

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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To my mother

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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.