

# [ (Not) Beyond the Shoe: Shakespeare and Theatre Rivalries in the Augustan Period ]

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**[Abstract]** *Although the high cultural status of Shakespeare was well established in England by the 1760s, the preceding stage history of his plays and the related adaptations are culturally much more ambiguous. This paper focuses on two adaptations of The Taming of the Shrew that were produced in 1716 in London as two short farces, both entitled The Cobler of Preston and written by Charles Johnson and Christopher Bullock respectively. By taking into account the cultural and political circumstances of the period, the analysis of the two farces demonstrates that the establishment of farcical afterpieces as one of the most popular and productive genres of early-18th-century English theatre was greatly accelerated by the staging of the two Shakespearean adaptations. This observation further shows that, as Shakespeare's authority was gradually rising, adaptations of his plays actually contributed to the development of London's commercial theatre culture, which at the time was often presented as the opposition to great classics of the past.*

**[Keywords]** *18th-century British theatre; Restoration theatre; Elizabethan theatre; The Taming of the Shrew; Shakespeare adaptations; farce; afterpiece; Cobler of Preston; Charles Johnson; Christopher Bullock*