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Sheridan, America, and the Ends of Theatre

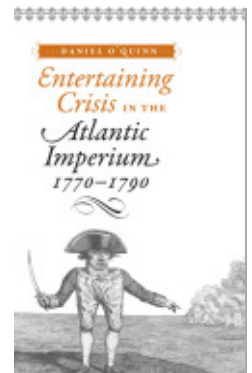
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## “THE BODY” of David Garrick

*Richard Brinsley Sheridan, America,  
and the Ends of Theatre*

What Shakespeare says of *ACTORS* may be better applied to the purpose of *PLAYS*; they ought to be “the abstract and brief Chronicles of the times.”

Therefore when history, and particularly the history of our own country, furnishes anything like a case in point to the time in which an author writes, if he knows his own interest, he will take advantage of it.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Critic*, 2.1.1–7

At almost precisely the same moment that readers in London would be pondering the significance of the representation of the *Mischianza* in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, they were confronted with a remarkable letter from Admiral Augustus Keppel proclaiming victory over the French fleet at Ushant. The letter appeared first in the government publication the *London Gazette Extraordinary* and was reprinted in all of the newspapers on 4 August 1778. From the outset, it was the subject of intense scrutiny, because of the strange manner in which he described the crucial decision to not pursue the French fleet:

The fleets, being upon different tacks, passed each other very close: The object of the French seemed to be the disabling the King's ships in their masts and sails, in which they so far succeeded as to prevent many of the ships of my fleet being able to follow me when I wore to stand after the French fleet; this obliged me to wear again, to join those ships, and thereby allowed of the French forming their fleet again, and range it in a line to

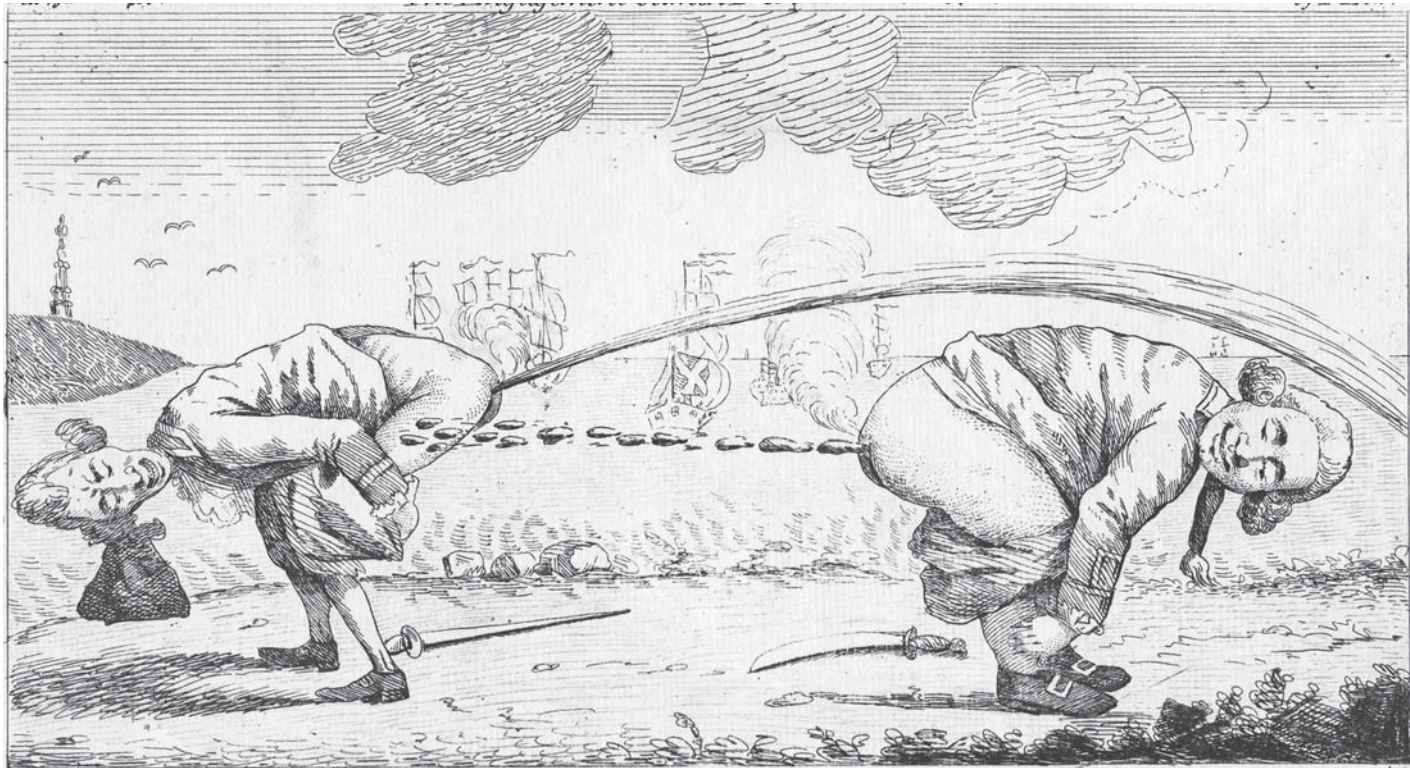
leeward of the King's fleet, towards the close of the day, which I did not discourage, but allowed of their doing it, without firing upon them, thinking they meant *handsomely* to try their force with us the next morning; but they had been so beaten in the day, that they took the advantage of the night to go off.<sup>1</sup>

The adverb "handsomely" provoked repeated commentary in the weeks and months after its publication, in part because the word is so multivalent—it is synonymous with readily, appropriately, skillfully, elegantly, and, in a strictly nautical sense, carefully—and in part because very few of the papers were willing to allow the French any capacity for handsomeness. Britain was in the midst of a palpable invasion scare because the French had joined the American cause and were threatening the southern coast of England. Keppel, a much-lionized naval hero and Whig parliamentarian, had been hastily called forward to lead the poorly maintained channel fleet. The nation was preoccupied with news from the camps at Coxheath and daily reports of preparations for war with France, so it should come as no surprise that news from Ushant was much anticipated.

But the scrutiny of Keppel's letter, which briefly reported on the naval action of 27 and 28 July, was curiously stylistic. For example, in the same column of the *Morning Chronicle* in which Keppel's letter appeared, we get the following:

Admiral Keppel's letter, in yesterday's London Gazette Extraordinary, is one of the most singular that ever was written as an official dispatch. It neither mentions where the action was fought, where the French fleet are gone to, nor in what kind the hard blows received by our ships were repaid. The latter may certainly be ascertainable as to the precise quantum of the injury done the enemy, but surely the brave Admiral might have given us some better expression to guess by, than the vague declaration that they were "so beaten."<sup>2</sup>

Questions of usage are here standing in for a full array of anxieties and recriminations. In the weeks and months that followed, the papers are replete with indictments of Keppel's failure to fully describe the battle in naval language, and insinuations that he failed to fully engage with the French fleet. For commentators hostile to Keppel, this smacked of evasion or, worse, of a willful attempt to mislead the public. Less factionalized reports argued that the lack of clarity and precision allowed for the deliberate or innocent misconstrual of events vital to the nation. Keppel's letter became a narrative enigma that prompted the proliferation of accounts of the battle: the papers printed accounts from subordinate



*Don't you think my good Friends this a comical Farce is,  
 To see two Great Admirals fight with their A— ,  
 Mons! squirts Soup-mayre acro's K-p-Is back,  
 What a Smoak & a Sink! & yet neither prevails  
 But he in return gives a far hander Smack,  
 For how can it be? when they both turn their Tails.*

Keppel's Court Martial, Jan 1790
 
 July  
 177  
 Price 6

officers and, more divisively, reprinted radically contradictory reports from France that celebrated French victory over the British fleet in the same battle.<sup>3</sup> These reports, of course, were rebutted and provided the occasion for invective against the perfidious French. Inflammatory prints such as the anonymous "The Engagement between D'Orvilliers and Keppel," whose appended verse concludes "What a Smoak and a Stink! & yet neither prevails / For how can it be? when they both turn their Tails," refigured the battle as a vortex of excrement in which both admirals were running from each other (fig. 4.1).<sup>4</sup> Like the letter itself, the Battle of Ushant very quickly became an event whose historical interpretation was dangerously inconclusive and thus had to be worked through at every level of its signification. The *Morning Post* captures the nature of the event when it referred to the battle as "that dark transaction off Brest."<sup>5</sup>

This double enigma—the battle and Keppel's representation of it—instantiates one of the crucial narratives of the American war, a narrative whose political significance is well known but whose cultural import remains underexplored.<sup>6</sup> From August 1778 through February 1779, the interpretive struggle to resolve the enigmas surrounding Keppel's actions and his text moved through various fields. In the summer and early fall, much of the engagement with the issue took place in the papers, and they played a decisive role in the institutional response to the issue. Throughout August, September, and October, the papers printed highly technical accounts of the action, signed by correspondents with names such as Nauticus Sr., that attempted to piece together the events of the battle from the reports printed in the papers. And they also printed a host of rumors aimed at undermining both the government's and the opposition's representations of the war itself. But the resolution of the enigma took a dramatic turn, when, on 15 October, Vice-Admiral Hugh Palliser, Keppel's second in command, was publicly impugned by one of Keppel's supporters aboard his own flagship in the *General Advertiser* for failing to obey orders and join Keppel in pursuit of the French fleet.<sup>7</sup> Within the week Palliser attempted to exculpate himself, again in print, but Keppel refused to contradict, in print, the attack on Palliser.<sup>8</sup>

This war of words, like the battle itself, remained inconclusive and threatened to destabilize the command structure of the navy. As the *Morning Chronicle* stated,

Figure 4.1., *opposite* Anonymous, "The Engagement between D'Orvilliers and Keppel," etching (1780). BM 5626. Department of Prints and Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.

It is much lamented by all true friends to their country, that there should exist such a matter as party aboard a fleet, fitted out like that sent to sea under the command of Mr. Keppel, on the most important of all possible occasions, the immediate defense of the kingdom, and the chastisement of her most perfidious and most powerful foe. Admiral Keppel and Sir Hugh Palliser are both allowed to be able seamen and brave officers, what a pity it is that two such respectable characters should be under the influence of either political or personal pique. When the service of their country is the business, every little passion should give way to the greater impulse, and all parties in employ should unite, hand and heart, in the discharge of their duty.<sup>9</sup>

On 9 December, Palliser brought charges against Keppel; they were accepted by Lord Sandwich, the lord of the Admiralty, and one of the most explosive trials of the eighteenth century was set underway. Keppel declared in Parliament that he would not serve with Palliser, and it became clear that the political divisions over the American conflict had the potential to undermine the solidarity of the military. Keppel's court-martial was the focus of intense conflict in Parliament throughout December, and literally dominated print culture for its duration from 9 January to 11 February. Politically, the court-martial was a disaster for the Ministry and especially for Sandwich. At a moment when it was extremely difficult to critique the government, the opposition was presented with a political gift. At the same time that it was defending one of its own—Augustus Keppel was a prominent member of the Rockingham faction and second cousin to Charles James Fox—the opposition could attack the Ministry on a variety of fronts. It is not an exaggeration to say that the rhetorical advantages gained during the Keppel affair provided much of the traction for subsequent parliamentary critique of the war effort.

All twenty-eight days of the court-martial were reported in intense detail, and Keppel's acquittal resulted in mass celebrations or mass rioting, depending on one's political perspective, throughout England. As Roger summarizes, "According to reports in the London and provincial press over 160 demonstrations were staged in his favour, coupled in most instances with the burning or hanging of Palliser in effigy. Comparable in scale to the Wilkite demonstrations, the Keppel affair rivaled the radical in popular engagement. It was one of the causes célèbres of the decade."<sup>10</sup> And yet even after Keppel's acquittal, anonymous satirical prints such as "Who's in Fault? (No Body) A View off Ushant" (fig. 4.2)<sup>11</sup> emphasized that the question of who was at fault in the Battle of Ushant and



Figure 4.2. Anonymous, "Who's in Fault? (No Body) A View off Ushant," etching (1779). BM 5570. Department of Prints and Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.

even of what precisely happened in the Channel remained unresolved. Clearly the rendering of Keppel without a body in the satirical print attempts to get at this problem less through equivocation than through a direct pun on the word "nobody" and the direct assertion of cowardice when it states that Keppel's "Heart was in his Breeches."

In the satirical prints from the postacquittal period, Keppel becomes a head or, more specifically, a face. And certainly we have to be struck by the rejuvenation of Keppel's face in these satires. "Who's in Fault? (No Body) A View off Ushant" does not give us an aged Keppel, but rather supplies us with the new face of a younger, less experienced man. There is evidence that a similar facialization of Keppel was also true of the theatrical illuminations that accompanied many of the celebratory declamations in the theatres. These disembodied heads are significant because they effectively separate the martial hero from his body and thus implicitly pose the question of how and when the fragmented body of the hero will be reconstituted. Interestingly, "Who's in Fault? (No Body) A View off Ushant" attaches the faces to the same signs of power deployed in the

postacquittal celebrations—namely, Keppel’s uniform and his sword. But here their very status as mere signs is set in damning contrast to the representation of the battle itself on the right side of the picture—a battle, I might add, that is completely obscured by smoke. From this perspective, I think it is possible to recognize an important distinction between the hyperembodiment of Palliser and Sandwich in the celebrations themselves—effigies of both men were often attacked or burned by the crowd—and the decororealization of the “hero.” With the body of Keppel melting into air, the anonymous engraver of “Who’s in Fault? (No Body) A View off Ushant” seems to put time into reverse in search of a body to attach to a rejuvenated face. This print is asking the viewer to think through the implications of celebrating Keppel’s victory over the Ministry rather than celebrating his victory over the French, which amounts to asking why the nation was beset with internal conflict during a period when it faced direct threat from external forces. This harsh historical question, or a version of it, threads its way through all of the performances I discuss in the next three chapters. Sheridan, Cowley, Colman, and directors of the Handel Commemoration all develop strategies for addressing this question, and in each case a tactical deployment of the body of the national hero becomes crucial for countenancing the time to come.

