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ROMEO AND JULIET ON THE ENGLISH STAGE:

FOUR CENTURIES OF INTERPRETATION

by

SYLVIA ALEXA BERG

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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FOR MY PARENTS

ABSTRACT

Next to Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet has been for audiences the most enduringly popular of all Shakespeare's dramas on the English stage. Although the text of the play has received a fair measure of study from critics, very little has been written on how directors and actors through the centuries have interpreted the play. This thesis, therefore, examines various changes in interpretation that the play has undergone in four centuries of performance on the English stage and proposes reasons for those variations in interpretation.

Four representative productions of the play from the Restoration to the present day have been chosen for study: David Garrick's at Drury Lane in 1748, Henry Irving's at the Lyceum in 1882, William Poel's at the Royalty in 1905, and Franco Zeffirelli's at the Old Vic in 1960. Both Garrick and Irving were the leading theatrical figures of their ages, actor-managers who were strongly bound by contemporary theatrical conventions and tastes but whose pre-eminence also allowed them to introduce important innovations to their presentations of Romeo and Juliet which markedly influenced many subsequent productions of the play. Their versions of Romeo and Juliet thus became the definitive versions of the play in their own ages. Garrick restored a more original text of the play than had been performed in England since the Restoration yet conceded to the eighteenth century's taste for spectacle and sentimentality by interpolating a funeral procession and dirge and a

seventy-five-line death scene. His alterations to Shakespeare's plot, characterization and language were largely grounded in the tenets of neo-classical tragic theory. Irving's production reflected the nineteenth-century trend towards restoration of Shakespeare's texts but also accommodated the nineteenth-century's taste for historical realism and pictorialization. In interpretation the forty-four-year-old Irving envisioned a whole production concept which could accommodate his playing Romeo as a more mature, sombre lover.

Twentieth-century Shakespearean production, by contrast, has been characterized both by an enormous proliferation of performances on the English stage and a great diversity in approach to those presentations. Two major trends, however, have emerged. Zeffirelli's production, representative of the twentieth-century eclectic attitude in which "anything goes," has made Shakespeare relevant to modern concerns. For Zeffirelli this was a contemporary drama; Shakespeare was given a modern sociological relevance and Romeo and Juliet were presented as unaffected teenagers having much in common with young people in the twentieth century. In his treatment of the play Zeffirelli sacrificed Shakespeare's romanticism for realism. William Poel's production, on the other hand, aimed at a complete restoration of Shakespeare's text on the stage and used that text as the sole authority for interpretation. The integrity of the text, the continuity of the action, the non-localized scene, the swift and musically inflected speech -- these were the principles that Poel's 1905 production of Romeo and Juliet embodied.

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A Note on the Text

The New Variorum edition is the edition of Romeo and Juliet that has been used throughout this thesis.

For David Garrick's 1748 version of the play, his Dramatic Works (1798), repeated by Gregg in 1969 has been used.

The newest and best edition of Garrick's works, entitled The Plays of David Garrick: Garrick's Adaptations of Shakespeare, edited by Harry William Pedicord and Fredrick Louis Bergmann and published in 1981, was acquired by the University of Alberta Library just as this thesis was being completed. This edition, which contains a number of line variations from the 1969 edition by Gregg, was unfortunately not available for my use.

Introduction

Very little is known about the stage history of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet in Elizabethan times. Writers of the period could have read the story of the two young lovers in The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet, adapted in 1562 from the Italian by Arthur Brooke; some referred to a dramatic version of the tale written probably in 1594 by William Shakespeare, and quoted scraps of text; but the earliest surviving eye-witness accounts of Romeo and Juliet are ones given after the Restoration. It is one of the ironies of English dramatic history that the greatest period is the least documented. Dramatic criticism, as we know it, did not exist in the age of Shakespeare; it owes its growth to the development of the newspaper and the periodical in the eighteenth century. Plays were regarded as ephemeral things -- as part of the world of entertainment which included bear-baiting and cock fighting; no one thought of writing dramatic notices of these grim sports. Yet, here and there, in the diaries and notebooks, the biographical sketches and pamphlet trivia, comments are found on the drama, although references to specific productions are rare indeed.

That Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet was already popular in 1596, however, is shown by the title page of the first printed copy (Q₁, 1597), probably by actor's memorial reconstruction, which describes the play as "often (with great applause) plaid publiquely, by the right Honourable the L. of Hunsdon his Seruants." This company of actors was thus known only between July 1596 and April 1597. The play's popularity, affirmed

by the first Quarto, is attested by the frequent allusions in contemporary literature, from Marston's Scourge of Villany (1598) through John Weaver's Epigrams (1599) and The Return from Parnassus, Part I (?1599), in which a character's misquotation of II.iv.41 is hailed as "Romeo and Juliet," to L. Digges' memorial verses in the first Folio (1623), which declares it "impossible" for "some new strain t' outdo/ Passions of Juliet and Romeo."¹ Both the second, the "good" Quarto (1599) and the third Quarto (1609) give testimony that the play had been "sundry times publiquely acted" by 1609, Q₂ speaking of performances by the "Lord Chamberlain's," and Q₃ referring to performances "at the Globe" by "the Kings Maiesties Seruants." Although no actual record of performances before the Restoration survives, the fact that the play was reprinted four times in Quarto (Q₄, 1622; Q₅, 1637), as well as the evidence afforded by the title pages of these editions, supports the belief that this tragedy held the English stage until the closing of the theatres in 1642.

When the theatres reopened in the Restoration in 1660, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet was one of the first plays to be revived; the English stage annals, moreover, reveal a nearly unbroken chain of performances for almost four centuries, demonstrating that from the Restoration to the present day the play had retained its firm hold on the English stage. Indeed, next to Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet has been for audiences the most enduringly popular of all Shakespeare's dramas on the English stage.

Although the text of the play has received a fair measure of study from critics, it is surprising to discover that, in light of the

play's consistent popularity on the English stage, little critical attention has been accorded its stage history. Most of what has been written on the play's performance history has been of a general nature: chronicles of notable English stage Romeos and Juliets, and dates and places of famous performances. Very little, however, has been written on how directors and actors through the centuries have interpreted the play. It is the purpose of this thesis, therefore, to examine various changes in interpretation that the play has undergone in four centuries of performance on the English stage and to propose reasons for these variations in interpretation.

Four representative productions of the play from the Restoration to the present day have been chosen for study: David Garrick's at Drury Lane in 1748, Henry Irving's at the Lyceum in 1882, William Poel's at the Royalty in 1905, and Franco Zeffirelli's at the Old Vic in 1960. Both Garrick, in the eighteenth century, and Irving, in the nineteenth century, were the leading theatrical figures of their day, actor-managers who were strongly bound by contemporary theatrical conventions and tastes, but whose pre-eminence also allowed them to lead that taste and therefore to introduce important innovations to their presentations of Romeo and Juliet which markedly influenced many subsequent productions of the play. Their versions of Romeo and Juliet thus became the definitive versions of the play in their own ages. Twentieth century Shakespearean production, by contrast, has been characterized by both an enormous proliferation of performances on the English stage and a great diversity in approach to those presentations. Two major trends, however, have

emerged. Zeffirelli's production, representative of the twentieth-century eclectic attitude in which "anything goes," makes Shakespeare relevant to modern concerns. Poel's production, on the other hand, aims at the complete restoration of Shakespeare's text on the stage and uses that text as the sole authority for interpretation. Both directors have been greatly influential in the presentation of Shakespeare on the twentieth-century stage.

Because the four productions can be viewed generally as reflections of or reactions to the ages in which they are performed, it becomes necessary to examine not only the four productions themselves, but also to place them in a larger, historical framework. Consequently, each chapter of the thesis analyzes not only a particular production of Romeo and Juliet in detail, but also gives a brief historical survey, summarizing any general dramatic currents of the age and any advancements in staging techniques which have affected Shakespeare in performance during that period.

Common to all productions is a discussion of the actor-manager's or director's major ideals for the play, his interpretation of the characters of the titular figures, as well as any excisions made in the text and reasons for them; moreover, some attention is paid to the critical reception of the production and the influence that the director's ideas and stage work have had on successive generations of theatrical taste and actual practice. Because these productions represent four centuries of Shakespearean performance, however, there is great variety in the way the four people have approached the text of

Romeo and Juliet and the manner of presenting this play on the English stage.

Chapter I

David Garrick: Shakespeare Refined

When Charles II came to the English throne in 1660 the London theatres had been closed for about eighteen years -- since the puritans, in 1642, had ordered that actors in all "Stage Plays, Interludes, or other common Plays" were to be "punished as Rogues, according to Law."¹ On August 21, 1660 the new king issued patent letters for the incorporation of two companies of players; by this official act the theatrical interregnum was brought to an end, and the stage, now protected by royal patronage, was safe from the attacks of its puritan enemies.

Londoners who recalled the last performances allowed in the public theatres under Charles I, however, were to find conditions greatly altered in the new theatres, with such innovations as the appearance of women as performers and the employment of "scenes." In former times, says a writer of 1664, the public theatres were "but plain and simple, with no other Scenes, nor Decorations of the Stage, but only old Tapestry, and the Stage strew'd with Rushes, (with their Habits accordingly) whereas ours now for Cost and ornament are arriv'd to the height of Magnificence."² If this, today, seems extravagant praise at least the illusion of drama was greatly enhanced by the addition of movable painted scenery. The public theatres were now also roofed, with expensive seats in the "pit" where once the groundlings had stood; and the apron stage, much less protuberant than before, became merely an

extension beneath a proscenium arch within which much of the action took place. Thus, in these theatres the rudimentary beginnings of the boxed-in stage could be seen; in general, the stage arrangement for this period was a time of transition from the older non scenic "platform" stage to the later "picture" stage with its elaborate scenic effects. It was also during the Restoration that music took a permanent and important place in theatrical performances; the opera was a new, popular entertainment and the song became an inevitable element even in serious plays.

The Restoration therefore gave Londoners public theatres once again and the managers of the new houses very soon gave their audiences Shakespeare. The audiences approved and a number of the dramatist's plays established themselves almost at once in the permanent repertory. Restoration changes in the structure and technical resources of the stage, however, brought into view what seemed to the "fashionable" Restoration theatregoers the antiquated dramatic techniques of earlier playwrights such as Shakespeare who had been able to treat their material much more plastically, even loosely and episodically, than could their successors, who were writing for a stage framed by the proscenium arch and decorated with movable, painted scenery. As soon as scenic machinery and music became routine accessories of the stage, theatrical managers, almost as a point of honour, arranged Shakespeare's dramas to fit the new conditions. The use of scenery may have delighted the eye and helped create dramatic illusion, but it also made frequent changes of place awkward and thus prevented the easy cinematographic flow characteristic of plays performed during Shakespeare's own time. Instead of the rapid tempo made possible by the Elizabethan use of multiple stages, two

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levels, and no extraneous scenery, Restoration productions of Shakespeare became cramped and retarded by frequent scene changes, laboriously contrived spectacle and operatic music. Yet the mutation of public taste offered, as the only alternative to Shakespeare's abandonment, the obligation of bestowing on his work every mechanical advantage, every ornament in the latest mode.

Another difference between the two ages soon began to be evident, at least to the more "discerning" theatrical patrons. John Evelyn saw Hamlet in 1661 and liked it himself, but reported in his diary, "Now the old plays began to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty's been so long abroad."³ Great changes in society and theatrical taste had taken place since the publication of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays in 1623. The theatres of Shakespeare and his contemporaries had enjoyed the patronage of all classes of society from courtier to 'prentice, but the new playhouses tended to attract an audience more homogeneously upper-class and consequently their repertory was subject to the influence of courtly and fashionable taste. The theatres inevitably became theatres of a coterie, interested primarily, though not entirely, in satisfying the taste of a sophisticated few, not of the many.

During the interregnum in England, the classical ideal had been generally adopted in France. Charles Stuart and his court had seen French and Italian plays during their exile abroad and preferred them to the English; so that Charles intended that his playwrights and theatre managements should regard them as models. Largely through the influence of French example and criticism, the English after 1660 inaugurated an

Age of Classicism; consequently, from 1660 onwards classicism in acting, staging and drama was reinforced in its conflict with the native romanticism of English drama, and succeeded in transforming the English stage. Thus, with the Restoration of the stage had come also a new type of drama, with plays having a much more sophisticated veneer than Shakespeare's audiences had been accustomed to, and with classical themes and academic aims entirely alien to the Elizabethan's work. There was now no doubt that Shakespeare and some of the Elizabethans were men of great native genius but unhappily they lacked "art" and had not acquired that refinement of manner demanded in an age of politeness. Their plays, though sufficient for a "rude" and "barbarous" generation, could charm an "understanding" age no more. To be acceptable now they had to be reshaped into conformity with the three unities and other prescriptions of the neo-classic code.⁴ The process of remodelling the elder poets began with the Restoration and continued without abatement for fully a hundred years.

Shakespeare therefore was to be "reformed" not only to make the plays fit the new stages with their scenes, but also to suit the neo-classical tastes of the audience; so that the plays were not merely cut, but also drastically changed. From that time onward, the theatre had a new Shakespeare.

The practice of altering Shakespeare's plays to suit the tastes of the new age began almost as soon as the playhouses opened their doors, and by the beginning of the eighteenth century most of them had been reformed. Romeo and Juliet, one of the first plays to be revived, was no exception. The play, "Wrote by Mr. Shakespeare" was first revived again

on March 1, 1662, shortly after the opening of the first theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. Samuel Pepys, who saw the opening night, had the distinction of being among the last for almost two hundred years to see the play as written by Shakespeare. A man who disliked poetry and romance, Pepys judged it "a play of itself the worst that ever I heard in my life."⁵ Only a very short time later, probably within a few months, an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet appeared, produced by James Howard. Under Howard's hand the play was altered to please those sensitive persons among the public who would wish every story to come to "blissful termination"; consequently, the play was alternately presented as a tragedy and as a tragi-comedy.⁶ In 1680 the play appeared as the altered Caius Marius by Thomas Otway, a version which accommodated the renewed interest in the classics. The play's setting was changed to Republican Rome and the conflict of Marius and "Sylla" took the place of the Montague-Capulet feud in Verona. The two lovers were now Marius Junior and Lavinia, daughter of Sylla's chief supporter, who ordered her to marry Sylla; and their tragedy was interwoven into the larger conflict. The Nurse and a very poor substitute for Mercutio had parts in the play, but there was no equivalent for Tybalt. Betterton played Caius Marius, a far more important character than Montague in Shakespeare; Smith and Mrs. Barry were the lovers; and James Nokes received acclaim as the Nurse. Otway's play superseded both the original and Howard's adaptation and held the stage intermittently for more than sixty years. Romeo and Juliet reopened, however, in 1744; "revised and altered" by Theophilus Cibber. Although announced as "Not acted these hundred years," the play

was far from the original, being a mixture of Otway's Caius Marius and Shakespeare's play, with the added feature of various lines from Shakespeare's The Two Gentlemen of Verona. The play, acted ten times in 1744, proved so popular that, the General Advertiser tells us, distinguished people were crowded out of the boxes into pit and gallery on the first night.⁷

It was David Garrick's version of Romeo and Juliet, however, that proved to be the most enduringly successful production of the play since the Restoration; first performed in 1748, it was immediately popular and received twenty-one performances at Drury Lane that season and two years later it was again revived, this time for nineteen performances.⁸ In the first decades of the eighteenth century over two thousand performances of Shakespeare had been given to London audiences, and the great, generally-known Shakespearean characters, such as Hamlet, Othello and Lear belonged to the permanent repertoire of every distinguished actor. By the middle of the eighteenth century, one man, David Garrick, dominated the English theatrical world. Garrick became the greatest English actor of the century and as manager of Drury Lane, one of only two theatres allowed a license in London, he influenced the entire English theatre world with his ideas. A great admirer of Shakespeare, he did more in his thirty-five years at Drury Lane to popularize the playwright than anybody before him; from 1741 until 1776 he presented over 1400 performances of twenty-seven Shakespeare plays, producing at least ten plays each season.⁹

To the eighteenth century Garrick was "Shakespeare's priest"¹⁰ and little or no distinction was made between the two men: the actor-

manager was received as the dramatist's heir and representative, self-entrusted with the mission of defending his ancestor's glory. "Shakespeare is not more admired for writing his plays," said Walpole, than "Garrick for acting them."¹¹ More than any other man Garrick was responsible for enabling his audience to hear more of Shakespeare's actual lines spoken on the stage than at any time since their original productions.

