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PIERRE RÉMOND DE SAINTE-ALBINE AND JOHN HILL FROM *LE COMÉDIEN* TO *THE ACTOR* *

Foreword

John Hill's treatise entitled *The Actor* and published in London in the 1750s occupies a particularly important place in the debate on acting. In the first place it had the merit of disseminating in Britain the innovatory theories expressed in Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine's *Le Comédien*, a crucial text which sanctioned on one hand acting's definitive emancipation from the rules of *actio* as contemplated in rhetoric, and on the other the requisite for the actor to be emotionally involved in the interpretation of a text.¹

In treatises on acting published in France and Britain at the beginning of the eighteenth century – *Traité du Récitatif* (1707) by Grimarest;² *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton* (1710) by Charles Gildon³ – the actor's technique was still entirely dictated by the *actio* incumbent on the orator. Subsequently, however, as the impetus to evolve a more autonomous status for acting gained ground, some less conventional

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¹ Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine (1699-1778), member of the Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles Lettres, Berlin, held office as Censeur Royal from 1751. He was the author of plays as well as theoretical works on the theatre. He collaborated with *L'Europe savante* and *Gazette de France* in the years 1733 to 1749 and 1751 to 1761, and from 1748 to 1750 was chief editor of *Mercur de France*; in this journal he published two comedies and some excerpts from the first version of *Le Comédien*. Other works include: *L'Amant difficile ou L'Amant constant*, a comedy written with Houdar de La Motte, given on 17 October 1716 at the Hôtel de Bourgogne; *Mémoire sur le laminage du plomb* (1731); *La Convention téméraire* (1749); *L'amour au village* (1749); *Abrégé de l'Histoire du Président de Thou* (1759, in 10 volumes).

² Jean-Léonor Le Gallois, Sieur de Grimarest (1659-1720), man of letters, acted as French teacher and cicerone for tourists visiting Paris. He had several heterogeneous publications to his name including a treatise on warfare (*Campagnes de Charles XII. Roi de Suède*, 1705) and an essay on grammar (*Éclaircissements sur la langue française*, 1715), and had also written some comedies and acted as an amateur.

³ Charles Gildon (1665-1724), man of letters, playwright, author of biographies of the major protagonists of the English Restoration and collections of plays by authors such as Aphra Behn and William Wycherley, as well as being a translator and adapter. He gave up a possible career in the church and settled in London where, after spending his allowance, he turned to the theatre and wrote *The Roman Bride's Revenge* (1697), *Phaeton, or The Fatal Divorce* (1698), based on a French play of the same name of 1683, *Love's Victim; or, The Queen of Wales* (1701), *The Patriot; or The Italian Conspiracy* (given in late 1702 at the Drury Lane and published in 1703). In 1700 he put on an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. He also oversaw the seventh volume of Nicholas Rowe's edition of Shakespeare's works, including his own *Essay on the Art, Rise, and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England* and *Remarks on the Plays of Shakespeare* (1709). His study *The Complete Art of Poetry*, published in 1716, was also dedicated to Shakespeare.

attitudes began to emerge. In treatises by Luigi Riccoboni⁴ – *Dell'arte rappresentativa* (1728) and *Pensées sur la déclamation* (1738) – and by Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine – *Le Comédien* (first published in 1747, followed by a second, definitive edition in 1749) – the key to acting was seen as the actor's emotional participation, while in his *Art du théâtre à Madame **** (1750) Antoine-François Riccoboni saw acting as being based on the “dispassionate” imitation of the external manifestations of the passions.⁵ In fact we are witnessing the emergence of a fundamental issue in acting which was to polarise debate for many years to come, with the emotionalists ranged against the anti-emotionalists.

As we have seen, with his treatise Hill helped to spread the innovatory ideas and concepts of *Le Comédien* in the English-speaking world. This is certainly one good reason for taking an interest in his work.

Arising out of the wish to ‘submit to the opinion of the Managers of the *British* theatres’ what ‘*St. Albine* laid before the *French* audiences’, *The Actor* also represents a turning-point in the development that led to Denis Diderot's *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, written in the 1770s and published posthumously in 1830, which precipitated the *querelle* that had been brewing for years between “rationality” and “sentiment”, or detachment and identification.⁶

Hill's treatise, based on the second edition of *Le Comédien*, was first published anonymously in 1750. The text was brought out again in 1755 as “A New Work, Written by the Author of the former, and Adapted to the Present State of the Theatres”. This second edition was translated into French by Michele Sticotti in 1769, with the title *Garrick ou les Acteurs Anglois*. It was in writing a review of this work in 1770 for *Correspondance littéraire* that Diderot set down the basic outline for his *Paradoxe*. Thus the importance of Hill's text also lies in its function as a link between the treatise of Rémond de Sainte-Albine and Diderot's *Paradoxe*.

⁴ Luigi Riccoboni (1676-1753), known as Lelio, impresario, actor and man of letters. Having become head of a theatrical company at the age of twenty-two, he set about reforming Italian theatre but met with opposition. Then he accepted an invitation from the French regent Philippe d'Orléans to move to Paris with his company. Here he revived the Comédie Italienne, which had been disbanded by Louis XIV in 1697. In 1716 this company was installed in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and from 1723 became known as the “Comédiens ordinaires du Roi”. On his return to Italy in 1729 Riccoboni was appointed Intendente for the theatres of Parma. On the death of the Duke of Parma, in 1731, he went back to Paris, where he retired from acting and devoted himself to literature. Among his published works: *Nouveau théâtre italien* (1718, in 2 volumes), a collection of his youthful comedies put on during his first stay in Paris, *Histoire du Théâtre Italien* (1728), *Observations sur la Comédie et sur le Génie de Molière* (1736) and the treatise *De la Réformation du Théâtre* (1743).

⁵ Antoine-François Riccoboni (1707-1772), actor, poet, playwright, and member of the Société du Caveau together with Crébillon fils, Gentil-Bernard, Collé and Saurin. Son of Luigi Riccoboni and the actress Elena Balletti, François followed in their footsteps, making his début in 1726 at the Théâtre Italien in Marivaux's *Surprise de l'amour* (given for the first time in 1722 and published in 1723). He retired from acting in 1750, aged forty-three, although he made sporadic comebacks up until 1758. Among more than fifty plays written for the Théâtre Italien, often in collaboration with Dominique and Romagnesi, we can recall the celebrated *Les Comédiens esclaves* (1726), *Les Amusements à la mode* (1732), *Le Conte de fée* (1735), *Le Prétendu* (1760), *Les Amants de village* (1764) and *Les Caquets* (1761) based on Goldoni.

⁶ *Dedication to the Managers of the Two Theatres*, in John Hill, *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing. Interspersed with Theatrical Anecdotes, Critical Remarks on Plays, and Occasional Observations on Audiences*, London, R. Griffiths, 1750.

The two editions of *The Actor* have all too often been described as translations and adaptations of Rémond de Sainte-Albine's *Le Comédien*, implying that the original text and the English versions are virtually identical. Moreover, even when it is stated that the English treatise contains several variations and additions with respect to the French text, this is invariably only a generical indication, or refers exclusively to the examples and anecdotes concerning the British theatrical context integrating the French text. We have set out to verify just how far Hill was indebted to Rémond de Sainte-Albine. This has involved making a thorough investigation of his work, confronting not only the 1750 edition with its archetype but also the first and second editions of *The Actor*. This was a necessary task, never previously undertaken, and the first stage in preparing a comprehensive monograph on Hill, which has also never yet been attempted.

Our investigation has enabled us to touch on some questions which lie behind the whole discussion concerning the English treatise such as the problem of the identity of the author of the 1750 and 1755 versions and the existence of two intermediate editions of the text.

“Sir” John Hill’s Life and Works

The biography of John Hill enlightens us on two aspects of the man: on one hand his literary output, testifying to his dedication to study and the multiplicity of his interests, and on the other his provocative and polemical nature which inevitably hampered his career and tarnished his reputation. Few of the protagonists of the cultural world of his day were spared the lashings of Hill's satire and invective. Indeed, while his vast catalogue of writings has been almost entirely forgotten, and his contributions to botany, then still in its infancy, receive scant recognition, his name recurs frequently in the innumerable pamphlets and satirical epigrams dedicated to him by those he had provoked and insulted.

John Hill, youngest of four sons born to the Reverend Theophilus Hill (1680-1746) and Ann Susannah Yorke, was baptised on 17 November 1714, probably in Peterborough, Northamptonshire.⁷ Apart from this fact, itself still not altogether certain, we have little information concerning his early years and education, prior to his becoming apprentice to the London apothecary Edward Angier in 1730 or 1731.⁸

⁷ In 1705 his father, who graduated in medicine at Cambridge, moved to Northampton with his wife. He took orders on 18 December 1709 and in 1720 was appointed a canon of Peterborough Cathedral, a post he relinquished seven years later in favour of his first son Theophilus Jr. (1706-1792). He was subsequently curate of Denham in Buckinghamshire. The other two sons, John and Christopher, born respectively in 1707 and 1710, both died in the summer of 1713 for reasons unknown.

⁸ Some sources give Hill's date of birth as 1716 or 1717, without saying where (David Erskine Baker, Isaac Reed, Stephen Jones, *Biographia Dramatica; or, A Companion to the Playhouse*, 3 vols., London, Hurst and others, 1812, I, part I, p. 342; 'Hill', in *The Thespian Dictionary; or, Dramatic Biography of the Present Age*, London, J. Cundee, 1805). A. D. Morris states that Hill was baptised on 4 February 1707 at St. John the Baptist's, Peterborough (see A. D. Morris, "'Sir" John Hill, M. A., M. D., 1706-1775, Apothecary, Botanist, Playwright, Actor, Novelist, Journalist', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 53, no. 1, January, 1960, p. 55). According to George S. Rousseau he was baptised on 17 November 1714, 'probably in Peterborough-Spalding' (G. S. Rousseau, *The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill 1714-1775*, New York, AMS Press, 1982, p. xxvii). The date of 1714 is confirmed by the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004) which adds that it probably took place in the 'Peterborough-Spalding region of Lincolnshire'.

On the basis of a source which survived until the late nineteenth century, some scholars maintain that his period as an apprentice was occasionally interrupted when he went off to join a company of strolling players.⁹ There is, however, no concrete evidence for such a hypothesis, although of course if he had used a pseudonym when working as an actor, this would explain the lack of any objective information concerning these years.

The fame of Linnæus and the novelty of his system of botany, which was causing a considerable sensation in Europe, induced Hill to take an interest in this science, for which he undoubtedly possessed a marked proclivity.¹⁰ In 1738 he accepted a commission from Lord Robert James Petre to collect botanical specimens to enrich the latter's collection.¹¹ This same year Hill was working as an apothecary near the Strand – probably in St. Martin's Lane. Thereafter, with the patronage of Charles Lennox, second Duke of Richmond, Lennox and Aubigny, he was employed to collect botanical specimens found in England and Wales.¹² At this time Hill devised a scheme to sell to the growing fraternity of collectors specimens of rare or uncommon plants, gathered all over Britain, duly preserved using a process he himself had invented and accompanied by a scientific description. However this project was never put into effect.

Hill was invited to take up residence at Goodwood House, the seat of the Dukes of Richmond near Chichester in Sussex, where he was employed to oversee the botanical gardens. At Goodwood, where the Duke, who had a passion for drama, frequently received actors and other people involved in theatre, Hill met David Garrick (then just starting out on his career), Margaret Woffington (with whom he fell in love, without however having his ardour reciprocated), and other leading figures in the contemporary theatrical world.¹³ This was the period when he acted in plays put on at Goodwood House, and also first tried his hand at dramaturgy with *Orpheus: An English Opera*.

It seems likely that some time between 1738 and 1742 Hill married Susannah Travers, the daughter of the house steward of Richard Boyle, third Earl of

⁹ Both George S. Rousseau (*The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill 1714-1775*, p. xxvii) and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* refer to a source, without giving any further details, recording that Hill took part, between 1730 and 1735, in a strolling company. A further reference to Hill as a strolling player is found in *Some Remarks on the Life and Writings of Dr. J- H-, Inspector-General of Great Britain*, London, W. Owen, 1752, p. 14.

¹⁰ Carl Nilsson Linnæus (1707-1778), Swedish botanist, considered the father of modern scientific classification.

¹¹ Robert James Petre (1713-1742), eighth Baron Petre. One of Europe's foremost collectors of botanical specimens.

¹² Charles Lennox (1701-1750), second Duke of Richmond, Lennox and Aubigny. Member of the Royal Society in 1724, Lord of the Bedchamber (1726-1735) and Master of Horse (1734-1735), he took part in the battle of Dettingen in 1743. Appointed Lieutenant General of the British Army, in 1745-1746 he served under Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, fighting the Jacobite rebels led by Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie).

¹³ Margaret Woffington (1720?-1760), known as Peg or Peggy, Irish actress. She made her début as an actress aged ten, in a production of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) in Dublin. In 1732 in London she played the lead part of Macheath in the same play, but her professional career really got under way in 1737, in Dublin, when she performed Ophelia. In 1740 she was engaged by the manager of Covent Garden, John Rich, winning immediate fame. Although she also played tragic roles, she was particularly acclaimed for her comic roles. One of her most celebrated roles was Sir Harry Windair in *The Constant Couple* by George Farquhar. She retired from acting in 1757.

Burlington, even though no document relating to the wedding has come down to us. In September 1753 Hill was to marry Henrietta Wilhelmina Jones, sister of Charles Wilkinson Jones, fourth Viscount Ranelagh.

From 1742 Hill spent lengthy periods up in London, where he moved in 1743. In September 1746 his first publication appeared, *Theophrastus's History of Stones*, giving his translation with parallel Greek text and explanatory notes. The accuracy and precision of the translation gained Hill a reputation as a scholar, as well as ensuring him a considerable income. Also from this period are two publications in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*,¹⁴ while in conjunction with Charles Corbett and Ralph Griffiths he founded *The British Magazine*, for which from 1746 to 1750¹⁵ Hill provided several regular features, entitled *The Visiter* [*sic*], *The Moralist* and *The Occasional Spectator*.¹⁶

In 1748 Hill oversaw the fourth edition of the translation of Pierre Pomet's *Histoire générale des drogues* (1694),¹⁷ making numerous additions and corrections, and the following year he took over, in practice even though not nominally, the editorship of *The Monthly Review*.¹⁸

The year 1750 saw the publication, anonymously, of *The Actor*, which was followed by a second edition, also anonymous, in 1755. In the same year Hill also published the two satires on the Royal Society, *Lucina sine concubitu* and *A Dissertation on Royal Societies*, followed in 1751 by *A Review of the Works of the Royal Society of London*. It seems to have been in this period that Hill was awarded a degree in medicine from the Scottish University of St. Andrews.¹⁹

¹⁴ 'A Letter from Mr. John Hill, Apothecary, to the President, concerning the Manner of the Seeding of Mosses' and 'A Letter from Mr. John Hill, Apothecary, to the President, concerning Windsor Loam'. The first issue of the *Philosophical Transactions* was published by Henry Oldenburg in March 1665, six years after the foundation of the Royal Society. Among the most famous contributors we can mention Isaac Newton, Michael Faraday, William Herschel and Charles Darwin.

¹⁵ It is likely that Hill continued as editor of *The British Magazine* until December 1750. In fact 'the final volume of five numbers (January-May 1751)', published when Hill was probably no longer in charge, is 'conspicuously poorer in quality', being based above all 'on extracts from pamphlets and reprintings (some veiled) from contemporary magazines and newspapers' (Introduction to *The British Magazine, 1746-1751. An Annotated Index of the Literary Prose*, by E. W. R. Pitcher, Studies in British and American Magazines, 21, Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter, Edwin Mellen Press, 2002, p. 3). There certainly had been a change of ownership, seen also in the different format and in the recourse to a different printing firm. Articles by Hill continued to be published after 1751, but it is doubtful whether they were submitted by Hill himself, or were merely reprints or extracts from monographs, if not indeed sheer plagiarism.

¹⁶ The columns *The Visiter* and *The Occasional Spectator* were published on and off in 1746 and 1747, often with inconsistent numbering. Some issues of *The Moralist*, which appeared regularly from 1746 to 1750, were also published in 1751. Moreover several articles were published without any numbering.

¹⁷ The first English translation of Pomet's work appeared in 1712.

¹⁸ This journal was founded in 1749 by Ralph Griffiths, who continued as editor until his death in 1803. All the articles appeared anonymously. In many cases, however, we can identify the contributors thanks to Griffiths's habit of appending the initials or abbreviation of the author's name to almost all the articles conserved in his personal archive.

¹⁹ Two sources refer to this event without specifying the date (David Erskine Baker, Isaac Reed, Stephen Jones, *Biographia Dramatica*, I, part I, p. 345; *The Thespian Dictionary*). A. D. Morris dates it to about 1750 (see A. D. Morris, "'Sir" John Hill, M. A., M. D., 1706-1775, Apothecary, Botanist, Playwright, Actor, Novelist, Journalist', p. 56).

From 5 March 1751 to 7 July 1753 Hill was responsible for the daily column *The Inspector*, a pseudonym with which he became famous, in *The London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, the newspaper he founded and directed.²⁰ Meanwhile he published *A History of the Materia Medica*, *The Adventures of Mr. George Edwards*, *The History of a Woman of Quality* and *Essays in Natural History and Philosophy*. Furthermore he completed the work which set out his system of the natural world, *A General Natural History* (1748-1752), in three volumes (*A History of Fossils*, *A History of Plants*, *An History of Animals*) duly reviewed in the *Monthly Review* and other journals.

The years 1753 to 1757 were an extremely prolific period in Hill's life. His output featured works related to a wide variety of disciplines: a treatise on marriage entitled *The Conduct of a Married Life*; *Observations on the Greek and Roman Classics*; *The Story of Elizabeth Canning*, in which he stated his own point of view on a contemporary cause célèbre; a dictionary of astronomy, *Urania: or, A Compleat View of the Heavens*; a gardening manual called *The Gardener's Pocket-Book; or, Country Gentleman's Recreation*; *Thoughts concerning God and Nature*, a treatise on metaphysics and ethics running into some 400 pages; the farce *The Maiden Whim; or, The Critical Minute*, performed on 20 April 1756 at Drury Lane; *The Naval History of Britain*, published on the eve of the Seven Years War (1756-1763). To these we can add several botanical texts: *The Useful Family Herbal*, giving indications about conserving and using medicinal herbs; *The British Herbal* and *Eden, or A Compleat Body of Gardening*, the first books to appear in Britain mentioning and giving a clear account of Linnæus's system of classification; *The Sleep of Plants, and Cause of Motion in the Sensitive Plant*, in the form of a series of letters addressed to the Swedish scientist.

Hill's *annus mirabilis* was 1758. Enjoying the patronage of the Earl of Bute,²¹ he strengthened his ties with the leading printers and booksellers in London and published a whole series of books: *The Construction of the Nerves, and the Cause of Nervous Disorders*; *The Virtues of Wild Valerian in Nervous Disorders*; *An Idea of a Botanical Garden in England*; *The Management of the Gout*; *The Book of Nature; or the History of Insects*; *The Gardener's New Kalendar*; *A Method of producing Double Flowers from Single*; *The Old Man's Guide to Health and Longer Life*; *Outlines of a System of Vegetable Generation*; *The Rout. A Farce of Two Acts*.

²⁰ Initially published as *The London Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, from 18 April 1751 this paper took the name *The London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, changing once again to *The London Daily Advertiser* from issue 229, 25 November 1751. Publication continued until 21 July 1753.

²¹ John Stuart (1713-1792), third Earl of Bute. During the Jacobite Rebellion (1745), he moved to London where two years later he met Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707-1751), whose friendship was fundamental for his future political career. In 1755 Bute became the tutor of the future King George III. On his accession to the throne in 1760, Bute was appointed first Privy Counsellor and then Secretary of State for the Northern Department. In May 1762 he became Prime Minister, the first Scotsman and first Tory to hold this office. However, his tenancy lasted only eleven months. Despite having put an end to both Whig predominance in government and the Seven Years War (peace being signed in February 1763), Bute was not popular in England for various reasons, not least on account of his nationality (following the Jacobite uprising there was considerable antagonism towards the Scots) and his role as the King's favourite. This led to verbal and physical attacks, until he tendered his resignation in April 1763. He conserved the King's favour a little while longer, until the new Prime Minister, George Grenville, had him banished from court and Bute retired to his estate in Hampshire. He was an important literary and artistic patron, promoting Samuel Johnson and Tobias Smollett among others. A keen botanist, he assembled a magnificent collection of rare plants and in 1785 published the *Botanical Tables, containing the different Families of British Plants*.

