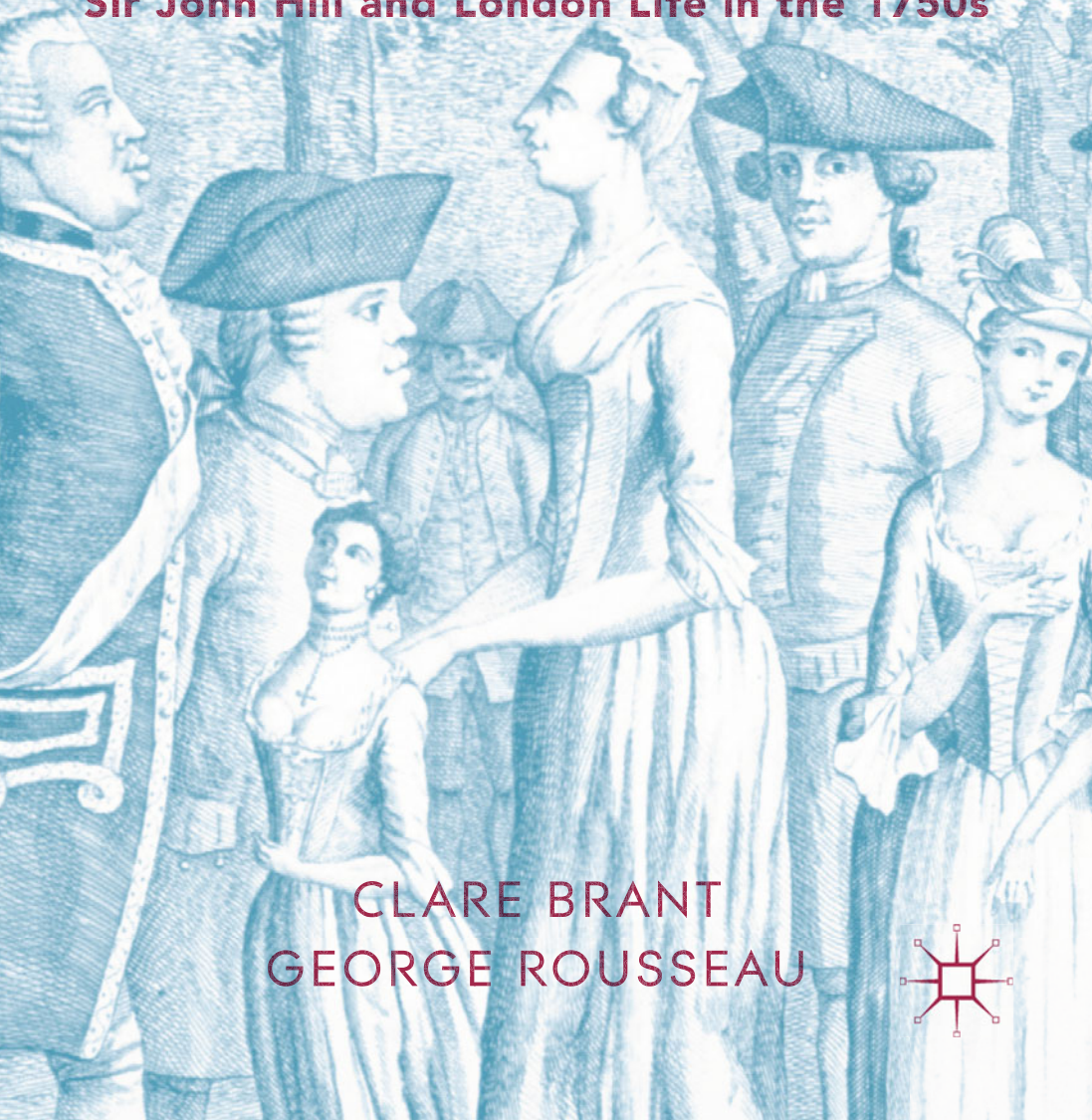


# FAME & FORTUNE

Sir John Hill and London Life in the 1750s



CLARE BRANT  
GEORGE ROUSSEAU



# Fame and Fortune

Clare Brant · George Rousseau  
Editors

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palgrave  
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*To our fathers*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

FRS	Fellow of the Royal Society
LDA	<i>London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette</i>
LPH	<i>The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill</i> ed. G. S. Rousseau (New York: AMS Press, 1982)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
Phil. Trans.	<i>Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society</i>

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## A NOTE ON DATES

New Style dates are used throughout this book: when the Calendar Act came into effect in 1752, the New Year began on 1 January and England adopted the Gregorian calendar, skipping eleven days. So, Wednesday 2 September 1752 was followed by Thursday 14 September 1752.