'Tis my chief wish, my joy, my only plan,
To lose no drop of that immortal man

wrote Garrick in a prologue.¹² Although it was Garrick's constant intention to restore to the eighteenth-century stage as much as possible of Shakespeare's own words, he was subject to the limitations both of his audience's and his own taste. Consequently, alterations were made to the plays that accorded with his own interpretations of how the plays should be acted or that he felt necessary to conform to the tastes of an age which mingled censure with its admiration for the great Elizabethan. Faced, for example, with the gross disregard for the unities in The Winter's Tale, and the very un-Enlightenment manners of The Taming of the Shrew, Garrick salvaged both plays for his audience by creating three-act versions of them.

Thus, when Garrick brought out his version of Romeo and Juliet in 1748 it was his purpose to return to what he considered to be a more authentic Elizabethan text than had been used on the English stage for over a century; and it became his challenge both to restore Shakespeare and yet to fit the play to the mid-eighteenth-century stage. The changes imposed upon Romeo and Juliet by him were largely grounded in the tenets

of neo-classical tragic theory. Although the "rules" had long been under attack and even though the eighteenth century did not slavishly and mechanically apply them to Shakespeare, a pattern of critical belief, approximating what we call neo-classicism, nevertheless exerted an influence upon eighteenth-century playmaking and, consequently, upon the alteration of Shakespeare. The fundamental assumptions behind the "rules" were still largely in force, and in practice plays were judged by their conformity or non-conformity to these prevailing critical standards. Hence tragedies were praised for their excellence of plot construction, for their observance of morality and justice, for the preservation of decorum of character, as well as the decorum of the genre itself -- that is, no mingling of the comic and the tragic.

Garrick's major alterations in Romeo and Juliet were in plot and characterization. In eighteenth-century playwriting generalized characterization became common producing well-marked types rather than idiosyncratic individuals. Subtlety had largely departed but the issues were clearly drawn; the characters tended towards what in the modern view would be considered extremes of "black and white sketches," without shading, without particularizing details.¹³ The neo-classic ideal of decorum became a strong consideration in many of the adaptations of Shakespeare. It was now a common contention that tragedy should move the audience to admiration of the hero, for unless they admired him the efforts of the poet were wasted; as well, not mere terror at the misfortunes of the hero was to be moved, but terror mingled with admiration. The heroic, the admirable and the good, moreover, were

usually seen as the exclusive qualities of persons of high rank, so that the characters of tragedy, and especially the tragic hero, were drawn from the upper reaches of society; and their manners, as a consequence, were to be those of the court. The first way in which decorum manifested itself was in a vigorous preservation of what was regarded as character type. A king must invariably act like a king; likewise, every hero had a set pattern of behavior to follow. Shakespeare had not always adhered to similar conventions: because of his emphasis on character delineation, his use of complexes and motivations that make a person a particular individual, many of his characters showed eccentricities of behavior inconsistent with the basic, more generalized behavior patterns of eighteenth-century dramatic figures.

If the character presentation or the action of a play disturbs a spectator's sense of propriety, whatever the century, his pleasure and belief in the dramatic action are likely to be disturbed. The difference of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable comes in deciding what constitutes a violation of one's sense of propriety. Conformity to character type, a virtue in the eighteenth century, is usually considered a limitation in the twentieth century. As a result many of the departures that seemed flaws to the eighteenth-century spectator, since they made a many-faceted individual of the character, are today counted the happiest proofs of Shakespeare's genius. The orientation of the eighteenth-century audience was moral and social, not psychological; and that moral orientation, deriving from an intense sense of order, gave theatrical spectators a different sense of values from that of modern audiences. The world was to the eighteenth century an ordered though

complex place and audiences, reinforced by a comforting sense of certainty and of absolute values, delighted^{ed} in contemplating that order. The universal harmony was more easily discerned and the meanings of actions more easily understood if not too many variables were involved. It therefore seemed best not to distract audiences with characters who behaved in unorthodox ways; generalized characters were clearly advantageous. Eighteenth-century dramatists consequently tended to portray the same character types over and over again; the meaning of action was clear when a character behaved as a man of his sort^{ed} would be expected to behave.

Lacking the appreciation of psychological quirks that Shakespeare possessed, and being unable to realize Shakespeare's characters in their full complexity because of eighteenth-century critical rules, the century could not avoid being disturbed by some of what were regarded as irregularities in the plays. Samuel Johnson, the major literary spokesman of the age, praised Shakespeare's "excellencies," but pointed out that the dramatist had likewise faults "sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit." In Johnson's view Shakespeare's major weakness was that he seemed "to write without any moral purpose" and that he neglected to make the world better.¹⁴ The major function of drama might be entertainment but the theatre was now also a didactic medium for vivid presentation of generally held concepts of socially acceptable behavior; a drama therefore arose in which pathos and delicacy and refined sentiments were accorded a prominent place and where moralizing was given a central position.. To David Garrick, tragedy was to be viewed

as the school of virtue, representing the actions, passions, and sufferings of human nature, for the instruction of mankind.

This desire to create idealized character types motivated some of Garrick's changes in Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare's young lovers had long been regarded as symbols of ideal love, and for this very reason the eighteenth-century adapters of Romeo and Juliet felt that no blemishes should lessen the purity of the pair. In their view the theme of the play concerned not the caprices of love but the peculiar purity of emotion that is sometimes attributed to the young. The characters were therefore altered to conform to that idea. When Garrick first published the play in 1748, he included the following advertisement:

The sudden change of Romeo's love from Rosaline to Juliet was thought by many, at the first revival of the play, to be a blemish in his character; an alteration in that particular has been made more in complaisance to that opinion, than from a conviction that Shakespear, the best judge of human nature, was faulty.¹⁵

Garrick, therefore, had Romeo love Juliet from the outset of the play and made no mention at all of Rosaline; in this alteration Garrick was following Cibber who had already introduced the change to the stage. Romeo's swift transformation from lover of Rosaline to lover of Juliet was changed not because Garrick's audience might feel that such a hasty decision was unrealistic but because the audience preferred Romeo and Juliet to be idealized abstractions of those qualities that were esteemed in lovers. Romeo was given the opportunity to make clear his feelings shortly after his first entrance when, in his conversation with Benvolio, he said:

This love feel I; but such my forward fate,
 That there I love where most I ought to hate.
 Dost thou not laugh, my cousin! -- Oh Juliet, Juliet!¹⁶
 (p. 95)

The constancy of Romeo's love to Juliet was also necessary because, as Margaret Barton notes, "a truly romantic hero must only be in love once in a lifetime."¹⁷

Francis Gentleman, who was at various stages of his career an actor, playwright and an editor of dramatic works, had much to say about Garrick's Romeo and Juliet. His contributions can be found mainly in a work he published in 1770, The Dramatic Censor, a series of essays providing a running commentary on many of Shakespeare's plays as they were acted; and in Bell's 1773 theatre edition of the plays, which Gentleman not only edited but supplied with introductions and notes. The text of the plays (twenty-four in all) which Bell printed in his Shakespeare edition was taken from the prompt books used at either Drury Lane or Covent Garden, and thus it provides us, along with Gentleman's notes and comments, an invaluable guide to what the eighteenth-century theatre esteemed or disliked in its Shakespearean productions. In The Dramatic Censor Francis Gentleman approved of Garrick's omission of Rosaline, saying, "We must be of the opinion that the change of affection from Rosaline to Juliet is judiciously omitted, as it certainly served no purpose but throwing an imputation upon Romeo's constancy."¹⁸ In an editorial comment made in Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays, Gentleman went on to remark that "making no mention of Rosaline, but rendering Romeo's love more uniform, is certainly improving upon the original, notwithstanding the caprices of love."¹⁹

It is interesting to note, however, that inconsistencies appeared in the wishes of the eighteenth-century audience. In Act I of Shakespeare's play *Romeo* confesses to Mercutio that he "dreamt a dream to-night" (I.iv.49). This line then introduces Mercutio's famous "Queen Mab" speech in which he describes the queen of fairyland who visits lovers in their dreams. Francis Gentleman found this aspect of Romeo's character to be a blemish: "A touch of superstitious weakness we find thrown into Romeo's character in the mention of a dream." Garrick, however, kept both Romeo's admission to dreaming and Mercutio's entire "Queen Mab" speech. Gentleman, after condemning the blemish in Romeo's character, went on to approve of Garrick's faithfulness to the original text: ". . . but as it introduces so beautiful a description of the queen of dreams, her equipage and various influence upon various characters, we must rather be pleased than offended."²⁰ The eighteenth century valued Shakespeare's imagination and conceded that even flights of fancy were delightful in the proper circumstances.

In its treatment of love Shakespeare's play encompasses two disparate views. The heterogeneous audience of Shakespeare's own day would have appreciated both the dramatist's treatment of idealistic love, as reverentially expressed in the religious imagery used by the young couple, as well as the contrasting bawdy, down-to-earth view of their sexual attraction. Because of eighteenth-century conventional delicacy and taste in idealized characterization, Garrick had Romeo talk only in such abstract exemplary terms as would befit innocent young love. Any sexual interests were therefore removed from the character. In

Shakespeare's play, for example, Romeo expresses much of the lusty young man's frustrated sexual interest in Rosaline:

she'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow; she hath Dian's wit,
And in strong proof of chastity well arm'd,
From love's weak childish bow she lives unharm'd
She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
Nor bide the encounter of assailing eyes,
Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.²¹

Garrick removed the double-entendre, changed Romeo's attitude, and gave him a new cause for his frustration; the stars had not befriended him:

she's fair I love:
But knows not of my love, 'twas thro' my eyes
The shaft empiere'd my heart, chance gave the wound,
Which time can never heal: no star befriends me,
To each sad night succeeds a dismal tomorrow,
And still 'tis hopeless love, and endless sorrow.
(p. 95)

In Garrick's version of the play Romeo agreed to go to the Capulet ball not because Rosaline was to be a guest there, but to see Juliet, who would naturally be present:

Let come what may, once more I will behold,
My Juliet's eyes, drink deeper of affection.
(p. 97)

As a result of Garrick's alterations, much of the irony found in Shakespeare's play is missing. Romeo never loves anyone but Juliet. Mercutio and Benvolio are perfectly aware of this, which not only eliminates the irony of their banter at the beginning of the play, but also eliminates the element of fearful secrecy which, from beginning to end, surrounds the love of Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare. Because Garrick chose to abstract only as much of Shakespeare's characters as he believed was decorous, consistent and appropriate to the roles the

characters played, the complexity of Shakespeare's men and women was lost. The eighteenth-century portrayal of Romeo was summarized by the Dramatic Censor in these generalized terms:

The hero of this piece is vested with very warm passions, with much love, and what in that case may well be expected, little prudence; he fixes his affections upon a particular object, and determines to have her at any rate; the two valuable qualifications of courage and friendship he seems, happily possessed of . . . ardent in affection, vehement in rage, poignant in grief.²²

The same journal then happily concluded that Romeo "affords capital talents a fine opportunity of displaying themselves."

Juliet had no previous lover to be eliminated, but Garrick felt that Shakespeare's fourteen-year-old heroine was unrealistically mature. Accordingly, he altered Juliet's age to eighteen, a change that he felt would be more consistent with probability. Capulet thus explained to Paris that his daughter "hath not seen the change of eighteen years" (p. 94). The Dramatic Censor found Garrick's Juliet to be "tender, affectionate and constant; possessed of liberal sentiments and delicate feelings."²³ Several of Juliet's lines in the third act had to be cut to remove allusions to physical love: such knowledge as these lines betrayed seemed inappropriate to the kind of character Garrick believed his audience wanted Juliet to be. In Garrick's play, for example, Juliet says of her unconsummated marriage to Romeo: "Oh, I have bought the mansion of a love, / But not possessed it . . ." (p. 120); she does not continue in Garrick's version as she does in the original: ". . . and though I am sold, / Not yet enjoyed . . ." (III.ii.27-28). Another of Juliet's speeches in Shakespeare's play is filled with double meaning. The change from maid to wife can be seen in:

O, how my heart abhors
 To hear him named, and cannot come to him,
 To wreak the love I bore my cousin
 Upon his body that hath slaughter'd him!
 (III.v.99-102)

Speeches such as these were excised by Garrick. With all reference to Rosaline deleted and with Juliet's knowledge of and interest in sex removed, "the two lovers were cleansed of any mark that might prevent their complete acceptance as symbols of ideal and idyllic young love."²⁴

Garrick's version of Romeo and Juliet shows a number of structural changes in addition to his alterations in characterization. These changes include scene rearrangement, and a large number of line deletions and additions. Shakespeare's text of the first act is composed of five scenes containing 719 lines. Garrick rearranged scenes, and, with many cuts, turned the material into an act of 451 lines divided into six scenes. To these lines of Shakespeare he added forty-two lines of his own which were necessary either to bridge gaps or to effect transitions for his new arrangement;²⁵ Garrick's purpose here was to gain speed and clarity of movement. The Prologue was considered unnecessary and almost one third of Act I was also cut. With his excisions and rearrangements, Garrick's first act now followed a new order. In scene i he keeps the servants brawling in Verona's streets and has the Prince rebuke both Montague and Capulet. In scene ii Romeo is discussed by the Montagues and Benvolio and, in scene iii, Capulet discusses Juliet with Paris. In scene iv, in a wood near Verona, Mercutio, Benvolio and Romeo meet, information is given concerning the feast to be held that evening at the home of Capulet, Romeo discloses his love for Juliet, and Mercutio

gives his "Queen Mab" speech. In scene v there is talk of marriage and Juliet's infancy by Lady Capulet, the Nurse and Juliet. Finally, the sixth scene presents the ball at Capulet's house where Juliet falls in love with Romeo and learns his identity.