Then in 1759, at the instigation of his patron, Hill began work on his *magnum opus*, *The Vegetable System* (1759-1775), which ran to twenty-six volumes with 1,600 engravings featuring 26,000 plants. This enterprise, which stood as the most voluminous botanical publication to be produced in England in the eighteenth century, proved a severe financial burden for its author. Bute had assured Hill that he would foot all the expenses for the publication and would provide for recompensation in case of heavy losses. Yet Bute's involvement in the project was intermittent, mirroring the rise and fall of his political fortunes. In the end he did not honour his obligations towards Hill, leaving him in financial difficulties (part of the capital required to produce the work was collected by selling medicinal herb concoctions). Nonetheless the publication of *The Vegetable System* attracted considerable attention on the continent, arousing controversies and debates. This brought Hill into contact with some of the leading European scientists including Linnæus – to whom he sent an illustrated copy of his work in 1772 through the Swedish ambassador to London – Albrecht von Haller and Johannes Gessner, maintaining a regular exchange of letters with these two latter scholars.²²

The same year saw the publication of several works on botany – *Exotic Botany illustrated*; *The Origin and Production of Proliferous Flowers*; *The Usefulness of a Knowledge of Plants*; *The Practice of Gardening* – a pamphlet denouncing David Garrick, *To David Garrick, Esq.*; *The Petition of I. In Behalf of Herself and Her Sisters*, and two publications on medical topics, *The Virtues of Honey in Preventing many of the worst Disorders* and *Cautions against the Immoderate Use of Snuff*. While the latter, a brief pamphlet, was virtually ignored at the time of its publication, it has recently been hailed as occupying a place of considerable importance in the history of medicine for making the link between the use of tobacco and lung cancer for the first time. It was also in this year that Hill started to collaborate, albeit without an official appointment, as botanical assistant to Lord Bute in the creation of Kew Gardens.²³ He subsequently described and illustrated the approximately 2,500 species used in laying out the gardens in *Hortus Kewensis*. Hill also carried out some studies on plant structure at Kew, publishing his findings in *The Construction of Timber*, a volume illustrated with cross-sections of the tree trunks which Hill had observed through a microscope of his own invention.

Flora Britannica was published in 1760: this was the first British botanical publication to adopt Linnæus's system of classification and to use, albeit not throughout, the binomial nomenclature. The following year saw the pamphlet entitled *Some Projects recommended to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures,*

²² Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777), Swiss medic and poet, is considered the founder of experimental physiology. In *Icones anatomicae* (1743-1756) he gave the first description of arterial circulation in the human body, and studied the properties of the nervous and muscular systems in *De partibus corporis humani sensilibus et irritabilibus* (1752). Johannes Gessner (1709-1790), Swiss medic and naturalist. Professor of mathematics and physics at the Collegium Carolinum in Zurich, where in 1746 he founded the Society of Physics – subsequently Society of Natural Sciences – which he presided until his death.

²³ The Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew, generally known as Kew Gardens, are situated between Richmond upon Thames and Kew, south-west of London. On this site Lord Capel of Tewkesbury's created an exotic garden at Kew House. On the death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, in 1751, Princess Augusta (1719-1772) enlarged the site considerably, putting Lord Bute in charge of the work begun by her husband.

and Commerce, in which he made several suggestions for improving the functioning of the Royal Society. In 1762 and 1763 he brought together previously published writings on botany with the title *Botanical Tracts*, and also published *On the Virtues of Sage, in lengthening Human Life*.

In 1764 he first began to suffer from the health problems, probably due to gout and dropsy, which in the space of a few years were to take Hill to death's door and which led to a reduction in his fervid production.

In 1767, financial difficulties caused by the diminution in his annual publications spurred Hill to export his medicinal herbal preparations to the American colonies.²⁴ The following year saw the publication of *Hortus Kewensis, A Method of curing the Jaundice, Polypody* and *A New Astronomical Dictionary* (a new edition of *Urania*). Nonetheless a new attack of his illness once again obliged Hill to suspend his activities and on 1 January 1769 he was in such a serious plight that he made his last will and testament. Yet by the spring of that year he was fully recovered and could return to his various projects, publishing *The Family Practice of Physic* and *Herbarium Britannicum*. Furthermore he signed a contract for the publication of *The Construction of Timber*, which appeared the following year. This work met with considerable success, receiving favourable reviews and an encomium from Albrecht von Haller. *Virtues of British Herbs*, originally published in two parts, also appeared in 1770.

The years 1771-1772 saw the publication of *Cautions against the Use of Violent Medicines in Fevers*, *Fossils arranged according to their Obvious Characters* and an important work of geology, entitled *Spatogenesis. The Origin and Nature of Spar*. At this time Hill was received at court and this was perhaps his second or third encounter with George III.

In 1773, in spite of the worsening of his illness, Hill managed to publish *A Decade of Curious Insects, A Decade of Curious and Elegant Trees and Plants* and *Plain and Useful Directions for those who are afflicted with Cancers*.

In 1774 he was decorated by Gustavus III of Sweden with the Order of the Vasa for his contributions to science, giving him the right to style himself "Sir" John Hill.²⁵ This year also saw the publication of *Horti Malabarici pars prima*.

The last writings to be published before his death were: *Enquiries into the Nature of a new Mineral Acid discovered in Sweden* and *Circumstances which preceded the Letters to the Earl of [Mexborough]*. The latter pamphlet dealt with the scandal caused by some defamatory letters signed Camlin in *The Morning Post* accusing the wife of the Earl of Mexborough, who was pregnant, of having committed adultery with her brother-in-law.

In 1775, following a trip to the Netherlands, Hill's health took a further turn for the worse. On 8 November he again drew up his last will and testament, naming his wife Henrietta and Martha Constance Hardy as his executors. He died on 22 November 1775 and was laid to rest in the graveyard of Denham, Buckinghamshire. No headstone has survived marking his grave. His biography, published

²⁴ Apart from some volumes of *The Vegetable System*, in 1765-1767 only three works were published: *The Power of Water-Dock against the Scurvy, Centaury, the Great Stomachic* and *Hypochondriasis*. This diminution in publications is only due in part to his illness. Hill's reputation had suffered as a result of the attacks and polemics in which he was involved, and it was no longer so easy for him to negotiate with publishers or gain the favour of the reading public.

²⁵ Although this title had been awarded by a foreign monarch, George III allowed Hill to use it.

anonymously and printed by George Reid in Edinburgh, appeared in 1779 entitled *A Short Account of the Life, Writings, and Character of the Late Sir John Hill, M. D.*

In spite of the diligence and dedication he had invariably shown in his work, and the incredible number of publications to his name, Hill died in poverty, very likely on account of the love of luxury and ostentation which had made him a favourite butt for satire. In the years following his death, Lady Hill sought unsuccessfully to obtain the money which Lord Bute had promised her husband, taking out a law suit. The publication in February 1788 of *An Address to the Public, by the Hon^{ble} Lady Hill; Setting forth the Consequences of the Late Sir John Hill's Acquaintance with the Earl of Bute*, in which the widow accused Lord Bute of being responsible for her husband's financial and health difficulties, made the issue a public talking point. On the death of Lady Hill in 1789, Juliana Hill inherited the medical manuscripts and the secret recipes of her father's herbal preparations. The latter were sold to the druggist Benjamin Shaw in 1802.

Hill and the Theatre

The world of the theatre held a great fascination for Hill, and even if his achievements in this domain failed to match up to either his expectations or his ambitions, it remained, together with botany, one of his main interests throughout his life.

His first contacts with the contemporary theatrical world came through his ambition to act, although the attempt to give a reliable account of his experiences as an actor proves to be anything but simple, since we only have fragmentary details of his activities. The likely experience with a company of strolling players on and off in the years 1730-1735 and the amateur dramatics he took part in at Goodwood House when he was in the service of the Duke of Richmond, mentioned above, probably served as a sort of apprenticeship which he hoped would lead to a career in the London theatres.²⁶

Maria Chiara Barbieri suggests that the young gentleman making his *début* who features in the playbill of Drury Lane in the role of Constant in *The Provok'd Wife* (1697) by John Vanbrugh, may have been Hill.²⁷ In this case his London *début* would have been on 13 March 1742, and there is some corroboration for this in records contained in *The London Stage*.²⁸ George S. Rousseau also mentions that Hill seems to have appeared at the Drury Lane theatre that year.²⁹ However, another source gives the date of his *début* as 6 February 1744, at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket,

²⁶ Cf. M. C. Barbieri, *La pagina e la scena. L'attore inglese nella trattatistica del '700*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 2006, p. 226.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 226-227.

²⁸ *The London Stage 1660-1800*, Part III (1729-1747), ed. by A. H. Scouten, 2 vols., Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1961, II, p. 975.

²⁹ Cf. G. S. Rousseau, *The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill 1714-1775*, p. xxviii.

playing Lodovico in *Othello*.³⁰ We learn of this production, put on by Charles Macklin with the pupils of his school,³¹ from Hill himself in *The Actor*.³²

Even if Hill's acting début was not particularly successful – there seems to have been only one performance of *Othello* at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket – he sought to pursue his career, appearing in other roles in various London theatres. One record we do have of the opinion of his peers is provided by the actor Henry Woodward.³³ He himself had been derided in Hill's column *The Inspector*,³⁴ and had replied with a vitriolic letter in which he attributed Hill's attacks to the 'rage of a disappointed *Jealousy*' and considered the latter's ventures onto the boards as nothing short of disastrous.³⁵ Woodward produced a large body of evidence to support his

³⁰ In the cast list we find: 'Othello=a Gentleman: (Foote); Lodovico=Gentleman: (Hill) being their first appearance on the stage; Iago=Macklin' (John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage, from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*, 10 vols., Bath, H. E. Carrington, 1832, IV, p. 76).

³¹ Charles Macklin (ca. 1699-1797) founded various schools of acting, not only as a cover for outlawed theatrical activity following the strictures of the Stage Licensing Act of 1737, but also out of a genuine interest in training actors. In 1743 for example, when the actors at Drury Lane went on strike in protest against the impresario Charles Fleetwood and Macklin was excluded from the theatre, he 'collected together a company of unfledged performers, and undertook to instruct them in the science of acting' (John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage*, IV, p. 76). For further details see W. W. Appleton, *Charles Macklin: An Actor's Life*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press; London, Oxford University Press, 1961, in particular the chapter on 'The Science of Acting', pp. 151-167. On the controversy that broke out between Garrick and Macklin following the dismissal of the latter see: David Garrick, *Mr. Garrick's Answer to Mr. Macklin's Case*, London, 1743; Charles Macklin, *Mr. Macklin's Reply to Mr. Garrick's Answer. To which are Prefix'd all the Papers, which have Publickly Appeared, in Regard to this Important Dispute*, London, J. Roberts and A. Dodd, 1743.

³² Hill refers to this in the first edition of 1750 (*The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing*, I, Book I, *Reflection I*, pp. 73-74) and more briefly in the 1755 edition (*The Actor: Or, A Treatise on the Art of Playing*, London, R. Griffiths, 1755, chap. IX, pp. 156-157).

³³ Henry Woodward (1717-1777). Engaged by John Rich, he made his début at Lincoln's Inn Fields at an early age. After an unsuccessful period in Ireland as impresario at the Crow Street Theatre, from 1762 to his death he was in the company of Covent Garden. The most famous Harlequin in the eighteenth century, after John Rich, Woodward was also popular in the roles of Captain Bobadill in *Every Man in His Humour* (given in 1598 and published in 1601) by Ben Jonson, and in the role he created, Captain Absolute in *The Rivals* (1775) by Richard Sheridan. He also wrote some pantomimes, including *Queen Mab*, given on 26 December 1750 at Drury Lane, one of the greatest hits of the age.

³⁴ In his column Hill gave a sarcastic account of the incident that occurred during a performance of *Harlequin Ranger, a Pantomime* at Drury Lane in November 1752. In order to parody the entertainments offered at Covent Garden by Rich, Garrick had included a scene in which the actors impersonated 'an Ostrich, a Lyon, Dog, Monkey, 2 small Ostriches and A Figure like Madox upon ye Wire' (*The London Stage 1660-1800*, Part IV, 1747-1776, ed. by G. W. Stone Jr., 3 vols., Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1981, I, p. cxxiii). At the first performance on 6 November, the new scene was greeted with 'a most terrible Noise compounded of hissing, howling, yawning, groaning, shouting, &c.' (*The Covent Garden Journal*, no. 71, 18 November, 1752, in *The Covent-Garden Journal By Sir Alexander Drawcansir Knt. Censor of Great Britain, Henry Fielding*, ed. by G. E. Jensen, New Haven, Yale University Press; London, H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1915, II, p. 140). Among those who set out to denigrate Garrick's play, one Fitzpatrick threw an apple which struck the actor Woodward. Garrick removed the scene from the performance given on 13 November, probably because Hill had reported the incident, accusing Woodward of challenging Fitzpatrick to a duel. The latter sued the actor, and Woodward and his witnesses appeared before the magistrate Henry Fielding, denying any wish to offend Fitzpatrick. The dispute between actor and spectator was taken before the Lord Chamberlain, who found in favour of Woodward, deeming Fitzpatrick guilty of aggression. Cf. *The Inspector*, no. 524 (14 November, 1752).

³⁵ Henry Woodward, *A Letter from Henry Woodward, Comedian, The Meanest of all Characters; to Dr. John Hill, Inspector-General of Great-Britain, the Greatest of all Characters*, London, M. Cooper, 1752, p. 4.

argument. This, for example, is what he says about Hill's interpretation of the characters of Oroonoko and Blandford in an adaptation of *Oroonoko* by Aphra Behn:³⁶

You may remember [...] the extraordinary Pains he [Mr. Cross the Prompter] took with you in the Part of *Oroonoko*, tho' (if you please to remember again) to very little Purpose; and afterwards finding you incapable of the *Hero*, or the *Lover*, he good-natur'dly recommended the inferior Character of *Blandford* to your Inspection: The *Honesty*, *Humanity* and *Friendship* of which Character, you cou'd by no Means feel, or enter into, with the least Propriety, or Appearance of Probability.³⁷

Woodward also referred to the roles of Lothario in *The Fair Penitent* (1703) by Nicholas Rowe,³⁸ of the 'Reverend *Botanist*' in *Romeo and Juliet*,³⁹ and of Constant in *The Provok'd Wife*. In particular, speaking about the interpretation of the last-named character, he emphasised how 'in a certain Passage, where, at least, a *seeming* Manliness was necessary, you handled her [Mrs. *Woffington*] so awkwardly, that she join'd the Audience in laughing at you'.⁴⁰ All these examples tended to demonstrate Hill's inadequacy as an actor because he was unable to enter into the part and feel the character's emotions.

In reality Woodward's criticism did not stop at pillorying Hill's shortcomings as an actor. He took issue above all with Hill's particular and idiosyncratic determination to appear as a man of many parts, concluding:

I WILL not dispute whether a *Dog*, a *Monkey*, or a *Hare*, may act the Part of a *Hero*, the *Gentleman*, &c. equal with some who have *attempted* those Characters on the Stage: – But this I am sure of, that a *HARE* is equally capable of acting the *Hero*, a *MONKEY* the *fine Gentleman*, and a *DOG* the *Doctor*, with some, – at least, with *one* who has in real Life *attempted* to unite in himself *all those Characters*.⁴¹

Hill's interest in the theatre is shown not only by his numerous, albeit vain, attempts to make a name for himself on stage but also by his authorship of a number

³⁶ According to *The Thespian Dictionary*, Hill played the role of Oroonoko at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket. It has not been possible, however, to corroborate this with any more specific reference to Hill, or indeed the play in question or the exact date of the performance.

³⁷ Henry Woodward, *A Letter from Henry Woodward*, pp. 4-5.

³⁸ According to Woodward, Hill played the role of Lothario 'at the celebrated Theatre of *May Fair*', with Dagger Marr in the role of Altamont (*ibid.*, p. 5). But according to another source, Hill played this role at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket. It has not been possible to establish the exact date of the performance, nor find any more specific reference to Hill (see *The Thespian Dictionary*).

³⁹ Probably in the adaptation by Theophilus Cibber staged on 11 September 1744 at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket. The cast list is incomplete and contains no reference to Hill.

⁴⁰ Henry Woodward, *A Letter from Henry Woodward*, p. 6. It has not been possible to find any other evidence to corroborate Woodward's affirmations.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

of plays. There is no doubt that Arthur Murphy⁴² was well aware of all this when he made Hill the protagonist of *The Spouter, or The Triple Revenge*.⁴³ In this farce in two acts, published anonymously in 1756 and never performed,⁴⁴ Murphy set out to caricature some of the leading protagonists in the theatrical world of his time and to avenge himself for personal and professional insults received. The triple revenge of the title refers explicitly to Theophilus Cibber, Samuel Foote and John Hill,⁴⁵ portrayed respectively as Squint-eyed Pistol,⁴⁶ Dapperwit⁴⁷ and Slender “the spouter or the would-be actor”. The story, featuring the conflict between the young would-be actor Slender/Hill and his father, consists in a series of visits made by the protagonist to various impresarios and dramatists in an effort to make his way in the theatre, and also to several publishers to get information about sales and profits concerning his vast output.⁴⁸ Murphy’s satire, directed against Hill’s ambitions both as an actor and as an author, also included caricatures of some of the latter’s interpretations.

If Hill saw the stage as the real opportunity for his genius to be revealed to the world at large, all his attempts to shine on it and ensure himself a pre-eminent

⁴² Arthur Murphy (1727-1805), Irish playwright, was also actor, journalist, theatre critic, impresario and lawyer. He made his acting début in 1754, as Othello at Drury Lane. After three seasons at Covent Garden and Drury Lane he retired from acting. His activity as political journalist and theatre critic was linked to various journals, some he directed himself, including *The Gray’s Inn Journal* (1752-1754) which was succeeded by *The Entertainer*, where he signed himself with the pseudonym Charles Mercury. In 1757 and 1758 he collaborated with *The London Chronicle*, writing on the theatre. He owed his fame as a playwright to the English version of Voltaire’s *Orphelin de la Chine* (1755), given in 1759. Murphy is also known for his biographies of Henry Fielding (*An Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding, Esq.*, 1762), Samuel Johnson (*An Essay on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson*, 1792) and David Garrick (*The Life of David Garrick*, 1801). He died before completing his biography of Samuel Foote, who for several years from 1761 had been joint manager with him of the Drury Lane theatre.

⁴³ *The Spouter, or The Triple Revenge*, London, W. Reeve, 1756. The title alludes to *The Spouter, or The Double Revenge: A Comic Farce in Three Acts* (1756) by Henry Dell.

⁴⁴ This was probably due to the overly personal and vulgar contents of the farce. It does not even feature in *The Works of Arthur Murphy* (London, T. Cadell, 1786, 7 vols.).

⁴⁵ Having come in for Hill’s satire in his column The Inspector, Murphy had already launched an attack on him in *The Gray’s Inn Journal* and various pamphlets.

⁴⁶ Pistol is the actor who is jealous of others’ success. Cibber had contested the monopoly of the licensed theatres by publishing *An Epistle from Mr. Theophilus Cibber to David Garrick, Esq.* (1755) and *Dissertations on Theatrical Subjects* (1756), in which he launched a severe personal and professional attack on Garrick, then manager of Drury Lane. Murphy’s satire was in fact a parody of these texts, presented in *The Spouter* as ‘Pistol’s challenge to the actors’ (John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage*, IV, p. 461). In the farce we also see David Garrick and John Rich, the first as Patent and the second under his usual pseudonym of Lun. On the controversy between Cibber and Garrick see H. McPherson, ‘Theatrical Riots and cultural Politics in Eighteenth-Century London’, *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 43, no. 3 (2002), 236-252.

⁴⁷ Dapperwit is the author who plagiarises the works of others. Murphy chose to present Foote in this light because in 1753 the playwright had put on a farce called *The Englishman in Paris*, and he intended to bring out a sequel. He had informed Foote, who however preceded him, having his own version, *The Englishman return’d from Paris*, put on two months beforehand, on 3 February 1756, at Covent Garden. For further details see: John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage*, IV, pp. 456-457 and pp. 466-467; H. Hunter Dunbar, *The Dramatic Career of Arthur Murphy*, New York, The Modern Language Association; London, Oxford University Press, 1946, pp. 30-33; S. Trefman, ‘Arthur Murphy’s Long Lost Englishman from Paris: A Manuscript Discovered’, *Theatre Notebook*, 20, no. 4 (Summer, 1966), 137-141.

