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The Stages of Celebrity

By

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A thesis submitted to the University of
Birmingham for the MPhil degree Course.

With thanks to Dr. Tom Lockwood and my internal and
external markers for their comments.

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January 2013

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I

Introduction: The Stages of Celebrity

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David Garrick retired from the stage in 1776. He had worked tirelessly to establish and maintain his own fame and renown during his lifetime; after his death in 1779 this task passed to his posthumous biographers. Garrick had used the popular press and print medium to excellent effect and was largely able to control many aspects of the transmission of his public perception and popular reputation.

The focus of this investigation into David Garrick's celebrity will consist of three key identifications. Firstly, an enquiry into Garrick's approach to constructing and cultivating his own fame and celebrity during his own lifetime; secondly, following Garrick's death and using Thomas Davies' *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (1780) as a case study of the beginnings of late eighteenth-century reactions to Garrick and the early creation of his posthumous fame. The third and final area of examination discusses critical responses to Garrick in the first third of the nineteenth century, using James Boaden's *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick* (1831-2) as a work indicative of Garrick's stature at this point, and the shifts that had taken place in the fifty-two years between Garrick's death and Boaden's *Correspondence* which will be balanced with current scholarship and critical responses to Garrick. Many of the methods I have drawn on in my historical approach to tracing Garrick's

career in the eighteenth century are indebted to contemporary scholarship¹ and by tracing Garrick's history, in print during his lifetime and after his death, a consideration of how the value of Garrick's cultural capital has endured and how and why the importance of this stock has either risen or depreciated in academic discourse will be undertaken.² Throughout the case-studies, the issues and arguments that biographical writing presents will be defined and discussed in order to offer analyses not only of examples of Garrick's, and his biographers' construction of his fame, but also on the biographical genre itself and how it can affect the stability of a life in print and the interaction between fame, celebrity and renown.

Robert D. Hume suggests that 'culture is a commodity produced for gain (whether pecuniary or otherwise) and offered for sale to the public.'³ The focus of this research is particularly relevant to Hume's idea of culture as commodity, and cultural capital. Garrick paid close attention to his, what we might now call, public-relations in the quest to achieve a respectable level of celebrity,⁴ and was also marketed by the popular press (after his death he was marketed very successfully as a cultural commodity of great interest and high esteem). These efforts affected the task of his biographers and the manner in which information about Garrick was disseminated to the public at different times during his life and critical afterlife.

¹ Much of the contextual work was taken from a variety of sources but principally, Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); James Raven, *The Business of Books* (Bury St. Edmunds: St. Edmundsbury Press, 2007) and John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: HarperCollins, 1997).

² This concept can be traced back to Pierre Bourdieu's 'Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction', *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change*, ed. Richard Brown, (London: Tavistock, 1973). Bourdieu enumerates the consumers of cultural capital as, 'consumers of the museum, the theatre, the concert, the art cinema, and...of all the symbolic wealth that constitutes "legitimate" culture.' pp.257-271, 265.

³ R.D. Hume, 'The Economics of Culture in London', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 4 (2006) pp.487-532, 487.

⁴ Fred Inglis' investigation of celebrity cites Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1977), as the text to use the idea of cultural commodities that originated with Karl Marx's notion of *commodity fetishism* in relation to popular culture and the mass media.

In focusing on David Garrick and the path that his celebrity followed, I want to concentrate on how a figure of fame's life in print is unsteady and constantly evolving and how, at certain junctures, his fame and celebrity has new meanings and interpretations imposed upon it from exterior influences, especially when this is applied to an individual posthumously. This study of Garrick's hand in the construction of his celebrity in his lifetime and Garrick's afterlife in print is underscored by modern critical perspectives on Garrick and how current academic discourse chooses to comment on these phenomena.⁵

In 1755, Samuel Johnson defined *fame* as concerning 'celebrity; renown... report and rumour'.⁶ Although much has changed in cultural perceptions of celebrity in the two centuries since Garrick died, there are many analogous aspects that we would recognise today in modern celebrity culture and, on the whole, they largely correspond with modern conceptions of celebrity. What appears to have changed is how we arbitrate social achievement and the type of people we reward for this social achievement. David Garrick's achievements in the public sphere, and his husbandry of these achievements to his own end, are key articulations in this investigation and the overlapping of the public and private is at the heart of understanding Garrick and his legacy. The oppositions and the often blurred boundaries between the private and the public are a key to understanding how fame and reputation is shaped and constructed.

In the late eighteenth century celebrity can be said to have been produced by a complex interaction, or an overlap, of the private motivations and desires of

⁵ Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody's introductory essay 'The Singularity of Theatrical Celebrity' makes the helpful distinction between fame as 'the nature of an exceptional life' and celebrity as 'the interplay between individuals and institutions, markets and media.' Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds. *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain 1660-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp.1-11, 1.

⁶ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Jack Lynch, ed., (Florida: Levenson Press, 2004), 182.

individuals and the subsequent levels of effort to shape and control their own fame tempered by the notable successes they achieved in their field. These efforts were then transmitted to cultural consumers via print and the popular press; in this instance in the form of newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and art. The interface between the public and the private domain and whether any public figure can truly possess a private life is another facet of the transmission of fame and one that will be discussed in relation to David Garrick with a particular focus on effect of his management of his personal reputation.

William Hazlitt analysed the cultural trends of fame and celebrity in the first half of the nineteenth century and observed that, ‘When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society, a gap which requires to be filled up.’⁷ In a fundamental way this can be read as being indicative of the way that the absence of a celebrity figure (Hazlitt uses actors as his reference point) leaves a cultural gap of posthumous interest and critical engagement that is filled by the figure in question being memorialised in whatever form is culturally dominant; prior to the twentieth century this had been the print medium but now we can add television, film and the internet into the arenas that contribute to this process. By this gap being filled up with a continuation of interest in, and a change of perspectives towards, a particular individual, the fascination, engagement and analysis of a celebrity is prolonged (and even revived) for as long as this figure is deemed culturally significant or relevant; the term that I will employ for this popularity and relevance is the *cultural capital* of a particular celebrity; Garrick had invested deeply in this cultural capital in his own lifetime. In his critical afterlife the level of interest and engagement with Garrick altered this value on an almost continual basis as he was interpreted and reinterpreted by scholarly debates. The

⁷ William Hazlitt, *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, Vol. II, ed. Duncan Wu (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998), 154.

actual value of cultural capital is impossible to quantify empirically but it is not impossible to trace or at least monitor; scholarly biographies, academic writing, critical preoccupations and in a wider sense the celebration of anniversaries and centenaries are indicative of this cultural capital. When we speak of David Garrick, the Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769 is an example of a celebration that raised the value of Garrick's already high cultural capital and significance in his own lifetime and this value has been consistently interpreted and reinterpreted in his reception history due to continued interest in another renowned figure: William Shakespeare.

Heather McPherson has observed that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries 'marked a seminal moment in the historiography of fame when celebrity first became embedded in cultural consciousness and the concept of fame was expanded and democratised.'⁸ This democratisation of fame meant that an individual was not the sole trustee of their celebrity or reputation and the public arena then becomes a much more dynamic and influential source of influence. In his lifetime Garrick was active in establishing and perpetuating his own celebrity and during this period was *subject* to his fame; in his afterlife this phenomenon was adapted and interpreted by other sources and, in that sense, David Garrick then became the *object* of this fame. This democratization of fame, owing to technological advancements and the resulting expansion of distribution of printed material, is in various ways comparable with the fairly recent emergence of the internet, social networking and the impact of blogging on the accessibility to and participation in celebrity lives. This process is relentlessly expanding and consumers were, and remain, important investors and contributors in the construction of fame and celebrity.

⁸ Heather McPherson, 'Siddons rediviva: death, memory and the theatrical afterlife.' *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*, ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.120-140, 123.

* * * *

In *A Short History of Celebrity* (2010) Fred Inglis introduces a dichotomy between celebrity and renown in which the notion of celebrity has supplanted renown, or incorporated renown in conjunction with some of the more transient conventions that the evolution of celebrity culture has produced. It is not objective to consider renown as simply archaic as it has not disappeared entirely. However sceptics would assert that the reasons that an individual achieves renown have shifted markedly since and become as synonymous with infamy as much as achievement. In the sixteenth century, renown, according to Inglis, had previously been allocated to men of achievement in a handful of specific positions:

[A] jurist, cleric, senior mercenary, or scholar was renowned for bringing honour to the office he occupied...Renown brought honour to the office not the individual, and public recognition was not so much of the man himself as of the significance of his actions for the society.⁹

A core idea in my work is that Garrick's achievement of fame made him a celebrity and this was a direct result of a combination of ability, industriousness, a flair for self-publicity, a cultivated association with Shakespeare and an ongoing interest by scholars in Garrick's career in his afterlife. Inglis, again, asserts that, 'fame was and remains either the reward of social achievement in the public field or the tribute necessarily paid to power, wealth, and privilege.'¹⁰ From this it is possible to infer that fame contains elements of both renown and celebrity. The 'reward of social achievement' seems to fit satisfactorily with the above definition of the archaic sense of renown, whereas tributes 'paid to power, wealth and privilege' surface as something that is much closer to modern perspectives of celebrity. This point will

⁹ Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 4.

¹⁰ Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity*, 57.

become more apparent when a definition of celebrity is introduced. To add to the complexity of this theme, celebrity has often been characterised as a component of fame and, as many conjecture, its poorer relation. Celebrity, according to Inglis,

[I]s either won or conferred by the mere fact of a person's being popularly acknowledged, familiarly recognised, attended to, selected as a topic of gossip, speculation, emulation, envy, groundless affection or dislike.¹¹

I feel that this clear separation seem to be both over-simplified and misleading so instead I will use these terms to discover how they filter into each other, how certain personalities can blur the boundaries and how audiences, critics and consumers shape and mediate how public figures are received and ultimately what makes these responses differ. Elizabeth Barry puts forward another theory that warns against a clear demarcation of such terms by stating that,

[F]ame and celebrity have coexisted for centuries...and have had a complex interaction with each other, rather than giving way to the other in a dynamic of inexorable decline as the more familiar story goes.¹²

To arbitrate as to who is renowned, famous or a celebrity and whether it is warranted is not part of this discussion; my aim is to examine the relationships between David Garrick's status as a celebrity and the ways in which his private and public life shaped this celebrity during his lifetime and how, after his death, biographers, academics and cultural commentators participated in reconstructing and reinterpreting his, fame, renown and celebrity.

¹¹ Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 57.

¹² Elizabeth Barry, 'Celebrity, cultural production and public life', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2008, 11: pp.251-258, 252.

In order to make the transition into the first section, an examination of David Garrick's efforts during his own lifetime to manage and control his own celebrity, a brief illustrative example from modern academic discourse will allow readers to appreciate this dichotomy of public and private and the complex accretion of influences acting on celebrity. Elizabeth Barry makes a distinction between fame and celebrity and although acknowledging that they coexist and often act together, explains that,

The engines of fame – royal recognition, state honours, religious canonization, the laurels of artistic achievement – in fact operate side by side with the engines of celebrity – the popular press, the circulation of printed images, theatre and music hall, public trials and hanging – in the early modern period and Enlightenment world, as well as in our own.¹³

David Garrick was both the *subject* and the *object* of these engines of fame and for all his restless exertion and proactive efforts to control his reputation, many of Barry's factors were beyond Garrick's sphere of control during his own lifetime as the discussion about Garrick's celebrity in the afterlife will develop.

* * * *

Having looked at some notions of celebrity, I now want to focus on David Garrick's personal exertions to build, maintain and perpetuate his own celebrity before embarking on a closer study of a particular biographical text. Garrick provides an opportunity to test the concept of celebrity, and particularly celebrity biography,

¹³ Elizabeth Barry, 'Celebrity, cultural production and public life', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2008, 11: pp.251-258, 252.

and to explore how Garrick's career and afterlife mirror or diverge from the contemporary notion of celebrity and display the way that it has evolved from the eighteenth century to the present day.

