

EDITING FOR PERFORMANCE: DR JOHNSON AND THE STAGE

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I want to begin by quoting one of Dr Johnson's notes on *Hamlet*, a passage that, though entirely characteristic, may be less than familiar to many. Johnson is commenting on the punctuation of a passage and is concerned about a sequence of dashes towards the end of the play:

To a literary friend of mine I am indebted for the following very acute observation: "Throughout this play," says he, "there is nothing more beautiful than these dashes; by their gradual elongation, they distinctly mark the balbuciation and the increasing difficulty of utterance observable in a dying man." To which let me add, that, although dashes are in frequent use with our tragic poets, yet they are seldom introduced with so good an effect as in the present instance. (qtd. in Wells 1: 69)

Johnson's reliance on others—and their cloaked identity—is something we are used to. So too Johnson's yearning here both to generalize about tragic practice and to praise the particular local effect in Shakespeare can be paralleled frequently elsewhere. There is that precision that is

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also apparent in Johnson's note on Ophelia's reference to "a rope of onions", a phrase that Pope had suggested emending to "a *robe* of onions":

Rope is, undoubtedly, the true reading. *A rope of onions* is a certain number of onions, which, for the convenience of portability, are, by the market-women, suspended from a *rope*: not, as the Oxford editor ingeniously, but improperly, supposes, in a bunch at the end, but by a perpendicular arrangement. (qtd. in Wells 1: 64)

But perhaps Ophelia referring to a rope of onions in the mad scene is unfamiliar too:

To bring a rope of onions, too, I tried,
But father eat them all before he died. (qtd. in Wells 1: 43)

The couplet, like the notes, are, of course, Shakespeare and Johnson parodied, all taken from one of the earliest and one of the best of the nineteenth-century Shakespeare burlesques, John Poole's *Hamlet Travestie*, first published in 1810 and revised and extended by Poole in further editions in the next two years. *Hamlet Travestie*, Poole's first play, was published in the hope of performance rather than in response to it, though it was performed later, for instance as a benefit for John Liston in 1813, the beginning of a successful collaboration between author and actor. The text of the comic play is accompanied by annotations parodying Johnson, Steevens and others for, as Poole writes in the preface,

no real admirer of SHAKESPEARE but must feel indignant at finding his sense perverted, and his meaning obscured, by the false lights, and the fanciful and arbitrary illustrations, of Black-letter Critics and Coney-catching Commentators. And it had been well if some able satirist had exposed and punished their folly, their affectation, and their arrogance, at

the time when the rage for editing and commenting on SHAKESPEARE was at its height, and every pedant in Black-letter lore assumed the prerogative of an *authorized* polluter of his text. (qtd. in Wells 1:5-6)

Significantly Poole adds a footnote on Johnson:

From this general reproach must the great Dr. Johnson be excepted, who, *even as a Shakespearian Commentator* [a phrase Poole italicizes], is entitled to our respect; and of whom it may truly be said, that he never wrote without the intention, and scarcely ever without the effect, of rendering mankind wiser or more virtuous. (qtd. in Wells 1:6)

Poole's template of text and commentary was used for three further burlesques of Shakespeare tragedies, *Macbeth Travestie*, published in *Accepted Addresses*, and *Othello Travestie*, both published in 1813, and *Richard III Travestie* (1816), none apparently performed.

But annotations cannot be performed on stage. Though performative—and I shall want to argue that Johnson's performativity as editor is exactly what Poole recognizes and parodies—editorial commentary resists theatrical representation. Performance has no space for footnotes, except, I think uniquely, in the extraordinary case of Peter Greenaway's version of the first eight cantos of Dante's *Inferno* made for television in 1989, where numbered headnotes (i.e. notes spoken by talking heads) appear to explain the text. Before turning to the problems of performing Johnson's Shakespeare, I want to set it against two other editions of the period. It seems appropriate to start, as editions begin, with a brief *dramatis personae*: my cast-list will include a censor, a gentleman and a bookseller.

