A Splendid Festival

BOSWELL VERSUS DIBDIN

Of the many eyewitness accounts of the Jubilee, that of James Boswell is perhaps the most rapturous and that of Charles Dibdin the most cynical. Although Dibdin's story was written thirty years after the event, he protests that it "may be depended on as correct and faithful." He should have been in a position to know the inside story, for he was "consulted from first to last" in the preparations. Boswell was only an observer, but he was the ideal observer with a fine eye for detail and a quick reaction to personalities. His story was written during and immediately after the Jubilee in his private journal and for the public press. Both Boswell and Dibdin bring to the telling of the tale real feeling and a keen sense of personal involvement, and yet their versions differ so widely that the two points of view may serve as a sort of stereopticon to bring the affair into three-dimensional focus.

Charles Dibdin was one of the corps of composers who supplied Garrick with tunes for Shakespeare's Garland, the ditties designed for group singing at the Jubilee with lyrics mostly by Garrick plus a few by Jerningham and Bickerstaffe. Dibdin was a popular composer and a fluent one. With his autobiography he published six hundred songs selected from his complete writings. The other composers in the group were Ailmon, Aylward, Barthelemon, and Boyce—all of them popular writers representing no mean competition. Dr. William Boyce would today be judged the best of the group, and he had already
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had considerable experience writing for some forerunners of the Jubilee. He set to music William Havard's *Ode to Shakespeare*, forerunner of Garrick's ode, and wrote the music for Harlequin's *Invasion*, another forerunner of Jubilee procedure. That pantomime included "Heart of Oak," a sea chanty with words by Garrick which is not yet forgotten. Dibdin, however, considered himself a cut above the others. He objected strenuously to Garrick's assigning a lyric to several composers and choosing the product that best suited his purpose for the *Garland*. Just what that purpose was was clear enough in Garrick's own mind, but, being no trained musician, he had difficulty in conveying the idea to his staff. Garrick had read Percy's *Reliques*, and had modeled his lyrics on the old English songs he found there. The flavor of antiquity was meant to waft the Jubilee back to the proper historical era. He wanted melodies that would reinforce his antiquarian interests without offending modern taste or putting a strain on modern ears, and melodies that could be picked up at one hearing. This quasi-historical approach was something of a strain on Dibdin, who thought he knew how music should be written. "I was slave to it for months," he wrote. "I set and re-set songs till my patience was exhausted, which were received or rejected just as ignorance or caprice prevailed." Dibdin always insisted that Garrick could not tell one tune from another, and during the writing of the *Garland* might cheerfully accept one morning a tune he failed to recognize as the very tune he had categorically rejected the night before. To ignorance and caprice Garrick added a vanity that caused many a crisis, as on the day when Dibdin praised the lyric "Sisters of the tuneful strain" as the best of the lot only to find that it had been written by Jerningham, not Garrick.

Dibdin owed Garrick money, and only the debt kept him from abandoning the trying work. If he showed signs of rebellion, Garrick cracked that whip over his head. And for all his
work he was paid twenty guineas, and spent twenty-six pounds on the trip to Stratford. How "correct and faithful" this story is, one cannot tell; certainly Dibdin can be proved wrong in his statement that Thomas Arne was paid no more than he, for Garrick's correspondence contains Arne's receipt for sixty guineas paid for the ode alone. Anyway, Dibdin's picture of backstage life is an ugly one, soured by grudges kept warm for thirty years.

Boswell, on the other hand, approached the Jubilee in festive mood. Not long before, he had made his trip to Corsica and had met the celebrated patriot Paoli, who was so much admired at the time that recipes in the ladies' magazines were named for him. Boswell's book on Corsica, as the newspapers even at the moment were saying, was in a third edition with seven thousand copies sold, and the French and Dutch translations were announced. He had deeper cause to rejoice, for he had just won promise of the hand of his loved cousin Margaret Montgomery. The summer sessions of the Edinburgh court over, he set out for London pleased with himself and with all he saw. His primary reason for going to London was to get medical treatment, but his spirits were high and the very sight of London, as always, sent them even higher.

He arrived in the city on Friday evening, September 1, resolved not to go to the Jubilee, but he soon succumbed to the "whirlpool of curiosity, which could not fail to carry me down." Next morning he went to the office of his physician to postpone treatment until after he should return from Stratford, and went to the shop of an embroiderer carrying a paper pattern he had devised for a Corsican cap. He had determined to attend the Jubilee masquerade ball dressed as a Corsican chieftain. On Sunday he had dinner with his physician, Sir John Pringle, who manifested little sympathy with the Jubilee and kept the conversation on the barbarities of Shakespeare and the bad manners of the citizens of Edinburgh. Monday Boswell bought
and borrowed his Corsican costume: scarlet waistcoat and breeches, a coat with a Moor’s head (the crest of Corsica) ringed with laurel (presumably Shakespeare’s), black spatter-dashes, musket, stiletto, pistol, and cartridge pouch. The cap turned out well, with a blue cockade and feather on one side and VIVA LA LIBERTA embroidered in gold letters on the front. Then he found a perfect treasure, a staff for climbing Corsican mountains, fatefully carved with the Avonian swan. He was not long in grasping this amazing fusion of symbols. He paid six shillings for the staff, and after the bargain was closed, confessed to the shopkeeper, “Why, Sir, this vine is worth any money. It is a Jubilee staff. That bird is the bird of Avon.” On Tuesday morning he set out for Stratford, lost his pocket-book, found it again, and arrived Wednesday noon in a real Jubilee frame of mind.

