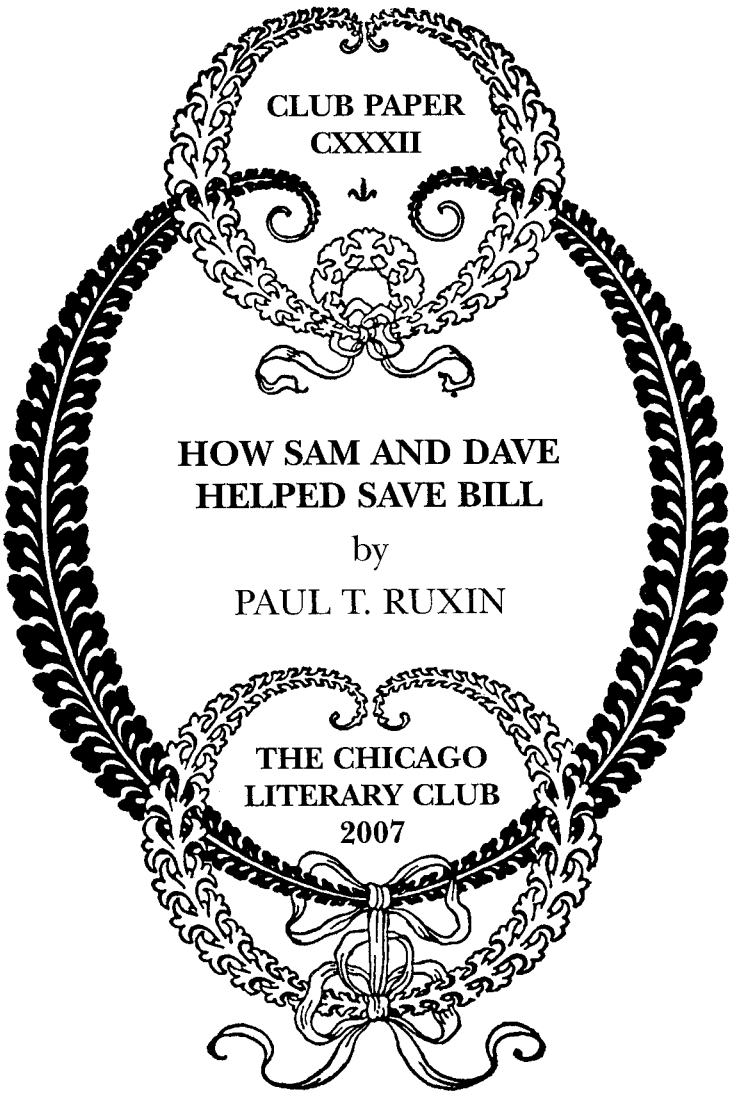
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by
PAUL T. RUXIN
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How Sam and Dave Helped Save Bill

Let us begin with the *Dramatis Personae.* "Sam" is Samuel Johnson, the dominant, overwhelming "Great Cham" of eighteenth-century English literature and eighteenth-century London life. "Dave" is David Garrick, the most famous actor of the eighteenth-century English stage, and perhaps of all time. And "Bill"? Bill is William Shakespeare, who, I trust, needs no introduction. In fact, Bill is so well known that it is perhaps jarring to read a suggestion that it could have been necessary or even possible for Sam and Dave to "save" him, 150 years after his death, and after Shakespeare's own contemporary and rival Ben Jonson had already bestowed immortality on him by declaring that "He was not of an age, but for all time."

It is an assumption today by the culturally literate—perhaps even more often by the culturally illiterate—that Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist and perhaps the greatest writer in English of all time. Nearly four hundred years after his death, in 1616, it seems to us now that such an opinion has been the conventional wisdom continuously

since then, or at least since the 1623 printing of the First Folio, the first collected edition of his plays. But that is not so. There was a time when Shakespeare was seldom performed and scarcely read. This was followed by a period in which a cult was created, only later named "Bardolatry" by George Bernard Shaw. During these cult years what in fact was worshipped were almost unrecognizable "adaptations" of his plays. The focus was on a near-mythical figure of enormous importance to England's national self-image, but all in all Bardolatry during this period had little to do with what the best available evidence now identifies as the work of the Swan of Avon, William Shakespeare, born in 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon.