There are many single performances in Garrick's lifetime that illustrate his flair for the self-promotion of his celebrity that made him so successful but with limited time the example under consideration is one that can be viewed as characteristic of Garrick's approach to his career. In the Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769 Garrick used the festival to firm up his links to Shakespeare. The Shakespeare Jubilee is equally important and symbolic to Garrick's career as any of his stage performances and it manages to capture him constructing elements of his own celebrity in a way that would establish a firm link with Shakespeare in the eighteenth century as well as in his critical afterlife. In my research, the page rather than the stage is under examination and particularly the idea of theatrical memory: how texts are theatrical memory and how biographies of Garrick are a store of theatrical memory that allow his celebrity to persist into the afterlife. The stages of celebrity of this research's title signifies the epochs of David Garrick's fame: his life, when he could to a large extent steer (or attempt to steer) his own celebrity; his afterlife in the late-eighteenth century, where his friend Thomas Davies' biography cultivated his celebrity in the afterlife; and finally some nineteenth-century responses to Davies' version of David Garrick and what it meant for Garrick's celebrity in his reception history. After Garrick's death, the celebrity that he helped to create was taken up by critics, commentators and detractors. Critical responses to Garrick, after being released from the control of Garrick himself, were free to either support or oppose many of the characterisations of Garrick and his career that had been constructed during his lifetime.

The Shakespeare Jubilee is a major feature of biographical material on Garrick and Shakespeare's continuing elevation in both critical discourse and popular imagination would have influenced biographers' writing and critical choices. It has always maintained an important place in biographical writing on Garrick and, as Shakespeare's status was growing and theatre was beginning to becoming a more reputable profession, the Jubilee and the connection with Shakespeare was an important one for Garrick: to eighteenth century critics there were still doubts centred around the propriety of the stage and actors, although Shakespeare was becoming one of the most important English playwrights in the canon.¹⁴ In the Eighteenth century Shakespeare had been established as the national poet and the theatre had achieved a level of hitherto unknown regard and reputation. Michael Dobson calls the alliance between Garrick and Shakespeare the 'mutually reinforcing trinity of Shakespeare, Garrick, and middle-class virtue'¹⁵ The 1769 Shakespeare Jubilee provided an excellent way for Garrick to find public expression for his worship of Shakespeare that had been limited to stage-roles and adaptations before the idea of the celebration had been proposed. The Stratford Corporation had calculatedly used Garrick to their advantage in promoting the festivities and in return Garrick was able to use the festival to commemorate Shakespeare and firmly establish the link between himself and Shakespeare.¹⁶ A characteristic criticism of the 1769 Jubilee is that no Shakespeare plays were performed but a counter argument is that Stratford at that time did not possess a theatre to perform them in, let alone in the sophisticated manner to which eighteenth century audiences were accustomed. Performing a Shakespeare play in Stratford at that time would have proved an even more onerous

¹⁴ Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 1997).

¹⁵ Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 179.

¹⁶ Christian Deelman, *The Great Shakespeare Jubilee* (London: Michael Joseph, 1964).

task than organising and managing the Jubilee celebrations as they stood.¹⁷ Garrick did adapt the festivities and the ode into the parodic stage entertainment, *The Jubilee* (1769) and not only succeeded in turning a massive profit but also, as Reiko Oya demonstrates, ‘Garrick succeeded in not only parodying the parodists, the hypercritics and his own bardolatry, but in creating a thoroughly enjoyable metatheatrical entertainment.’¹⁸ Garrick was able to almost rewrite the history of the Jubilee into being a successful one whilst answering his critics in his usual manner and bringing in large revenues for himself and for Drury Lane in the process. Early on in *The Jubilee*, Garrick presents Shakespeare as a ‘...*Warwickshire* lad,/Warwickshire lad,/All be glad, For the lad of all lads, was a *Warwickshire* lad.’¹⁹ This reiteration seems angled at those people of Stratford that were unenthusiastic or opposed to celebrating their townsmen’s legacy and it is just one example of Garrick’s shrewd repositioning of the 1769 Shakespeare Jubilee from apparent failure to the success of *The Jubilee* on stage. If the criticism and anti-climactic elements of the Jubilee celebrations had worried Garrick at all, the thought of the critical marriage to Shakespeare being overlooked would almost certainly have troubled him more. *The Jubilee* dissipated these concerns and gave Garrick a successful entertainment that was performed eighty-eight times in 1769-70 and countless other times as an adapted afterpiece.²⁰

A major feature of Garrick’s career was the active contribution (it must be pointed out that he was not alone in these efforts) he made to increasing interest in and revival of Shakespeare and the Jubilee was the pinnacle of these efforts.

According to Michael Dobson, ‘Garrick would discover to his great profit, the

¹⁷ Vanessa Cunningham, *Shakespeare and Garrick* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 111.

¹⁸ Reiko Oya, *Representing Shakespearean Tragedy: Garrick, the Kembles and Kean* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 58.

¹⁹ David Garrick, *The Jubilee* (London: T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt, 1769), 2., I.4-7.

²⁰ Reiko Oya, *Representing Shakespearean Tragedy: Garrick, the Kembles and Kean* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 58.

invocation of the great Shakespeare would be capable of legitimizing anything'²¹ and although his own fame remained fairly steadfast, prevailing attitudes towards actor in society could always threatened the stability and legitimacy of his reputation. By the time Francis Wheler and the Stratford Corporation made their approach to Garrick about a celebration of what was actually the two-hundred and fifth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, he had performed a total of nineteen Shakespearean roles and his fellow actors had recognized Shakespeare's popularity as being largely due to Garrick's popular influence, even if they also acknowledged that Garrick had personally capitalised on and advanced eighteenth-century audiences' renewed interest in Shakespeare. Michael Dobson demonstrates that by Garrick associating himself with Shakespeare he had found the perfect source to bring the theatre towards a level of respectability and distinction that it had not previously achieved; the upshots of this could only have a positive effect on his reputation and celebrity. The intriguing thing about the association with Shakespeare and Garrick is that it was not his performances as Richard III, Hamlet or Macbeth alone that compounded this union but the Shakespeare Jubilee and *The Jubilee* of 1769; the former not a particularly successful event at the time but symbolically an extremely significant statement for Garrick. The symbolism and Garrick's careful fashioning of himself in Shakespeare's image (particularly in statues and paintings that he personally commissioned) are all part of Garrick equating himself with Shakespeare's standing and respectability. Dobson, again, observes that, '[f]ittingly the greatest single symbol of Garrick's having made good is a likeness of the upwardly mobile playwright on whom both his own social status were founded.'²² The Jubilee, with its criticisms

²¹ Michael Dobson, *The Making of a National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship* (Oxford: University Press, 1992), 134.

²² Michael Dobson, *The Making of a National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship* (Oxford: University Press, 1992), 179.

about the lack of an actual Shakespearean performance, was a particularly public moment for Garrick; his personal project being played out on a very public stage and, hopefully, further linking his own name with Shakespeare's. It is difficult to view 1769 for Garrick without taking the view that it was a crucial year and one in which he can be seen to be shoring up his own fame whilst cementing an alliance between the respectability and pride in Shakespeare on one hand and the acting profession on the other.

The Jubilee celebrations and the subsequent stage adaptation give the impression that this was the time when Garrick firmly and finally yoked his name with that of Shakespeare (at least in his own lifetime) but Garrick was not the only person that was attempting to use Shakespeare as a means to strengthen and promote their own celebrity, even though Garrick was the man through which theatre-goers of the eighteenth-century became familiar with Shakespeare.²³ Scholars of the day were critical of Garrick and what they perceived as his meddling with Shakespearean affairs and Garrick's Ode at the Jubilee engendered a great deal of criticism for its content and literary merit. Boaden, referring to the 'clamour excited against Garrick's Ode', reports that:

Scholars are always sufficiently indulgent to their studies, to think them of the highest importance. That, as an actor, penetrating by a sort of intuition the power of character in Shakespeare, Garrick should have been deemed his "best living commentator," was sufficiently mortifying to men, who were struggling with each other for the fame of ascertaining what he really wrote in a thousand passages.²⁴

²³ Vanessa Cunningham, *Shakespeare and Garrick* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 5.

²⁴ James Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*. vol.I (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831-2), xlix.

There is an indication of a battle to possess, interpret and use Shakespeare in this passage; scholars were struggling against each other, as well as actors, in their attempts to establish their own fame and celebrity by their association with Shakespeare. Shakespeare became a vehicle which scholars could use to transport their own reputations to a higher level. It is little wonder that Garrick being perceived as Shakespeare's best living commentator could cause some resentment; it is coveted title and perhaps one that Samuel Johnson might have liked to have owned. David Garrick, for all his supposed literary pretensions and affectations, put Shakespeare's work and Shakespeare's name to the best popular use during the mid-to late-eighteenth century. It was not as a scholar that Garrick achieved this but as a performer and interpreter and noticeably an interpreter in more than one sense of the word: firstly, as an adaptor who shaped Shakespeare's plays for a different audience with different stage conventions, and secondly as a conduit through which eighteenth-century audiences could have Shakespeare's plays translated to them and illuminated in a way that they may not have experienced before. The epithet 'best living commentator' suggests that this is a mantle that is relinquished in the afterlife and picked up by a new generation of performers who then vie to become thought of as the individual that, for that generation at least, and whilst they are still alive or active, becomes the paragon of Shakespearean interpretation.

* * * *

Garrick's debut in 1741 at Goodman's Fields as Richard III is an event that has been mythologized and as we will see, Judith Milhous' empirical research has confirmed that in the years following his debut, the name David Garrick considerably increased audience numbers when he performed at Drury Lane. James Boaden

suggests that although the debut had a decisive impact on Garrick's career, the sensational audiences were far more sporadic than might have been implied in the eighteenth century. Hermione Lee has commented that, '[b]iography is bound to incorporate the relationship of the writer and their subject, even if only subliminally.'²⁵ In contrast to Lee, or perhaps giving another perspective, Mary Rhiel and David Suchoff assert that '[t]here are always at least two people competing for control over the story of a life'²⁶ and, owing to the numerous eighteenth-century critical antecedents Garrick's debut is evocative of the relationship between celebrity and biography and how the stability of a life is in a constant state of fluctuation that is affected every time that it is chosen to be written about. Graeme Turner observes that in relation to celebrity, 'the production of meaning in biographical form is a powerful force in shaping and reshaping cultural memory.'²⁷ This particular incident in Garrick's career is a microcosm of a much larger and overarching phenomenon in celebrity and particularly the life and afterlife of celebrity in print. The interpretations of biographers and their efforts to produce meaning are both products of and producers of this cultural memory, just as Garrick was both subject and object of his own celebrity.

One year after Garrick's death, Thomas Davies' *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* became the first major biography to remodel and reproduce David Garrick for a posthumous audience. Davies' text will now be examined as a piece of theatrical memory, exploring how the transmission of knowledge about Garrick is approached, the effect that it produced on audiences and, perhaps more importantly, the lasting effects that it had on academic discourses about Garrick and his theatrical celebrity.

²⁵ Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: University Press, 2009), 134.

²⁶ Mary Rhiel and David Suchoff, eds., *The Seductions of Biography* (London: Routledge, 1996), 119.

²⁷ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 3.

II

The Posthumous Stages of Celebrity: Thomas Davies and David Garrick

* * * *

In 1780, a year after David Garrick's death, Thomas Davies wrote and published his *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, and consequently wrote himself into the posthumous reputation of a man who became known as one of the world's greatest actors. Garrick invested much of his time and energy into constructing this reputation and after his death this was taken on by scholars, biographers, historians and critics; all with differing perspectives, predispositions and intentions that have offered secondary perspectives on Garrick's reputation and fame. During the course of this investigation the focal point is as much one of theatre history as it is the history of David Garrick's critical afterlife in print.

Davies was among the first to immortalise Garrick in print in a scramble of publishing that produced verses, elegies and brief biographies. A vast amount of these appeared in the two years following Garrick's death and, as we shall see below, shortly after his death a large body of publications on David Garrick was being amassed.²⁸ What is interesting and worthy of attention in relation to Davies is the fact

²⁸ Within three years many publications had memorialised Garrick in print: Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Verses to the Memory of Garrick. Spoken as a Monody* (London, 1779); Anonymous, *The Life and Death of David Garrick* (London: J. Pridden, 1779); Richard Brinsley Sheridan *The Tears of Genius* (Dublin, 1780); Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (London: By the Author, 1780); Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*, 2 Vols. (London: J. Wright, Piccadilly, 1801).

that the *Memoirs* are the first accessible and cheaply published popular biography about Garrick. References and allusions made to Davies in subsequent material on Garrick affirm the place of the *Memoirs* in Garrick's posthumous fame whether it is viewed as a populist and timely piece of publishing or a document produced by a man who was acquainted with Garrick and the inner workings of the theatrical profession. It is interesting that both Davies the man and Davies' work partake in the construction of Garrick's posthumous fame. This is the case with most successful biographers who are commenting on the lives and afterlives of people who have achieved a level of fame and renown and, in essence, there are no truly objective biographers. As we shall see as we use various contemporary sources, personal inclinations and the demands of wider society filter in almost without conscious endeavour on the part of biographers and academics.

