

Davies 1780 Thomas Davies, Memoirs of the
life of David Garrick, Esq., 2 vols. (London,
1780).

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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
histrionem esse arbitratur, qui ita dignissimus est scena propter
artificium, ut dignissimus sit curia propter abstinentiam.
Cicero pro Q. Roscio Comoedo.

VOL. I.

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

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1:20

... Mr. Ryan had enjoy'd a kind of prescriptive
claim to all the lovers in tragedy, and fine
gentlemen in comedy, at the theatres 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 his first parts, which was suddenly put into his hands in the absence of a more experienced player, was Seyton, an old

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officer in Macbeth, when Betterton acted the principal character. As Betterton had not seen Ryan before he came on the stage, he was surprized 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 actor, but reproved old Downs, the prompter, for sending a child to him instead of 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 ac-

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tors and managers, Booth, Wilkes, and Cibber, not more than eight or nine of Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies were in possession of the stage. Of the thirty-five genuine pieces of this author, Mr. Garrick annually gave the public seventeen or eighteen. But, when in the revival of Shakespeare's plays, he complied with the general taste as well as his own, he was determined to restore him to his genuine

splendour and native simplicity, unincumbered with the unnatural additions, and gaudy ornaments, thrown upon him by some writers who lived in the reign of Charles the second.

Downs, in his narrative of the revival of Macbeth, by Davenant, tells 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 agreeable to the then taste of the audience, who were pleased with the comic dress which the actors gave to the witches, contrary,

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in the opinion of every person of taste, to the original design of the author; but Downs might have added too, that Davenant and his coadjutors adulterated many excellent scenes of this tragedy by ridiculous and foreign appendages, many of them in rhyme. The restorers too thought that Shakespeare had not given the audience a sufficient quantity of spectres; and therefore to supply the deficiency, lady Macbeth must be terrified with the ghost of Duncan, in a supplementary scene between her and her husband; -- 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.

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L. Macb. ---- ---- Resign your kingdom now,
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 Malcom's death her health receive,
When by a viper bitten, nothing's good
To cure the venom, but a viper's blood.

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 Shake-

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speare'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 Shakespeare from the altered copies of
his plays /†. ...

/* Macbeth. Act V.

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

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... I remember when he first acted Mac-
beth, he was so alarmed with the fears of
critical examination, that during his pre-
paration 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 was 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 con-*

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sidered, the mimical behaviour of a certain fashionable faulty actor, and the 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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M.DCC.LXXX.

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2:80

... /* One of the most 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 by him during
the instant of time when a dagger is pre-
sented to the disturbed imagination of a man
ready to perpetrate a horrid murder. His ar-
dent look, expressive tones, and impassioned
action, convinced the nobleman of the reality
of his great reputation. ...

/* The duke of Parma.

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... 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 exhibitions, in
the character of Macbeth. Lady Macbeth
is the chief agent of the poet to carry on
his grand plot; a woman of unbounded
ambition, void 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 cruelty. When she snatched the dagger

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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 possible, than in the preceding act. The guilty king, full of the horrors resulting from the murder of Banquo, by his alarming terrors of mind, betrays himself to his guests. Mrs. 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 terrors of a guilty

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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 tears and sobs, 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. ...