⁴⁸ John Genest gives a detailed résumé of the text (cf. John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage*, IV, pp. 459-461).

position on the contemporary dramatical scene came to nothing. His failures as an actor were matched by his frustrations as a playwright. Not only did he encounter great difficulties in getting impresarios to adopt his texts, but when they did finally receive a performance, they invariably flopped. The main upshot was to induce Hill to launch attacks on the leading figures in the world of theatre. The first to come in for his vehemence was the manager John Rich, who had turned down Hill's first script, *Orpheus: An English Opera* (1740).⁴⁹ Shortly afterwards, on 12 February 1740, Rich put on at the Covent Garden Theatre *Orpheus and Eurydice*, an operatic pantomime by Lewis Theobald, with music by John Frederick Lampe.⁵⁰ This production aroused an immediate reaction from Hill, who accused Rich of plagiarism.⁵¹

Hill received another refusal in 1754, when both David Garrick, at Drury Lane, and John Rich, at Covent Garden, declined to stage *The Maiden Whim; or, The Critical Minute*. Two years went by before Hill succeeded in having this play performed.⁵²

He returned to the attack when he had the backing of Lord Bute, whose wife was a friend of Garrick's, hoping to persuade the actor-manager to put on a farce in two acts called *The Rout*. From Hill's correspondence we learn not only that it may have been Garrick himself who suggested the subject of the farce, but also just how much store Hill set by the actor's opinion.⁵³ The final version of *The Rout*, printed in 1758, suggests that Hill incorporated all Garrick's suggested changes to the text.⁵⁴ And yet it was precisely this play which became the bone of contention between Garrick and Hill.

The farce, presented as a work written by a "person of quality", was put on at Drury Lane as the Christmas benefit show for the General Lying-In Hospital (20 December 1758). It did not arouse any particular enthusiasm. Shortly after this event, Hill asked for a benefit performance for himself. According to George S. Rousseau, Garrick agreed 'even to the point of volunteering to play the principal role himself. Whether he gave his word to Hill in writing or verbally is no longer known, but there

⁴⁹ John Rich (1692-1761), actor and impresario, known as "the father of English pantomime". In 1714, on the death of his father Christopher, he took over the direction of Lincoln's Inn Fields, where in 1716, under the pseudonym Lun, he first performed as Harlequin in an untitled entertainment that became an annual pantomime. The success of this role enabled him to withstand the competition of the more powerful Drury Lane. He subsequently directed the Covent Garden Theatre, inaugurated in 1732 with *The Way of the World* by William Congreve.

⁵⁰ Published in 1739, it went into a second edition in 1740.

⁵¹ The long diatribe between Hill and Rich, which began with the announcement of the performance of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, came to a head with the publication of *An Answer to the many Plain and Notorious Lies Advanced by Mr. J. Rich, Harlequin, and contain'd in a Pamphlet, which he vainly and foolishly calls, An Answer to Mr. Hill's Preface to Orpheus* – in which Hill accused Rich of copying much if not all of his manuscript – and *Mr. Rich's Answer to the many Falsities and Calumnies Advanced by Mr. John Hill, Apothecary, and contained in the Preface to Orpheus, An English Opera, as he calls it, Publish'd on Wednesday the 26th of December last* – where Rich argued the two works' complete extraneousness. *Orpheus and Eurydice*, put on in 1740 with Hippisley as Drudge, Rich as Harlequin and Giuseppe Grimaldi as Pantaloon, was revived by Rich in 1747 and 1755, and in the latter case received thirty-one consecutive performances.

⁵² This performance took place on 24 April 1756 at Drury Lane.

⁵³ Cf. G. S. Rousseau, *The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill 1714-1775*, Letter 86, 'To David Garrick', pp. 94-95.

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, Letter 89, 'To David Garrick', pp. 97-98; Letter 91, 'David Garrick to John Hill', pp. 99-100.

can be no doubt that Garrick first consented and then changed his mind'.⁵⁵ The date for the performance had been fixed for the end of December but it was called off at the last minute, ostensibly on account of the indisposition of one of the main actors. When Hill finally managed to have a benefit performance of this work put on for himself, it was hissed at every scene. Goaded by anger and resentment, he accused Garrick of the failure and avenged himself by publishing the pamphlet *To David Garrick, Esq.; The Petition of I. In Behalf of Herself and Her Sisters* (1759). Hill accused the actor of mispronouncing some words which included the vowels *i* (as for example in *firm* and *virtue*, which he pronounced *furm* and *vurtie*) or *u* (so that *ungrateful*, for example, became *ingrateful*). In his pamphlet these letters complained bitterly about their unfair treatment at the hands of the actor, with an inveterate habit of displacing them.⁵⁶

This marked the definitive break with Garrick, who subsequently gave vent to his opinion of Hill in three epigrams:

Hill puffs himself: forbear to chide!
An insect vile and mean
Must first, he knows, be magnified
Before it can be seen.
The worst that we wish thee, for all thy vile crimes,
Is to take thy own physic, and read thy own rhymes.⁵⁷

For Physick and Farces, his Equal there scarce is,
His Farces are Physick, and his Physick a Farce is.⁵⁸

We should add that *The Rout* was also the motive for a clash between Hill and the actor and impresario Arthur Murphy. In the Autumn of 1758, shortly before the performance of 20 December at Drury Lane, Murphy wrote to Garrick accusing Hill of plagiarism.⁵⁹

Alongside his attempts to make his mark as a playwright and actor, Hill was also active as journalist and theatre critic. Between 1746 and 1753 he expressed his opinion on actors, productions and all sorts of topics associated with the theatre first in the columns of *The British Magazine* and then in *The London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*. Yet since this activity too was all too often motivated by polemical or provocative designs, when not consisting in pure invective, it was once again deprecated by his contemporaries. Among those who considered Hill a mediocre

⁵⁵ Ibid., Letter 99, 'To David Garrick', p. 106, note 1.

⁵⁶ Garrick immediately retorted: 'If it's true, as you say, I have injur'd a letter, /I'll change my note soon, and I hope for the better./May the just rights of letters as well as of men/Hereafter be fix'd by the tongue and the pen;/Most devoutly I wish, they may both have their due,/And that I may be never mistaken for YOU'. I quote from *English Theatrical Literature 1559-1900. A Bibliography, incorporating Robert W. Love's A Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature published in 1888*, ed. by J. F. Arnott and J. W. Robinson, London, The Society for Theatre Research, 1970, p. 273.

⁵⁷ Both citations are given in G. S. Rousseau, 'John Hill, Universal Genius Manqué: Remarks on His Life and Times, with a Checklist of His Works', in *The Renaissance Man in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by J. A. Leo Lemay and G. S. Rousseau, Los Angeles, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1978, p. 56.

⁵⁸ G. S. Rousseau, *The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill 1714-1775*, Letter 100, 'David Garrick to John Hawkesworth', p. 107.

⁵⁹ For Garrick's reply see *ibid.*, Letter 95, 'David Garrick to Arthur Murphy', pp. 103-104.

judge in questions of theatre, Arthur Murphy disputed his expertise, dismissing as banal both the observations that featured in the newspaper articles and those expressed in *The Actor*.⁶⁰

Hill in the Opinion of his Contemporaries

A man of many parts, Hill was a prolific and eclectic writer: there is hardly any subject which he did not tackle, and he produced getting on for a hundred publications. Nevertheless he has never gained wide recognition in England, remaining a controversial figure on whom opinions have been mostly negative when not actually hostile. In spite of the fact that he was able to meet and frequent the most eminent personalities of his age, and enjoyed the influential support of such illustrious aristocrats and politicians as Lord Bute, the Duke of Richmond and Lord Petre, Hill always remained on the fringes of that Republic of Letters of which he so desired to be a part.⁶¹

When, for example, he applied to become a member of the Royal Society, in 1747, he did not manage to secure the number of votes necessary to ensure his election. He considered this a personal affront, and in 1750 published two satires on the Royal Society, *Lucina sine concubitu* and *A Dissertation on Royal Societies*, followed in 1751 by *A Review of the Works of the Royal Society of London*. This work, which reproduced the format, style and page layout of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, criticised the articles contained in the latter, accusing their authors of writing about scientific topics without being competent to do so. Hill's publication was satirised by William Hogarth in *Beer Street*, where it features together with other volumes in a basket seen bottom right in the engraving.⁶² Nonetheless, paradoxically Hill's attacks contributed to making a considerable improvement in the quality of the Royal Society's publications: 'Yet Sir John Hill, this despised man [...] performed more for the improvement of the "Philosophical Transactions", [...] than any other contemporary'.⁶³

⁶⁰ Cf. G. S. Rousseau, 'John Hill, Universal Genius Manqué', p. 56. Regrettably Rousseau does not specify where Murphy expressed these opinions which, concerning *The Actor*, could have constituted proof for the attribution of this text to Hill.

⁶¹ In London Hill was able to meet some of the most eminent British scientists and members of the Royal Society: Sir Hans Sloane, Martin Folkes, Henry Baker, William Watson, James Parsons, Emanuel Mendes da Costa. He corresponded with John Bartram, Peter Collinson, Jean-Baptiste de Secondat, Johannes Gessner, Albrecht von Haller, Carl Linnæus, Richard Pulteney. He also knew the leading exponents of the literary and theatrical world of the period, including James Boswell, Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Richardson, Tobias Smollett, Laurence Sterne, David Garrick, Charles Macklin, John Rich. Hill's correspondence, published by George S. Rousseau (*The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill 1714-1775*), provides interesting information on some of these contacts.

⁶² Hogarth's prints of *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* were published in support of a campaign in favour of legislation for controlling the consumption of gin (Gin Act, 1751). Also in 1751 Henry Fielding published *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers*, where the increase in criminality was imputed to the abuse of gin.

⁶³ Isaac Disraeli, *The Calamities and Quarrels of Authors*, London, New York, Routledge, Warnes and Routledge, 1859, p. 363.

According to Isaac Disraeli's account, when the Sloane Collection⁶⁴ was handed over to form the core of the British Museum – founded in 1753 and opened to the public in 1759 – Hill, writing in his column *The Inspector*, put himself forward as a qualified candidate for the post of museum curator.⁶⁵ His request was simply ignored, and he was to try to obtain a position in the museum on various other occasions, always without success.⁶⁶

In general Hill's contemporaries regarded him as a man of talent with the consuming vice of vanity, a disproportionate idea of his own abilities, and 'a pride, which was perpetually laying claim to homage by no means his due, and a vindictiveness which never could forgive the refusal of it to him'.⁶⁷ He was accused of being dominated by egotism, by forwardness and by blind ambition. His most hostile critics regarded him as simply incompetent, with a distorted mind and personality disorders. There is no doubt that the scant consideration reserved for Hill by his contemporaries was due at least in part to his conduct. His relationships with the cultural milieu of his time tended to be conflictual, and throughout his life he aroused harsh reactions on the part of the *literati*, making powerful enemies, as the following episodes clearly show.

Tobias Smollett⁶⁸ accused Hill of harming the sales of *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*: just two weeks before the novel's publication, when it was too late for Smollett to make any changes, Hill brought out *The History of a Woman of Quality: or, The Adventures of Lady Frail*, which claimed to tell the true story of Lady Vane.⁶⁹ Then in August 1752, Hill had had the first issue of a periodical called *The Impertinent* published anonymously, in which he launched a violent attack on the poet

⁶⁴ Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), Irish medic and naturalist. On his death he left to the nation a library containing 50,000 volumes, an immense herbarium and a splendid art collection, on condition that Parliament pay £20,000 to his executors. This legacy, initially acquired by the British Museum, subsequently formed the core of the Natural History Museum.

⁶⁵ Cf. Isaac Disraeli, *The Calamities and Quarrels of Authors*, p. 373.

⁶⁶ Cf. G. S. Rousseau, *The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill*, p. xxxi.

⁶⁷ David Erskine Baker, Isaac Reed, Stephen Jones, *Biographia Dramatica*, I, part I, p. 344.

⁶⁸ Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), Irish medic and author. After graduating in medicine he moved to London to try his fortune as a playwright. Having failed to make his mark, he joined a British warship as assistant surgeon. This experience led to his first novel, *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), influenced by Lesage's *Histoire de Gil Blas* (1715-1735). This was followed by *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751), *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753), *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760) and *Travels through France and Italy* (1766). In 1757 he began work on his *magnum opus*, *A Complete History of England* (1757-1765). *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, published shortly before his death in 1771, is considered his masterpiece.

⁶⁹ Hill's text was published anonymously – "By an Impartial Hand" – on 8 February 1751. On 25 February *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* came out, which included some chapters entitled *The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*, quite probably the work of Frances Anne Hawes (1713-1788), wife of Lord William, second Viscount Vane. Shortly after its publication an anonymous pamphlet, probably by Hill, began to circulate, *A Parallel between the Characters of Lady Frail, and the Lady of Quality in Peregrine Pickle*, comparing the two novels. Moreover Hill set out his own version of the facts in *Observations on the Memoirs of the Lady of Quality in Peregrine Pickle, on the History of Lady Frail, and on the Parallel between those two Characters*, published in *The Inspector* (no. 8). A report of these events, from January to April 1751, is contained in W. Scott, "Smollett, Dr. John Hill, and the Failure of "Peregrine Pickle"", *Notes and Queries*, 200 (September, 1955), 389-392.

Christopher Smart.⁷⁰ At the same time, in his column 'The Inspector', he took the part of the latter, condemning the cruel treatment he had received in *The Impertinent*.⁷¹ In this way, Hill had hit on an astute expedient to harass Smart freely and without any apparent incongruity. When Smart discovered this stratagem, he got his revenge by publishing a fierce satire entitled *The Hilliad: An Epic Poem* (1753), in which Hill was evoked thus:

Pimp! Poet! Puffer! 'Potheary! Play'r!
Whose baseless fame by vanity is buoy'd,
Like the huge earth, self-center'd in the void.⁷²

In this poem, Hill was persuaded to abandon the profession of apothecary to devote himself to the writer's calling by a 'tawny Sybil' who significantly recompensed him with all the riches and fame that six pennies could buy.⁷³ Once he had become 'th' INSPECTOR'⁷⁴ and had been admitted to the presence of the gods, he aroused the suspicions of Zeus, who was surprised to find that Nature, whose labours are never in vain, in his case had

On mere privation [...] bestow'd a frame,
And dignify'd a nothing with a name,
A wretch devoid of use, of sense and grace,
Th' insolvent tenant of incumber'd space.⁷⁵

The poem ends with Fame's pronouncement:

While in the vale perennial fountains flow,
And fragrant Zephyrs musically blow;
While the majestic sea from pole to pole,
In horrible magnificence shall roll,
While yonder glorious canopy on high
Shall overhang the curtains of the sky,
While the gay seasons their due course shall run,

⁷⁰ Christopher Smart (1722-1771) directed and collaborated with various journals, wrote songs, farces and miscellaneous texts for the theatre, and a series of translations of the works of Horace. His published works include *Poems on Several Occasions* (1752), *A Song to David* (1763) and *Jubilate Agno* (the fragments of this work, composed between 1759 and 1763, were first published in 1939 and in a definitive edition in 1954).

⁷¹ Hill's invective in *The Impertinent* was aimed not just at Christopher Smart, whose *Poems on Several Occasions* he ridiculed, but also at Henry Fielding. In *The Covent Garden Journal* the novelist and magistrate had sided with one Mr. Brown who, having been defamed by 'The Inspector', had taken the law into his own hands and assaulted Hill in Ranelagh gardens. On the controversy between Hill and Fielding, which also involved Smart, see L. Bertelsen, "'Neutral Nonsense, neither False nor True': Christopher Smart and the Paper War(s) of 1752-53", in *Christopher Smart and the Enlightenment*, ed. by C. Hawes, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999, pp. 135-152.

⁷² Christopher Smart, *The Hilliad: An Epic Poem*, in *The Poems, of the Late Christopher Smart*, 2 vols., London, Printed and sold by Smart and Cowslade, and sold by F. Power and Co., 1791, I, pp. 173-174. J. P. Emery maintains that Arthur Murphy contributed to, or was sole author of, the "Notes Variorum" which accompany the poem (see J. P. Emery, 'Murphy's Authorship of the Notes of Smart's Hilliad', *Modern Language Notes*, 61, no. 3, March 1946, 162-165).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Ruled by the brilliant stars and golden sun,
 While wit and fool antagonists shall be,
 And sense and taste and nature shall agree,
 While love shall live, and rapture shall rejoice,
 Fed by the notes of Handel, Arne and Boyce,
 While with joint force o'er humour's droll domain,
 Cervantes, Fielding, Lucian, Swift shall reign,
 While thinking figures from the canvas start,
 And Hogarth is the Garrick of his art.
 So long in flat stupidity's extreme,
 Shall H-ll th' ARCH-DUNCE remain o'er every
 dunce supreme.⁷⁶

Henry Fielding, the great novelist and magistrate, clashed with Hill over the controversial case of Elizabeth Canning.⁷⁷ The legal battle between the opposing factions – Canningites and Egyptians – had attracted such interest that vignettes and caricatures were circulating and a full-blown pamphlet war was being waged.⁷⁸ Fielding and Hill joined in the controversy, the former with *A Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning* (1753),⁷⁹ in which he maintained the veracity of the version provided by the young woman, and the latter with *The Story of Elizabeth Canning* (1753), presenting the case as a fabrication and contradicting Fielding's arguments to uphold the innocence of Mary Squires.⁸⁰

The dispute between the two actually went back to the previous year. In the pages of *The Covent Garden Journal* – which appeared from 4 January to 25 November 1752 – Fielding had penned a facetious description of the 'paper-war between the forces under Sir Alexander Drawcansir, and the army of Grub Street', which numbered Hill in its ranks: 'Fielding in commencing his "Covent Garden Journal", undoubtedly

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 201-203. Hill's reply to Smart's invective came in *The Smartiad, a Satire. Occasioned by an Epic Poem, intitled The Hilliad* (London, D. Jobs, 1753).

⁷⁷ On 1 January 1753, the young servant Elizabeth Canning disappeared while returning home after spending an evening with relatives. About a month later she turned up at her mother's house saying she had been abducted by two men who had robbed her and stunned her with a blow to the head. On regaining consciousness she found herself in a room with two women. The elder of the two tried to persuade her to become a prostitute. She managed to escape almost a month later. Susannah Wells was apprehended as the landlady of the place where she had been sequestered, and Elizabeth was able to identify the gipsy Mary Squires as the woman who had locked her away. On 7 February 1753 Henry Fielding, who had taken Canning's statement, issued an arrest warrant for Susannah Wells and Mary Squires. On 21 February 1753 Mary Squires was sentenced to death and Susannah Wells was sentenced to six months in prison. Unhappy about the sentence, Sir Crisp Gascoyne, Chief Magistrate and Lord Mayor of London, held an enquiry in which other witnesses speaking in favour of Squires were heard. The execution of Mary Squires was suspended and in May 1753 she was pardoned by the King. Susannah Wells only regained her liberty after serving her sentence. Elizabeth Canning was accused of perjury and was sentenced to one month in prison and seven years' deportation to the American colonies (Cf. Thomas Bayly Howell, *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and other Crimes and Misdemeanors from Earliest Period to the Year 1783*, 21 vols., London, Longman and others, 1816-1828, XIX, pp. 262-276 and pp. 284-692). For further details see *A Collection of Several Papers Relating to Elizabeth Canning*, London, E. Innocent, 1754.

⁷⁸ The term "Egyptian" was commonly used for members of nomad groups, and gives us the word "gipsy".

⁷⁹ Henry Fielding, *A Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning*, London, A. Millar, 1753.