* * * *

James Raven's *The Business of Books* (2007) has reminded us of the print boom in the eighteenth century and in examining the factors that Davies would have been influenced by as a bookseller and author it is important to take into account the influences on the *Memoirs* as physical objects as much as the social and political influences on their subject-matter and content. Raven suggests that the eighteenth century produced a great number of opportunist publishers and that 'many publications, reliant not just on literary content but on design and modishness, created great fortunes for the most successful of their commercial producers.'²⁹ Davies' *Memoirs* are not in any way modish or lavish in terms of design but Garrick was very much in vogue in the late-eighteenth century and after his death the demand for commemorative biographies surged. A discussion of Thomas Davies' *Memoirs* will

²⁹ James Raven, *The Business of Books* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 222.

reveal that his David Garrick biography is not easily classified as purely low-brow opportunism or as a high-brow celebration of the English Roscius.

My own reasons for using Davies' work above others are related to the phenomenon of fame and celebrity and, in particular, David Garrick's posthumous fame. Davies' *Memoirs* appeared in the year following Garrick's death and, as we shall discuss in further detail below, they were hugely successful and (certainly in terms of longevity and the number of editions) sustained its position as an important commentary on Garrick's celebrity for as long as, if not longer than, scores of rival biographers. The following is in equal measure a history of David Garrick's afterlife in print and a discourse on how Thomas Davies as an early biographer was an active participant in the early construction of Garrick's fame and celebrity and had an important effect on critical responses to Garrick. Robert D. Hume suggests that 'one critical function of the theatre historian is *to demonstrate how production and performance circumstances affected the writing and public impact of plays* [Hume's italics].'³⁰ Although I will not be analysing playtexts or performances directly, Hume's statement of intent transposes to this research in many ways: by demonstrating that the production and performance of Garrick's celebrity in his own lifetime had a discernible influence on the authors of the *Memoirs* and *Private Correspondence* and shaped Garrick's reception-history as a whole.

* * * *

Thomas Davies (c.1712-1785; *ONDB*) published the first edition of the *Memoirs* in 1780 and the demand was such that a second edition appeared only one year later. The third and final edition that Davies himself published was in 1784 and

³⁰ Robert D. Hume, "Theatre History 1660-1800: Aims, Materials, Methodologies", Michael Cordner and Holland eds, *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), pp.9-44, 12.

he died shortly afterwards in the May of 1785. It is worth pausing for a brief moment to highlight the physical appearance and production of the *Memoirs* as an object as this can sometimes divulge information of the value, or perceived value, as commercial products and the intellectual value and appreciation that the expenditure on book production can reveal (this premise will be revisited and expanded in a later discussion of James Boaden's *Correspondence*). Davies' two-volume octavos are small, compact and reasonably cheaply produced, as we might expect with a limited first edition print run. After the first edition quickly sold out, Davies maintained the same inexpensive production values which unquestionably increased his profit margins significantly as both author and publisher. After a dedication to R.B. Sheridan, and an acknowledgment of Samuel Johnson's input on Garrick's early life, Davies begins in apologetic fashion, forestalling criticism in true Garrick style, by entreating his audience to 'pardon many inaccuracies, which inadvertency or rapidity in writing may have occasioned.'³¹ One might think that the speed of writing and production might have caused any technical inaccuracies but this swiftness is in all probability what made Davies' *Memoirs* so successful as it followed so soon after Garrick's death. There were other biographical elegies and verses written around the same time, notably by William Tasker and R.B. Sheridan, but the only biographical work before Arthur Murphy's *The Life of David Garrick* (1801) is the anonymous 'Old Comedian's' *The Life and Death of David Garrick* (1779) which contains a brief eighteen-page biography and a disjointed collection of anecdotes, sketches, observations and extensive details on Garrick's funeral proceedings. The anonymity of the author either points to an expedient publishing house rushing out a biography, which could account for its garbled composition in the rush to produce biographical

³¹ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (London: By the Author, 1780), A5-6.

material following Garrick's death, or, this particular comedian's name may not have been as revered as Garrick's and rather than preclude commercial possibilities the author chose to remain anonymous. Davies was in the privileged position of being an insider in theatrical circles, a friend of Garrick, Johnson and Sheridan, a bookseller and (at this point) financially buoyant enough to speculate on a modest first run of the *Memoirs*. Davies's speculation proved a successful one and he went on to publish another two editions making it three editions in four years.

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In 1808 Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme published the final edition of the *Memoirs* which is almost identical to the original with the exception of some of the errata being cleaned up and a commentary added in the form of notes interspersed throughout the text. The theatrical historian Stephen Jones wrote the new publisher's introduction (that was placed alongside the original dedication) that rationalized the need for the updated edition with its new notes, illustrations and corrections. Stephen Jones, a printer, editor and 'industrious complier'³² was criticised for updating the *Biographica Dramatica, or, A Companion to the Playhouse* due to observations by commentators that they saw little or no alterations from the earlier editions of this work begun by David Erskine Baker and then continued by Isaac Reed. Their similarity to the previous editions as well as the lack of any major changes in form testify to either the appeal or overall accuracy of Davies' work, or possibly Jones' lack of any fresh knowledge or insight into Garrick that he could have appended. Stephen Jones appears to have been on the whole an unsuccessful newspaper editor who went on to achieve minor success by editing various theatrical biographies,

³² H. J. Spencer, 'Jones, Stephen (1763-1827)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15083>, accessed 18 July 2011].

including Sheridan and Garrick. Stephen Jones' familiarity with theatrical biographies, editing experience and his experience as a compiler situates him as a minor footnote in the life of Davies' text as he tried to refine and augment the already successful *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* for early nineteenth-century audiences.

As previously alluded to, one might assume that Davies' first run of his speculative publishing venture would be cheaply produced and in relatively small numbers for financial security. Raven suggests as much when he points out that in the eighteenth century, '[r]isks remained daunting in a market where even a small edition might prove slow to sell. The expense of stockpiling unsold books introduced unbearable risks, encouraging still smaller runs and fashionable promotions for quick turnovers.'³³ Davies' financial problems had at times been critical and, although the *ODNB* states that the *Memoirs* were an extremely lucrative venture, prior to the publication he had been bailed out by his friends and was definitely not in a position to speculate on the *Memoirs* on a grand scale (both in terms of numbers and the quality of production).³⁴ After a tentative run, a publisher would be able to gauge interest and marketability without being at too great a loss should it prove unpopular. In fact, all the versions of Davies' *Memoirs* are compact and cheaply produced; this is not in any way to denigrate them as badly produced: in fact, it makes the volumes more accessible to a wider reading audience and must have earned Davies more rewards as a result and the accessibility of the *Memoirs* is one of the reasons it has endured and is still used in academic work on Garrick today.

³³ James Raven, *The Business of Books* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 304.

³⁴ O.M. Brack, 'Davies, Thomas (c.1712-1785)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19569>, accessed 26 June 2011].

The *Memoirs*' success and popularity would undoubtedly have been advanced by this economical and portable format and even after Davies had died, the fourth edition was produced using the same cost-effective values. The 1808 edition did expand the *Memoirs* slightly and the notes in the form of a commentary made the text slightly more academic and developed the information in the appendix which detailed Garrick's career from his stage roles, plays and his funeral service and will.³⁵ Davies as a popular biographer and a bookseller was surely as concerned with perpetuating an accurate memory of Garrick as he was interested in making a living and staying financially afloat. In 1780 the *Memoirs* started life as a populist text but as early as 1808 the notes and commentary in the fourth edition show it was beginning to take on an extra dimension as it followed the rise of Garrick's posthumous celebrity.

A close reading of the text will follow with the focus placed on how this text began to be part of the construction of Garrick's posthumous celebrity and how biographers were able to make their own name by documenting the fame, renown and celebrity of others. By necessity, this reading will follow Garrick's life chronologically but the aim is not to generate thorough and definitive biography (this has been covered expansively since his death) but to construct more of an analysis of Davies' key articulations and how the fundamental concerns of the *Memoirs* impacted on Garrick's posthumous celebrity and what Davies' place within it is.

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It is a testament to David Garrick's popular appeal, to Davies' unprecedented intimacy with Garrick during his lifetime, and to his shrewdness as a bookseller that the two-volume work appeared so speedily after Garrick's death. A telling expression

³⁵ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808).

from the *Memoirs* springs to mind, when Davies refers to what we might now call, Garrick's star power and the fascination that his name alone could engender:

Such an actor as Garrick, whose name, when announced in the playbills, operated like a charm, and drew in multitudes to the theatre, of consequence considerably augmented the profits of the patentee.³⁶

It is arresting to think that before David Garrick had himself become manager of Drury Lane, his name was beginning to be a significant factor in audiences choosing to go to see certain plays. Garrick's name alone was not possessed with the strength to carry a bad play, or a bad production, but the important point here is that within Garrick's lifetime his name was beginning to have attached to it the gravitas that would develop much further after his death. We might observe what might now be recognised as the making of the Garrick brand: a brand that would flourish long after David Garrick died. The choice of the words 'operated like a charm' is extremely appropriate in regards to the manner in which the theatre, and in particular actors, were viewed (Garrick himself was likened to Prospero during his Shakespeare Jubilee performance). Actors, we can see, were often viewed with a sort of superstitious mistrust that bordered on the irrational. As John Brewer puts it;

As its critics understood, the danger of the theatre lay chiefly in the skills of its actors. Players made the stage seductive: their glamour and beauty, the virtuosity of their performances, their private lives, at once the focus of polite society and yet disreputably on its margins, all made the theatre a place of exciting dreams, fantasies and illusions.³⁷

This wariness of the stage, and its actors and managers, conceivably perpetuated by the notion of the licentious and bawdy nature of the stage and, although Garrick

³⁶ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (London: By the Author, 1780), 59.

³⁷ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 334.

helped to make acting become a profession to be admired, these prejudices endured long after Garrick's Drury Lane tenure. Garrick was aware of the rather poor estimation of the theatre and its actors; his attentiveness to public opinion prompted him to work so conscientiously at establishing an excellent reputation for himself and Drury Lane. If the Garrick name was indeed talismanic then why would it not operate in a similar way for his posthumous biographers and attract readers on the strength of his reputation? It certainly sold newspapers and pamphlets and filled theatres during his lifetime. Garrick's name came to operate at a much higher lever after his death due to the great feeling of collective loss and the perceived gap that the celebrated Garrick had left gaping behind him. Whether Davies was aware when he was writing about the charm and allure of Garrick that exactly the same phenomenon was exerting itself on his *Memoirs* is difficult to decipher but what is clear is that for Davies, and many other Garrick biographers, this charm drew them to their subject whilst considerably augmenting their own success. Davies was in the beneficial position of being a personal friend of Garrick's who acted in the Drury Lane Company as well as the author *and* publisher of the *Memoirs*.

Davies and Garrick did not always see eye to eye but Davies, it appears, was expedient enough not to hold a grudge and he and Garrick were eventually reconciled to better terms. Regardless of Garrick's sometimes unsympathetic treatment of him in their correspondences one cannot help but feel that this reconciliation and continued association benefitted Davies a lot more than it did Garrick. In 1780, without any apparent animosity, Davies began the *Memoirs* with eulogistic zeal by stating that,

All excellence has a right to be recorded. I shall therefore think it superfluous to apologize for writing the life of a man who, by an

uncommon assemblage of private virtues, adorned the highest eminence in a public profession.³⁸

The interaction between the private and the public here is especially applicable to what has been said in the introduction about the oppositions and contradictions uncovered when we begin to think of private lives lived out publically, the construction of public personalities and the disparity between the terms public and private; if they indeed can ever accurately be applied to public figures. Fred Inglis observes that ‘early forms of celebrity life were lived in the public gaze but in the pretence of privacy.’³⁹ This pretence of privacy implies an element of performance in the lives of early celebrities that blurs the boundaries between the private and the public. David Garrick is an excellent example of this as he is frequently alluded to as an accomplished performer on the societal stage whose social accomplishments ingratiated him into the society of famous men and women. Garrick was seemingly able to perform in a variety of arenas and capable of adapting these performances for whatever stage or situation he found himself in.

Whatever interpretations and speculations we put forward for the reasons Davies had for remaining loyal to Garrick, they are demonstrative of the importance of Garrick in popular culture of the late-eighteenth century during his lifetime and then after his death. Davies edges towards hyperbole in his admiration of Garrick when he declares that ‘he had perfectly convinced the public of his superior accomplishments in acting, that not to admire him would not only have argued an absence of taste, but the grossest stupidity.’⁴⁰ It is worth attempting to qualify some ideas relating to taste in the eighteenth century and its characterization and connotations especially in relation to the arts. To frame this short qualification of what

³⁸ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. I (London: By the Author, 1780), 1.