A little English political and literary history is in order to help understand how low he fell, and how high the artificial Shakespeare rose, before the efforts of Samuel Johnson, David Garrick and others restored him to a more proper and reasonable estimation. William Shakespeare wrote most of his plays between 1590 and 1613. Only about half were printed during his lifetime, in part because publication was deemed to be by performance, and in part because Shakespeare did not wish to make copies of his plays available for troupes other than his to perform. It may also be that Shakespeare and his company intentionally withheld publication in order to revive interest in them later, after they had fallen out of the repertoire. In any event, printed versions were scarce. Even the actors were given only rolls of paper with their own lines and cues pasted on—from where, of course, we get the word "role." Yet during Shakespeare's lifetime his company, in which he was variously author, actor and theater-owner, was enormously successful. His work was performed frequently for Queen Elizabeth,

and following her death in 1603, for her successor, James I. Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, named after their earlier patron, was taken up by the new king, and renamed the King's Men. The Shakespeare years were part of a golden age for theater, with Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Johnson, Christopher Marlowe and others achieving success. Shakespeare himself, however, was the most successful.

Censorship and regulation of theaters by the Master of Revels were both firmly in place by 1581, well before Shakespeare began to write. In the years both before and immediately after 1600 there was consistent opposition to the theater, as a licentious, heretical spawning ground for the devil. But even after the death of James I in 1625, theater and Shakespeare's plays survived, although diminished in popularity and possibility. The First Folio of 1623 was reprinted in 1632, both editions relatively expensive books that sold well. But as they aged, Shakespeare's plays were performed less often. For a time the opposition to theater lacked the power to do much other than close down occasional performances, although more often theater closings were due to outbreaks of plague rather than breakout plays. Until, of course, the Puritan Revolution. After the rise to power of Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans, culminating in the execution of King Charles I, all theater was banned. There was no legitimate theater performed in London from 1642 until 1660, when Charles II's ascension to the throne marked the beginning of the period we know as the Restoration.

As it had been under Elizabeth and James, Restoration theater reflected the tastes of the times, and occasionally pandered to the tastes of the trend-setters. While it is probably not true that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written to

please Queen Elizabeth, who had apocryphally regretted the enormously popular Falstaff's death, offstage, in *Henry V*, James I was himself a literate, even scholarly man, and the author of, among other things, a book on demonology and witchcraft. There is no question but that the witches and the show of kings who appear in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* were put there, in large part, specifically to please him. Charles II, on the other hand, was no scholar. He was, instead, a notorious libertine, a bawd, a rake. Known as the "Merry King" he had thirteen acknowledged mistresses, including the actress Nell Gwinn. He loved the theater. But not Shakespeare. When Charles II took the throne in 1660 it had been about fifty years since Shakespeare had written his last play, and perhaps seventy years since his first. They seemed old and tired, rustic and unpolished. They were too tame for the "liberated" and sophisticated times of Charles II. In 1661 Pepy's friend John Evelyn wrote of *Hamlet*, "Now the old play begin[s] to disgust this refined age."

Restoration drama—unlike Elizabethan drama—was blasphemous, topical, scandalous, often just plain coarse and dirty, especially when compared to Shakespeare, who, no prude himself, was infinitely more subtle than Aphra Behn or William Congreve. Moreover, by the time the Civil Wars began in the 1640s only five of Shakespeare's plays were still in the active repertory, *Hamlet, Othello, Julius Ceasar, The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Henry IV, Part 1*. By the time the theaters reopened in 1660 there were virtually no actors left who knew the lines. Thus, during the early years of the Restoration—from about 1660 until 1680—Shakespeare's plays were seldom performed, and when they were, the productions were often rewritten, updated, changed so as to be almost unrecognizable to us. *The Tempest* of the Restoration

was the most successful, but it was a version by John Dryden and William Davenant, an actor, producer and writer who claimed to be Shakespeare's bastard son. Dryden, Davenant and others also adapted many other Shakespearean plays, adjusting them to the tastes and politics of the times.