⁸⁰ Hill also proclaimed his opinion on the Canning case in *The Inspector* (no. 186, 7 June 1754).

regarded him as a nuisance which ought to be abated'.⁸¹ This marked the beginning of a lengthy exchange of provocative sallies from the pages of their respective journals.⁸²

And still we have not come to the end of the list of Hill's detractors. Arthur Murphy made him the butt of his satire, disparaging him in verse published in *The Gray's Inn Journal*, which appeared between 1752 and 1754:

Three great wise men, in the same Æra born,
Britannia's happy island did adorn:
Henley in cure of souls display'd his skill,
Rock shone in physic, and in both *John Hill*.
 The force of *Nature* could no further go,
 To make a third she join'd the former two.⁸³

In the satire *The Rosciad* (1761), which lampooned contemporary actors and actresses, Charles Churchill⁸⁴ referred to him ironically as a 'Proteus':

With sleek appearance, and with ambling pace,
 And, type of vacant head, with vacant face,
 The Proteus H-LL, put in his modest plea, –
 "Let Favour speak for others, Worth for me. –"
 For who, like him, his various pow'rs could call
 Into so many shapes, and shine in all?
 Who could so nobly grace the motley list,
 Actor, Inspector, Doctor, Botanist?
 Knows any one so well, – sure no one knows, –

⁸¹ Frederick Lawrence, *The Life of Henry Fielding: With Notices of His Writings, His Times, and His Contemporaries*, London, Arthur Hall, Virtue, & Co., 1855, pp. 303-305. In the guise of Sir Alexander Drawcansir, literary hero of *The Covent Garden Journal*, "Censor of Great Britain", one can of course recognise Fielding. According to Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Grub Street was originally the street in London 'inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems' made popular by Alexander Pope in his satire on the literary world *The Dunciad* ('Grub Street', in *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols., London, Printed for W. Strahan, and others, 1783, I). The expression came to indicate not only the place where hacks scraped a living but also literary mediocrity generally.

⁸² The 'paper-war' pitting Fielding against Hill, the former writing in *The Covent Garden Journal* and the latter in *The London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, also involved other exponents of the literary world. For an account of this literary dispute see Frederick Lawrence, *The Life of Henry Fielding*, pp. 305-308. For further details see: B. Rizzo, 'Notes on the War between Henry Fielding and John Hill, 1752-53', *Library*, ser. 6, 7, no. 4 (December, 1985), 338-353; B. A. Goldgar, 'Fielding's Periodical Journalism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry Fielding*, ed. by C. Rawson, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 94-108.

⁸³ *The Gray's Inn Journal*, no. 6 (25 November 1752), in *The Works of Arthur Murphy*, V, p. 56. Murphy also dedicated a satirical poem to Hill, published under the pseudonym Quinbus Flestrin and entitled *Doctor Bobadil's Monody; Occasioned by an Unhappy Accident he met with at Ranelagh Last Summer; With a Preface and Notes Variorum* (1752). Another version of this text bears the title *The Inspector's Rhapsody or Soliloquy, on the Loss of his Wigg, in a Scuffle with some Irish Gentlemen at Ranelagh* (1752).

⁸⁴ Charles Churchill (1731-1764), poet. Following ordination in 1756 he succeeded his father as curate of Westminster in 1758. In 1761 he abandoned the cloth to devote himself to a literary career. His knowledge of the theatrical world of the day was put to good use in the satire *The Rosciad* (1761), followed by *The Prophecy of Famine: A Scots Pastoral* (1763), a violent satire against Scottish influence on the British government (making clear reference to Lord Bute). Churchill was the author of other satirical pieces touching on politics and morals such as *The Conference* (1763), *The Author* (1763), *The Duellist* (1764), *Gotham* (1764), *The Candidate* (1764), *The Farewell* (1764), and *The Times* (1764).

At once to play, prescribe, compound, compose?
 Who can? – But WOODWARD came, – H-LL slipp'd away,
 Melting like ghosts before the rising day.⁸⁵

In 1765, under the pseudonym Mercurius Spur, Cuthbert Shaw⁸⁶ published *The Race*, a poem featuring Johnson, Smollett, Churchill and others, where also Hill appears to put in his claim to fame:

Not so repuls'd, nor overaw'd with shame,
 Next Hill stood forth, a darling child of Fame;
 But, as to Justice, Fame herself must bow,
 The poets' bays shall never deck his brow:
 Else who, like Hill, can save a sickly age;
 Like him arrest the hand of death with sage?
 But this the ancients never knew, or sure
 They ne'er had died while sage remain'd a cure.
 Oh, matchless Hill! if aught the Muse foresee
 Of things conceal'd in dark futurity,
 Death's triumph by thy skill shall soon be o'er,
 Hence dire disease and pain shall be no more;
 'Tis thine to save whole nations from his maw,
 By some new tincture of a barley-straw.
 He bow'd, and spoke: – 'Oh, Goddess, heavenly
 To thy own Hill now show a mother's care; [fair!
 If I go unrewarded hence away,
 What bard will court thee on a future day?
 Who toils like me thy temple to unlock,
 By moral essays, rhyme, and water-dock?
 With perseverance who like me could write
 Inspector on Inspector, night by night;
 Supplying still, with unexhausted head,
 Till every reader slumber'd as he read?
 No longer then my lawful claim delay' –
 She smil'd – Hill simper'd, and went pleas'd away.⁸⁷

Hill was also ridiculed in a poem by William Kenrick,⁸⁸ *The Pasquinade*, published in 1753, in which the goddesses of 'Pertness' and 'Dulness' chose him as their favourite.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Charles Churchill, *The Rosciad*, London, Printed for the Author and sold by W. Flexney, 1761, p. 4, 69-80.

⁸⁶ Cuthbert Shaw (1738/1739-1771), poet. Born in Yorkshire, he soon moved to London where he was active as an actor from the spring of 1760. He gave up this profession in 1762.

⁸⁷ Cuthbert Shaw, *The Race*. By Mercurius Spur, Esq. With Notes by Faustinus Scriblerus, in *The Poetical Works of Cuthbert Shaw*. Collated with the best editions: by Thomas Park, ESQ. F.S.A., London, Printed by Charles Whittingham for J. Sharpe and sold by W. Suttaby, 1807, pp. 31-32, 142-167.

⁸⁸ William Kenrick (1725?-1779), journalist, playwright and translator. From 1759 to 1769 he collaborated with *The Monthly Review* and from 1768 with *The Gentleman's Journal*. In 1775 he founded *The London Review of English and Foreign Literature*. He wrote several plays and compiled a *Dictionary of the English Language* (1773). In 1765 he published the pamphlet *A Review of Dr Johnson's New Edition of Shakespeare; In which the Ignorance, or Inattention, of that Editor is exposed, and the Poet defended from the Persecution of his Commentators*. Among his poems we can recall: *The Pasquinade* (1753), *Epistles Philosophical and Moral* (1759), *Poems; Ludicrous, Satirical, and Moral* (1768).

⁸⁹ Cf. William Kenrick, *The Pasquinade*. With Notes Variorum, London, C. Mountfort, 1753.

In the face of such numerous and vitriolic attacks, one can almost concur with Samuel Johnson's observation: 'Dr. Hill was [...] a very curious observer; and if he would have been contented to tell the world no more than he knew, he might have been a very considerable man, and needed not to have recourse to such mean expedients to raise his reputation'.⁹⁰

Nonetheless, we should point out that the sarcasm shown to Hill by his contemporaries seems to have been stirred up not only by his provocative and polemical behaviour but also by his versatility as a writer, by his readiness to express himself in every form of creativity, and above all by the financial success which attended his alleged incompetence. It was in fact his determination not to restrict his intellectual energy to a single field of study that condemned Hill to pay a particularly high price, arousing the irritation and condemnation of his contemporaries, for whom he would always be an impostor and a charlatan. His tendency to write about subjects which ranged so widely, from botanics to drama, geology to medicine, journalism to astronomy, was taken as indubitable proof of his 'small and insignificant mind'.⁹¹

Ridiculed by his compatriots, forgotten by the scientists, abandoned by his patron Lord Bute, Hill died a poor and broken man. Nonetheless time has afforded him a gradual and partial vindication. In the closing decades of last century a reappraisal of his contributions in various fields – in particular botanics, medicine and literature – has led to at least a partial re-evaluation of his work and standing as a scholar.⁹²

For his tireless activity of research and classification, for his powers of intuition and above all for his determination not to rein in his curiosity or limit his range of study and action, Hill can be considered to have been 'more modern, for better or worse, than many of his distinguished contemporaries'.⁹³

The Actor (1750-1755): Textual Issues and Characteristics. The Question of Attribution

With the exception of some anticipations in the *Mercure de France* in October and November 1745,⁹⁴ the first edition of Rémond de Sainte-Albine's essay was published in 1747, followed by a second, definitive edition, "augmentée et corrigée", in 1749.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 4 vols., London, T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807, II, p. 42. Johnson expressed his views in front of George III, who had asked his opinion on Hill.

⁹¹ G. S. Rousseau, 'John Hill, Universal Genius Manqué', p. 89.

⁹² See: A. D. Morris, "'Sir" John Hill, M. A., M. D., (1706-1775): Apothecary, Botanist, Playwright, Actor, Novelist, Journalist'; G. S. Rousseau, 'John Hill, Universal Genius Manqué'; G. S. Rousseau, *The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill 1714-1775*.

⁹³ G. S. Rousseau, 'John Hill, Universal Genius Manqué', pp. 91-92.

⁹⁴ The fascicule of October 1745 included the 'Préface', while that of November 1745 included the 'Introduction', the first section of Part I – 'Des principaux avantages que les Comédiens doivent tenir de la Nature' – together with two chapters indicated as the third of Book I and the second of Book II.

⁹⁵ First edition: *Le Comédien. Ouvrage divisé en deux parties. Par M. Rémond de Sainte Albine*, Paris, Desaint & Saillant et Vincent fils, 1747. Now in S. Chaouche (ed.), *Sept traités sur le jeu du comédien et autres textes. De l'action oratoire à l'art dramatique (1657-1750)*, Paris, H. Champion, 2001, pp. 541-669. Second edition: *Le Comédien. Ouvrage divisé en deux parties. Par M. Rémond de Sainte Albine. Nouvelle édition, Augmentée et corrigée*, Paris, Vincent Fils, 1749. This second edition, including the corrections indicated in the *errata corrigé* of the first edition, presented an *Avertissement de l'Auteur sur cette seconde Édition* and

The Actor, which appeared anonymously in 1750, was the English translation and adaptation of this second version, with several variants and additions. The treatise was brought out again in 1755, also anonymously, as “A New Work, Written by the Author of the former, and Adapted to the Present State of the Theatres”.

Fourteen years later, in 1769, Michele Sticotti translated the 1755 version into French, with the title *Garrick ou les Acteurs Anglois*, probably unaware of the fact that it was based on a French original.⁹⁶ Diderot, as is well known, lost no time in attacking Sticotti’s work in an article entitled ‘Sur une brochure intitulée Garrick ou les acteurs anglais’, which came out in 1770 in *Correspondance littéraire*.⁹⁷

This article, which spoke out against the emotionalist positions, formed the core of Diderot’s subsequent *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, written during the 1770s and published posthumously in 1830. It was the *Paradoxe*, which took a stand in the polemic between Rémond de Sainte-Albine, the ‘médiocre litterateur’ who had declared ‘sensibilité’ to be the cornerstone of acting, and François Riccoboni, the ‘grand comédien’ who had denounced emotionalism in the theatre, which sparked off the protracted *querelle* on the art of acting, with “rationality” pitted against “sentiment”.⁹⁸

These then were the stages, in outline, of the debate concerning acting that raged in France and England during the second half of the eighteenth century. The various developments in this debate have been carefully reconstructed by scholars, but some points about the British phase continue to pose a number of questions, notably the attribution of *The Actor*, in the two versions of 1750 and 1755, and also the question of the existence of two intermediate editions of the essay.⁹⁹

On 28 April 1750 the publisher Griffiths announced *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing, Interspersed with Theatrical Anecdotes, Critical Remarks on Plays, and Occasional*

three extra chapters – XIX, XX, XXI – at the end of Part II. Various changes had also been made to the conclusion in chapter XXII.

⁹⁶ *Garrick ou les Acteurs Anglois; Ouvrage contenant des Observations sur l’Art Dramatique, sur l’Art de la Représentation, et le Jeu des Acteurs. Avec des Notes historiques et critiques, et des Anecdotes sur les différens Théâtres de Londres et de Paris. Traduit de l’Anglois*, Paris, Lacombe, 1769. The on-line catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, which holds the volume, reads: “Traduit par Antoine Fabio Sticotti, d’après Barbier”. However, the author is not Antoine Fabio Sticotti as suggested by Barbier (see Antoine-Alexandre Barbier, *Dictionnaire des ouvrages anonymes*, Paris, P. Daffis, 1872-1879, II, 1874, p. 522). As Claudio Meldolesi has shown, reconstructing the genealogy of this family of actors and playwrights, there never was an Antonio Fabio Sticotti. The patriarch was Fabio Sticotti, who moved from Venice to Paris in 1716. His two sons were called Antonio Giovanni (also known as Fabio) and Michele (also known as Kelly). It was the latter who wrote the treatise (cf. C. Meldolesi, *Gli Sticotti, comici italiani nei teatri d’Europa del Settecento*, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969, pp. 157-169).

⁹⁷ Friedrich Melchior Grimm, Denis Diderot, Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal, Jacques-Henri Meister (eds.), *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique, par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister etc.* (Paris, Garnier Frères, 1877-1882), 16 vols., Nendeln, Liechtenstein, Klaus Reprint, 1968, VIII, pp. 134-141 and pp. 149-158. Diderot’s article appeared in the *Correspondance littéraire* in two parts, respectively 15 October and 1 November 1770.

⁹⁸ Denis Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, in *Œuvres Complètes de Diderot* (Paris, Garnier Frères, 1875-1877), 20 vols., Nendeln, Liechtenstein, Kraus Reprint, 1966, VIII, p. 358.

⁹⁹ The first scholar to reconstruct this itinerary was William Archer in *Mask or Faces? A Study in the Psychology of Acting*, London and New York, Longmans and Green, and Co., 1888. In particular, Archer identified the 1755 edition of *The Actor* as the source used by Sticotti. See also: C. Meldolesi, *Gli Sticotti, comici italiani nei teatri d’Europa del Settecento*; P. Alatri, Introduction to *Paradossos sull’attore*, by Denis Diderot, trans. by J. Bertolazzi, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1972.

Observations on Audiences. On 12 March 1755 the same publisher brought out what is generally considered as the second version of the essay. The text bore the same title, but had a longer and more detailed subtitle: *The Actor: Or, A Treatise on the Art of Playing. A New Work, Written by the Author of the former, and Adapted to the Present State of the Theatres. Containing Impartial Observations on the Performance, Manner, Perfections, and Defects of Mr. Garrick, Mr. Barry, Mr. Woodward, Mr. Foot, Mr. Havard, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Berry, &c. Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Miss Nossiter, Mrs. Gregory, Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Green, Miss Bellamy, &c. In their several Capital Parts*.

According to Maria Chiara Barbieri it was in the wake of this edition that notice began to be taken of the work, with John Hill generally being identified as its author. But since people invariably referred to the book merely by its title, *The Actor*, without any further specification, it is not clear whether he was simply regarded as the author of the 1755 edition.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, although nowadays the 1750 edition is also attributed to John Hill, the identity of the author of this text is one of the thorny questions we evoked above, on which scholars have not reached a consensus.

However, before going into the question of the identity of the author of *The Actor*, we have to deal with another point which lies behind the whole question of attribution, namely the existence of two intermediate editions of the treatise. It must be pointed out that the attribution to John Hill of the two versions dated 1750 and 1755, and also their comparative analysis, is based on the assumption that the 1755 version is the second edition of the treatise. Nonetheless this assumption has to be questioned in the light of the discovery of the existence of two further editions of the work. This means that the reference in the title of the 1755 edition to “the Author of the former” cannot necessarily be taken to refer to the 1750 edition. Griffiths in fact published two other related volumes between these two editions. Maria Chiara Barbieri argues that the first of these must be considered ‘in all likelihood’ a reprint of the first 1750 edition, on the basis of the total correspondence of the respective titles, while the second volume is alleged to be a re-elaboration of the 1750 version.¹⁰¹ In reality a comparison of the titles of the four editions leads us to draw different conclusions.

Published respectively on 30 November 1752 and 30 October 1753, the two intermediate editions have titles which are essentially identical – with the exception of the mention of the actress Horton, not found in the 1753 version – but differ from that of the first 1750 edition, and are only partially similar to that of the 1755 edition:

*The Actor; A Treatise on the Art of Playing. Interspersed with Observations on the Performances of Mr. Garrick, Mr. Quin, Mr. Barry, Mr. Berry, Mr. Macklin, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Havard, Mr. Woodward, Mr. Foot, &c.; Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Ward, Mrs. Elmy, Mrs. Green, Mrs. Clive, Miss Bellamy, Mrs. Horton. Also some Anecdotes of Mess. Betterton, Booth, Wilks, and other late celebrated Performers; together with Occasional Remarks upon Managers, upon Audiences, and upon our principal Tragedies, Comedies, Masques, and Farces.*¹⁰²

The Actor. A Treatise on the Art of Playing. Interspersed with Observations on the Performances of Mr. Garrick, Mr. Quin, Mr. Barry, Mr. Berry, Mr. Macklin, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Havard, Mr. Woodward, Mr. Foot, &c.; Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Ward, Mrs.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. M. C. Barbieri, *La pagina e la scena. L'attore inglese nella trattatistica del '700*, p. 219.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

¹⁰² From *The London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, 30 November 1752.

*Elmy, Mrs. Green, Mrs. Clive, Miss Bellamy, &c. Also some Anecdotes of Mess. Betterton, Booth, Wilks and other celebrated Performers; together with Occasional Remarks upon Managers, upon Audiences, and upon our principal Tragedies, Comedies, Masques and Farces.*¹⁰³

According to what can be desumed from the titles, both volumes could contain elements capable of opening up new lines of enquiry or prompting a re-examination of the relationship between the 1750 and 1755 editions. However, this is merely a hypothetical consideration. The 1752 and 1753 editions have never been located to date, so it is not possible to say with certainty if and in what way they differed from the first 1750 edition, except for the title.¹⁰⁴ What is more, we are duty bound to suppose that the 1755 edition included some new elements with respect to the intermediate editions of 1752 and 1753, since it contains references to events which took place after these two dates.

The actors mentioned in the titles of the 1752 and 1753 editions are already cited, sometimes if only in passing, in the text of the first 1750 edition. Among them, some were nearing retirement, like Quin, or had died some time previously, like Betterton, Booth and Wilks. Reference to these actors was eliminated from the title, and in part also from the text, of the 1755 edition. Moreover the title of this latter edition, compared to the two intermediate versions, also registers the elimination of other players, namely Macklin, Mrs. Ward and Mrs. Elmy. Instead of these actors, who were nonetheless still active at this time, we find Mr. Palmer, Miss Nossiter and Mrs. Gregory. In giving a list of actors which is in part updated, the 1755 edition presents itself as a work referring “to the Present State of the Theatres”, while the two editions which immediately preceded it, to judge from their titles, do not seem to have been so topical.¹⁰⁵

The fact that the two intermediate editions are unavailable not only makes it impossible to make an accurate comparison with the editions of 1750 and 1755, but also poses some other questions concerning the important question of the text’s attribution.

In presenting itself as “a New Work”, does the 1755 edition make this claim with respect to the first 1750 edition or the one that had appeared in 1753? Or again, if we suppose that, in spite of the difference in their titles, the contents of the first and third edition were identical, is it possible that the 1755 version wished to present itself as a novelty with respect to both editions? And furthermore, when in the 1755 text the author claims paternity of the previous edition, was he referring generically to all the preceding editions or only to that of 1753?¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ From *The Public Advertiser*, 30 October 1753.

¹⁰⁴ We learn of both intermediate editions in *English Theatrical Literature 1559-1900* (p. 74). Since they had not been able to see the texts, the editors refer, for the 1753 edition, to George W. Stone (*The London Stage 1660-1800*, Part IV, 1747-1776, p. 387). Stone had taken the information on the 1753 edition from *The Public Advertiser*, a daily which published theatrical playbills and gave general information on important events such as the publication of works on the theatre. For the 1752 edition, contrary to what Barbieri maintains (see M. C. Barbieri, *La pagina e la scena. L'attore inglese nella trattatistica del '700*, p. 221, note 6), the editors do not refer to Robert William Lowe, which in fact contains no reference to the intermediate editions (see *A Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, London, J. C. Nimmo, 1888).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. M. C. Barbieri, *La pagina e la scena. L'attore inglese nella trattatistica del '700*, pp. 221-222.

¹⁰⁶ These questions are raised by M. C. Barbieri in *ibid.*, p. 222.

In any case, the intermediate editions, which joined the two better known ones, undoubtedly testify to the widespread success which the treatise must have met with at the time. It is clear that, if four editions were published in five years, the work was capable, on the strength of its subjects and contents, of capturing readers' interest.

