

Davies 1784 Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the
life of David Garrick, Esq.*, 4th ed., 2 vols.
(London, 1784).

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MEMOIRS
OF THE
LIFE
OF
DAVID GARRICK, Esq.

INTERSPERSED WITH
CHARACTERS AND ANECDOTES
OF
HIS THEATRICAL CONTEMPORARIES.

THE WHOLE FORMING
A HISTORY OF THE STAGE,
WHICH INCLUDES
A Period of Thirty-Six Years.

By THOMAS DAVIES.

---- Quem populus Romanus meliorem virum quam his-
trionem esse arbitratur, qui ita dignissimus est scena propter
artificium, ut dignissimus sit curia propter abstinentiam.
Cicero pro Q. Roscio Comoedo.

FOURTH EDITION:
To which is added an accurate INDEX.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed for the Author, and sold at his Shop in Great
Russell-Street, Covent-Garden.
M.DCC.LXXXIV.

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1:20

... Mr. Ryan had enjoyed a kind of pre-
scriptive claim to all the lovers in tragedy,
and fine gentlemen in comedy, at the the-
atres in Lincoln's-inn-fields and Covent-

garden, for near thirty years.

In a conversation, which I had with him some years before his death, he told me that he began the trade of acting when he was a boy of about sixteen or seventeen years of age; and that one of the first parts, which was suddenly put into his hands in the absence of a more experienced player, was Seyton, an old officer in the tragedy

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of Macbeth, when Betterton acted the principal character. As Betterton had not seen Ryan before he came on the stage, he was surprised at the sight of a boy in a large full-bottom wig, such as our judges now wear on the bench. However, by his looks he encouraged him to go on with what he had to say; and, when the scene was over, he commended the young actor, but reproved old Downs, the prompter, for sending on the stage a child to represent a man advanced in years. ...

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... In old Downs's list of plays, acted from the Restoration to the middle of queen Anne's reign, it is astonishing to see how few plays, written by the great father of the drama, were acted during so long a period. I am sorry that I have it in my power to prove, that, during the twenty years government of the theatre by those eminent actors and managers, Booth, Wilkes, and Cibber, not more than eight or nine of Shakspeare's comedies and tragedies were in possession of the stage. Of the thirty-five uncontested pieces of this author, Mr. Garrick annually gave the public seventeen or eighteen. But, when in the revival of Shakspeare's plays he complied with the general taste as well as his own, he determined to restore him to his genuine splendour and native simplicity, un-

incumbered with the unnatural additions
and tinsel trappings thrown upon him by

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some writers who lived in the reign of
Charles the Second.

Downs, in his narrative of the revival
of Macbeth, by Davenant, assures us, that
it was acted with all the magnificence of an
opera. Locke's excellent music had given
the managers an opportunity of adding a
variety of songs and dances, suitable, in
some measure, to the play, but more agree-
able to the then taste of the audience, who
were pleased with the comic dress which
the actors gave to the witches, contrary,
in the opinion of every person of taste, to
the original design of the author; but
Downs might have added too, that Dave-
nant and his coadjutors adulterated many
excellent scenes of this tragedy by ridicu-
lous and foreign appendages, many of them
in rhyme. The restorers, too, thought that
Shakspeare had not given the audience a suf-
ficient quantity of spectres; and therefore, to
supply the deficiency, lady Macbeth must be
terrified with the ghost of Duncan, in a sup-
plementary scene between her and her hus-

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band; -- where she advises him to resign the
crown.

ACT IV.

L. Macb. You may in peace resign the ill-got crown.

Why should you labour still to be unjust?
There has been too much blood already spilt;
Make not the subjects victims to your guilt.

Macb. Can you think that a crime, which you did once

Provoke me to commit? Had not your breath
Blown my ambition up into a flame,
Duncan had yet been living.

L. Macb. ---- ---- Resign your kingdom,
And with your crown put off your guilt.

Macb. Resign the crown, and with it both our lives!
I must have better counsellors.

