

Introduction

Mr. Garrick's Province was Praise; perhaps no Mortal ever enjoyed a greater Share of it: We will leave it, not to Poetry but to History to determine his Claims to it. The most singular Circumstance in Mr. Garrick's Life, was that he obtained a greater Share of Applause than any Man ever enjoyed, than any Man ever Merited . . . When Garrick gave up his Breath, we supposed his Praises would cease. But there were Reasons for their Continuation . . .

– *St. James's Chronicle*, 11–13 March 1779

From 1741, when he created a sensation with his novel interpretation of Richard III, David Garrick dominated the London stage both as actor and as progenitor of a new 'natural' style of acting. As part-owner and manager of Drury Lane, one of London's two official theatres, from 1747 to 1776 he controlled hiring, actors' salaries and the plays and entertainments offered there – many of which he also wrote or adapted himself from various sources, including, most famously, Shakespeare. His image was omnipresent: Garrick was artistically represented more times than the King,¹ and amateur actors in London's "spouting clubs" energetically aped his gestures and delivery. Garrick's fame, iconicity and his importance to theatre history and Shakespeare studies are all well documented in period sources and in recent biographies and works of theatre criticism.² What remains unexplored is the question of whether Garrick's influential stature is better understood as the fame garnered by an exceptional actor, or as celebrity produced by media and market forces. I argue for the latter, and view Garrick as an entrepreneurial manufacturer and mediator of his own celebrity.

Garrick not only published advertisements, pamphlets, letters, poems and essays which promoted his acting and his theatre, but, in a spectacular foreshadowing of today's media convergences, he was also a proprietor of papers, including the *St. James's Chronicle*, the *Public Advertiser*, the *Morning Post*, and the *London Packet* – papers which, not coincidentally,

advertised and reviewed Drury Lane's theatrical productions. It was entirely possible for a theatre-goer in the 1760s to attend Drury Lane Theatre (partly owned and managed by Garrick) to see a play which Garrick had written or adapted, featuring a prologue or epilogue written by Garrick, in which Garrick himself was acting. That playgoer had likely been enticed to go to the play by an advertisement, puff or review written by Garrick, placed in a newspaper partly owned by Garrick. David Garrick possessed an almost inconceivable level of cultural power.

The influence Garrick wielded over the media was a recurring complaint amongst his contemporary adversaries: the *Theatrical Monitor* of 14 November 1767, for instance, complained bitterly of a "collusion of managers with news writers." Beyond mentioning his ownership of newspapers, however, modern critics have scarcely noticed this aspect of Garrick's celebrity. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody summarize recent work by theatre historians as mainly "concerned with fame (the nature of the exceptional life) rather than with celebrity (a concept which focuses attention on the interplay between individuals and institutions, markets and media)."³ In Garrick's case, scholarship has followed the 'exceptional life' model, refreshing his fame rather than examining the social production of his celebrity. This focus on Garrick's exceptionality as a performer has led scholars to downplay the extent to which his carefully crafted puffs of various productions and actors (including himself) and his ability to quash opposition in print and on stage enabled public perception of his stature as a dramatic innovator.

This book will attempt to answer two multi-pronged, interconnected questions, the first of which is: how much of his own celebrity did David Garrick produce, directly and indirectly, by means of the media? The book examines Garrick's correspondence and contemporary media items written by or about Garrick to assign some quantitative basis to Garrick's mediation of his own celebrity. Which newspapers during the period 1741–76 were concerned with the reporting of dramatic or entertainment news? Of these, what share did newspapers owned by Garrick hold in the marketplace? Who comprised the target markets of these papers? How frequently do the papers and other print media refer to Garrick, and how often is Garrick the author of such references? How, in practical terms, did Garrick manage the production of his own celebrity?

The second research question asks: what strategies of self-representation did Garrick employ in the media, and what were their discernable effects? Further, to what extent can we define a secondary level of influence, exercised by Garrick over persons who owed him personal, political or

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economic debts? I ground my analysis of effect using not only the print texts identified above, but also readings of Garrick's prologues and epilogues, timely ephemeral pieces that address current theatric events; of cultural artifacts such as portraits, playbills, tickets and souvenirs that respond to developments in Garrick's public image; and of records of audience response, including the diaries kept by Drury Lane Theatre prompters Richard Cross and William Hopkins.