Not so Dibdin. As Garrick left for Stratford, Dibdin had staged a grand rebellion, asking that his songs be returned, refusing to complete one of Garrick’s projects assigned to him when it was too late to assign it to anyone else. Garrick had written a morning serenade, “Let Beauty with the sun arise, / To Shakespeare tribute pay.” It was to be sung under the windows of reigning beauties and the more noteworthy visitors, and was to set the whole tone of ye Olde English rustic festival. After Garrick left, Dibdin reconsidered, fearing Garrick would represent his refusal as “a meditated insult to the public.”

I therefore changed my mind, set the words, with accompaniments, as everybody knows, for guitars and flutes, got down to Stratford the evening before the Jubilee, made the musicians sit up all night, and as soon as it was daylight we sallied forth as a band of masqueraders, and to the astonishment of Garrick serenaded him with the very thing he had set his heart upon, but which he had given up as lost.

Why professional musicians should have to sit up all night
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learning music anyone can read at sight is not explained. Be that as it may, no sleep and a diet of crow made an inauspicious beginning for a festive occasion.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER FIFTH

Wednesday dawned fair and clear. Thirty cannon on the banks of the Avon announced the Jubilee dawn. All the bells of Stratford rang, and the mummers sang merrily under the windows of William Hunt's home, where lay the Steward. These dawn ceremonies have been reverently preserved in later Jubilees. As the masquers moved through the town, early risers joined them and joined the serenading beneath the windows of dukes and earls and society beauties and current celebrities. Even Dibdin was moved to surprise by the "large assembly of elegance and fashion."

Very early the burgesses assembled at the Guild Hall and transacted a traditional duty of the day which had no connection with the Jubilee—the election of a mayor for the coming year—before they marched in full regalia to the new Town Hall. In the large upstairs ballroom the morning light flickered dramatically through the transparencies that filled the windows and fell on the two new portraits of Garrick and Shakespeare, as William Hunt delivered to the Steward the insignia of his office, a wand of mulberry wood and a medallion carved from the wood, saying, "Sir, You, who have done the memory of Shakespeare so much honour, are esteemed the fittest person to be appointed the first Steward of his Jubilee." And at the words all the cannon fired again and all the bells rang.

During breakfast served in the ballroom the drums and fifes of the Warwickshire militia played for the first time Dibdin's
ballad “Warwickshire.” It was to become the hit tune of the year, part of London stage and social life, yet remaining peculiarly and officially the property of the Warwickshire militia; for it is still the regimental quickstep, and has gone around the world with Shakespeare’s embattled townsmen. Boswell happily judged it “a ballad of great merit of its kind, lively, spirited, full of witty turns and even delicate fancies. Mr. Garrick’s words and Mr. Dibdin’s music went charmingly together and we all joined in the chorus.” The chorus sings: “The Will of all Wills was a Warwickshire Will,” “The man of all men was a Warwickshire man,” and—determined to whitewash the deer-stealing episode—“The thief of all thieves was a Warwickshire thief,” for he had stolen not only the deer, but also all the beauties of Nature.

At eleven o’clock all marched in solemn procession to the church that had rounded the cycle of Shakespeare’s life, and there placed wreaths and garlands on the bust, so many that one observer said the bust peeped from the shrubbery like the god Pan. Then the audience heard Dr. Thomas Arne conduct a corps of brilliant musicians through the score of his oratorio Judith, book by Isaac Bickerstaffe, dedicated to Garrick. Dibdin found no fault with the music, “one of the noblest compositions that ever stamped fame upon a musician.” He did, however, find fault with Garrick’s scheduling the oratorio at this point in the program. “Its beauties were not felt.” Even Joseph Cradock found it a bit dull for a day of gaiety. Garrick’s Vagary: or England Run Mad, one of the pamphlets on the Jubilee that stocked the London bookstalls a few weeks later, ironically protested that it was perfectly appropriate, a compliment to Shakespeare’s older daughter, for there was no oratorio named “William.” But Boswell, at least, was not bored with religious observances on such a day. He wished, on the contrary, that prayers and a short sermon had been added to express appropriate
gratitude to the Creator. If a twentieth-century reader finds an oratorio inappropriate to a festive occasion, he forgets the place of the oratorio in eighteenth-century social life. Shortly after Garrick’s Jubilee, a jubilee was held in West Wycombe in imitation of Garrick, the purpose being to dedicate a temple (i.e., summerhouse) to Bacchus. The oratorio *Jephtha* was given, the guests attending not only the performance but the rehearsals as well. We might not choose *Jephtha* for a twentieth-century bacchanal, but in 1769 things were different.

The religious ceremony past, it was “desired that the Shakespeare favours be universally worn.” These were of Garrick’s design, a medal to be worn about the neck, on the obverse a head of Shakespeare and the motto “We shall not look upon his like again,” on the reverse, “Jubilee at Stratford in honour and to the memory of Shakespeare September 1769—D. G. Steward.” Westwood of Birmingham had struck the medals and they were worn by all guests and townspeople. Garrick had designed rainbow-striped ribbon that had been specially woven at Coventry. Mr. Jackson of Tavistock Street, London, had set up shop in Chapel Street where all returning from the church could conveniently read his placard.

