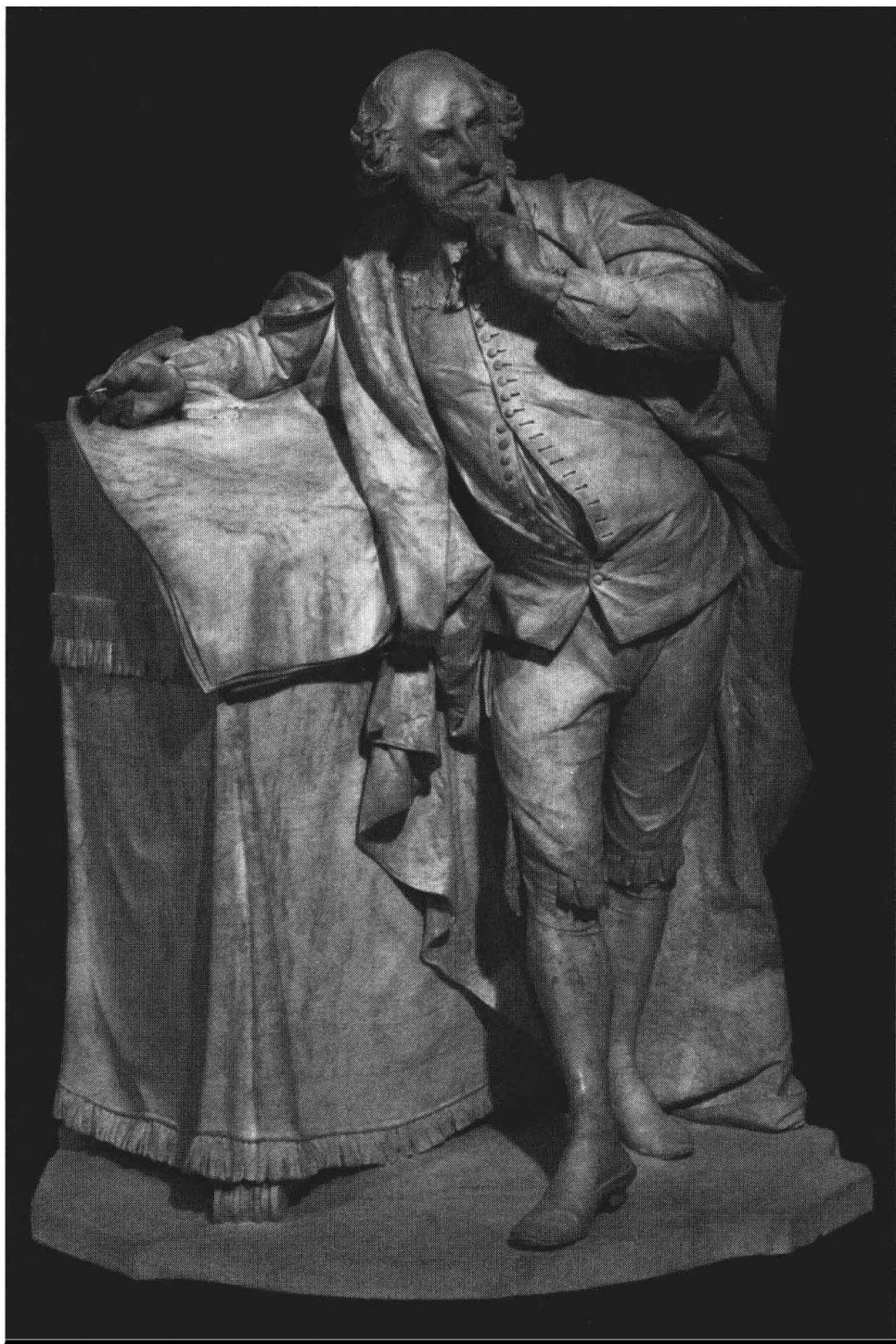
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SHAKESPEARE AND GARRICK