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The scholarly turn to consider the cultural import of celebrity has included numerous invocations of Garrick. Joseph Roach's book concerning celebrity, *It* (2007), touches on Garrick at numerous points⁴; Roach's earlier work, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (1985), offered a detailed study of eighteenth-century theories of acting and the expression of the passions, especially the work of Denis Diderot and its implications for Garrick's reputation as a 'natural' actor.⁵ Fred Inglis's book, *A Short History of Celebrity* (2010), summarizes Garrick's role in professionalizing acting.⁶ Leo Braudy, in *The Frenzy of Renown* (1986), sees Garrick as exemplary of the idea that "Greatness, no matter what its inner nature, appears to the world and to its greatest admirers as a performance that reaches beyond the grave."⁷ Antoine Lilti's recently translated book, *The Invention of Celebrity 1750–1850* (2017), invites scholars to attend to the "mechanisms" of publicity that shape celebrity, and discusses Garrick's use of benefit performances to enhance his public image.⁸ However, no extended study of Garrick's manipulation of the media yet exists. Closest to the mark is Cheryl Wanko's excellent book, *Roles of Authority: Thespian Biography and Celebrity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2003), which studies three contemporary biographies of Garrick. Wanko postulates that Garrick's authority was enabled by "an expanding London publishing trade and the increasing amount of attention the previous generation of performers had received in print," and defines his authority as "less actual power and more the perception of power and the acceptance of an actor as a person worthy of holding power."⁹ Perception of power is itself powerful; but Garrick also did possess real media power, owning, contributing to and intervening in many media venues. It is only our view of that actual power that has been obscured, and biography is one of the culprits.

Biography is often a problematic evidentiary source, and it may be particularly so in Garrick's case: his first two significant biographers, Thomas Davies and Arthur Murphy, were men with whom Garrick

wrangled repeatedly in matters personal, professional and financial. Both Davies and Murphy wrote their biographies to get out of debt, and their biographies do not so much interrogate Garrick's celebrity as capitalize upon his popularity. Davies, an actor-turned-bookseller who was co-proprietor with Garrick and others in the *St. James's Chronicle*, had a privileged view of many of Garrick's media interventions, but Davies only teases his reader: "Those who can trace his [Garrick's] letters and essays in the newspapers, will find many just observations and acute criticisms on manners, customs, and characters."¹⁰ Davies places Garrick's involvement with the press early. "Sometimes he wrote criticisms upon the action and elocution of the players, and published them in the prints. These sudden effusions of his mind generally comprehended judicious observations and shrewd remarks unmixed with that gross illiberality which often disgraces the instructions of modern stage critics," writes Davies, of Garrick before his London stage debut, circa 1740.¹¹ However, Davies declines to identify Garrick's "acute criticisms."

As an insider who profited from the symbiotic relationship of print media, theatre and bookselling, Davies was not motivated to expose the workings of the industry. If some personal animus against Garrick persisted, it is likely that, having meted out this much praise, he was not inclined to add to Garrick's fame as a writer by identifying his contributions with specificity. Or perhaps Davies regarded Garrick's media contributions as negligible alongside his other cultural work. Whatever his now irretrievable reasons for withholding specifics, the biographer who could have identified Garrick's additions to theatrical criticism did not do so. By the time Davies's biography was published, just a year after Garrick's death, many of Garrick's anonymous media interventions, restricted during his lifetime to "those who [could] trace" them, as Davies put it, were already fading fast from view. Murphy, a lawyer and playwright whose biography was published in 1801, at a greater distance after Garrick's death than Davies's work, is less gracious and less accurate in several factual points than is Davies, and even less inclined to consider Garrick as anything but an actor and manager. Garrick's 'natural' talent in acting, and to a lesser extent, in writing for the stage, is the focus of these early biographies.¹²

Even leaving early biographers' self-interest out of the question, biography's customary progress and parade create a rhythm that is not appropriate to the study of Garrick's use of the media, which was extremely consistent in approach throughout his career. Garrick's media use was considered: responsive to negative media, conflicts of taste or theatre riots,