# Introduction

*Clare Brant and George Rousseau*

## ORIGINS OF THE BOOK

This book grew out of a biography and an international conference held by the Centre for Life-Writing Research at King's College London to coincide with the tercentenary of Hill's birthday on 14 November 2014. Hill's tercentenary was also commemorated by the Linnaean Society and Geological Society in London and at the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies in the USA. However, the KCL conference provided the spur for this book; it was catalysed by George Rousseau's biography of Hill, *Notorious* (2012), which was favourably reviewed,<sup>1</sup> shortlisted for book prizes in the USA, and put Sir John Hill back on the map of eighteenth-century studies. A distinguished scholar of natural history, Dr D.E. Allen, wondered whether Hill's career typified a 'moment of madness' in mid-Georgian London:

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... of these curious outbreaks (of an impish delight in mockery and lampooning) probably none has been more enduring than that of the eighteenth-century's middle years, when even learned pursuits such as natural history were not immune altogether. [All were] mere passing aberrations compared to the prolonged embracing of such distractions as John Hill succumbed to.<sup>2</sup>

Allen does not comment further on the 'moment of madness' represented by metropolitan London during the 1750s; this book attempts to supply some of its contexts, and to explain more of the 'distractions' and learned pursuits of Hill and his contemporaries.

Nonetheless, despite the appearance of *Notorious*, Hill lingered in the shadows: even eighteenth-century specialists lost no sleep over (as Clare Brant titles her chapter) 'Sir John Who?' A few reviewers expressed their amazement at the number of fields Hill cultivated but there ended their curiosity. Rousseau's biography contextualized Hill's polymathy and explained that, while he was a household name in his own day, he plummeted into obscurity afterwards. But Rousseau also established Hill as a controversial figure of early celebrity, a perspective this book develops further.<sup>3</sup>

The London conference held promise for Hill by dint of multi-disciplinary recuperation of Hill's interests. We therefore include chapters on Hill's botanical, geological, literary and public activities, and his character considered from the perspective of his own generation as well as our present one. An emergent theme of the conference was that mid-Georgian metropolitan London was overdue for reevaluation.<sup>4</sup> This was a step forward from Rousseau's goals in the biography. Whereas *Notorious* is the first full life of a neglected figure, the conference pushed biographical and chronological boundaries further, as reflected in our title: *Fame and Fortune*. Contributors to this volume share themes of ambition, competition and tribalism, patronage and preferment, the expanding metropolis, the growth of commerce, communication, networks, motion and movement, road traffic and other forms of interaction, all exploring the types of public space London was becoming. A tercentenary conference devoted to a single figure metamorphosed into a study of that figure in his cultural place.<sup>5</sup>

Hill's meteoric rise to notoriety during the 1750s remains central to the plan of *Fame and Fortune*, especially in relation to the expanding city and investments in new forms of print culture, celebrity and

self-promotion. A second objective for the book is exploration of the changing world of knowledge and science, extending beyond Hill to his audiences and contemporaries. Presenting Hill's activities in coffee-houses, learned societies and institutions, pleasure gardens, markets, theatres, bagnios, and other meeting places frequented by the devotees of fashionable (and not-so-fashionable) society, our contributors also probe such sites for what they were *becoming* during the 1750s. And we situate these endeavours in the broader contexts of a society pushing beyond the very different 1740s. That decade has been assessed primarily in the light of collective subjectivities in new literary genres;<sup>6</sup> the 1750s responded to these outlets of communication—particularly in expanded print culture but also in new social and commercial developments we adumbrate later. We are aware of the limitations of decadal thinking but, when carefully handled, thinking in decades can help pinpoint ways mid-Georgian metropolitan culture was altering.