**SHAKESPEARE’S JUBILEE**

A Ribband has been made on purpose at Coventry called the Shakespeare ribband: it is an imitation of the rainbow, which uniting the colours of all parties, is likewise an emblem of the great variety of his genius.

“Each change of many coloured life he drew.”

—Johnson

Boswell approved. “I dare say Mr. Samuel Johnson never imagined that this line of his would appear on a bill to promote the sale of ribbands. Since I have mentioned this illustrious author, I cannot but regret that he did not honour Shakespeare’s
jubilee with his presence, which would have added much dignity to our meeting."

Thus resplendent the entire population paraded through the town to the Birthplace led by the musicians. The papers as well as the visitors commented on the complete democracy in the air. Hairdressers and earls, townspeople, runaway apprentices, lords and ladies and actors all rejoiced together. Garrick was sparkling, the air was sparkling, Stratford was at its best. The Birthplace in Henley Street was ready to turn an honest penny—the Swan and Maidenhead by wetting any throats dried by too much singing, the bookshop by selling Shakespeare's Garland so all could join in the chorus. Garrick had written a special song for the Birthplace and he led the group in singing it:

Here Nature nursed her darling boy,
From whom all care and sorrow fly,
Whose harp the Muses strung.
From heart to heart let joy rebound!
Now! Now we tread enchanted ground.
Here Shakespeare walked and sung.

Then the parade moved toward the river and entered the Rotunda. Outside it still looked a bit thrown together, but the banners waved brightly, and within, all flaws were covered by the much-talked-of crimson velvet curtains.

Boswell's story of the Jubilee is redolent of the atmosphere of Stratford streets and inns and homes. He moved through the town greeting acquaintances from all over England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. He was naively pleased to meet for the first time performers whom he had heretofore seen only on the stage. He records his joy at the sight of the lovely ladies and the many celebrities, his relish for new acquaintances made in holiday mood, his interest in gossip of London business. He reminds one that the Jubilee basically was a social event. From other
accounts also come pleasant tales of that cheerful day: Of admiration excited by eight gentlemen from Dover who displayed their Jubilee home, a large wagon fitted out as combination sleeping, eating, and living quarters which they had parked in a proto-trailer camp as unvexed by the housing shortage as snails. Of quick trips to see the horses and place bets on the sweepstake race. Of Foote, a great favorite, who was courted by the crowds, and who favored them that day with one of his most famous jests. A large, stocky man officiously attempted to scrape acquaintance with him, and he stared at the mancoldly and asked where he might come from. “Essex,” said the man, who must have resembled the draught horses from that region. “Indeed?” said Foote. “And who drove you?”

Dinner was served in the Rotunda with John Payton of the White Lion catering. Glees, carols, and catches rang in the hall in what Garrick hoped was the true style and spirit of Olde England. “Sweet Willy-O” was an instant hit—so “tender and pathetic” Boswell thought as he sang, “The pride of all Nature was Sweet Willy-O.” Dibdin recorded no glow of pleasure at the fresh laurels that were his that day. When Stratford presented Garrick with the goblet carved from the mulberry tree and mounted in silver, and he responded with a toast in song prepared for the occasion, Boswell thought the chorus “very fine,” and the words later were translated into French by the Mercure de France for the edification of Garrick’s admirers in Paris. Dibdin thought only that Garrick could not sing a note. Tune or none, Garrick made the point:

All shall yield to the mulberry tree,
    Bend to thee
    Blest mulberry.
Matchless was he
    Who planted thee,
And thou, like him, immortal be!
When the singers adjourned to dress for the ball and then returned in the direction of the Rotunda, Stratford blazed with light. The great transparencies gleamed in the town, and the streets were lighted with a brilliance that was arranged so as to increase as one neared the Rotunda. There is a book named Splendid Occasions in English History, 1520–1947, in which the author, Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, describes twelve of the great pageants that have illuminated England, among them the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the Progresses of Queen Elizabeth, the Coronation of Charles the Second, the Institution of the Order of the Bath. Sixth of the twelve is Garrick's Jubilee. For obvious reasons Mr. Fletcher concentrates on this evening. Since Garrick knew well the value of climax, one can deduce what bravura effects must have been ruined by the rain next day from the fact that his second-best efforts rivaled in splendor any of the pageants England has accorded her monarchs. It stands alone in the eighteenth century as a classic example of unclassical restraint. Only knowing the dazzle of Wednesday night can one realize the disappointment when Thursday's show did not come off. Jopson's Coventry Mercury was almost inconsolable, although the chance to watch richly dressed peers fall into the flooded ditches had its simple pleasures also. But on Wednesday night Warwickshire crowded the banks of the Avon and trembled with awful joy as the handiwork of Domenico Angelo, pyrotechnist to kings, shattered forever the quiet of the countryside.