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it was also proactive and managerial, often attempting to seed responses in the audience, and in the wider public that read about the theatre. Still, if their treatment of Garrick's involvement in the media is scanty, these and other contemporary biographies remain valuable sources of other information. In part, the biographies are confirmations and repositories of Garrick's concerted, life-long shaping of his media image – in some cases, echoing back to posterity words and images framed by Garrick himself. By examining the biographies alongside newspapers, pamphlets and correspondence, it is possible to trace some of Garrick's media interventions; these traces demonstrate that the convergence of media ownership and influence on stage and in print enabled Garrick to exercise real power over aesthetic and financial dimensions of the theatre market. For example, Garrick was and remains known for his infinite 'variety,' or his ability to play both comic and tragic parts, as well as the roles of manager, author and genteel, sociable man. As Wanko perceptively remarks, "Garrick's immense public presence seems more manageable [to biographers] when split into separate 'roles,'" yet it was the overwhelming combinatory effect of these personae and their connections to media and markets that constituted his celebrity. *David Garrick and the Mediation of Celebrity* uncovers the means by which Garrick's interventions in contemporary media contributed to the ideal of variety as the apex of theatrical achievement, and the cornerstone of his celebrity.

Of modern scholarly works, George Winchester Stone, Jr. and George M. Kahrl's magisterial book, *David Garrick: A Critical Biography* (1979), has long had the last word on Garrick's relationship with the London press. While Stone and Kahrl cite Garrick's part-ownership of several papers¹⁴ and acknowledge that public "suspicion of his power" over the press was "rampant,"¹⁵ they categorically deny that Garrick exercised undue influence over public perception of his theatre. Garrick could and did place puffs in various papers, but, they say, paid for the privilege, which, they stress, was normal business practice for theatre managers and "open to *all* comers."¹⁶ Subsequent works on Garrick have tended to follow this thinking. This study will correct assumptions that Garrick's involvement with the media was routine at several points.

Stone and Kahrl do not fully outline the times at which Garrick's shares in various papers were operative, or suggest how Garrick's periods of newspaper ownership might correlate with important, media-intensive incidents at Drury Lane Theatre. My work will mark a few notable incidents in Drury Lane Theatre during Garrick's reign, and plot media coverage against those occurrences. After identifying Garrick's periods of

media ownership, I shall make an in-depth study of a theatrical incident with particular implications for Garrick's public image – the Battle of the Romeos (1750), in which Garrick's ardent Romeo was pitted against that of Covent Garden's handsome Spranger Barry – and contrast each theatre's management of the media in response to it.

Second, Stone and Kahrl presume that the press had the responsibility and the potential to make impartial observations. This misplaced, ahistorical faith in the freedom of the press leads them to misinterpret key documents pertaining to Garrick's influence over the media. For example, they interpret printer William Woodfall's letter to Garrick of 13 February 1776 as a sincere protest of Woodfall's journalistic impartiality. Woodfall writes: "It was not the object, what Mr. Woodfall would wish to print against his friend Mr. Garrick, but how far the editor of the *Morning Chronicle* found it absolutely necessary to go to save his character for theatrical impartiality—a character, by the by, which is the very basis of the paper."¹⁷ An earlier letter from Woodfall of 18 November 1773 similarly insists, "my preserving inviolate my character for impartiality is of as much consequence to me as your preserving the character you have on the best grounds established, that of being the most capable actor, this or any other country ever produced."¹⁸ Woodfall's letter and the "editor" persona he employs cannily signal that the *Morning Chronicle* needs to *display* the character of impartiality, which will be maintained by printing letters against Garrick from time to time.

The term "impartiality" appears to have borne quite a different meaning to eighteenth-century newspaper printers and publishers than it bears today. Impartiality was invoked to show that publishers had printed both sides of a question;¹⁹ it in no way implied that both sides were given equal weight in the length, strength or frequency of their representation. To give but one example of this frequently voiced sentiment, see the *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser* for 27 January 1763. The printer, Charles Say, declares, "actuated by the steady principle of impartiality, we declare ourselves ready upon this, and all other proper occasions, to throw open our paper to whatsoever may be suggested on either side the dispute, provided a spirit of decency and good manners is adhered to, all *personal* and *illiberal* invective avoided, and our own safety in particular is not endangered," while remaining firmly on the "Town's" side of a theatrical riot, professing but not realizing impartiality. To return to Woodfall's letter, Woodfall as editor preserves not any real autonomy from Garrick, but rather, his public reputation for such autonomy. Even if one reads Woodfall's letter as a principled stand against Garrick's influence, the

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emotional and monetary ties of the Garrick–Woodfall association visible in Garrick’s correspondence caution against belief that this feint had any lasting effect.²⁰ This project reads Garrick’s correspondence closely, and demonstrates that there are further letters that might be reinterpreted in the light of Garrick’s mediation of his own celebrity.