³⁹ Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 12.

⁴⁰ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. I (London: By the Author, 1780), 42.

taste refers to, Brewer provides a succinct starting point when he states that, '[t]aste in the arts was considered a sign of refinement, cultivation and politeness, qualities it was believed were best nurtured in towns and cities.'⁴¹ In the eighteenth century Samuel Johnson defined taste as 'Intellectual relish or discernment'⁴² and this discernment, or discrimination, reveals an eighteenth-century preoccupation with the importance of the ever-fragile *taste* and a veiled terror of things that were pleasurable overlapping and descending into territory of a baser nature. There is an awareness of the division between high and low culture in these reflections on taste and Brewer comments that taste was used by critics to discriminate between fashionable recreations and the arts. These critics, according to Brewer, 'argued that a special relationship existed between art and those who enjoyed it, which involved feeling and emotions but not the gross passions of greed and desire.'⁴³ This delicately balanced relationship, and the anxiety about the possible link between art, ownership and pleasure, gives us an insight into Garrick's concern with raising the acting profession to a respectable level in the eyes of the public. His lofty aspirations for himself and his profession, and his need to be taken seriously as an artist, would have been influenced by these pervading attitudes towards the acting profession and as the arts grew ever more commercial and accessible, the struggle to maintain the untainted position of these aspirations demanded careful management of one's public professional life. If, as Brewer maintains, the arts' special status was at risk due to the expansion of popular and largely uneducated audiences, those that wished to retain this status would have undoubtedly fought hard to retain the distinction.

⁴¹ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), xviii.

⁴² Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) ed. Jack Lynch (Florida: Lever Press, 2004), 494.

⁴³ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 87.

A close focus on Davies' major themes and concerns allows us to see how he was a participant in the early construction of Garrick's posthumous fame and also how these key concerns have filtered into subsequent biographers and how they were treated by rival biographers. With Samuel Johnson's input, Davies gives a brief account of young Garrick and his early education. Davies dates Garrick's predisposal to the stage back to his childhood by asserting that, 'His proficiency, however, in mathematics and philosophy, was not extensive; his mind was theatrically led, and nothing could divert his thoughts from the study of that to which his genius so powerfully prompted him.'⁴⁴ It does appear from various accounts, both from family members and schoolmasters, that Garrick displayed a proclivity for the theatrical and, as has been remarked by almost all his biographers, possessed an early flair for mimicry that would make him such a success in polite society. As author of one of the first detailed accounts of Garrick's life, Davies' personal knowledge of Garrick, plus his friendship with Samuel Johnson, allowed him to detail these early indicators: subsequent biographers have used Davies' *Memoirs* as a foundation for their research and various references outside of Davies support this critical opinion.

Moving on to David Garrick the young actor, Davies writes about his debut as an event that emptied the main houses and stirred polite society into a frenzy: 'Mr. Garrick shone forth like a theatrical Newton; he threw new light on elocution and action; he banished ranting, bombast, and grimace; and restored nature, ease, simplicity, and genuine humour.'⁴⁵ According to Davies' Newton analogy, Garrick, too, had stood on the shoulders of giants and seen further than any man and been influential enough to usher the theatre into a new age. The transition to Garrick's famed naturalistic acting style was a little more gradual than that but, as a pioneering

⁴⁴ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (London: By the Author, 1780), 14.

⁴⁵ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick* (London: By the Author, 1780), 43.

figure, this event was to be mythologized and as Ian McIntyre has remarked, ‘there are generally, long after the event, mysteriously large numbers of people who remember being present at the birth of a star.’⁴⁶ Davies can be forgiven this fault of memory as he does not make any pretence to having been present but he was in a position to have possibly heard about this exciting young newcomer and if the stories were not quite so grandiose at the time, as Garrick’s reputation grew more and more splendid so did the accounts surrounding his entrance into London’s theatrical world. Apparently, the association between the word Garrick and the fascination and magnetism allied with it began early and after attributing the majority of playhouse profits to the name of the young actor, Davies goes on to say that ‘the benches of the playhouse were almost always empty when his name was not seen in the playbills.’⁴⁷ This may appear as a convenient fable for Davies to illustrate the profound impact that Garrick made when he made his debut. However, subsequent scholarship has unearthed evidence that supports this bold claim and Judith Milhous observes that in the years following his 1741 debut, Garrick did indeed have such a spectacular impact and Drury Lane receipts from 1742-43 have allowed quantitative research into this period:

The financial figures are, if anything, even more astonishing than the rhapsodic stories. The current break-even point, ignoring abnormal and non-theatrical debt service, appears to have been no more than £60 per night. On 78 nights when Garrick performed, sometimes in minor roles, income averaged £117. On 59 nights when he did not appear, the average fell to £55. He literally doubled the average income.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ian McIntyre, *Garrick* (London: Penguin, 1999), 39.

⁴⁷ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol I (London: By the Author, 1780), 46.

⁴⁸ Judith Milhous, ‘Reading Theatre History from Account Books’, Michael Cordner and Peter Holland, *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 101-131, 123.

Milhous confirms the accuracy of the theatrical legend of Garrick's box-office power and the supports the claims of Davies, as well as other biographies contemporary to Garrick, following her discovery of further evidence. This key articulation in the *Memoirs*, one that is manifested in subsequent research that has employed Davies as a primary source, has been tested and verified and its part in Garrick's posthumous fame and reputation is now buttressed after modern scholarship has been able to conclude the factual basis for this supposition. This quantitative discovery allows a retrospective confirmation of Davies' seemingly qualitative assertion of Garrick's star status and strengthens the reputation of the *Memoirs* as justifiable record of the fame of David Garrick. Economic history cannot contain a definitive answer on the point of the sensation that Garrick caused when he burst onto the scene, but as part of a body of supporting evidence that makes it possible to triangulate some of the evidence that may have previously been dismissed as anecdotal.

A telling issue and a matter that caused a lot of friction between Davies and Garrick was the appearance of Charles Churchill's 1761 poem, *The Rosciad*. Davies concedes that, 'The writer [Churchill] with the art of a skilful surgeon, probed the wound to the bottom, but was not gentle in the use of his instrument.'⁴⁹ Although Davies has previously written himself into the Garrick narrative by using first-person anecdotal evidence, he circumvents any reference to Churchill's biting professional critique of him and complements Churchill's art, even though he resents his forcefulness. Davies fades into the background at this point in the *Memoirs*, whether from a sense of personal injury, embarrassment or a retrospective realisation that his theatrical abilities were indeed weak can only be guessed at, although he does justify Churchill's criticisms of some other performers and his praise of Garrick. He does not

⁴⁹ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. I (London: By the Author, 1780), 314.

name himself in the litany of those that were attacked when he observes that, ‘The writer very warmly, as well as justly, celebrated the various excellencies of Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Clive; but no one man, except Mr. Garrick, escaped his satirical lash.’⁵⁰ With the benefit of time to ponder his former career on the stage it is possible that Davies’ initial feelings towards *The Rosciad* had softened and he may have realised the accuracy of some of the comments even though he would not wish to acknowledge this publically or in print.

Davies cited a lack of attention his business affairs, owing mainly to his theatrical career, for finally causing him to quit the stage and focus on bookselling, but this was after he had given alternative reasons for his departure. Davies had assigned blame to David Garrick’s ‘warmth of temper’ as the reason he had retired but in a correspondence between the two men, Garrick wrote to Davies that Davies was ‘always confused and unhappy whenever you saw Mr. Churchill before you.’⁵¹ Davies’ personal reason for retirement is difficult to ascertain but what we can observe from the incongruities in the conflicting accounts of his leaving the stage is that Davies was sensitive about the public criticism he had received from Churchill, and in a private correspondence between himself and Garrick he concealed the causes and deflected inquiry to guard himself and his reputation. Davies’ *Memoirs* was an excellent arena for him to attack Churchill and Garrick, if he did bear the two any animosity, which reveals that he had come to respect Churchill and revere Garrick at least to an extent that any mention of these incidents or his involvement in them are omitted. To summarise Churchill’s impact on Garrick’s fame, Davies has this to say,

The praise bestowed upon him came from no mean hand. The character of Roscius was esteemed to be one of the warmest and most

⁵⁰ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. I (London: By the Author, 1780), 315.

⁵¹ Garrick to Davies, Aug 10th 1763, Boaden. J, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*. vol. I (London: Colburn & Bentley , 1831-2), 163-4.

masterly descriptions of his abilities which had hitherto been penned.⁵²

Davies himself, perhaps not possessed with a poetic bent, would also provide a warm and detailed example of the English Roscius and he was mature enough and seasoned enough not to attack any of his previous detractors and surely this was because he realised that it would cheapen the *Memoirs* and do himself a discredit. Thomas Davies could foresee that by aligning himself with Garrick and running parallel with his career, instead of positioning himself as an antagonist, he stood to gain far more and, as a testament to this judgment, his name is still synonymous with biographies of David Garrick to the present day.

Garrick was in enormous demand and his success, both theatrically and financially, spurred him on to extend his fame and augment his budding reputation by crossing the Irish sea to play to the theatres of Dublin; which was a summer that would greatly increase Garrick's purse and his fame outside of England. The English Roscius caused such a stir there that the Irish press nicknamed the furore 'Garrick Fever' although Davies assures readers that there was a much more plausible explanation for the sickness that gripped Dublin: 'the excessive heats became prejudicial to the frequenters of the theatre; and the epidemical distemper which seized, and carried off in great numbers, was nicknamed the Garrick fever.'⁵³ By the time he returned to England the clamour to see David Garrick perform would reach new heights and, whether this break from London was calculated to produce such an effect, the result for Garrick's career was tremendous. The 'epidemical distemper' that Garrick's introduction had inculcated likens him to a force of nature and the mild form of hysteria his introduction to theatrical life created was, undoubtedly,

⁵² Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. I (London: By the Author, 1780), 317.

⁵³ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. I (London: By the Author, 1780), 52.

overstated by Garrick for effect but it does give us an idea of the interest and force with which he arrived on the theatrical scene.

After documenting Garrick's successful return to London, Davies centres his attention on David Garrick's partnership in the management of the Drury Lane Theatre. This is an important theme for Davies and in itself is an important landmark in David Garrick's own fame, a fact attested to by the confusion (or perhaps difference of critical opinion) as to how to label David Garrick. Garrick has been written about as an actor, manager, actor-manager, director, playwright, or a complex amalgamation of all of these roles. Labelling Garrick is not important to the central ideas of this work as it is unlikely to improve a deeper understanding of the development of Garrick's fame to categorize different epochs of his career: a focus on evidence of the construction of this celebrity seems to illustrate this with more clarity and remains true to the printed sources identified in the introduction. Davies attributes Garrick's success as the manager of Drury Lane to his conscientious and diligent approach towards his private and professional life. Garrick's awareness of the fragility of the position of the actor in society, coupled with his keen personal awareness of criticism and the importance of the role of the press, provided him with an excellent platform to showcase his own abilities and also make a success of managing the theatre:

Order, decency, and decorum, were the first objects which our young manager kept constantly in his eye at the commencement of his admiration. He was so accomplished himself in all the external behaviour, as well as in the more valuable talents of his profession, that

his example was greatly conducive to that regularity which he laboured to establish.⁵⁴

The use of the pronoun *our* and its connotations of possession and collective ownership is worthy of mention and provides another link to the public life of a celebrity and the investment that is made by cultural consumers in such lives.

Davies repeatedly highlights Garrick's sensitivity and insecurities when it came to criticism and public disapproval and from what we have learned of Davies' scathing criticism at the hands of Churchill in *The Rosciad* one might make the assumption that he identified with this trait in Garrick and identified with being on the receiving end of criticism. He may have envied this ability of forestalling and warding off censure and was certainly more aware of this than other biographers having been a recipient of such theatrical criticism. Garrick's insecurity concerning critical approval was to be tested when he felt the full force of the press and the public over the controversy surrounding his employing foreign dancers for his *Chinese Festival*. Prior to this Garrick had judged critical reactions well and more often than not been able to anticipate any possible reactions to his acting roles. Davies recalls Garrick's apprehensions of his forthcoming lead role in *Macbeth* and states that during his preparation,

He devoted some part of his time to the writing a humorous pamphlet upon the subject. He knew that his manner of representing Macbeth would be essentially different from that of all the actors who had played it for twenty or thirty years before; and he was therefore

⁵⁴ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. I (London: By the Author, 1780), 111.

determined to attack himself ironically, to blunt, if not prevent, the remarks of other people.⁵⁵

Throughout his career, David Garrick diligently turned this anxiety to his own ends by writing pieces for the popular press, composing poems (see *The Fribbleriad*) and creating characters (Macaroni) to speak in defence of himself and the Drury Lane Theatre in prologues and epilogues. Posthumously Garrick had no control over his reputation and critical reception, and succeeding biographers (both popular and scholarly) had access to the evidence and testimonies to be able to deconstruct Garrick's reputation.