The Rotunda was the grandstand. All along the river were temporary buildings fantastically shaped and lighted to achieve a harmonious whole. The cynosure was the transparency designed by Sir Joshua Reynolds. From across the Avon it glowed and moved with unearthly life. Then suddenly in the sky above it flared a great sun of shifting colors, and all along the banks on both sides rose the sun's comets, flight after flight in rapid
succession. Then from the farther bank shot up sheets of flame, ear-splitting and brain-dazzling. Then up the river and down as far as one could see, long thin sprays of colored light curved in perfect rainbows, one of the chosen symbols of Shakespeare’s genius, a lingering splendor that renewed itself and hung in the air. And beneath the arcs the famous old Clopton Bridge had its gaudiest night; three turrets had been built where they would reflect best in the water below, and along the parapet raced blazing serpents, from shore to turret, from turret to turret, miraculously coiling themselves and returning to shore.

The Rotunda needed stage-lighting to give it glamor. Inside, the enormous candelabra shone on acres of gold paint and crimson velvet, on gorgeous dresses moving in the country dances that Garrick considered more “antique” and “English” and better suited to the occasion than court dances. Special music had been written for these dances, and they became a fad in high society. John Payton did not stint the toasts to the Bard. Toasts and ancient songs and antique dances continued till three o’clock. Then the lights went out, leaving the great comet, outshone for a time by earth-bound luminaries, to come into its own.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER SIXTH

Two hours’ sleep and the cannons roared again. The bells rang and the masquers sang, “Let Beauty with the sun arise, To Shakespeare tribute pay.” “What sun?” said Beauty, and went back to sleep. Rain was falling in torrents, as the country folk had predicted, from a flick of the comet’s tail. This was the day set for the procession of Shakespearean characters to crown the new statue. Expensive costumes brought from London,
elaborate stage properties all summer in the making, actors
cajoled and lured to Warwickshire to walk the parts—and now
this! This was the day for the performance of Garrick’s ode,
and his barber, unsteadied by toasts to the Bard, slit his face
from lip to chin, that mobile face on which so much depended.

The procession met in the improvised greenroom. More than
sixty years later Henry Angelo, son of Domenico, recalled the
fine pair of wings in which he was to have “walked” Ariel in
the procession that never processed. He remembered vividly
the hours spent in that room while the best theatrical talent of
England wilted as the sodden air impregnated plumes and
veiling. George Colman was urbane enough through it all.
Why not? It was not Covent Garden’s funeral. James Lacy
of Drury Lane energetically damned Warwickshire weather,
damned the obnoxious presence of Foote and his gang, and
damned Davy for thinking up the whole stupid plan. Davy
was still oozing blood from his barber’s ministrations, and Mrs.
Garrick was trailing him with wet cobwebs, tea leaves, and other
styptics. Repeatedly the procession formed as the rain lessened
a bit only to dissolve in a fresh downpour. Finally at two
o’clock all hope for the procession was abandoned. As Garrick,
still cheerful, left the room, he asked Foote, “What do you think
of the weather, Sam?” “Think of it?” Foote sneered. “What
any sensible man would think of it. It is God’s judgment on
vanity and idolatry.”

Percy Fitzgerald, Foote’s biographer, said that Garrick on
that occasion deserved Goldsmith’s exquisite compliment, “An
abridgement of all that was pleasant in man,” and all that Foote
could do “did not succeed in ruffling the actor’s sweet temper,
or in making him depart from his rule of restraint.” Gold-
smith’s words were not intended as unqualified approbation, and
Dr. Johnson meant his words on “the gaiety of nations” as
something less than the highest praise; yet they bring to mind
the reiterated "Sweet Shakespeare," "Gentle Shakespeare," "I did love the man" spoken by the comrades of the other man whose "memory was being perpetuated" that day for Stratford. One of Shakespeare's contemporaries seems to have thought the Bard borrowed his plumage and considered himself the only Shakescene in the country, and several of Garrick's fellows thought that of him; but perhaps the two men had a certain sweetness in common. And if, like Dibdin, you will not grant the sweetness, at least you must admit the restraint Fitzgerald praised. It was the tremendous self-discipline of a great actor that carried Garrick through that dreadful day to victory.

Garrick had come to Stratford to honor the god of his idolatry, and he was not to be deterred by natural nor intellectual climate. One he could control; and he proceeded to do so in one of the greatest performances of his life. The hundreds of dispirited visitors, embarrassed performers, gloating enemies, and mortified friends splashed through the flood to the Rotunda, which was leaking and threatening instant disintegration. The Avon flowed sluggishly two feet deep on the Bankcroft. The Rotunda had been built for a thousand spectators. Two thousand packed it that day, and they never forgot what they heard there. They never let anyone who missed it forget what he had missed. Even Dibdin called it pure magic.

Dr. Thomas Arne raised his baton and a hundred musicians began the *Ode to Shakespeare*, whose charming, florid music is still heard occasionally in England. The consistent triple time was saved from any monotony by Garrick's innovation of spoken recitative with ostinato accompaniment. The words of the ode fall far short of the ideal of good poetry; occasional verse for music is rarely that. Once in a while there occurs *Comus* or *Cynthia's Revels*, but Garrick was not of the caliber of those authors. This is typical actor's poetry, a cento of Milton, Shakespeare, and the books of Handel's oratorios. It is derivative,
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disconnected, and keyed to rhapsodic nationalism and poetic idolatry. But dramatically it was keyed to the occasion and phonetically it was keyed to Garrick's voice. The ode when it was printed was derided by many critics, but of Garrick's reading that day there was only one opinion. He wrung extravagant praise from his enemies and reduced his friends almost to hysterics.