To say that the Keppel-Palliser affair dominated the press would be both an understatement and, in some senses, a misconstrual of the press’s role in the event itself. There is no question regarding the sheer column inches devoted to the debates and the court-martial, but the papers themselves were very much aware that they played a generative role in the crisis.<sup>12</sup> Here is the loyalist *Morning Post*’s reflection on the papers’ role on the eve of the court-martial:

The present unhappy divisions between our two Admirals, are the baneful effects of party-zeal. The little success attending our arms off Brest, gave rise to a thousand conjectures; burned, sunk, and destroyed, not making, as usual, a part of the Gazette, gave rise to murmurs and discontent; and the novelty of a sea-engagement without its usual consequences, led the people to surmise, that all was not right at bottom. The Minority threw some oblique hints to the disadvantage of Sir Hugh Palliser, and both parties alternately expressed their surprise at Admiral Keppel’s suffering the French fleet to form, on the vague supposition, that they intended fighting it out *handsomely* the next morning. The very expression (*handsomely*) was a standing joke on both sides, and on all occasions; but the affair now become too serious for a subject of wit, or ridicule. The mistaken ——,



therefore, which has caused such an unhappy conflagration, should subside, nor aggravate contradictions already too complicated; a continuation of which can only foment a professional discord among a set of brave men, whose country, at this period particularly, demands their utmost care and attention.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the *Morning Post's* almost de rigueur slur on the minority party—that is, the Whigs—this is a remarkably accurate representation of how the enigma generated narrative effects. Because the papers were themselves so factionalized, “Party zeal” expressed itself in the struggle for dominance in the commercial print public sphere. The *Morning Post* is particularly important here because it argued from the outset that the opposition was actively impugning the reputations of both Keppel and Palliser in order to embarrass the Ministry.<sup>14</sup> Suggesting that the opposition was attacking Sandwich’s friend Palliser was simply politics as usual, but charging the opposition papers, and in particular the virulently critical *General Advertiser*, with assassinating the reputation of one of their own heroes amounted to saying that the opposition was willing and able to eviscerate itself in order to destroy the best efforts of the government. This was tantamount to saying that Britons who were partial to the colonists’ critique of imperial rule were exhibiting a form of self-loathing aimed ultimately at destroying Britain itself. This was sedition in its most profound form, and it was a highly effective way of containing the political efforts of not only the pro-American elements of the British populace but also those factions within Parliament that were deeply concerned about North’s management of the war. In other words, this stream of anti-opposition rhetoric argued quite explicitly that the opposition critique of the Admiralty is simply the most egregious example of a kind of masochistic desire within the nation itself to tear itself to pieces. Resisting this kind of self-mutilation becomes a key progovernment trope, and thus much of the discourse surrounding the Keppel court-martial is aimed at restoring unanimity within the officer corps of the navy and, by extension, within the nation itself.

The Keppel-Palliser affair brought into unmistakable visibility the palpable disunity of not only the military but also the state at this crucial juncture in the war. Officer would not serve with officer, and certain officers would not follow orders because of political allegiances to entities other than the state. That disunity was frequently represented, especially by the progovernment papers, as a contagion destroying the patriotic vigor of the nation. And the contagion of factional politics was not simply a matter of parliamentary disagreement but rather was concretized by the papers themselves. However, this concretization carried

with it a number of disturbing corollary effects relating specifically to their commercial circulation. The papers were both conduits of information and sources of entertainment. The porous relationship between news and entertainment is implicit in the *Morning Post's* appraisal of the crisis, because it is seeking, rather belatedly, a restoration of the distinction between “facts” and “wit” that never existed in the first place. The coverage always already blended ostensible eyewitness accounts, public documents, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, bon mots, poems, and pedestrian commentary into an amalgam of printed materials aimed at keeping the story alive. The repeated reactivation of the enigma was a perfect mechanism for driving consumption of the papers themselves.

Illuminating the “darkness of the transaction off Brest” took narrative time, and narrative time in the world of the newspapers is a commodity whose exchange value only increases with the proliferation of points of view. The factionalization of the daily papers ensured that the story of the battle would be told in conflicting ways, and thus readers were confronted with the narrative pleasure of adjudicating between narrators. Thus, the entire struggle within the public sphere for the interpretation of the facts of the case aspired to the condition of the most complex experiments in prose fiction. It would be inaccurate to describe the entire newspaper archive as a novel, but the daily collocation of radically disjunctive narratives pertaining to the same story brings the problem of disunity or faction directly into the experience of reading. And that means that the very issue of faction is not only internalized but also formally reinforced by the medium itself. The very contagion that generated so much anxiety in the progovernment papers was formally propagated by the print public sphere of which they were a vital part. The charge of attempting to dismember the nation from within, which was so regularly directed by progovernment voices at the opposition during this period, is simply a specific case of a wider problematic that not only envelopes all parties but also permeates the political itself, especially when politics are actuated in the public sphere of print.

It was against this backdrop that Richard Brinsley Sheridan attempted to come to grips with the passing of David Garrick and the loss of one of the cultural icons of eighteenth-century Britain. The first envoi came on 1 February, just before Admiral Augustus Keppel's acquittal, at David Garrick's funeral. Richard Brinsley Sheridan was designated chief mourner for the man whose name was synonymous with theatre itself, and Sheridan's performance in the streets of London marked the end of a theatrical era. The procession and interment in Westminster Abbey quite literally overwhelmed London, and it was perhaps the only event capable of interrupting the barrage of Keppel-Palliser news

in the press. This was supplemented by another performance roughly six weeks later within Drury Lane theatre. Working with De Louthembourg, Sheridan wrote and staged an elaborate eulogy entitled "Verses to the Memory of Garrick, spoken as a Monody" which combined declamation, music, painting, and sculpture to mourn Garrick yet again. Sheridan wrote the poem, which was spoken by Mrs. Yates; Linley wrote the music; and De Louthembourg designed the set, incorporating a strange portrait of Garrick by Sir Joshua Reynolds. These two performances are obviously linked by their pretext, Garrick's death, and much of this chapter aims to comprehend the curious relation between these events and their complex place within the historical crisis of the American war. The final farewell, on the surface, seems unconnected to Garrick's passing, but I argue that the premiere on 30 October 1779 of *The Critic*, Sheridan's last great play, engages not only with the loss of Garrick earlier in the year but also with the impending loss of the Atlantic empire. This chapter explores the relationship between these two losses. Garrick was definitely over, the American war was not, but both losses, one finished and one ongoing, raised fundamental questions about closure, tragedy, and continuation that I wish to explore in this chapter.

### After Garrick

On 20 January 1779, David Garrick died from kidney failure. If the nation was suddenly confronted with the loss of arguably its greatest cultural icon, it was also routinely intimated that the Admiralty had lost much of its authority and reputation. When Garrick's death was reported on 21 January, Palliser's case had reached its lowest point: much of the log evidence was in disarray, and it was clear that Keppel would be acquitted. With the tide turning in favor of Keppel, most of the opposition had made its way to Portsmouth to witness Palliser's humiliation and to celebrate Keppel's victory. Many of the primary members of the opposition, including Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Garrick's close friend Edmund Burke, and Charles James Fox, left Portsmouth on the evening of 30 January, attended the funeral on the morning of 1 February, and hastily returned to Portsmouth to be present for Keppel's triumphant denunciation of the charges the next day. Sheridan's movements here are particularly important because he organized much of the funeral from afar and returned on the day to perform as the surrogate mourner not only for Garrick's family but also for the nation as a whole. Sheridan's movement from the site of the trial to Garrick's house at the Adelphi through the streets of London to Westminster Abbey and then back to

Portsmouth again physically traces a powerful psychic divagation from scenes of martial crisis.

I use the word divagation advisedly here because Garrick's funeral operates as a kind of metaleptic loop that momentarily interrupts the powerful narrative drive of the Keppel court-martial. For a day, the most powerful men in the land, the foremost practitioners of culture, and a large portion of London's inhabitants, watched what the papers referred to in bold letters as "THE BODY" move from its former domicile to the national pantheon.<sup>15</sup> Garrick's corpse moved in procession from his house on Adelphi Terrace up to the Strand and then westward to Charing Cross and along Whitehall Street to the Abbey: "There were upwards of thirty mourning coaches, followed by twice the number of gentlemen's carriages."<sup>16</sup> The "Order of the Procession" that was printed in all but a couple of the papers not only lists and categorizes the mourners but also keeps a careful tally of the porters, supporters, and physical accoutrements of the hearse and carriages. The hearse was very elaborately decorated with feathers and surrounded by four porters with staves, twelve pages, and twelve horsemen. It was followed immediately by the pallbearers including the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Camden. Sheridan, as chief mourner, followed the pallbearers in a coach of his own, which required two train bearers. Then came various members and associates of the family, gentlemen of the theatre Drury Lane, gentlemen of the Covent Garden theatre, gentlemen of the Literary Club, and intimate friends. Each of these groups was separated by two men on horseback with cloaks. All in all, a list of 38 unnamed attendants and 138 named figures, followed by a host of empty coaches with their footmen, slowly moved through the streets.

According to the papers, the crowds that attempted to see Garrick's body before the funeral and those attending the procession were extraordinarily large. The *Morning Post* reported that approximately fifty thousand "gentlemen and ladies" went to the Adelphi to see the remains on the day before the funeral, and this already large influx of people was matched by a huge crowd of less exalted personages: "A prodigious concourse of the lower class of the people likewise assembled before the house the whole day, and finding they could not gain admittance, became so troublesome, that an officer's guard was obliged to be sent for from the Savoy, which with great difficulty prevented their committing some acts of outrage."<sup>17</sup> Because the crowds at the funeral the next day were both unprecedented and predictably unruly, "as usual it was, in its progress, attended with some confusion; many pockets were picked, and some persons were hurt by the pressure of the crowd, which was enormous, there being more people present in

the windows, and on the tops of houses, in the streets and the avenues of the Abbey, than were ever remembered to have been collected since the coronation."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps because of the difficulties the day before the funeral, the procession was preceded by a party of guards. When the procession approached the Abbey, two further bodies of armed guards "formed a lane for the ceremony to pass through."<sup>19</sup>

The fact that Garrick's funeral required an armed guard is not especially significant. To all reports, the event was marked by the utmost solemnity, but the size of the crowd and its relation to this particular space should give us pause. At a midway point between Adelphi and the Abbey lay the Admiralty office and the Houses of Parliament. None of the papers say anything about these sites as zones of political contestation, but it is difficult to imagine that observers were not aware of the strange spectacle of key opposition figures, recently arrived from the Keppel court-martial, walking before a large crowd outside the Admiralty office. In two weeks, members of this same crowd would be attacking the building and burning Palliser in effigy in this very same spot. No doubt the restraint in the press was a mark of respect for Garrick himself. But the lack of explicit partisan demonstrations or commentary does not mean that the funeral did not have its own political valences. As we will see, the funeral's reception was imbued with a complex critique not of Garrick but of the nation he was called on to represent.

### *Social Insecurity*

As elaborate as this event might seem to us, perhaps the most fascinating thing about the funeral is the relative lack of commentary in the papers. All of the papers print a few paragraphs on the event, and most provide a detailed list of the mourners, including the order and nature of their procession. But after this spate of coverage the day after the event, references to Garrick's death are drowned out by the Keppel news. The only remnants of his passing are the consistent appearance of brief elegiac poems and epitaphs in the dailies for roughly a month after the funeral and the curiously detailed transcription of his will that appeared in papers and magazines alike. Furthermore, it is difficult to read the accounts of Garrick's funeral and not think of the profound response to Thomas Betterton's death some sixty years earlier. One could argue that Garrick's great innovations in Shakespearean performance were aimed at displacing performance protocols established by Betterton and James Quin.<sup>20</sup> And yet this comparison simply does not register either in print or in performance.

This lack of connection is important, because it allows us to consider Joseph Roach's famous account of the effigy in *Cities of the Dead* in a new light. According to Roach, the body of the actor plays a crucial role in the continuation of national ideology:

[The effigy] fills by means of surrogation a vacancy created by the absence of an original. Beyond ostensibly inanimate effigies fashioned from wood or cloth, there are more powerful effigies fashioned from flesh. Such effigies are made by performances. They consist of a set of actions that hold open a place in memory into which many different people may step according to circumstances and occasions. I argue that performed effigies—those fabricated from human bodies and the associations they evoke—provide communities with a method of perpetuating themselves through specially nominated mediums or surrogates: among them actors, dancers, priests, street maskers, statesmen, celebrities, freaks, children, and especially, by virtue of an intense but unsurprising paradox, corpses.<sup>21</sup>

Of crucial importance to his analysis of Betterton's interment in Westminster Abbey is the relationship between the body of the actor and the body of the king. Because Betterton's fame, like Garrick's, was built on his representation of characters such as Lear, Hamlet, and Macbeth, his burial in Westminster Abbey in 1710 registered for observers such as Richard Steele and Colley Cibber as a surrogative burial of the king. In Roach's analysis, Betterton's body, and the performance history associated with it, occasions styles of remembering aimed at stabilizing national fantasy in a time of rapid growth and change in Britain's social and economic history. Through a subtle analysis of Betterton's own theorization of how to speak with the dead in the Ghost scenes from *Hamlet*, Roach argues that the actor "explored and codified an explicit mode of conduct governing conversations with the dead. By its protocols, the secular reverence appropriate to social memory in the Enlightenment could be extracted from the residual fear and worship of once omnipresent ancestors."<sup>22</sup> Betterton's great innovation in the role was to forego the excessive vociferation of earlier actors in favor of the embodiment of decorous, manly, control. It was the very epitome of self-governance that would come to figure for British governmentality. And it was this dignity of comportment that provided the figural ground for Richard Steele's meditation on the nondistinction of the imaginary and the real monarch in the grave.<sup>23</sup> In this argument, Roach suggests that these protocols were entirely opposite to Britain's consolidation of imperial power in the circum-Atlantic world.

However, this influential argument is not simply generalizable, because, with the unfolding of time, empires and the effigies that support them change.

Despite the manifest similarities between the interment of Betterton and Garrick's funeral, it is important to remember not only that Garrick, in the same scene from *Hamlet*, severely revised the performance protocols for conversing with the dead father expected by the audience but also that, in the seventy-year period between these events, Britain's status as an imperial power had gone through extraordinary transformations. In the winter of 1779, the circum-Atlantic empire, so forcefully consolidated at the close of the Seven Years' War, was unraveling before the eyes of its constituents, and the primary theatrical memory of most British onlookers of how to speak with the dead, and hence how to think through the problem of cultural continuation in a time of crisis, involved none of Betterton's stoicism. What I want to do here is utilize the distinction between Betterton's and Garrick's performances as a heuristic for understanding Garrick's funeral as a moment in which the nation turned to question its own imperial aspirations.