Early biographers like Davies are likely to have been influenced by their friendship with Garrick and the contemporary perceptions of what and who he was. Paula Backscheider's *Reflections on Biography* (1999) explains the restrictions that are imposed on biographers both internally and externally. She highlights '[h]ow limited biographers are, how imprisoned within their own experiences, societies, educations, and philosophies'.⁵⁶ This emphasis on biographers' predisposition, conscious or otherwise, is a conventional criticism of biographers (what Backscheider terms 'unconscious cultural assumptions') but this is not in any way meant to devalue Davies or any of the other biographers; in fact, these cultural complexities and the relationship between subject and biographer allow us to make deeper explorations into the construction of fame, celebrity and reputation in different eras. John Lennard uses a comparison between biography and poetry and the biographical elements that can lead to the pitfalls of the authorial fallacy. Lennard comments that:

Just as all poems must have been written at a particular historical moment, so they must have been written by a particular person, whose

⁵⁵ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. I (London: By the Author, 1780), 163.

⁵⁶ Paula Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography* (Oxford: University Press, 1999), 90.

nationality, age, education, experiences, and so forth, will partly determine what poems and what kinds of poem, they can and do write.⁵⁷

Lennard is making the point about poets and poetry but the sentiment is definitely applicable and transferable to the study of biography in prose and the incalculable factors that go towards the production of biographies and, in this case particularly, celebrity biography.

What has subsequently emerged as a result of continuing academic interest and engagement begins to be weighted toward a more even-handed commentary on Garrick and, although no biographer is hermetically sealed off from social trends and economic pressures, the Garrick narrative has moved from his own internally maintained construction in his lifetime to an external one after his death. This has shifted the emphasis from image managing, and what we might refer to as media manipulation, towards a critical dialogue that questions how the fame, reputation and celebrity of David Garrick were constructed.

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Garrick had carefully planned and arranged his retirement from the stage and when the time came he did it with his characteristic awareness of the need to accomplish it with gravity and delicacy in order that he might cement his reputation, and (perhaps of slightly lesser importance) Drury Lane's reputation, for posterity. In the fortnight before he performed his last role, Don Felix in Susanna Centlivre's comedy *The Wonder*, he had played Hamlet, Richard III and Lear. The physical exertion and stress of these huge roles took their toll on Garrick's ageing body but he

⁵⁷ John Lennard, *The Poetry Handbook* (Oxford: University Press, 1996), 160.

was aware that his final season needed to contain many of the roles that he had made his own in order for people to remember him for years to come. There is an issue of the upshots of physical exhaustion on David Garrick but there is also the emotional impact that retiring from the stage would have on a man that Samuel Foote once remarked of as loving the stage to such an extent that, ‘rather than not play, he would act in a tavern kitchen for a sop in the pan.’⁵⁸

The last performances of his Richard III in 1776 caused such demand that, after his royal command performance, Garrick was so exhausted that he had to postpone any performances in the near future to recuperate.⁵⁹ The string of performances that so shrewdly encompassed many of his signature roles (Abel Drugger, Kately, Benedick, Lear, Hamlet and Richard) fatigued Garrick to a point where his swansong performance would have been jeopardised and been anticlimactic unless he rested and replenished himself for the final act of his extensive career. This run of performances cannot have done his now fragile health any good but it did bolster his reputation and the energy and pathos of his performances created a furore that would become the stuff of legend and keep audiences hungry for memorials, accounts and biographies of Garrick after his death. Thomas Davies, honest but complimentary as always, seeing that Garrick was eager not to outstay his welcome and avoid taking his final bow as a pale imitation of his former self, comments that:

Another motive for leaving the stage at this time, was, doubtless, his resolution not to stay on it till his powers of acting were weakened by age or infirmity. He was determined, before he left the theatre, to give

⁵⁸ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. II (London: By the Author, 1780), 268.

⁵⁹ Ian McIntyre, *Garrick* (London: Penguin, 1999), 562-3.

the publick proofs of his abilities to delight them as highly as he had ever done in the flower and vigour of his life.⁶⁰

If Garrick's talents were indeed beginning to wane (Garrick died just three years after he retired from the stage) it still had enough of his legendary force and vitality to be able to leave his audiences, for the final time, breathless and hungry for more.

This hunger in Garrick's audiences is what will be taken into consideration in the following chapter as we investigate the first third of nineteenth century critical responses to David Garrick in print and how his celebrity was being fashioned by a new critical audience.

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⁶⁰ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. II (London: By the Author, 1780), 327.

III

The Nineteenth-century Stage of David Garrick's Celebrity.

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Following on from the close study of Thomas Davies' *Memoirs*, the next section of my dissertation moves forwards from Davies and into the second stage of Garrick's posthumous fame. In this the first third of the nineteenth century, Garrick's reception history developed and evolved when James Boaden edited *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick* (1831-2). Using Boaden as a text to approach Garrick's critical afterlife, this chapter will examine the book's production and biographical scholarship to form a study of the reception of David Garrick's fame fifty-two years after his death and Davies' *Memoirs* the following year.

One of the foremost nineteenth-century commentators on theatrical celebrity, William Hazlitt, is an excellent figure to use to contextualise some of the debates on celebrity in the first third of the nineteenth century. References to Hazlitt's essays can offer us a helpful indicator of critical engagement with theatrical celebrity before we move on to engage with some of the wider, and more contemporary responses to Garrick during this period. Hazlitt focused to a large extent on the performers of his own time, but he is an excellent pointer to prevalent attitudes towards celebrity in the nineteenth century as well as approaching celebrity in the critical afterlife and how this relates directly to Garrick's critical reception in the century after his death. David Garrick's fame is both achieved and conferred in the sense that he carefully managed his private and public affairs during his lifetime and kept a vast number of his

correspondences through the years. Posthumously, this self-editing and self-awareness casts a shadow over Boaden as the editor of a collection that had been edited by Garrick and that had the opportunity to be edited Garrick's wife after his death. There is no direct accusation levelled at either David or Eva Garrick, more an alertness to Garrick's discretion and attentiveness to his reputation and also the fact that Eva lived for over forty years after Garrick had died. In his introduction, Boaden notes that, '[t]he papers which form the present collection were selected and preserved by Mr. Garrick himself; whether as the materials of any auto-biography, cannot be absolutely determined, although that is highly probable.'⁶¹ It is 'highly probable' that this was the intention but as Garrick died before he was able to produce an autobiography and instead these materials became the basis for his posthumous biographers to interpret. If as Boaden says Garrick selected and preserved these letters, he selected the materials that he deemed worth preserving. There is no way of ascertaining what was omitted by as prolific a letter-writer as Garrick, there are a conspicuous lack of letters to and from Garrick and his wife; Peg Woffington and Susannah Cibber's correspondences are not of an intimate nature and more often than not pertain to theatre business which matters because we are aware that Garrick and Woffington had been lovers and Cibber was also often linked to Garrick in the same manner.⁶²

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Between 1831-2 Colburn and Bentley published *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick* edited by James Boaden and this work provides a useful contrast to Davies' *Memoirs* and also an indication of how Garrick's celebrity had evolved and was being shaped in the first half of the nineteenth century. The following discussion

⁶¹ James Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, 2 vols (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831-2), 1. ii.

⁶² For Garrick's supposed relationships with Peg Woffington and Sussanah Cibber see, Ian McIntyre, *Garrick* (London: Penguin, 1999).

will focus on the transformation that Garrick's celebrity had undergone after the publication of Davies' *Memoirs* and in doing so I want to show how Garrick's cultural capital had been elevated to such a level that, although his popular celebrity may have reached its peak in the late eighteenth century while he lived, a new fame as the existence as the subject of popular cultural discourse had supplanted it. The concept of celebrity afterlife is crucial to my ideas of the stability and volatility of a celebrity life in print; Heather McPherson highlights the importance of legendary actors such as Betterton, Garrick and Siddons in order to explore how they were able to 'defy the temporal limitations of performance by fixing and immortalising the evanescent art of acting.'⁶³ The ephemerality of a single performance, an entire career or even one's reputation was wholly reliant on the print medium prior to the advent of photography and popular cinema. The uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in newspapers, pamphlets and biographies dealing with pre-twentieth century theatre all influence the stability of a life or afterlife in print.⁶⁴ By moving into the mid-nineteenth century we can illustrate the transformation that David Garrick's fame had taken since Davies' *Memoirs* and how, even taking into account McPherson's statements about the immortality of performers such as Garrick, the interpretation and responses to an individual's fame are in a constant and fascinating state of interplay and fluctuation.

It is an unusual feature of this research that some elements of the supporting evidence for the earlier case study of Davies' *Memoirs* were gathered from Boaden's *Correspondence* which was published over fifty years later. Such is the importance of Boaden's *Correspondence* that it remains a primary resource for Garrick studies

⁶³ Heather McPherson, 'Siddons rediviva: death, memory and the theatrical afterlife', *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*, ed. Tom Mole, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 120-140, 122.

⁶⁴ Peter Holland's *hearing Garrick* is a contemporary example of 'recording' David Garrick and in particular the lost vocal intricacies of Garrick's performances. Peter Holland, 'Hearing the Dead: the Sound of David Garrick', Michael Cordner and Peter Holland eds., *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), pp.248-270.

today. It has been little studied, though, in its own right. Structurally, Boaden's *Correspondence* is primarily a collection of letters containing an extensive biographical section by way of an introduction which justifies it as a form of biography for this particular research. The scale of Boaden's *Correspondence* is worthy of some discussion due to what it says symbolically about Garrick's celebrity in the nineteenth century. By far the largest books used in this dissertation, the two volumes of the *Correspondence* are large folios comprised of 1296 pages and weigh in at just below six kilograms. The volumes, 30 centimetres by 24 centimetres are printed with a very small block of text that leaves a 5cm margin to the edge of the page, signifying that no expense was spared in the printing as the paper would have been the expensive element in the production of these volumes. In the chapter on Davies, I quote James Raven's useful reminder that over this period, books change from a largely from productions concerned first and foremost with content to 'design and modishness'⁶⁵ in the intervening years between Davies and Boaden's publishing, even the books themselves and grown in stature from the small octavo two-volume *Memoirs* volumes to Boaden's massive *Correspondence*. If this is anything to go by, Garrick's modishness has gained standing in his critical afterlife and the type a scale of books produced about him attest to this. The very fact that the final 256 pages of volume two are letters in French without translation signifies a tacit assumption of knowledge of the French language which again points to a scholarly audience or at least an educated one.

The *Correspondence* suggests that Garrick had achieved a level of popularity, growth in stature and raised cultural capital that had extended beyond the realm of purely biographical writing and into an interest in his letters and how they furthered

⁶⁵ n28, James Raven, *The Business of Books* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 222.

the debate and supplemented the body of knowledge for critical engagement with Garrick. If Garrick was determined to keep himself in the public eye, he had succeeded so well that he was still firmly in view in the nineteenth century as the vast amount of prolonged biographical interest attests to.⁶⁶

The *Correspondence*, in contrast with Davies' small and inexpensive volumes, show that Garrick's cultural stock had raised in value and the interest in him had grown to be a more specifically theatrical one. McPherson remarks on the 'centrality of the stage to eighteenth-century London' and that '[t]he proliferation of theatrical biographies and autobiographies in the eighteenth century is an important gauge of the public's growing interest in actors and their desire to record their lives and performances for posterity.'⁶⁷ In the nineteenth century, the only way that remained for David Garrick's voice to be heard was through the texts that documented his public and professional life. This act of recording, and particularly the process of recording for posterity, grew and grew and Boaden's *Correspondence* is testament to the fact that in the mid-nineteenth century, the desire to record the life and letters of one such actor was great enough to produce the *Correspondence*. Granted, Boaden, unlike Davies, was not financially accountable for the publishing costs of his own work but his publishers Richard Bentley and Henry Colburn were wise to the rising cultural value of David Garrick and theatre history, judging Boaden's venture worthy of speculating on a much larger scale than they we used to; in fact, Bentley and Colburn's three year partnership was more accustomed to publishing low-cost⁶⁸,

⁶⁶ Brewer comments on Garrick's unstoppable charm and energy that advanced his self-promotion. John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), pp.415-6.

⁶⁷ Heather McPherson, 'Siddons rediviva: death, memory and the theatrical afterlife', *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*. ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.120-140, 122.