On 3rd January 1759, William Warburton wrote to David Garrick praising him in advance of the first performance of his adaptation of *Antony and Cleopatra* that evening: "whatsoever advantage, I say, which Shakespeare may receive from the whims of his dead editors, he

will this night receive a luster from a living one, which I make no doubt was in his own idea when he wrote the play, but despaired to give" (qtd. in Boaden 1: 93). Garrick had sent Warburton a copy of the printed text of the adaptation three days earlier and Warburton's reference to the "whims" of "dead editors" is a dig at the visible signs in the text of the hand of Garrick's collaborator in the adaptation, Edward Capell, for the 1758 *Antony* is Capell's first published work as Shakespeare editor, complete with a list of "*Conjectural Readings*" at the end of the text (sig. G2b). If, on the one hand, the text is a theatre version, "fitted for the Stage by abridging only", as the title-page announces, it is also a first attempt at the mode of textual presentation (short only of emendations at the page-foot) that Capell would use in the 1768 edition and on which he had already been hard at work for twelve years, having begun collecting editions and being in the midst of transcribing the text afresh. The first sheets of the edition would go to press in September 1760, less than two years later. Capell and Garrick had collaborated already in the cataloguing of Garrick's play collection in 1756 and Capell, unlike Johnson, made extensive use of Garrick's library for his edition. They worked on *Antony* by Capell marking the cuts in a 1734 printing of Rowe's text, adding stage-business as necessary.¹ I say "they worked" but it is not clear how much of the work was Garrick's and how much Capell's own. The published text mentions neither name, with its dedicatory poem to an unnamed Countess signed "Ignoto".

This is all familiar but I want to suggest another context for the collaboration. Since 1749, after the death of the playwright Thomas Odell, Capell had been Deputy Examiner of plays, working for William Chetwynd who was appointed Examiner by Grafton after the Licensing Act in 1737. He continued in the post until his death in 1781. Capell was closely involved in the censoring of plays and many manuscripts in the Larpent collection are marked by Capell, who was particularly concerned with removing political allusions, wherever he spotted them and however innocent they may have been. Capell, mocked by the *Biographica Dramatica* as "our guardian eunuch of the stage", clearly lacked a sense of proportion in his work, manifesting "an inability to

distinguish between the important and the insignificant" (Conolly 34).² Capell and Garrick corresponded about matters to do with Capell's job as Deputy Examiner and Garrick's as Manager of Drury Lane.³ The involvement of Capell in the editing of *Antony* for the stage is a moment of gamekeeper turned poacher, creating a version which heavily cuts the play's political concerns in ways that not only increase the focus on this "historical Play", as the title-page calls it, as a drama of two lovers but also chimes exactly with Capell's practice as Deputy Examiner over cutting new plays submitted for licensing.

While Capell's other job that he also owed to the Duke of Grafton, Groom of the Privy Chamber, was something of a sinecure, his work as Deputy Examiner was time-consuming, tense and detailed, and, characteristically, he discharged his responsibilities with extreme care. Capell's editing of Shakespeare could then be seen not only as the work of an innovative scholar whose methodology as editor has come to be rated extremely highly, but also as the outcome, throughout the years of editing and annotating Shakespeare, of prolonged immersion in the careful reading of new drama, a context without annotations and commentary, where the text stands alone and is read in isolation from considerations other than its legality for performance. Recontextualising Capell's work as editor in this way identifies him as engaged in editing within a context of performance practice, of reading as and for the spectator and the audience member. The *mise-en-page* of the 1768 edition was in part then a reflection of a practice of play-publication and of the nature of play-script, not only a response to the excesses of recent Shakespeare editions. A next stage for Capell studies might be to look closely at the Larpent collection and see more exactly the nature of his examining work, reading it against the Shakespeare edition.⁴

Warburton's letter praises the Capell-Garrick text of *Antony* for being "prettily printed" but, he goes on,

without doubt the mysterious marks you speak of, mean something; but I think it would be an impertinent curiosity in

the public to ask what? When every religion, and even every trade has its mysteries, it would be hard to deny it to the Worshipful Company of Editors. Besides, these dealers in other men's sense should give a *sign*, at least, that they have some of their own. (qtd. in Boaden 1: 92-3)

Warburton was mocking Capell's innovatory forms of punctuation used here in print for the first time. The explanations for the dashes, ranged high and low, the high-level point, the single and double crosses, and the double inverted commas had indeed not yet been published. Capell with typical and frustrating restraint included them in the preface to his *Prolusions* published in 1760 and nowhere else (v-vi). Someone reading the version of *Antony* in 1758 would have had to wait for the explanation, just as someone reading the 1768 edition of Shakespeare had to go elsewhere to understand Capell's distinctive usage.