The archive of materials pertaining to Garrick's performance technique is extremely rich, and we are blessed with a range of accounts from all the different phases of his career. As one reads through descriptions of his performances, which are often separated by decades, it becomes clear that once a set of strategies was first worked up, it was repeated again and again. Garrick's famous performances of *Hamlet* are a case in point, but I concentrate here on Georg Christian Lichtenberg's description because it is both highly specific and based on performances from 1775, only four years before Garrick's death. Lichtenberg's famous account of the Ghost's appearance is markedly different from the Cibber passage cited by Roach:

Hamlet appears in black . . . Horatio and Marcellus, in uniform, are with him, and they are awaiting the ghost. . . . The theatre is darkened, and the whole audience of some thousands are as quiet and their faces as motionless, as though they were painted on the walls of the theatre; even from the farthest end of the playhouse one could hear a pin drop. At his words, Garrick turns sharply and at the same time staggers back two or three paces with his knees giving way under him; his hat falls to the ground and both his arms, especially the left, are stretched out nearly to their full length, with the hands as high as his head, the right arm more bent and the hand lower and the fingers apart; his mouth is open: thus he stands rooted to the spot, with legs apart, but no less of dignity, supported by his

friends. . . . His whole demeanour is so expressive of terror that it made my flesh creep even before he began to speak. The almost terror-struck silence of the audience, which preceded this appearance and filled one with a sense of insecurity, probably did much to enhance this effect.<sup>24</sup>

As Lichtenberg emphasizes, the staging and Garrick's actions collaborate to generate a "sense of insecurity" in the audience. Some of the actions here are conventional—the falling hat, for instance—but other gestures would have deeply unsettled an audience that was highly cognizant of the corporeal signs formerly established by Betterton and replicated by actors such as Quin in the intervening years. Garrick's asymmetrical arm motions and, above all, his off-balance recoil are the very opposite of Betterton's self-control. Establishing the sense of insecurity in the audience was crucial to Garrick's adaptation of the play, because he wanted the audience to feel the degree to which Denmark, under the corrupt rule of Gertrude and Claudius, had descended into a realm where both space and time were out of joint.

Similarly, Garrick reintroduced violence into the scene and thus shattered the careful articulation of equipose in the face of the dead that Betterton had inculcated. Again Lichtenberg's remarks are resonant:

At last he speaks, not at the beginning, but at the end of a breath, with a trembling voice: "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" The ghost beckons to him; I wish you could see him, with eyes fixed on the ghost, though he is speaking to his companions, freeing himself from their restraining hands, as they warn him not to follow and hold him back. But at length, when they have tried his patience too far, he turns his face towards them, tears himself with great violence from their grasp, and draws his sword on them with a swiftness that makes one shudder, saying: "By heaven! I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!" That is enough for them. Then he stands with his sword upon guard against the spectre saying: "Go on, I'll follow thee," and the ghost goes off the stage. Hamlet remains motionless, his sword held out so as to make him keep his distance, and at length, when the spectator can no longer see the ghost, he begins slowly to follow him, now standing still and then going on, with sword still on guard, eyes fixed upon the ghost, hair disordered, and out of breath, until he is lost to sight.<sup>25</sup>

I have presented these oft-quoted passages at length, not only to emphasize Garrick's departures from Betterton's enactment of control but also to recognize the complex relationship between Garrick's violence and Horatio's and Marcellus's



attempts to restrain him. Garrick's Hamlet draws his sword first on his friends and then holds it on guard against the Ghost. In the process, the audience watches his body struggle to regain its composure after a sudden outburst of violence. In this light, Garrick elicits a liminal state where things could go either way, and this is completely in keeping with the scene itself, where the audience is asked to contemplate the liminal state between life and death, present and past. Composure now registers, not as a permanent attitude but rather as a sign of self-preservation, occasioned by his predicament, in which Hamlet protects himself against present complacency and the revenant past. This is, after all, the play in which the past ruler, in the form of the Ghost, quite literally instantiates a critique of the present regime. In Garrick's interpretation of the role, that critique is totalizing—that is, it encompasses even the misplaced protective desires of Hamlet's friends—and deeply unsettling because it is aimed not at quelling insecurity but rather at fully recognizing the unviability of the social insecurity of the present times.<sup>26</sup>

Could this scene with the Ghost not only offer a way of understanding the political crisis enveloping Britain at this point in the American war but also allow us to comprehend the cultural crisis precipitated by Garrick's death? The obvious move here would be to build a comparison between the British Empire in 1779 and the corrupted state of Denmark under the rule of Claudius and Gertrude. For the opposition of all stripes, and for the rebellious colonists, this would hardly be a stretch. For these observers, something truly was rotten in the state, and the Keppel court-martial provided evidence of this corruption on a daily basis. In terms of cultural memory, it is important to remember that Hamlet's Ghost was conventionally understood to have been played by Shakespeare, and thus Garrick's unsettling negotiation with the Ghost validates the importance of contemporary culture's relation to the Shakespearean past by activating an anxious appreciation of its potential loss.<sup>27</sup> What this means is that Garrick's critique of the present is carried out on Shakespeare's behalf. In other words, it was through the enactment of insecurity that the desire for Shakespeare's patrimony—and, by extension, Garrick's cultural power—was fully activated.<sup>28</sup> With his death, British culture was confronted with a crisis of succession that resonated with the political crisis in the Atlantic, and like that conflict, this cultural crisis would require successive recalibrations of subjectivity before a new future could be envisaged.

As noted earlier, the media response to the funeral is surprisingly terse, but the *Morning Chronicle* offers a lengthy interpretation of the funeral's excesses that, I would argue, fulfills the twofold imperative to recognize social insecurity

and critique the present state that I believe is encoded in Garrick's revision of Betterton's Hamlet.<sup>29</sup> Immediately after declaring that the crowd at Garrick's funeral was the largest "collected since the coronation," the correspondent makes a crucial comparison: "Lord Chatham's funeral had not near so many spectators."<sup>30</sup> Whereas Steele had compared Betterton to "real monarchs in the grave," the invocation of Chatham is both more specific and more pointed, because his name is almost synonymous with Britain's circum-Atlantic empire. Chatham, or Pitt the Elder, the much-lionized parliamentarian and personal friend of Garrick, had died nine months earlier on 11 May 1778. Parliament had agreed to an elaborate funeral in Westminster Abbey, which was preceded by two days' lying in state. Great crowds came to view the body, but only a handful of peers attended.<sup>31</sup>

But there is more at stake here than simply similarly crowded funerals. Chatham was given a state funeral because of his leadership before and during the Seven Years' War. With British imperial fortunes at a low point following the loss of Minorca to the French in the summer of 1756, Pitt took up the office of the secretary of state. After attempting to stabilize foreign affairs, Pitt was confronted with the problem of what to do about the execution of Admiral Byng. Byng was a flashpoint for public opinion regarding the humiliation at Minorca. Pitt argued for mercy but was overridden by the tide of public opinion. In later years, especially during the Keppel court-martial, Pitt's position was vindicated, but in 1757 his intervention in the Byng court-martial contributed to his dismissal from office. Later that year, however, he was reinstated in a new coalition with the Duke of Newcastle, and from then on his name was to be associated with the extraordinary turn around in the war with France in both North America and India. In the public imagination, Pitt was largely responsible for the glorious victories of 1759 that marked the highpoint of British imperial domination in the eighteenth century. He was revered as a great war minister in spite of demonstrable lapses in his later political career. This gave him particular stature in Parliament when he returned in the spring of 1777 to critique the North Ministry's management of the American war. As one of his biographers states: "After the startling news in December of defeat at Saratoga, Chatham, in enthusiastic co-operation with the Rockinghams, took the lead in furious criticism of the 'disgraces of the war'—so contrasted with 'the fame and renown' of the last war—and pointedly returned to the pervasive evil of secret influence."<sup>32</sup> Chatham broke with the Rockinghams over the question of American sovereignty and succumbed to his final illness in the midst of a speech reiterating the right of imperial sovereignty over the American colonies.

In other words, this comparison between Garrick and Chatham raises at the very least three key issues that animated the public in early 1779: the spectral presence of the Byng court-martial and the humiliation at Minorca during the Keppel court-martial, nostalgia for the great victories of 1759, and more recent opposition to the Ministry's mismanagement of the American war. Significantly, the Byng court-martial and the nostalgia for 1759 were regularly invoked in the months before Garrick's death by the opposition as key rhetorical points in its critique of the government's handling of the Keppel affair. Invoking Chatham at this historical juncture effectively calls into question the efficacy of the state and reminds the public of how more capable hands had turned an earlier set of reversals into a time of national and imperial glory. One could make a similar argument about Garrick's mythic relation to past glory. Just as Chatham was associated with the patriotic nostalgia for the military victories over the French in the Seven Years' War, Garrick was associated with the patriotic investment in Shakespeare and the cultural victory over French neoclassicism.

But the *Morning Chronicle* calls up Chatham's ghost in order to make a different set of negative comparisons:

The undertaker, we are told, was left to his discretion as to expense and decoration. . . . The coaches were covered with eschutcheons, and the horses loaded with mournful plumes; in both which points we are given to understand, that the customs of funeral procession were violated, and the ornaments over-charged. A correspondent, versed in heraldry, assures us also, that the form of the procession, number of banners, &c. &c. were out of all order; how far is right or wrong we pretend not to determine, but although we are ready to agree that too much respect could not be paid to the memory of so singular a genius as Mr. Garrick, we are a little scrupulous in opinion, as to what is really a token of regard, and cannot refrain expressing our abhorrence of useless ostentation; we know of none more ridiculous than that shewn at a funeral, unless indeed where the solemnity is (as in Lord Chatham's case) meant to be a monument of national honour.<sup>33</sup>

This is a complex intervention because it is simultaneously a critique and an endorsement of ostentation that both screens and indicts Garrick. Ostentation is appropriate when the dead body merits national honor. According to the *Morning Chronicle*, Chatham warrants such a funeral on the basis of his patriotic credentials and Garrick does not, and this is why the correspondent suggests later that a less public interment presided over by Johnson, Burke, and other

literary figures would have been more appropriate. The gap between statesman and artist is forcefully maintained. Lurking behind this critique of ostentation is a familiar attack on luxury and the feminization of elite culture. But the paper very shrewdly ascribes this ostentation not to Garrick, or even to his superiors, but to a tradesman, the undertaker, and furthermore suggests that the undertaker was pandering to the disproportionate crowd in attendance. Suddenly the problem is a social one: the excesses of Garrick's funeral demonstrate a devolution in the citizenry whose members need to be reminded, by an unnamed correspondent to the paper, that the heraldry and funerary protocols "were out of all order." This critique is broad-based and damning because it suggests not only that mourners of all ranks fail to see the difference in value between a patriot statesman like Chatham and mere actor like Garrick but also that the very signs of aristocratic power encoded in the form of heraldry have become unreadable. This allows us to see the strange deployment of heraldry in the *Mischianza* in a different light, because it too was incoherent. In other words, there is nostalgia here for more than past martial supremacy; there is nostalgia for a mythic pre-bourgeois social order whose stability would reinvigorate the nation. In this scene, it is the mysterious "correspondent, versed in heraldry" who acts as the revenant.

Like Garrick's Hamlet, the paper yearns for a nation where the time is no longer out of joint, and where corruption has been cleansed from the land. And it is here that Garrick's scene becomes so instructive. Rhetorically, the *Morning Chronicle* follows Garrick's lead by turning the conversation with the dead into an occasion in which one can both read the present as a terrifying, almost Gothic, symptom and then act accordingly. Garrick's playing of the Ghost scene instantiates action not only toward one's friends and foes but also toward the past. What this means is that, at least in the case of the *Morning Chronicle*, the observer should be overwhelmed by the profound insecurity of the present moment, where the Admiralty seems bent on replicating the disaster of the Byng court-martial, where the government is repeating the errors in supply that disabled the British forces in the early phases of the Seven Years' War, and where the "people" no longer know the difference between the statesman and the actor. Unlike Steele's famous reaction to Betterton's death, the problem here is not the dissolution of distinction in death but rather the deeply unsettling dissolution of distinction in life. The liminality that Roach locates in the threshold between life and death in the reading of the Betterton funeral has, under Garrick's influence, moved fully into the realm of life, and thus violence is always on the verge of erupting into the scene. This was Garrick's legacy in the role, and perhaps we can see its trace in the threat of violence surrounding his funeral, for as the pro-

cession slowly marched past the Admiralty office and Parliament, the papers quietly inform us that guards were necessary—to keep the crowds from doing what exactly?

### *Monumental Tears*

The preceding argument suggests that Garrick's funeral failed to do the cultural work necessary for ensuring the continuation of the social order, but rather set the stage for what amounts to a painful, even tragic, renovation of the present that involved a complex gleaning of the past for new models of political and cultural organization. That gleaning operation is necessarily involved with Garrick's emblematic relationship to Shakespeare, and it is tied to an explicit recognition of the social insecurity of the empire in the post-Saratoga era.

As noted earlier, Sheridan was very much involved in the organization of the funeral spectacle despite the *Morning Chronicle's* attempt to impugn the undertaker for its excesses. But in the enactment of the spectacle, Sheridan's role was that of a silent but iconic mourner. His carriage was specially equipped with trains that required the attention of two pages, and thus he was a conspicuous figure. As Garrick's successor as manager of Drury Lane, he figures for the continuation of the theatrical enterprise and, by extension, the cultural patrimony. Like the figure of the poet in many elegies, he had the potential to declare his ascendancy. But he did not. Sheridan did not speak but rather reserved his public expression of grief for the "Verses to the Memory of Garrick, spoken as a Monody," that was first declaimed on 11 March 1779, again not by Sheridan, but by Mrs. Yates before a crowded house in the theatre all but synonymous with Garrick's name. The "Monody" was performed as an afterpiece to Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian*, a detail of theatrical history that poses some challenging questions for the place of Garrick's passing in the circum-Atlantic world.