⁶⁸ Robert L. Patten, 'Bentley, Richard (1794-1871)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2171>, accessed 18 July 2011]; Peter Garside, 'Colburn, Henry (1784/5-1855)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5836>, accessed 18 July 2011].

marketable popular novels geared towards a mass audience and this is indicative that Garrick had an appeal that was broad enough and marketable enough for a mainstream audience or at least a affluent mainstream audience whose interests lay in the theatre.

Henry Colburn was in financial difficulty when he went into partnership with Bentley and the partnership only operated briefly from 1829 to 1832 before it ended.⁶⁹ Financial difficulty is something of a recurring theme in the case studies of Garrick's biographers and publishers: Davies had teetered on the edge of bankruptcy before the publication of the *Memoirs*; a devastating collapse of Boaden's private income in 1824 prompted him to become a theatrical biographer and Henry Colburn had entered into a partnership with Richard Bentley to avoid defaulting on a debt owed to the Bentley publishing firm.⁷⁰ The frenetic commercial activity of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made it possible, or at least presented the opportunity, for men like Davies and Boaden to make their fortunes and the fact that they were able to take advantage of Garrick's commercial viability and popular interest in him attests to the continuing prominence of a man that put in such a determined effort to raise his own public profile and maintain its popular currency in his own lifetime. Thomas Davies' fortunes were turned around due to his literary association with David Garrick, but Boaden, in 1831, as the *Correspondence* went into publication, was in severe financial difficulties and, whatever the level of commercial success of his publication,

⁶⁹ Robert L. Patten, 'Bentley, Richard (1794-1871)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2171>, accessed 18 July 2011]; Peter Garside, 'Colburn, Henry (1784/5-1855)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5836>, accessed 18 July 2011].

⁷⁰ John Russell Stephens, 'Boaden, James (1762-1839)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2730>, accessed 26 June 2011].

by 1835 Boaden had forfeited his family home to his creditors and spent a short time in Fleet prison for debt.⁷¹

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The striking difference between Boaden's earlier publications on Kemble and Siddons and his later publication on Garrick is the sheer scale of the books in comparison: the *Correspondence* is of a much larger dimension (as with Davies' *Memoirs*) in comparison to his works on Kemble and Siddons. John Philip Kemble had died in 1823 therefore Boaden's publication was a posthumous one and Siddons, although she had retired from the stage formally in 1812, made rare special appearances up until 1819 so although Siddons was alive, her career was over and was an afterlife of sorts.⁷² Had Siddons' *Life* been a posthumous publication, there is a case to be made for this publication being elevated to the size and lavishness of Garrick's *Correspondence*. Sarah Siddons died in 1831 and as this is the first year of publication of the *Correspondence* a tangible connection can be made between the outpouring of grief over Siddons and the professional relationship between Garrick and Siddons. The idea that Siddons had taken up the mantle from Garrick of raising the acting profession to respectability, as well as their Drury Lane connection, ushered in an association between Siddons and Garrick in their critical afterlives that furthered their previous association in life. Siddons makes up the final part of the trinity that was inaugurated by Shakespeare's plays, developed and established by Garrick and augmented and given gender balance by Sarah Siddons: Shakespeare fashioned the compelling tragedies that allowed Garrick and Siddons respectively to interpret and

⁷¹ John Russell Stephens, 'Boaden, James (1762-1839)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2730>, accessed 26 June 2011].

⁷² Robert Shaughnessy, 'Siddons, Sarah (1755-1831)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25516>, accessed 18 July 2011].

perform the roles that helped them become acclaimed as the greatest tragedian and tragedienne in the history of the stage.⁷³ As Shearer West comments, ‘Siddons ended her career as a household name, an object of cult worship, and a living embodiment of Melpomene, the mythical muse of tragedy.’⁷⁴ This likening of Garrick to Roscius and Siddons to Melpomene solidifies their positions as the centre of the cult of the actor and actress in British theatre history.

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As with Davies’ *Memoirs*, Boaden commences by justifying the worth of writing the life of Garrick and, in Boaden’s case, gathering together his correspondence. Although Boaden was not perhaps subject to the same conflict and complications that acted on Davies due to him being Garrick’s acquaintance, Boaden was subject to the nineteenth-century esteem that was felt for Garrick so for Boaden to look outside of his own theatrical period to choose Garrick is indicative of the reverence that Boaden and his nineteenth-century readers had for Garrick. Following a hesitant explanation that only substantiated evidence and no anecdotal material will be drawn on, Boaden begins by stating that ‘the moral and intellectual eminence of this great man will be held in still higher veneration; he will be proved entitled to a lasting *fame* among the renowned of his species.’⁷⁵ This lasting fame amongst the renowned of his species is a particularly significant phrase for the theme of this research: how has Garrick’s fame *lasted* and what factors have affected its longevity?

⁷³ Heather McPherson highlights the gravity of the achievement of celebrated actors like Betterton, Garrick and Siddons becoming ‘cultural icons and nationalistic symbols during their lifetimes...in light of the ambivalent social status of the actor and the powerful anti-theatrical discourse.’ Heather McPherson, ‘Siddons rediviva: death, memory and the theatrical afterlife’, *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*, ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.120-40, 122.

⁷⁴ Shearer West, ‘The Public and Private Roles of Sarah Siddons’, *Sarah Siddons and her Portraitists*, ed. Robyn Asleson (Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1999), pp.1-40, 1.

⁷⁵ James Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*. Vol.I (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831-2), ii.

Is the endurance of fame related to the successes and failures of an individual in their lifetime or is fame in the afterlife a subjective and arbitrary phenomenon dictated mostly by prevalent critical trends? The stability or instability of Garrick's celebrity in print in his critical afterlife is a core concern here: what changes had his celebrity gone through and how was the plasticity of it moulded and remoulded by those constructing biographical representations? Posthumous critical responses to Garrick's celebrity are equally as interesting and engaging as Garrick's personal efforts to form and control his public celebrity. Garrick was partly active participant in the commodification of his celebrity and partly spectator and the recipient of his celebrity from audiences.⁷⁶

Garrick's ability to promote and sell himself was made possible by an existing popular cultural interest in theatre and theatrical celebrity and by the expansion of the popular press and publishing that could cater for, and perhaps even engineer, the mounting demand and interest in celebrity. In order to appreciate how Boaden presents Garrick in print, we need to understand the ways in which Garrick had in already determined the ways in which his printed selves would or could be understood. Jane Moody explains that as '[t]he newspaper...was emerging as a crucial site for the construction and destruction of reputations; theatres and newspapers also began to exploit their mutual interests in the production of publicity.'⁷⁷ Garrick certainly did use his interests in newspapers to aid the construction of his celebrity and to further his career but his hyper-awareness and keen sensitivity displays that Garrick was conscious and responsive to the possibility of the destruction of his reputation in the press. As a result of the opportunity that the press presented for

⁷⁶ Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1977), is cited by Inglis as the work that developed Karl Marx's commodity fetishism in relation to popular culture and the mass media.

⁷⁷ Jane Moody, 'Stolen Identities: Character, Mimicry and the Invention of Samuel Foote', ed. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain 1660-2000*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 65-89, 72.

either creating or destroying reputations, celebrities that were shrewd and attentive enough to be aware of the parameters of their own celebrity were able to, ‘now construct a relationship with their audience that was independent of the vehicles in which they appeared.’⁷⁸ This relationship was largely constructed through the media and pamphleteering but also there is something to be said for Garrick’s active life in the social circles of polite society. A fascinating additional element to the division between the public and the private world of celebrity is that actors publically perform and assume other identities as part of their profession and this skill can often be beneficial in their private and social lives. The performative aspect of identity is part of a larger discussion of the nature of identity and celebrity but an idea of the complexity and fascination it adds to this celebrity discourse can be detected in Garrick’s professional career. Peter Thompson comments that:

The idea of celebrity, like the idea of performance, raises issues of authenticity. Does the person match the reputation? The celebrated actor, as a professional imitator of persons not himself, is, then, either liable to double scrutiny or protected by a riveting ambiguity.⁷⁹

Garrick was renowned for his performances in social circles as well as his more accessible performances in theatres and this social success of in his private social life is further complicated by adding the extra layer of Garrick’s performances in private company that are separate from the simple division of public and private.

Now it is necessary for Davies’ work to support the case study of Boaden’s here by providing evidence of Garrick’s social performances: Brewer reports that often what made Garrick stand out was not simply the association with Shakespeare

⁷⁸ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 13.

⁷⁹ Peter Thompson, ‘Celebrity and Rivalry: David [Garrick] and Goliath [Quin]’, *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain 1660-2000*, ed. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 127-147, 141.

or his indisputable acting skill but his ‘unstoppable charm, astonishing energy and genius for self-publicity. He was a constant performer, whether on stage, dining with friends or writing a letter.’⁸⁰ This begs the questions: did Garrick attempt, and on the whole succeed, in furthering his celebrity by matching his behaviour to his reputation? This readiness to perform, publically and privately, displays on a basic level an individual that wishes to be liked and wishes for social popularity. On the other hand, it demonstrates that Garrick had realised the value that these social performances possessed and how they offered a means to further expand his reputation and manage his own celebrity. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence of Garrick as the master of transformation showcasing the elasticity of his facial expression and versatility of his voice. Thompson observes that, ‘[w]e know that Garrick’s facial features were uncommonly mobile, and that a spectacularly rapid visible transition from passion to passion was his party trick.’⁸¹ These performances of facial elasticity, considered private in the sense that they were social but not on the public stage, had become as much a part of the Garrick repertoire as his Hamlet, Ranger, Benedick and Lear.

Garrick was clearly and understandably concerned with his good reputation in his own lifetime and we can see first hand from Thomas Davies and Arthur Murphy and afterwards by Boaden all the way through to modern scholarship that this was the case. Arthur Murphy’s *The Life of David Garrick* (1801) gives us another perspective and helps us to understand and define Garrick’s preoccupation with his own reputation as the combined energy of him adoring celebrity and a dreading bad publicity. According to Murphy, ‘the love of fame was Garrick’s ruling passion, even

⁸⁰ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), 415.

⁸¹ Peter Thompson, “Celebrity and Rivalry: David [Garrick] and Goliath [Quin]”, *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain 1660-2000*, ed. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp.127-147, 140.

to anxiety. He held the small wits in contempt, and yet lived in fear of them.⁸² Following on from this, it is not inconceivable that Garrick's career and image management and anxiety over the stability of his reputation extended to his mixing socially and a stimulated a wish to be regarded highly in social circles as well as by the press and by the public. Garrick's love of fame and fear of critical condemnation united to create an awareness that in modern terms can be viewed as a proficiency in public relations employed by Garrick as he acted as his own press secretary and orchestrated countless opportunities to spotlight himself and maintain an interest and prominence in the media.⁸³

The popular interest in the public life of Garrick did not cease when it approached the boundary of the very private facets of it; in fact it increased this curiosity and it is unlikely that there even is a clear division between the private and public when celebrity is concerned. William Hazlitt comments that one of the pleasant features of the acting profession is not only being able to admire those on the stage but also that 'we contract a personal intimacy with them.'⁸⁴ It appears as a far more pleasurable feature for those involved in the consumption, rather than the production, of the acting profession and this intimacy, or at the audiences' perception of such a sentiment is a contributing factor to the way in which the public and private boundary is distorted. There are certainly no apparent lines of exact demarcation where audiences' interests were concerned and their fascination with the public and the private was at least of an equal intensity: prior to Garrick's marriage he had experienced this during his association and relationship with Peg Woffington which

⁸² Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick*. Vol. II (London: J. Wright, Piccadilly, 1801), 13.

⁸³ Among many others, John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship* (Oxford: University Press, 1992), Vanessa Cunningham, *Shakespeare and Garrick* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008) highlight Garrick's efforts to promote and manage his own celebrity.

⁸⁴ William Hazlitt, *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, Vol. 6, ed. Duncan Wu (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998), 153.

had begun to move to the foreground of his celebrity and sideline and tarnish his public professional life. This would certainly have conflicted with his wish to establish high regard for himself and his profession and may have hardened his resolve to eschew scandal and associate himself with men and women of good reputation.