During this period, too, the actor Thomas Betterton became famous, in large part for his performances as Hamlet. But whose Hamlet was it—Davenant's, or Shakespeare's? Betterton acted for many years in Davenant's version of *Hamlet*, and one member of the audience at Betterton's last performance, at age seventy-four in 1709, wrote that reading the play was to see "dry, incoherent, & broken sentences," but seeing Betterton perform it proved that the play had actually been written "correctly."

The early Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare gave way, roughly between 1680 and sometime in the 1690s, to other considerations. This period included various constitutional crises, and particularly the Exclusion Crisis, in which the king and Parliament maneuvered over, among other things, whether Protestant Charles II's Catholic brother James II could succeed him on the throne. During these years Shakespeare's plays were often rewritten to avoid any hint of taking sides on these or any other political or religious issue of the day. Questions about the authenticity of what appeared on stage were seldom raised, and "Shakespeare" was simply a convenient brand name to assure some measure of box-office success. In many of these versions, in newly written prologues or otherwise, Shakespeare himself was presented as a character, often a king—or even as a royal ghost of great power, as in John Dryden's successful rewriting of *Troilus and Cressida*, which remained in the repertory from 1679 through 1719. Shakespeare him-

self—at least the already mythical Shakespeare—became the point, a kind of authority figure, a John Bull symbol for an England that needed calming.

After the constitutional crises the situation reversed, and every faction tried to adopt and use Shakespeare for its own ends, and to advance its own arguments. As one commentator has observed:

> Whether pro- or anti-Stuart, Tory or Whig, the playwrights of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century share a growing perception and promotion of Shakespeare as both a national father and a domestic one, his plays amendable to readings and re-writings stressing their private pathos, or their patriotic morals, or perhaps both.

Thus Shakespeare's plays became tools to be used to promote whatever agenda the user preferred. Adaptations were cleaned up to reflect the more strict public morals of the post-Restoration Augustan Age. The plays were reworked again, to glorify England's image of itself, or of Shakespeare, now shorthand for everything great about the growing British Empire. The most popular version of *King Lear*—indeed the only one performed for close to 150 years—was Nahum Tate's 1681 version, with a happy ending in which Lear reigns sane and happy and, like Edgar and Cordelia, lives on at the end, testament to the glory of British royalty and England itself.

Yet with the beginning of the eighteenth century, things began to change. Several factors were in play, as always with cultural shifts. The Renaissance—a period not identified by that name until about 1850—had seen the growing ubiquity of the printing press and literacy, which stimulated renewed attention to the Greek and Roman classics, both in

their originals and in translation. Renaissance humanists like Petrarch, Poliziano and Scaliger had concerned themselves with restoring classical writings from the corrupt forms passed down over the centuries in manuscript. This Renaissance/humanist tradition of capturing textual authenticity was well known to eighteenth-century writers and scholars, although few knew it as well as Samuel Johnson. Also at work, and again, particularly with Johnson in England, was neoclassicism, a movement that might be said to have started with the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* by the humanists in the sixteenth century, and advanced most significantly by the French dramatists in the seventeenth century, especially Corneille and Racine, but also by John Dryden with his play *All for Love* in 1671 and Joseph Addison with his own neoclassic drama, *Cato*, in 1713.

For our purposes the most important principle of neoclassicism was its insistence on the Aristotelian concept of the dramatic "unities." This principle held that observing the unities of time, place and action—that is, either comedy or tragedy but not both—in drama helped make a play a better reflection of nature, and, therefore, more likely to be credible and capture the belief and emotions of the audience. In a play of two or three hours, it would not do—or so neoclassic theory held—to have the action spread over many years, or even many days, many places, many themes, or two genres.

One final important consideration before we move on to how Sam and Dave helped bring the pendulum back: Shakespeare needed the passage of time to be considered a "classic" writer. The works of Virgil or Sophocles were not only great, they were also old. The eighteenth century was a hundred years removed from Shakespeare's time. Johnson himself thought that this period was "the term commonly

fixed as the test of literary merit." Thus, according to Johnson, writing nearly 150 years after Shakespeare's death, he "may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration." It was time, in short, to accord Shakespeare the respect accorded the classics, and consider what he wrote, and the context in which he wrote it—in modern terms we might see this as the beginning of what we call historicist criticism. But Johnson's words again are best. "Every man's performance, to be rightly estimated, must be compared with the state of the age in which he lived."