Capell used the marks for changes in address (the dashes), for something shown or pointed to (the single cross), for "a thing deliver'd" (the double cross), for asides (the double inverted commas), and, extremely rarely, for irony (the point "ranging with the top of the letter"):

It is hop'd, that when these new-invented marks are a little consider'd, they will be found by the candid and discerning to be no improper substitutes to those marginal directions that have hitherto obtain'd; which are both a blemish to the page they stand in, and inadequate to the end propos'd. (*Prolusions* v-vi)

For the most part the marks correspond, often more consistently and more effectively, to the kinds of directions that the tradition of editing had begun to add to clarify the text—and Johnson's markings are of course a significant and performance-aware aspect of that development. It is the mark of irony which is most unusual: "there seem'd", Capell wrote,

to be much want of a particular mode of punctuation to distinguish irony; which is often so delicately couch'd as to escape the notice even of the attentive reader, and betray him into error. (*Prolusions* 5)

But, if that is the case—and Shakespeare is the most ironic of all playwrights—then Capell's refusal to use it more widely is astonishing. In the 1758 *Antony and Cleopatra* the mark appears only once: for Enobarbus' lines

"Yes, like enough; high-battl'd *Cæsar* will"
"Unstate his happiness, and be stag'd to the shew"
"Against a sword" ⁵ (56)

Why here and not, say, Cleopatra's "Can *Fulvia* die?" (1758, 15)? In the whole of the 1768 *Hamlet*, perhaps the play where Shakespeare is at his most frequently ironic, there is apparently no use of it whatsoever.⁶ If Capell is on the one hand embedded more than we have suspected in a performative context, the text also leaves performative reading at the reader's discretion, creating what we could see as a theatre of reading, a space unmarked by the interventions of representation and interpretation.

By contrast the other major edition of the decade after Johnson's is ambivalently placed in relation to performance. Bell's Shakespeare, which started publication late in 1773, ostensibly represents contemporary theatre practice, announcing the plays "As they are now performed at the Theatres Royal in London; Regulated from the Prompt Books of each House By Permission". The first five volumes included the plays currently in the repertory while the last three shifted the tense of the title-page, "As they *were* performed", and no longer including on the title-pages for the individual plays any reference to the theatre, the prompt-book, the managers' permission, or the prompter. For most plays, then, the text represents the performance version in use at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, while for others it represents both

Shakespeare's full text and those cuts which Francis Gentleman, the gentleman of my cast, as editor/commentator, viewed as necessary to make the play performable. For *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, Gentleman is "doubtful" whether the play, "tho' excellently wrote", "has any chance for long existence on the stage".

Twenty years since, that very able and successful Dramatic Modeller, Mr. *Garrick*, produced it under the most probable state of reformation; yet, tho' elegantly decorated, and finely performed, it too soon languished.⁷ (*Bells's Edition* 6: 261)

Though the text of other plays may align with the performing text, the annotation, the "notes critical and illustrative" that Gentleman provided are not a commentary on those performances. Garrick may be praised as a superlative Macbeth in the introduction (1:3), "[t]hough it is not strictly within our design to speak of Performers", but Gentleman's footnote at Macbeth's first appearance, the usual place where he notes the kind of actor who should play each role, does not describe Garrick at all: "*Macbeth* requires a bold, graceful, soldier-like Figure; strong marking features; a firm, deep, extensive voice" (1:8). Similarly, though he lists the casts for *Macbeth* at both patent theatres, he never refers to any of the other actors. The edition was dedicated to Garrick and Gentleman "pronounce[s him] the best illustrator of, and the best *living comment* on, SHAKESPEARE, that has ever appeared, or possibly ever will grace the British stage" (1.A2r). But Garrick's illustrating is not recorded and Gentleman's "illustrative" notes are primarily representative of his own moral and poetic anxieties about Shakespeare's text, with occasional remarks about the way scenes should be played, rather than the way they were played:

The Scene of the murder is most admirably calculated for action, and should be played in a tremulous, under tone of voice, with a strong exertion of horror struck features, on the part of *Macbeth*; his lady's countenance should express an eager firmness, touch'd with apprehension. (1: 23)

An approving comment on Betterton's staging of the apparition scene with the witches speaking the apparitions' lines or a complaint about the costuming of the murderers "in the most ragamuffin stile" ("such appearances could ever come before a monarch") or about the manner of stage deaths ("we are not fond of characters writhing and flouncing on carpets") (1: 48, 35, 69) is an unusual event, rare enough in *Macbeth*, increasingly unusual as Gentleman gets further into his task. Gentleman's edition is both a record of practice and a refusal to comment on it, an ambivalence increased in the republication from 1775 to 1778 as individual plays when each was given an image of an actor in a role in the play, images which represent actor against a theatrical void, devoid of set and setting.⁸

Gentleman defines his purpose as providing "a companion to the theatre" and he records Garrick's anxiety that the necessities of theatre, changes made "for the convenience of representation, or accommodation to the powers and capacities of his performers, might be misconstrued into a critical presumption of offering to the literati a reformed and more correct edition of our author's works" (1: 8). If at the new Globe in London now, you will often see playgoers, nose in text, never looking at the stage, flipping through the play to find where a cut has landed them, it is also a practice that Gentleman's edition is explicitly designed to assist: "those who take books to the THEATRE, will not be so puzzled themselves to accompany the speaker; nor so apt to condemn performers of being imperfect, when they pass over what is designedly omitted" (1: 7).