By the time the lovely Mrs. Baddeley had finished her big soprano solo, Boswell was examining his soul to see if his reaction to her glamor, which was the rage of London, cast any slur on his love for Cousin Margaret (he forgave himself). Garrick was carefully calculating audience reaction. He saw that he “had it made” at that point and knew that from then on he could do anything he liked with the audience. The song, which became a standard anthology piece for a century and a half, was encored, and Garrick, in a sudden move, flung open the big doors so all could see the Avon lapping at the very lintels, and turned his misfortune into jest. He knew he could trust Mrs. Baddeley to turn jest into sentiment.

Thou soft-flowing Avon, by thy silver stream,
Of things more than mortal, sweet Shakespear would dream,
The fairies by moonlight dance round his green bed,
For hallow'd the turf is which pillow'd his head.

Flow on, silver Avon, in song ever flow,
Be the swans on thy bosom still whiter than snow,
Ever full be thy stream, like his fame may it spread,
And the turf ever hallow'd which pillow'd his head.

Laughter at Garrick's rueful gestures toward the all-too-full and spreading Avon melted into tears at the rippling beauty of the
singer's cadenzas reinforced by her own rippling beauty and by English love of a good sport who can take a joke even when it is disaster.

In one section of the ode Garrick had his first chance to spread himself in the role of Falstaff, a character he never attempted on stage. This was the section of the poem that gained great popularity. Wit, Fancy, and Humor impregnated the mind of Shakespeare,

Which teeming soon, as soon brought forth,
Not a tiny spurious birth,
But out a mountain came,
A mountain of delight!

LAUGHTER roar'd out to see the sight,
And FALSTAFF was his name!

With sword and shield he, puffing, strides;
The joyous revel-rout
Receive him with a shout,

And modest Nature holds her sides:
No single pow'r the deed had done,
But great and small,
Wit, Fancy, Humour, Whim, and Jest,
The huge, mishapen heap impress'd;
And lo—SIR JOHN!
A compound of 'em all,
A comic world in ONE.

AIR.

A world where all pleasures abound,
So fruitful the earth,
So quick to bring forth,
And the world too is wicked and round.
Garrick made the transitions from his recitatives to the airs and choruses with a deference to the musicians that charmed them to surpass themselves for him, and they were encored to exhaustion.

When the ode at last was ended, Garrick spoke in his own character. The statue of Shakespeare, his gift to Stratford, was elevated in the center of the stage. Above the crowd it leaned on one elbow as it leans today above the Stratford street. Raising his wonderful india-rubber face Garrick addressed it in Milton's words, "What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones / The labour of an age. . . . 

Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a livelong monument.

Turning to the audience with his eyes yet fixed on the statue, at length he lowered his gaze. Moving toward his listeners with a superb gesture, he struck the knell of all objective standards for art: "If you want still a greater authority than Milton's for the unequalled merits of Shakespeare, consult your own hearts."

He addressed the ladies in a rhymed tribute to those exquisite creatures who always wisely follow their own hearts, alluding to the Ladies Club of London and their instigation of the movement to erect Shakespeare's monument in Westminster. He gallantly intimated that, as they had given him a model for the statue, so had they given him a model in devotion. He spoke of Shakespeare's deep understanding and fine portrayal of women, and urged the ladies to continue in honoring a poet who had so honored them. Then he took the audience completely by surprise. He challenged the detractors of Shakespeare to speak.
It had never been Garrick's intention to leave unanswered the jibes of the Devil upon Two Sticks and the Public Advertiser, and he plotted carefully the method and tone of his retort. There are records of two plans he made and discarded. One got so far as to be announced in the Gentleman's Magazine and reprinted in Scottish periodicals. It was a plan to counter the derogation of the scholars by opposing his own scholarship and offering three scholarly discourses during the three days of the Jubilee. The record of another plan can be read in an unpublished manuscript in Folger Library, an early draft of his "Address to the Ladies," which shows that at one time he planned to use that address as a weapon against his critics. The lines which appear in the manuscript but are omitted from the published versions are:

Nor change of fashion, fickleness of youth,
Can warp your hearts one moment from the truth,
While all-sufficient man, than woman wiser,
Is turn'd about by Ev'ry Advertiser.
He reads, looks wise—What Satire! What a pen!
Here's root & branch, the mulberry again!
These daily stripes will make the Steward sore;
We never knew what Shakespeare was before:
He ne'er could be the man we thought him once;
Why he combed wool, stole deer, & was a Dunce.
Thus fools will fools, as meggots meggots breed,
And scribbling Fools make Foolish Thousands read.

Garrick wisely discarded this plan; wisely because, for one thing, it simply was not true that there had been any intimation
in the periodicals that Shakespeare was unworthy of honor. The point had invariably been that he was worthy of greater honor than the Jubilee promised to give him. For another thing, had Garrick used this method of rebuttal, he would have destroyed the accord of the audience by placing himself and the ladies against the common male. And it would have been a tactical error for him to mention the unpleasant matter himself and thus stand self-accused. Anyway Garrick never trusted anything so much as the dramatic form when there was a point to be made. He devised another plan, dramatic and less obviously personal, that would give him the common male as an ally against a common enemy.