Much has been written about the acting style of David Garrick, the eighteenth century's greatest actor-manager, but this book, unusually, claims a place for him within Shakespeare studies as a *literary* as well as a *theatrical* figure. It analyses several of Garrick's alterations of Shakespeare's plays in which he took the lead, and traces his close involvement with the major Shakespeare editors of the period, including his friend Samuel Johnson. Admirers claimed that Garrick's performances illuminated the playtexts better than the commentaries of scholarly editors. His reputation as Shakespeare's living representative and best interpreter was so high that he was involved in most Shakespeare-related projects of his day, not least the Jubilee at Stratford. While Garrick lived, the imminent divorce of 'stage' and 'page' could not take place. Cunningham shows how vital a resource Garrick's collection of early plays in English has been to generations of Shakespeare scholars.

Vanessa Cunningham was awarded an MBE for Services to Cardiff University in 2000, and became a Fellow of the University in 2001. She is the author, with John Goodwin, of *Cardiff University: A Celebration* (2001).



Roubiliac's statue of Shakespeare. Made in 1758 to adorn Garrick's temple at Hampton, it now stands in the British Library. Garrick was almost certainly the model.
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PROLOGUE

Garrick's alterations of Shakespeare – a note on texts

The great majority of the versions of Shakespeare's plays made by David Garrick and published during his management of Drury Lane (1747–1776) are described on their title pages as 'alterations', or as having been 'alter'd for performance'.¹ The two operas (*The Fairies*, 1755, and *The Tempest*, 1756) are said to be 'taken from Shakespear', while *Antony and Cleopatra*, published in 1758 and generally credited jointly to Edward Capell and Garrick (though not attributed to either on the title page), is distinguished from the others by its description as 'an historical Play, written by William Shakespeare: fitted for the Stage by abridging only'. Despite the fact that Harry William Pedicord and Fredrick Louis Bergmann, modern editors of Garrick's plays, entitle their two volumes of Shakespeare-derived texts 'adaptations',² 'alteration' is certainly the preferable term for discussion of Garrick's performance versions of Shakespeare's plays, since throughout the eighteenth century 'alter' was used far more commonly than 'adapt'.

Garrick, according to Pedicord and Bergmann, is believed to have been involved in the altering of some twenty-two plays by Shakespeare over the course of his professional career. In their collected edition they reproduce the dozen that they consider can be authenticated.³ The present work discusses a selection of alterations that span Garrick's professional career. Two are from the early years (*Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*) and two from the middle period (*Florizel and Perdita*, *Antony and Cleopatra*). Although Garrick seems to have tinkered with *King Lear* and *Hamlet* throughout his career, he worked most intensively on them towards its close; they therefore represent the late stage of his career. This chronological approach makes it possible to explore whether any trends – for example, towards greater faithfulness to Shakespeare's language or respect for his plots – are discernible in Garrick's alterations over time. Another strong reason for choosing these six plays is that in each, at least initially, Garrick himself played the leading role.

The base text used is the only complete edition of Garrick's *Plays*, that of Pedicord and Bergmann (1980–1982), with its modernised spelling and punctuation; quotations from their edition are preceded by 'G'. Inevitably, the gain in ease of access and reference is at the expense of the sense of immediacy generated by the excited punctuation and lavish capitalization of the eighteenth-century editions. Garrick often straightforwardly referred to the plays upon which his alterations were based as the 'originals'. Occasional use of the shorthand term 'original' in this book should not be seen as under-estimating the complexities facing editors who seek to establish authoritative texts. Quotations from Shakespeare are from a modern edition, the Oxford *Complete Works*,⁴ selected not least because of its recognition that '[t]heatre is an endlessly fluid medium' and that performance was 'the end to which they [the plays] were created'.⁵

CHAPTER I

Garrick and Shakespeare – before the divorce of stage and page

When SHAKESPEARE dy'd, he left behind
No mortal of an equal mind.
When GARRICK play'd, he liv'd again,
Unrival'd'mongst the sons of men.
But GARRICK dies! and (mark the sequel)
THE WORLD WILL NEVER SEE THEIR EQUAL.