Whether or not this practice was widespread is not the point. Gentleman is here proposing a theatrical usefulness for the text and the plays themselves are continually evaluated for their performability: *Julius Caesar*

as it rests upon one great, independant [sic] idea, the love of our country, it can never be very popular;...besides it requires a greater number of good speakers, than generally meet in one or both of the theatres. (5: 3)

But Gentleman often balances reading and watching: *Richard III*, for instance, “must always read well, but act better” (3: 3); of *Twelfth Night*, “Action must render it more pleasing than perusal” (5: 315). The audience is also a reading public. Spectators read as well as watch the play and may be more pleased by one than the other. The plays themselves are approved for viewing both morally and aesthetically precisely insofar as contemporary performance practice reforms them. If Capell was effectively the period’s theatre censor, it is no accident that Gentleman’s major publication before *Bell’s* was *The Dramatic Censor*, published in two large volumes in 1770, an account endlessly judgemental and rarely theatrical, the plays treated as dramatic literature.

In effect the link to the theatre in *Bell’s Edition of Shakespeare* is a marketing ploy to define the difference from other kinds of editions (Johnson, Capell, Johnson-Steevens), while the commentary, most striking for its absolute refusal to praise much in Shakespeare, provides an exemplification of cultural reading, the text read for its moral function and its poetic virtues, as much as for its theatrical potential. Many plays are seen as unperformable; others might just make the transition. Gentleman recommends passages that are not played and includes them in his commentary, while loathing some that are performed. The text is a malleable entity, cut and re-cut to fit a cultural template that Gentleman finds appropriate.

Just occasionally Gentleman is startlingly brilliant in his theatrical awareness: praising Shakespeare’s handling in *Measure for Measure* of the four central characters, the duke, Angelo, Lucio and Isabella, he adds “the two former require great help from the actors who personate them; the two latter assist the performers” (3: 3). It is one of the few moments that Gentleman is recognizably an ex-actor and dramatist as well as critic, the author of plays as well as the satire *The Theatres: A Poetical Dissection* he published pseudonymously in 1771.

Capell’s Shakespeare, I have been suggesting, needs reconsidering for its links to performance. Gentleman’s needs realigning with its own ambivalent status in which the very innovativeness of the edition—for

there is no model for such a complete Shakespeare—leads to a cultural insecurity of placement, located midway and uncomfortably between the practice of playgoing and the world of learned literati. How then might Johnson's Shakespeare be seen? My concern in this is precisely because of the location of much work on Johnson by Shakespeare scholars, work which is either a part of a history of criticism (the great tradition) or a part of reaffirming an equally great traditional line of textual transmission through the eighteenth-century editions, that litany that traces a line of descent from Rowe to Malone. It is a history of textual study that, until recently, rigorously excluded performance evidence, for Shakespeareans need reminding that, as recently as the Arden second series, editions had no illustrations of performance and no reference to stage history, *Bell's Shakespeare* and the Dover Wilson-Quiller Couch New Shakespeare for Cambridge being striking exceptions. The context is, then, one which has been effectively deaf to the presence of performance in Johnson's practice, restricting its acknowledgement primarily to the gap between Shakespeare's *King Lear* and the Tate-Garrick version to which Johnson assented. Our conventional history has been based on an unquestioned assumption that a divide began in the 1660s with the beginnings of publication of adapted texts, exemplified by the familiar preface to the 1676 edition of Davenant's *Hamlet* with its division between a reading text and the performance text:

This Play being too long to be conveniently Acted, such places as might be least prejudicial to the Plot or Sense, are left out upon the Stage: but that we may no way wrong the incomparable Author, are here inserted according to the Original Copy with this Mark.⁹

Capell belongs on one side of this line and Bell's edition on the other. The membrane between the two is seen as impermeable. So, for instance, Marcus Walsh describes "eighteenth-century theatre texts [as] functional reprints rather than works of scholarship...bearing

virtually no signs of editorial intervention in terms of commentaries, glossaries, or introductions" (126), a statement that might be true for many but bears little relation to Gentleman's work, unscholarly perhaps but full of editorial interventions.