At Garrick’s challenge a man rose to his feet in the midst of that audience inflamed by poetry and patriotism. He was dressed in an inconspicuous greatcoat which he shed as he started toward the stage, revealing the blue satin suit and silver frogs well known to London audiences as the garb of Tom King’srenchified fops. It was King, loved by the gallery, highly regarded by the gentry almost as Garrick himself. Garrick loved to write for King, and later Sheridan entrusted to him the creation of his greatest roles, Mr. Puff in The Critic, Sir Peter Teazle in The School for Scandal, and Captain Absolute in The Rivals. King had been one of the few who backed the Jubilee from start to finish, and deserved his starring role. In 1776 when Garrick retired from the stage, he gave his sword to King with words of gratitude for his long friendship. So well did King play the role of devil’s advocate to the Devil upon Two Sticks that many in the audience did not know till later that it was a role.

He minced daintily toward Garrick denouncing Shakespeare in emasculated English garbled with French tags. Plainly the French attacker was in the midst of the loyal English idolators. But King’s lisping drawl showed a clever merger of the enemy
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without and the enemy within, for his lines were a pastiche of Voltaire’s slurs on Shakespeare and slurs on the Jubilee from The Devil upon Two Sticks and the Advertiser. The moral was clear: any attack on the Jubilee was tantamount to an attack on Shakespeare, and both were equally un-English, un-Shakespearean, and unmanly. King’s petulant voice drew to a climax in his interpretation of Voltaire’s charge of “barbarity.” Shakespeare was an ill-bred fellow, he pouted, who made ladies and gentlemen laugh and cry in public, and thus violated the laws of decorum.

Not to leave the common male out of the game, Garrick had stationed members of the orchestra to shout quips at King during the course of his harangue, but of course he kept the spotlight for himself. He answered King with the Jubilee oration, a little gem of Shakespearean criticism, written, in my opinion, by Edmund Burke.¹⁴

Wild applause demonstrated the willingness of the ladies and gentlemen present to give decorum secondary consideration. During the demonstration benches collapsed in several parts of the building. The walls rocked, “and, had it not been for a peculiar interposition of Providence,” piously observed the next issues of several London periodicals, “Lord Carlisle, who was much hurt by the fall of a door, must inevitably have been destroyed.”¹⁵ After the tumult died and the show was declared over, Lord Grosvenor approached Garrick to show his muscles twitching with the emotion that “affected every part of his frame.”¹⁶

John Payton should have some sort of monument in Stratford to commemorate the job of catering that conveyed across the flood the famous turtle dinner that was praised by even Dibdin. The chef, Gill of Bath, was honored by a toast. Garrick again used Burke’s wits to supplement his own in his after-dinner speech on the turtle. Earlier in the summer Burke had sent
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Garrick a turtle and a letter announcing the gift by an extended gustatory metaphor likening Garrick to the turtle. "Let the type and shadow of the master grace his board," Burke wrote, explaining that the turtle was a union of all meats, a dish eminently fitting for one who "can represent all the solidity of flesh, the volatility of fowl, and the oddity of fish." Garrick applied the metaphor to Shakespeare, and it became one of the Jubilee jokes that went through many subsequent variations. Payton tapped his deepest cellars that night; the enthusiast high as a kite from bardic libation was a stock figure in all representations of the Jubilee next season.

Just before the revelers adjourned to dress for the masquerade, Garrick called for order. In his brown suit laced with gold, he stood in triumph beside Shakespeare's statue and performed a symbolic act. Many relics of the Bard had come to light after the announcement of the Jubilee and more were to follow, his chair, his shoeing-horn, his seal ring, a coach dog "spoted like a leper" and descended from Shakespeare's own dog, but the gloves Shakespeare had worn were the best of all relics, sanctioned by years of glovolatry. These were the gloves given to John Ward at Stratford's first Shakespeare festival in 1746 when he staged Othello. Ward generously sent the gloves, which he believed to be authentic, to Garrick when he learned that Garrick was to be Steward of the first nationwide festival. The authenticity of Garrick's gesture, at least, cannot be questioned. He drew the gloves on his own hands. He had earned the right to wear them. With all odds against him, for a few memorable hours the power of his theatrical art had created its own world.

Praise of his performance that day would fill a book. Boswell's opinion can be anticipated—"A demi-god!"; "A man in ecstasy!"—as can the critique of Jopson's Coventry Mercury, affected like Lord Grosvenor in every member: his performance "will carry
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his fame down to Posterity along with Shakespeare's." Lloyd's Evening Post said: "We may justly return to the orator: We ne'er shall look upon his like again." And in those words Garrick had unwittingly chosen his own obituary notice; at the time of his death they were over and over applied to him. Even the most hostile of the newspaper reporters paused in their raillery and did reverence, saying all who heard him were "more than overpaid for their expense, their inconvenience and their disappointment." Any account carries a thrill for those who love the actor's art.