The above poem by William Oland appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1779.¹ It is just one of numerous tributes published that year to mark the death of David Garrick, England's celebrated actor-manager-dramatist, and is typical in placing Garrick's name on an equal footing with Shakespeare's. Garrick's fame as an actor has persisted to this day: a well-known London club and numerous theatres, drama groups and pubs still bear his name. Since his death, few decades have passed without the publication of yet another Garrick biography; this book is not intended to add to the list. Nevertheless, the basic outline of his life, though well known, needs to be briefly retold.

Of Huguenot descent and the son of an army officer, Garrick was born in Hereford in 1717 and brought up in Lichfield in a family of four boys and three girls, in which money was always short. David and his younger brother George were two of the three pupils of the short-lived school set up at Edial by fellow Lichfield resident Samuel Johnson. The friendship of Johnson and Garrick, though often under strain, lasted until the actor's death in 1779. In 1737 they set out together for London to seek their fortunes; Johnson had written a tragedy and Garrick was supposed to study for a legal career. Johnson's struggles to survive in the capital as a writer were lengthy and painful but Garrick, after an attempt to establish himself as a wine merchant, rapidly achieved the fame that Johnson longed for. Since boyhood he had been stage-struck, and in 1741 he became a professional actor.

The young player's success in both tragedy and comedy was immediate and spectacular. Audiences were especially struck by the contrast between

the mannered, rhetorical style of acting adopted by contemporaries such as James Quin and the young Garrick's much more naturalistic approach. As his first biographer, Thomas Davies, put it: 'he banished ranting, bombast and grimace; and restored ease, simplicity and genuine humour'.² In 1747, at the age of 30, he became joint patentee of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, a managerial role that continued, along with those of performer, dramatist and alterer of plays, until his retirement in 1776. Garrick is credited for his attempts to bring respectability and order to the theatre. His thirty-year marriage to Eva Maria Veigel, a Viennese dancer, was a very close and happy one, though the couple had no children. In his lifetime Garrick was hugely celebrated. Fêted in the highest circles of British and European society, he was frequently painted, both in character and in private life, by leading artists, and his image was reproduced in prints, on porcelain figurines and even on trays and tea caddies. The impact of his startlingly original acting style upon audiences is often recorded in novels of the period; of these, Partridge's response to his Hamlet, in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, is probably the best known.³ His health was always poor. His death from uraemia in 1779, at the age of 61, was followed by a funeral of almost royal magnificence and a torrent of tributes and eulogies in the press.

The contribution made by Shakespeare to the growth of Garrick's reputation is hard to overstate. Indeed, some of his contemporary admirers would have reversed the names in the previous sentence. Garrick had abundant reason to be grateful to the author who had provided him with many of his most acclaimed roles, of which Richard III (in Cibber's alteration) in his London debut season of 1741–1742 was just the first. Over the thirty-five years of his acting career, he triumphed as Benedick in *Much Ado about Nothing* (113 performances),⁴ Hamlet (90), King Lear (85) and, of course, Richard III (83). While manager of Drury Lane he appeared in his own alterations as Romeo (60 performances), Macbeth (37), Posthumus in *Cymbeline* (23) and Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* (23). The only leading Shakespearean roles he attempted in which he was not acclaimed were Antony (6 performances) and Othello (3). Shakespeare not only brought Garrick fame, riches and social position, but he also offered the actor magnificent opportunities to practise his art, and Garrick's letters demonstrate the immense care with which he studied the texts in order to tease out the finest nuances of meaning, and so determine where emphases, pauses and breaths should occur in performance. Because of similarities in their backgrounds, Garrick may well have felt a strong personal identification with Shakespeare. Both left Midlands

homes at a young age to seek fame in the capital. Garrick became an actor who wrote plays, Shakespeare a playwright who also acted. Both progressed up the social ladder and gained the highest professional eminence and royal patronage. Both were involved in the management of the companies that formed the settings for their theatrical achievements, and both survived to a prosperous and comfortable retirement in private life.