In the first act bawdry among the servants and between Mercutio, Benvolio and Romeo was cut. Edward Taylor, a neo-classic critic of Shakespeare, objected to the inclusion of bawdry on the grounds that it degraded the majesty and dignity of tragedy:

It must be acknowledged that Shakespeare abounds in the true sublime; but it must be allowed that he abounds likewise in the low and vulgar. And who is there, that after soaring on eagle wings to unknown regions and empyreal heights, is not most sensibly mortified to be compelled the next moment to grovel in dirt and ordure.²⁶

By far the most serious charge levelled against Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet in the eighteenth-century acting texts was that the play's tone of tragic intensity in action and incident was all too often destroyed. Many instances in the play were viewed as violent intrusions upon the decorum of tragedy. As far as most neo-classic critics were concerned Shakespeare continually vitiated his tragedy by mingling it with comedy, or with characters or incidents fit only for comedy. Francis Gentleman, for example, expressed his displeasure at the Nurse's loquaciousness in the first act: "The nurse's trifling rhapsody of circumstantial nothingness, which although extremely natural, means nothing but to raise some laughs, which we deem highly disgraceful to the nature, bent and dignity of tragic compositions."²⁷ Samuel Johnson was one of the eighteenth-century critics to offer an aesthetic deference to

Shakespeare's mingling of tragedy and comedy, but even he felt that

Shakespeare's comic scenes were not entirely pleasing:

In his comick scenes he is seldom very successful when he engages his characters in reciprocations of smartness and contests of sarcasm; their jests are commonly gross, and their pleasantry licentious; neither his gentlemen nor his ladies have much delicacy, nor are sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of refined manners.²⁸

Although deleting some dialogue to make the play more acceptable to his audience, Garrick, on the whole, remained faithful to Shakespeare's major characters. Romeo was still a love-struck youth; Mercutio still told jokes although they were not as sexually suggestive; Tybalt was still hasty and ill-tempered; and Capulet and Montague were still presented as typical Italian fathers. The Nurse remained garrulous in her reminiscences, although she too lost some lines considered to be too bawdy. The fact that Garrick did not excise all dialogue considered indecorous can be seen in Gentleman's horrified reaction to the Nurse's first speech in the play: ". . . indelicacy is very natural to nurses, but why the reformer of this play should have retained swearing by her maidenhead we cannot think."²⁹

It was Garrick's practice in his Shakespearean alterations to increase the roles of the major characters of a play and lessen the roles of the minor characters. In his version of Romeo and Juliet Lady Montague was cut entirely from the play and her few lines were given to her husband; likewise, Lady Capulet's speeches were reduced.³⁰

After the initial two performances of the drama in 1748, a new play notice was published, advertising the play "with a new Masquerade

Dance proper to the Play."³¹ The masquerade scene was obviously added to the play to please the audience with special music, choreography and costumes. A large part of the acting company was involved and the text was cut even further. The verbiage in the first love scene between Romeo and Juliet was shortened; at this point, however, the two main characters had opportunity to reveal their growing youthful love by pantomimic action. In this instance the play was probably cut, like a number of Shakespearean plays performed during the eighteenth century, simply because a shorter playing time was demanded in order to provide room for other spectacles and features on the same bill. Pantomimes, harlequinades and other "shorts" which could show off the scenic art of the stage designer became extremely popular; indeed, by the second decade of the eighteenth century pantomime was the most popular form of theatrical entertainment in England. Margaret Barton points out that in some eighteenth-century plays it became a "struggle between Harlequin and Shakespeare, between pantomime and straight drama."³² Because audiences were demanding an increasing amount of this spectacular and superficial entertainment, and because the theatres themselves had to cater to the all-powerful desires of the general public, a manager was well advised to cut his more serious productions in favour of what was sure to bring money into the house. In Fielding's Tumble-Down Dick (1744) a dialogue takes place between a theatre manager, Mr. Prompter; an actor, Fustian; and Machinist, the stage designer, which, although ironic, aptly illustrates the increasing importance afforded "entr'acte" features during Shakespearean presentations:

- Mach. . . . But, Mr. Prompter, I must insist that you cut out a great deal of Othello, if my Pantomime is perform'd with it, or the audience will be pall'd before the entertainment begins.
- Prompt. We'll cut the fifth act, Sir, if you please.
- Mach. Sir, that's not enough. I'll have the first act cut too.
- Fust. Death and the devil! Can I bear this? Shall Shakespeare be mangled to introduce this trumpery?
- Prompt. Sir, this gentleman brings more money to the house, than all the poets put together.
- Mach. Pugh, pugh, Shakespeare! . . . 33

By adding pantomimic actions between the young lovers in his version of Romeo and Juliet Garrick therefore made concessions to public taste to make the play even more popular, but did not allow the pantomime to take an important position.

The second and third acts of Garrick's plays were kept essentially faithful to the original text of Shakespeare. Two passages at the beginning of the second act in which Mercutio speaks mockingly of Rosaline were deemed "unpardonably gross" and "not fit for readers to peruse or spectators to hear."³⁴ Lines such as the following were therefore excised:

I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
By her high forehead and her scarlet lip,
By her fine foot, straight leg and quivering thigh,
And the demesnes that there adjacent lie.

(II.i.18-21)

The balcony scene, which in Garrick's play was presented as a garden scene, remained as a high point in Act II, but it too suffered loss; of its 189 lines, Garrick cut twenty-six, twenty-two of which were from Romeo's speeches. Lines which displayed anything but pure idyllic love were omitted. Romeo must "vow" not swear and his

reference to being "baptiz'd" under another name was changed lest the Church be offended. Shakespeare's two lines

Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo
(II.ii.50-51)

became

Call me but love, I will forsake my name
And nevermore be Romeo.
(II.ii.37-38)

Also in the interest of decorum the Nurse's teasing of Juliet in II.v. was shortened. Deleted, for example, was

I am the drudge, and toil in your delight;
But you shall bear the burthen soon at night.
(II.v.74-75)

Although Garrick was generally faithful to Shakespeare's text in the second act, he could not resist interpolating comic pantomimic stage business to make II.iv. more entertaining to his audience. Francis Gentleman described Garrick's presentation of the Nurse and Peter bearing Juliet's message to Romeo:

Stage policy, to please the upper regions, generally presents Peter as bearing an enormous fan before his mistress; skipping also and grinning like a baboon; the beating which he gets for not resenting Mercutio's raillery, is a very mean, pantomimical, yet sure motive of laughter.

In the third act the scene between Friar Laurence and Romeo was shortened; Romeo, as a heroic figure, was made to rant less about his banishment and Friar Laurence was quicker to comfort him. Likewise, Juliet hurled fewer imprecations upon Romeo's head for killing Tybalt. For instance, no longer did she cry "O serpent, hid with a flowering face/ Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?" etc. (III.ii.72-84). In

Garrick's play there was no bedroom scene; the parting of the lovers took place in the garden with little excision.

In Act IV cuts reduced Garrick's text to half the length of the original. Servants, musicians, Capulet, Paris, and the Friar suffered loss because they were minor characters, but nothing vital to the clear movement of the plot was omitted. The neo-classic dictum of unity of action required that not more than one thread of plot should be admitted into a play, and that all episodes not strictly necessary to the design should be rigorously excluded.

It was in the fifth act that Garrick made his major alterations. Friar Laurence, toward the end of Act IV in Shakespeare, asks Juliet's parents and Paris to "prepare/ To follow this fair corpse unto her grave" (IV.v.91-92). In the year 1750, at the opening of the fifth act, an elaborate funeral procession for Juliet was introduced in which appeared the following dirge written by Garrick:

CHORUS

Rise, rise;
Heart-breaking sighs,
The woe-fraught bosom swell;
For sighs alone,
And dismal moan,
Should echo Juliet's knell.

AIR

She's gone -- the sweetest flow'r of May,
That blooming blest our sight;
Those eyes which shone, like breaking day,
Are set in endless night!

CHORUS

Rise, rise! etc.

AIR

She's gone, she's gone, nor leaves behind
So fair a form, so pure a mind;
How could'st thou, Death, at once destroy,
The lover's hope, the Parent's joy?

CHORUS

Rise, rise! etc.

AIR

Thou spotless soul, look down below,
 Our unfeign'd sorrow see;
 Oh give us strength to bear our woe,
 To bear the loss of thee!

CHORUS

Rise, rise! etc.

(p. 139)

Garrick asked the pre-eminent English musician Dr. William Boyce to compose music to his words, and the dirge, involving at least seven vocal parts, was then sung during the play's performances.³⁶ Many of Shakespeare's original texts have songs in them, testifying that music was already a popular feature in dramatic productions during Elizabethan times. An even greater taste for musical drama affected many of Shakespeare's plays as they appeared on the eighteenth-century stage, and the inclusion of additional interpolated songs was often required to maintain the success of Shakespearean productions.

Garrick's addition of the funeral procession seems to have been forced upon him solely by the news that such a procession and dirge at the rival theatre, Covent Garden, had been instituted. A member of the audience made this statement in his diary: "Both ye houses play'd on ye same day Romeo and Juliet . . . both Houses too added a Scene of Juliet's funeral."³⁷ Thereafter, playbills for performances for both theatres featured not only the Masquerade Scene but also the Funeral Procession and Solemn Dirge.

The circumstances of the introduction of the funeral procession bear witness to the competitive pressures of stage managership. Before 1750 the parts of Romeo and Juliet at Drury Lane were played, under Garrick's direction, by Spranger Barry and Susannah Cibber, but for the

1750-51 season these two actors left Garrick's employ and opened the same play at Covent Garden. Garrick countered by acting the part of Romeo himself with a new actress. The rivalry between the two theatres became fierce and centered upon acting abilities, and Arthur Murphy reports that the public delighted in the rivalry: ladies of the audience stated that Garrick's passion was so fierce that they expected to see him climbing up the balcony, but Barry's voice so winning that any Juliet would surely wish to go down to meet him.³⁸ The veteran actress Susannah Cibber was considered the better of the Juliets, although Miss Bellamy showed amorous rapture and had natural loveliness. The audience tired of the lack of variety, however, and Burnim quotes the following poem which appeared in The Daily Advertiser on October 1, 1750:

'Well, what's tonight?' says angry Ned,
 As up from bed he rouses:
 'Romeo again!' and shakes his head --
 'Ah Pox on both your houses!'³⁹

Mrs. Cibber at Covent Garden tired after the twelfth night and Garrick triumphantly staged a final performance at Drury Lane with Miss Bellamy.

Critical reaction to Garrick's interpolated funeral was mixed. Some contemporary critics pointed out the absurdity of this practice: obviously the spectators could not have the slightest twinge of fear and pity for the corpse which they knew to be on the point of waking as soon as it was laid in the tomb. Arthur Murphy made the following evaluation:

But what end is all this farce and shew to answer? If it be calculated to please the ear and eye only, and not designed to have a proper tragical effect on the mind of the audience, nor contribute to the carrying on or denouement of the plot, it is absurd and ridiculous.⁴⁰

Francis Gentleman, however, revealed Garrick's purpose in adding the procession and concluded: "Though not absolutely essential, nothing could be better devised than a funeral procession, to render this play thoroughly popular." Gentleman justified his remarks by explaining that "three-fourths of every audience are more capable of enjoying sound and show, than solid sense and poetical imagination."⁴¹ His assessment of the eighteenth-century audience's taste may be sound. Theatre managers seem to have agreed with his opinion for during the eighteenth century an increasing proportion of music and lavish spectacle was introduced into productions. This trend could already be discerned in the first decades of the century, as demonstrated by the following notice which the Daily Post carried in May of 1726, advertising a Drury Lane production of Macbeth

. . . with all Songs, Dances and other Decorations proper to the play; and several additional entertainments. viz. After the 1st Act, the Musette by Y. Rainton and Miss Robinson. After the 2nd, the 8th of Corelli's Concertos; after the 3rd, a Wooden Shoe Dance by Mr. Sandham's Children; after the 4th a Dutch Skipper by Mr. Sandham; after the 5th, La Peirette by Mr. Roger the Peirror and Mrs. Brent.⁴²

Probably the most popular feature of Garrick's play concerned his addition of a seventy-five line death scene in Act V. In Shakespeare's play the star-crossed lovers never have an opportunity to take a final farewell. Otway had introduced to the stage a scene in which Juliet awakens before Romeo dies from the effects of the poison; Cibber had followed suit; and Garrick also decided to include such a scene in his version of the play. Garrick's addition, beginning at V.iii.118, is as follows:

(Drinking the poison)

Rom. Soft! -- she breathes and stirs!

Jul. Where am I? -- Defend me, powers!

Rom. She speaks, she lives, and we shall still be bless'd;

My kind propitious stars o'erpay me now

For all my sorrows past -- Rise, rise, my Juliet,

And from this cave of death, this house of horror,

Quick let me snatch thee to thy Romeo's arms,

There breathe a vital spirit in thy lips,

And call thee back, my soul, to life and love. (Raises her.)

Jul. Bless me! how cold it is! -- Who's there?

Rom. Thy husband;

'Tis thy Romeo, Juliet, rais'd from despair

To joys unutterable! -- Quit, quit this place,

And let us fly together -- (Brings her from the Tomb.)

Jul. Why do you force me so? -- I'll ne'er consent --

My strength may fail me, but my will's unmov'd --

I'll not wed Paris -- Romeo is my husband. --

Rom. Romeo is thy husband; I am that Romeo,

Nor all the opposing powers of earth or man

Shall break our bonds, or tear thee from my heart.

Jul. I know that voice -- Its magic sweetness wakes.

My tranced soul -- I now remember well

Each circumstance -- O my lord, my husband! -- (Going to embrace
Dost thou avoid me, Romeo? Let me touch him,)

Thy hand, and taste the cordial of thy lips --

You fright me -- Speak -- O, let me hear some voice

Besides my own, in this drear vault of death,

Or I shall faint -- Support me --

Rom. Oh, I cannot;

I have no strength; but want thy feeble aid. --

Cruel poison!

Jul. Poison! What means my lord? Thy trembling voice,

Pale lips, and swimming eyes, -- Death's in thy face.

Rom. It is indeed, -- I struggle with him now; --

The transports that I felt

To hear thee speak, and see thy opening eyes,

Stopped, for a moment, his impetuous course,

And all my mind was happiness and thee; --

And now the poison rushes through my veins: --

I have not time to tell, --

Fate brought me to this place to take a last,

Last farewell of my love, and with thee die.

Jul. Die? -- Was the friar false?

Rom. I know not that. --

I thought thee dead; distracted at the sight, --

O fatal speed! -- drank poison, -- kiss'd thy lips,

And found within thy arms a precious grave; --

But, in that moment -- O! --

Jul. And did I wake for this!

Rom. My powers are blasted;
 'Twixt death and love I'm torn, I am distracted;
 And death's strongest. -- And must I leave thee, Juliet? --
 O cruel, cursed fate! in sight of Heaven, --

Jul. Thou rav'st; lean on my breast.

Rom. Fathers have flinty hearts, no tears can melt 'em; --
 Nature pleads in vain; -- Children must be wretched.

Jul. O, my breaking heart!