The 1750s was the decade of the Calendar Act (1751), which introduced the Gregorian calendar and made 1 January New Year's Day; Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act (1753); the Jew Bill (also of 1753 but repealed in 1754), which permitted the naturalization of Jews; early in 1750, the first reported earthquakes recorded since 1601, obscured by the later and better-known Lisbon earthquakes of 1755 which contributed local shockwaves to moralizing;<sup>7</sup> the first burletta performed and premiered in Ranelagh in 1754 (a burletta is a short comic opera); the completion of Westminster Bridge in 1750 (for the first time, opening a new crossing over the Thames to rival London Bridge and accommodate numbers of new stage coaches crossing the City); the operation of London's first professional police force, all of six men, the Bow Street Runners, founded by Hill's antagonist, the magistrate Henry Fielding. In 1753 the British Museum was established, funded by the state. The decade also includes the landmark publication of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755, after which the English language had a magisterial and stabilizing reference book. Other important advances of the decade include Joseph Black's identification of carbon dioxide, or 'fixed air', and John Harrison's No.1 sea watch, the best marine chronometer to date.

Cultural history through landmarks, however, can mask complexities. For instance, in architecture the 1750s saw the beginnings of Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill Gothic and Robert Adams' neoclassicism. A comparable polarity appears in 1757 in the publication of

Edmund Burke's *Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, and the first appearance of Harris's *List of Covent Garden Ladies*, a pornographic directory. Although the decade began with London socially affected by demobilization in particular, it ended on a high for Britain: the Seven Years War (1756–1763)—from which Britain emerged as a dominant world power, producing the nation's so-called *Annus Mirabilis* of 1759—in which victories over the French kept London busily jubilant. The 1750s in Britain were neither simply the end of the first half of the eighteenth century nor the beginning of the second, nor even both, but a decade in which tumult had its own distinct specificities.

With London energized in new ways, it is therefore no wonder that print magnate Ralph Griffiths decided to fund a new column in 1750 in the *London Daily Advertiser* called 'The Inspector', gathering news from diverse parts of the metropolis and commenting on a city in hectic motion. Griffiths chose an 'Inspector' to present it—John Hill, a man seemingly always in motion. Intellectual developments did not lag behind the growth of these public spaces, even if new empirical knowledge could not rival earlier leaps of the Scientific Revolution from Boyle and Hobbes to Locke and Newton. Even so, the 1750s demonstrated how acutely retrieval of the past (antiquarianism and archaeology) was co-existing with new theories in natural history (Linnaeus), geology (the mid-Georgian birth of this science in Britain),<sup>8</sup> medicine (especially the consequences of public awareness that people had nerves),<sup>9</sup> herbology (the first commercialization of herbal remedies), and psychology (the prescription of all sorts of panaceas selling vigorously to quell what we today consider anxiety and depression), to name a few.<sup>10</sup>

*Fame and Fortune* aims to demonstrate how understanding of new social arrangements was changing and how Hill, uncannily, unwittingly, and often intuitively, was a type of filter, or strainer, embodying their transformations. George Rousseau explains in his first essay what he thinks a filter does:

A filter clarifies, purifies, and reveals what has been dirty and impure; it strains through the purified liquid or physical material and leaves the rest as waste. A filter is a common physical object as well as metaphor ... and it functions as both in this chapter: the *purification* from the filter resulting in the modern scholar's sense of a mid-Georgian world now almost three centuries removed, and the *waste* remaining inside the filter forming the

image of Hill among his contemporaries as *persona non grata*, upstart, parvenu, all of which I aim to account for in the evidence for an autistic Hill. The image of the filter further applies to Hill because he illuminates the excesses of the 1750s; his frenzied paper wars and coffeehouse controversies reveal how dizzying and extreme those excesses had become.<sup>11</sup>

A filter in this sense encompasses an historical figure who suggests how scholars can explore the texture of that decade. ‘Filter Hill’, as Rousseau calls his subject, serves as an individual who is a visible figure of mid-Georgian London, yet also a type and anti-type who helps us better understand the people and places of mid-Georgian London—its daily life and cultural practices. Our work in *Fame and Fortune* admittedly requires deft passage in navigating among those figures who traversed the streets, squares, theatres and pleasure gardens, and the taxonomies of understanding they imagined. If the 1740s was indeed a watershed in the eighteenth century—viewed as an end or a beginning, as many scholars have sought to demonstrate—then what framed it and what followed?<sup>12</sup> Hence our inquiry into the 1750s, a decade that has gathered no similar defining marker.