In the six weeks between Garrick's funeral and the first performance of the "Monody," Keppel was acquitted, and virtually every metropolitan region in England was overwhelmed by pro-Keppel celebrations. Palliser was burned in effigy throughout the land and the Admiralty was attacked in every conceivable venue. As Nicholas Roger has argued, the newspapers were awash with discussions of the celebrations, of the Admiralty's actions, and of the opposition's ascendancy. Myriad tributes to Keppel were rushed into print and performance. Victory odes were performed both with and without musical accompaniment in all of the theatres.<sup>34</sup> It is not difficult to see these cultural artifacts as compensatory expressions of patriotism in a time when there was little to celebrate, and

such a reading is substantiated by even a cursory look at two other developments in this six-week period. First, there is a rather singular spate of performances of Handel's patriotic oratorios all through the weeks between the funeral and the "Monody's" first presentation. *Samson*, *Judas Maccabeus*, *Messiah*, and *Alexander's Feast* are offered repeatedly at one or other of the theatres during this period. It is as though Handel's oratorios, which were so closely aligned with patriot ideology from an earlier era, were being mobilized either to shore up a crumbling polity in a time of martial crisis or to celebrate a renovated sense of national potential consistent with the enthusiasm for Keppel's victory. Second, almost every day the newspapers printed or reprinted brief elegies and epitaphs for Garrick. With the exception of Anna Seward's substantial "Prize Monody on the Death of Mr. Garrick," these poems are remarkably slight, perhaps a further sign of the failure to effectively eulogize the actor.

If the newspaper verse disappoints, Seward's poem does not, and it serves as a useful bridge between our previous discussion of Garrick's performance in *Hamlet* and Sheridan's complex deployment of Shakespeare in his "Monody." The poem's subtitle is "For the Vase at Bath Easton, February 11, 1779," and the eponymous vase becomes a crucial prop in the poem. Seward's poem is broken into four verse paragraphs and the first two are integrally connected to Garrick's performance of *Hamlet*. The poem's first image is of Horatio weeping over the vase:

Dim sweeps the shower along the misty vale,  
And Grief's low accents murmur in the gale.  
O'er the damp vase Horatio sighing leans,  
And gazes absent on the faded scenes;<sup>35</sup>

By figuring Horatio as a surrogate mourner, Seward blurs the distinction between representation and reality and implies that Garrick will be mourned above all by Shakespeare's characters. This transposition of loss effectively renders Garrick as one of Shakespeare's creations and thus subtly cancels his mortality by investing in the memory of his transient performances. This rhetorical gesture is given further elaboration in the second verse paragraph when Seward reviews Garrick's great Shakespearean performances and argues that his audience understood Garrick to be Shakespeare:

Shakespeare's great spirit, in its cloudless blaze,  
Led him unequal'd thro' th' inventive maze;  
'Midst the deep pathos of his melting themes,

Thro' the light magic of his playful dreams.  
 He caught the genuine humour glowing there,  
 Wit's vivid flash, and Cunning's sober leer;  
 The strange distress that fires the kindling brain  
 Of feeble madness on the stormy plain;  
 Or when pale youth, in midnight shade,  
 Pursues the steel-clad phantom thro' the glade;  
 Or, starting from the couch with dire affright,  
 When the crown'd murd'rer glares upon the sight  
 In all the horrors of the guilty soul,  
 Dark as night that wraps the frozen pole.  
 —Our subject passions own'd the sway complete,  
 And hail'd their Garrick as their Shakespeare great. (13–28)

This passage starts with Shakespeare leading Garrick through the "inventive maze" of the plays and concludes with the audience so subjected to Garrick's performance that it can no longer distinguish between the living actor and the dead playwright.<sup>36</sup> That subjection, complete with its implied rupture of the temporal continuum, is ascribed to Garrick's performance, first, of Lear's madness on the heath and, second, of Hamlet's negotiation with the ghost of his father and the confirmation of Claudius's guilt. In other words, the revenant disclosure of the Shakespearean past into the present of Garrick's audience is linked to the precise scenes where the actor's capacity to become a cultural effigy was enacted. This effectively styles Garrick as an emblem of transience capable of bringing Shakespeare's "great spirit" to bear on the present.

But after this remarkable assertion, the next verse paragraph turns on the very notion of transience itself by emphasizing that Garrick's voice and his gestures are irrevocably gone. In light of the preceding verse paragraph, this common place of both elegy and discourses on acting takes on an important, and rarely articulated set of ramifications, because the real loss mourned by the poem is not Garrick but rather the audience's subjection to his performative power. In other words, Garrick's death implies a loss of Shakespeare, a curtailment of the audience's transient access to the national past encapsulated in his plays. Because the poem opens by equating Garrick the actor with Hamlet, Seward is ruthlessly following the logic that attends the death of both actor and character: namely, that with the death of Hamlet, the Ghost—often conflated with the historical figure of Shakespeare—will not reappear.<sup>37</sup> Could there be a more devastating statement of the failure of the effigy to ensure cultural continuation?

And the poem explicitly recognizes why this continuation does not occur: there is neither an actor nor an audience adequate to the task of subjection articulated in the second verse paragraph. In other words, the failure is a function of the historical moment. The culture, now allegorically figured by Genius and the Muses, is suddenly cast into a state of suspension marked by the repetition of the word “still”:

Breathe, Genius, still the tributary sigh,  
 Still gush, ye liquid pearls, from Beauty's eye,  
 With slacken'd strings suspend your harps, ye Nine,  
 While round his urn yon cypress wreath ye twine. (39–42)

This state of suspension is both placating and fearsome, because “still” implies both continuation and stasis, and thus the reader is left contemplating when and if there will be access to the Shakespearean legacy that Garrick was so instrumental in disclosing to his audience.

Seward's poem offers a both a cogent, if perhaps apocalyptic, statement of the historical predicament facing British culture in the early months of 1779 and an illuminating point of comparison for Sheridan's much more famous “Monody.” Sheridan too would be addressing the question of Shakespeare's legacy in a time of historical crisis through a consideration of the transience of the actor's art, but the “Monody” is complicated by its own enactment. A straightforward comparison of Seward's and Sheridan's texts, although they were at times printed side by side,<sup>38</sup> fails to account for Sheridan's collaboration with other artists in the construction of the “Monody.” As noted earlier, the actual declamation of the words was ably handled by Mrs. Yates, but her performance was fashioned with De Louthembourg's set design in mind, because at key moments in her declamation she not only embraced the giant urn placed in the center of the stage but also pointed to a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds that had been incorporated into the set. Furthermore, a range of musicians and composers were called upon to supplement the spoken word, such that for a number of observers the staging of the event was akin to an oratorio.

The “Monody” unfolded in three declaimed sections, each of which was framed by orchestral and vocal performances. The *Morning Post's* redaction of the performance gives a clear sense of its structure:

The curtain rising to slow music, discovered in a cypress shade the mausoleum of our departed Roscius, on which were the figures of Melpomene



and Thalia mourning his loss; over whom appears Time supporting a Medallion with his portrait. Mrs. Yates in the character of the Recording Muse, is seen in the center of a temporary orchestra, reclining on an urn, with her hair dishevelled. The Introductory strain of music ceasing, she advanced, and recited an invocation to the audience, to pay their tribute to his memory before any other offering was made to it; then the Chorus sing—

His fame requires, we act a tenderer part;  
His *Memory* claims the tear you gave his *Art*!

The unequal effects of the different arts of *Poetry*, *Painting*, and *Sculpture*, are then beautifully described, in the course of which an elegant compliment is paid to the superior genius of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the *Raphael* of the present age: these arts however are represented as yielding objects; but not so the *Actor's* art, for

Feeble tradition is his memory's guard.

Here succeeds a forcible, and marking description of Mr. Garrick's acting powers, which the poet says were

All perishable like the electric fire,  
But strike the frame, and as they strike—expire!  
Incense, too choice, a bodied flame to bear,  
Its fragrance charms the sense, and blends in air!

Here a Trio of Mrs. Wrighten, Mr. Webster, and a young Lady, &c. succeeds; after which a second Poetic Exhortation is made to the audience, and the Monody concludes with a classical description of an intended Shrine, which the mournful Muse shall guard,

And with soft sighs disperse th'irrev'rend dust,  
That Time shall shake upon his sacred bust.<sup>39</sup>

The printed versions of the "Monody" do not indicate which sections of the poem were sung, nor do they indicate where the musical interludes were placed. What the *Morning Post's* description allows us to see is the degree to which the placement of the vocal and orchestral performances highlighted the poem's two separate exhortations to the audience. If we look closely at these moments, what we discover is a particularly rich moment of deixis that forces the audience to question its own capacity to effectively mourn for Garrick.

The first exhortation is a remarkably strange utterance, whose conditionality puts into question not only the very act of mourning that the “Monody” presumes to enact but also the practice of theatre itself:

If dying EXCELLENCE deserves a Tear,  
 If fond Remembrance still is cherished here,  
 Can we persist to bid your Sorrows flow  
 For fabled Suffe’rers, and delusive Woe?  
 Or with quaint Smiles dismiss the plaintive Strain,  
 Point the quick Jest—indulge the Comic Vein—  
 Ere yet to buried ROSCIUS we assign—  
 One kind Regret—one tributary Line!<sup>40</sup>

The opening question of the first four lines is quite complex. The repetition of the word “if” in the first two lines forcefully establishes the conditional mood so that the audience is asked to consider whether the related acts of remembrance and commemoration are “still” practiced “here.” “Here” specifies both present time and present place and thus hails the audience into this loaded consideration, because the doubt occasioned by the conditional mood threatens to call the auditors to account. I would argue that the rest of the poem strives to put the anxiety generated by these opening two lines into abeyance, for, by suggesting the slightest possibility that “Remembrance” is no longer cherished, the opening lines hint at a terrifying disarticulation of the present from the past. As the sentence unfolds, it becomes clear that the question of whether “excellence deserves a tear” or “Remembrance still is cherished here” is primarily rhetorical; lines 3 and 4 reorient the question such that the conditional terms register as the initial terms in an “if-then” construction. If, as we know, excellence deserves a tear, then can we continue to attempt to elicit sorrow in tragedy, or mirth in comedy for that matter, before Garrick is sufficiently mourned? This gesture establishes the purpose of the “Monody”: it must satisfy the demands of “Remembrance” so that theatre, with all its capacity for surrogation, can operate. In other words, the question of cultural continuation is put front and center.

How the “Monody” is going to satisfy the demands of “Remembrance” involves a fundamental parsing of players from audience. Just as line 3 carefully separated “we” the players from “you” the audience, the couplet sung by the chorus places the responsibility for cultural continuation in the hands or, more precisely, in the eyes of the audience:

His Fame requires we act a tenderer Part:—  
 His MEMORY claims the Tear you gave his ART!

(9–10)

The fact that these lines are not spoken by Mrs. Yates but rather are sung by the chorus that surrounds her on stage means that they operate as if they were a response to the complex set of questions declaimed in the opening eight lines. In this sense, the "we" of line 9 takes on a more capacious sense than that of the "players." In the context of this choral response, it is as though his fame requires that the nation, as figured by this community on stage, acts a tenderer part, which will elicit singular bodily responses from the audience. The verbs "require" and "claim" are part of a larger discursive construction, which understands the audience's relation to Garrick as one of obligation or debt.

This becomes abundantly clear in the verse paragraph immediately following the choral exhortation:

The general Voice, the Meed of mournful Verse,  
 The splendid Sorrows that adorned his Hearse,  
 The Throng that mourn'd as their dead Favourite pass'd,  
 The grac'd Respect that claim'd him to the last,  
 While SHAKESPEAR's Image from its hallow'd Base,  
 Seem'd to prescribe the Grave, and point the Place—  
 Nor these,—nor all the sad Regrets that flow  
 From fond Fidelity's domestic Woe,—  
 So much are GARRICK's Praise—so much his DUE—  
 As on this Spot—One Tear bestow'd by YOU. (11–20)

In this passage, which was singled out for special praise,<sup>41</sup> the speaker reviews the honors accorded Garrick between his death in late January and the performance of the "Monody" in mid-February—the general public acclaim, the outpouring of elegiac verse, the splendor of his hearse, the crowd at the funeral, the private expressions of domestic sadness, and, above all, his placement in Westminster Abbey near the statue of Shakespeare—and subordinates them to the tears of the audience elicited here and now by this poem. These bodily signs are both singular and multiple, because "One Tear" is bestow'd by the multifarious group of spectators designated by the plural pronoun "you." This doubleness is significant because it implies that it is through this shared emotional response to the present performance that the community will be reconstituted, and that reconstitution will allow theatre and, by implication, all the other arts invoked by the poem to carry on their task.

That task is specified in the second exhortation of the audience late in the poem. After an extended distinction between the transience of acting and the

permanence of painting, sculpture, and poetry, Mrs. Yates's declamation is once again interrupted by a group of singers this time singing as a trio, rather than as a chorus:

Where then—while sunk in cold Decay he lies,  
 And pale Eclipse for ever veils those Eyes!—  
 WHERE is the blest Memorial that ensures  
 Our GARRICK'S Fame?—whose is the Trust?—'tis YOURS. (79–82)

The legal and financial connotations of the word "Trust" establishes an important temporal relationship that will be explored at length in the exhortation proper. In its legal definition, a trust is: "The confidence reposed in a person in whom the legal ownership of property is vested to hold or use for the benefit of another; hence, an estate committed to the charge of trustees."<sup>42</sup> Suddenly, the distinction of players and audience has great significance, because the speaker is stating unequivocally that the audience has all the privileges and responsibilities of a trustee. It is the audience's job, not that of the players, both to memorialize Garrick and to ensure the safety and value of the cultural patrimony for the future:

And O! by every Charm his Art essay'd  
 To sooth your Cares!—by every Grief allay'd!  
 By the hushed Wonder which his Accents drew!  
 By his last parting Tear, repaid by you!  
 By all those Thoughts, which many a distant Night,  
 Shall mark his Memory with a sad Delight!—  
 Still in your Heart's dear Record bear his Name;  
 Cherish the keen Regret that lifts his Fame;  
 To YOU it is bequeath'd, assert the Trust,  
 And to his WORTH—'tis all you can—be JUST. (83–92)

This foregrounding of the audience's agency declares that it holds the cultural property of the nation in its hands, and that the audience must manage it with the same care and reverence exemplified by Garrick himself. In short, just as Garrick managed the theatre for the benefit of his audience, so the audience is being called on to manage the culture and, by extension, itself, so that it will benefit not simply itself but those in whose name they operate—that is, the Britons beyond the walls of the theatre and, most vitally, those yet to come. This is an explicit call not simply to memorialize Garrick but also to step forward and assert the Trust of nationhood in a time of great social anxiety.