Rom. She is my wife, -- our hearts are twin'd together. --
 Capulet, forbear; -- Paris, loose your hold; --
 Pull not our heart-strings thus; -- they crack, -- they break, --
 O Juliet! Juliet! -- (Dies. Juliet faints on Romeo's body.)
 (pp. 145-146)

In his advertisement to the third edition of the play in 1753, Garrick felt compelled to justify this addition to the work of the dramatist he idolized: he explained that Bandello, from whom he claimed Shakespeare had borrowed the subject for his play, had Juliet awaken before Romeo dies; Shakespeare did not read Italian, having taken the story from French and English translations, "both of which have injudiciously left out this Addition to the Catastrophe," and thus he did not know the ending, to which certainly his better judgment would have given approval.⁴³ From the Restoration onwards, the love element, considered essential to tragedy, had been expanded in most Shakespearean productions.⁴⁴ Garrick, furthermore, felt obliged to compose his own conclusion because Otway's did not possess sufficient "Nature, Terror, and Distress."⁴⁵ Murphy praised Garrick's ending as superior to Otway's because it "rouzes a variety of passions; we are transported with joy, surprise and rapture, and, by a rapid change, we are suddenly overwhelmed with despair, grief, and pity."⁴⁶

The increasing preoccupation with what now seem to be sentimental effects during the first half of the eighteenth century had caused audiences to respond to drama emotionally rather than intellectually.

Their powers of identification with the characters were cultivated to a remarkable degree and it was now the goal of drama, to "shock one's sensibility, whether it caused to be 'melted into tenderness the heart of every spectator,' or produced a feeling of terror."⁴⁷ Such a conception of tragedy was indeed far removed from that held in the days of Shakespeare. The interplay of emotions had given way almost entirely to whatever would provoke a feeling of pity in the audience instead of the varied passions of Elizabethan heroes and heroines, contemporary tragic characters were activated solely by love. The human being in distress had taken the place of the whole man of the Renaissance. The eighteenth-century theatre considered pathetic situations to be useful devices because they demonstrated the goodness of the characters who withstood all trials and because they provided the spectator with an occasion for displaying his own goodness, since to be moved by the sight of virtue in distress was a sign of a properly sensitive and moral nature. Consequently, in Shakespeare's tragedies, mid-eighteenth-century audiences found their chief pleasure in scenes that most readily provoked tears -- the distress of Ophelia, the pitiable reunion of Lear and Cordelia, and the dying kisses of Juliet.

In the last scene of Garrick's version of Romeo and Juliet a splendid opportunity arose for the two main actors to display their greatest acting talents in wringing emotion from the audience. Garrick not only wished to make Shakespeare's tragic force yet more powerful, but also aspired to create for himself an opportunity of playing one of those sensational scenes of passion and death in which he excelled. The

interpolated death scene was, accordingly, elongated with many contortions and groans. Francis Gentleman expressed his delight in Garrick's conclusion to the play: "Criticism could never ever [meet] more melting incidents or expression, than the catastrophe of this piece furnishes. We deem it rather too great a strain for tender sympathy."⁴⁸ Even Garrick's stern opponent MacNamara Morgan acknowledged the pathos of Garrick's interpolated death scene, thus complimenting the actor-manager on his imagination and creativity: "Nothing was ever better calculated to draw tears from an audience The circumstance of Juliet's awakening . . . is perhaps the finest touch of nature in any tragedy ancient or modern."⁴⁹

Because the versions of Cibber and Garrick were the only ones acted with any frequency in the mid-eighteenth century, audiences were unacquainted with the real nature of the Shakespearean ending. Garrick cut 166 lines from the last act, mainly from the parts of Friar Laurence, Paris and those people who appear in the tomb to view the dead lovers. The little-understood lines in which Friar Laurence recounts what he knows of the circumstances that brought on the tragedy were almost entirely excised. Francis Gentleman approved of Garrick's deletion, maintaining that "Shakespeare has given the friar, here, a tedious circumstantial narrative of forty lines; cutting it off to five, is perfectly right, ~~as~~ the catastrophe is sufficiently wrought up."⁵⁰ Explanations by other characters at the end of the play were briefly given, Montague and Capulet became reconciled, and the Prince closed with Garrick's lines:

From private feuds, what dire misfortunes flow,
Whate'er the cause, the sure effect is WOE.

(p. 149)

The battle between instruction and pleasure as the chief object of tragedy was never very serious during the eighteenth century; pleasure won with ease. However, moral instruction was regarded as a very important part of tragedy and scarcely any adaptation of Shakespeare failed to point up the moral lesson, or to supply one if Shakespeare had not obliged. For the eighteenth-century audience some very instructive lessons could therefore be drawn from Garrick's version of Romeo and Juliet. Francis Gentleman, in The Dramatic Censor, presented these lessons:

Disobedience in children, in doing what they know is totally against parental inclinations brings a train of perplexities, and produces the most fatal consequences. Parents may learn that family quarrels are not only socially absurd, but pregnant with misery to them and their offspring; they may also perceive that compelling youth in the article of marriage is an unnatural, dangerous exertion of authority; and duellists may infer from Tybalt's fall that the sword of fate hangs suspended by a cobweb-thread over a turbulent disposition.⁵¹

Although the eighteenth century found Romeo and Juliet's scenes "busy and various," its incidents "numerous and important," and its catastrophe "irresistibly affecting," the play was not fully acceptable without alterations to the language that Shakespeare had employed.⁵²

After Otway's presentation of the play in 1680, the drama was not presented on the English stage until Cibber's version appeared in 1744. Garrick blamed this long absence on Shakespeare's use of "jingle and quibble, which were always thought the great objection to reviving it." He stated that his design in alteration would be to "clear the original,

as much as possible," from this defect.⁵³ Garrick lived in an age that admired Shakespeare's imagination but criticized traits attributed to his supposed lack of learning or to the lack of refinement of the late sixteenth century. Romeo and Juliet was compared to a fine garden filled with "some beautiful flowers of genius," but Shakespeare's language had caused the garden to be choked with weeds.⁵⁴ Accordingly, Garrick made those alterations that he felt were necessary to fit the language of the Elizabethan dramatist to eighteenth-century standards of taste. Generally, the changes were intended to make the play more understandable to an eighteenth-century audience, or to make it conform to that audience's taste in tragedy. Garrick's alterations fell into three categories: he omitted quibble (puns and plays on words), he cut a great deal of jingle (rhyme), and he substituted many words and phrases of his own. The century was convinced that excessively figurative language represented a lack of judgment, and that Shakespeare's language was excessively figurative; thus, many alterations were designed to reduce the imagery in the play.

Following Addison's criticisms the pun was now condemned as the lowest form of wit and thought highly inappropriate for serious drama. Samuel Johnson said in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare:

A quibble is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapours are to the traveller; he follows it at all adventures; it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible.⁵⁵

Garrick, blaming quibbles upon the uncouth nature of Shakespeare's age rather than upon the bard himself, set about eliminating the puns and

plays on words he found in Romeo and Juliet. He omitted all the punning in the opening scene of the play, pruning all but four of the first thirty-two lines. He also excised the extensive passage of wit exchanged by Romeo and Mercutio in the fourth scene of Act II (II.iv.51-97), and in Act III Mercutio's famous pun was cut: "Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man" (III.i.92). In Act II Romeo's reply to the Nurse when she is sent to find him appears in Shakespeare as follows:

I can tell you; but young Romeo will be older when
you have found him than he was when you sought him:
I am the youngest of that name, for fault of a worse.
(II.iv.108-110)

Such passages, said Samuel Johnson, affect "a disproportionate pomp of diction, and a wearisome train of circumlocution."⁵⁶ In Garrick's play these lines became simply "I am the youngest of that name, for fault of a worse" (p. 111).

Garrick's most important cuts of word play occurred in his abbreviating the love scene between Romeo and Juliet at the masquerade ball. In reducing the quibble, however, Garrick lost some pretty love-making which turns upon the word-play concerned with "Saint," "Pilgrim," "Lips," and "Sin." Even Gentleman was forced to comment upon the swiftness of Juliet's falling in love as a result of excision in the scene, but he condemned her character rather than Garrick's excisions: "This masquerade scene is well disposed to give Romeo an opportunity of unfolding himself: but we rather think the lady's catching fire so very suddenly, shows her to be composed of tinder-like material."⁵⁷

The eighteenth century regarded blank verse as the proper medium for tragedy; Shakespeare's occasional use of rhymed lines in his

tragedies therefore posed problems for his adapters. Act-end and sometimes scene-end rhymes were usually retained because they were seen to fulfill a definite purpose; in Romeo and Juliet, however, the play's 498 rhymed lines were abundant enough to cause concern. Garrick proceeded systematically to reduce the number of rhymed lines in the play, retaining scene-end, act-end and even speech-end rhymes for Romeo and Juliet, who were allowed a more "poetic" speech than the other characters.⁵⁸ The revisions centered mainly on those 281 lines of the play that contained consecutive rhyme; the sonnets between Romeo and Juliet were therefore altered. For example, Romeo's sonnet beginning:

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
 It seems she hangs onto the cheek of night
 Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;
 Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
 (I.v.41-44)

was altered by Garrick to read:

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
 Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night,
 Like a rich jewel in an Aethiop's ear;
 The measure done, I'll watch her to her place.
 (p. 101)

In this scene Garrick also altered the sonnet of dialogue between Romeo and Juliet, cutting seven of the lines and leaving only one rhyme. In Shakespeare the sonnet begins as follows:

Romeo: If I profane with my unworthiest hand
 This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this,
 My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.
 (I.v.91-94)

Garrick's version reads:

Romeo: If I profane with my unworthy hand
 This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this.
 Juliet: Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,

For palm to palm is holy palmer's kiss.
(p. 101)

Injury done to the play because of the cutting of rhyme was not great, inasmuch as Garrick's emendations of rhyming words amount to less than twenty-eight throughout the whole play.⁵⁹ He therefore did not comb through the play to break up all the rhymes, but altered enough to satisfy the average contemporary playgoer.

Shakespeare was often offensive to neo-classical taste in his choice of words, one of the principal reasons being the alleged violation of the dignity of tragedy, a kind of extension of what might be called the doctrine of decorum.⁶⁰ Garrick omitted from Romeo and Juliet various words that seemed unsuited to the elevated nature of tragedy and substituted words that appealed to mid-century rationalism: the Nurse's "dugs" became "breasts," "beast" became "wretch," and "knife" became "steel" or "dagger."

All emotional expressions that might seem excessive were suppressed or toned down. Thus in

These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder
Which as they kiss consume:
(II.vi.9-11)

Garrick altered "kiss" to "meet." Juliet's cry

Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathed enemy
(I.v.137-138)

was omitted entirely.

Thus, although the play prospered on the London stage in the eighteenth century on the basis of its emotional impact and drawing power, its text was cut to bring it into some conformity with the

prevailing standards of eighteenth-century criticism. Shakespeare's language, his more elaborate conceits, passages which seemed out of place in tragedy, and speeches which detracted from the decorum of Romeo and Juliet's characters were regularly excised by the eighteenth-century prompt books and acting editions. Francis Gentleman, summarizing Garrick's presentation of Romeo and Juliet, said that the adapted play

. . . has many poetical beauties, expressed in smooth, nervous, agreeable versification, and takes, in several places, tender possession of the passions; it conveys very instructive admonitions, rises by just degrees to a striking conclusion, and must be allowed the candid praise of great merit.⁶¹

Garrick's alterations in plot, characterization and language met the approval of Drury Lane and Covent Garden audiences well into the nineteenth century. From 1748 to 1776 Romeo and Juliet was the most popular tragedy in the two licensed theatres in London, and was second only to The Beggar's Opera (1727) as the most frequently repeated piece of the eighteenth century.⁶² At Drury Lane it missed only one season between 1750 and 1777; and at Covent Garden the play was staged every year from 1750 to 1800 except during 1780, a striking proof of its popularity since no actor of eminence but Barry appeared in it there. The interest of the public carried on for years in the reissuing of three editions (1748, 1750, 1753) of Garrick's adaptation, and a printing every three years thereafter until 1787.⁶³ Garrick's addition of the final death scene appealed to the melodramatic tendency in drama found throughout the nineteenth century, and was used as the final episode in Gounod's opera, where the lovers sing a duet before the curtain falls. For almost a hundred years Garrick's alterations as well as his additions

of the Masquerade Scene, Funeral Procession and Dirge, and Death Scene were used in productions of Romeo and Juliet throughout England.

Even with all its alterations and additions Garrick's was by far the best text of Shakespeare's play which was carried on the English stage from 1680 until the middle of the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ Garrick's pre-eminence did allow him to return more original Shakespeare to the theatre than any of his predecessors, yet the hegemony of the London stage during the eighteenth century meant that the split between stage and printed text was altogether more powerful than in the twentieth-century theatre. Garrick's was usually the most faithful version of Shakespeare that could be seen acted by his audience. On the other hand, fuller texts, which had always been available, not only became more easily accessible to the public, but, through the textual work of Steevens, Warburton, Capell, and Johnson, among others, more faithful. Hence, the division between Shakespeare seen on the stage and the Shakespeare read in the "closet" was actually deeper than it is today. Garrick's interpretations of a part and his alterations of the plays themselves had an authority now unthinkable. The twentieth century has seen both a renewed scholarly concern with the establishment of Shakespeare's text and an unprecedented freedom with that text on the stage and elsewhere. Modern theatre is essentially pluralist in its aesthetic approach; in Garrick's London, by contrast, two major companies dominated serious theatre, and at Drury Lane Garrick's was the definitive Romeo of his period.

Garrick, by his own testimony, was an avid lover of Shakespeare

and was driven, as Thomas Davis, his eighteenth-century biographer says, by a "passionate desire to give the public as much of their admired poet as possible."⁶⁵ Indeed, it is possible to make a case for Garrick as a "restorer" of Shakespeare rather than as an adapter; it is easy to deceive ourselves if we compare Garrick's acting versions of Shakespeare with those of Howard, Otway and Cibber. Garrick is so much closer to Shakespeare that we may be inclined to minimize his departures; but departures they were, and some of them, considerable ones.

Despite Garrick's professed love of Shakespeare he was the most active adapter of the mid-century, and some of his alterations to such plays as Romeo and Juliet may strike a modern reader as "extraordinary acts of vandalism" as John Barnard has indeed termed them.⁶⁶ Even some critics closer in time to the actor-manager's own found his versions of Shakespeare to be mutilations of the original texts. Garrick's public, for the most part, took him at his word that his "only plan" was "to lose no drop of that immortal man," but not Dr. Johnson. When Boswell once argued that Johnson should have mentioned Garrick in his Preface to Shakespeare, on the grounds that Garrick had "brought Shakespeare into notice," the Doctor's gruff rejoinder was, "Sir, to allow that would be to lampoon the age."⁶⁷ Similarly, Charles Lamb, writing in the nineteenth century, long after Garrick's death, said, "I am almost disposed to deny to Garrick the merit of being an admirer of Shakespeare."⁶⁸

Chapter II

'Henry Irving: Shakespeare In Sumptuous Garments'

During the latter half of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century Shakespeare's plays continued to hold a prominent position on the English stage. In 1882 William Archer, one of the leading theatre critics of the period, made the following evaluation of the playwright's reputation:

Shakespeare is unquestionably the popular dramatist of the day. What other playwright can boast of two five-act plays running simultaneously at the two leading theatres of London? What other playwright is studied so scrupulously or mounted so sumptuously? If he now 'spells ruin' to anyone, it is not to the managers who act him, but to the modern dramatists who have to compete with him.²

Just as David Garrick had dominated the English theatrical world with his Shakespearean productions in the eighteenth century, Henry Irving now exercised that same control in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In 1878 he became manager of the Lyceum theatre in London and in more than twenty years of association with that theatre as manager and principal actor, he presented thirty-seven plays, of which twelve were Shakespeare's and the others were melodramas. All his Shakespearean productions enjoyed long and successful runs, becoming famous for both their increasing use of lavish spectacle and his controversial interpretations of such leading figures as Shylock, Richard III and Romeo. Romeo and Juliet, presented in 1882, was his first elaborate production and its run of 161 performances proved that Irving's

presentation and treatment of the play appealed to a century which built upon and expanded the eighteenth-century taste for the spectacular and the sentimental.