## HISTORIES OF LONDON AND HISTORIES OF LITERATURE

Separate studies of London and literature have been prolific and many comment on the 1750s. Yet if Hill was the ‘filter’ we are claiming, why has he been overlooked and, more crucially for our argument, what difference does his inclusion make? This is a salient question this book poses. We do not say the decade has been understudied—far from it, or that its literary history is defective or inchoate. Rather, that inclusion of unusual figures such as Hill, culled from the margins and perimeters of the currently imaginable, proffer a new sense of the era. One could have pronounced similarly for Oliver Goldsmith, another pivotal figure in the 1750s who has similarly been sidelined, although not to the extent of polymathic Hill. One reason there has been no panoptic approach to Goldsmith in the decade in which he mostly flourished is that he defies so many of the pieties and conventions.<sup>13</sup> Hill augments this challenge. Not only did he sabotage convention and challenge authority, he tested patronage more aggressively than his contemporaries and broke the boundaries that were forming between fields of knowledge. His contemporaries severely punished him for these violations, more than he ought to have been.

Histories of literature rarely trace the history of print at that time, a further reason Hill is of interest. Hill not only colluded with print rogues such as Mary Cooper; conventional printers and publishers such as Robert Baldwin, the producer of orthodox science books, also made contracts with him (or Hill with them) and it would be hard to name anyone else in the decade who aimed to deflate aspiring literary careers (Smollett, Fielding, Smart and Kenrick represent only the prominent names) more efficaciously than Hill did.<sup>14</sup> This is what Hill's cabal of 'Malevolios' at the Bedford coffeehouse sought to achieve in their nocturnal activities. It is of course a history of very masculine-focused aggression, taking attention away from writers such as Eliza Haywood, Sarah Fielding and Charlotte Lennox, all of whom produced several significant novels throughout the 1750s, but whose achievements were evidently not thought by Hill to be worth wrecking.<sup>15</sup> And it raises the question as to why Hill's gender orbit simply ignored women. With Cooper's press, Hill could be prolific; with Baldwin, he could make money, through ample royalties with which he afforded his ostentatious lifestyle. Baldwin was the type of printer accustomed to amass multi-volume works and reproduce them, quickly and cheaply, for profit. Hill's 'Botanical Tracts' offer good specimens: they included all his short botanical writings to 1762 and sold at a hefty price.<sup>16</sup>

Most histories of Georgian London are eloquent about its changing landscapes and burgeoning buildings but taciturn about its textures and intricate social arrangements, especially on the relations between places and people, and the complex ways in which social stratification played out in specific places. Consider, for instance, the Mall, a gravel walk on the north side of St James's Park, laid out by Le Nôtre for Charles II, which had become by the 1750s part of the interlacing paths on which Londoners of all kinds circulated. César de Saussure (1705–1783), a Swiss travel writer who came to London and fell in love with it (so much so that he returned for long periods), described it this way:

Society comes to walk here [along the Mall] on fine, warm days, from seven to ten in the evening, and in winter from one to three o'clock ... the park is so crowded at times that you cannot help touching your neighbour. Some people come to see, some to be seen, and others to seek their fortunes; for many priestesses of Venus are abroad ... all on the look out for adventures.<sup>17</sup>

Although favoured by the fashionable the Mall was open to everyone, as its appearances in the works of Goldsmith attest: ‘let a man’s character, sentiments, or complexion, be what they will, he can find company in London to match them. If he be splenetic, he may every day meet companions on the seats in St James’s Park, with whose groans he may mix his own, and pathetically talk of the weather.’<sup>18</sup> The Mall was a popular location for chance encounters on and off the page, especially ones in which actions and reactions created problematic interactions, like this one:

It happened about six weeks ago that VENTOSUS, as he was walking in the Mall with an officer of distinction, met AMELIA in company with several ladies and a gentleman. He thought fit to bow to AMELIA with a supercilious respect, which had greatly the air of an insult: of this compliment AMELIA, though she looked him in the face, took no notice: by this calm disdain he was at once disappointed and confused; he was stung by an effort of his own malignity, and his breast swelled with passion which he could not vent.<sup>19</sup>

The all-important novel of the 1750s was perfecting this sociology of personal interchange, particularly its cognitive and democratic subtleties,<sup>20</sup> but its underpinnings lay in daily human exchanges, verbal and silent in a real historical place. Something of this complicated relay of looks and looking is caught by a print of 1752 that is our cover image for *Fame and Fortune*: the figures are all choreographically related yet most have different sightlines. This multiplicity of points of view makes a strong metaphor for our recuperation of both Hill and his times. The strangeness of the print’s style exemplifies the difficulties of recovering exact textures of the 1750s. Elusivity extends to the artist: J. L’Agneau may be a pseudonym, thinks Sheila O’Connell, curator of an exhibition entitled *London 1753* (at the British Museum in 2003).<sup>21</sup> L’Agneau is known to have produced two other prints in 1752. One depicts a scene of secret flagellation; the other, ‘*Lusus Naturae, or Carracturas of the Present Age*’ (Fig. 1), features Hill on the left foreground in company with a woman, probably Elizabeth Canning, in a similarly peculiar and strangely stylised line-up of luminaries.<sup>22</sup> Identifications here are no easier than in *Lusus Naturae*: as O’Connell observes, ‘Features, though exaggerated, clearly belong to individuals and remain to be identified.’ These figures include Lord Chesterfield (statesman, wit and writer; his 1750 Calendar Act



**Fig. 1** 'Lusus Naturae, or Carracaturas of the Present Age', 1752. Etching by John June after J. L'Agneau. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

established the Gregorian calendar in Britain) and Sir Samuel Prime (looking straight out at us, he was mocked for marrying his cook, as per the paper in front of him). The print's title suggests people can be wonders of nature; like cabinets of curiosities, a group also provokes curiosity. Under Hill's feet a paper reads 'not to know me argues thyself unknown'. George Rousseau has observed that the *Lusus Naturae* public cluster is situated in a political space,<sup>23</sup> in *View of the Mall*, the figures are interwoven rather than grouped, in public space and even less 'knowable'.

More curiously yet, in *View of the Mall* L'Agneau's figures fold into a typology of the ordinary: a military man, prostitutes, beaux. Bodies—thin, fat, dressed according to station or occupation, accoutred—take on mercurial movements—spry, supplicating, provocative—which speak to interactions, also strange and elusive. Who are these people? We don't know. And what are they doing on the Mall? We can only guess. Sheila describes the print as 'suggestive of how leisured promenading in St James's Park might have been seen by those at the workaday end of town'

and she may be right.<sup>24</sup> Yet L'Agneau's figures are strange, their silences eloquent, their stiff silhouettes and exaggerated faces full of presence and purpose. Disproportions startle: outsize heads and elongated faces co-exist with normal perspective. This admixture of odd and conventional provides an apposite metaphor for representing Hill and London life in the 1750s. It thrives on the blend—people in their contexts, one unusual man and his times—as well as recognition that metaphors for the age are intrinsic to deep-layer reconstructions of a society transforming itself.

