

CRITICISM, PERFORMANCE, AND THE PASSIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Great art is about emotion. In the eighteenth century, and especially for the English stage, critics developed a sensitivity to both the passions of a performance and what they called the transitions between those passions. It was these pivotal transitions, scripted by authors and executed by actors, that could make King Lear beautiful, Hamlet terrifying, Archer hilarious, and Zara electrifying. James Harriman-Smith recovers a lost way of appreciating theatre as a set of transitions that produce simultaneously iconic and dynamic spectacles; fascinating moments when anything seems possible. Offering fresh readings and interpretations of Shakespearean and eighteenth-century tragedy, historical acting theory, and early character criticism, this volume demonstrates how a concern with transition binds drama to everything, from lyric poetry and Newtonian science to fine art and sceptical enquiry into the nature of the Self.

JAMES HARRIMAN-SMITH is a lecturer at Newcastle University. He is a trustee of the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and a former trustee of the British Shakespeare Association. His articles have appeared in *Theatre Journal*, *RECTR*, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *Studies in Romanticism*, and *Etudes françaises*.

CRITICISM, PERFORMANCE,
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EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The Art of Transition

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CAMBRIDGE
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Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-108-81283-2 — Criticism, Performance, and the Passions in the Eighteenth Century
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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
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477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108812832

DOI: 10.1017/9781108890847

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First published 2021
First paperback edition 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-108-83549-7 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-108-81283-2 Paperback

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To my mother

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Note on Style</i>	xi
Introduction: Iconic and Dynamic	i
1 Dramatic Transition	22
2 <i>Zara</i>	55
3 Odes	83
4 <i>King Lear</i>	116
5 Dramatic Character	153
Coda	184
<i>Notes</i>	190
<i>Bibliography</i>	215
<i>Index</i>	228

Illustrations

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------------|
| 1.1 | Steele's notation of the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy in the style of a 'ranting actor' (p. 40). By permission of the British Library (shelfmark RB.23.b.3187). | <i>page</i> 43 |
| 1.2 | Steele's notation of Garrick's rendition of the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy (p. 47). By permission of the British Library (shelfmark RB.23.b.3187). | 44 |
| 1.3 | James Burgh's presentation of the Shylock-Tubal dialogue (p. 190). Image provided by the National Library of Scotland. CC BY 4.0. | 50 |
| 4.1 | The start of Act III of Nahum Tate's <i>King Lear</i> , as annotated by members of the Drury Lane company in an edition of 1756 (p. 29). © The British Library Board (shelfmark C.119.dd.22). | 129 |
| 5.1 | William Richardson's analysis of Hamlet's 'O that this too too solid flesh would melt' soliloquy (p. 98). By permission of Newcastle University Library, GB186 (shelfmark 822.33 SHA(5), 18th C. Coll.). | 168 |

Acknowledgements

This book began as a PhD thesis at the University of Cambridge. I could not have asked for a better supervisor for that project than Fred Parker, nor for a better team of examiners than Christopher Tilmouth and Tiffany Stern. I would not have got this far without the benefit of all their excellent advice, encouragement, and research.

To my friends, colleagues, and students at Newcastle University, I also owe a great deal. Whether for giving me feedback on draft chapters and book proposals or for discussing scepticism, the history of madness, musical aesthetics, eighteenth-century pronunciation practice, the perils of actioning, and much else besides over coffee, in corridors, and between lectures, I am particularly grateful to Michael Rossington, Anne Whitehead, James Procter, Rebecca Woods, Matthew Grenby, Jennifer Richards, Jo Hicks, Emma Whipday, Adam Mearns, Zoe Cooper, Martin Dubois, Ros Haslett, Joseph Hone, Jake Jewusiak, Ella Mershon, Fionnghuala Sweeney, and Ella Dzelzainis.

I am just as grateful to all those friends and colleagues elsewhere in the world who read my work or listened to my ideas for this book. David Wiles and Jed Wentz helped me think about performance practice in new ways; Blair Hoxby taught me a different approach to the passions; Paul Monod and Emma Salgård Cunha made me re-evaluate John Dennis and the religious sublime; and Katherine Hambridge, Clare Bucknell, Matthew Ward, Lucie Vivian, Renée Vulto, Sean Ferguson, and Kathryn Hill, with all their intelligence and kindness, have brightened many of the toughest parts of the writing process.

Bethany Thomas, Linda Bree, Sarah Lambert, Natasha Burton, Katie Idle, Tanya Izzard, Raghavi Govindane, Catherine Dunn, my two anonymous peer reviewers, and everyone else at or associated with Cambridge University Press will always have my thanks for the work they have done in making my manuscript into a book. Without the librarians and archivists at the British Library, Cambridge University

Acknowledgements

Library, Robinson Library, Folger Shakespeare Library, and National Library of Scotland, there would never have been a manuscript in the first place.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge here the influence of Roger Harcourt, who taught me why English literature was important, and the curiosity, enthusiasm, and love of my wife, Anne-Charlotte Husson, who has been at my side from this project's start to its ending.

Note on Style

This book follows the *MHRA Style Guide* (third edition). Note, however, that I have maintained, as far as possible, my sources' idiosyncratic use of punctuation, capitalisation, and italicisation in order to support my argument for the significance of these features as traces of transition. For a similar reason I have also quoted eighteenth-century critics' own quotations of other texts: such citation practices are, I suggest, useful evidence for the kind of critical attention once given to the dynamic and iconic qualities of art.