During the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century developments occurred in English theatrical conditions that were to affect Irving's Shakespearean productions. Already in Garrick's time and until 1843, the London theatres were regulated by a patent system in which only two theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, were licensed to perform plays with dialogue which of course included Shakespeare and practically all of English drama. After the lively dramatic activity of the Restoration, and much of the eighteenth century, English drama throughout most of the nineteenth century suffered a decline in both the number and quality of new plays offered. Prevented from performing anything more worthwhile, the management of the "minor" theatres presented trivial novelty and spectacle to the public. The common practice now was to present pantomimes or to circumvent the licensing laws by performing farces, melodramas and burlesques, plays in which the dialogue was accompanied by music. Often all these forms of spectacle, together with animal acts, would be presented on the same program. Hence, the theatre often became a kind of variety show.

Larger and less literate audiences than in the past century filled the theatres. In the prologue to Mrs. Inchbald's To Marry or Not to Marry (1805) Mr. Taylor urged the authoress' "anxious hope . . . still to find/ Some useful moral for the feeling mind."³ This might tempt the more genteel playgoer of the eighteenth century, but now most of the writers for the theatre worked for all the emotional and sensational

effects possible. In an adaptation of Oliver Twist, for example, the following treatment of the scene of Nancy's murder shows the taste of both performers and audience in the popular theatre: "Nancy was always dragged round the stage by her hair, and after this effort Sykes always looked up defiantly at the gallery. . . . He was always answered by one loud and fearful curse, yelled by the whole mass."⁴ All the emotional and visceral effects of the popular theatre -- the violence, the macabre, the focusing of strong feeling on the monstrous villain, the audience's emotional response, the mixture of horror and theatrical thrill -- are suggested by this performance and its response. It is a graphic illustration of what was commercial and thus successful during most of the nineteenth century.

Serious dramatists could seldom compete with this kind of theatrical spectacle. Shakespeare could compete with bear-baiting pits next door to the Globe, or the slaughterhouse drama of his Jacobean contemporaries, but not with an audience that was unwilling to listen to long speeches, or wanted a variety show of fast-moving entertainment that startled the eye and did not make great demands on the ear or intellect. Sensational effects therefore moved into the two patent theatres as well, and by the time the patent law was repealed in 1843, the use of these effects had become a part of Shakespearean performances in most theatres.

To accommodate the growing audiences, theatres at the end of the eighteenth century were enlarged, some seating as many as three thousand people. That process of completely isolating the actors from the spectators, which began at the close of the seventeenth century and

gradually cut away the old Restoration stage and its attendant stage-doors, now attained its culmination in that the apron vanished entirely and the picture-frame stage, apt for realistic and spectacular experiments, was established. Percy Fitzgerald, commenting on the new Haymarket, drew attention to a "novel arrangement" introduced by Bancroft:

A rich and elaborate gold border, about two feet broad, after the pattern of a picture frame, is continued all round the proscenium, and carried even below the actor's feet -- there can be no doubt the sense of illusion is increased, and for the reason just given; the actors seem cut off from the domain of prose; there is no borderland or platform in front; and stranger still, the whole has the air of a picture projected on a surface.

Here the picture-frame stage is not only recognized but full awareness of its function and significance is clearly realized.

The enlargement of the theatres created practical problems: soft voices could not be heard; rapid speech could not be understood; and facial expression, subtle gesture and the fine nuances of delivery had to be omitted or exaggerated. Thus the actors were driven into a slow, heavy enunciation, with each phrase marked off by strong pauses. Because the actor and stage had shrunk behind the proscenium, rapport between actor and audience diminished and with that lost rapport went loss of interest in plays depending a great deal on language for their theatrical effect. In conjunction with scenic interest there was an increased emphasis on broad gesture, eye-catching stage action, and clever stage devices. A demand in the theatre therefore arose for the pictorial realization of the word and the scenic recreation of the dramatist's setting. To look at the stage as if it were a picture was by 1850 an

automatic response in audiences and to make performance resemble painting became a habit of managers and technical staff. Acting made great use of eye-catching stylized and sometimes stereotypical gesture, attitude and facial expression, thus pictorializing character and emotional response. The actor was no longer performing far in front of a pictorial background of wings and backshutters, but had retreated behind the proscenium arch and was therefore integrated within a scenic unit.

The nineteenth century framed its stage as a painting would be framed, but as the century progressed nineteenth-century taste also insisted that the content of the frame should be as life-like as possible. Designers like William Capon (1757-1827) responded to the demand by introducing massive three-dimensional pieces into their settings. The pieces were often difficult to move, with the result that frequent delays occurred even within the progress of a single act. Producers attempted to recover the time lost in shifting scenes by drastically cutting the plays. These cuts, together with the inherited excisions of Restoration adapters and the temporary distortions occasioned by a star actor's vanity, often reduced the heroic sweep of the major Shakespearean tragedies to a patchwork of short and ill-connected scenes. The problem increased rather than diminished as time passed. Great star performers emerged such as Charles Kemble, Edmund Kean, William Macready, and Charles Kean, who appeared in crudely abbreviated "acting versions" of the major dramas, heavily mounted in an increasingly illusionistic style.

New developments in historical and archaeological research and the popularity of historical fiction prompted a theatrical response to

the facts of history, a striving after "historical accuracy." Thus audiences were attracted to such presentations as:

A grand Naval Spectacle at Sadler's Wells Theatre, presenting that memorable monument of British Glory, the Siege of Gibraltar; with exact representation of the armament both by Land and Sea, of the combined forces of France and Spain, with real Men of War and Floating Batteries, built and staged by professional men from His Majesty's Dock Yards, and which float in a receptacle containing nearly 8000 cubic feet of real water.⁶

This interest in the past and the recreation of history in painting, poetry, the novel, scholarship, and theatre became one of the most important features of nineteenth-century thought and creative art.

Learning through history was important for the Victorians, as apparent in their response to the Shakespearean productions of Charles Kean as in their appreciation of historical painting. The requirements of historical realism, archaeological accuracy and pictorialization necessitated full and elaborate scenic treatment for Shakespeare's plays, and by the middle of the nineteenth century it was the aim of such managers as Charles Kean to mount the plays of Shakespeare not only with every attraction of appropriate and picturesque scenery, but with a scholarly precision which would make the ages conjured up by the poet's fancy live again before the London public. Kean went so far as to turn his playbills into miniature essays in which he gave the historical background of each play and the details of his archaeological research. Authorities of all kinds were used to ensure a faithful reproduction of what were often inessential details in elaborating the pictures of past ages. Kean appealed oblivious of the fact that Shakespeare busied himself but little with petty accuracy of detail, choosing picturesque

locales for his dramas and then concerning himself only with the development of the dramatic essentials of his themes and the human nature of his characters. That it was Shakespeare's purpose in many of his plays to present as complete a picture as possible of a bygone age was hardly questioned by the mainstream of Victorian theatrical opinion. Kean's spectacles which utilized the most elaborate methods of historical realism determined the main trend in English Shakespearean production for sixty years: this was the tradition inherited by Henry Irving at the Lyceum. At the same time, there seems to have been a contemporaneous interest in a closer adherence to the Elizabethan texts of Shakespeare's plays than had been exercised in the previous century.

Influenced, therefore, by an age which demanded Shakespeare with novelty, Henry Irving presented Romeo and Juliet in 1882. His professed ideals as a producer can be found in this concise statement, which, although it concerns his 1879 production of The Merchant of Venice, is also of relevance to his Romeo and Juliet presentation:

I have endeavoured to avoid hampering the natural action of the piece with any unnecessary embellishment; but have tried not to omit any accessory which might heighten the effects. I have availed myself of every resource at my command to present the play in a manner acceptable to our audiences.⁷

Irving knew his audience when he remarked that Shakespeare well acted on a bare stage could afford intellectual pleasure, but the enjoyment of the audience listening to the poetry of Shakespeare would be greater if their eyes were charmed as well: "Many are thus brought to listen, with pleasure to the noblest works of dramatic art who might otherwise turn away from them as dull and unattractive."⁸ In the short preface to his

acting version of Romeo and Juliet Irving repeated his ideals for this particular play. "In producing this tragedy, I have availed myself of every resource at my command to illustrate without intrusion the Italian warmth, life, and romance of this enthralling love story."⁹

When the curtain opened for the first time on Irving's production, the audience was delighted to see Romeo and Juliet presented on the stage more lavishly than ever before. The play unfolded in a majestic progression of twenty-two different scenes and acts created by the best scene painters of the day. Clement Scott, a contemporary theatre critic, marvelled at the pictorial effect of the production:

Such scenes as these -- the outside of old Capulet's house lighted for the ball, the sunny pictures of Verona in the summer, the marriage chant to Juliet changed into a death dirge, the old lonely street in Mantua, where the Apothecary dwells, the wondrous solid tomb of the Capulets -- are as worthy of close and renewed study as are the pictures in a gallery of paintings.¹⁰

The opening scene revealed the market place in Verona, realistically complete with donkeys and children walking over a sloping bridge. To create the proper atmosphere for the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet, Irving presented the opulence of the Capulet house. The curtain lifted on an elaborate banquet in which Rosaline was seated on a throne of blue and silver flanked by silver draperies and surrounded by scarlet oleanders. Serving men were seen removing peacocks from the table while in the foreground moved richly clad pages. The prominent English musician Sir Julius Benedict had been asked to compose music for this production and as the minuet began Irving exercised to the utmost his mastery of crowds. Clusters of young people moved slowly and rhythmically around the stage, displaying their rich Renaissance brocades

and satins and accompanied by unseen singers who made their own melodious contribution to the dance melodies. Bram Stoker, Irving's business manager and biographer, felt that Irving had approached Romeo and Juliet in the correct manner: "The story . . . demands picturesque setting. For its tragic basis the audience must understand the power and antiquity of the surroundings of each of those unhappy lovers."¹¹

In the balcony scene Juliet was presented on the marble terrace of an ancient palace whose solid pillars towered above her, while below her the garden was covered in the dense foliage of real lilies and trees through which shafts of moonlight shone. To emphasize the contrast in mood that Irving felt was so important in the interpretation of Shakespeare, innovative use was made of modern technological advances in lighting. The scene in which Mercutio was killed, for example, showed the market square and emphasized the glaring white heat of the city. In this scene, when Mercutio described his wound as being "not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a churchdoor" (III.ii.90), he could gesture to either side of him where a fountain and a church had actually been constructed on the stage. Nothing was left out of the picture of Renaissance Italy: an old street in Verona, a street in Mantua, and the ancient apothecary's shop were all there. The tomb scene gave great satisfaction to the audience as Romeo melodramatically dragged the body of Paris down a steep, dark, gloomy staircase and along a gallery to the burial place.

In the preface to his acting edition of the play, Irving defended his extensive use of lavish accessories, employing a similar method of

reasoning to that of Garrick who, over a century earlier, had argued for a final farewell by the lovers. Garrick had stated that Shakespeare did not know the original ending to his source and surely would have used it had he been aware of it. Likewise, Irving argued that Shakespeare would have used lavish accessories if stage conditions had been different:

Such changes as have been made from the ordinary manner of presentation are, I think, justified by the fuller development of our present stage, of the advantages of which the Poet would, doubtless, have freely availed himself had his own opportunities been brought up to the level of our time.¹²

Irving's production moved in a series of separate pictures, whose aim it was to complement action as well as to portray contrasting moods. In her memoirs, Ellen Terry, who played Juliet to Irving's Romeo, points out that Irving once told her his reason for creating a pictorial effect in this play:

Hamlet could be played anywhere on its acting merits. It marches from situation to situation. But Romeo and Juliet proceeds from picture to picture. Every line suggests a picture. It is a dramatic poem rather than a drama, and I mean to treat it from that point of view.¹³

Owen Meredith, a contemporary poet and scholar, concurred with Irving's evaluation of the play, seeing Romeo and Juliet as one of the most poetic but one of the least dramatic of Shakespeare's tragedies. "To us," he said, "its main charm and interest must always be poetic rather than dramatic."¹⁴ Shakespeare had surrounded the two young lovers with a scenery and had invested the romance with a sensuous beauty; Irving had captured on the stage the charm which Meredith felt was the play's "natural poetic climate."

Although the general public flocked to see Irving's production and marvelled at the treatment of the play, some critics were appalled by the importance that Irving had assigned to spectacle. Henry James reviewed the play in The Atlantic Monthly in 1882 and condemned Irving for putting "the cart before the horse."¹⁵ His conclusion about the production was that "the play is not acted; it's costumed." Irving, in his view, had reached the pinnacle of a negative trend found throughout nineteenth-century English drama in attaching too much importance to scenery and decoration; the sublimities of dialogue and characterization had been suffocated by the luxurious scenery and massed crowds. Even Clement Scott was forced to admit that in certain scenes of Irving's production the immortal lovers of Verona had been made subordinate and ineffectual figures. The Capulet ball, for example, was an especially splendid scene but ". . . it seemed impossible to get action with all this magnificence. The play was forced to stop, whilst the eye travelled from one detail to another." The very beauty of the stage pictures dulled the action itself, and Scott singled out Romeo's farewell in Juliet's chamber as an example of what he meant. "Here we have, if anything, an excess of colour." He found the colours and scenery to be "a trying background for the central figures."¹⁶

It was Henry Irving more than anyone else who helped transform Shakespearean productions into such lavish spectacles; the pictorial trend of the realistic-romantic theatre of the nineteenth century had found in Irving its most significant British exponent. His use of a magnificent series of pictures represents a level in nineteenth-century

pictorial realism beyond which progress without the motion picture would hardly seem possible.