If the rigour of the conventional division between scholarship and performance risks collapse in these other two cases, what happens to it in Johnson's case? One route would be to re-examine *Irene* as an emerging text, rather than as a completed one that failed, to see if it helps to define Johnson's attitude towards drama. Johnson's first draft material opens with notes on his reading of Knolles' *General Historie of the Turkes*, moves on to construct a list of characters before writing out what we would call a treatment or scenario but which Johnson would have called the "scenary", defined in the *Dictionary* as "The disposition and consecution of the scenes of a play" (*OED*scenary 1).¹⁰ Strikingly, here, Johnson seems to have sketched the outline of Act 5 in some detail before listing twice the sequence of characters in each scene of the final sequence:

Scene 1 Aspasia sola 2 Aspasia Irene &c 3 Aspasia Irene
Demetrius 4 Irene etc Happy bark 5 Irene. Hasan. Caraza.
Jealous beauty – force of woe – relenting Nature shr[inks]
from the hated t[ask] – Unhappy fair – Grant me one Resign.
Repentance. (Johnson 6: 229)

And so on. As intriguing is a sequence of notes written upside down in the Hyde notebook, probably as the first notes made in the book, reminders of technical requirement for dramaturgy that Johnson needed to incorporate, an awareness of the processes of playwriting that reflects his later interest in the ways in which Shakespeare does and often does not remember to do such things:

To mention Abdalla in the first act
To make Aspasia and Irene name each other.
The death of Abdalla to be produced by Caraza's neecessity
[sic] of discovering him. (Johnson 6: 230)

But perhaps no-one would wish to reread *Irene*.

Performance is a recurrent issue in Johnson's approach to Shakespeare, a presence more substantial than acknowledged. Take the following two notes on the Latin lesson in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, one from Gentleman and the other from Johnson:

That ridiculous excrescence of scene in the original, which begins the fourth Act with an examination of young *Page* in grammar, is justly cut off, the act commencing much better here. (*Bells's Edition* 3: 55)

This is a very trifling scene, of no use to the plot, and I should think of no great delight to the audience; but Shakespeare best knew what would please. (qtd. in Sherbo 7: 336)

Neither likes the scene and can see its point. Gentleman sees it as properly cut in contemporary performance, Johnson who, as a result, could not have seen it in performance, at the same time is prepared to allow it as likely to have been successful, given Shakespeare's knowledge of his audience. This is not simply an attempt at the historical reconstruction of audience response nor is it a gibe at the poor taste of early modern playgoers; rather, it is a recognition that the 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. The scene indeed does not read well and does play well, especially to an audience with that elementary knowledge of Latin and of grammar needed to understand Mrs Quickly's errors.

Performance can also be for Johnson the testing-ground for emendation. Warburton had proposed an emendation in the first scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a play incidentally which *Bell's Shakespeare* treats as unperformed: in Theseus' line to Hermia on her father "within his power / To leave the figure, or disfigure it" (1.1.50-1), he altered *leave* to *'leve*, glossing it as a shortened form of *releve*, "to heighten or add to the beauty of the figure". Johnson rejected the idea:

I know not why so harsh a word should be admitted with so little need, a word that, spoken, could not be understood, and of which no example can be shown. (qtd in Sherbo 7:136)

The homophone is impossible to be grasped in the highly specialized, indeed impossible way Warburton had suggested, visible on the page but inaudible. Johnson, who could not have heard the line performed, rejects it because it is unperformable. In the same way, he rejects Warburton's emendation of Orlando's opening speech *As You Like It*, "this my father bequeath'd me" for "this fashion bequeath'd me" (1.1.1), because

There is, in my opinion, nothing but a point misplaced, and an omission of a word which every hearer can supply, and which therefore an abrupt and eager dialogue naturally excludes. (qtd. in Sherbo 7: 242)

These effects in Johnson's analysis are not like those references, for example in the note at the end of *The Merry Wives*, which align reader and/or spectator: the play "never yet had reader or spectator, who did not think it too soon at an end" (qtd. in Sherbo 7: 341). This is not a particular response to performance. Often, of course, Johnson identifies performance response as approving something that ought to be rejected on the kinds of aesthetic and moral grounds that define drama for him as they would for Francis Gentleman:

The marriage of Olivia, and the succeeding perplexity, though well enough contrived to divert on the stage, wants credibility, and fails to produce the proper instruction required in the drama, as it exhibits no just picture of life. (qtd. in Sherbo 7: 326)

Johnson's sense of early modern performance was, of course, extremely shaky. Quince's suggestion that Flute could play Thisbe in a mask is not a clue to "the common use of masks" in professional theatre to cover the lack of a "young man who could perform the part with a

face that might pass for feminine" (qtd. in Sherbo 7.140). But there are three areas in the Preface and elsewhere where he writes with the perception of an intersection—or at least a problematic historical continuity—between early modern and contemporary modes of performance and of the connection between performance and reading.