But this declaration of a species of national trust is tied to a very particular set of performance protocols both on the stage and in the audience. As noted previously, the proof of able trusteeship is visible to one and all. It is marked by the tear elicited by the "Monody," and thus Sheridan pulled out all the stops in this performance:

With regard to the representation, pains have obviously been taken to render it great in effect. The Monody is divided into three parts, between each of which, and at the conclusion, solemn airs are sung by Mr. Webster, Mr. Gaudry, a Young Lady, and Mrs. Wrighten, supported by a band of choristers. The stage is formed in somewhat like the same shape that it assumed when Mr. Garrick was wont to speak his Ode to Shakespeare, excepting only, that now, instead of an air of hilarity and cheerfulness which then pervaded it, an air of solemnity and awful woe is cultivated. In the center of the perspective, amidst a thick grove of bays and cypress, stands a monumental pyramid representing the funeral pile of Mr. Garrick. The figures of tragedy and comedy appear as if in basso relievo, in positions expressive of their loss, while fame is mounting the skies with a medallion of Mr. Garrick, and little Cupids are weeping o'er his urn beneath. The ground work of the basso relievo is decorated with the torch of Hymen, comic masks and symbols, tragic bowls, chains, &c. Before the pyramid Mrs. Yates with dishevelled hair and in a flowing robe of purple satten, speaks the Monody. The singers are ranged on each side in compartments railed off with a balustrade.<sup>43</sup>

De Louthembourg's scenography explicitly conjures up Garrick's beloved performances of the "Ode to Shakespeare," and thus, in attending to Mrs. Yates's words, the audience would be continually reminded of the variance from the hilarity of past performance (fig. 4.3).<sup>44</sup> Her performance here both cites and cancels a specific moment of Garrick's performance, which itself played with the actor's relationship to the cultural patrimony of Shakespeare.<sup>45</sup> When one recognizes that Garrick's performance of the "Ode" was a supplement that both continued and canceled the Shakespearean legacy, then it becomes clear that the "Monody" aims to elicit an anxious cascade of references that testify to both the presence and absence of Shakespeare's ghost. In this context, Mrs. Yates's disheveled hair could well call up the famous fright wig Garrick employed in the Ghost scene of *Hamlet*.

What we have then is an assemblage of deictic moments signaled first by the poem itself when it states that "Shakespeare's Image . . . / Seem'd to prescribe



Figure 4.3. John Lodge, “Mr Garrick delivering his Ode, at Drury Lane Theatre, on dedicating a Building & erecting a Statue, to Shakespeare,” etching (1769). BM Ee,3.163. Department of Prints and Drawings © Trustees of the British Museum.

the Grave” and then enacted by Mrs. Yates when she cites Garrick’s past performances either of the “Ode” or of *Hamlet*. These deictic moments are also thematized by the poem’s repeated investment in the capacity for pronouns such as *we* and *you* to shift meaning according to their moment of utterance. The act of pointing that is so crucial to reference here is a fundamental problematic in the “Monody” because it goes directly to the heart of the doubt elicited at the poem’s outset. Can we point to performance? The question is troubling because it necessarily raises questions about memory, forgetting, and the inexorable passage of time. Is fond remembrance still cherished here? Everything is calculated to heighten the anxiety generated by Mrs. Yates’s negotiation both with precursor performances, and with the nonliving props that surround her, in order to make the audience feel the precariousness of cultural memory.

The subtle invocation of Garrick’s performances of the “Ode” and of the Ghost scene suggest a citational relation to the dead, but this relation is amplified and problematized by Mrs. Yates’s negotiation with the nonliving objects on the stage. As the preceding passage indicates, a great deal of thought was put into the stage properties, and the poem itself theorizes their function. The poem’s third

verse paragraph discusses the capacity of painting not only to memorialize its subject but also to withstand the ravages of time. In doing so, it praises Reynolds, whose painting of Garrick is the object of both Mrs. Yates's and the audience's gaze and thus uses the object itself to confirm the argument of the verse. The poem points to the painting and the painting points back to the poem, thereby implicitly confirming the capacity of both arts to "rehearse" the past.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, the fourth verse paragraph argues that sculpture, once it achieves a rendering of its subject, is augmented by the defects inflicted by time, and thus the speaker's call for the yet-to-be-constructed shrine to the memory of Garrick in the final verse paragraph is not that distant from a form of investment advice. The trustees—that is, the audience—should invest in a physical memorial because it will only accrue value over time for those in whose name it was built:

With thoughts that mourn—nor yet desire Relief,  
 With meek Regret, and fond enduring Grief;  
 With looks that speak—He never shall return!—  
 Chilling thy tender Bosom clasp his Urn;  
 And with soft Sighs disperse the'irreverend Dust,  
 Which TIME may strew upon his sacred Bust. (107–12)

In the printed version of the "Monody," these final lines are accompanied by an image of Mrs. Yates embracing De Louthembourg's urn (fig. 4.4), which suggests the degree to which these lines were enacted in the "Monody."<sup>47</sup> But in their enactment, an important difference is articulated. Mrs. Yates embraces the urn, but this urn does not contain Garrick's body, nor is it even a permanent funerary monument. It is a mere prop, and its temporary status is emphasized as a way of stressing the need for a permanent record, because the record elicited in performance is written on the heart (89) and thus, like any other living thing, subject to death. In this light, the objects surrounding Mrs. Yates become paradoxical examples of the transience of living things: the urn is a theatrical object whose transience amplifies both the sense of life's impermanence and the desire for sculpture to alleviate some of this sense of decay.

Significantly, Sheridan's two allusions to the relative permanence of architectural sculpture were singled out for praise in the reviews: "Throughout the composition, the soul and spirit of true poetry exist manifestly; all the thoughts are good; that of Shakespeare's monument, pointing out the grave of Garrick is admirable, and that of architectural ruins giving the architect's fame additional grace from their decay, truly excellent."<sup>48</sup> But if the idea of a monument carrying out its deictic task was welcome to some reviewers, the temporary monument



Figure 4.4. Frontispiece, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Verses to the Memory of Garrick, spoken as a Monody* (London, 1779). Courtesy of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

built by De Louthembourg unraveled the claims for painting and sculpture's effective rememoration in the poem: "The *coup d'oeil* of the whole is good, but the monument, whether from its colouring, or from some other cause, does not produce the desired effect. The medallion also, which we understand to be an original picture of Mr. Garrick by Sir Joshua Reynolds . . . is scarcely distin-



guishable; we mean so distinguishable that the audience, did not the occasion tell them, could discover who it represented."<sup>49</sup>

The failures of Reynolds's painting and of De Louthembourg's monument are effectively those of reference. For the reviewer, there is nothing in the likeness that ensures reference, and thus Reynolds's painting points to Garrick only by virtue of its spatial and temporal location in the theatre on this particular evening. In their attempt to memorialize or capture Garrick, both painting and monument end up pointing at some indistinguishable figure. It is the same shedding of specificity that lay behind the designation of Garrick's corpse as "THE BODY" in the newspaper accounts of the funeral. This disfiguration helps to explain why in the final line of the poem, Sheridan reintroduces the notion of doubt that opened the "Monody." In the final couplet, "And with soft Sighs disperse the irreverend Dust, / Which TIME may strew upon his sacred Bust" (111–12), the verb "may" raises the question of whether Time will act upon the projected memorial sculpture. What remains in question here is whether there will be a bust to be ravaged by Time, and as we have seen the existence of such a piece of art relies on the fulfillment of the trustees' obligation to the nation. This is a curious proleptic moment because it projects the audience forward in time to witness its yet-to-be-constructed memorial to Garrick's passing into antiquity. Within the logic of the poem, this simultaneously drives the audience to translate its subjective reaction to the "Monody" into a "permanent" object and forces them to recognize that even this attempt to represent and reconstitute the past "may" fail.

### *Imperial Obsolescence*

But why that attempt to build the requisite memorial shrine might fail is left curiously unstated. It simply registers as a possibility. In spite of their tears, the erstwhile sign of their commitment to remembrance, the audience and the nation may yet fail to mourn Garrick. This possibility is, I believe, directly tied to the larger context within which the "Monody" was composed and spoken. According to the papers, there were calls for a national monument to Garrick almost immediately after his death, but Parliament and the public were preoccupied with a host of interrelated issues pertaining to the Ministry's execution of the war.<sup>50</sup> With the war now taking on a global scale, naval matters were of particular importance, and thus the Keppel affair was a national obsession. Invasion scares were rampant and the newspaper-reading public kept careful track of the strange goings-on at the encampments at Coxheath.<sup>51</sup> But closely related

to both the camp news and the Keppel court-martial were the almost daily accounts of the West Indian fleet. Important campaigns were being fought in the Antilles all through the summer and fall of 1778 and the winter of 1779. The French had captured Dominica in early September of 1778, and in December the British had conquered and successfully defended St. Lucia against a French counterattack. The French would go on to capture St. Vincent and Grenada in June and July of 1779. One of the primary concerns that surfaced in the Keppel court-martial was the safety of the West Indian fleet, whose commercial value to the nation was paramount. Many of Keppel's actions in the Channel were aimed at securing safe passage for ships to and from the West Indies. With the war in the thirteen colonies going extremely badly, British attention was focused on maintaining control of the Caribbean and the lucrative trade in sugar and slaves.

It is one thing to point to a general sense of anxiety regarding the West Indian campaigns, but quite another to conclusively link the sense of doubt in the "Monody" to these historical events. But the first performance of the "Monody" was staged as an afterpiece to Richard Cumberland's comedy *The West Indian*. As manager of Drury Lane, this bit of scheduling fell to Sheridan. At the time of this production, the Caribbean colonies were under continual threat, so we need to ask how the audience would understand the play in light of the difficulties faced by the West Indian fleet. And we need to consider how the interval between the mainpiece and the afterpiece sets up a historical dilemma that resonates with the figuration of historical rupture within the "Monody" itself. It could well be that the pairing of the "Monody" and *The West Indian* is purely circumstantial, but I want to momentarily explore the interpretive possibility afforded by their sequential performance.

*The West Indian* was one of the great theatrical successes of the prewar period. First produced by Garrick at Drury Lane on 19 January 1771, it had a run of more than thirty performances in its first season and quickly became a mainstay of the stage in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The play was very much the product of the Seven Years' War in that key plot elements are directly concerned with the flow of goods and people in the post-1759 circum-Atlantic empire. The story of an intemperate young planter's misadventures in London relies on widely held beliefs about the influence of tropical climate on character. From Belcour's tumultuous landing to the revelation that his friend Stockwell is actually his father, the comedy figures the Caribbean as a space of unbridled yet innocent desire and London as zone of more restrained yet also more corrupt sociability. The prosperous merchant Stockwell's own Caribbean past is marked by sexual freedoms that would have damaged his reputation in London, but

within the time frame of the play, he operates as an exemplar of commercial and moral rectitude. As Belcour slowly progresses toward the revelation of Stockwell's paternity, so too does the play engage in a complex disciplinary procedure. Belcour's "tropical" propensities are constrained in order to make him not only a suitable match for Louisa Dudley but also a prudent enough heir to Stockwell's fortune. At the same time, Belcour's "natural" innocence is used as a foil to frustrate and reveal the avarice and cruelty of Lady Rushport. Thus, the colonial figure is deployed to critique errant aristocratic behavior. This critique results in the affirmation of a familial alliance between the planter and the merchant, on the one hand, and between the planter and the soldier's daughter, on the other.<sup>52</sup> Louisa Dudley's father and brother are active military men who have served or will serve in colonial venues throughout the circum-Atlantic. The fact that the play's resolution also results in Captain Dudley's access to a posting in Africa often goes unnoticed. In this comedy, the drive toward marriage entails the disciplining of the impetuous colonial subject, the consolidation of circum-Atlantic capital, and the validation of both past and future military action in zones of commercial interest to Britain. In other words, it offers a fulsome fantasy of metropolitan control of the Atlantic imperium that is grounded in the marriage plot itself.

To see how this would have operated in its first season of performance is not difficult, but it is worth considering how the historical events of the rebellion of the American colonies would impinge on the play's reception. The relationship between metropole and colony was frequently figured as that between father and son or that between brothers. Belcour's intemperance, although generally benign, is not at all distant from the figuration of American rebels as impetuous. In fact, the entire discourse of civility that is so crucial for Cumberland's play is also an important trope for distinguishing rebellious colonists from more judicious imperial rulers. Perhaps this is why in the winter of 1777, King George III commanded a series of performances of *The West Indian* at Covent Garden to shore up the fantasy of metropolitan control at a moment when it was beginning to dissolve.<sup>53</sup> Equally important was the fact that General Clinton's officers staged the play for the first time in America on 15 January 1779. The audience for this performance was the largest house that had ever attended a play in the New York theatre, and it was immediately revived. The fact that it failed miserably on its third revival in New York by the same players may indicate that wishful thinking has a limited shelf life.<sup>54</sup> *The West Indian* played throughout the war with a particularly heavy scheduling at both Drury Lane and Covent Garden in the 1778–79 and 1779–80 seasons.<sup>55</sup> After this the play continued to run intermittently

at Drury Lane as part of the standard repertory, but all but disappeared from the boards of Covent Garden until the end of the war. I discuss its revival in the postwar period in chapter 5, but I would like to suggest here that during the highly unstable days of 1779 the play had the potential to operate either as a nostalgic diversion from the present crisis or as an anxious articulation of what could be lost if the Ministry and the military did not turn things around. In fact, it is through the suturing of nostalgia and anxiety that the play could overcome the generic obsolescence of its sentimental structure.

Just as Garrick's funeral was preceded by Chatham's lying-in-state, so the "Monody" was preceded by another success of the prewar era that may now be obsolete, both in substance and in structure. In 1779 a comedy where the differences between colony and metropole are ameliorated by the sentimental resolution of virtuous commerce and conjugal desire would seem at variance with the violent struggle for power that had enveloped the empire. *The West Indian* would play on the London stage for the rest of the century, but as we will see in chapter 5, its signification changed irrevocably with the Peace of Paris. For our purposes here, it is enough to recognize that the war was an engine of obsolescence. Sheridan, I believe, explores the possibility that historical forces, beyond the control of art, may render the surrogative potential of performance null and void. Rather than continuation, the effigy, to use Roach's term, would turn on the present and signal its alienation from the past. It is this fear of alienation that seeps into the theatre between the mainpiece and the "Monody," and which the "Monody" both dramatizes and attempts to circumvent. But this attempt at circumvention amounts to a challenge to the audience to assert its historical and cultural agency.