That said, on the question of the author's identity the opinions expressed by scholars and the data provided by the sources are in contradiction. One man in particular has often been evoked as the contender with John Hill for the attribution of the two editions of *The Actor* to have come down to us, namely Aaron Hill.¹⁰⁷

In arguing that the author of the 1750 treatise is Aaron Hill, Jacques Chouillet set out not only to reconstruct the development of the mistaken attribution to John Hill but also to provide concrete proof for his own thesis. He traces the origin of the false attribution to John Hill to the catalogue of Boase and Courtney dating from 1874, in which we find the following indication:

The Actor; or a Treatise on the art of Playing. A new work written by the author of the former [Sir J. Hill, M.D.], and adapted to the present state of the theatres, containing impartial observations on the performance, etc., of Mr. Garrick ... Mr. Foote, etc. Lond., printed for R. Griffiths, at the Dunciad, in Pater-noster Row, 1755, 12°, pp. 284.¹⁰⁸

The proof adduced by Chouillet consists in a note to be found in the *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature*.¹⁰⁹ In this note the *Dictionary's* editors, Halkett and Laing, attributed *The Actor*, in both the 1750 and 1755 versions, to Aaron Hill, denouncing the mistake committed by the compilers of the catalogues of the British Museum Library in ascribing the work to John Hill. According to Chouillet, this mistake had subsequently been rectified: the British Museum's current catalogue is alleged to attribute the two editions of the treatise (1750 and 1755) to Aaron Hill.¹¹⁰

Today, in the British Library's on-line catalogues, both editions of the treatise are attributed to Rémond de Sainte-Albine, with the specification, concerning the 1750 version, that it is a translation and adaptation of *Le Comédien*. The only edition of the treatise ascribed to John Hill is the one published by Benjamin Blom in 1972, an anastatic reprint of the 1755 edition. The entry for Aaron Hill comes up with a text published in 1821 and entitled *The Actor; or, Guide to the stage*, and it is specified in a

¹⁰⁷ It is not possible to say with certainty whether the fact of homonymy played any role in the attribution. The question is raised by M. C. Barbieri in *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ George Clement Boase, William Prideaux Courtney, *Bibliotheca Cornubiensis. A Catalogue of the Writings, both Manuscript and Printed, of Cornishmen, and of Works relating to the County of Cornwall, with Biographical Memoranda and copious Literary References*, London, Longmans and others, 1874-1882, I, p. 153 (the information between square brackets is by Boase and Courtney). In the catalogue the treatise appears under 'Samuel Foote' and is mentioned as a text including references to the playwright: 'Note. – Account of S. Foote, pp. 156, 166, 273' (*ibid.*).

¹⁰⁹ S. Halkett, J. Laing (eds.), *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature, New and enlarged edition by James Kennedy, W. A. Smith and A. F. Johnson*, Edinburgh and London, Oliver and Boyd, 1926-1962, I, p. 24. The *Dictionary* dates from 1882-1888 (*A Dictionary of the Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature of Great Britain. Including the Works of Foreigners Written in, or Translated into the English Language*, Edinburgh, William Paterson, 4 vols.). Chouillet used the edition of 1926.

¹¹⁰ Cf. J. Chouillet, 'Une source anglaise du Paradoxe sur le comédien', *Dix-huitième siècle – Revue annuelle publiée par la Société française d'Etude du XVIII^e siècle avec le concours du C.N.R.S.*, no. 2 (1970), p. 212.

note that this is a “rearrangement of Mr. Aaron Hill’s celebrated Essay”.¹¹¹ According to Maria Chiara Barbieri, it is possible that, in attributing *The Actor* to Aaron Hill, the editors of the *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature* considered that the title referred not to the re-edition of the *Essay on the Art of Acting*, originally published in the fourth volume of Aaron Hill’s collected writings,¹¹² but to the treatise we are dealing with.¹¹³ In any case, in the years in which Halkett and Laing were compiling their *Dictionary*, the author of *The Actor* was generally believed to be Aaron Hill, as is confirmed by William Archer.¹¹⁴

Chouillet, who receives the endorsement of Paolo Alatri in the introduction to the Italian translation of Diderot’s *Paradoxe*,¹¹⁵ also bases his argument on the substantial continuity and conceptual coherence which he identifies between Aaron Hill’s writings on the theatre and the ideas elaborated in *The Actor*, in particular in the first part of the treatise.¹¹⁶

Concerning the 1755 edition, Chouillet does not give an opinion on its attribution: ‘We do not have any information making it possible to reply to this question. One may suppose that the success of the first edition induced the anonymous author to rework the first text, embellishing it with numerous examples’.¹¹⁷

Chouillet thus treats the two versions of the treatise as completely autonomous, and views the allusion to Aaron Hill contained in the 1755 edition – ‘Aaron Hill, an author of allowed merit, requires to be studied as a classic. This he in general owes to the peculiar arrangement and disposition of his words’¹¹⁸ – merely as showing that the anonymous author was unaware of the fact ‘that he was re-editing a work by this writer’.¹¹⁹

However, the attribution to Aaron Hill has been dismissed by William Archer: since it is explicitly stated in the 1755 edition that the treatise is the work of the “Author of the former”, and since it contains references to events which occurred

¹¹¹ Aaron Hill, *The Actor; or, Guide to the Stage; exemplifying the whole Art of Acting; in which the Dramatic Passions are defined, analyzed, and made easy of Acquirement. The whole interspersed with Select and Striking Examples from the most popular Modern Pieces*, London, John Lowndes, 1821.

¹¹² Aaron Hill, *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq. Consisting of Letters on Various Subjects, and of Original Poems, Moral and Facetious, With an Essay on the Art of Acting*, 4 vols., London, Printed for the Benefit of the Family, 1753.

¹¹³ Cf. M. C. Barbieri, *La pagina e la scena. L'attore inglese nella trattatistica del '700*, p. 223.

¹¹⁴ ‘The book has generally been attributed to Aaron Hill, the adaptor of Voltaire’s *Zaïre*, *Alzire*, and *Mérope*’. William Archer, *Masks or Faces? A Study in the Psychology of Acting*, p. 16.

¹¹⁵ P. Alatri, Introduction to *Paradosso sull'attore*, by Denis Diderot, pp. 9-10. Alatri states that in *Garrick ou les Acteurs Anglois* Michele Sticotti translated not the first but the second edition of *The Actor*, the latter being ‘the work of an anonymous author’ (p. 10).

¹¹⁶ The French scholar refers to *The Art of Acting* (1746).

¹¹⁷ ‘Aucun renseignement ne permet de répondre à cette question. On peut supposer que le succès de la première édition a incité l’auteur anonyme à remanier le premier texte, en l’enrichissant de nombreux exemples’. J. Chouillet, ‘Une source anglaise du Paradoxe sur le comédien’, p. 214.

¹¹⁸ John Hill, *The Actor: Or, A Treatise on the Art of Playing. A New Work, Written by the Author of the former, and Adapted to the Present State of the Theatres. Containing Impartial Observations on the Performance, Manner, Perfections, and Defects of Mr. Garrick, Mr. Barry, Mr. Woodward, Mr. Foot, Mr. Havard, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Berry, &c. Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Miss Nossiter, Mrs. Gregory, Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Green, Miss Bellamy, &c. In their several Capital Parts*, London, R. Griffiths, 1755, chap. II, p. 19.

¹¹⁹ ‘qu’il rééditait un ouvrage de cet écrivain’. J. Chouillet, ‘Une source anglaise du Paradoxe sur le comédien’, p. 219.

after the death of Aaron Hill, it is clear that both texts cannot be ascribed to him.¹²⁰ Nonetheless Archer does not mention John Hill by name: the author of the treatise remains a 'nameless writer'.¹²¹

In reality, various elements militate against the attribution of *The Actor* to Aaron Hill, starting with some circumstances in his biography. The author of the treatise shows to have a profound knowledge of the theatrical milieu in London and to maintain constant relationships with its protagonists, which Aaron Hill would undoubtedly have possessed at one time, but not by the time this text was written. From 1738 financial difficulties had forced him to retire to Plaistow, in Essex. Although he travelled up to the capital whenever possible and never failed to frequent the theatres, his contacts with the contemporary theatrical world were by no means continuous. One only has to dip into his correspondence to learn of his nostalgia, and at times also his regret and resentment at the indifference manifested to him by the current protagonists of the theatrical milieu.

Furthermore, in the final period of Aaron Hill's life, when he returned to London to undergo further treatment for a kidney ailment that had degenerated, it seems unlikely that he can have gone to the theatre often enough to be able to write about all the actors mentioned in the treatise, or to witness the performances that are referred to or described therein. We can find confirmation for this by comparing references made in the treatise with circumstances that emerge from his correspondence.

In *The Actor* we find, for example, a reference to the performance of *Macbeth* given at Drury Lane on 7 January 1744, with Garrick in the title role. The author describes the particular way the actor wore his costume, making his entry 'with his coat and waistcoat both unbutton'd, and with some other discomposures in his dress', to suggest the character's state of violent agitation. However these touches, which in the author's opinion were very effective, had been omitted, perhaps at the suggestion of Garrick's friends, in the subsequent performances.¹²² From a letter to David Mallet we know that Aaron Hill was unable to see Garrick perform *Macbeth* until a few months after the first performance, in April 1744, and that this was the actually first time he had ever seen the actor on stage.¹²³ Moreover, in the same letter, before expressing an opinion on Garrick, Aaron Hill states that he wishes to see him in the role of Richard III, in which he was held to be insuperable, while in a letter written two years later, addressed to the actor himself, he wrote that he had 'too seldom, had the pleasure to be present, when you acted'. In a subsequent letter, also addressed to

¹²⁰ William Lowe reported Lowndes's statement concerning *The Actor* – 'A very sensible performance, written by Aaron Hill' (William Thomas Lowndes, *The Bibliographer's Manual of English Literature*, London, New York, Bell and Daldy, Scribner, Welford, & Co. 1869, I, p. 7, reprint of the London edition by Henry G. Bohn, 1857-1864) – and expressed the same opinion: 'as Aaron Hill died February 8, 1749-50, and, as the 2nd vol. of "The actor" treats of theatrical incidents after that date, this must be an error' (Robert William Lowe, *A Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature*, p. 2).

¹²¹ William Archer, *Masks or Faces? A Study in the Psychology of Acting*, pp. 15-17.

¹²² *The Actor* (1750), II, chap. IX, p. 226.

¹²³ See Aaron Hill, *To Mr. Mallet* (April 20, 1744), in *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.*, II, *Original Letters*, pp. 34-36.

Garrick, he admitted that he had never been able to attend a theatre again after witnessing the performance of *Macbeth*.¹²⁴

Aaron Hill did not have any further firsthand experience of the theatre until 1749, when Garrick agreed to stage his *Merope* at Drury Lane.¹²⁵ This tragedy, based on Voltaire's play of the same name, led to a revival in Aaron Hill career in the theatre, enabling him to reap some unlooked for economic rewards. Bearing this circumstance in mind, it is impossible to explain the harsh judgement passed on Garrick's activity as impresario at his first mention in *The Actor* if these words are attributed to Aaron Hill: 'Mr. Garrick, who is as amiable in the character of a player, as censurable in another capacity in which he has too much connexion with our theatrical entertainments'.¹²⁶ It is equally impossible to account for the measured tone and substantial equilibrium of positive and negative appraisals of his interpretative ability as an actor, which are at odds with the expressions of appreciation of the letters and the encomiastic tone of Aaron Hill's poem *On his united Idea of Actor and Writer*, where Garrick is defined as 'SUN of our Stage'.¹²⁷ Certainly, as is pointed out by Maria Chiara Barbieri, Aaron Hill might conceivably have arrived at a different opinion on the actor in the last months of his life, but we have no evidence to corroborate such a hypothesis.¹²⁸

There is one more important circumstance to add to these considerations: Aaron Hill obtained and consulted Rémond de Sainte-Albine's original treatise. In a letter to the playwright David Mallet written in 1748, he says that he has read the French text of *The Comedian [sic]*, in the first edition of 1747, and intends to give it back, via Mallet, to its owner, Lord Chesterfield. He also makes a brief comment on the text:

It has many very *just* remarks, no *new* ones: they are only generals, and such as tend but to display, what should be *done*, without attempting to disclose the art of *doing* it. The author treats his subject, with a florid *leafiness*. He shews it, as *earth* shews us *trees*: we see the *branches*, and confess their *beauty*; but the *root* lies *underground*, and we walk but upon the *surface*.¹²⁹

As this passage shows, Aaron Hill's interest in Rémond de Sainte-Albine's work gives no sign that he was about to set work translating it. He could have come to such a decision shortly afterwards, perhaps with the intention of amending some of the shortcomings he found in the French text, but this hypothesis can be met with various objections. First of all he would have had to have at his disposal the second

¹²⁴ See Aaron Hill, *To Mr. Mallet* (April 20, 1744); *To Mr. Garrick* (June 30, 1746); *To Mr. Garrick* (October 13, 1746), in *ibid.*, II, *Original Letters*, p. 35, p. 245 and p. 264.

¹²⁵ Aaron Hill, *Merope. A Tragedy. Acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane, By His Majesty's Servants*, London, A. Millar, 1749. The play was given at Drury Lane on 15 April 1749, with Garrick playing Eumenes.

¹²⁶ *The Actor* (1750), I, Book I, chap. II, p. 21.

¹²⁷ Aaron Hill, *To Mr. Garrick. On his united Ideas of Actor and Writer*, in *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq.*, IV, *Original Poems*, p. 92.

¹²⁸ Cf. M. C. Barbieri, *La pagina e la scena. L'attore inglese nella trattatistica del '700*, p. 225.

¹²⁹ Aaron Hill, *To Mr. Mallett* (September 29, 1748), in *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill*, II, *Original Letters*, p. 347.

1749 edition of *Le Comédien*, “augmentée et corrigée”, which *The Actor* is based on.¹³⁰ Then we must bear in mind that the publication of the English treatise was announced by *The General Advertiser* on 28 April 1750, within a few months of the appearance of the second edition of the French treatise.¹³¹ This means that the author of the English version only had a quite short time at his disposal to complete his task (all the more so when one considers that it is not merely a translation). Aaron Hill died on 8 February 1750. This fact surely makes it unlikely, without being able to rule it out altogether, that he was the author.

As for the substantial continuity in approach linking the observations set out in Aaron Hill’s writings on the theatre and the ideas developed in *The Actor* advocated by Chouillet, we must say that there are differences in terms of concept and content, and also of style, between the treatise in question and Aaron Hill’s publications concerning the theory and practice of acting.

It is true that the emphasis placed on the sensibility and emotional identification of the actor with his character constituted an important element in Aaron Hill’s doctrine. Nonetheless, the theories set out in *The Actor* do not adhere to the Cartesian paradigm to which he refers. If, on one hand, analysis of Aaron Hill’s texts reveals a conception of acting as the “natural” result of a process from the interior to the exterior, on the other hand it shows the wish to catalogue and define the passions and thus to codify the modalities of performance in the description of gestures and movements which the actor has to adopt to characterise each mood. These ideas transpire with great conceptual coherence in the topics, arguments and vocabulary featured in all the writings in which the playwright speaks of acting, with only a few, insignificant variations. It does thus seem unlikely that in the last months of his life he should have departed from the topics peculiar to his output, his models and even his expository style in order to translate a text about which he himself was anything but enthusiastic.

In the light of these considerations, the most likely author of the treatise appears to be John Hill. Yet although this is a fact which is almost unanimously endorsed by English-speaking scholars, this attribution has not been the object of much discussion, and no incontrovertible proof has been produced in support of it. The only explicit testimony to have been identified comes from James Boswell who, in listing the texts which had been devoted to the art of acting during the eighteenth century, attributed *The Actor* to John Hill, expressing a positive opinion on it:

Dr. Hill’s Actor, or a Treatise on the Art of Playing, is none of the worst productions of that multifarious author; and, if I am not mistaken, players may learn many useful lessons from it, while his other readers, who compose the audience at our theatres, may be assisted to judge with more candour and discernment.¹³²

¹³⁰ Edwin Duerr, who has made a comparative study of *Le Comédien* and *The Actor*, ascribed the latter to John Hill, but erroneously attributed the last three chapters to him as an original elaboration (cf. E. Duerr, *The Length and Depth of Acting*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962, p. 242). In actual fact they were added by Rémond de Sainte-Albine to his 1749 edition.

¹³¹ ‘*This Day is publish’d, Price 3s.* In One Volume. Twelves. Dedicated to the Managers of the British Theatres. THE ACTOR: A Treatise on the Art of Playing, Interspersed with theatrical Anecdotes, critical Remarks on Plays, and Occasional Observations on Audiences. Printed for R. Griffiths, at the Dunciad in St. Paul’s Church-yard’ (*The General Advertiser*, 28 April 1750).

¹³² J. Boswell, *On the Profession of a Player. Three Essays by James Boswell. Now first reprinted from The London Magazine for August, September, and October, 1770*, London, Elkin Mathews & Marrot, 1929, p. 26.

In any case various elements enable us to corroborate the hypothesis of the treatise's attribution to John Hill. The known facts of his biography show that his knowledge of the contemporary theatrical world and the contacts he maintained with its leading protagonists were by no means superficial or inconstant.

The likelihood of his experience with a company of strolling players in the years 1730-1735, the amateur theatricals he took part in at Goodwood House, where he met various figures in the contemporary acting milieu including David Garrick and Margaret Woffington, his subsequent attempts to undertake a career in the London theatres not just as an actor but also as an author, are all circumstances which show, or at least suggest, that John Hill's frequentation of the theatrical milieu of his time was sufficiently assiduous to enable him to know the actors mentioned in the treatise or to be present at the performances referred to or described therein. One tangible sign of these experiences may be seen, for example, in the already mentioned reference, found in both the 1750 and 1755 editions of the treatise, to the performance of *Othello* at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket on 5 February 1744. In this production, staged by Charles Macklin with the pupils of his school, John Hill took the role of Lodovico.

Furthermore it is possible to find parallels with the observations expressed in the treatise in the articles on the theatre which John Hill published between 1746 and 1753, first in *The British Magazine* and then in *The London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*.

From 1746 to 1750 Hill was responsible for various columns, entitled respectively *The Visiter* [*sic*], *The Moralist* and *The Occasional Spectator*, in *The British Magazine*, which he had founded together with Charles Corbett and Ralph Griffiths, the first issue appearing on 1 April 1746. In these columns Hill published essays of a moral and scientific nature, articles dealing with scandal or contemporary satire, and pieces on various aspects of the theatrical world of the day.¹³³

On 4 March 1751 the first issue of *The London Advertiser and Literary Gazette* appeared, a daily newspaper founded and directed by Hill. From the second issue, dated 5 March, and up until 7 July 1753, Hill published a daily column called *The Inspector*, a pseudonym with which he soon became famous. In 1753 a selection of his articles was published in two volumes, featuring some 152 issues of the column.¹³⁴ The pieces that appeared under the *nom de plume* of *The Inspector* deal with a wide variety of subjects. Perhaps the most interesting are those devoted to natural history (in particular the observations on the microscope), the animal world, and the theatre and its protagonists.

The articles on the theatre published in both journals give us a variegated portrait of the British theatrical milieu in those years, painted with great acuteness and often with a pungent irony. The pieces contain critical remarks and anecdotes concerning

¹³³ It is likely that Hill was the author of many more articles than he has been credited with to date. It has not, however, been possible to determine exactly which, since from 1748 onwards, already a target for detractors, Hill chose to conceal his identity under pseudonyms. Nor can one say with certainty how many collaborators worked for the paper in the early years of its existence; there is no doubt that from 1748 several authors collaborated.

¹³⁴ *The Inspector*, 2 vols., London, R. Griffiths, J. Whiston and B. White, S. Baker, W. Shropshire, L. Davis, J. Ward, 1753. A first collection, in a single volume, was published in 1751.

the most wide-ranging topics related to the theatre. Hill moves from general considerations on the value and function of the theatre to some of the customs pertaining to theatrical life at various levels; from observations, frequently caustic, on the typology and behaviour of the spectators that frequent the theatres, to the policies pursued by various theatrical managers and impresarios; from details of all kinds – quite often polemical or provocative, when not vehemently satirical – concerning the players and from the analysis of their acting technique, to the description of the features of specific plays – language, structure, characters, topics – with analysis of the productions and their distinctive traits.