The first is the problem of scenery in its second sense in the *Dictionary*, what he defines as "The representation of the place in which an action is performed". Place and the audience's consciousness of place are clearly important to Johnson, part of the tension between audience self-consciousness and the supposed demands of the unities, the "false assumptions" that created the unities of time and place, and the "essential" importance to "the fable" of "unity of action" (Preface qtd. in Sherbo 7: 79). But it is also part of a kind of editorial flexibility over the fictive space in which the authority of early texts works against the assuredness of recent editors. The location of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* 2.6, for instance, is simply an editorial addition:

It is to be observed that in the first folio edition, the only edition of authority, there are no directions concerning the scenes; they have been added by the later editors, and may therefore be changed by any reader that can give more consistency or regularity to the drama by such alterations...I know not whether the following soliloquy of Protheus is so proper in the street. (qtd. in Sherbo 7: 167)

The sense of place, "scenes" used in that sense, needs defining by the reader and may be redefined in the interests of a neoclassical orthodoxy, "consistency or regularity", but it also needs to be defined for production, just as our notion of the heath in *King Lear* is the consequence of Rowe's adoption of the "Desert Heath" setting Tate had chosen, not as a result of anything in Shakespeare's play which never uses the word at all, while Tate's Cordelia does speak the word as she looks for "A poor old Man, who through this Heath has stray'd / The tedious Night" (35).

It is also a topic on which Johnson's approach to performance as "dramatick exhibition", "a book recited with concomitants that encrease or diminish its effect" (qtd. in Sherbo 7:79), ran up against the effective counter-arguments in William Kenrick's attack in the *Monthly Review*, for, as Brian Vickers sums it up, Kenrick shows

Johnson's fundamental error in assuming that the "dramatic fable" is meant to be believed in its "materiality": "The dramatic unities, if necessary, are necessary to support the *apparent probability*, not the *actual credibility* of the drama" [...]. Kenrick's argument is superior to Johnson's not only in its logic but in its grasp of the fundamentals of theatrical experience [...] [his] refutation of Johnson is both intelligent and responsive to the nature of drama. (5: 26-7)

Kenrick may mark out the limitations of Johnson's view of theatre and to that extent might be thought to be underlining the connection with Johnson's concept that "A play read, affects the mind like a play acted" (qtd. in Sherbo 7: 79), as if that were a denial of performance. But Johnson's concept of the interlaced nature of reading and performance is also apparent in the second area in which the history of performance and the act of reading align, the problem of act-division. Johnson, it is fair to say, goes on and on about act-division in note after note, even though he knows "the common distribution of plays into acts (...) to be in almost all plays void of authority" (qtd. in Sherbo 7: 107). There is a gap between early modern continuous performance as Johnson perceives it and "[t]he settled mode of the theatre" which "requires four intervals in the play". Johnson's rule for act-division may derive from a notion of fictive unity of time and that, as he saw, when applied to Shakespeare, produces "a thousand absurdities". At the same time, the person who carefully outlined the scenery for *Irene* in its five-act form is aware of how the structuring of drama into acts is also an act of perception in reading and watching. Johnson is in search of a proportion, a balance in act-structure which, at the same time, he knows the nature of

the Shakespearean form resists. The early modern dramaturgy and Johnson's notion of the balanced rhythm play as read or watched are in conflict. Yet he also perceives act-division as a movement of place, "scenery" in that sense. So, for example, the scene of Pistol and the leeks in *Henry V*, conventionally the first scene of Act 5, ought, for Johnson,

to conclude the fourth act and be placed before the last chorus. There is no English camp in this act; the quarrel apparently happens before the return of the army to England, and not after so long an interval as the chorus has supplied. (qtd. in Sherbo 8: 562)

The same kind of argument at the same dramatic juncture is used over act-division in *Richard III* where 5.1

should, in my opinion, be added to the foregoing act, so the fourth act will have a more full and striking conclusion, and the fifth act will comprise the business of the important day, which put an end to the competition of York and Lancaster. (qtd. in Sherbo 8: 628)¹¹

Whether act-division is "distributed by chance, or...by the judgment or caprice of the first editors" (qtd. in Sherbo 8: 629) is not the point. The problem is a perception of form as it affects reading or viewing. We, of course, watch Shakespeare plays as if they exist in two or, occasionally, three acts. Johnson and his theatre-going readers watched the plays as five-act structures.