The historical aporia between mainpiece and afterpiece on the evening of 11 March 1779 is akin to the aporia between the tears elicited by the "Monody" and the anticipated memorialization of Garrick. It is this stutter step in the time of mourning, whether it be for an evaporating sense of imperial control in the Atlantic world or for an evanescent sense of contact with Shakespeare through Garrick's art, that Sheridan recognized and dramatized in the "Monody." Its radicality lies in the implicit sense that the gap between one historical moment and another could simply expand in a way that consigns the culture to a state of entropic decline. In both cases, performance temporarily bridges the gap—De Louthembourg fashions a surrogate urn to figure for the missing monument of the future, and Sheridan fashions a poetic spectacle to shift attention away from the historical rupture from the stable imperial world of Cumberland's play—but it does so in a way that warns the audience that such a bridging function may

not work if the chasm becomes too wide. If the present, by force of political events in the Atlantic world, becomes disconnected from the past, then the prophetic desire of the nation to have a recognizable future may not be realized.

### After Hamlet

In the months after the first performance of the "Monody," the sense of torpor that had enveloped the nation from at least the news of Burgoyne's loss at Saratoga reached an almost unbearable state. Spain declared war on Britain in June 1779, and thus the Spanish fleet joined the French in the English Channel. The historical analogue to Spain's earlier threat of invasion was palpable, but there was widespread fear that it would be repetition with a horrible difference. In June 1779 King George himself referred to the defeat of the Spanish Armada in an effort to rouse his subjects to the needed effort to defend his kingdom. "It was the vigour of mind shown by Queen Elizabeth and her subjects," he wrote in June 1779, "added to the assistance of Divine Providence, that saved this island when attacked by the Spaniards."<sup>56</sup> Invoking the glorious year of 1588 was not simply a royal prerogative. The deployment of past glory either to prop up patriot ideology or to critique present insipidity was a prominent feature not only of political reporting but also of two wildly popular plays from the fall of 1779: Thomas King's musical spectacle *The Prophecy, or Elizabeth at Tilbury* at Sadler's Wells and, of course, Sheridan's satire *The Critic* at Drury Lane. I am going to be looking at the plays in some detail later in this section in order to understand how the problem of historical rupture and repetition broached in the "Monody" was turned on the audience in even more heightened form by Sheridan's comedy.

If anything, the question of what it means to come after, to be tragically belated, is felt with even more intensity in Sheridan's third envoi to the theatre staged some six months after the "Monody." *The Critic* takes many of the concerns articulated in the "Monody" and reworks them into a biting satire not only of monumental history but also of the theatrical enterprise itself. If, as I have argued earlier, Sheridan's staging of Garrick's funeral failed to ensure a sense of cultural continuity, and his "Monody" dramatized the possibility of rupture and cultural decline, then there was no shortage of supplemental attempts, by far less able hands, to reconstitute patriot ideology. As Robert W. Jones argues, these attempts were keyed to the threat of invasion:

The threat of invasion infected every aspect of political and cultural life: troops were mustered, debates raged in the Lords and Commons, angry

letters in newspapers bemoaned the state of His Majesty's ships, and poets and dramatists exploited the mood of the times. In his "Ode to the Warlike Genius of Great Britain," William Tasker urged Britain to rouse herself to defeat the aggressors; in the summer of 1778 Richard Cumberland's tragedy *The Battle of Hastings* told a tale of forlorn Saxon daring and love in troubled times; at the Haymarket George Colman revived John Fletcher's *The Tragedie of Bonduca*, cleverly revising the play to reflect new anxieties about invasion and colonial conquest; and at Sadler's Wells in 1779 Tom King's extravagant pageant, *The Prophecy; or, Queen Elizabeth at Tilbury*, tried to rouse spirits by appealing to past glories.<sup>57</sup>

One can add to this list the Handel mini-explosion in the winter of 1779, much of the verse on Garrick's death, and specifically William Tasker's own "Elegy on the Death of David Garrick," which was advertised as a companion to his "Ode to the Warlike Genius of Great Britain." As is well known, these failed attempts at monumental history themselves became the target of Sheridan's critical history: all of these productions were burlesqued in *The Critic*.<sup>58</sup> Numerous critics, most notably Morwood, Jones, and Russell, have examined Sheridan's satire on the failures of patriot performance in both *The Camp* and *The Critic*.<sup>59</sup> Russell's work in particular has underlined the importance of the gender insubordination of fashionable society and martial masculinity in her writings on camp culture.<sup>60</sup> My intention here is to come at this issue from a different direction by exploring the play in light of the radical possibilities opened up by the "Monody." And in order to do so, I want to replicate my earlier deployment of Seward's poem, this time with Tasker's "Elegy," in order to indicate the importance of Garrick and Shakespeare to Sheridan's critique.

### *Warlike Genius*

The antiquarian William Tasker's "Elegy on the Death of David Garrick" is almost a catalog of clichés that barely sustains critical interest, except for two rather strange elements of its initial printing, which appears to have occurred in the early fall of 1779. Tasker was a scholar of Latin and Greek, and beneath the thicket of classical tropes and references, the poem reveals a remarkable obsession with Sheridan's public responses to Garrick's death. This is signaled immediately by the insertion of the same illustration of Mrs. Yates grasping De Louthembourg's urn that graced the first edition of Sheridan's "Monody" (fig. 4.4). The illustration even replicates the final lines of Sheridan's poem. When one

enters the poem proper, it becomes clear that much of the substance of the poem is simply an elaboration on the themes and images of the "Monody"; therefore, the replication of the illustration acknowledges a fundamental state of indebtedness. Like the "Monody," Tasker's speaker calls for a memorial statue, honors Reynolds, and elaborates on De Louthembourg's physical invocation of Melpomene and Thalia. Furthermore, those elements of the poem which do not directly reference the "Monody" are little more than rehearsals of other Garrick memorials. The poem's references to the interment in the Abbey call up the newspaper accounts, and the litany of Shakespearean characters, now dead, is clearly derived from Seward's "Prize Monody on the Death of Mr. Garrick." This is elegy warmed over for expressly commercial purposes.

But the other significant aspect of its printing should give us pause. Immediately on the title page, the reader is informed that the "Elegy" is "By the Author of the Ode to the Warlike Genius of Great Britain." Beyond mere authorship, these two poems are linked by their willingness to capitalize on national and cultural anxiety and by a rather startling inattention to how the later poem undoes many of the rhetorical objectives of the earlier poem. As its title suggests, the patriotic rhetoric of "The Ode to the Warlike Genius of Great Britain" turns on the repeated figuration of the "Genius of Britain," whose vengeance strikes terror into her foes and elicits virtuous pride from her sons and daughters. Predictably, Tasker offers a nostalgic catalog of past heroes (including Keppel) who have channeled this warlike genius. But when "genius" is invoked in the "Elegy," the speaker is more concerned with its future status. The final stanza of the "Elegy" directly thematizes the notion of cultural continuation:

While Science fires her Sons on Earth,  
 While BRITAIN gives to Genius Birth,  
     His praise no bounds shall know;  
 The Stage while buskin'd Actors tread,  
 While Taste shall SHAKESPEARE'S Drama read,  
     While Avon's stream shall flow.<sup>61</sup>

By repeating the word *while* five times in six lines, the boundless praise afforded Garrick and the continued reverence for Shakespeare's texts are here pegged to the continual birth of British "genius." Because the precise nature of this genius goes unspecified in the poem, it signifies doubly: it can incorporate not only the artistic genius implicitly alluded to in the poem's celebration of Garrick, Shakespeare, and Reynolds but also the "Warlike Genius" alluded to on the poem's title page. There was nothing novel here: Garrick himself had made a

similar gesture in the “Ode on Shakespeare” when he compared Shakespeare’s art with the martial prowess of Alexander the Great.<sup>62</sup> The problem here is that the repetition of *while* begs the question of history’s relation to this national destiny. It would appear that both artistic and warlike genius will replicate themselves for as long as the Avon will flow, but this does not square with the fact that in the seventh stanza, just as in Sheridan’s “Monody,” the act of memorialization has been forestalled. There is a gap between the transient expressions of grief, both enacted and referenced by the poem, and their manifestation as cultural monuments. This is exacerbated by the fact that Tasker’s invocation of the Avon resonates with precisely those passages in Garrick’s “Ode on Shakespeare,” which indicate that it took well over 150 years for Shakespeare to be physically commemorated.<sup>63</sup> What Tasker isolates here, perhaps in spite of himself, or perhaps because his method is so citational, is the perilous nature of performance to ensure continuity. Lines such as the following underline both the psychic and commercial value of surrogation and the temporal alienation that attends its failure:

Britannia’s Sons the Tomb shall raise,  
 And, sacred to her ROSCIUS’ Praise,  
     The sculptur’d Marble stand;  
 The Worth of him, who lies below,  
 The fair recording Verse shall show,  
     Wrote by the Muse’s hand. (37–42)

Tasker’s assertion of future stability and his replication of Sheridan’s topoi signal an anxious attempt to replace the question posed by the “Monody” with a fantasy of national supremacy that is at odds with the present state of affairs.

In contrast, Sheridan faced the threat of failed surrogation head-on in *The Critic*, but in doing so, he also recognized the cost of success. Significantly, his critique aimed at both the psychic damage and the commercial opportunities afforded by loss. In the face of national crisis, Sheridan stages a ruthless critique of nostalgia and of the often-profitable rememorative processes that subtend patriotism. The three-act play is broken into two sections. The first act, which garnered most of the reviewers’ praise, is set in the critic Dangle’s house, and aside from lampooning Richard Cumberland quite directly in the caricature of Sir Fretful Plagiary, much of the dialogue revolves around the commercial print press. Newspapers figure prominently in act 1, and their place in Sheridan’s critique is extremely important. The second section of the play, comprising the



second and third acts, is a rehearsal of Puff's tragedy "The Spanish Armada," which, like the play itself, is set in Drury Lane theatre.<sup>64</sup> The play is both an adaptation of the Duke of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* and a pastiche of a host of recently performed patriotic plays, most notably Cumberland's lugubrious tragedy *The Battle of Hastings*, originally staged in the summer of 1778, and *The Prophecy, or Elizabeth at Tilbury*, an extremely popular musical spectacle that ran at Sadler's Wells from August 1779 through much of the fall.<sup>65</sup> I discuss these two sections in turn because the critique of the newspapers quite literally sets the stage for the more complex theatrical critique in the final two acts. Interestingly, the ready wit of act 1 immediately met with public approval, whereas it took a number of weeks for audiences to fully understand Sheridan's objectives in acts 2 and 3.<sup>66</sup> This lag time in the approbation of the play was itself an indication of the necessity of Sheridan's intervention.

Sheridan's analysis of the role of the newspapers in national fantasy unfolds in two stages in act 1. The play opens with newspapers strewn all over the Dangle's breakfast table. Mr. Dangle's opening speech famously captures the perilous state of national affairs and subordinates them to the theatrical intelligence:

DANGLE:           *(reading)* "BRUTUS TO LORD NORTH."—"Letter the second, on the STATE OF THE ARMY."—Pshaw! "To the first L dash D of the A dash Y."—"Genuine Extract of a Letter from ST KITTS."—"COXHEATH INTELLIGENCE."—"It is now confidently asserted that SIR CHARLES HARDY."—Pshaw!—Nothing but about the fleet, and the nation!—and I hate all politics but theatrical politics.—Where's the MORNING CHRONICLE? <sup>67</sup>

The *Morning Chronicle's* close attention to theatrical affairs makes it Dangle's "gazette of choice," and Sheridan is clearly going after the state of denial that was enveloping the nation. All of the cited stories can be traced to the papers, and each one testifies to the unsatisfactory progress of the war. Lord North's inactivity, Lord Sandwich's humiliation during the Keppel affair, the perilous state of the West Indian fleet off of St. Kitt's, the continuing farce of aristocrats playing soldier at the encampment at Coxheath, and Sir Charles Hardy's reprise of Keppel's ineffectual engagement with the enemy fleet in the English Channel are signaled in turn. It is a catalog of ineffectual leadership, poor management, ministerial conspiracy, elite dissipation, political factionalism, and plain allegations of cowardice that had been raging from at least the time of the Keppel affair, and which continued for much of the war.

In the face of such a devolution in the state and its military leaders, Dangle decides to invest his time in the theatre, and Sheridan implies that the *Morning Chronicle* is similarly delusional. Even for those who profess to want to know about the state of the nation, news is a species of entertainment:

MRS. DANGLE: . . . you never will read anything that's worth listening to:—you hate to hear about your country; there are letters every day with Roman signatures, demonstrating the certainty of an invasion, proving that the nation is utterly undone—But you never read anything that will entertain one. (1.1.28–33)

This is denial of a different order. Here the political has become simply another flight of fancy where emotions are elicited, but actual historical consequences are not fully grasped. It is difficult to say which form of denial is more dangerous, for at least Dangle recognizes that the time is out of joint.

But it is only with the arrival of Mr. Puff that the full extent of the nation's denial and its self-delusions are made apparent. In his famous adaptation of Touchstone's speech on lying from *As You Like It*, Puff offers a careful anatomy of the art of puffing that concludes with a discussion of political mediation:

MR. PUFF: . . . Here are too some political memorandums I see; aye—To take PAUL JONES, and get the INDIAMEN out of the SHANNON—reinforce BYRON—compel the DUTCH to—I must do that in the evening papers, or reserve it for the Morning Herald, for I know that I have undertaken tomorrow, besides, to establish the unanimity of the fleet in the Public Advertiser, and to shoot CHARLES FOX in the Morning Post,—So, egad, I haven't a moment to lose! (1.2.314–22)

Many critics have noted that Sheridan at this time was himself involved, with Fox, in the production of *The Englishman*, but the specificity of Puff's remarks here are crucial. Here at the end of the first act, the audience is drawn back to the very issues that Dangle had attempted to evade in his opening speech. Puff is about to go and invent stories about the navy for papers from the opposite sides of the political spectrum. Almost all of Fox's parliamentary oratory during this period pilloried the Admiralty and Lord Sandwich's failure to bring unanimity of purpose to the navy following the divisive Keppel court-martial. So Puff here is writing one story arguing that the navy is unified in the Whiggish *Public Advertiser*, and another attacking Fox in the pro-Ministry *Morning Post*. Puff is

working both sides of the issue on opposite sides of the press in order to stir controversy regarding the Ministry's management of the war, not because he is concerned with the fate of the nation, but because factional controversy sells papers. The problem here, much in evidence in the reporting of the Keppel affair, is that commerce and factionalism spur each other on and completely hijack the resolution of narrative enigmas vital to the state of the nation. As we will see, this specter of factionalism in the navy, inherited from the Keppel affair and kept alive by Hardy's failed efforts of August 1779, haunt the remainder of the play, because it is precisely this lack of unanimity that troubles Puff's use of the Elizabethan past in "The Spanish Armada."