### THE NEW CITY AND ITS PUBLIC SPACES

Hill's London at mid-century is also an intriguing imbrication of urban and green places. He sought out nature there as well as its populated spaces of culture—theatres, assemblies, clubs and coffeehouses, fairs and markets, and above all its pleasure gardens at Ranelagh and Vauxhall. A writer celebrating summer entertainments in London in 1750 recorded, 'who has not frequently heard [among the gay and polite], "How many trades were thereby encourag'd; of what advantages such places of resort were to the government; how much they advanc'd politeness and society; that fair weather invited company to Vauxhall; and that a cloudy evening made well for Ranelagh"'.<sup>25</sup> The 'Inspector', as Hill became known for his daily editorials in the *London and Daily Advertiser*, relished these places of resort, especially their fashionable activities—fireworks at Cuper's Gardens, an auction in the Minories, coffeehouses for conversation—and conjoined his own choice of place and bustle in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens where he habitually carried a pocket microscope to discover more about London's smallest inhabitants. He sallied out to London's green penumbra, the verdant fields and common places as much in London as around it, even allowing for a much smaller city than today. An anonymous writer of the 1750s gives fascinating details of hedgerow food and field fare, such as the French gathering dandelions for salads in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and describes how Londoners of all classes re-provisioned themselves on Sundays from the surrounding country.<sup>26</sup> Hill could afford to have an incredible interest in plants and animals, though as an herbalist he was attentive to their uses and promoted simples. When he writes of microscopic life, London disappears, levels into a realm of discovery or turns to watery reflection. Hill alludes to the great smoke of London and his relief at escaping its hurry and fatigue; he also relished its opportunities.

One figure, now iconic, consistently connected writers and painters: Hogarth, held up as a model by Henry Fielding, the anonymous author of *Low-Life* and many others. Hogarth supplied humour, types and moods. The idea of ‘Hogarthian’ London still has currency, as Martin Rowson—a graphic artist who often uses Hogarth—explains:

[Hogarthian] is an interesting adjective too. In his book *The Fatal Shore*,<sup>27</sup> describing the city from which the first white Australians were transported, Robert Hughes summed it up rather well: ‘Modern squalor is squalid yet Georgian squalor is “Hogarthian”, an art form in itself.’ Without quite knowing why, we all recognize what it implies: an earthy, vicious yet also rather jolly rumbustiousness, neatly summing up all we think we understand by the 18th century. For instance, we instantly recognize the difference between what is meant by ‘Hogarthian’ and ‘Dickensian’ London. The latter is filthy, crime-ridden, sentimental, pitiful but also, once we’ve recognized its hideous nature, reformable and consequently redeemable; the former, on the other hand, while being filthy and crime-ridden and occasionally sentimental, is depicted without pity, without hope of redemption, and is therefore, in its cynical slapstick, much, much funnier. That this isn’t quite what Hogarth intended is very much beside the point.<sup>28</sup>

Gin is hugely important here: it supplied indifference to irredeemtion, for one thing. As biographer and historian Frank McLynn puts it, ‘In 1759 England was still a rigidly stratified society, with the oligarchy enjoying the best of everything in terms of conspicuous consumption while the masses suffered wartime dearth, warding off the misery with a per capita consumption of spirits 25% higher than at the beginning of the century.’<sup>29</sup> Discussing the Gin Craze, Nicholas Rogers identifies a golden age of gin drinking: ‘Spirit production did not fall appreciably until the late 1750s, making the period 1723 to 1757 the golden age of gin drinking, when output was consistently above 3.5 million gallons annually and in half of these years over 5 million.’<sup>30</sup> Hill was included as a presence in Hogarth’s *Beer Street*, an engraving of London sobriety, for his *Review of the Works of the Royal Society* (1751). Hill was apparently displeased. It is the only satire of him in Hogarth’s works.<sup>31</sup>

In the rich scholarship on eighteenth-century London there is much to satisfy the Hogarthian tendency, especially in Vic Gatrell’s history of artistic and debauched Covent Garden.<sup>32</sup> The famously London-fixed Johnson becomes a touchstone of a roughly politer taste in Lisa Picard’s