However we conceive of the kinds of interconnections that place and act-division offer, they are, finally, far less important than Johnson's concept of character, my final area of concern, for the difficulties of acting "just representations of general nature" have, it seems to me, never been thought through. At the core of this comes Johnson's concept of the actor's responsibilities, his view of the work the actor does.¹² Take Murphy's familiar account:

The present writer well remembers being in conversation with Dr. Johnson near the side of the scenes during the tragedy of *King Lear*: when Garrick came off the stage, he said, "You two talk so loud you destroy all my feelings." "Prithee," replied Johnson, "do not talk of feelings, Punch has no feelings." This seems to have been his settled opinion; admirable as Garrick's imitation of nature always was, Johnson thought it no better than mere mimicry. (qtd. in Hill 1: 457)¹³

In Reynolds' version of the same thought in his "Two Dialogues" Garrick's attitude towards the feelings is placed even more firmly than in Murphy's or Steevens' account of the sentiment:

Garrick's trade was to represent passion, not to feel it...
 GIB. But surely he feels the passion at the moment he is representing it.
 JOHNS. About as much as Punch feels. That Garrick himself gave into this foppery of feelings I can easily believe; but he knew at the same time that he lied. (qtd in Hill 2: 248)

Mimicry was, of course, something Johnson admired and which he carefully evaluated, for instance in his dislike of Foote: "He gives you something different from himself, but not the character which he means to assume. He goes out of himself, without going into other people" (Boswell 2: 154). It was also a talent Boswell claimed Garrick supremely possessed¹⁴ and which Reynolds identified Johnson as seeing in Garrick as something that went far beyond externals:

Garrick, besides his exact imitation of the voice and gesture of his original, to a degree of refinement of which Foote had no conception, exhibited the mind and mode of thinking of the person imitated. (qtd. in Hill 2: 240-1)

The form of acting that Johnson admires is then not a product of an obsession with matching actor's feelings to character's but of finding a form of representation of thought as well as body. Feeling is too compromised by the accidents of chance to be a basis for regular performance, for, as Reynolds ventriloquises Johnson,

No, Sir, Garrick left nothing to chance; every gesture, every expression of countenance, and variation of voice, was settled in his closet before he set his foot upon the stage. (qtd. in Hill 2: 248)

Performance is the repetition of what has been already formulated, not a moment of inspiration but the outcome of study. This may be unfair to some part of Garrick's achievement but it is also profoundly accurate and aware of the major part of his art.

In part, we can see the problem as both a product of Garrick's (in Johnson's view, arrogant) claim to a sensibility that Johnson refused to allow him to possess and a result of an attitude towards the actor as presenting rather than becoming, more Brecht than Stanislavsky as it were. Garrick, for Johnson, does not of course become Richard III and deserved hanging if he thought he did. The actor is outside the role, not inhabiting it, demonstrating it by adding action and decoration but not thereby improving it: "Many of Shakespeare's plays are the worse for being acted: Macbeth, for instance" provokes Boswell's reply "What, Sir, is nothing gained by decoration and action?" (qtd. in Hill 2: 92). The exclusion of Garrick from the *Preface to Shakespeare* is not simply annoyance over the refusal to lend books nor a commercial equation, "Garrick has been liberally paid for any thing he has done for Shakspeare [sic]" (qtd. in Hill 5: 244), it is also a judgement on what the actor cannot do: "He has not made Shakspeare better known; he cannot illustrate Shakspeare" (qtd. in Hill 5: 244-5). It is the word *illustrate* that seems here to be central. On the one hand is the project that Johnson had undertaken, the printing of Shakespeare's plays "corrected and illustrated" by Johnson as the *Proposals* put it or "with the corrections

and illustrations of Various Commentators; To which are added notes by Sam. Johnson" as the edition finally phrased it. This is the same sense as Charlotte Lennox's reprinting of Shakespeare's sources as *Shakespear Illustrated* in 1753, for which Johnson wrote the epistle dedicatory. We may see this as the *Dictionary's* sense 3, "to explain; to clear; to elucidate". On the other is Johnson's sense 3, "to brighten with honour", something that Johnson's edition may have done but which Garrick was unable to do.