The Actor: A Treatise on The Art of Playing (1750)

The first version of John Hill's treatise, as we have seen, was published by Griffiths on 28 April 1750 with the title *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing. Interspersed with Theatrical Anecdotes, Critical Remarks on Plays, and Occasional Observations on Audiences*. In the *Dedication to the Managers of the Two Theatres* which replaces the *Avertissement de l'Auteur sur cette seconde Édition*, the *Préface* and *Introduction* from *Le Comédien* (1749) by Rémond de Sainte-Albine, the text is presented as the work of 'an author unknown to you, and who shall ever remain so'.¹³⁵ This formula was frequently used to maintain anonymity, even though it was not unusual, especially if the publication was a success, for the author to assert his paternity, which did not, however, happen in this case.

The anonymous author was thus submitting 'to the opinion of the Managers of the *British* theatres' what '*St. Albine* laid before the *French* audiences'.¹³⁶ This phrase identifies the volume as a translation of *Le Comédien*, and in fact the first version of *The Actor* reproduces exactly the structure of the French treatise, with the same division and chapter headings. More importantly in terms of our analysis, *The Actor* reproduces above all the conceptual contents of Rémond de Sainte-Albine's work.

The premise that authenticity and naturalness in acting were essential to creating the effect of illusion necessary in drama had led Rémond de Sainte-Albine to redefine not only the requisite qualities for aspiring actors but also the structure of the text. These structural and conceptual elements are rigorously respected by Hill: like *Le Comédien*, his work featured Part the First, divided up into Book I and Book II, the latter further divided into Section the First and Section the Second, treating *Of the principal Advantages which a Player ought to have from Nature* (*Des principaux avantages que les Comédiens doivent tenir de la Nature*), followed by Part the Second, treating *Of those Assistances which Players ought to receive from Art* (*Des secours que les Comédiens doivent emprunter de l'Art*).

Exactly like Rémond de Sainte-Albine, Hill begins the first Book – *In which many of the common Prejudices of the Age are considered; and Observations made on the necessary Qualifications of Performers on the Stage in general* (*Dans lequel l'Auteur combat différens préjugés, et fait plusieurs remarques, sur quelques-uns des avantages nécessaires en general à tous les Comédiens*) – by examining the natural requisites which are indispensable to embark

¹³⁵ *Dedication to the Managers of the Two Theatres*, in *The Actor* (1750). The "Managers of the Two Theatres" refers in all probability to David Garrick and John Rich, respectively managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

on an acting profession, covering both the actor's physical characteristics and some rather uncommon interior endowments.

The description of the basic categories of the art of acting – *understanding* [*esprit*], *sensibility* [*sentiment*], *fire* [*feu*], *figure* – dealt with in the four chapters comprising Book I is also clearly modelled on its French counterpart. The first chapter of *The Actor*, entitled *Can an Actor excell in his Profession, without a good Understanding? (S'il est vrai que d'excellens Acteurs ayent manqué d'esprit)*, explains *understanding* as a quality which allows the interpreter to give a correct account of the characteristics of the role and thus to respect the author's intentions, avoiding errors and contradictions in his performance. The second chapter, *Of Sensibility. Whether this Quality of the Heart be more important to the Performer in Tragedy, or in Comedy? (Ce que c'est que le Sentiment. Cette qualité est-elle plus importante chez les Acteurs Tragiques que chez les Comiques?)*, treats the actor's ability to really feel the sentiments he intends to represent.

Given that it is only by having recourse to sensibility that the actor can achieve an accurate and effective rendering of his role, conferring on his performance that veracity and illusionary effect which are essential to get through to and involve the spectators, he has to shed his own personality, remaining indifferent to his own everyday problems, and become 'like soft wax, which, under the hands of a judicious artist, is capable of becoming, in the same minute, a Medea and a Sappho'.¹³⁷ Of course, as for Rémond de Sainte-Albine, there was no question for Hill that making emotive participation, and spontaneous and natural expression of sentiments, the cornerstone of the art of acting meant inviting the performer to surrender to the impulses of emotional stimuli. For if on one hand sensibility has to animate the actor's behaviour, on the other rational intelligence intervenes to regulate and guide his expressive modalities. And thus, if for Rémond de Sainte-Albine the actor was guided by a 'sentiment fin des convenances',¹³⁸ for Hill a 'nice discernment to perceive the affinities of things, and the dependances of the incidents on one another' is to guide his counterpart.¹³⁹ The discussion of sensibility continues with an indication, in keeping with the canonical distinction laid down by Rémond de Sainte-Albine between the tragic and the comic registers, of how actors must react in the different genres so as to render their characters.

The third requisite for the actor is *fire* or, as Hill calls it, 'Promethean heat', a sort of creative energy which animates the sentiment, bestowing naturalness and authenticity on his interpretation – Chapter III: *Whether an Actor can have too much Fire? (Un Comédien peut-il avoir trop de Feu?)*.¹⁴⁰

The fourth chapter contains a description of the actor's physical characteristics, under the title *Whether it wou'd be to the Advantage of all Players to be of a distinguished Figure? (Seroit-il avantageux que toutes les personnes de Théâtre fussent d'une figure distinguée?)*. As for Rémond de Sainte-Albine, an aesthetically pleasing figure does not constitute an essential requisite for appearing on stage. This, however, is not to be taken as

¹³⁷ *The Actor* (1750), I, Book I, chap. II, p. 15. Rémond de Sainte-Albine: 'cire molle, qui sous les doigts d'un savant Artiste devient alternativement une Medée ou une Sappho' (*Le Comédien*, 1749, I, Book I, chap. II, p. 32).

¹³⁸ *Le Comédien* (1749), I, Book I, chap. I, p. 21.

¹³⁹ *The Actor* (1750), I, Book I, chap. I, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, I, Book I, chap. III, p. 28. The expression 'Promethean heat' may come from Shakespeare's *Othello*: 'I know not where is that Promethean heat/That can thy light relumine' (V, 2, 12-13).

implying the need for realism in the representation. Since the theatre offers the image of what is in nature, not the original, what is presented on stage must differ from everyday reality. This requires first of all an overall harmony in the physical features of the actor, so that ‘the several exterior parts of the player bear a due proportion to each other’, and hence the exclusion on stage of all kinds of physical difformity or incongruities.¹⁴¹

Book I of the English treatise concludes, like *Le Comédien*, with two *Reflections*. Once *understanding, sensibility, fire* and *figure* have been established as indispensable qualities for aspiring actors, the first *Reflection* lays down this condition: ‘Those Actors who appear in subordinate Characters can no more succeed without a good Understanding, Sensibility, and Fire; than those who play the principal Parts’ (‘Les Comédiens, dans les rôles subordonnés, ne peuvent pas plus se passer de Feu, d’Esprit et de Sentiment, que dans les premiers rôles’). In the second *Reflection* – *Tho’ Persons are happy in the principal Advantages which are required in theatrical Performers, ought they not in general, after a certain Age, to quit the Stage? (Quoiqu’on soit doué des principaux avantages que nous exigeons dans une personne de Théâtre, on doit ordinairement à un certain âge renoncer à se donner en spectacle)* – actors, and in particular actresses, are advised to choose roles which do not clash too stridently with their ages, and moreover to take their leave of the stage when they have exceeded a certain age and can no longer hope to find favour with the public. The only exception to this rule is certain actors of outstanding merit who may prolong their activity in spite of their advancing years.

Book II, entitled *Of the Advantages in which it is requisite that those Players, who play the capital Parts, shou’d be superior to those who perform the subordinate Characters (Par quels avantages il importe que les Acteurs, qui jouent les rôles dominans, soient supérieurs aux autres Comédiens)*, reviews the qualities which must distinguish actors who play leading roles. Reiterating the distinction between the comic and tragic registers, each presupposing different modalities not only of performance but also of expression, Hill, like Rémond de Sainte-Albine, affirms that each genre requires specific physical and interior characteristics.

The first section of Book II deals with the interior characteristics – *Of the interior Qualifications which an Audience requires in the Players, who perform the capital Parts (Des Dons intérieurs qu’on desire chez les principaux Acteurs)* – and the second section with the physical characteristics: *Of those Qualifications which, when they fall to the Share of that Class of Actors spoken of in the Second Book, peculiarly interest the Senses of an Audience (Des Dons, qui chez les Acteurs, dont il s’agit dans ce second Livre, interressent les sens des Spectateurs)*.

Among the interior qualities, Hill paraphrases Rémond de Sainte-Albine in pointing to ‘gaiety of Temper’ and ‘elevation of soul’ as the fundamental requisites of the comic and the tragic actor respectively – Chapter I: *A gaiety of Temper is absolutely necessary to the Players in Comedy, whose Business it is to make us laugh (La Gaieté est absolument nécessaire aux Comédiens, dont l’emploi est de nous faire rire)*; Chapter II: *No Man who has not naturally an elevated Soul, will ever perform well the Part of a Heroe upon the Stage (Quiconque n’a point l’ame élevée, représente mal un Héros)*.¹⁴² At the same time there is one recommendation which applies to the protagonists of both comedy and tragedy: they

¹⁴¹ Ibid., I, Book I, chap. IV, p. 63. Rémond de Sainte-Albine: ‘un juste accord entre toutes les parties, dont son extérieur est composé’ (*Le Comédien*, 1749, I, Book I, chap. IV, p. 61).

¹⁴² Ibid., I, Book II, sect. I, chap. I, p. 89; chap. II, p. 98. ‘Gaieté’ and ‘hauteur de sentimens’ in Rémond de Sainte-Albine (*Le Comédien*, 1749, I, Book II, sect. I, chap. I, p. 79; chap. II, p. 88).

are not to let their own personality transpire on stage; the performer is always obliged to remain hidden behind his character.

Chapter III of the first section – *As all Players have occasion for the great Quality of Sensibility; those in a particular manner who propose to themselves to succeed in drawing Tears from us, have more Necessity than any others, for that peculiar kind of it, which we sometimes express by the Word Tenderness, tho' more strongly by the appropriated Term Feeling (Si toutes les personnes de Théâtre ont besoin de Sentiment, celles qui se proposent de nous faire répandre des larmes, ont plus besoin que les autres de la partie du Sentiment, désignée communément sous le nom d'Entrailles)* – expands on the concept of *sensibility* in relation to tragic roles, analysing some of the factors which can hinder its correct application.

Chapter IV – *Players who are naturally amorous, are the only ones who shou'd perform the Parts of Lovers upon the Stage (Les personnes, nées pour aimer, devraient avoir seules le privilege de jouer les rôles d'Amans)* – develops the concept of the necessity for actors impersonating the roles of lovers of a natural predisposition to sentiments of love and tenderness, while Chapter V – *Which is a corollary to the foregoing Chapter (Qui n'est qu'un Corollaire du Chapitre precedent)* – makes it clear that an actor who is no longer young must refrain from donning the clothes of the lover since such a role is not suited to his age and physiognomy.

It has to be pointed out that in his translation, Hill incorporates the theoretical contradictions which characterized the French treatise: as Earl R. Wasserman states, 'there are [...] serious contradictions in the theories of Sainte-Albine and Hill, for though they demand that the actor lack all personal bias, they add that lovers can best be portrayed by those who are naturally amorous, and tragic heroes by those who are naturally of an elevated spirit'.¹⁴³

In the second section of Book II, which discusses the physical characteristics of the actor, Hill keeps closely to the French text in describing both the qualities of the voice – Chapter I: *That sort of Voice which may be very adequate to certain Characters, may be by no means sufficient for the Actor, in Parts by which we are to be peculiarly moved and affected (Telle voix, qui peut suffire dans certains rôles, ne suffit pas dans les rôles destinés à nous intéresser)* – and the actor's physical appearance – Chapter II: *An audience expects to find in the Person who acts the Part of a Lover, in Comedy, an amiable figure; and in him who acts the Part of a Hero in Tragedy, a majestic and striking one (On demande aux Amans, dans la Comédie, une figure aimable, et aux Héros, dans la Tragédie, une figure imposante)*. In terms of vocal qualities, while all actors must have an adequate power of projection, the comic actor must possess a 'swift and manageable voice, ready for every turn of expression', while that of his tragic counterpart must be 'strong, majestic, and pathetic'.¹⁴⁴ Moreover performers must vary their timbre of voice according to the role they are playing: 'The voice of the comedian ought to be noble, when he plays the part of a person of rank and quality; and it ought to be interesting and affecting, when he performs in character of a lover'.¹⁴⁵ As for the actor's appearance, since this is one of

¹⁴³ E. R. Wasserman, 'The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century Theories of Acting', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 46, no. 3 (July, 1947), p. 268, note 22.

¹⁴⁴ *The Actor* (1750), I, Book II, sect. II, chap. I, p. 128. Respectively 'une voix légère et flexible' and 'forte, majestueuse et pathétique' (*Le Comédien*, 1749, I, Book II, sect. II, chap. I, p. 111).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 130. Rémond de Sainte-Albine: 'La voix d'un Comique doit être noble, s'il joue le rôle d'un homme de condition: elle doit être intéressante, s'il joue le rôle d'un Amant [...] il est nécessaire que celle des Amantes soit enchanteresse' (*Le Comédien*, 1749, I, Book II, sect. II, chap. I, pp. 114-115).

the elements that determine the performance's illusory effect, there has to be a certain physical congruence between performer and character. Hence the need, for the actors who impersonate the roles of lovers in the comic genre, to have a pleasing aspect, while the physical characteristics of those who play the leading roles in tragedies have to evoke the greatness and nobility of the character they are playing.

The necessity for a physical conformity between performer and character leads to the reiteration of the stricture that an actor who is no longer young has to refrain from roles in which the age and physiognomy clash with the reality – Chapter III: *Of the real or apparent conformity there ought to be between the age of the actor, and that of the person represented* (*Du rapport vrai ou apparent, qui doit être entre l'âge de l'Acteur et celui du Personnage*).

The last chapter in the second section – *Of the Characters of Footmen and Chambermaids on the Stage* (*Qui regarde particulièrement les Soubrettes et les Valets*) – reviews the requisites for actors who have to perform the secondary roles of servants.

Part the Second of *The Actor*, entitled *Of those Assistances which Players ought to receive from Art* (*Des secours que les Comédiens doivent emprunter de l'Art*), also reproduces the French treatise, analysing the modalities in which actors can develop their own innate ability and perfect their stage business with the support of art. For technique is not only essential for a thorough definition of the different degrees and nuances of the passions, and the rendering of different moods simultaneously, but it is indispensable in the phase in which a character's make-up is established, guiding the actor towards a correct and comprehensive interpretation of the role.

The notion of representative truth and the ways in which it is to be achieved occupy the first chapter of the second part, *In what the Truth of a Representation on the Stage consists* (*En quoi consiste la vérité de la Représentation*). It is explained that the effect of illusion, of truth in fact, created on stage depends on the 'concourse of all those appearances which may assist in deceiving the audience', which are achieved primarily by 'the play of the performer' but also by 'the disguise we see him under' and 'the decorations of the place where he plays'.¹⁴⁶

As for the 'appearances' caused by the actor's behaviour, in Chapter II – *On the Truth of Action on the Stage* (*De la vérité de l'Action*) – Hill, following Rémond de Sainte-Albine, explains that the performer's task consists in rendering his role in a clear and precise manner, not only in terms of the character's age and social condition, and the circumstances and situation described in the text, but also bearing in mind the particular historical period in which the action takes place and the character's nationality.¹⁴⁷

Chapter III, entitled *Observations on the two principal Things essential to the Truth of Action* (*Remarques sur les deux parties essentielles à la vérité de l'Action*), specifies how the term "natural" is used in relation to acting: it is always to be seen as a "theatrical natural", meaning reality enlarged and emended. As Rémond de Sainte-Albine had stated, on stage it is not only necessary to show nature in forms which are perfect

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., II, chap. I, p. 156. Respectively 'le concours des apparences, qui peuvent servir à tromper les Spectateurs', 'le jeu des Acteurs', '[le] travestissement qu'il emprunte', 'la décoration de l'endroit où il joue' (*Le Comédien*, 1749, II, chap. I, p. 135).

¹⁴⁷ The latter concept is expressed in chapter XIII of Part II: *Of the Finesses in playing, which peculiarly belong to Tragedy* (*Des finesses qui appartiennent au Tragique*).

and exemplary, but also to employ particularly emphatic expressive modalities so that even the most distant spectators are able to see and hear what is taking place.

The requisite of representative truth had led Rémond de Sainte-Albine to reject the principles underlying the way in which tragedy was declaimed on the French stage. Paraphrasing *Le Comédien*, in Chapter IV – *On the Truth of Recitation (De la vérité de la Récitation)* – Hill argued that not only do the artificial conventions underlying the sing-song diction of tragic acting annul the illusion of truth which is essential in the theatre, but that it is also impossible to prescribe once and for all the tones of voice required to convey each sentiment. To discover the secret of effective declamation, the actor has to call on his inner resources, not on codified prescriptions. It is in fact his emotive participation which will enable him to produce, naturally and spontaneously, the appropriate tones of voice. Hence the necessity for doing away with the magniloquent and artificial acting which was then characteristic both of comedy – Chapter V: *What ought to be the Manner of Recitation in Comedy (Quelle doit être la manière de réciter dans la Comédie)* – and tragedy – Chapter VI: *Whether Tragedy ought or ought not to be spoke in a declamatory manner (La Tragédie demande-t-elle d'être déclamée?)*. Nonetheless it remained true that the tragic hero had to adopt a different tone to that of ordinary conversation, and on certain occasions 'the pompous and sounding delivery were just, nay were necessary'.¹⁴⁸

Chapter VII, *Of certain Obstacles which impair the Truth of the Recitation (De quelques-uns des obstacles qui nuisent à la vérité de la Récitation)*, speaks of the shortcomings which may deprive the interpretation of authenticity and naturalness, such as the habit of forcing the voice, monotony of diction, uniformity of expression, and substituting the actor's own emotions for those of the character being portrayed. Among the elements that may compromise the veracity of the acting there is also memory failure, a shortcoming which actors often compensate for by resorting to improvisation. It is essential for an actor to be endowed with a good mnemonic ability to be able to ensure complete identification in the part – Chapter VIII: *Of the Care that ought to be taken perfectly to implant the Parts of a Play in the Actor's Memory, in order to its being play'd with Truth (Avec quelle perfection il faudroit que les Pieces fussent sues des Comédiens, pour être jouées avec une entière vérité)*.

As we have seen, for Rémond de Sainte-Albine the effect of representative truth depended not only on the actor's craft but also on the staging. He advocated significant changes in this latter aspect, and Hill championed the same changes in *The Actor*, notably the abolition of the custom of allowing spectators onto the stage and greater accuracy and verisimilitude in the costumes – Chapter IX: *Containing a Digression concerning certain Articles, which in themselves are foreign to theatrical Representation; yet without which the Truth of acting is never to be arrived at (Digression sur quelques articles étrangers au jeu Théâtral, mais sans lesquels la vérité de la Représentation est imparfaite)*.

In the original French version Chapter X – *In which some important Rules are added to the Principles before establish'd, of the Truth of Action and Recitation (Dans lequel, aux principes déjà établis sur la vérité de la Récitation et de l'Action, on ajoute quelques préceptes importants)* – comprised three separate sections (*De la Préparation; De la Gradation; De l'Art de nuer les passages d'un mouvement à l'autre*) explaining that, to confer authenticity on one's interpretation and keep alive the spectators' interest, the actor should be able to

¹⁴⁸ *The Actor* (1750), II, chap. VI, p. 195. Rémond de Sainte-Albine: 'le débit pompeux est admis, et même nécessaire' (*Le Comédien*, 1749, II, chap. VI, p. 168).

‘prepare and grade the principal movements, and to blend in the passages from one to another’.¹⁴⁹ In this case Hill introduced several variations into the original text, modifying the first section and completely eliminating the other two with their examples.

The concept by which “natural” acting should not be taken to mean an exact reproduction of reality is enlarged on in Chapter XI of the second part of the treatise, entitled *Of natural Playing (Du Jeu naturel)*. As in the French text, it is divided up into three *Observations*, explaining that in some cases, in particular in comic roles, it is necessary to confer on the character all the affected or exaggerated traits which characterise him, making him larger than life. Naturally, in having recourse to this expedient the actor must always take care not to make excessive or inappropriate use of it, and above all must prepare the spectators to accept it.