Dibdin watched Garrick act night after night, but it was this performance he remembered most vividly. The ugly interpretation of Garrick's motive does not negate the central fact, the effect of the performance on a sullen and resentful man. Dibdin quoted at length Boswell's published praise, ending with his reference to Foote's threat to interrupt Garrick's performance with one of his own. Boswell had said, "If anyone had attempted to disturb the performance, he would have been in danger of his life." Dibdin added:

This was certainly the fact: and if Boswell had added that there was never enthusiasm so ardently conveyed, nor so worthily felt; that it was magic; that it was fairyland; that . . . the effect was electrical, irresistible; that every soul present felt it, cherished it, delighted in it, and considered that moment as the most endearing to sensibility that could possibly be experienced; when he had said all this and ten times more, he would have given a very faint idea of the real impression.

But all this does not take the truth off my assertion. I know it was called forth by a contemplation of the prodigious remuneration that would result to himself. It was acting, and . . . his soul was fixed on the Drury Lane treasury. I will give him all that has been said, and twenty times more as to the enchantment and the fascination of his admirable powers of acting; but let no man tell me that at the very moment he uttered the line, "We shall not look upon his like again," the manner and effect of which beggared all description, he did not feel that the
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jubilee would be performed half the following season at Drury-Lane Theatre.

Dibdin may have been right about where Garrick's heart was fixed, but he was not infallible in his reading of the human heart. "The good-natured Jemmy Boswell, who was hired, not by money but by well-timed flattery" to praise the Jubilee is one possible interpretation of the facts, although Boswell records no flattery, and he was not one to overlook it. But when Dibdin said that Boswell could not have had a good time at the masquerade ball, "for I saw him dancing in water over his shoetops," then Dibdin gives ground for questioning how "correct and faithful" may be his story of the Jubilee. For the Corsican Boswell was in his glory that night.

Before the ball he sat at his window looking out at the Birthplace across the street. He thought how much better a man he would be if he should spend all his life in that hallowed spot. Garrick's key word had been Nature, and it rang in Boswell's ears. His soul flowed out in song—his own "Ode to Corsica." He hoped to have it printed in time for distribution at the ball, but that proved impossible. He wanted to read it, but the dancers were too merry to listen, and he had to be content with giving out the broadsides the next day.

He spoke in the person of a Corsican, defeated and exiled after the small country's unassisted battle for liberty, come to pay homage to Shakespeare. If Shakespeare had written the story of Corsica's struggle, if Garrick had acted it, then the English, blessed in their own freedom, would understand Corsica's tragedy.

Amidst the splendid honours which you bear,
To save a sister island be your care:
With generous ardour make us also free:
And give to CORSICA, a noble JUBILEE!²¹

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The connection between Shakespeare and Corsican liberty may seem tenuous, and the ode not one to call spirits from the vasty deep, but by fateful coincidence Corsica answered. As Boswell struck his twice-deflected blow for a Corsican Jubilee, she gave birth to her most famous son, the greatest romantic hero of all time, the personality in relation to whom romanticism would orient itself. The exact date of Napoleon's birth is not known, but it lay within Jubilee week. Bardolatry and he were born twin stars to a new era.

"Confusion at the ball because of the rain afforded high entertainment for the crowd," said the Mercury. A thousand masquers had been expected. Two thousand came, entering the Rotunda by ramps built across the flooded waters. By the end of the ball the floor was awash, and on Friday the building was not safe for use. When Garrick found that the possibility of damage by rain had caused the price of costume rental to soar out of all reason, he decreed that ordinary dress might be worn. Some costumes appeared, and among them were such Shakespearean characters as had distinctive dress at that date. William Kenrick emphasized his vaunted physical resemblance to the Bard by coming as Shakespeare's Ghost. Joseph Cradock, even in the downpour, had the temerity to make up in imitation of the portrait of Sir William Dugdale, Royal Herald to Their Majesties King James the First and King Charles the First, the early historian of Warwickshire, and to wear the authentic court regalia actually worn by Dugdale. In this regalia he danced a minuet with Mrs. Garrick. She had been a professional dancer before her marriage; all society columns noted her dancing with Cradock as "beyond expression graceful."

The scarlet breeches of the Corsican Boswell flashed about the hall, and the black spatterdashes traveled miles around the dance floor, "My Corsican dress attracted everybody," he wrote in his journal, "I was as much a favorite as I could
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desire.” And so the night went. The Mercury said, “The more prudent did not leave till daylight; for some fell into ditches covered by the flood so as to be indistinguishable in the dark.”

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER EIGHTH

Of Friday the less said the better. The horse race was run on Shottery Meadows, a good course but now up to the horses’ knees in water. All five colts started as announced, all carrying eight stone by rule, previous winners carrying a four-pound handicap. A groom named John Pratt won, riding his own colt Whirligig, and received the Jubilee Sweepstakes Cup worth fifty pounds engraved with Shakespeare’s arms. When Garrick gave it to him, he said in his speech of acceptance that he knew “very little about the plays of Master Shakespeare” but would keep the cup always as a memento of the Jubilee.