If the actor cannot illustrate and does not represent, if instead s/he presents, can s/he (re)present *general* nature? Johnson's problems with performance return to questions of probability and extreme. In exactly the way that Stanislavsky's account of *Othello* so conspicuously fails to account for Iago,¹⁵ so Johnson's concept of generality narrows the field of the actor's performance. Hence, for instance, his suspicions of the witches in *Macbeth*. If mimicry is the sum of the actor's achievement, how can some Shakespeare's characters be performed at all? Johnson's Shakespeare resists performance at exactly the point at which Shakespeare's fantasy, his imagination that Johnson so admired, stretched the concept of the natural.

But Johnson's Shakespeare is not inimical to others' understanding of performance. One copy of Johnson's edition of Shakespeare belonged to the bookseller Thomas Davies, the man, of course, who introduced Boswell to Johnson and who wrote a superb early biography of Garrick. Davies used his interleaved copy to write materials that would then form part of his own three-volume study of Shakespeare's plays and their performances, *Dramatic Micellanies* [sic], published in 1784.¹⁶ Davies found Johnson's edition to be the ideal place where the consideration of the plays could be extensively undertaken, as the decision to create an interleaved copy by dividing each volume of Johnson's edition into three, adding up to 24 volumes in all, indicates. For Davies Johnson's edition was the place in which to think about Shakespeare in a context which for Davies was always connected admiringly with performance, as an ex-actor like Davies might well do. Hence Davies saw Johnson's Shakespeare as the route to

understanding performance, something which Johnson could never entirely do.

Notes

1. The copy is now in the Folger Shakespeare Library, classmark: Prompt Ant.3. On the version, George Winchester Stone, Jr.'s article, 'Garrick's Presentation of *Antony and Cleopatra*' *RES* 13 (1937), 20-38, is still the best account.
2. L.W.Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama 1737-1824* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1976), p.34. Conolly's account of Capell's work (pp. 31-4) forms the basis for mine but see also Alice Walker, 'Edward Capell and his Edition of "Shakespeare"' in Peter Alexander, ed., *Studies in Shakespeare* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp.132-48.
3. See for example David Garrick, *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. David M.Little and George M.Kahrl, 3 vols, (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 1.159 and 332.
4. MacMillan's catalogue has little to say in detail of Capell's hand in the texts; see Dougald MacMillan, *Catalogue of the Larpent Plays in the Huntington Library* (San Marino: Henry E.Huntington Library, 1939), p.66 for a rare example. Conolly is similarly imprecise while referring to his 'easily identifiable, small neat handwriting [which] appears in a number of Larpent manuscripts' (p.33).
5. *Antony and Cleopatra* (1758), p.56. I include the use here of Capell's marks for asides.
6. I rely here on the careful checking of Marcus Walsh, *Shakespeare, Milton, and Eighteenth-century Literary Editing* (Cambridge: Cambridge: University Press, 1997), p.125.
7. *Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays*, 8 vols. (London, 1773-4), 6.261.
8. On the images, see Kalman A.Burnim and Philip H.Highfill, Jr., *John Bell, Patron of British Theatrical Portraiture* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998). On Gentleman, I have found my thoughts converging with Stuart Sillars, 'Seeing, Studying, Performing: *Bell's Edition of Shakespeare* and Performative Reading' *Performance Research* (forthcoming). There is a brief discussion of Gentleman in Lois Potter, 'Humour Out of Breath: Francis Gentleman and the

Henry IV Plays in Lois Potter and Arthur Kinney, eds., *Shakespeare: Text and Theater* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), pp.285-97.

9. *Hamlet* (London, 1676), ð2r.
10. See Samuel Johnson, *Poems*, ed. E.L.McAdam, Jr. and George Milne, The Yale Edition, vol.6 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp.218-29.
11. 8.628. See also the worrying at where the end of Act 4 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* comes (7.155) and the divide between Acts 2 and 3 of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (7.168).
12. The best work summarizing this is still Joan E.Klingel's article, 'Backstage with Dr.Johnson: "Punch has no feelings"' *Studies in Philology*, 57 (1980), 300-18.
13. George Birkbeck Hill, ed., *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1897), 1.457. Compare George Steevens' version of the same story: 'As to your feelings, David...Punch has just as many' (Ibid., 2.317).
14. See, for example, *ibid.*, 1.99, 2.326 and 2.464.
15. See Konstantin Stanislavsky, *Stanislavsky Produces Othello* (London: Bles, 1948).
16. The handwriting in the copy, now in the Folger (PR2752 1765a, copy 7), was identified by Bernice Kliman. See her article, 'Cum Notis Variorum', *Shakespeare Newsletter*, 51 (2001), pp.83-4, 90, 96.

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