Up until this point Hill kept to Rémond de Sainte-Albine’s treatise in illustrating how, in his reliance on the resources of emotive participation, the actor can render clearly and precisely all the details of his role, in an interpretation which will be both natural and “true to life”. It is even more significant that Hill adopts another fundamental concept from the French text. For *The Actor* too recognises the status of the actor as an artist. This concept, evoked at the start of both the treatises, is discussed in detail in Chapter XII of the second part, *Of the Finesses in the Art of Playing in general (Des finesses de l’art des Comédiens, prises en general)*. The actor is the creator of his role insofar as he has the possibility, and obligation, of making up for the deficiencies and rectifying the defects of the text, highlighting details which may not be immediately perceptible and introducing elements which can throw light on the character’s personality, having recourse to expedients which can lend a greater authenticity and additional nuances to his role, enlarging his freedom of action to the point of introducing modifications and cuts into the text.

The next three chapters deal with the various *finesses* which the actor can call on in the two genres – Chapter XIII: *Of the Finesses in playing, which peculiarly belong to Tragedy (Des finesses qui appartiennent au Tragique)*; Chapter XIV: *Of the Finesses in playing, peculiar to Comedy (Des finesses particulieres au Comique)* – as well as the principles underlying the use of this resource – Chapter XV: *Rules which ought to be observ’d in the use of Finesses (Règles à observer dans l’usage des finesses)*.

Chapter XVI, *Of Bye-play, or what are called Stage-Tricks (Des Jeux de Théâtre)*, talks about those particular *finesses* which ‘depend entirely upon the action, and therefore are lost if they are not attended to by the eye’.¹⁵⁰ Like Rémond de Sainte-Albine, Hill also divides them up into two distinct groups: those which add veracity to the action can be applied both in tragedy and in comedy, while those which embellish the performance and make it more appealing are better suited to the comic genre. Moreover in *Le Comédien* it was specified that *les jeux de théâtre* could either be deployed by a single actor or involve a joint action. In the latter case Hill, like Rémond de Sainte-Albine, insisted on a greater coordination, recommending the players ‘to concert their plan of acting together in such a manner beforehand, that

¹⁴⁹ ‘préparer et de graduer les grands mouvemens, et de nuer les passages de l’un à l’autre’ (*Le Comédien*, 1749, II, chap. X, p. 197).

¹⁵⁰ *The Actor* (1750), II, chap. XVI, p. 284. Rémond de Sainte-Albine: ‘dépendant de [l’action de l’Acteur], ont besoin d’être vûes’ (*Le Comédien*, 1749, II, chap. XVI, p. 283).

there may appear all the necessary precision in the gestures and motions of each in regard to those of the rest'.¹⁵¹

The following chapter, entitled *Of Variety in Playing (De la Variété)*, concerns the actor's creativity and talent for introducing *finesses* so as to bring variety and a new liveliness to a certain role. It is not enough for the actor to vary his acting in roles with similar characteristics; he has to be able to diversify it even when playing the same role for, as Hill adds, 'in nature and reality there is no man of whatever peculiar turn of mind, that wou'd always preserve it during the changes that the circumstances he is thrown into in the course of a good comedy work in him'.¹⁵² Hence the necessity for the actor to analyse his part, regulating his interpretation according to the various passions, or the different nuances of one and the same passion, typical of the character, so as to bring variety to the performance.

In Chapter XVIII, *Of graces in Playing (Des Graces)*, Hill echoes Rémond de Sainte-Albine in defining 'grace' as 'the art of rendering nature elegant even in her defects'.¹⁵³ The actor must not simply portray everyday reality, or ordinary nature, but must represent it, says Hill, 'in its fairest light', giving to the character a sort of ideal perfection.¹⁵⁴

In the two following chapters, the first – *Observations on some Parts of the Art of Playing, of a subordinate Kind to those we have hitherto been treating of (Des quelques parties de l'Art du Comédien, inférieures à celles qui jusqu'ici ont fait l'objet de nos réflexions)* – contains remarks on how the voice is to be projected and on gestures, as well as some brief considerations on 'the art of treading the stage',¹⁵⁵ while the second gives the *Objections* which featured in *Le Comédien* questioning the fundamental principle by which, to undertake the actor's profession, it is necessary to acquire technique in addition to possessing talent.

If, in order to excel in his profession, an actor has to have undergone an adequate preparation, involving constant study, it is equally important that he should be conscious of his limits so as avoid taking on roles which go beyond his abilities and resources. In Chapter XXI, *Some Remarks which may be of Service to certain modern Actors (Remarque qui ne sera peut-être pas inutile pour certains Acteurs)*, it is stated that the decision of some actors to present themselves in both the tragic and comic genres, or attempt roles for which they are not gifted, generally leads to mediocre results.

In *The Conclusion (Conclusion de cet Ouvrage)* Hill reiterates Rémond de Sainte-Albine's notion according to which the actor cannot achieve the same degree of perfection in both tragedy and comedy. Each of the two registers requires in fact a thorough and exclusive study, and the requisites for the one are often quite different to those for the other.

As for the difficulty of representing sentiments or roles which are far removed from or quite alien to the performer's own propensities, both texts argue that

¹⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 286-287. Rémond de Sainte-Albine: 'se concerter tellement, qu'il régné dans le rapport de leurs positions et de leurs mouvemens toute la précision nécessaire' (*Le Comédien*, 1749, II, chap. XVI, pp. 286-287).

¹⁵² Ibid., II, chap. XVII, p. 298.

¹⁵³ Ibid., II, chap. XVIII, p. 301. Rémond de Sainte-Albine: 'rendre la nature élégante jusques dans ses défauts' (*Le Comédien*, 1749, II, chap. XVIII, p. 296).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 307.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., II, chap. XIX, p. 314. Rémond de Sainte-Albine: 'la marche dans la Tragédie' (*Le Comédien*, 1749, II, chap. XIX, p. 313).

sensibility, the innate capacity to experience all the human passions, should allow an actor to adopt any emotive state required by the play in question. All the same, the two texts concur that acting based on emotive participation inevitably involves a limitation on the performer's repertory, inasmuch as actors will give a better account of the roles they feel more in harmony with their personalities.

The authors of both *The Actor* and *Le Comédien* conclude their remarks on the art of acting by condemning the habit of glorifying the great actors of the past and inviting their readers to encourage and support the younger generations of talent.

One might readily deduce from this brief résumé of the English treatise that it is identical to the work it presents as its model. Indeed, Hill made so few conceptual changes to the original text that he was greatly indebted to Rémond de Sainte-Albine, and to an overwhelming extent the ideas and concepts expressed in the French treatise are simply reiterated in *The Actor*. Nonetheless, while one can assert that Hill's intention was to present to an English readership what Rémond de Sainte-Albine set out in his treatise, reproducing the topics, arguments and concepts discussed therein, and even its rhetorical strategy, the English text cannot be considered a mere translation from the French. For while it is true that the essence of a language cannot be rendered in another without making some necessary alterations, in the eighteenth century, when the concept of faithfulness to the original text was not yet accorded particular consideration, the translator disguised the difficulty he might encounter in making the text comprehensible to his readers through a series of expedients which ranged from slight modification of the sense to more significant changes.

This accounts for some of the modifications carried out by Hill in translating the text of Rémond de Sainte-Albine, ranging from slight changes in translation to significant enlargements of the original text. The latter modifications were in fact motivated by the passage from one language to another, as Hill sought make the concepts or terms occurring in the French treatise clearer to the British reader, often simply elaborating on the initial concept without adding any particularly significant elements. An example of this kind of modification can be seen in Hill's decision to translate the term *sentiment*, which is used in the French treatise to indicate the actor's ability to actually experience the feelings he had to convey on stage, with the word *sensibility*. Hill obviously wished to clarify the possible ambiguity in Rémond de Sainte-Albine's use of the term and effect a shift of meaning.¹⁵⁶

The same kind of motive underlies the modification Hill made in Chapter IV of the second Section of Book II, concerning the characteristics that pertain to the roles of servants. In this case, in translating the French text he decided to clarify and develop the initial concept: if for Rémond de Sainte-Albine 'les soubrettes' had to be characterised by an 'air malin' and 'volubilité de langue', while 'la souplesse et l'agilité'

¹⁵⁶ 'English draws a fairly clear distinction between *sensibility* and *sentiment*. Sensibility is a capacity or inherent disposition: the readiness to respond to stimuli, the capacity for emotion as distinct from cognition or will, sensitivity to the pathetic in art and literature or to the feelings of others [...] Sentiment means for the most part [...] a thought or feeling prompted by a passion (O.E.D.). Sensibility thus describes a capacity or disposition to respond to sensation, whereas sentiment describes the sensation itself. [...] The same discrimination is possible in French, though less insistently so: *sensibilité* means the quality whereby a subject is sensible to physical impressions [...] *sentiment* means first a faculty of feeling, of receiving impressions and, secondly, the passions, emotion, and affective phenomena in general (D.A.F)'. J. R. Roach, *The Player's Passion. Studies in the Science of Acting*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1999, pp. 99-100.

were the distinctive traits of ‘valets’,¹⁵⁷ for Hill the ‘volubility of tongue’ was accompanied, in the female roles, with ‘an arch and cunning look, with a world of discernment, and occasional secrecy in it’, while the fundamental requisites for their male counterparts are ‘a cringing humility, an attentive observance, and an agility of body’.¹⁵⁸ The same motivation can perhaps also explain the way in which Hill rendered Rémond de Sainte-Albine’s expression ‘sentiment fin des convenances’.¹⁵⁹

The wish to make the sense clearer for the British reader can also account for such changes as substituting or adapting references and examples given by Rémond de Sainte-Albine, while the insertion of definitions not found in the original text could go to clarify the meaning of some terms or add further details to what had been said. This may be the sense of Hill’s expression ‘Promethean heat’ to define the actor’s creative energy.

But this does not account for all the differences between *The Actor* and *Le Comédien*. In fact Hill made other, quite different variations to the French original, regarding not only the elimination of sections of varying length, while suppressing the relevant citations, examples or references, but also, and above all, the integration and hence addition of original interpolations.

In fact, although the total number of pages in the two treatises is more or less the same (326 pages in *The Actor* and 331 in *Le Comédien*),¹⁶⁰ the different format of the two texts (the former is printed in duodecimo, the latter in octavo), and closer inspection, show that the English treatise is in fact longer than the French one, and the text is actually twice as long. In fact the title announces a number of integrations, specifying that the treatise is “Interspersed with Theatrical Anecdotes, Critical Remarks on Plays, and Occasional Observations on Audiences”.

These anecdotes, critical remarks and observations concern primarily the British theatrical world, even though there are also references to its French counterpart. These contributions, which are well integrated in the translated parts of the text, making for a generally coherent whole in terms of both contents and style, represent the most original part of Hill’s work and an important source of information on British theatre in the mid-eighteenth century.

Precisely the references to British theatre which Hill introduced either *ex novo* or to substitute allusions to French theatre go some way to compensating for the lack of attention paid to the practice of acting as opposed to the theory. They touch on the actors and their technique, characteristics of the scripts, the roles portrayed and the productions staged, as well as managerial policy, customs obtaining in the theatres, and the taste and behaviour of the theatre-going public.

While keeping to the overall plan, ideas and content of *Le Comédien*, Hill shows evidence of an indubitable wish to innovate which is made explicit above all in the integrations of varying length inserted in the original text. The numerous examples relating to the British theatrical world, the observations and the personal critical comments that amplify and enrich the French text, all highlight Hill’s wish not to remain tied to his model and to freely express his own thoughts and opinions.

¹⁵⁷ *Le Comédien*, 1749, I, Book II, sect. II, chap. IV, pp. 129-130.

¹⁵⁸ *The Actor* (1750), I, Book II, sect. II, chap. IV, pp. 150-151.

¹⁵⁹ *Le Comédien*, 1749, I, Book I, chap. I, p. 21. Hill: ‘nice discernment to perceive the affinities of things, and the dependances of the incidents on one another’ (*The Actor*, 1750, I, Book I, chap. I, p. 4).

¹⁶⁰ The number of pages given for each text includes the indexes.

The Actor: Or, A Treatise on The Art of Playing (1755)

On 12 March 1755 what is generally known today as the second version of John Hill's treatise appeared: *The Actor: Or, A Treatise on the Art of Playing. A New Work, Written by the Author of the former, and Adapted to the Present State of the Theatres. Containing Impartial Observations on the Performance, Manner, Perfections, and Defects of Mr. Garrick, Mr. Barry, Mr. Woodward, Mr. Foot, Mr. Havard, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Berry, &c. Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, Miss Nossiter, Mrs. Gregory, Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Green, Miss Bellamy, &c. In their several Capital Parts.* The title itself proclaims the text's characteristics: although "Written by the Author of the former", it nonetheless distances itself from the preceding edition by presenting itself as "A New Work".

But what are the innovatory elements of this edition with respect to that of 1750?

According to William Archer, Hill did no more than present again topics and opinions from the first version of the treatise, themselves originating in Rémond de Sainte-Albine's *Le Comédien*, restricting himself to adding new material by way of examples. Archer has this to say of the 1755 edition: 'It professed to be "A New Work... Adapted to the Present State of the Theatres", but was in truth a mere recapitulation of the former argument, with some new anecdotes inserted'.¹⁶¹

In reality, even a superficial comparison of the two editions immediately reveals some striking differences. While both are printed in duodecimo, the 1755 version has 303 pages (284 plus a final 19 pages of index of the names mentioned in the text) as against 326 pages in the 1750 version (322 plus 4 pages of index coming after the *Dedication to the Managers of the Two Theatres*). The structure and overall layout of the text have also been reorganized and simplified. The 1755 version is simply divided into 32 chapters,¹⁶² whereas the 1750 edition was divided up into Part the First and Part the Second, of which the former divided up again into Book I and Book II, with the latter subdivided into two sections, with 34 chapters in all. The chapter headings have also been rephrased in the 1755 edition.

On closer inspection, with respect to the 1750 edition Hill has introduced some considerably more substantial modifications, including the elimination or condensation of some chapters and the insertion of new ones, and the addition of new material in order to clarify and illustrate the concepts expressed. On this latter point, in the 1755 *Introduction* Hill declares that he has based the work on the example given by 'the excellence of the principal among the present performers'.¹⁶³ The new exemplificatory material introduced to illustrate the theories expressed goes to enrich the discussion of acting and, at the same time, to make the treatise topical. It follows that the 1755 version of *The Actor*, with respect to its predecessor, faithfully mirrors the transformations and changes that took place in those years on the English stage. We should also point out that, while the original contributions found in the 1750 edition were interpolated into the translated parts so as to form a text which was generally homogeneous and coherent, in the 1755 edition the enunciation of the precepts which should underlie the art of acting sometimes seems no more than a

¹⁶¹ William Archer, *Masks or Faces? A Study in the Psychology of Acting*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁶² In reality the treatise comprises 31 chapters in all, with the seventh missing, probably for a printer's error.

¹⁶³ *The Introduction. Containing certain general observations*, in *The Actor* (1755), p. 2.

pretext for analysing and criticising what was currently happening on the London stages, which the author may well have considered to be of greater interest for his readers.

If on one hand we can subscribe to the view that the 1755 version of *The Actor* does not depart radically from the 1750 edition, reproducing its fundamental topics and concepts and presenting them, in the work's overall layout, in the same order in which they appeared in the first edition, on the other it has to be recognised that the two texts diverge not only on account of a reorganization of the material, making for structural differences, but also, and above all, on account of the difference in the way the theories on acting are developed, justified and exemplified, resulting in differences in content. If, in producing the new version of the treatise, Hill has maintained faith with the conception of acting outlined in the 1750 edition and deriving from the opinions set out by Rémond de Sainte-Albine in *Le Comédien*, he nonetheless introduced some original theoretical insights and critical observations. And this is evident right from the start of the treatise.

In the 1755 *Introduction*, which is entirely new, acting is numbered among the scientific disciplines, whereas in the 1750 version it had been viewed as one of the arts:

THE intent of this treatise is to shew what acting truly is; to reduce to rules a science hitherto practised almost entirely from the fancy; and by that means to assist certain performers in their attempts to attain perfection in it, and some parts of an audience how they may regularly judge of it.¹⁶⁴

This concept recurs in Chapter I (*Concerning the powers of nature, and their limits, and of the necessity of rules and art to form a perfect player*),¹⁶⁵ in which it is stated quite explicitly that 'playing is a science, and is to be studied as a science'.¹⁶⁶

These affirmations mark an immediate divergence between the two works, and are to be read as a declaration of authorial intent.¹⁶⁷

Starting from the premise that acting is a science and thus presupposes a period of study and preparation prior to being practised, when Hill states in the *Introduction* that he wishes to regulate this discipline, 'hitherto practised almost entirely from the fancy', he also indicates what is to be the guiding thread of the treatise: the notion that "natural" acting must be regulated and refined by means of technique forms the core of the 1755 version. This premise in fact accounts for the structure of the text.

In the 1750 version Hill had maintained the structure of Rémond de Sainte-Albine's text, organizing his material according to the requisites incumbent on whoever wished to enter the acting profession in two distinct parts, the first concerning the innate qualities of the player and the second the technique which had to underpin his activity. In the 1755 treatise, in which he comes to the conclusion

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ In the 1755 edition this chapter replaces the brief section which, in the 1750 version, introduced the first part of the treatise (*Of the principal Advantages which a Player ought to have from Nature*).

¹⁶⁶ *The Actor* (1755), chap. I, p. 12.

¹⁶⁷ According to Joseph R. Roach and Maria Chiara Barbieri, the scientific approach taken by Hill in his treatment of acting is clearly linked to his own biography: a man of multifarious interests, John Hill was first and foremost a scientist (see J. R. Roach, *The Player's Passion*, pp. 100-101; M. C. Barbieri, *La pagina e la scena. L'attore inglese nella trattatistica del '700*, p. 228).

that art and nature are so closely bound up in acting that it is impossible to establish whether, and to what extent, one predominates over the other, Hill decided to introduce immediately, in the first six chapters setting out the general theoretical principles, the concepts of natural gifts and technical abilities in dialectical relationship.

Understanding, sensibility, fire and figure are all gifts of nature, even though granted to each human being in different measures. In spite of the importance attributed to such innate gifts, technique and study take on a crucial role because they allow the individual to orient, increase and perfect the natural requisites.

To prove the truth of this premise Hill refers to David Garrick, emphasising that people often think of him as a born actor, undervaluing the work and technique that underlie his remarkable results: ‘those who imagine that he has not cultivated with an indefatigable assiduity the talents he possessed from nature, have a very imperfect knowledge of the source of that merit which so much astonishes them’.¹⁶⁸ The impression of reality and illusion of truth which confront the audience are the fruits of the ability of the actor in dissimulating the art he is employing:

Genius, we hear men say, is all; playing is not to be acquired by study: as it is the representation of human life, they say it ought to be the sole production of nature; and that to give it rules, is to take from it all its spirit. But this is error; it has an appearance of truth, because nature does a great deal, and the consummate artifice of the performer is to conceal the art which she is assisted; [...] actors receive and establish nature as the ground-work of all; but they raise upon this basis a structure, in which art has the most considerable share. [...] when [*genius*] is ungoverned and undirected we may admire a flight, or stare at some unexpected stroke, but after that we are disgusted; ‘tis only when natural fire is regulated by judgment; when the powers of genius are under the guidance of rule and method; when they know where to expatiate and where to check their impetuosity; when all their extravagance is too little, and where the least excess is too much, that we acknowledge and admire the perfect player. Nature will carry a man a great way, but she may carry him all the way out of his road.¹⁶⁹

Thus actors are warned: ‘he who, with all that nature ever did, or can do for a man, expects to succeed wholly without the effects of that study, deceives himself extremely’.¹⁷⁰

In Chapter II, *Of the necessity of a good understanding to the player*, which is three times longer than in the 1750 version, Hill reiterates that the actor’s task is based on a full understanding of the role in all its nuances, an indispensable condition for arriving at an interpretation which is faithful to the author’s purpose.¹⁷¹ This premise lies behind his condemnation, in no uncertain terms, of those who maintain that a mechanical imitation of given interpretative models can take the place of *understanding*.