How genuinely heartfelt Garrick's frequently professed devotion to Shakespeare actually was can never be known for sure; it certainly provided a very useful professional stance. Throughout the eighteenth century, the process of establishing Shakespeare as the supreme Bard of the nation accelerated. As manager, Garrick seized the opportunities offered by the rising tide of bardolatry,⁵ and enthusiastically presented himself to the public as the high priest at Shakespeare's shrine. In the prologue with which he opened Drury Lane's 1750–1751 season, he declared: 'Sacred to Shakespeare was this spot design'd, / To pierce the heart, and humanize the mind.'⁶ In 1755 he purchased a villa at Hampton and built there, beside the Thames, a temple to Shakespeare, designed by Robert Adam, to house memorabilia and a statue of his idol. Garrick's identification in the public mind as Shakespeare's chief representative could only intensify when, in 1769, he presided over and master-minded every detail of the famous (or infamous) Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon.

Nowadays, Garrick is only a marginal figure in the scholarly world of Shakespeare studies. Few modern works concerned with eighteenth-century editors of Shakespeare pay him much attention. Simon Jarvis's single mention of Garrick is as authority for a word in Johnson's *Dictionary*,⁷ while Marcus Walsh makes three brief references in passing.⁸ The actor-manager lies quite outside the field of reference of such specialists, and any interest that his peripheral figure holds for them lies only in the fact that he made his collection of old English plays available to contemporary editors of Shakespeare, including Samuel Johnson, George Steevens and Edward Capell. Yet, in his lifetime, his domination of the theatre, his literary pursuits and his close relationships with contemporary writers and editors were such that few important Shakespeare-related projects could happen without his involvement, and a generation of playgoers came to 'know' Shakespeare primarily through Garrick's alterations. Evidence of his wide-ranging dominance is found even in Walsh's three passing mentions. He speaks of the eighteenth century's 'divinization' of the figure of Shakespeare, which 'reached its zenith' in Garrick's Ode for the Stratford Jubilee, and gives examples of 'editorial discourse' throughout the century in which 'the texts of Shakespeare

are insistently figured as sacred, reverend, scriptural'. Second, he cites Garrick's alteration of *Hamlet* (misdated to 1773) as an example of one of the 'few survivals of printed texts annotated as promptbooks' (strictly speaking it was a preparation copy, not a promptbook). Third, when dealing with the development of glossaries of Shakespeare, Walsh gives as an example the specimen annexed to Richard Warner's *A Letter to David Garrick, Esq., Concerning a Glossary to the Plays of Shakespeare* of 1768, which sought Garrick's endorsement of his proposed work. These three brief references provide glimpses of one whose influence was such that, in his own person, he linked domains that succeeding generations would fence off from one another. Later actors – Henderson and Kemble, for example – made collections of rare old plays, but after Garrick none had the authority personally to hold together the soon-to-be-separate worlds of editing and performing Shakespeare.

Garrick's claim that Shakespeare was the god of his idolatry occasionally earned him ridicule from his intimates. Boswell gives an account of Garrick in 1769 rising with 'tragick eagerness' to the bait of Johnson's praising Congreve above Shakespeare.⁹ But to his public there was nothing unreasonable in the idea that the brilliance of his performances signalled a unique insight into the mind of his idol. Garrick was early accorded the status of an expert on Shakespeare. In February 1744, for example, 'P. W.' wrote to him: 'As you seem to me to be a very good judge of Shakspeare, and have often given us his true sense and meaning where his learned editors could give us neither, I shall submit to your judgment a line in "Hamlet", which, in my opinion, is wrong placed in all the editions that I have seen.'¹⁰ Garrick was credited by admirers with interpretative powers surpassing those of his editors:

Dull Menders of a Syllable,
a learned, motley Train,
The Page with vague Conjectures fill;
and puzzle, not Explain:
In thy [Garrick's] Expression Shakespeare's Meaning shines,
Thou finest Commentator on his Lines!¹¹

Significantly, the anonymous writer of this tribute sees acting and editing as a single tradition and has little doubt that Garrick's stage can gloss Shakespeare's page and reveal its meaning.