Sheridan's exploration of the generative force of commercial culture in act 1 extends into his theatrical critique in acts 2 and 3. Richard Fitzpatrick's prologue to *The Critic* promised that, like Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, the afterpiece would attack the degradation of theatre in present times. Tragedy and comedy are now so insipid that audiences are faced with dullness rather than bombast. The play focuses its attention on the pitiful state of tragedy by attacking Cumberland's *The Battle of Hastings*. As Morwood has argued, Cumberland's play "sets grand romantic passions against a backdrop of national crisis and puts a grotesquely elevated diction in the mouths of its characters."<sup>68</sup> Sheridan does precisely the same thing in "The Spanish Armada" and by his repetition ridicules the absurdity of Cumberland's diction and of the play's structure.<sup>69</sup> Sheridan's critique of Cumberland's Shakespearean phraseology is devastating but, I would argue, of less importance than his critique of Cumberland's deployment of the past. In the summer of 1778, there were commercial and patriotic gains to be made by invoking the Battle of Hastings on the stage, but, as many reviewers complained, the play does not allegorize the present but rather attempts to pass off a rather cumbersome love plot as a confirmation of British national resolve. In other words, its use of the past is unknowingly cynical, and thus, in its attempt to shore up British nationalism, it actually hollows out the sense of historical continuity implied by the title.

Significantly, Sneer and Dangle make the same complaint about Puff's "The Spanish Armada," but Puff's response indicates that he is well aware of the commercial value of this kind of cynicism:

PUFF: It is a received point among poets, that where history gives you a good heroic out-line for a play, you may fill up with a little love at your own discretion; in doing which, nine times out of ten, you only make up a deficiency in the private history of the times.— Now I rather think I have done this with some success. (2.2.11–15)

In other words, the past has been rewritten to suit the audience's presumptive desire for a love plot and thus ensure the play's commercial success. It is important to recognize that Sheridan's attack, while aimed at *The Battle of Hastings*, could be equally directed at other more exalted productions. Garrick's famous rewriting of act 5 of *Hamlet* did not inject a spurious love plot, but it fundamentally reconfigured the play's closure in order to pander to audience desires; and Garrick, much like Puff, wrote widely about the success of his alterations.<sup>70</sup>

But aside from this explicit critique of the commercial and patriotic appropriation of the past, Sheridan's most biting satire was encoded into his complex treatment of *The Prophecy, or Elizabeth at Tilbury*. Significantly, all of the major papers applauded King's musical spectacle for its use of history:

The new musical piece, performed here on Monday evening for the first, under the title of THE PROPHECY, or Queen Elizabeth at Tilbury, is not only a very allowable, but a very commendable use of an historical event, which happily suits the circumstances of the present times. While from the stage decoration, and the stile of exhibition, it serves to entertain within the theatre, it may also contribute to the enlivening the spirits, and to stimulating the zeal of those on whom the defence of this country rests, in the present hour of difficulty and danger.<sup>71</sup>

There is an implicit assumption here, as in George III's remark cited earlier, that the nation has lost its vigor and that its citizens need to be roused into action. What better than a spectacular reworking of the narrative of Elizabeth's victory over the Armada off of Tilbury? Only that does not quite describe *The Prophecy*, nor does it fully convey the use and abuse of the future at Sadler's Wells:

The main incident is too well known to need detail of it; the manner in which it is used at the Wells, is as follows:—When the curtain rises, the scene discovers a part of the country near Tilbury, an excellent representation of that important Fort, with part of the adjoining river terminating the perspective. An old woman and her two daughters come on, and we learn from their converse, that, like the rest of their neighbours, they are gadding to Tilbury to see their Queen, who is expected there; they are presently joined by two countrymen, and after some humourous songs, on the report of martial music, they stand aside, in order to make away for the procession which precedes her Majesty, who at length approaches riding on a fine palfrey richly caparazoned; all present join in a loyal chorus, at the end of which the Queen thanks her subjects in recitative for their af-

fection, and in an air set to spirited music assures them, that relying on Heaven and them, she laughs at the Spanish Armada. Slow music is then heard, and presently a cloud descends to earth, from out of which the Genius of Britain issues, and after telling Elizabeth she has nothing to fear from the perfidious House of Bourbon, promises to present her with a view of what shall happen in the reign of mighty George, in an airy mirror; on waving his oaken sceptre, the cloud rejoins the sky, and a striking spectacle is exhibited, in which the navy of England appears riding triumphant on the seas, and the fleets of France and Spain, broken, dismasted, and vanquished. The prophecy is, "That England will ever be victorious, if Britons are true to themselves." And the whole concludes with a parody on the famous song, beginning with the words *On Thursday is the morn, &c.*<sup>72</sup>

The newspapers reprint the lines of both the opening songs between mother and daughters and Queen Elizabeth's song of thanks to her subjects, and it is significant that the first section of the play is dominated by women. The sailors and soldiers who fought in the Channel and at Tilbury are subsumed into their leader, and this effectively leaves them unrepresented on the stage, except in Elizabeth's words and in the painted backdrop. Thus, when the masculine Genius of Britain steps out of the cloud and ruptures the temporal continuum by magically displaying the future victory of the British navy over Spain and France in the English Channel, the play not only enacts the patriotic desires of the audience but also figures forth a form of masculinity capable of achieving this task. And it is here that the production confronts some of the key problems with its own generic conventions. The Genius of Britain may be borrowed from Tasker and speaks for George III, but in performance he shares a great deal with Harlequin. His oaken scepter operates much like Harlequin's flapper, and his entrance and exit through the cloud are conventional pantomime tricks.

This strange undercutting of the Genius of Britain's status is not an isolated element of the play. The question of whether there are men capable of achieving the eponymous prophecy inheres because the defeat of the Spanish and the French has not yet occurred. The futurity of the prophecy stubbornly undoes much of the play's invocation of the past. This is most evident in "Elizabeth's Reply to her People":

Thanks loving subjects! In whose loyal hearts  
My hopes I place—nor need I fear the arts  
Or arms, indeed, of an insulting foe.  
When honour calls what cannot Britons do!

AIR: (*To Arms ye brave Mortals away*)

Turn your minds back to great Arthur's days,

From thence trace our brave British story;

With wonder reflect and with praise,

Your forefathers were all sons of glory.

CHORUS—*Our free fathers were all sons, &c.*

See the thousands on Cressy's proud field;

Let Agincourt still be before ye,

To Britons their standards they yield,

They're conquer'd by sons of true glory.

CHORUS—*They're conquered by sons, &c.*

To herself then let England be true,

In spite of each threat and bravado:

Protected by Heaven and you

I laugh at the *Spanish Armada*.

*The last Verse in Chorus.*<sup>73</sup>

The song is clearly designed for the audience to sing along, and each verse links success over the Spanish to moments of past glory. But both the first and final verses point toward the future and underline that Elizabeth's confidence is contingent on England being true to herself—that is, to her past history of valor. The song proclaims a continuity of purpose both in 1588 and, by extension, in 1779, but the play's final prophecy modifies the song when it states "That England will ever be victorious, if Britons are true to themselves." What are we to make of that "if"? It is a curiously double-edged utterance because it could equally indicate that Britain will be defeated if its warriors are not true to their patrimony. My sense is that this is not simply an oversight on the playwright's part, or an overreading on my own. The play both activates and alleviates anxiety regarding the future, and it is precisely this two-pronged effect that hails the audience from a state of torpor into a posture of patriotism. In short, it is precisely the play's equivocal address to the future that makes its use of the past potentially capable of "stimulating the zeal of those on whom the defence of this country rests."

Lurking beneath this inculcation of patriotic response lies something even more complex, which I believe is crucial for understanding the full implications of Sheridan's practice in *The Critic*. For audiences responding to the play's advertisement, which promised "A New Musical Piece consisting of Airs, serious

and Comic, Recitatives, Choruses, etc. . . . In the course of which will be displayed a Transparency, representing the destruction of the Spanish Armada, and a moving Perspective View representing the present GRAND FLEET,"<sup>74</sup> some surprises were in store. First, there is no record of the promised transparency of the defeat of the Armada: this past event appears to have been subsumed into the as-yet-unrealized, but nevertheless represented, destruction of the French and Spanish ships currently threatening the Grand Fleet in the Channel. It is not difficult to recognize the structure of desire in this retroactive anticipation. The past event has quite literally been transformed—in this case, canceled and projected forward—to fulfill the desire for what has not been achieved.

Sheridan's lampoon of *The Prophecy* goes after this expression of patriotic desire by simply presenting what the proprietors of Sadler's Wells had initially advertised. *The Critic's* closing spectacle is in part a rehearsal of the promised destruction of the Spanish Armada that was obviated by the magic of the "Genius of Britain":

*Flourish of drums—trumpets—cannon, &c. &c. Scene changes to the sea—the fleets engage—the music plays "Britons strike home."—Spanish fleet destroyed by fire-ships, &c.—English fleet advances—music plays "Rule Britannia."—The procession of all the English rivers and their tributaries with their emblems, &c. begins with Handel's Water Music—ends with a chorus, to the march of Judas Maccabeus.—During this scene Puff directs and applauds everything—(3.2)*

De Louthembourg's execution of the final naval spectacle was universally praised for its realism: according to the reviews, the motion of the waves was very natural, and the moving fireships were quite thrilling. As the *London Evening Post* stated, "The deception of the sea was very strong, and perspective of the ships, together with the mode of their sailing, truly picturesque. This great painter, in all his scenic productions, seems to bring nature to our view, instead of painting views after nature."<sup>75</sup> In other words, this was less of a rendering than a simulation.<sup>76</sup> And with this protodocumentary gesture, De Louthembourg did something that *The Prophecy* did not achieve: it represented, with detailed specificity, the past event to which the present situation was being compared. In other words, it does not replace the past event with a present desire but rather fixes it before the audience on the stage. This act of fixing amounts to a form of counter-memory aimed at dissociating the historical event from present fantasies of national identity. In this sense, *The Critic's* objective is to challenge the ossified deployment of past greatness in order to salvage the nation from its own delusional sense of self.

That Sheridan and De Louthembourg are engaged in an act of countermemory is evidenced by the supplemental pastiche of recognizable tropes of patriot representation. “Rule Britannia” had long since become a commonplace expression of loyalty, but it was originally composed for the masque *Alfred*, whose substance had been recrafted into a full-length tragedy and performed at Covent Garden in January 1778. The procession of rivers, as the *Morning Post* recognized, dramatized the catalog of rivers in Pope’s “Windsor Forest.”<sup>77</sup> Both Handel compositions were staged to commemorate crucial victories over French aggression in the early and midcentury.<sup>78</sup> Apparently this pastiche generated a patriotic response in the audience, but it is hard to see this collocation as anything other than a sign of desperation. Puff signals as much in the final speech of the play:

PUFF: Well, pretty well—but not quite perfect—so ladies and gentlemen, if you please, we’ll rehearse this piece again tomorrow. (3.2.290–91)

“Tomorrow” is the final word of the play, and I would argue that this is crucial, because the present rehearsal of the past, even in Puff’s cynical eyes, has been insufficient. Just as *The Prophecy* projected the audience into the future desiring yet another assertion of naval success in the Channel, so Sheridan invites the “ladies and gentlemen,” both on stage and off, to yet another blunt statement, that this kind of naval victory has been achieved, 180 years earlier. Each subsequent performance of *The Prophecy* only serves to fortify the delusional elements of the Armada allegory, whereas every subsequent performance of *The Critic* aims to reveal the historical discontinuity that is driving the desire for allegorical, rather than real, victory over the combined forces of France and Spain. In other words, the closing spectacle is a ruthless critique of the misrecognition of the present evidenced not only in the crowds that packed Sadler’s Wells throughout the fall but also in those parts of *The Critic*’s audience that failed to grasp that the mock patriotism of these final moments of the play amounted to a proto-elegy for the nation. *The Critic*’s satire “constructs a countermemory—a transformation of history into a totally different form of time.”<sup>79</sup> And this different form of time is linked to the temporal problems first elucidated in relation to the death of Garrick.

If, as Sheridan argues, the closure of *The Prophecy* amounts to little more than the symptomatic temporality of patriotic fantasy, I am equally interested in the way this play opens. As noted, *The Prophecy* begins with a dialogue song between a mother and two daughters on their way to see the Queen at Tilbury, which comically meditates on the general lack of concern with the future. Here are the daughter’s first two verses and the Mother’s final riposte:



Deborah.

Of life's busy round shou'd we take a survey,  
 And each mortal mark in his different way,  
 We shou'd find nine in ten think nought but today,  
 which no body can deny

Dorcas.

The fop more to dress than to pay for't inclin'd,  
 Let's nought, but time present take of hold of his mind,  
 Tho' to day free as air, he's to-morrow confin'd  
 Which nobody can deny. . . .

Mother.

'Bout present, or future, then no more ado,  
 One thing, when I think on't, will still make me rue,  
 There's no eating one's cake, and then having it too,  
 Which nobody can deny.

Chorus.

'Bout present, or future, then no more ado,  
 One thing when we think on't, will make us all rue;  
 There's no eating, &c.<sup>80</sup>

The prime examples of a lack of foresight—fops, lawyers, courtiers, and impatient lovers—constitute a typical list of the corrupt avatars of eighteenth-century masculinity, so this jaunty song fits into the ongoing critique of British masculinity that animated both the papers and Sheridan's *The Camp*. And these three women, like Mrs. Dangle in *The Critic*, are attempting to get men to forestall the gratification of their immediate pleasures and attend to their place in history. In this context, the introduction of the martial Queen Elizabeth not only calls up a moment of past glory but also registers the threatening forms of gender insubordination that were ostensibly corrupting elite culture. Like the figuration of the Genius of Britain as Harlequin, putting the Amazonian Elizabeth next to a critique of foppish masculinity heightens the sense of social insecurity addressed by the play. With the promulgation of insecurity comes the desire for the consolidation of community and, one might add, the desire for one more performance of *The Prophecy*.