Not only did Irving's version of Romeo and Juliet gain fame for its use of lavish spectacle, but it also received recognition for his unusual interpretation of the play. From the Restoration onwards, Romeo and Juliet had been seen as idealized symbols of young, immortal love. Irving, however, rejected the traditions employed by such actor-writers as Cibber and Garrick, and wished his version of Shakespeare to stand on its own merits. Originality became his goal and he took Shakespeare's text and bent it to his own purposes. "No two people form the same conceptions of character, and therefore it is always advantageous to see an independent and courageous exposition of an original idea," he stated.¹⁷ Irving's emphasis upon individuality, coupled with a plea for liberty of interpretation, appears also in this characteristic declaration: "If a conception is not part of a man's own brain -- if it is not the impulse of his own creative faculty -- then it cannot bear the stamp of individuality without which there can be no true art."¹⁸ Because Irving was a romantic actor, his tragic heroes were frequently eccentrically individual; indeed the dramatic interest largely derived from what Victorian critics called their "idiosyncrasy." Alan Hughes calls it "tragedy of the uncommon man."¹⁹ In his insistence on personal interpretation, Irving magnified the value of personality, maintaining, "There are only two ways of portraying a character on the stage. Either you can try to turn yourself into that person -- which is impossible -- or, and this is the way to act -- you can take that person and turn him into yourself. That is how I do it."²⁰

Both Henry Irving and Ellen Terry had always wanted to appear in Romeo and Juliet; indeed, the roles had become favourites of actors and actresses for over two hundred years. In 1882, however, Irving was forty-four years old and Terry was thirty-five; both were uncomfortably aware that they were more than double the ages of the characters they were portraying. Irving, moreover, with his lean ascetic face, angular gestures, crooked gait, and high nasal voice lacking in flexibility, did not fit the traditional conception of a young Italian lover. His style of acting also did not lend itself to the spontaneity of youth, being characterized by slow deliberate speech accompanied by many pauses and byplay which had been developed in many years of playing parts in melodrama. Irving compensated for his physical defects, however, by attempting to create through a myriad of realistic details a subtle and complex character. The authority of theatrical tradition and the power of the classical repertory were blended with the psychological interpretation and the character details of a new school to produce a completely personal and individualized style of acting. Irving's success as an actor was due partly to the intensity with which he conceived and projected his not always sound but invariably "interesting" characterizations; partly to his striking, almost demonic personality; and partly to his very faults which so fascinated beholders that they came to be accepted almost as trademarks of his excellence.²¹ It was natural that Irving should choose those roles to which his somber character would give most force; in Shakespeare his past success had been with Hamlet and Richard III, and he was at his best in melancholy scenes.

Understandably, Irving's interpretation of Romeo and Juliet took into account his own acting strengths and weaknesses, and his planning, both of his own performance and of the whole production, brought out those features he could best express. Romeo was not presented from the outset as light-hearted, young and spontaneous, but rather as earnest, despairing, tragic, and star-fated. He was not the love-stricken boy but a tragic fool of fortune. Clement Scott, in the Theatre, summarized the lovers as Irving presented them:

We see Romeo and Juliet as the "pair of star-crossed lovers," the victims of adverse destiny, the subjects of our pity . . . not the lad physically beautiful but mentally incomplete, or the silly girl of fifteen of Coleridge . . . but the youth matured and the maiden strengthened into action, the pivots of a tremendous tragedy . . . the fate-haunted examples of vengeance and vindictiveness, who live to suffer for the faults of others and who die "poor sacrifices of our enmity."²²

It was Irving's belief that Shakespeare's play had been wilfully perverted in the eighteenth century, by either the waywardness of David Garrick or the bad taste of the age in which Garrick had lived. Acknowledging in his acting edition his indebtedness to the 1871 Variorum edition of the play by Furness and the editions of the play by Singer (1826) and Dyce (1857),²³ it became Irving's concern to restore a more Elizabethan text of Shakespeare's play to the stage, and to undo what Clement Scott referred to as "the mischief of the eighteenth century under the false guidance of David Garrick."²⁴ Irving's regard for restoration reflected a trend, found throughout the nineteenth century, to return to a more authentic Elizabethan text. John Philip Kemble began a partial restoration at the beginning of the century and as the century progressed audiences had occasion to hear an increasing proportion of

Shakespeare's own words on the English stage. There was still, however, a good deal of rewriting of the dramatist. Kemble's production of 1811 showed the remains of eighteenth-century taste; Romeo's extravagant metaphors of love were eliminated and nearly all rhymes were suppressed. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, most productions of the play had restored Shakespeare's language, a restoration aided by such literary figures as Coleridge, Lamb and Hazlett who considered adapters such as Garrick to be great abusers of Shakespeare.²⁵ Garrick's interpolated funeral procession and dirge, and his farewell scene between the lovers, nonetheless, generally still held the English stage; indeed many actors using Garrick's stage version thought that they were using the original text.

It was Irving's view that past productions had failed to emphasize properly the tragic setting of the story. Garrick had omitted the Prologue and this omission had been made by every English theatrical producer between 1749 and 1882. Because people had been seeing Garrick's acting version on the stage for over a hundred years and had not been reading Shakespeare, they had been misinterpreting the tragic pattern so plainly put forward in the Prologue. Clement Scott described Irving's desire to restore the story of Romeo and Juliet as Shakespeare had written it: "It has been Mr. Irving's ambition to do something of great moment in restoring the fabric destroyed by mutilated versions and corrupted texts. . . . He has striven . . . to get . . . at the soul of Shakespeare."²⁶ Shakespeare in the Prologue had stressed the feud between the two great families resulting in civil strife and had

therefore provided the setting for the tragic jewel: the "piteous overthrows" (1.7) of the "star-crossed lovers" (1.6) who "with their death bury their parents' strife" (1.8). Because this setting had generally been neglected on the stage the story had been exalted "into a region of supernal elevation above common life," a result at variance with the dramatist's intention.²⁷

Irving took away the usual romantic prettiness and stressed a setting of warfare and revenge. In his view the play was no light love poem and no tale springing from the quarrels of two neighbours, but a tragedy stemming from the hatred of two virile races.²⁸ The blood-feud, the ruthless vendetta declared between Montague and Capulet through the generations had infected all Verona. In the first scene of the play a picturesque crowd of citizens and nobles, children and donkeys went peacefully about their business around a fountain in the foreground, while upstage a sloping bridge crossed a walled stream. But peace was an illusion. Under the pretty surface the city was a "hell of vendetta and sordid murder" where tempers boiled over in the hot Mediterranean sun.²⁹ Members of the Capulet faction entered, at first slowly, but coming quicker and quicker until a crowd of them had gathered on one side of the bridge. Then over the bridge came a rush of the Montagues armed with sticks and swords. Bram Stoker relates that "they used to pour in on the scene . . . like a released torrent, and for a few minutes such a scene of fighting was enacted as I have never elsewhere seen on the stage."³⁰ The fight was no aesthetic sword-dance, but a deadly war.

The lovers, as star-crossed, were predestined to calamity and were the innocent victims of a malign, inevitable fate. Ellen Terry

ints out that in this production Irving used a "fate tree" to symbolize the destiny hanging over the lovers.³¹ It gloomed over the street along which Romeo went to the ball, reinforcing his dark exit speech:

my mind misgives
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels.

(I.iv.106-109)

loomed again over the "dismal heart-chilling street" in Mantua where he heard of Juliet's supposed death and brought poison from the apothecary. Terry attributed Juliet's swift surrender to a sense of urgency prompted by a "presentiment of sorrow":

O God! I have an ill-divining soul.
Methinks I see thee, now thou art below,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.

(III.v.54-56)

nry Pettitt pointed out that past productions had made the play charming, effective or pretty, and sometimes dramatic, but only Irving made it tragic."³²

In his acting edition Irving announced that the most important of his restorations was "that of Romeo's unrequited love of Rosaline."³³ Following the example set by Garrick, most subsequent producers had omitted any reference to Rosaline and it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that she was restored to the play. By that time Lady Montague had also been restored, and Juliet was once again presented as fourteen, rather than eighteen.³⁴ Irving saw Rosaline as being essential to the proper understanding of Romeo's temperament, believing that Shakespeare had carefully worked out the first baseless love of Romeo as palpable evidence of the subjective nature of the man and his

passion."³⁵ Reacting against the neo-classical view of dramatic characters as ideal types, nineteenth-century critics viewed Shakespeare as the dramatist of the individual, the supreme observer of human nature, whose creations were as complex as they were true to life.³⁶ "To play Shakespeare with any measure of success, it is necessary that the actor shall, above all things, be a student of character," declared Irving. "The end and aim of acting," he further maintained, is "to lay bare to an audience the heart and soul of the character which the actor may attempt to portray."³⁷ To Irving the interpretation of Romeo and Juliet was therefore mainly a matter of determining the character and motives of the hero, whom he treated as a real person with a past as well as a present, and who had psychological causes for his actions. Irving arrived at his interpretation by constructing Romeo's life before the play, ignoring the fact that an audience is shown nothing of Romeo's character before the play begins. A modern critic or director, asked what Romeo and Juliet is about, will usually offer a theme; the actor's alternative is to emphasize the character of Romeo. This was Irving's choice. The central basis of Irving's interpretation is found in the psychological state of the central characters. Victorian criticism and stage tradition, with their concentration upon character, generally assumed that this was the true interpretation, and that only perfect illusion could make it work. Romeo, therefore, ought to be played as a believable case history, and his symptoms delineated as realistically as possible.

Bram Stoker said that in Irving's initial portrayal of Romeo, he managed to convey that "though his mind was to a measure set on love with

a definite object, there was still a sterner possibility of a deeper passion." Irving seemed to show the heart of a young man yearning for all-compelling love, even at the time when "the pale phantom of such a love claimed his errant fancy."³⁸

In the scene of the Capulet ball Irving's aim was to place in the strongest possible light Romeo's sudden transition of affection from Rosaline to Juliet. Edward Russell, the reviewer from Macmillan's Magazine, described it as a transition "from disconsolate yearning and love-famine to the instinctive appropriation and assumption of glowing, mutually responsive passion."³⁹ Instead of incontinently dropping all thought of Rosaline, as the invariable stage usage had been, Irving ventured to display in dumb show to the audience the sudden transference of thought and emotion which must have taken place. Gazing from Rosaline around the room he was struck statuelike by the beauty and charm of an unknown girl. As he stood immobile the love of Rosaline fell unconsciously from him and it was changed into "the glory and glamour" of his new adoration.

Irving found it difficult to portray the impulsive, yet bashful and delicate ardour that tradition had decreed to the young lover. Instead, he sought to portray the extreme intensity of Romeo's sudden passion as he boldly courted Juliet at the Capulet ball and in the balcony scene. Ellen Terry, a frank and receptive Juliet, returned his ardour. The keynote of Irving's Romeo was yearning tremulous worship. Romeo made it clear that he adored his love and only slowly came to realize that he could be adored by her; and when he knew it he almost "sank in the sweetness of it."⁴⁰ In Shakespeare there is a definite

contrast between Romeo's boyish character at the beginning of the play and his more mature attitude towards love in later scenes. In Irving's production this contrast was not stressed. Russell, however, agreed with Irving's unusual interpretation of an aggressive Romeo from the outset of the play, stating that "the explanation lies in the sudden excitement of a new passion."⁴¹

In Act III Irving restored scenes ii and iii in which the young lovers react to Romeo's banishment. Garrick had excised those lines which might portray a "blemish" on the idealized characters that his audience desired. Irving, however, aimed for much more realism. In Act III he wished to show that Romeo's fibre had been weakened through love, and that this momentary weakness had been the cause of Mercutio's death. Likewise, he felt that it was important for the audience to see Romeo sobbing his anguish to the Friar. Garrick had eliminated Romeo's faults; it was now Irving's purpose to emphasize them. The Macmillan's reviewer defended this emphasis, believing that "Shakespeare fully intends us to behold the seamy side of his beautiful love story, and to know that there is a seamy side to it in character as well as in misfortune."⁴²

Another major restoration that Irving aimed for in his production was a return to Shakespeare's own conclusion to the tragedy, deleting Garrick's funeral dirge at the end of Act IV and the seventy-five-line farewell between the two lovers in Act V. It was his view that Garrick had contrived a climax and denouement totally at variance with the dramatist's expressed injunction. As late as 1811, in John Philip Kemble's production, Garrick's interpolated love scene had still been

performed and the funeral dirge was retained until Irving's production. Irving's position in deleting such interpolations was that "truth should remain unalterable, and the true words of Shakespeare be allowed to speak to the human soul."⁴³

Although it was Irving's aim to restore Shakespeare's play, he did not produce a completely restored text. Restoration of the "true text" in the latter part of the nineteenth century did not mean performance of the inviolate text, but only the deletion of all language inserted by earlier "improvers" and performance of as much of the original as time and sexual propriety permitted. A producer was privileged to give as much or as little as he chose of the authentic text, but whatever he gave must be genuine. It had not yet occurred to the majority of producers that probably Shakespeare, as author, was the best judge of what should be acted and that his plays, as written, might be allowed to speak for themselves. The plays were too long to be crowded -- with heavy, unwieldy scenery -- in the allotted three hours of the regulation evening in the theatre. Besides, many of the scenes and speeches seemed uninteresting or unnecessary. Hence, naturally, there were as many acting versions of Shakespeare as there were individual managers to produce his plays. Perhaps the justification for cutting Shakespeare's plays is attempted best by Mary Anderson in her preface to The Winter's Tale (1887):

The following stage-edition of 'A Winter's Tale,' like its various predecessors, may be said to aim at keeping as close to the original play as is compatible with the requirements of the theatre and the no less extracting demands of modern taste. Of the larger excisions it is unnecessary to speak, they are unavoidable; no audience of these days would desire to have 'The Winter's Tale' produced in its entirety.

. . . . A literal adhesion to the text as it has been handed down to us would in any case savour of supersition.⁴⁴

As with almost all Shakespearean producers before and after him, Irving felt justified in making a number of cuts. In his acting edition of Romeo and Juliet he referred to his arrangement of the text, claiming that he had "endeavoured to retain all that was compatible with the presentation of the play within a reasonable time."⁴⁵ Time became a major concern because the nature of his spectacular production did not allow for the quick shifting of scenery. Shakespeare had merely used dialogue to indicate a change to a new location and his versatile methods of staging had allowed his plays to be performed continuously. The Elizabethan stage was extremely flexible as regards acting. Action was unlocalized unless the dramatist required a specific location, which was then established by the convention of language. The late Victorian stage, however, was completely inflexible, realism and naturalism requiring that every scene must be localized in terms of time and place. Each scene required a new set and the changes could interrupt the flow of action. The fact that the practice of historical realism and lavish antiquarian display meant long wearisome intervals while heavy sets were changed, and that Shakespeare's text had to be cut and rearranged to make room for all of this did not matter, as audiences were quite prepared to accept the penalties for the sake of the benefits, provided there were sufficient pomp and splendour attached to the latter.

Much time was needed in Irving's production for scenery and set changes; musical interpolations such as a wedding carol to awaken Juliet at the end of Act IV were therefore added. These insertions, common

throughout nineteenth-century drama, could be justified to extend the atmosphere between scenes and to heighten the mood of the play. The production time was also lengthened by added bits of spectacular business as exemplified by the procession of fair bridesmaids to awaken Juliet at the end of Act IV and the melodramatic dragging of Paris' body down the stairs into the Capulet tomb in Act V.⁴⁶ Irving's slow ponderous speech with its lengthening of every syllable, and his emphasis on posture and pantomime to heighten scenes consumed even further time. As a result of Irving's acting style and various interpolations, the subtlety of Shakespeare's intention disappeared and the quick rhythm and music of the poet's words became lost.

Irving's policy was to omit those passages that he felt could be excised without losing continuity in the play. In the first two acts little was omitted. In Act I, he cut a servant's comic speech about the shoemaker and his yard (ii.38-43), believing, as did most producers of the nineteenth century, that comic parts could easily be cut because they were minor parts, and their excision or abridgement would give more time for the major actors to demonstrate their skills on the stage. Star actors in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demanded that their roles be heightened in importance as much as possible.⁴⁷

The entire sonnet duet between Romeo and Juliet at the Capulet ball was kept (I.iv.90-104), a duet which had been shortened and altered throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of its rhyme. In the balcony scene (II.iii.), however, Irving made some excisions to the speeches between the lovers, shortening Romeo's description of the fair Juliet by cutting eight of the twenty-four lines appearing at the

beginning of the scene. Omitted were the lines starting with ". . . 'tis not to me she speaks" (II.ii.14) in which Romeo describes Juliet's eyes and wishes to be ". . . a glove upon that hand,/ That I might touch that cheek!" (II.ii.22-23).