The effort to rediscover the "real" Shakespeare can be said to have begun with Nicholas Rowe, who produced the first attempt at a textually recovered Shakespeare in 1709. Rowe was followed by others, by Alexander Pope for example in the years 1723-25, by Lewis Theobald in 1733, Thomas Hanmer in 1744 and William Warburton in 1747. With all these editions then, why did Samuel Johnson propose yet another edition in 1756? First, let us hear his summary of how the plays first came into print, in the quarto (i.e., pre-First Folio) editions, both good and bad, based on the various manuscripts and cue cards of the theaters and the memories of the actors during and immediately after Shakespeare's lifetime. Remember, as Johnson tells us, that the author himself was "so careless . . . of future fame" that "he made no collection of his works, nor desired to rescue those that had been published . . ." so as to be able to leave "them to the world in their genuine state." Johnson goes on to tell us that

> . . . he sold them, not to be printed, but to be played. They were immediately copied for the actors, and multiplied by

> transcript after transcript, vitiated by the blunders of the penman, or changed by the affectation of the player; perhaps enlarged to introduce a jest, or mutilated to shorten the representation; and printed at last without the concurrence of the author, without the consent of the proprietor, from compilations made by chance or by stealth out of the separate parts written for the theatre: and thus thrust into the world surreptitiously and hastily, they suffered another deprivation from the ignorance and negligence of the printers . . . and in no other age was the art of printing in such unskillful hands.

Starting with this seventeenth-century mess, Johnson conceded that of the various eighteenth-century editors, "not one has left Shakespeare without improvement." But not improvement enough. Johnson promised in his 1756 *Proposals for Printing by Subscription the Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare Corrected and Illustrated by Samuel Johnson* that

> The corruptions of the text will be corrected by a careful collation of the oldest copies, by which it is hoped that many restorations will be made.

When Johnson finally wrote his great "Preface" to his edition in 1765 he reviewed the work of his predecessors in detail, finding a few kind words for their efforts, but finally leaving us with the ultimate damnation by faint praise. Of Rowe, Johnson found that while he "collated the old copies, which none had thought to examine before . . . he rejected whatever he disliked, and thought more of amputation than of cure."

Of Pope the editor, Johnson—who regarded Pope the poet highly—wrote:

> Pope in his edition did many things wrong, and left many things undone; but let him not be defrauded of his due praise: he was the first that knew . . . by what helps the text might be improved. If he inspected the early editions negligently, he taught others to be more accurate.

Johnson disposed next of Theobald, whom he called "a man of narrow comprehension and small acquisitions . . . zealous for minute accuracy, and not negligent in pursuing it," but, Johnson says, "A man so anxiously scrupulous might have been expected to do more . . . ." Theobald, Johnson concluded, was unfortunately "weak and ignorant . . . mean and faithless . . . petulant and ostentatious."

The next edition had been Thomas Hanmer's, in 1744. While Johnson acknowledges Hanmer's diligence and learning, Hanmer unfortunately took Pope and Theobald at face value and "thought himself allowed to extend a little further the license, which had already been carried so far . . . ." Finally Johnson confronted William Warburton's 1747 edition. Here he is circumspect, because Warburton is his friend, yet he finds that

> The original and predominant error of his commentary, is acquiescence in his first thoughts; that precipitation which is produced by consciousness of quick discernment; and that confidence which presumes to do, by surveying the surface, what labour only can perform, by penetrating the bottom.

Thus Johnson offered justification for his own edition. He tells us, in his 1765 "Preface," that "Not a single passage in the whole work has appeared to me corrupt, which I have not attempted to restore, or obscure, which I have not endeavored to illustrate."

But the importance of Johnson's edition of Shakespeare is actually not only, or even primarily, in its restoration of the text to the "real" Shakespeare. His edition does include nearly 15,000 textual emendations—we hope corrections—to earlier printings. He does do a far better job than any of his predecessors had in going back to the First Folio itself and its existing quarto predecessors, focusing attention on what existed before the adaptation craze kicked in. Yet neither he nor we know what the "real" Shakespearean version was, if there had been one at all. As far as we know, Shakespeare himself did not participate directly in the early printings of any of the plays. Seven years after his death the First Folio had been compiled by John Heming and Henry Condell, fellow actors in Shakespeare's company, from what they had at hand, which were probably the existing quartos of the eighteen previously printed plays and some manuscripts and actors' rolls, although none, as far as we know, in Shakespeare's hand. We do not know exactly what all of their sources were.