*The Dullest of All Dull Tragedies*

As the papers were quick to point out, the political efficacy of *The Prophecy* rests on the allegorical link between the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 and the desired destruction of the Spanish and French fleets in 1779. When Sheridan embeds Puff's tragedy "The Spanish Armada" in *The Critic*, the audience is forced to consider not simply the insipidity of recent tragedies such as *The Battle of Hastings* but more importantly the relationship between cultural production and historical events. This is why *The Prophecy* is so important, because Sheridan is drawing a set of historical and cultural parallels, which push his play beyond the ridicule of this or that bad play. If one takes the women's advice in *The Prophecy* and surveys "life's busy round" beyond the present, then an immediate parallel is drawn between the conclusive destruction of Spain's invading force in 1588 and the battle to be fought against the combined French and Spanish fleets in 1779. Unfortunately, the allegory amounts to wishful thinking because of the inconclusive interim battle at Ushant in which the Grand Fleet, under Keppel's command, failed to act decisively, and also because of Sir Charles Hardy's reprise of Keppel's excessive prudence in his nonengagement with the combined naval forces of France and Spain in August of 1779.

This sense of troubled allegory is explicit in Sheridan's play, but he expands the question of failed parallelism in a further disturbing direction when he starts to probe Shakespeare's relation to the present. The year 1599 was arguably Shakespeare's greatest: in the months before a second threatened Spanish invasion, he wrote two key explorations of patriotism and statecraft, *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar*. In the months after the dissolution of the second Armada fear, Shakespeare wrote *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*.<sup>81</sup> However, 1779 was not so auspicious: several months after not one but two inconclusive engagements in the Channel, Britons mourned the passing of Hamlet, in the form of "THE BODY" of David Garrick. Great victory would seem to generate the greatest of English tragedies, whereas "that dark transaction off Brest"<sup>82</sup> was followed by the loss of England's greatest tragic actor. If this was not a sufficient indication of social and cultural decline, one needed only to glance at *The Prophecy* to feel, not the proximity to past greatness, whether martial or theatrical, but rather its recession into the distant past.

If, as Tasker's "Ode" and Sheridan's own "Monody" implied, the only thing propping up the culture was the tenuous link to Shakespeare afforded by the memory of Garrick's performances, then we need to think carefully about the relationship between Shakespeare's plays and *The Critic*. In its first season,

*The Critic* was given fifty times; half of these performances paired the afterpiece with a Garrick adaptation of a Shakespearean play.<sup>83</sup> On only three occasions was a Shakespearean play offered without *The Critic*, and in these cases Sheridan chose to stage *The Camp*. The first production of Sheridan's afterpiece was staged after *Hamlet* and incorporated various elements of the mainpiece into "The Spanish Armada." James Morwood offers a comprehensive list of the parallels to *Hamlet* within "The Spanish Armada," and it is unlikely that the audience would have missed such obvious allusions as when Dangle declares that "the stage is 'the Mirror of Nature,'" and that "the actors are 'the Abstract, and brief Chronicles of the Time'" (1.1.724: cf. *Hamlet* 3.2.22, 2.2.518). Whereas *Hamlet* opens with two nervous and watchful officers on the guard platform at Elsinore, Puff's tragedy opens with "Two Sentinels asleep" at Tilbury Fort (2.2 SD). Similarly, Sheridan burlesques the declarative nature of the Horatio's exposition in the first scene of *Hamlet*, by having Sir Christopher Hatton and Sir Walter Raleigh go on at length to establish the already well-known historical situation. As Morwood emphasizes, "even Ophelia's mad scenes (4.5.21–71, 151–96) are mocked in Tilburnia's embarrassment of flowers (2.2.271–77) and her subsequent appearance stark mad—and crazily incoherent—in white satin (3.1.280, 293–301)."<sup>84</sup> That Tilburnia's white satin dress was precisely that worn by Mrs. Baddeley in her performance of Ophelia that very evening did not go unnoticed. These repetitions and parodies of *Hamlet* are not at all different from the attacks on Cumberland's *The Battle of Hastings*, so they radically expand the nature of Sheridan's critique. Is Sheridan arguing that *Hamlet* is similarly insipid? Morwood weakly argues that, in his control of language and in his treatment of themes of representation, Sheridan learned from Shakespeare and thus that *The Critic's* send up of *Hamlet* is "good natured."<sup>85</sup> I think there is another possibility grounded in the historical situation of the play's performance.

Many of the papers were troubled by the play's implied criticisms of Shakespeare, but the *Morning Chronicle*, arguably the most sophisticated popular critic of theatrical culture, focused its attention on the fraught relationship between mainpiece and afterpiece:

Whenever the public expectation is much roused by the reported or presumed excellence of a new after-piece, about to be performed, the managers of our theatres generally take occasion so far to advantage themselves of the publick curiosity, as to make the least alluring play in their catalogue serve the town for that evening, thereby through implication telling the audience that they shall pay for their eagerness to see the first face of

the entertainment, by being obliged to sit out the representation of a piece, which they would not have come to see but for its accompaniments. Thus on Saturday evening at Drury-Lane Theatre, those who were desirous of being present at the first performance of Mr. Sheridan's *Critic*, were under the necessity of patiently hearing *HAMLET*, altered by Garrick, which (the present state of the stage considered) is beyond dispute the dullest of all dull tragedies. The performers, to do them justice, endeavoured to excite the publick attention. Mr. Smith played the closet scene with his mother with great warmth and energy. Mrs. Baddeley's Ophelia was interesting and pathetic, but in some of the lesser points of character, she fell short of much less capable actresses. Her dress looked rather fantastical.<sup>86</sup>

What are we to make of the distinction between the obligation articulated here and that prescribed in the "Monody?" In Sheridan's "Monody," the audience had a national duty to honor Garrick and revere Shakespeare. Only seven months later, the audience is under the almost unbearable obligation to sit through Garrick's adaptation of *Hamlet* in order to ensure a seat to see Sheridan's attack on the insipidity of "slow Melpomene's cold numbers."<sup>87</sup> As the *Gazetteer* reported on the day of the performance, the opening time for the theatre was pushed back to a quarter after five for the rest of the season, so an already long evening at the theatre—*The Critic*, at three acts, was widely censured for being too lengthy for an afterpiece—would have felt that much longer.<sup>88</sup>

As is well known, tedium is one of *The Critic's* chief targets and, according to the papers, one of its primary faults in production. It was not until 5 November that the usually perceptive *Morning Chronicle* acknowledged, "The humour of the Mock Rehearsal being better understood, is much better relished than at first."<sup>89</sup> But it was the *Morning Post* that explicitly recognized that the satire works via boredom and therefore exhibits all the paradoxes of an imminent critique, noting that "when it is considered that burlesque is nothing more than the heightening to extravagance a ruling character in composition, it should seem to demand no common exertion of talent to make a burlesque on insipidity capable of furnishing continuance of entertainment."<sup>90</sup> For this reason it is important to consider that dullest of all dull tragedies, not Cumberland's *Battle of Hastings*, but rather the *Hamlet* being staged after Garrick's retirement from the stage.

The problem, of course, lies with Garrick himself, for his excellence in the central role cast a very long shadow. During Garrick's lifetime, no one would imply that *Hamlet* was boring. But after his death, theatregoers were left not only

with less able performers attempting to replicate his Hamlet but also with Garrick's rather unsatisfying version of the play. Garrick's virtuosity overcame the shortcomings of his adaptation, but with actors such as William Smith playing Hamlet, some of the absurdities of Garrick's emendations and additions became all too visible. This was exacerbated by the fact that more correct reading versions of the play—in particular Johnson's edition—were in circulation. *Hamlet* without Garrick was a very tedious affair, and, as George III himself recognized, the nation had descended into a state of torpor. Audiences obliged, for whatever reason, to patiently sit through a *Hamlet* without Hamlet, as it were, would have found themselves in a position where the passing of Garrick would be acutely felt. The historical disjunction feared in the "Monody" would be registered not by tears but rather by yawns and, perhaps worse, by a creeping realization of the absurdity of the very project of bringing Shakespeare to bear on the present. This latter point is registered in the *Morning Chronicle's* disdain for "Garrick's alteration," and it is rehearsed explicitly in *The Critic*. For Sheridan, it is this proliferation of torpor that warrants a tear, not simply for a belated player but for a nation on the verge of obsolescence. To put this more pointedly, a nation where *Hamlet* has become "the dullest of all dull tragedies" may not be worth reviving or fighting for.

I would argue that *The Critic* recognizes this predicament in order to militate against its final irrevocable realization, and it does so not by venerating Shakespeare, but rather by attacking the audience for whom this veneration has been bleb of meaning. And this attack, like the attack on *The Prophecy*, is conducted through an imminent critique of the audience's pleasures in the theatre. Just as the anticipatory desire promulgated by *The Prophecy's* staging of a naval victory yet to be achieved was attacked by De Loutherboung's careful staging of past events, so too does Sheridan attack the audience's desire to experience Shakespeare without Garrick's mediation between the living present and the distant past. He does this by reinforcing the fact of Garrick's nonpresence, by making the audience fully aware of his death. Garrick garnered much early fame in the role of Bayes in *The Rehearsal*,<sup>91</sup> and thus it is not difficult to read Puff as a parody of the former manager of Drury Lane. This accounts not only for the necessity of the metatheatrical deployment of the playhouse but also for *The Critic's* strong affiliation with Buckingham's earlier play. The harshness of this act of counter-memory is evident in the ruthlessness with which he critiques the performance of Garrick's adaptation of *Hamlet* that immediately preceded the first performance of the play.<sup>92</sup> The parodies of *Hamlet's* overly expository first scene, and of *Hamlet's* rather simplistic plot, may be good-natured, but the ridicule aimed

at Ophelia's mad scenes is not, because it is conducted with savage specificity. Mrs. Pope, in the role of Tilburnia, dons the "rather fantastical" white satin dress worn by Mrs. Baddeley only hours before in the role of Ophelia. It is useful to recall the *Morning Chronicle's* equivocal response to Mrs. Baddeley's performance: "Mrs. Baddeley's Ophelia was interesting and pathetic, but in some of the lesser points of character, she fell short of much less capable actresses."<sup>93</sup> Mrs. Baddeley may not have fully realized Ophelia, but Sheridan is actually far more interested in her dress. This object physically ties the plays together, and it is as though this thing carries with it a kind of contagion of dullness. Emblematic of surplus affect and dead convention, the white satin dress becomes an icon of obsolescence.

In this context, the dress becomes a strangely antiquarian object: it physically links the afterpiece to the mainpiece as a potsherd links the present to the long-buried past. But the question it poses is whether this link, this emblem of continuation, is of value. Clearly, for Sheridan, it was not. To borrow the *Morning Chronicle's* phrase, such emblems of continuity are, at this historical moment, "rather fantastical" and thus disconnected from the present crisis. And these failed or parodic connections to the past, whether theatrical, social, or political, proliferate throughout *The Critic*, because, as a few papers recognized, the entire play is composed of nothing but reworked elements of past cultural artifacts, some barely worth remembering and others so central to the patrimony of the nation that their presence in this pastiche is extremely disturbing. That said, Sheridan is not advocating a descent into nihilism or iconoclasm. Sheridan is saying not that *Hamlet* is no longer playable but that there will be a gap before it can signify properly again. Garrick's death, likewise, precipitated a hiatus in the cultural life of the nation: a gap in which the performance protocols for negotiating with the icons that moor national identity needed to be recalibrated, or even reinvented. The dead object, like the dead language that permeates "The Spanish Armada," had infiltrated the realm of performance, and *The Critic's* difficult task is to make its audience aware of a different life. This is why the play is so resolutely aimed at the future, and why the play, in addition to critiquing commerce, also testifies to the productive force of commerce.<sup>94</sup> The drive to make money is at the heart of both the imperial and the theatrical enterprise, and Sheridan built a wildly successful play out of the scraps of a failing institution. The implication of course is that capital has the capacity to reconfigure the empire from the wreckage of the American war. As Puff states at the play's conclusion, a more "perfect" performance may be rehearsed "tomorrow" (3.2.291).

The strange temporality of tomorrow's rehearsal, its anticipation of a more perfect retroaction, is staged as a counter to the kind of retroactive anticipation exemplified by the patriotic fantasy of *The Prophecy*. This temporality also turns out to be a defining thread not only in Sheridan's three attempts to deal with Garrick's passing but also in his perception of the nation's rapidly transforming imperial identity. What Sheridan brings to the question of appropriate action at this juncture in the war is a sense of how the American conflict demands a reevaluation of the values that define British subjectivity. Countermemory not only transforms our sense of historical time but also forces a reconsideration of the grounds of subjectification. Joseph Roach's analysis of the surrogative force of the performance effigy carries with it an implied argument about the value of continuity for the British imperial enterprise. I would argue that any theory of cultural continuity and, hence, of surrogation requires a more nuanced theory of value that can more accurately reflect the divergent interests of the nation's constituents.

*The Critic* demonstrates that continuity is a double-edged sword. When culture is corrupted or unmoored from its roots, then continuity only compounds the degradation. This understanding of political devolution can be found in Montesquieu, and it is certainly a part of Burke's thinking about the empire in the 1770s. This is what is at the heart of the American cause and what drives its supporters toward a radical critique of the value of liberty. For liberty, the defining element of British identity, to flourish, it needed to separate itself from its heritage. This paradoxical rupture, a discontinuation of present relations aimed at preserving a different kind of continuity for the future, describes both the war itself and the kind of action staged by Sheridan in the limited confines of Drury Lane theatre. In this sense, *The Critic* needs to be understood partly as a pro-American performance—this was already evident in its explicit critiques of the Ministry—and partly as a radically post-American intervention. The play's propulsion of the audience into the future is nothing short of a demand to reinvent British culture in a way that can revitalize its relation to the past, without demanding a slavish repetition of the performance protocols, which configure the relations between the living and the dead. And it is clear that these performance protocols need to be developed from the experience of the audience itself, from their intense sense of loss, both for Garrick and for their past imperial confidence. It may not be solely attributable to *The Critic*, but it is important to remember that, by the close of the 1779–80 season, Garrick's once popular adaptation of *Hamlet* would be consigned to oblivion, and thus one particular negotiation with the dead would be at an end.<sup>95</sup>

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