The Friar's speech on the medicinal power of herbs in II.iii.1-30 had often been entirely omitted in earlier productions, being deemed unnecessary to the central action of the play. Irving, however, in cutting eight of the thirty lines, retained the majority of the speech. In II.iv. some of the comic lines of the Nurse were cut as she brings Romeo's message to Juliet, including her allusion to Paris as "the properer man" (1.185) and her naive question, "Doth not rosemarie and Romeo begin both with a letter?" (1.187-188).

Larger excisions were made in Acts III, IV and V. Most of the good-natured banter between Benvolio and Mercutio at the beginning of the third act was omitted, and a large excision was also made at the end of III.i., the scene in which Mercutio dies and Romeo is banished. Irving omitted the whole latter part of the scene, cutting sixty lines so that the curtain could effectively be brought down on Romeo's cry "O, I am fortune's fool!" (III.i.129), giving the main character a splendid exit, but at the expense of the rest of the characters. The Prince was denied a second entrance to banish Romeo, Benvolio therefore was unable to recount the skirmish to the Prince, and the Capulets and Montagues were denied the opportunity to show their rage and grief.

In Act IV, the vital moment where the Friar gives Juliet the poison was robbed of its significance by the omission of the very

passages that express the fervour of Juliet's resolve:

O, bid me leap, rather than marry Paris,
From off the battlements of yonder tower, etc.
(IV.i.77-88)

Clement Scott explained that Irving had omitted these lines as anticipating the tomb scene but it was his own belief that the speech was an important forewarning of the oncoming evil, a necessary note in "the harmony so skillfully devised."⁴⁸ This passage marked a turning point in the tragedy at which the girl Juliet becomes a woman. Merely retaining the simple line "Give me, give me! O, tell me not of fear!" (IV.i.121) and omitting the other twelve lines describing Juliet's horrid imaginings, was not enough to describe her mental condition at this juncture.

Shakespeare's Act IV ends with the lamentations of the Capulets upon the discovery of the supposedly dead Juliet, followed by a short comic scene between Peter and the musicians. Irving interpolated a procession of bridesmaids and a wedding carol to the fourth act and omitted the musicians' scene; this enabled him to end the act with a grand tableau in which the Friar urges the Capulets and Paris "To follow this fair corpse unto her grave" (IV.v.93).

Bram Stoker relates that the pathos of the play's last act touched Irving to his heart's core and that in speaking the words he wept.⁴⁹ It was Irving's intention, however, noted Russell, to purge the final scene of all the sentimentality of previous productions and effect an ending of simplicity and power.⁵⁰ It was to this very last scene of the play that Irving made his most drastic cuts, omitting 137 consecutive lines. When Juliet had died the curtain closed, while behind it the

sound of an approaching crowd was heard. The curtain opened once more to reveal the lovers imperishably united in a final splendid tableau. Surrounding the bodies of the two lovers were the Capulets, Montagues, Paris, Prince, and Friar Laurence; while a great multitude of silent awestruck citizens carrying blazing red torches thronged the staircase, occupying every point of vantage and from the churchyard, offstage, came voices of friars chanting prayers for the dead. Irving was more interested in the lovers than in the restoration of order in Verona. The really significant compensation which the tragedy offered lay in the growth and self-fulfilment of the lovers. The Prince solemnly joined the hands of the two fathers and, above the distant requiem, closed the play with only a fragment taken from his final speech:

For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.
(V.iii.308-309)

Clement Scott praised Irving's conclusion, judging that the play "ends as Shakespeare intended it to end."⁵¹ William Poel, however, condemned the omissions, calling the conclusion a "mutilation" which he attributed to "the despotism of the actor on the English stage, and consequently to the star system." Irving, in his view, had neglected the importance of the minor characters and had not stressed enough the reconciliation of the two families. He ended his condemnation by asking, "Why open your play with the quarrel of the two houses if you do not intend to show them reconciled?"⁵² Bram Stoker, on the other hand defended Irving's ending by merely commenting, "So much can now be expressed by pictorial effect . . . which in Shakespeare's time had to be expressed in words."⁵³

Austin Brereton wrote that the tableau at the conclusion of the play brought to a close one of the grandest spectacular representations of a Shakespearean play that had ever been presented.⁵⁴ Those in favour of spectacle argued that pictorial recreation of bygone times, together with the beautiful and ornamental additions of fine paintings, rich costumes, and lavishly executed properties, replaced inevitable deficiencies in the imagination of a modern audience no longer content with simplicity of staging, the voice of the actor, and the spoken word. Although Henry Irving, in the opinion of some of his reviewers, achieved his goal of heightening the imagination of the audience in this "enthraling love story," his production of Romeo and Juliet was not termed a success by most critics. He had followed a nineteenth-century trend in restoring the text of Shakespeare, but had somehow missed the essence of the mercurial Romeo. There is no doubt that he had failed to convey the appearance of youthful spontaneity and it is hard to imagine a successful Romeo in whom this is lacking. Even though Clement Scott and a majority of the audience were delighted to see "Shakespeare in sumptuous garments,"⁵⁵ Irving himself knew that his portrayal of Romeo was not successful. His best moments as Romeo were in the "banished" scene and in the Apothecary scene, but he could not capture the youthful exuberance of Shakespeare's character. As he himself later put it: "The most elaborate scenery I ever had was for Romeo and Juliet, but as I was not the man to play Romeo the scenery could not make it a success. It never does -- it only helps the actor."⁵⁶ George Bernard Shaw conducted a long war against Irving, claiming that Irving couldn't play

Shakespeare's characters but only versions of himself and that he used Shakespeare's texts as mere quarries for the makings of original romantic dramas in which to exhibit characters of his own creation. Reviewing a Lyceum production of Cymbeline Shaw observed: "A prodigious deal of nonsense has been written about Sir Henry's conception of this, that and the other Shakespearean character. The truth is that he has never in his life conceived or interpreted the characters of any author except himself."⁵⁷

In spite of the fact that very few critics praised Irving's acting in Romeo and Juliet, the production ran to 161 performances, a fact that amazed Henry James: "As it happens, the play has thriven mightily, and though people are sadly bewildered by what they see and hear in it, they appear to recommend the performance to their friends."⁵⁸ It is not difficult to understand why Irving's lavish pictorial productions were popular: Shaw as well as James gave Irving credit for achieving great visual beauty in his productions, and the late nineteenth century was rich in visual arts in England as well as on the continent. The popularity of Irving's approach to characterization may seem more difficult to comprehend but, as Edward Moore notes, Irving's success can be understood when one reflects on what the literary critics were doing with Shakespeare at this time. This was the great age of "character" analysis -- volume after volume analyzing the characters of the plays as if they were real people, a tradition early climaxed in its absurdity by Mary Cowden Clarke's Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines (3 vols., 1851-52), and later climaxed brilliantly by A. C. Bradley's Shakespearean Tragedy (1904). "The age of the great novel of character was the age of

criticism by character analysis, and was the great age of character acting," concludes Moore.⁵⁹

There is no question that as a renderer of idiosyncratic character on stage Irving was superb. For all his inability to read verse, Irving was sensationally successful in certain Shakespearean parts and the reason certainly must be found in his meeting the tastes of the age by giving his strong personality the real meat of great parts to work upon; by applying intellectualized character methods to traditional roles, and by filling in naturalistic by-play between the lines he could not read properly. As Edward West rightly points out, Irving succeeded in those parts to which he could apply most surely his melodramatic and character acting technique: Richard III, Iago, Shylock; he failed most conspicuously in those where sound elocution and a heroic bearing were indispensable: Macbeth, Othello, Romeo.⁶⁰

Chapter III

William Poel: The Bard Restored

In 1902 Henry Irving retired from the English stage and the Kemble-Kean-Irving tradition of spectacle was continued by the Shakespearean producer Herbert Beerbohm Tree who, during the Edwardian period, tried to out-do his predecessors with a series of sumptuous realistic presentations. Irving shared with Kean and Tree the educational objectives of historical recreation in Shakespearean production although not with the ardour of these two, being commended, on the whole, for his restraint of spectacle and its harmonious relation to both play and acting performance. He had integrated the actor into the scenic environment by compositionally subordinating the intensity of the picture to the visual prominence of the actor, each composition therefore having its focal point on the principal actor. In doing so, Irving was able to place the character amidst his scenic milieu without sacrificing the human values of the drama or the histrionic values of the performance. Martin-Harvey, a lifelong admirer of Irving's scenic style, contrasted Irving's technique with that of productions which were excessively archaeological:

This "archaeological method" of production . . . has a serious drawback -- a play itself is sometimes buried beneath a mountain of antiquarian detail. This was never the case with the Irving productions, for he was a master of "tone" (painters will know what I mean), and though he would spend months of research over correct historical detail, he could, with his feelings for "tone," reduce all this detail to a mere background -- a subtle gift denied to those who followed or imitated his method. . . .¹

Tree further developed Irving's pictorial romanticism but was considered not as fine an actor as Irving and was frequently accused of excessive scenic elaboration; his productions often concealed Shakespeare under a mountain of carefully conceived but essentially irrelevant effects. For Anthony and Cleopatra he actually built "the barge she sat in" with its purple sails, golden poop, and silver oars, and moved it onto the stage. He loved tricky business, tableaux and dumb shows. In King John he staged the signing of Magna Carta, which Shakespeare never thought of. In A Midsummer Night's Dream real rabbits nibbled the grass of the floorcloth. Tree also often "helped" Shakespeare along with music. The actress who played Oberon, for example, not only spoke the passage beginning "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows" but then sang it. At Hamlet's death his soul was wafted upward by an angelic chorus singing him to his rest.

It was Tree's belief that the public was not interested in the plays of Shakespeare except as vehicles for providing an exciting star performance and that Shakespeare, in his words, could "not be made tolerable to any large section of the play-going public without the plethora of scenic spectacle and gorgeous costumes which the student regards as superfluous and inappropriate."² Tree felt justified in drawing such a conclusion by looking at what he called the "brutal but unanswerable logic of figures"; even relatively unpopular plays such as King John drew audiences of 170,000 when he produced them.³ Thus it was under Tree's guidance that "spectacular" Shakespeare moved into its most opulent and final phase of the English stage. He had modified an existing language of scenography and consequently had explored that

language's limits; except in the cinema, Shakespeare as historical fact or as pictorial illustration would hardly survive the 1914-18 war.

Although the richly upholstered versions of Shakespeare generally delighted the masses, there was a growing number of critics who expressed contempt for these elaborate productions. Shakespearean performance in the late Victorian period became a battleground between supporters and opponents of the spectacular style, a territory contested with particular bitterness toward the end of the nineteenth century and during the reign of Edward VII. Clement Scott, who had praised Irving's production of Romeo and Juliet, found that subsequent producers were carrying the tradition too far. He criticized an 1884 version of the play in which "silks and satins are preferred to interpretation" and lamented that because producers were overdoing spectacle, Shakespeare's poetry was suffering. It seemed to him that the entire production was sacrificed to "the harvest of the eye" and that acting was currently being made more and more subordinate to mere scenic success:

There are plenty of people to tell us . . . what kind of couch wooed [Juliet] to sleep; dozens of authorities as to where certain pines or orange-trees grew in Verona . . . but apparently not one who can instruct the younger generation how to deliver the Queen Mab speech, not a human being who can persuade a popular actress that the love of Juliet is something superior to that of Mary Jane flirting over the garden wall.

William Archer saw the miracles of modern mounting and stage-management as the result of an inevitable tendency and good in their own way: as the dramatic stage had learned from the lyric stage the secrets of movable scenery and mechanism, so the poetic drama was now borrowing from melodrama and pantomime the methods of realism and spectacle. Archer

also felt that producers were "overdoing it, indulging in expense for its own sake, and subordinating artistic effect to mere ostentation."⁵ Shakespeare, he concluded, was being "horribly maltreated" on the modern commercial stage; he had scarcely seen a single production in which expense did not predominate over intelligence, while the reasonable integrity and logic of the narrative had to yield to the "convenience of the scene-painter and the machinist."⁶ The Academy had long criticized the methods of such producers as Tree and delivered the following attack upon one of Tree's most popular productions:

Mr. Tree's Julius Caesar is a grievous insult to Shakespeare. . . . What do the playgoing public want? Do they go to Her Majesty's to see Shakespeare's Julius Caesar or to see Mr. Tree? If the former, then the present performance is an unqualified failure.

Such condemnations were well justified at the end of the nineteenth century. To accommodate the public's taste for spectacle and its demand to see as much as possible of the star during a performance, producers were ruthless with Shakespeare's texts. Often more than a third of a play was dispensed with; what remained, however, took well over three hours to perform. Productions had become cluttered with interpolated silent business, often to bridge gaps left by cut lines. A typical presentation of Shakespeare included at least three intervals, and as much as forty-five minutes was used in changing scenery, the long waits between scenes being filled in by actors taking calls and by orchestral interludes.

Still more damaging to Shakespeare's texts than the cuts were the rearrangements of the texts made in order to minimize the number of times

the scenery had to be changed. In versions of The Merchant of Venice, for example, it was not unusual to play all the early Venetian scenes consecutively; then the Belmont scenes were grouped together and played one after the other. In spite of the fact that much of the play was thus reduced to mere absurdity, this arrangement was for many years regarded as the standard acting text. In Augustin Daly's adaptation of Twelfth Night, the performance started with the first scene of the second act, followed by the second scene of the first act; this rearrangement allowed Daly to get the seacoast scene out of the way and gave him the added advantage of allowing the star to enter after the audience was seated.

Throughout the nineteenth century, however, a small school of thought persistently argued that plain unadorned productions of Shakespeare should be presented on the stage. The first step in this direction was taken by Benjamin Webster, who in 1844, in an isolated experiment, presented The Taming of the Shrew at the Haymarket in two hours with no vestige of scenery and no intervals. Between 1843 and 1879 Samuel Phelps produced thirty-one of Shakespeare's plays at Sadler's Wells with simple settings and a concern to follow Shakespeare's texts, followed, in the latter part of the century, by Frank Benson, who formed a company to present Shakespeare with a minimum of scenery and accessories. Practical considerations were partly responsible for these simple productions: Phelps had no money for elaborate presentations and Benson had worked mainly with a touring company, thus necessitating simple settings. It was Benson who in 1899 produced Hamlet in its entirety for the first time since Shakespeare's day, playing the first half of his five-hour production at a matinee, the rest in the evening.

The fact that textual fidelity in Shakespeare's plays was still an unusual occurrence can be seen by George Bernard Shaw's reaction to the 1897 Hamlet production of Forbes-Robertson, the first producer to bring Fortinbras back into the final scene of Hamlet instead of dropping the curtain on "The rest is silence":

The Forbes-Robertson Hamlet at the Lyceum is, very unexpectedly at that address, really not at all unlike Shakespeare's play of the same name. I am quite certain I saw Reynaldo in it for a moment; and possibly I may have seen Voltimand and Cornelius; but just as the time for their scene arrived, my eye fell on the word "Fortinbras" in the programme, which so amazed me that I hardly know what I saw for the next ten minutes.