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Lasting fame in the critical afterlife, what my introduction refers to as a reception-history, is an unstable phenomenon and a powerful factor that affects the ephemerality or permanence of a public figure, and consequently the ability to even have a sustained critical afterlife, is the dynamic between renown and notoriety. In his biographical memoir of Garrick, Boaden states that ‘his death impoverished equally the stock of social and public gratification’⁸⁵ and it could be said that Boaden aided Garrick, and vice-versa, to enrich the enjoyment of their nineteenth century readership. This statement seems largely to refer to the ease with which Garrick moved in public and private circles but in his reception-history he still receives that acclaim and his stock is still current albeit in a what it might be accurate to say was a more academic and highbrow discourse. According to Hazlitt in ‘The Indian Jugglers’ in his collection of essays *Table Talk* (1825), celebrity in one’s own lifetime and social and public gratification is not the true mark of significant fame:

No man is truly great, who is only great in his lifetime. The test of greatness is the page of history... Besides, what is short-lived and

⁸⁵ James Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*. Vol.I (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831-2), i.

pampered into mere notoriety, is of a gross and vulgar quality in itself.⁸⁶

There are two interesting points to be inferred from Hazlitt's summation of fame and posterity here: firstly that the page of history is considered an important component of celebrity in the nineteenth century; and secondly that notoriety, grossness and vulgarity were synonymous with temporary and transient celebrity; this lower form of fame does not approach Hazlitt's conceit of what he identifies as greatness.

One way to approach this is to see notoriety as generating a lower form of this phenomenon called *celebrity* which takes place during an individual's lifetime but fades very quickly. Conversely, renown and good report which can be said to produce the sometimes slower but definitely more resilient *fame*: a condition that manages to survive, and to use Hazlitt's metaphor, survive on *the page of history*. In a supportive explanation of the difference between the conceit of the more fleeting renown or notoriety of *celebrity* and the lasting *fame* achieved after death. Hazlitt contrasts the fortune of authors and actors after their death afterlife and explains that:

When an author dies, it is no matter, for his work remains. When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society which requires to be filled up. Who does not go to see Kean? Who, if Garrick were alive, would go to see him? At least, one or the other must have quitted the stage.⁸⁷

Garrick certainly made way for Edmund Kean on the stage but on the page, he continued to be part of the current discourse of the theatre and a yardstick for subsequent actors and actresses. In many ways, the gap is not so much filled by

⁸⁶ William Hazlitt, *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, Vol. 6, ed. Duncan Wu (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998), p.73.

⁸⁷ William Hazlitt, *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, Vol. II, ed. Duncan Wu (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998), 154.

another figure inasmuch as it is filled with a continuation of interest and engagement with the figure of David Garrick and the influence and presence he maintained in his critical afterlife. Hazlitt has Garrick and Kean unable to exist side-by-side because the presence of the former makes the latter redundant. The notion that they both offer a similar gift to audiences does support Hazlitt's theory of the 'void in society' but this simple interchange of personnel really undersells the individual and idiosyncratic differences that have been drawn between for example Garrick and Kean. After Garrick's death, his *celebrity* is almost a mantle passed on to the next generation of performers now that the void has opened up to them, but Garrick's *fame* (no longer under his stewardship) moves into another sphere where biography, scholarship and prolonged interest in Garrick all constitute his fame in his critical afterlife and what we might term Garrick's reception history.

Without a framework to approach Boaden it might appear that he had unmediated access to correspondences both to and from Garrick throughout his life and at face value this is an exciting notion for researchers that opens up a large number of possible dialogues with Garrick's celebrity. Boaden proposes that he 'will take especial care that all he advances in favour of his client be strictly borne out by the evidence produced in court.'⁸⁸ Boaden's invocation of legalistic terminology and use of the term client brings to mind that the editor feels a duty to Garrick as his representative and that he brings a judicious eye when he accesses Garrick's personal letters. Unmediated access here is as largely a redundant notion knowing what we know of David Garrick's concerted efforts to manage and control the flow of information that concerned him and his interest throughout his career. Garrick's correspondences are conspicuous in the fact that we can say that he had preserved and

⁸⁸ James Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*. Vol.I (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831-2), i.

been selective with the information in his own lifetime with a mind to a future autobiographical project. Garrick's letters are interspersed with his own annotations and commentaries and it is clear that Garrick kept copies of both sent and received correspondences: in itself this is not uncommon but the selectivity is the issue here at the inception of Garrick's assembling of his letters. As we have seen Boaden opens his biographical memoir of Garrick with a key statement:

[T]he papers which form the present collection were selected and preserved by Mr. Garrick himself; whether as the materials of any auto-biography, cannot be absolutely determined, although that is highly probable.⁸⁹

We have discussed the selected and preserved element elsewhere but if Garrick had planned to write his own memoirs in retirement, we can understand this careful cataloguing and we can understand his assiduous selection process. The projected Garrick autobiography did not happen but many of the issues surrounding the writing of lives still came to bear on the *Correspondence*. Paula Backscheider notes that biographers are 'decision-makers' whose decisions matter and that 'from a variety of perspectives, they judge and evaluate, and the art of interpretation is ever present, inseparable from every other action.'⁹⁰ In the *Correspondence* we have a glut of decision-makers and the choices they have made are part of a trickle down process that has at least two people (excluding Mrs. Garrick's possible opportunities) judging and evaluating and interpreting. David Garrick is, in a way, affecting the possible *art of interpretation* and using his ability to gauge and audience for the last time before the task is passed to Boaden to make his own choices. His own choices have been

⁸⁹ James Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*. Vol.I (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831-2), i.

⁹⁰ Paula Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography* (Oxford: University Press, 1999), xxi.

refined and guided, and in some ways limited, by Garrick's own preservation and selection and this has to be considered when approaching with the *Correspondence*.

These factors undoubtedly impinge on the information that is disseminated to any subsequent researchers that engage with these correspondences and especially Boaden as an inheritor of this information. Although Garrick had expressed his wishes to write his own autobiography, he does not by all historical accounts appear to have been so careless as to have not thought that if he died unexpectedly then his correspondences would or could have fallen into the hands of a biographer⁹¹. Even if Eva Garrick had interceded, it seems equally as unlikely that he would have included anything that would have been damaging to his wife and so Garrick's editing and control over this text started in his own lifetime and continued to influence this flow and transmission of information in the mid-nineteenth century when Boaden took possession of it.

The reason for highlighting recent biographical scholarship here is to point out that many of the pre-existing beliefs and opinions that influenced posthumous biographies on Garrick had been introduced by Garrick himself in his pursuit of excellence both in the public and private stages of his life by means of his utilisation of the press. In light of this, and in particular the sense that Boaden essentially witnessed Garrick through others' eyes, Boaden is subject to the public construction of Garrick's celebrity and as we shall see below Garrick being an performer only gives his celebrity further complexity. Hermione Lee poses the question,

What is biography's relation to the performative aspect of identity,
the individual's public role? The more public the subject of a

biography, the more urgent the question becomes...biography's job is

⁹¹ 'Garrick was a compulsive letter-writer, even though one of the American scholars who edited his correspondence ventured a guess that the fifteen hundred or so letters which survive may represent no more than a tenth of all that he wrote.' Ian McIntyre, *Garrick* (London: Penguin, 1999), 5.

to get behind the public performance and show us the real person at home in his ‘undress’.⁹²

Lee continues to suggest that it is exceptionally difficult to disentangle the real self from the performed, public and social self and her notion of ‘undress’ will come to bear as Garrick’s social performances are considered as an extension of his stage performances and subsequently finding Garrick in his ‘undress’ is ultimately an incredibly complicated task. The deliberate use of the term ‘undress’ has a particular theatrical resonance and also a direct relationship to clothing, costume and disguise: the implied interchange between these performative features is what makes Garrick such an excellent and engaging subject for a study of this kind. The interplay between Garrick the stage performer, Garrick the social performer and Garrick the performer in the press is the part of the rationale behind using the title ‘the stages of celebrity’ along with the equally significant temporal stages that are covered in the fifty-two year gap between Davies’ *Memoirs* and the *Correspondence*.

David Garrick’s endeavours to sanitise his reputation and exhibit appropriate aspects of it for mass consumption suggest that he was suitable as a brilliant and edifying subject not simply for a biography but for a more symbolic and significant collection of his letters in the nineteenth century; Garrick had been able to straddle the line between public and private reputability and maintain his celebrity without falling prey to the notoriety and criticism that he so feared. Boaden and his readers’ interest in Garrick demonstrates that, at least from the standpoint of 1830s Britain, Garrick in the critical afterlife was successfully negotiating the anxiety and fears about rumour and scandal, as well the blurring of private and public, and appealing to the tastes of a broad cultural audience.

⁹² Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: University Press, 2009), 102.

From the introductory statements of Boaden's *Correspondence*, it is clear that Boaden holds Garrick in great esteem and highlighting this passage has a two-fold reason: firstly, to draw attention to the perception of Garrick's superiority and how it had flourished after his death; and secondly to consider Boaden's choice of phrasing and what it reveals about an early nineteenth-century perceptions of Garrick. For Boaden, Garrick had not simply the attained a modicum of fame but fame amidst the most renowned men and women of his own time. In what reads like a deliberate echo of Davies' introductory statement, 'all excellence has a right to be recorded', Boaden suggests that Garrick's moral and intellectual eminence separated him from the figures of renown in the eighteenth century plus Boaden's own nineteenth century, by virtue of the publishing of the *Correspondence*, the moral and intellectual eminence of Garrick's celebrity has been enriched and elevated in the afterlife. Joseph Roach has argued that '[c]elebrities, like kings, have two bodies – the body natural, which decays and dies, and the body politic, which does neither.'⁹³ Roach describes an issue that was definitely a factor in Garrick's celebrity: the public ownership of his body and the sense of shared experiences and even ownership that audiences felt of the achievements and triumphs of the cultural commodity that they have invested their time, money and even adoration in. The celebrity body is obviously subject to the limitations of nature but the celebrity body politic takes on a new life that is determined by public interest, critical engagement and many of the cultural factors outlined in the introduction.

The shifting class boundaries of Boaden's century might have heightened the importance of moral and intellectual superiority but the fact that Garrick cultivated this aspect of his public reputation implies that this critical opinion is not a purely

⁹³ Joseph Roach, 'Public Intimacy: The Prior History of "It"', Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody eds., *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain 1660-2000* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp.15-30, 24.

historicised one. Garrick's endeavours to achieve this position of respectability and good report began in his own lifetime and, according to both Davies and Boaden, persisted as a marked characteristic of his reputation whilst he lived. Garrick's susceptibility to criticism is dealt with by all of his biographers and later in the nineteenth century Joseph Knight went as far as accusing him of possessing a narcissistic streak that drove his approach to managing other actors and promoting his own interest.⁹⁴ Boaden provides a more detailed account of this behaviour by first qualifying these opinions of Garrick before moving towards an attempt to explain it:

He paid great regard to the press, he even meddled with newspaper property, he anticipated attack sometimes, was irritated by it at others, and never practised the policy of being silent. But his self-love as an actor was not alone to account for this. He was a proprietor of a concern, that flourishes but by the 'popular breath'; to engage the public mind, therefore, about *himself* and his *theatre*, was essential to the triumph of both. He had writers who were engaged in his *interest* in such vehicles, and he wrote in them himself.⁹⁵

The suggestion of Garrick adding his voice, surreptitiously, to an artistic medium that lives (and by the same logic dies) by the metaphoric popular breath is an alluring one when taken in relation to Garrick's own influence and then the influence of others in his afterlife over his celebrity: Garrick's practice of not being silent meant that his voice was heard both on and off the stage throughout his career and then, in his

⁹⁴ Knight continually describes Garrick's machinations against younger actors in his company and the way in which he rewrote many plays to place himself in the limelight. For Knight, Garrick's Drury Lane management meant that he 'could carry out his schemes wholly for his own benefit.' Joseph Knight, *David Garrick* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1894), pp.103-4.

⁹⁵ James Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*. vol.I (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831-2), lxiii.

critical afterlife, echoes of his voice were continually being heard, interpreted and debated in new academic discourses.⁹⁶

Boaden's assessment of Garrick's management of Drury Lane theatre is both complimentary of Garrick and his lofty ambition and rather dismissive of the state of the theatre before he took up the position. Boaden proposes Garrick's accession to management as the inauguration of a new era of artistic promise that forced theatre to 'shake off the slumber of despondency, and, rousing its facilities, struggle against the fame of former writers.'⁹⁷ The image of such a struggle against the fame of former writers is a remarkable one considering that later in the paragraph Boaden comments that Garrick was unable to find contemporary writers to allow his talents to thrive, thus relying on the use of playwrights such as Shakespeare, Jonson and Fletcher. Quite how far back Boaden is referring to when he highlights this struggle against former writers is unclear in the text but it takes its place in part of a larger debate about eighteenth and nineteenth century theatre post-Shakespeare, and also provides an inroad to posit some theories on a nineteenth-century perception of Garrick's professional fight to legitimise the theatre in the public's eyes and to raise it to the level of respectability that he believed it was rightfully owed. Garrick battled preconceived notions of the licentiousness of the stage but also his brilliant acting ability may have compounded this, as Brewer asserts:

The danger of theatre lay chiefly in the skills of its actors. Players made the stage seductive: their glamour and beauty, the virtuosity of their performances, their private lives, at once the focus of polite

⁹⁶ Peter Holland resurrects the *voice* of Garrick in an essay on the phonology and elocution and its contribution to Garrick's performances. Peter Holland, 'Hearing the Dead: the Sound of David Garrick', ed. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), pp.248-270.