Stone and Kahlr further define media power as the ability to censor media content, and state that Garrick did not possess this power. This position is certainly at odds with contemporary perceptions of Garrick’s influence on print media. Claiming that his criticisms of Garrick were unpublishable in all but two papers, in 1772 David Williams attacked Garrick in an anonymous pamphlet entitled *A letter to David Garrick, Esq. On His Conduct as Principal Manager and Actor at Drury-Lane*. Williams clearly believes that Garrick’s extensive hold on the print media market amounts to censorship: “I happened to call on an acquaintance just as he had been disappointed of a share in one of the news-papers, by your having secured it to yourself.”²¹ Surprised that the wealthy Garrick should bother with this investment for “so trifling an object as the profits of such a share,” it is only when he wishes to say some things to Garrick via the media, or what he calls “the present fashionable method,” that the motive for Garrick’s ownership becomes appallingly apparent: “I was not a little surprized to find myself so much restrained. Only two papers would receive any thing in which you were mentioned with blame,” Williams remarks.²² His summation, “You are a proprietor in several papers, and upon such terms with the proprietors of others, that they must not disoblige you . . . I no longer wonder that your name is ever inserted with honor,”²³ establishes eighteenth-century newspapers as a superlative tool for image management. Newspapers could saturate their audience with certain names and ideas on a regular basis, and silently exclude other voices.

As Williams’s outcry hints, Garrick’s power over the media did include the ability to preclude certain items from publication. This power was not restricted to those papers in which he had a share, but spread over a much wider constituency. Robert Bataille offers a corrective (1989) to Stone and Kahlr’s assertion that contemporary journalists were impervious to Garrickian influence by suggesting that journalist and playwright Hugh Kelly did attempt to influence the public favourably on Garrick’s behalf (though not demonstrably at Garrick’s behest), out of a sense of gratitude for Garrick’s influence in gaining Kelly’s plays performances. While Bataille carefully concludes that it would be unfair to assume that the Garrick–Kelly relationship was “typical of Garrick’s other professional alliances,”²⁴

it now appears that it is indeed suggestive of the ways in which Garrick exploited his personal networks to produce a trade in media favours. This book will map Garrick's media shadow, articulate the levels of influence which he appears to have held over various printers and producers of newspapers, and consider the validity of accusations such as Williams's that he blocked others' media access.

Stone and Kahl's assumption that control of media would inevitably involve censorship of publicity Garrick considered to be negative in its representation of himself, his writing, or his theatre, is overstated. Garrick embraced negative publicity, generating it for himself, and responding to others' blasts with lively counter-attacks, misdirection or other forms of mediation. One of Garrick's first publications, *An Essay on Acting* (1744), was anonymously written in mock-criticism of himself. Self-manufactured anticipatory critique was a tactic that Garrick continued to employ throughout his career, as Ian McIntyre rightly observes in his entertaining biography, *Garrick* (1999): "Garrick's underlying instinct was to seek accommodation, to attempt to disarm opposition with facetious banter, to affect an ironic concession of the other side's case."²⁵ Garrick recognized that positive puffery was not the only or the most effective way of shaping public opinion, and his approach to negative publicity was not just about disarming the opposition. One of his most consistent strategies in self-critical works was to mention his diminutive height, a physical trait that ought to have excluded him from romantic leads according to contemporary typecasting. The title page of his *Essay on Acting* suggests Garrick is a "Pygmie"; elsewhere he calls himself "*a little fashionable Actor*" and punningly describes the *Essay* as a "*short Survey of Heroism in Miniature*."²⁶ The cumulative effect of these barbs reinforces the actor's skill in overcoming physical limitations. This book examines Garrick's production of negative publicity for himself and others, and demonstrates how his management of negative publicity produced beneficial effects for his reputation and that of Drury Lane Theatre.

If Stone and Kahl's critical biography is the most resistant to considerations of Garrick's interventions in the media, McIntyre's biography is one of the most attentive to Garrick's ubiquitous media presence: "If news-cutting agencies had existed in the eighteenth century, there would have been fierce competition to have Garrick as a client,"²⁷ he remarks. He also mentions Garrick's part-ownership of the *St. James's Chronicle*, writing "Garrick would find it a useful channel for the promotion of his interests over the years, and much of his occasional verse would appear there, as would many of his songs and prologues."²⁸ McIntyre's depiction of

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Garrick's media war with the lawyer William Kenrick over Kenrick's libelous satire, *Love in the Suds* (1772), is another point at which Garrick's media influence materializes.²⁹ As these brief allusions suggest, this biography is much more alert to the extent of Garrick's interventions in the media than is the earlier work by Kahrl and Stone, or the biographies of Garrick by his contemporaries Davies and Murphy, but consideration of the mechanics or implications of those interventions is not its main concern.