From the late 1870's onward, it was the rebellious voice of William Poel that provided the best sustained opposition to the spectacular presentations of such producers as Henry Irving and Beerbohm Tree. Poel's view of the standard Shakespeare productions of his time may be gauged from his sarcastic advice to any manager contemplating a Bardic revival:

Choose your play and be sure to note closely in what country the incidents took place. Having done this, send artists to the locality to make sketches of the country, of its streets, its houses, its landscapes, of its people, and of their costumes. . . . Then, when you have collected at vast expense, labour and research, this interesting information about a country of which Shakespeare was possibly entirely ignorant, thrust all your extraneous knowledge into your representation, whether it fit the context or not; let it justify the rearrangement of the play, the crowding of your stage with superfluous, the addition of incidental songs and glees. . . .

Poel admired the rich pictorial effects achieved by Irving at the Lyceum and by Tree at His Majesty's, but maintained that they were irrelevant to the imagery of Shakespeare's plays and destructive of their rhythm.

Shakespeare's poetry was obviously suffering in spectacular production. A change was needed in the attitudes of producers and actors who had to realize that their only business was to be loyal to the author and to interpret Shakespeare according to what were thought to be his intentions and not according to the theatrical fashions of the time. He stressed that if Shakespeare's plays were given on the stage in their entirety with the simplicity and rapidity with which they were acted in his own day, "it would limit the needless experiments, mutilations and profitless discussions that every revival of them occasions."¹⁰ Poel was to become the forerunner of a group of producers who reacted against the lavish spectacles that had characterized Shakespearean production from the late eighteenth century and attempted to return both to the simple style of production that Poel believed Shakespeare had used and to a complete restoration of the dramatist's text. In 1905, twenty-three years after Irving's production of Romeo and Juliet, Poel presented the play at the Royalty Theatre in London. Although only four performances of the play would be given to very small audiences in a non-commercial venture, the production included a number of innovations too startling to be ignored. These innovations were the practical outcome of more than twenty-five years of thought about and criticism of past Shakespearean productions.

That David Garrick and Henry Irving had been innovators in their Shakespearean productions is certain, yet it is equally sure that their work largely found its basis in the efforts of their predecessors. William Poel can be sharply distinguished from these two earlier producers in that his work took the form of a strong reaction against the theatrical conventions that had largely come about because of Garrick's

and Irving's influences. Far more self aware and critically conscious than either Garrick or Irving, Poel started with his own theoretical framework of well-conceived ideas and theories. He was much more theoretically based than most people in the theatre before him in that his practice was rooted in much background thought and production theories. Neither Garrick nor Irving was anything like so impelled, as was Poel, by a body of critical presuppositions and dramatic theories that were to be tried and tested by practical stage experimentation. In this respect Poel, although already formulating ideas more than two decades before the turn of the century, can very much be considered a twentieth-century figure. In Drama From Ibsen to Brecht Raymond Williams concludes his analysis of twentieth-century drama by stating that "this century of new drama is directly and indirectly self conscious; critically aware of its own problems and forms. Very few modern dramatists, whose works have survived their immediate place and time, have failed to write critically about dramatic form and the theatre."¹¹ This can also be said about many of the more important modern theatre practitioners.

Poel's efforts were comparable to those of other late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century innovators who expressed dissatisfaction with existing theatrical conditions or dramatic forms and set out to change them. Constantin Stanislavski, for example, explains in My Life in Art his rebellion against existing conventions on the Russian stage in 1898:

The founding of our new Moscow Art and Popular Theatre was in the nature of a revolution. We protested against the customary manner of acting, against theatricality, against bathos, against declamation, against the bad manner of

production, against the habitual scenery, against the star system which spoiled the ensemble, against the light and farcical repertoire which was being cultivated on the Russian stage at that time. . . . Like all revolutionists we broke the old and exaggerated the new . . . we sought for inner truth, for the truth of feeling and experience.¹²

Similarly, J.M. Synge and W.B. Yeats, in Ireland, protested against the lack of poetic drama on the contemporary stage. Synge said that the naturalistic drama of Ibsen and Zola that had become influential dealt with "the reality of life in joyless and pallid words." It was his contention that "in a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry."¹³ Synge then proceeded to base the language of his own plays on the idiom of a rural Irish people whose speech is naturally poetic, both in imagery and rhythm. It was the thesis of W.B. Yeats that "if one has not beautiful or powerful speech, one has not . . . great literature."¹⁴ His goal, then, was to write poetic drama in which, like drama of centuries past, "there is much lyric feeling and at times a lyric measure . . . wrought into the dialogue."¹⁵

"As always, criticism has preceded and fostered creation," says Mrs. Q.D. Leavis of the efforts of the Brontës in the mid-nineteenth century to write novels which would not merely give a surface imitation of life, but which would be true to the whole woman and convey a sense of life's springs and undercurrents.¹⁶ William Poel, in his approach to the theatre, was also, at first, critical rather than creative; archetypal of the twentieth-century reformer, the mode of his own creativeness would declare itself later on. As a young man, in the late 1870's, he wanted

to find out what the theatre was really like, he wanted to discover all he could about acting and, above all, he wanted to study Shakespeare; he therefore tried every sort of odd job behind the curtain and acted a wide variety of parts. A general criticism about Irving's powers was already given by him in 1877 after he saw the actor-manager as Richard III at the Lyceum. "He appears to aim at creating an effect by working his scene up to a striking picture upon which the curtain may fall," complained Poel. "This is a modern practice that I much dislike as it is sensational and stagey."¹⁷

In 1878 Poel went on tour in the provinces, picking up an audience wherever he could and giving recitals from Shakespeare, Sheridan and other classical playwrights. A year later, having familiarized himself with the plays he intended one day to produce, he proceeded to form a small company of "professional ladies and gentlemen" who gave scenes from such Shakespearean plays as Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, and Romeo and Juliet. The very simple conditions of these performances threw the actors back upon the text and Poel himself was forced to compare the acting editions of Shakespeare then in use with the original versions of the plays. He was made to realize how much had intervened since these had left the hands of the Elizabethan stage manager -- or whoever had assumed such a role. It was not merely a question of cuts or traditional "business"; it was also a question of literary editors preparing a text for publication, setting up their own system of punctuation, and arranging their own division of the plays into acts and scenes. Poel's conclusion was that contemporary Shakespearean production bore little resemblance to that found in Elizabethan times. If a performance was to

be given as Shakespeare might have seen it, it was essential, first, to establish an authentic text; to go back as close as possible to the original representation. It was also imperative to return to Elizabethan staging conditions.

Poel became a man with a vision whose views never changed throughout his working lifetime. He assisted regularly at the discussions of the New Shakspeare Society, sometimes reading a paper himself; he wrote constantly to the newspapers; and he lectured whenever anyone would offer him a platform. Slowly, in the face of mounting incredulity, his views became known. His beliefs, applied to the Shakespearean plays he chose to interpret, are summarized in his two volumes of collected papers, Shakespeare in the Theatre (1913) and Monthly Letters (1929), and are elaborated in the personal correspondence and journalistic activity of a lifetime.¹⁸

Poel's work, although based on theory, was far more than theoretical. Because he believed that the methods of Shakespearean production then triumphantly in vogue were totally and radically wrong, and because he was himself a radical, he decided to set about putting them right. "A decision of this kind," says Robert Speaight, Poel's biographer, "is always heroic. The artist must turn his back on the easy accommodations of compromise."¹⁹ Founding an Elizabethan Reading Society, Poel gave a directed reading of Hamlet in 1887 and followed that by performances of a series of Elizabethan plays including works not only by Shakespeare but also by such playwrights as Marlowe, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, and Jonson -- truly a remarkable series of

experiments. For a further ten years, from 1895 to 1905, he was able to express his ideas more fully through the activities of the Elizabethan Stage Society whose productions gained a good deal of critical attention, favourable and unfavourable.

When Poel presented Romeo and Juliet in May of 1905, Beerbohm Tree had produced, just one month earlier, his first Shakespearean Festival, an elaborately mounted and heavily abridged series of Shakespearean plays that delighted the masses.²⁰ The general public hailed every new refinement of realism and every further elaboration of spectacle with almost unqualified delight. It was in tune with the visual temper of the age; opposing criticism was not. Poel and a small number of dissenting critics complained that an overdone emphasis on realism in production rendered audiences mentally passive and anaesthetised the imagination. Poel's intention was to force the audience's attention away from visual delights; to fulfil that aim he presented Romeo and Juliet with no scenery, concentrating his efforts instead on making Shakespeare's poetry come alive to the audience. The public, unaccustomed to this radical change, stayed away.²¹ Even the Academy which had long urged a return to simplicity, cautiously termed the production "intelligent" and "adequate" but intimated that Poel had gone too far in a return to austerity.²² Poel, however, was a true reformer and was undeterred; he knew that the conservative public would not immediately tolerate a new thing but maintained that "no public demands what is not offered to it. Before demand can create supply, a sample of the new ware must be shown."²³

It became Poel's aim in his productions to restore rather than to invent: accordingly, Romeo and Juliet was presented with the goals of an unabridged text, a simplified setting, quicker pace, and none of the cluttering business that disfigured contemporary presentations. The main thesis that underpinned Poel's practice was that every play was written by Shakespeare with a particular form of theatre and a particular style of production in mind. He was convinced that Shakespeare and his fellow-Elizabethans could not adequately be contained within the limits of the proscenium stage; that the intervals imposed by the accessories of realistic scenery completely destroyed the vital speed and continuity of the action, broke the tension when it was essential to preserve it, distorted the fundamental dramatic structure, and made savage mutilation of the text a necessity.

Encouraged by the claims of contemporary scholars that the study of Elizabethan drama demanded a study of the Elizabethan stage, a movement gathered support to perform Shakespeare on platforms either chosen for their likeness to the theatre of his day (as provided by the Inns of Court or Halls of the Livery Companies) or reconstructed within modern buildings for this purpose. The same tendency toward realism which encouraged the elaborately spectacular productions of Shakespeare's plays was responsible for experimentation in the highly conventional manner of Elizabethan staging. Producers such as Charles Kean and Henry Irving had used the realistic method of making Lear look like an ancient British monarch. Others, employing an identical method, demanded that Shakespeare's stage be reproduced in all its exactitude and his

characters be costumed as they might have appeared in the original productions. This was the type of historical realism sponsored and guided by William Poel.

The Elizabethan Stage Society was founded in 1894 to give practical effect to the principle that Shakespeare should be accorded the stage architecture for which he designed his plays. When later asked why he had created the Society, Poel replied:

I am really a modernist. My original aim was just to find out some means of acting Shakespeare naturally and appealingly from the full text as in a modern drama. I found that for this the platform stage was necessary and also some suggestions of the spirit and manners of the time.²⁴

Poel carefully studied the work of W.J. Lawrence and the other scholars who were beginning to reveal the true nature of the Elizabethan playhouses and he examined the evidence afforded by the early Shakespearean texts. It became his judgment that the Shakespearean plays which were presented to audiences in the nineteenth century bore little trace of the swift continuous rhythm found on the Elizabethan stage. Shakespeare, he concluded, could only be played effectively on the kind of stage for which he wrote.

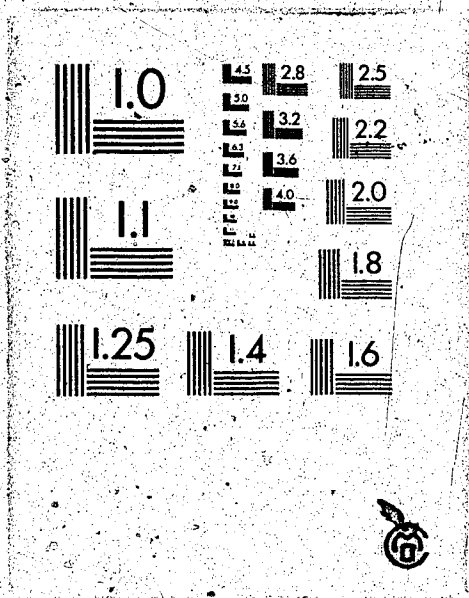
Aided by a sketch of the Swan Theatre which had been found in 1888, Poel set out to reproduce as far as was physically possible all the conditions that contemporary scholarship believed to have governed the performances of Shakespeare's plays in his own theatre and time.²⁵ Such experiments could not have been conducted before this time, there having been earlier only a slight understanding of the true features of the Elizabethan theatre. Not having the funds to rid himself of the

proscenium, Poel put the Elizabethan two-levelled architectural set with an inner stage behind the proscenium arch and created a wide and projecting platform stage over the orchestra pit in front of the proscenium. He also attempted to recreate several Elizabethan theatrical conventions: dressing the actors in Elizabethan-style garments to reflect Shakespeare's own day rather than the historical epoch of the dramatic action; using costumed pages to draw the curtains of the inner stage and to arrange properties and furniture; and employing an on-stage audience to emphasize the audience-actor relationships of the Elizabethans.

Poel wished to recreate the bareness of that stage which had proved to be a challenge to the dramatist and spectator alike. It was not readily conceivable that Shakespeare would enjoy having his poetical descriptions superseded by the obtrusive art of the scene-painter; the poet, he stressed, was his own scene-painter and electrician. It was primarily on an uncluttered Elizabethan stage that the gifts of the poet were to be understood by the audience to the full and that the audience, therefore undistracted by "outward decorations and subordinate details,"²⁶ could give its full attention to the poetry. Poel and a small number argued that spectacle suffocated the imagination rather than nourished it, that it distracted attention from the actor and the spoken word, and that a gorgeous picture was an inadequate substitute for the skills of the actor and the dramatist. It was Poel's belief that a modern Shakespearean producer could not make the same demands on an audience to concentrate its attention on the players and their speech without there being a simple uncluttered Elizabethan stage which allowed

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So many thousand times? -- Go, counsellor;
Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain.--
I'll to the friar, to know his remedy:
If all else fail, myself have power to die.
(III.v.233-240)

The film audience is not told of this rift between Juliet and the Nurse; instead, disillusionment and maturity are registered clearly on Juliet's face. The camera focuses on her youthful but serious face as it reacts to every line the Nurse speaks: the eyebrows arch when the Nurse calls Romeo a "dishclout" to Paris (III.v.219), and the mouth sets firmly as the Nurse tells her that this match "excels your first" (III.v.223). In the film Juliet merely says "Go counsellor" as she forcefully shoves back the curtains of her bed and pulls away from the Nurse's attempt to touch her sympathetically. Such action, in film, is to transfer to visual terms what needs to be verbalized on the dramatic stage.

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FIN

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

2. The second part of the document outlines the various methods and techniques used to collect and analyze data. It highlights the importance of using reliable sources and ensuring the accuracy of the information gathered.

3. The third part of the document focuses on the interpretation and analysis of the collected data. It discusses the various statistical and analytical tools used to identify trends and patterns in the data.

4. The fourth part of the document discusses the implications of the findings and the potential impact of the research. It highlights the need for further research and the importance of sharing the results with the relevant stakeholders.

5. The fifth part of the document provides a conclusion and summarizes the key findings of the study. It emphasizes the need for continued research and the importance of maintaining high standards of accuracy and integrity in all reporting.