We also find here a fundamental concept already present in the 1750 treatise and originating in Rémond de Sainte-Albine, that of the actor as artist or creator. And yet there is a profound difference with respect to what was stated in the 1750 edition. There the actor is the creator of his role not only insofar as he is charged with

¹⁶⁸ *The Actor* (1755), chap. I, p. 5.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷¹ In the 1750 version this topic occupied the Chapter I of Book I (*Can an Actor excell in his Profession, without a good Understanding?*).

compensating for shortcomings in the script and rectifying any mistakes, but also because he can, when necessary, introduce modifications and cuts. Whereas in the 1755 edition the actor's initiative is strictly linked to extraordinary circumstances, meaning only when what has to be played on stage has not been adequately defined by the author. Although he recognises a superior talent in the actor who shows himself able to complete whatever the author has not known how to depict, Hill specifies that changing or adding to the words in the script is not admissible:

There are many instances also in which the author has been able only to sketch out the out-line of what is to be done, and it is left to the actor or player to add the light, and finish, or in a great measure to make the picture. In this case he is not only to convey all the graces the author directs, but to add new ones. More is required than to understand the author perfectly; the actor is to be in some degree an author himself; and his executing this is as commendable, as his adding to the words, or altering them, is abominable.¹⁷²

Hill then devotes three lengthy chapters to the question of sensibility, whereas in the 1750 version this topic occupied just one chapter.¹⁷³ Chapter III (*Concerning Sensibility, and the proportion of it necessary to different actors*), itself twice as long as in the 1750 version, is integrated by some thirty pages on the same topic in the next two chapters (Chapter IV: *Of the means by which an actor may improve natural sensibility*; Chapter V: *On the due regulation and proper use of Sensibility*).

It is above all in Hill's treatment of the notion of emotive participation that we can see the most significant aspect of this new text, namely the greater emphasis on the necessity of controlling the actor's means of expression. Throughout the treatise Hill emphasises that the art of acting does not merely require certain interior qualities but also, and above all, the ability to regulate and guide their expression. Sensibility, in the sense of 'a disposition to be affected by the passions which plays are intended to excite', is not only essential for a correct rendering of a certain role but, in order to be efficacious, it must also be controlled.¹⁷⁴ The actor must identify with the character, feeling the passions he wishes to convey, but must also control his own expression:

What we should wish in the perfect player is, that he have all the sensibility [...] and yet all the command of himself that is necessary to regulate its emotions. We would not have him feel in such a manner as to lose the use of his voice; but while he conveys to us distinctly the words of his author, let him convince us also by his manner, that he is affected by them. Here is the great perfection of the science: we would have him, while he feels all this, yet command his passions, so that they do not disturb his utterance; and yet we would not have that expression he keeps for himself take away the pain of it from us; we would have his manner of pronouncing the words take all that effect upon us, which the passage has on the most sensible reader; but we would not have it take that effect on himself.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² *The Actor* (1755), chap. II, pp. 30-31.

¹⁷³ Specifically the Chapter II of Book I, entitled *Of Sensibility. Whether this Quality of the Heart be more important to the Performers in Tragedy, or in Comedy?*

¹⁷⁴ *The Actor* (1755), chap. III, p. 48.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

The performer's innate capacity to actually experience the sentiments he intends to convey must not only be regulated and trained but also cultivated, extended and refined. And the way in which the actor can succeed in doing this is clearly set out by Hill. Maintaining the distinction between the genres of tragedy and comedy, as established by Rémond de Sainte-Albine and found in the 1750 version, Hill advises the tragic actor, whose sensibility 'requires to be more perfect',¹⁷⁶ to develop and orient the innate ability to foster within himself all the passions to which man is susceptible by means of technique and study: for as, Hill explains, part of that 'greatness of mind' which must distinguish the tragic actor

may, nay, and must have been born with him. What is farther, he must have made it by management and study. The accustoming himself to great and noble sentiments is one great method of attaining that perfection in sensibility, the rudiments of which only can be had from nature.¹⁷⁷

It is the texts of the great tragedians which can provide the instruments suited to developing the actor's natural sensibility, enabling him to give a comprehensive rendering of the various nuances of a passion and to confer variety on his performance:

as he reads such passages; he will find his mind enlarge, and, as it were, dilate itself. It will take in sensations which he was before unacquainted with, and for which there is no name; and it will reject that which is little, or low, or mean, and indulge itself altogether in what is magnificent and sublime. [...] And he will find, as he gives way to the emotions these sentiments or several forms of sensibility require, his face, his features, and his person emotions thrown into forms and attitudes of expression. [...] His expression thus will have ease; for it will be unconstrained, the effect of natural, not artifice; and it will have another great perfection, it will be varied and appropriated; for it will rise out of the occasion, and be different under every circumstance. Whether it be a Bajazet that is angry, an Horatio that is angry, or a Richard that is angry, the player who has studied in what manner to express the sensibility of anger, will do the same things; but he, in whom expression is the offspring of the occasion, not of consideration and study, will have it different in each. In the same manner, the sorrow of a mother, of a wife, or of a mistress, are distinct things; and while the actress who practises before her toilet is the same in each circumstance, she to whom nature dictates will be different in all.¹⁷⁸

However, even though he has affirmed the need for the actor to maintain control over his means of expression, Hill believes that, in some cases, abandoning oneself to the instinct of emotional stimuli, being almost overwhelmed by passion, proves to be a useful and indeed necessary resource in order to fully communicate the beauty of a certain passage:

tho' it is very happy for the player to possess this quality of sensibility, it is necessary for him to have that command of himself, that he can keep in from interrupting his utterance, or taking away the articulation of his voice: but there are passages in which it

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. IV, p. 78.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. V, p. 95.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

may be allowed even this effect; and instead of a blemish it will communicate the greatest beauty.¹⁷⁹

He does nonetheless recommend actors to limit their recourse to this possibility:

Strokes of this kind in playing are like figures in oratory, a few of them enliven, elevate, and give an unconquerable power to a discourse; but to be eternally introducing them, robs them of all their merit and force: for the one, as well as the other, by this frequency, will be found to be the result of art and consideration, not of nature and sensibility.¹⁸⁰

In making these affirmations, according to Paul Goring, Hill ‘puts forward his own paradox: if an actor floods the stage with genuine sensibility, it will appear to the audience as artificial, but if signs of sensibility are *introduced* with tact and subtlety, they will be found powerfully affective’.¹⁸¹

The discussion of sensibility continues with Hill reiterating arguments expounded in the past, as for example when he criticises the mistake made by some actors in substituting their own emotions for those of the character, or warns them against lapsing into affectation.

Chapter VI (*Concerning Spirit, and what is called, in an actor, Fire*), concerns creative energy in the actor, a quality by means of which he breathes life into and animates his interpretation.¹⁸² In the 1755 edition *fire* takes on characteristics similar to the state of divine inspiration that characterised the priests of antiquity. He who is endowed with ‘true spirit’ when he acts is in a state of possession similar to that of Pythia, priestess of Apollo in the ancient sanctuary of Delphi:

[*The player*] is no longer himself, when he assumes his character; he possesses himself that he is the king or hero he represents, and inspired by the sentiments of his author, and merely what his own mind conceives from the several circumstances and incidents, he lives, not acts the scene. He is the priestess of the Delphic God, who as soon as she ascended the sacred tripod, became possessed, and uttered with a voice and mien, not her own, the sacred oracles. All that the supposed celestial vapour, rising from the sacred ground, could do for this enthusiast, the dignity of sentiment, and force of passion, execute for the player, who with his true perception, has in his nature this glorious heat.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., chap. III, p. 56.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., chap. III, p. 57.

¹⁸¹ P. Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 139.

¹⁸² In the 1750 version the chapter corresponds to the Chapter III of Book I (*Whether an Actor can have too much Fire?*).

¹⁸³ *The Actor* (1755), chap. VI, pp. 110-111. Hill’s description can be compared with that given in Plato’s *Ion*, in which the modes of poetic creation and acting are assimilated to the state of trance, or divine inspiration, of the priests and priestesses in ancient temples when they uttered the divine oracles (cf. C. Vicentini, ‘Theory of Acting I. Acting Theory in the Ancient World’, *Acting Archives Essays. Acting Archives Review*, Supplement 1, April 2011).

Chapter VIII (*Concerning the figure of a player*) deals with the actor's physical features.¹⁸⁴ Whereas in the 1750 edition it was stated that physical difformities of any kind were considered unacceptable on stage, in the 1755 version, while safeguarding the premise that the actor's features must be regular and well proportioned, Hill goes so far as to say that some 'singularities of figure' or 'bodily imperfections', far from prejudicing the performance, can on the contrary prove to be useful.¹⁸⁵

The text goes on to a description of the indispensable requisites for actors who play secondary roles (Chapter IX: *Concerning the players who are intrusted only with subordinate characters*), and a discussion of the actor's duty not only to choose roles in keeping with his age but also to retire once he has passed a certain age (Chapter X: *Of the time of life at which performers should quit the stage*).¹⁸⁶ Here the 1755 treatise expresses a criticism of contemporary British society, explicitly accusing the nation of abandoning actors to their own devices and of being indifferent to their fate. For while only the actors of outstanding merit have the possibility of prolonging their presence on the stage in spite of their advanced years, it was also all too often the case that actors found themselves obliged to go on working to ensure an income.

In the three subsequent chapters Hill considers the qualities, both physical and interior, which in general have to characterise the actors who take the leading roles, and in particular the protagonists of comedies and tragedies (Chapter XI: *Concerning the peculiar qualifications necessary to the principal performers*; Chapter XII: *Concerning that gaiety of disposition, which is essential to the comic actor*; Chapter XIII: *Of greatness of soul as necessary to the acting the character of an hero*).¹⁸⁷

Chapter XIV (*Of tenderness, that species of sensibility which is necessary to love-characters*) extends the concept of *sensibility* in relation to the roles of the lover, whereas in the 1750 version the discussion dealt more in general with the use of sensibility in tragic roles.¹⁸⁸

Chapter XV (*Of an amorous disposition, and its advantage to certain players*) incorporates Chapters IV and V of the first section of Book II in the 1750 edition, setting out the concept by which, in order to play the roles of a lover, the actor must be naturally inclined to sentiments of love and tenderness, together with the corollary, whereby an actor who is no longer young must refrain from taking on such roles.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ As we have already said, chapter VII is missing, probably through a printer's error. Chapter VIII corresponds, in the 1750 version, to Chapter IV in Book I, entitled *Whether it wou'd be to the Advantage of all Players to be of a distinguished Figure?*.

¹⁸⁵ *The Actor* (1755), chap. VIII, pp. 138-139.

¹⁸⁶ The two chapters correspond to the *Reflections – Reflection I. Those Actors who appear in subordinate Characters can no more succeed without a good Understanding, Sensibility, and Fire; than those who play the principal Parts*; 'Reflection II. Tho' Persons are happy in the principal Advantages which are required in theatrical Performers, ought they not in general, after a certain Age, to quit the Stage?' – which ended Book I of the 1750 edition.

¹⁸⁷ In the 1750 edition these topics were dealt with in the *Introduction* to Book II (*Of the Advantages in which it is requisite that those Players, who play the capital Parts, shou'd be superior to those who perform the subordinate Characters*) and the first two chapters of the first section of Book II (Chapter I: *A gaiety of Temper is absolutely necessary to the Players in Comedy, whose Business it is to make us laugh*; Chapter II: *No Man who has not naturally an elevated Soul, will ever perform well the Part of a Heroe upon the Stage*).

¹⁸⁸ The title of the chapter in question (the third of the first section of Book II) makes the difference in content explicit: *As all Players have occasion for the great Quality of Sensibility; those in a particular manner who propose to themselves to succeed in drawing Tears from us, have more Necessity than any others, for that peculiar kind of it, which we sometimes express by the Word Tenderness, tho' more strongly by the appropriated Term Feeling*.

¹⁸⁹ Chapter IV: *Players who are naturally amorous, are the only ones who shou'd perform the Parts of Lovers upon the Stage*; Chapter V: *Which is a corollary to the foregoing Chapter*.

We should point out how, in maintaining that, on one hand, an actor should conceal his own personality so as to take on that of his character and, on the other, should possess a natural predisposition for certain passions, Hill did not trouble to remove from the new edition of *The Actor* the theoretical contradictions which, inherent in Rémond de Sainte-Albine's text, had also characterised the 1750 version of his treatise. Thus for example he can say in the 1755 text, talking about the actor Colley Cibber, that he is particularly suited to playing the role of Lord Foppington because he himself does indeed possess 'something of the coxcomb'.¹⁹⁰

Chapters XVI (*Concerning the peculiar kinds of voice, suited to peculiar characters*) and XVII (*Of that peculiar figure which is suited to particular characters*) examine respectively the vocal and physical characteristics of the actor in relation to certain types of roles.¹⁹¹

Chapter XVIII (*Concerning the age of the player, as connected with that of the character*) develops the notion that there must be an outward conformity between actor and character, while Chapter XIX (*Concerning the characters of footmen and chambermaids*) looks at the requisites for actors destined to play the secondary roles of servants.¹⁹²

Chapter XX (*Concerning the general assistance that the natural accomplishments of the player may receive from art*) concerns the way in which the actor can perfect his own natural gifts through technique and study. This was the topic that inaugurated the second part of the treatise in the 1750 version (*Of those Assistances which Players ought to receive from Art*). Hill explains why, in producing this new version of the treatise, he has modified the structure of the text, eliminating the division into two parts:

IN a former treatise, under the same name with this, the general observations were divided under the two heads of the advantages of nature, and their assistances from art, but as it was impossible to speak of the former, without frequent mention of those assistances, the latter part of that work had too much the air of repetition. In this, those observations have been given in their places more at large; and this succeeding part, avoiding those repetitions, will be more concise.¹⁹³

In the following chapter, called *Of the general truth of theatrical representations*, he explains what such truth consists in,¹⁹⁴ while one of its fundamental elements, the actor's behaviour on stage, is discussed in Chapters XXII (*Concerning the truth of*

¹⁹⁰ *The Actor* (1755), chap. XII, p. 176. On this resemblance we read: 'it is well known that his excellence in representing the fops, induced many to imagine him as great a coxcomb in real life as he appear'd to be on the stage, so, he informs us, that from the delight he seem'd to take in performing the villainous characters in tragedy, half his auditors were persuaded that a great share of the wickedness of them must have been in his own nature' (*Life of Colley Cibber, Esq.*, in *The Dramatic Works of Colley Cibber, Esq.*, 5 vols., London, J. Rivington and Sons, C. Bathurst, T. Longman, T. Lowndes, T. Caslon, W. Nicoll, and S. Bladon, 1777, I, p. 11).

¹⁹¹ In the 1750 edition these topics were developed respectively in the first two chapters of the second section of Book II (Chapter I: *That Sort of Voice which may be very adequate to certain Characters, may be by no means sufficient for the Actor, in Parts by which we are to be peculiarly moved and affected*; Chapter II: *An Audience expects to find in the Person who acts the Part of a Lover, in Comedy, an amiable figure; and in him who acts the Part of a Hero in Tragedy, a majestic and striking one*).

¹⁹² The two chapters correspond, in the 1750 version, to Chapters III and IV of the second section of Book II (Chapter III: *Of the real or apparent conformity there ought to be between the age of the actor, and that of the person represented*; Chapter IV: *Of the Characters of Footmen and Chambermaids on the Stage*).

¹⁹³ *The Actor* (1755), chap. XX, p. 223.

¹⁹⁴ This topic occupied the Chapter I of Part II of the 1750 treatise (*In what the Truth of a Representation on the Stage consists*).

action)¹⁹⁵ and XXIII (*Concerning truth in Recitation*). In the latter Hill reiterates the necessity of doing away with magniloquent and artificial acting in comedy and tragedy, as well as the impossibility of establishing the exact tone of voice required to express each sentiment.¹⁹⁶

Chapter XXIV (*Concerning a declamatory recitation*)¹⁹⁷ deals with tragic declamation and the hindrance to an authentic and natural interpretation, topics which in the 1750 version were discussed respectively in Part II, Chapters VI (*Whether Tragedy ought or ought not to be spoke in a declamatory manner*) and VII (*Of certain Obstacles which impair the Truth of the Recitation*).

The actor's mnemonic ability, the advantages to be derived from prolonged experience on stage and familiarity with a role, as well as the two other elements involved in truth of representation, costumes and staging, are dealt with in Chapter XXV, *Of the being perfect in remembering the words*.¹⁹⁸

In the 1755 version the fundamental concept according to which "natural" acting does not mean a direct imitation of reality and the consequent notion whereby, in some cases, the actor should overdo the traits of the character are expounded in two separate chapters (Chapter XXVI: *Concerning what is called natural playing*; Chapter XXVII: *Concerning what is called force in playing*). In the 1750 version these topics had been discussed in two of the three *Observations* which constituted Chapter XI in Part II (*Of natural Playing*). The third observation, concerning the tendency of the public to consider 'every exaggeration, every heightening of a part by the performer, a fault', was omitted in the 1755 edition.¹⁹⁹

The consideration of the *finesses* which the actor can employ both in tragedy and in comedy takes up a sole chapter (Chapter XXVIII: *Concerning what are called finesses in the art of playing*) in the 1755 version, as opposed to three in the 1750 edition.²⁰⁰ The principles which are to guide the actor in the use of the *finesses* are set out in Chapter XXIX (*Containing some rules which ought to be observed in the use of finesses*), while the 'finesses of the lowest kind', or 'stage-tricks', are dealt with in Chapter XXX (*Concerning bye-play, or what are commonly called stage-tricks*).²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵ In the 1750 edition this topic was developed in Chapters II and III of the second part, entitled *On the Truth of Action on the Stage and Observations on the two principal Things essential to the Truth of Action*.

¹⁹⁶ The topics developed in Chapter XXIII of the 1755 edition occupied respectively Chapters IV (*On the Truth of Recitation*) and V (*What ought to be the Manner of Recitation in Comedy*) of the second part of the 1750 treatise.

¹⁹⁷ For a printer's error this chapter appears as XXVI.

¹⁹⁸ These topics occupied respectively Chapters VIII and IX of the second part of the 1750 treatise (Chapter VIII: *Of the Care that ought to be taken perfectly to implant the Parts of a Play in the Actor's Memory, in order to its being play'd with Truth*; Chapter IX: *Containing a Digression concerning certain Articles, which in themselves are foreign to theatrical Representation; yet without which the Truth of acting is never to be arrived at*). Chapter X was suppressed (*In which some important Rules are added to the Principles before establish'd, of the Truth of Action and Recitation*).

¹⁹⁹ *The Actor* (1750), II, chap. XI, *Observation III*, p. 245.

²⁰⁰ Chapters XII, XIII and XIV in the second part, entitled respectively *Of the Finesses in the Art of Playing in general*, *Of the Finesses in playing, which peculiarly belong to Tragedy* and *Of the Finesses in playing, peculiar to Comedy*.

²⁰¹ *The Actor* (1755), chap. XXX, p. 275. The two chapters correspond to XV (*Rules which ought to be observ'd in the use of Finesses*) and XVI (*Of Bye-play, or what are called Stage-Tricks*) in the second part of the 1750 treatise.

The ability of the actor to diversify his interpretation in rendering one particular role, and the talent for embellishing his part with those *finesses* able to add variety and new life, are the topics of Chapter XXXI, *Concerning variety in playing*.²⁰²

The last chapter of the treatise (*Concerning graces in playing*), shows how everyday reality has to be transfigured on stage, through the actor's ability to confer on his character a sort of ideal perfection.²⁰³

What in the 1750 version comprised the last three chapters (Chapter XIX: *Observations on some Parts of the Art of Playing, of a subordinate Kind to those we have hitherto been treating of*; Chapter XX: *OBJECTIONS*; Chapter XXI: *Some Remarks which may be of Service to certain modern Actors*) were suppressed in the 1755 version. While some of the observations and arguments presented therein were re-elaborated and inserted elsewhere in the 1755 edition, various concepts which had featured previously are totally absent from the new edition. One final difference with respect to the 1750 version is the fact that the 1755 text has no conclusion.

On the basis of this brief analysis of the structure and contents of the 1755 treatise we can endorse Joseph R. Roach's statement that 'with the second version of *The Actor*, Hill had in effect written an adaptation that could stand as an original work'.²⁰⁴ The new edition of *The Actor* is not presented as, and is in fact no longer, the translation of the text of Rémond de Sainte-Albine, even though the latter's influence is still clearly visible. Neither can it be considered a mere recapitulation of the topics and concepts that had been discussed previously. It is in fact the outcome of a more markedly personal reflection on the art of the actor.

In undertaking a complete re-elaboration of what had been expressed in the first edition of the treatise, Hill did indeed bring into being "A New Work", in which there is greater emphasis on the need to regulate the actor's means of expression, with particular importance being given to the analysis and critique of what was happening at that time in the London theatres, refining and reinforcing the concepts expressed previously by means of a new and more personal approach.

²⁰² Corresponding, in the 1750 version, to Chapter XVII of Part II (*Of Variety in Playing*).

²⁰³ This topic occupied Chapter XVIII (*Of graces in Playing*) of the second part of the 1750 version.

²⁰⁴ J. R. Roach, *The Player's Passion*, p. 101.