Johnson himself had been thinking about this problem of the lack of an authoritative text for a long time. As early as 1745 when he published his *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth,* he had attached to it a single page entitled *Proposals For Printing a New EDITION of the Plays of William Shakespeare, with Notes Critical Explanatory, in which the text will be corrected; the Various Readings remarked: the conjectures of former Editors examin'd, and their Omissions supply'd.* The title was almost as long as the rest of the text, which merely compared the proposed price, favorably, to the prices of the Pope, Theobald and Hanmer editions, and included examples from the *Macbeth* notes. But Jacob Tonson, printer, in 1745 claimed the copyright to Shakespeare, and wrote a

threatening letter to Johnson's printer, Edward Cave. The edition proposed in 1745 was not to be forthcoming soon.

Yet Johnson, as we have seen, did not forget the idea. In 1753 he wrote a "Dedication" for his friend the Bluestocking Charlotte Lennox's *Shakespeare Illustrated.* This work was itself a collection of the sources of Shakespeare's plots, with translation and commentary where necessary. In his dedication Johnson alluded to what would be the great theme of his own Shakespearean criticism, Shakespeare's adherence to the real emotions and actions of human beings, not "Phantoms that strut upon the stage." And during the years between his *Macbeth* observations and Mrs. Lennox's book, Johnson studied Shakespeare diligently, collecting thousands of quotations for his great *Dictionary,* in progress between 1747 and 1755. Then, with all this behind him, he issued his 1756 *Proposals for Printing by Subscription the Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare Corrected and Illustrated by Samuel Johnson,* the promises and premises of which you have already read.

He proposed that the edition would be ready for publication in eighteen months. It took, of course, until 1765, nearly nine years. When it did finally appear, it was, more than anything else, the "Preface" to his edition that allowed his contemporaries, and successive generations, to read Shakespeare in a better light, free from the distortions imposed by ignorance, politics and ambition over the 150 years between Shakespeare's death and Johnson's edition. Many Johnsonian scholars consider the "Preface" among the two or three best things we have from him. Indeed his prose is, as sometimes it is not, accessible as well as elegant, and sensible as well as sonorous. While it has been argued that Johnson's observations are not necessarily original, they are incisive. They clear the fog, they state the whole

case for Shakespeare in a way that gives us the forest clearly rendered, rather than merely a better view of the individual trees. His printing of the individual plays, with extensive notes, keeps his promise to restore what had been corrupt, and to illuminate what had become obscure. The appended notes and critical remarks about each play reflect Johnson's erudition, his common sense, his sensitivity to shades of meaning, to words.

But the "Preface" tells us something more, something useful not only to the student struggling with a language different from his own, one that, even in Johnson's day, in Johnson's own words, had "become obsolete." This is because for Johnson Shakespeare was primarily a poet, and he approached the plays as literature, as poetry, not as drama. In his *Dictionary* Johnson defines "drama" as "a poem accommodated to action." Johnson himself, plagued by near-blindness and weak hearing, seldom attended the theater, and most of what he saw or heard he did not like; he was not seduced into the "suspension of disbelief," and even his friend Garrick, the greatest actor of his age, was not persuasive as a performer to Johnson. To digress for a moment, Johnson also told Garrick he could not longer visit him behind the scenes to watch the plays, because "the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses do make my genitals to quiver." (Boswell, in his *Life*, reports that Johnson said the effect was to "excite my amorous propensities," but both versions come to us secondhand.) In any event, for Johnson, Shakespeare was literature, to be read, carefully, not necessarily something to watch. After all, he wrote, "A play read, affects the mind like a play acted."