L. Macb. What, your witches!
Curse on your messengers of hell! Their breath
Infected first my breath. -- See me no more

As king; your crown sits heavy on your head,
But heavier on my heart: I have had too much
Of kings already -- See! the ghost again!

[Ghost appears.]

[Lady Macbeth is led out by women.]

Macbeth solus.

She does from Duncan's death to sickness grieve,
And shall from Malcolm's death her health receive;
When by a viper bitten, nothing's good
To cure the venom, but a viper's blood.

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The play thus altered, and different in almost every scene from the original, kept possession of the stage from 1665 to 1744, when Mr. Garrick first acted Macbeth. So little did the players know of Shakspeare's text, that Quin, after he had seen Garrick in this character, asked him where he got such strange and out-of-the-way expressions, as

/* The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac'd loon,
Where got'st thou that goose look?

Mr. Garrick advised him to consult the original, and not borrow his knowledge of Shakspeare from the altered copies of his plays /†. ...

/* Macbeth. Act V.

/† Mrs. Pritchard read no more of the play of Macbeth than her own part, as written out and delivered to her by the prompter.

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1:172

... I remember, when he first acted Macbeth, he was so alarmed with the fears of critical examination, that, during his preparation for the character, he devoted some part of his time to the writing a humourous 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 therefore determined to attack himself ironically, to blunt, if not to prevent, the remarks of others. This pamphlet was called, *An Essay on Acting; in which will be considered the mimi-*

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cal behaviour of a certain fashionable faulty actor, and laudableness of such unmanly, as well as inhuman, proceedings; to which will be added, A short criticism on his acting Macbeth. -- It had this motto in the title-page,

Macbeth has murder'd Garrick.

This little pamphlet was written with humour and fancy. ...

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2:82

... One of the illustrious princes /* of Italy requested he would favour him with some very striking or affecting scene in one of the most admired English tragedies. Mr. Garrick immediately recited a soliloquy of Macbeth, which is spoken during the instant of time when a dagger is presented to the disturbed imagination of a man ready to perpetrate a horrid murder. His ardent look, expressive tones, and impassioned action, convinced the nobleman of his great theatric excellence. ...

/* The Duke of Parma.

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2:191

... Mrs. Pritchard took leave of the public in an epilogue written by Mr. Garrick. The tragedy of Macbeth was acted for her benefit. Mr. Garrick, out of respect to this very valuable woman, gave the public, and, I believe, for the last time, one of his principal and most masterly performances, in the character of Macbeth. Lady Macbeth

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is the chief agent of the poet to carry on his plot; a woman of unbounded ambi-

tion, divested of all human feelings, to gain a crown, urges her reluctant husband to the murder of the king. Mrs. Pritchard's action, before and after the commission of the horrid deed, was strongly characteristic; it presented an image of a mind insensible to compunction, and inflexibly bent to gain its purpose. When she snatched the daggers from the remorseful and irresolute Macbeth, despising the agitations of a mind unaccustomed to guilt, and alarmed at the terrors of conscience, she presented to the audience a picture of the most consummate intrepidity in mischief. When she seized the instruments of death, and said,

GIVE ME THE DAGGERS! ----

her look and action cannot be described, and will not soon be forgotten by the surviving spectators. At the banquet scene, in the third act of the play, she still discovered more characteristical skill, if pos-

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sible, than in the preceding act. The guilty king, whose mind is full of horrors resulting from the recent murder of Banquo, by his alarming terrors, betrays himself to his guests. Pritchard's art, in endeavouring to engage the attention of the company, and draw them from the observation of Macbeth's feelings, equalled any thing that was ever seen in the art of acting.

In exhibiting the last scene of Lady Macbeth, in which the terrifying fears of a guilty conscience keep the mind broad awake while the body sleeps, Mrs. Pritchard's acting resembled those sudden flashes of lightning which more accurately discover the horrors of surrounding darkness.

She spoke her farewell epilogue with many sobs and tears, which were increased by the generous feelings of a numerous and splendid audience. She retired to Bath, and died there, about four months after, of a mortification in her foot. ...