*Dr Johnson's London* (2001), although his famous aphorism tends to be more remembered for its first than its second half: 'When a man is tired of London he is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford.' Hill's London, like Johnson's, is a chronotope of time and space and a bustling, noisy one. In Johnson's 1738 poem *London*, an imitation of Juvenal's third satire, 'th' affrighted Crowd's tumultuous Cries/Roll thro' the Streets, and thunder to the Skies'.<sup>33</sup> It is through these streets that the 'Inspector' roves, as George Rousseau observed in *Notorious*: 'It presented Hill as "walking the city" and "roving in his chariot," at a time when London's newly curious, and often fawning, inhabitants, were also compulsively strolling.'<sup>34</sup> One might think that Johnson's bi-weekly periodical *The Rambler* (1750–1752) evinced a commitment to urban walking, but not at all: the name (which Boswell didn't think much of) was chosen, Johnson told Reynolds, so he could stop thinking about it and go to bed. Far more than Johnson, Hill's *Inspector* promoted ambulation, though, as Rousseau observed, 'it soon became apparent in the columns themselves that he himself was the centre of attention far more than the expanding city.'<sup>35</sup> Hill's frequently aural London enables the 'Inspector' to listen to conversations, supposedly real, many concerning himself. Hill's London is richer, faster, lighter than Johnson's: he explicitly aspired to fame and fortune, and to the elegancies of life which could be bought.

Then as now, London has a curious double existence as a unifying signifier and a multifarious topography: an assemblage of distinct locales that combine into a general urban entity. In the mid-eighteenth century, such distinctions were stronger than now. 'To talk of London as if it were a unity is to forget the intense localism of the lives lived there', says Vic Gatrell, devoting his study to 'the Town':

What contemporaries called 'the Town' had developed between the City of London and the City of Westminster in the seventeenth century. With the Piazza at its centre, it stretched from Soho and Leicester Fields (now Square) to Drury Lane in the east, and from St Giles's and Long Acre in the north to Charing Cross and the Strand in the south. It had important outreaches eastwards along Fleet Street and into the booksellers' quarter of St. Paul's Churchyard, but you could walk across its core in ten or fifteen minutes.<sup>36</sup>

An anonymous author of the 1750s presented the city hour by hour on a summer Sunday in *Low-Life: Or One Half of the World, Knows not how the Other Half Live*.<sup>37</sup> It is as immersive as Henry Mayhew's account of London life in the 1840s, and provides a valuable extension of ideas about the mid-century metropolis. 'Low-lifer', let us call him, puts the poor at the centre of his stage and layers of occupational groups between them and the rich, who appear as a source of help in money and broken victuals. The lowest of hack writers, legal scribes, are mentioned in passing among those who stay home because their clothes are not decent enough to go abroad: no wonder John Hill indulged in silks and ruffles. Fine clothes were not idle costumes but literally a material part of social mobility; they enabled entrance to finer places. Carolyn Steedman has discussed *Low-Life* at length, with an analysis of what she notes are the 'very peculiar acoustic properties of *Low-life* as a text'.<sup>38</sup> One of the many striking features of 'Low-lifer's' account is just how much walking Londoners did. On a Sunday half the townspeople walked out to the country to socialise, take in the air or a prospect, eat and drink. Steedman opines that 'no one has a body in this text',<sup>39</sup> and she argues persuasively.

But there is also a case for there being many bodies in *Low-Life* in that state of liminal embodiment, drunkenness. 'Low-lifer's' citizenry is continuously drunk, or sleeping off one bout before starting another, or eyeing up a mug or a bottle in anticipation of the next drink. Steedman discusses the author's unusual style in terms of his preference for 'free existential clauses', and there is a philosophical liberty for the text's subjects (not its more moralizing author) in drinking to get drunk. Hill was most unusual in not caring for drink.<sup>40</sup> 'Low-lifer' includes a paean of praise to Hogarth whose depictions of Gin Street seem wildly innocent in comparison to 'Low-lifer's' London, which is curiously written in gerundive sentences as if other parts of speech had simply passed out drunk. All the doing, saying and telling of *Low-Life* circles round being drunk, hungover, thirsty and getting drunk, a process intersecting with another process, latent with violence, of cheating, lying, slandering, stealing and fighting. Not all of this loop, however, is confined to the poor, and on London streets much of it was visible and audible.

*Low-Life* is also attentive to the circulation of money in London and the dodges and feints around debt. Joining the beau monde, Hill appeared to earn fantastic sums: he earned £1500 from journalism in 1751, according to Horace Walpole, who was outraged again in 1759

when he learnt ‘this journeyman [Hill] is one of the first men preferred in the new reign: he is made gardener of Kensington, a place worth £2000 a year.’<sup>41</sup> It was in such ways that Hill’s ambition was well-served by the public and, eventually, by patronage centred in London.