In reading Shakespeare, therefore, Johnson reminds us that we must always be conscious that "the English nation,

in the time of Shakespeare, was yet struggling to emerge from barbarity." Shakespeare's England was in its "infancy," Johnson tells us, in that literacy itself "was an accomplishment still valued for its rarity." To write for and appeal to audiences largely composed of the "vulgar," the "unenlightened," and the illiterate (remember, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre could accommodate nearly three thousand spectators), Shakespeare had to find "strange events and fabulous transactions," and borrow popular plots, "for his audiences could not have followed him through the intricacies of the drama, had they not held the thread of the story in their hands." These stories, he points out, "which are now [1765] found only in remote authors," were then "accessible and familiar."

The "Preface" proceeds in an orderly manner. It begins by explaining the need to distinguish between works that are merely old and works that are also important and good. The ultimate test that can be applied, he tells us, is "length of duration and continuance of esteem." Shakespeare, as you have read, now can claim "the dignity of an ancient, and . . . the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration." Then Johnson sums up, in a brief paragraph, everything we need to know to make us want to return to these works again and again:

> Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight a-while, by that novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest; but the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth. Shakespeare is

> above all writers . . . the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirrour of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion.

If there were time and space enough, I would reproduce the rest of Johnson's great "Preface," but there is not, and it can easily be found and studied as it deserves. In addition to being remarkable in its Johnsonian command of the English language, it may be in some sense the first fully achieved piece of modern literary criticism, although fans of John Dryden's 1668 essay, *Of Dramatick Poesie,* may disagree. Criticism itself is now, of course, a recognized genre, but it was much less so 250 years ago. How much the "Preface" helped that recognition may be subject to argument by modern critics, just as they argue about whether it represents the last gasp of neoclassical criticism, or the first gasp of romanticism. But it is beyond argument that the "Preface" restored Shakespeare and his plays to the realm of rational and objective and text-based analysis. Johnson describes how and why Shakespeare is the poet of nature, and how he was limited by his age, his audience, and even his education, and how those very limitations became strengths and sources of dramatic power in the hands of genius. Johnson dismisses and discards the neoclassic theory of the uni-

ties as necessary to the power of drama. He defends Shakespeare against the attacks of Voltaire and others who argued that Shakespeare's disregard of the unities of time and place and action makes his plays incapable of engaging and moving the audience. Never again was a serious argument in favor of the necessity of the unities an important element of critical theatrical discourse.

Johnson then moved on to a discussion of Shakespeare's language, which Johnson's edition of the texts does much to restore. Considering the tendency of language to reflect fashion, Johnson finds that Shakespeare's language captures

> . . . a stile which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of phraseology so consonant and congenial . . . as to remain settled and unaltered. . . . [Shakespeare] deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of our language.

Next, Johnson does Shakespeare the greatest honor, by daring to identify and discuss his faults. Much of the contemporary criticism of Johnson's edition of *Shakespeare* focused on this fault-finding in the "Preface"; this reaction was the voice of Bardolatry outraged, but for the most part it has survived poorly indeed compared to the legitimacy of Johnson's criticism. Johnson also treats questions of Shakespeare's plots and the challenges to his greatness created by Shakespeare's lack of formal schooling. Johnson reviews and largely dismisses the work of his own predecessor editors, as we have seen, but in the end Johnson produced what may have been the first variorum edition of any author, bringing together the work of previous editors, and providing comparisons and commentary. He had promised in his 1756 *Proposals* that his edition would exhibit

> All the observable varieties of all the copies that can be found, that, if the reader is not satisfied with the editor's determination, he may have the means of chusing better for himself. . . .

Johnson did not quite manage to include or review "all the observable" copies, in part because Garrick, for one, knowing well how Johnson was careless and hard on books, refused to lend the many and unique valuable texts in his own library. Nevertheless, Johnson exceeded the work of his predecessors in this regard by orders of magnitude.

He once had famously admonished Boswell, "My dear friend, clear your mind of cant." And that is what Johnson did for Shakespeare's readers; he cleared their minds of more than 150 years of accumulated cant, and helped them, and us, find ways into the real and complex world of Shakespeare. For Johnson, part of Shakespeare's greatness lay in his stature as a moral writer. In his plays good is not always rewarded, and evil is not always punished. Both, however, are displayed in full. Complexity of emotion and response is disclosed, and Shakespeare's palette includes shades of grey. He acknowledges what nature decrees for mankind—not merely right and wrong, but the vast space in between. Johnson reminded the world that

> This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of Life . . . human sentiments in human language. . . .