⁹⁷ James Boaden, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick*. Vol.I (London: Colburn & Bentley, 1831-2) xxvi.

society and yet disreputably on its margins, all made the theatre a place of exciting dreams, fantasies and illusions.⁹⁸

Garrick's skill was undoubtedly of such a level that, in Brewer's sense, he was a dangerous man: he had the ability, glamour and attention drawn towards his private life but also the inclination to remove the harmful connotations that the theatre was bound up with at that time.

Garrick did not live a remarkably controversial private life, and less so once he had married, but he was an intensely public figure and for all the mocking from Foote, Johnson and Cibber et al, it was perhaps no surprise at all that Garrick was so keenly focused on his public life and the criticism he received when he was fighting to combine this personal respectability whilst pursuing a career on the stage. The greater the level of Garrick's celebrity the sharper the criticism became; this was something that he had recognized and attempted to balance achieving the success his ambition spurred him to with the scathing criticism that this success could, and often would, lead to. Fred Inglis suggests that:

Garrick was capacious enough...to carry off the contradictions in the role he had himself contrived. His irreproachable private life as well as his public munificence on behalf of the theatre meant that he was able to play out his signal version of the theatre celebrity who unites business with art, wealth with popularity, gregariousness with immaculate self-conception.⁹⁹

Garrick struggled under these ambiguities and contradictions to create and establish his celebrity in his own lifetime and put a great deal of effort into doing so; Boaden suggests that he was keen to escape the shadows of previous theatrical

⁹⁸ John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), 334.

⁹⁹ Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 44.

celebrities and show himself as an alternative to what had passed before. This could be motivation enough for Garrick's work to move theatre from low to high art and his careful management of his own image and private affairs certainly does not preclude this suggestion. Garrick's determined alignment with Shakespeare was also a means of achieving respectability, a way in which he could benefit from the association with the bard whilst offering a respectable alternative to the scandalous side of eighteenth-century theatre. It seems that Garrick's love of Shakespeare and success in Shakespearean roles coincided with a time when a burgeoning interest in the playwright assured that he was raised to the zenith of the canon of English writers. It seems highly unlikely that Garrick would fail to notice that this allegiance was ultimately beneficial and was able to indulge his adoration in Shakespeare whilst furthering his pursuit of celebrity and renown. If this is the case then the Jubilee would have been the crowning achievement of this strategy and the point where Garrick and Shakespeare (at least in the eighteenth century) became indivisible and in some ways supplemented each other's celebrity: Shakespeare, in the afterlife, providing Garrick with the quality of plays to help raise him to the very pinnacle of British theatre and Garrick, in his own lifetime, helping to resurrect and redefine Shakespeare for a new generation of theatre-goers, scholars and a wider public audience.

* * * *

As discussed above, the lavishness of the production and size of Boaden's *Correspondence* is a physical and symbolic representation of how Garrick was beginning to grow in stature and reputation in the nineteenth century and how his celebrity was, and still is, under construction. The nineteenth century saw a critical engagement with Shakespeare in theatre history that helped bring David Garrick's

celebrity to prominence in the afterlife. Over twenty years prior to Boaden's *Correspondence*, Charles Lamb was outraged that Shakespeare and Garrick were being contemplated as equals; to Lamb, Shakespeare was the genius and Garrick was the interpreter that rode to fame on his coattails.¹⁰⁰ The expansion of the print medium and ensuing availability of versions of Shakespeare's playtexts was ushering the study and the appreciation of Shakespeare into a new arena and, as Cunningham proposes, '[i]n the thirty years since Garrick's, a new, individualised approach to appreciating Shakespeare had developed, whose adherents believed that he could be known more profoundly in private study than in a public audience.'¹⁰¹ It is interesting that we return to the public/private dichotomy in relation to Garrick but now in a completely different discourse; the advancements that take place in the study of Shakespeare's plays unavoidably influences our reading of Garrick's career and celebrity. It is a mark of how inextricably the two have become linked that Garrick's position in the afterlife is impinged on in this way and another indication of how successful The Jubilee was in crowning Garrick as the (self-styled) heir apparent to Shakespeare's throne. One final irony that results from this shift in academic discourse is that however Garrick was viewed by Lamb and his contemporaries in the nineteenth century: he managed to provide many of the scholars with the materials that they would use to bring about these changes by leaving his vast collection of plays to the British Library¹⁰². As well as being known as an actor, manager and theatre owner, David Garrick could now be credited as a researcher and contributor to the ongoing scholarly debates that would so frequently link his name and the god of his idolatry, William Shakespeare.

¹⁰⁰ Vanessa Cunningham, *Shakespeare and Garrick* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 166.

¹⁰¹ Cunningham, *Shakespeare and Garrick*, 166.

¹⁰² 'George M. Kahrl and Dorothy Anderson, eds, *The Garrick Collection of Old English Plays: A Catalogue with An Historical Introduction* (London: The British Library, 1982).

IV

Conclusion: Staging Celebrity

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As a coda to this dissertation it should be made apparent that although this piece of work centres on the period 1760 through to 1832, many analogous ideas can and will be drawn with modern day notions of fame and celebrity. It is from a modern day starting-point that his work was conceived and I was interested in looking retrospectively at how a close study of David Garrick can provide information as to where our thoughts and concepts of fame and celebrity may have been conceived and how David Garrick could be an excellent example of one of the first real public figures who clearly understood the value of cultivating fame rather than renown.

Later in the nineteenth century biographer Joseph Knight *David Garrick* (1894) emerged as one of the dissenting voices that opts not to venerate David Garrick but instead makes an attempt to demolish some of the information disseminated by Davies, Murphy and Boaden amongst others. In his preface Knight also criticizes the methodology of Garrick's early biographers by stating that, 'The literature and the memoirs of the last half century are full of anecdote concerning Garrick or references to him.'¹⁰³ Knight himself is subject to the use of anecdotal evidence and it is interesting to contrast Davies and Knight on a similar subject and try to ascertain the motivation behind their contentions and how they might have been able to have evidenced them. Much has been made of Garrick's undertaking of bringing acting and the stage into the respectable public domain, supporting fledgling talent (Spranger Barry, Sarah Siddons) and his devotion to philanthropic funds to

¹⁰³ Joseph Knight, *David Garrick* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1894), Preface, V.

support retired, sick or disabled actors. Late eighteenth century biographers lauded this virtue in Garrick and those biographers who knew him well, Thomas Davies and Arthur Murphy, have presented support from his correspondence and anecdotal evidence to attest to this. Commenting on Garrick's shrewd business sense and lack of egotism and professional envy, Davies observes that:

His engagement with [Sheridan] was of very great advantage to him. Little difference in the bulk of audiences was to be perceived when they acted separately, the part of Hamlet, or of Richard, or any other capital character...But Garrick's ruling passion was the love of fame; and his uneasiness, arising from the success of Sheridan, began every day to be more visible. However, he seemed for a time to suspend his jealousy, and promote every scheme proposed by Sheridan for their mutual profit.¹⁰⁴

It is interesting to note that Davies is certain that Garrick was able to suspend this professional envy in place of mutual profit. The fact that the theatre was filled to a similar level and that both of them were successful must have made it easier for Garrick to suspend any resentment he might have had. Had the takings been considerably lower for his rival's performances, and had it affected their mutual profit-margins, then we can say with conviction that Garrick's envy would have dissipated immediately and his interests in financial and critical success would have surfaced. Garrick as theatre manager had, for the most part, excellent commercial instincts; however, nineteenth and twentieth-century commentators have found occasion to criticize this commercial streak and perhaps develop Davies insinuation that Garrick's 'ruling passion was the love of fame' into something more sinister and

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, vol. I (London: By the Author, 1780), 293.

conniving. In contrast to Davies' sentiments towards Garrick (but much more in agreement with the earlier statement about Garrick's ruling passion) Joseph Knight's opinion is more often than not that Garrick rarely troubled himself unless it was in the interest of furthering his own career as actor and manager. Knight points to Garrick's reworking of *Hamlet* as evidence for Garrick's ruthless egocentricity: 'He had, it is true, given no actor a chance except himself, and when a dying speech which he wrote for Laertes was received with applause, he withdrew it from Aikin, the exponent of that character, and incorporated it into his own part.'¹⁰⁵ In *David Garrick* Knight presents a contradictory view of Garrick which is critical of many of his decisions and, on the whole, comes to the conclusion that everything he did was as a direct result of a streak of self-interest that paid little attention to others (especially actors) that were in a less opportune position than he was. According to Knight, when Garrick became manager of Drury Lane, he was able to harness its power to his own designs;

With his assumption of the reins of management the brilliant portion of his career begins. So great had been his popularity that he had for the last three or four years virtual control of the stage...Garrick was in very sooth the manager, and could carry out his schemes wholly for his own benefit.¹⁰⁶

The discrepancy between early biographers and Knight is worth addressing with reference to the earlier point that it is impossible for a biographer to be exempt from the society, economics and cultural trends of their time. Knight perhaps sees Garrick's career as indicative of the mercenary self-centredness that was prevalent in his own century which may have been at odds with his view of theatre as a more sophisticated

¹⁰⁵ Joseph Knight, *David Garrick* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench and Trübner and Co., 1894), 260.

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Knight, *David Garrick* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench and Trübner and Co., 1894), 103-4.

creative medium that could only be made anodyne by a more commercially-related mentality. The stock figure of successful theatre-manager as some sort of Dickensian scoundrel is a stereotype; aside from being used on the stage, that stock-figure appears unlikely to have ever really been a reality and particularly with someone that achieved the level of success of Garrick. It would be interesting to investigate the differences and similarities between nineteenth-century managers, such as Henry Irving and Charles Kean, and David Garrick in order to try to understand some of Knight's objections to Garrick's management style and see if they may have influenced his perspective.

Aside from Joseph Knight, who continually vilifies Garrick as a sort of Machiavellian actor-manager, the main body of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century critical opinion regarding Garrick treats him with graciousness and esteem. Staying on the theme of accusations of Garrick guiding Drury Lane towards his own ends, but now moving forward to twentieth-century criticism, Dougald MacMillan is dubious of Garrick's actual choice of plays and the also the volume of new plays produced whilst he was manager. MacMillan's motivation for this criticism of Garrick's choice of plays is unusual:

In passing judgement upon plays submitted to him for performance at Drury Lane, he seems to have accepted or rejected solely on the basis of the actability of the play at his theatre. This is probably the correct attitude for a manager to take.¹⁰⁷

It seems both an odd turn of phrase and a strange condemnation to suggest that Garrick's attitude was 'probably correct': for a theatre manager and investor, an interest in success is undeniably the correct attitude. What might the manager of a

¹⁰⁷ Dougald Macmillan, "David Garrick as Critic", *Studies in Philology* (Vol. 31, No. 1.), pp.69-83, 82.

popular theatre do as an alternative? Garrick had invested his money, time and, perhaps most importantly for him, his good name in managing Drury Lane and to do anything other than promote his interests would have jeopardised Garrick's investments. Twentieth-century theatre's advancements and innovations do make Garrick, in his own day lauded as a great innovator, and his theatrical choices seem very safe, staid and traditional but to judge them by these standards is anachronistic and perhaps unjust on the part of MacMillan. In using Davies' *Memoirs* as a starting point, we are able to examine many different commentators and their approaches to David Garrick. These commentators are all part of the course of Garrick's posthumous fame and their places in it are not untouched by critical trends, societal concerns and economic pressures.

By limiting the scope to this period I hoped that I could create an interesting personal, social and theatrical history and also to demonstrate that this research is worthy of expansion that would, ideally, pursue the theme over a larger period so as to be able to introduce other examples, such as Edmund Kean, Sarah Siddons and Henry Irving in a discussion of the path of fame and celebrity. An exploration of the dialogue between Shakespeare, Garrick and Siddons in the critical afterlife would be an appealing expansion of this theme in the future, as would a more in-depth investigation to include the journey of theatre's shift from low culture to high cultural art form and how the profession's place in society impacted on Garrick's posthumous celebrity and the phenomenon of celebrity as a cultural form.

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