In the eighteenth century the term 'editor' was more broadly defined than it is today, and in the eyes of his contemporaries Garrick would have been regarded as an editor of Shakespeare. In his advertisement to the

third edition (1753) of his version of *Romeo and Juliet*, Garrick called himself 'the present editor', and later he referred to his alteration of *Cymbeline* (published 1762) as 'this edition'. Pope, writing in 1725 when Garrick was eight, had used 'stage-editors' to mean player-alterers. In commenting on the notorious 'table of green fields' crux in *Henry V* (II.iii.16–17), he said: 'This nonsense got into all the following editions by a pleasant mistake of the Stage-editors, who printed from the common piece-meal Parts in the Play-house.'¹² Johnson used a shortened version of that very quotation ('This nonsense got into all the editions by a mistake of the stage editors') to illustrate his definition of 'editor' in his Dictionary of 1755. An editor, he said, was a 'Publisher: he that revises or prepares any work for publication'. But when defining 'publish', Johnson had placed the literary connotations second. The word's primary meaning, he said, was to 'discover to mankind; to make generally and openly known; to proclaim; to divulge' – exactly the service that Garrick's admirers saw him as performing for Shakespeare by revealing the plays to an ever-wider public. In this sense Garrick could be counted in his own day as honouring Shakespeare as publisher and editor, as well as actor.

Strict boundaries had not yet been set between those who served Shakespeare in the study and in the theatre. As editor, Pope had not actually re-written the plays, but he had not hesitated to update Shakespeare's vocabulary or to demote to footnotes passages he personally considered unworthy, often attributing them to interpolations by 'the players'. However, his squabbling successors over the next half-century, though they may not have realised it, were feeling their way towards the devising and adopting of generally accepted standards and methodologies for editing. This process of professionalisation was actually impeded by Garrick's pre-eminence in matters Shakespearean. Over the thirty-five years of his career, 'page' was striving to separate from 'stage', but their divorce was prevented by the authoritative figure of the great alterer-actor-manager who enjoyed public recognition as Shakespeare's supreme interpreter.

In the centuries since Garrick's death, two accounts, over-simple but persistent, of his relationship with Shakespeare have predominated. The first hails Garrick as the great restorer to the stage of plays not seen in their original forms since Shakespeare's day; the second, paradoxically, condemns him for choosing to stage travesties when he could have presented what Shakespeare actually wrote. The first of these myths – Garrick the great rescuer of Shakespeare – was widely circulated in Garrick's lifetime

and fostered by his earliest biographers, Thomas Davies and Arthur Murphy,¹³ both of whom had had the incomparable advantage of having worked professionally with their subject: Davies as a member of the Drury Lane company, Murphy as a successful and prolific playwright. Davies recalls: 'But when in the revival of Shakespeare's plays, he [Garrick] complied with the general taste as well as his own, he was determined to restore him to his genuine splendour and native simplicity, unincumbered with the unnatural additions, and gaudy trappings, thrown upon him by some writers who lived in the reign of Charles the Second.'¹⁴ Murphy quotes Dr Browne's tribute, written in 1776 upon Garrick's retirement:

A great genius hath arisen to dignify the stage, who, when it was sinking into the lowest insipidity, restored it to the fullness of its antient splendour, and, with a variety of powers beyond example, established nature, Shakespeare, and himself.¹⁵

Garrick's monument in Westminster Abbey, erected in 1797 eighteen years after his death, perpetuates the myth. It shows him in the act of 'throwing aside a curtain, which discovers a medallion of the great Poet [...] The curtain itself is designed to represent the Veil of Ignorance and Barbarism, which darkened the drama of the immortal bard till the appearance of Garrick.'¹⁶ The inscription plays up the theme of Garrick as restorer of Shakespeare from oblivion:

Tho' sunk in death the forms the Poet drew,
The Actor's genius bade them breathe anew.
Tho', like the Bard himself, in night they lay,
Immortal Garrick call'd them back to day.