Of course Johnson was not alone in his effort to make Shakespeare both relevant and accessible. While Johnson saw Shakespeare primarily as a poet, and his work as literature to be read, Johnson's friend and former student David

Garrick saw Shakespeare primarily as a dramatist, and his work not, as Johnson thought, "poetry accommodated to action," but as words needing action to bring them to life. Yet Johnson and Garrick, the closest of friends, did have at least one essential common view of why Shakespeare was and would always be thought great. Perhaps this fundamental agreement is best expressed in one couplet from the "Prologue" Johnson wrote, and Garrick delivered, at the opening in 1747 of Garrick's new Drury Lane Theatre. In part a paean to Shakespeare, the "Prologue" is also a paean to theater itself, and this couplet summarizes what Johnson and Garrick understood about why Shakespeare was both universal and immortal. It is because Shakespeare is the ultimate proof that

> The Drama's Laws the Drama's Patrons give,
> For we that live to please, must please to live.

That Shakespeare would again and forever please drama's patrons was the lifework of David Garrick.

Garrick, nearly nine years younger than Johnson, had also been raised in Lichfield. He was one of less than a dozen students Johnson had been able to recruit for his short-lived school at Edial. When the school failed, in 1737, and Johnson set out to make his way in London, young Garrick walked there with him. Although his stated purpose was to enroll in a school and then study for the bar, his father's death led him instead to enter the wine trade with his brother. From the beginning, however, Garrick's real interest was the stage. His play *Lethe* was first performed in London in 1740 and stayed in the repertoire for many years thereafter. Garrick himself took to the stage in 1741, anonymously

making his debut in the role of Shakespeare's King Richard III. Garrick was an immediate sensation, initially as an actor, then as a playwright, and, after 1747, as proprietor of Drury Lane. He became famous nationally and even internationally—not easy for an actor before television or film or radio—and wealthy and respectable, too, the first actor to be accepted as a gentleman by virtually all of English society.

Garrick's contributions to the stage were enormous. It was he, for example, who introduced sophisticated concepts of lighting and scenery, who first darkened the theater, who finally eliminated the ancient practice of letting wealthy men sit on the stage to be closer to the actresses, who introduced the concept of rehearsals, and, finally, who created the naturalistic, as opposed to the declaratory, style of acting. He also introduced the cult of celebrity—he being the principal celebrity, with Garrick teacups, perfume bottles, snuff boxes, plates and pictures, all contributing to his wealth and fame. Yet from the first he saw that his celebrity would ultimately be tied to Shakespeare. Even before taking the theatrical world by storm with his Richard III in 1741, he had in the late 1730s supported the efforts of a group known as the Shakespeare Ladies' Club to have a statue of Shakespeare placed in Westminster Abbey. Remember that by the 1730s Shakespeare was seldom produced, other than a few plays, and those largely in adaptations we would scarcely recognize today. Garrick saw in the Shakespeare Ladies' Club a sign that there were those who would welcome and support more and better Shakespeare, as a matter of patriotism and as an antidote to the bawdy Restoration comedy and the then-popular Italian *opera seria* and *opera bufa*, often shallow and tedious, if not downright silly. After the passage of the Licensing Act of 1737 the censors

made a return to Shakespeare even more appealing for theatrical managers, since there were few "approved" new plays. Garrick better than others capitalized on the opportunity.

He first played Hamlet in 1742, and over the course of his career played that part 90 times, along with 113 performances as Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing*, 85 as Lear, 83 as Richard III, 60 as Romeo, and numerous performances as Macbeth, Henry IV, Iago and Othello and others. In addition to acting in Shakespeare he also adapted more than twelve of the plays for his own use. Often, but not always, he restored the texts, using the available eighteenth-century editions, as well as drawing on his own unmatched collection of early pre-Folio printings. While hardly a purist —he did favor "improved" versions of Shakespeare in which the parts he played were "enhanced" in one way or another—by the end of Garrick's career in 1776 Shakespeare was again as regular an offering on the stage as he had been during his own lifetime. During Garrick's years as manager of Drury Lane, for example, Shakespeare represented 27 percent of all performances of tragedy and 16 percent of all performances of comedy presented there.