There was no big central session on Friday; the Rotunda could not be used. Ordinaries were held at the various inns, Garrick presiding at the White Lion. As that inn was headquarters for Jubilites, so the Boar, an inn in Bridgetown, was the unofficial headquarters of the Jubilee satirists. There is no record of the celebration at the Boar; it may have been a merry one. There was a ball that night at Shakespeare’s Inn. Except that Mrs. Garrick danced again by request and delighted all who saw her, no one bothered to mention details of the day. The dress she wore is in Stratford, almost unimpaired by time. Threads from it may someday be given as sacred relics to women who marry actors. In the theatrical calendar of saints, she is unique as Garrick is unique: the perfect actor’s wife. At the close of the dance at four o’clock Garrick yielded up the insignia of his office as Steward of the Jubilee. The Jubilee was over.
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SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER NINTH

Even Boswell admitted in the public press that tempers were short on Saturday morning. Abandoning any idea of spending the rest of his life in Stratford, he borrowed five guineas from Mrs. Garrick (the Steward being out of funds) and joined the mobs that were maneuvering for any type of transportation elsewhere. He succeeded, but so many failed that John Payton estimated it would be a profitable three weeks for the White Lion before all the Jubilites could leave. Angelo salvaged such fireworks as survived and splashed away to fire them at the Lichfield races. Garrick and the town council had agreed that any profit should go to the town, any loss should be shared equally. There was a deficit of two thousand pounds. Garrick volunteered to pay it, and eventually did pay it all, though he took so long about it that Stratford's gratitude lost some of its fine edge. "Of all involved in the jubilee Garrick was the greatest loser," said the newspapers, "and the greatest gainer was a Mr. M------ who made a fortune selling Balsam of Honey to those who caught cold." On September 21 the London Post carried notice in its obituary column of the first martyr to bardolatry.

James Henry Castle, Esq: at his lodgings at Clopton: his death is attributed to his having laid in damp sheets at Stratford-upon-Avon, where he went to amuse himself at the so much talked of Jubilee.

On the banks of the Avon where Garrick had envisioned a permanent temple to Shakespeare a demolition crew hastily razed the tottering Rotunda, a threat to passers-by in its dangerous condition, and the materials were immediately sold at auction.
1. Boswell in Search of a Wife, eds. Frank Brady and Frederick A. Pottle (1956), pp. 264-85. Permission to quote was given by McGraw-Hill Co. Boswell’s letter appeared in the Public Advertiser, September 16, 1769, and also in the London Magazine, XXXVIII (1769), 451-56. A different version of the letter was printed in Scottish periodicals; it defends the Jubilee against the charge of being an extravagant waste of money. Dibdin as previously cited, I, 73-81.

2. Boswell, p. 269.


4. Hubert Langley, Dr. Arne (1938), pp. 88-96, attests the excellence of the music, and adds the fact that, in 1773, at a performance of this work in Covent Garden, women for the first time took the place of boys singing in an oratorio chorus.


6. This was the estate of Lord Le Despencer. The procession was made up of Pans, satyrs, fauns, priests, and priestesses under the tutelage of Silenus. See: Universal Magazine, XLIX (1771), 163-64; Gentleman’s Magazine, XLI (1771), 409.

7. In the New York Public Library are two curious volumes devoted to the Great Comet of 1769. One, in French and the language of calculus, was published in St. Petersburg in 1770; the other, in German, was published in Hamburg in 1769, with symbolic woodcuts of the face of the comet as angelic (or demonic) creature pouring its influence down on something that suggests a formal garden, and a diagram of the comet’s position. J. E. Bode, Kurzgefasste Abhandlung von dem in Herbst dieses 1769sten Jahres Erschienenen Kometen nebst einem Geometrischen Entwurf Seiner wahren Laufbahn um die Sonne (Hamburg; 1769).

8. Henry Angelo, Reminiscences (2 vols.; 1830), I, 41 ff. Domenico Angelo, in addition to his skill in pyrotechnics, was acknowledged fencing master without a peer. He was the first master in England of riding in the manège, or equitation. A very handsome man, he was chosen to walk Antony in the Jubilee procession with Mrs. Yates’s Cleopatra. He posed for many of the equestrian statues of the kings of England. Lord Pembroke was his patron and his friend. At the Jubilee, Clitherow, pyrotechnist of Ranelagh Gardens, was his assistant. His home on Carlisle Street in Soho was scene of much of the planning; he was a real Jubilee enthusiast.


12. Gentleman’s Magazine, XXXIX (1769), 375. This is the August number; the letter appeared in the August number of the Scots Magazine. The August number of Gentleman’s covered news for August and appeared at the end of the month, not, as is current American custom, before August 1. I am not sure of the printing schedule in the case of Scots. I have said the letter was “reprinted,” but it may have gone directly to Scots. The letter is the only piece of Jubilee publicity which draws class distinction: there will be pageantry for “the millions who are capable of receiving pleasure through the medium of
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the senses only; but a dish of caveare is prepared for such intellectual spirits who are susceptible of more abstracted and refined indulgence.


15. E.g., Universal Magazine, XLV (1769), 159; Town and Country Magazine, I (1769), 475.


17. Gar. Cor., I, 332.

18. Gar. Cor., I, 424–25. Letter from H. Cooper, claiming to own the descendent of Shakespeare’s coach dog. The London Evening Post, apparently in good faith, reported that Garrick had two pairs of gloves worn on stage by Shakespeare, his comedy gloves and his tragedy gloves. The article does not appear to be satiric; in fact, Ward’s gift of the gloves was never mentioned with satiric tone. Either the gloves were accepted as genuine, or the spirit of his gift touched all hearts.


23. Three handbills announcing the sweepstakes race are in Folger Library, two printed by Fulk Weale, one by J. Keating. They disagree about the name of Mr. Watson’s colt.