The second myth – Garrick the vandal – emerges in biographies of the nineteenth century, a period when devotion to Shakespeare could only be envisaged in terms of strict faithfulness to his writings. Percy Fitzgerald, for example, pays very little attention to Garrick's alterations of Shakespeare, and Shakespeare is not even listed in his index.¹⁷ The exception is Garrick's 'hacked and hewed' alteration of *Hamlet*. Like James Boaden before him,¹⁸ Fitzgerald is shocked that, at the close of his career Garrick, who had 'done so much for Shakspeare', could commit such sacrilege as 'that famous and Gothic mutilation of "Hamlet", the outrageous hewing to pieces of the noble play'.

Even more indignant was Joseph Knight, who saw Garrick's 'perversions of Shakespeare's texts' as his 'crowning disgrace'.¹⁹ Knight condemned Garrick for hypocritically posing 'as the great defender of Shakespeare, oblivious of the fact that he had continually, with no feeling of shamefacedness, promoted his own kitchen drudge of a muse to

occupy the same eminence with the muse of Shakespeare'. Garrick's first biographer of the twentieth century, Mrs Clement Parsons (1906), followed the line of her predecessors in deploring his 'inexcusable stupidity' in retaining Tate's happy ending to *King Lear*.²⁰ As for his *Hamlet*: 'Could obtuseness go further?' Frank Hedgcock, too, agreed that Garrick's 'travesty of *Hamlet*' was just 'the most celebrated' of 'all Garrick's nefarious attempts on Shakespeare's pieces'.²¹ The counter-view – Garrick the restorer – is heard again from the 1920s. Shakespeare scholar George Odell had no doubts that alteration was always to be deplored but, refreshingly, was prepared to give Garrick credit for turning the tide against it.²² W. J. Macqueen Pope, in his history of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, went further, writing (quite inaccurately): 'One of his best and wisest actions was to restore Shakespeare's own text to his mutilated plays. [...] Garrick threw overboard all the "improvers"'.²³

It is doubtful whether any of these writers had closely studied Garrick's alterations of Shakespeare. For example, his major biographer of the mid-twentieth century, the historian Carola Oman, pays them scarcely any attention.²⁴ Indeed, had they wished to do so, they would have found it difficult to obtain either texts to consult or reliable data on performances. All this was to change when Garrick found his Boswell in the person of George Winchester Stone, whose doctoral thesis²⁵ marked the beginning of a long career as Garrick's devoted champion, in which he returned again and again to the defence of Garrick's alterations of Shakespeare. Garrick is Stone's hero, who

found God's plenty in the tragic vein in the great plays of England's past, largely (but not exclusively) in Shakespeare. His genius lay not in imitating those plays (as a number of writers had tried to do), but in making their texts live anew on stage by restoring them in many ways to their authors.²⁶

Stone was one of the editorial team employed on *The London Stage*, a 'calendar of plays, entertainments and afterpieces, together with casts, box-receipts and contemporary comment, compiled from the playbills, newspapers and theatrical diaries of the period'. This remarkable work of reference appeared in five parts between 1960 and 1968, Stone being responsible for the critical introduction and editing of part 4, covering Garrick's period of management. It was now easy to find out what had been performed at any of the London playhouses on any night in any theatrical season between 1660 and 1800. Casts, and changes of cast, were noted and, where known, the takings from each evening were itemised.²⁷