No doubt exists, however, about which of Garrick's numerous promotions of Shakespeare had the greatest and most long-lived impact. It was the great Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769. According to legend the idea of commemorating Shakespeare in his home town of Stratford-upon-Avon can be traced to local outrage in 1758 over the fact that the then owner of Shakespeare's house had dared to cut down a mulberry tree allegedly planted by Shakespeare's own hand. The populace drove the landowner out of town, and the tree, purchased by a shrewd carpenter, was carved into a variety of objects, including a chair, designed by Hogarth,

for Garrick, which can now be seen at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington. But, in a very modern chamber-of-commerce spirit, the town leaders some years later gave Garrick the equivalent of the keys to the city, sent in an elaborate box carved from the same mulberry tree, and requesting a portrait of Shakespeare's greatest representative to hang in the new Town Hall then under construction.

Garrick quickly recognized an opportunity to promote himself, his theater, Shakespeare, and Stratford. The Jubilee took shape as he planned for a three-day festival of events. An elaborate amphitheater along the banks of the Avon was to be built to accommodate the crowds during the indoor programs, which would include dedication ceremonies, concerts, balls, and masquerades. Outdoors there would be processions, fireworks, and even a horse race. Garrick devoted substantial attention to the planning of the Jubilee, even to specifying the prices for rooms and meals in town. His partners in the Drury Lane grudgingly cooperated—although Garrick's proposed procession of over one hundred Shakespearean characters in Drury Lane costumes was vetoed because of the owners' fear that rain would ruin the costumes—and enthusiasm throughout England, stirred up by Garrick's manipulation of the press, resulted in enormous crowds. The event itself was an oddity, and belittled by some, including Horace Walpole and Samuel Foote, the actor and playwright, once Garrick's friend, but never thereafter. There was, for instance, no performance of any of the plays. And it did in fact rain—the River Avon flooded, mud was three feet deep, and the fireworks and horse race were ruined.

But the high point of the Jubilee was, in effect, an exclamation point on the resurrection of Shakespeare in the

eighteenth century. Garrick himself wrote a celebratory "Ode" for the dedication of both the new Town Hall and a statue of Shakespeare. Delivered during the second day of the Jubilee, Garrick recited it to background music composed by Thomas Arne, better known to us as the composer of "Rule, Britannia." This, at least, was a success. There is no doubt that Garrick's presence on a stage was mesmerizing. Even in the rain and mud, with a musical background and text that is not exactly Shakespearean, it was a triumph. Before two thousand spectators Garrick was at his best. Even his rival actor, William Smith, from Covent Garden, wrote this reminiscence, forty years later, in his copy of the "Ode":

> I heard with rapture the great genius, author of the Ode recite it at the Jubilee in Stratford upon Avon, amidst admiring multitudes. . . . I love, honored and respected his virtues and his talents, and ever thought one of the fortunate circumstances of my life was living in the days of Garrick.

If the Jubilee itself was subject to ridicule, Garrick soon turned it into a triumph. He put together a new play, based on the events of the Jubilee, making fun of the crowds, the weather, the shortages and the price gouging. It also included nineteen processionals, using Drury Lane actors and costumes, depicting the high points of many of the plays. Was it a success? It ran for ninety-two successive nights at the Drury Lane, the longest continuous run of any play in eighteenth-century London.

It cannot be said that without Sam and Dave old Bill would be forgotten today, or known only to that diminishing few who also still recognize the names of Fletcher and Beaumont, Marlowe, and Ben Jonson. But it can be said that

the impulse to revive and restore Shakespeare, and the modern scholarly tradition of critical attention to text, and even the beginning of Shakespeare as an industry, were all nurtured by these two old friends, who, with different points of view, and in very different ways, had much to do with what we today know and see and think of Shakespeare.

Perhaps it is best to close with a few lines from Garrick's "Ode":

> Now swell at once the choral song
> Roll the full tide of harmony along;
> Let rapture sweep the trembling strings,
> And fame expanding all her wings,
> With all her trumpet-tongues proclaim,
> The lov'd, rever'd, immortal name
> Shakespeare! Shakespeare! Shakespeare!

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