A few scholarly articles that treat of Garrick's relationship with the media have appeared since the publication of McIntyre's biography. John Pruitt's article "David Garrick's Invisible Nemeses" (2008) summarizes and considers a sample of the anonymous satirical pamphlets written against Garrick. Focusing on the pamphlets' similarities and cumulative contributions to public discourse, Pruitt argues that "satirists began to evaluate Garrick by both social criteria and business endeavours: they investigated and questioned [Garrick's] identity as a virtuous gentleman and his business ethics as a perversion of true commerce."³⁰ These are indeed common themes amongst Garrick's detractors, but few of Garrick's media nemeses (with the possible exception of "Junius") were unknown to him, however anonymous their pamphlets appeared to readers outside the circle of theatrical cognoscenti. More importantly, pamphlets formed but one part of Garrick's variegated mediascape.

Stuart Sherman's article, "Garrick Among Media: The 'Now Performer' Navigates the News" (2011), considers suggestively "the reciprocal impacts – political, commercial, cultural – occurring day by day between press and playhouse"³¹ brought into being by the temporal rhythms of the news. In contrast to the "profitably self-obsolcescing" newspaper, Sherman writes, "Garrick worked differently, supplanting other actors' product with his own. But by severing the long thread of theatrical transmission and inherited roles – by breaking with the playhouse's tradition of tradition – Garrick forged a new and potentially reusable template of obsolescence, even of usurpation, that more than occasionally haunts his texts and gestures."³² In two case studies (the 1763 Half-Price riots and the 1769 Stratford Jubilee), Sherman considers the press's potential to confer immortality upon performers.

These articles are the most media-centric of recent essays concerning Garrick, and they contribute to a trend in eighteenth-century studies to consider ephemeral texts, such as newspapers, more fully. Their materiality once enabled newspapers to circulate information about the theatre beyond its benches and boxes; now, paradoxically, it is their immateriality

that enables their scholarly circulation. The beauty of the virtual newspaper archive is that it permits one to look through either end of the telescope: electronic databases illumine, at the micro level, content privatizing, and enable searches for microbial ideas, or repeated phrases, or pseudonyms; while at the macro level, they can show expansion of interest in the development of genres such as the theatrical review, or in the number of papers which devoted space to theatrical affairs.

Structure

At Garrick's first performance on the London stage, Thomas Davies reports, the city's social geography reconfigured itself: "Goodman's-fields was full of the splendor of St. James's and Grosvenor-square; the coaches of the nobility filled up the space from Temple-bar to Whitechapel."³³ Garrick's London debut was nothing less than a singular, cataclysmic theatrical enlightenment. "Mr. Garrick shone forth like a theatrical Newton," wrote Davies, "he threw new light on elocution and action; he banished ranting, bombast, and grimace; and restored nature, ease, simplicity, and genuine humour."³⁴ Garrick's success in London was immediate, according to his biographer.

However, as I contend in this book, celebrity is an iterative form of public recognition that is the product of repeated media exposures across multiple media platforms. If we take this view, Davies's statement can be read not just as contemporary witness to the birth of a new talent, but as affirmation of the cumulative effects of the biographer's life-long exposure to media representation of Garrick as a natural talent and immediate success. Why should we take this perspective? Consider Figure 1. It is a manuscript imitation of a rare newspaper advertisement announcing Garrick's first appearance on a London stage. The original document is rare because Garrick was not yet famous; no one knew that an ordinary newspaper playbill advertising yet another anonymous actor's debut ought to be clipped out and preserved. This imitation newspaper article, produced by an unknown artist, was used to extra-illustrate a copy of another biography of Garrick (that written by Percy Fitzgerald in 1868). Instead of merely transcribing the words announcing the appearance of a "Gentleman" as Richard III, the illustrator's attention to italics and font size in the faux type simulate the medium of transmission. This is a portrait of Garrick *as* news. The faux document is an ingenious solution to the extra-illustrator's problem of how to mark the moment when Garrick burst from obscurity, when no extensive visual or verbal archive of the