But ambition could also partake of its obliquities, as represented in ‘A Night Scene at Ranelagh’, showing Hill being caned and brutally attacked by a man and his accomplices (Fig. 2). Betty Rizzo identified the assailant as the swash-buckling and money-hungry Mountefort Browne.<sup>42</sup> Hill had cast Browne in an ‘Inspector’ column as ‘empty-headed Clody’, a witless fop who strolls about London with sawdust in his head. Browne demanded an apology; Hill refused it, and the caning at Ranelagh was the upshot.<sup>43</sup> Then ‘Clody’ asked Henry Fielding, in his capacity as a magistrate, for help. Hill drew the conclusion Browne was put up to the job by his enemies. Given the incident’s date, 6 May 1752, at the very height of the paper wars, Fielding’s ‘Junto’ may have played some part, although Rizzo never discovered any evidence for it.

The point for ‘public spaces’ is not Browne’s biographical enigma, or the incident’s further details; histories of Ranelagh and Vauxhall in the eighteenth century reveal no other similar incident.<sup>44</sup> Hill vexed whole segments of his contemporaries in ways no other mid-Georgian had or would. The public’s response as reported in newspapers (and by Hill’s lawyers too) was a new sense of crime in relatively respectable places—after all, Ranelagh was no Covent Garden or Pimp Lane. The new Bow Street brigade was too small and far away for their ‘runners’ to be useful. The spectators at Ranelagh that night feared pandemonium would ensue though once Hill lay prostrate Browne and his cohorts fled. The cost to the public’s perception of security was considerable. It generated a sense of no longer being safe to ‘stir abroad as once one had’, in the words of one commentator writing a few days after Hill was beaten.<sup>45</sup>

## JOHN HILL AND HIS INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS: MAVERICK CONFORMIST?

To approach Hill-the-man in biographical isolation or solitude, without context, sans broad socioeconomic and political backdrop is risky business, even though Hill’s works are notably silent about contemporary politics. It is one reason we have soft-pedalled the politics of the 1750s in this book, despite the claim of some political historians that the decade



Fig. 2 'A Night Scene at Ranelagh on Wednesday 6th of May 1752'. Engraving by Leumuth [?] after Clody. Courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London

was undergoing important shifts.<sup>46</sup> Though in 1757 Hill tied his fortune to Lord Bute, nonetheless he took on little, if any, of the political colouring of his eminent—and controversial—patron. Possibly it is precisely because of his relatively apolitical stance that Hill both found a patron and was not politically affected by it. Political atmosphere is relevant to fame and fortune, yet Hill's polymathic endeavours seem relatively untouched by it. Because Hill was busy in so many fields, he needs to be understood across different contexts. *Fame and Fortune* brings together his contributions to different fields and treats them seriously: as a maverick conformist, Hill often proves to be an exceptional type. Hill has been too readily dismissed as an imposter, parvenu, charlatan, quack, eccentric. He was not simply any of these;<sup>47</sup> the unusual ways in which he attracted aspersion should contribute to better understanding of the mid-century and show how attacks on him arose.

Though Hill's successes span 1745–1775, it was in the 1750s that he flourished most visibly. His silence on politics, at odds with concepts of celebrity as vocalizing opinions for the public, may be significant for historicising fame and fortune.<sup>48</sup> In the aftermath of *Notorious*, a fresh approach would be to study how he bridged two burgeoning cultures of the 1750s, the scientific and the literary. In England, they had been developing since the Restoration, in different tempi over the decades, encompassing trailblazing research in physics (Newton), chemistry (Boyle), mathematics (Newton, again), neurology (Thomas Willis), physiology (Robert Whytt, the Scot), and medicine (Thomas Sydenham, John Radcliffe, Richard Mead, Erasmus Darwin, the Hunters).<sup>49</sup> These and other leading figures accelerated scientific development in the first half of the eighteenth century. However, by the 1730s its pace slowed, or geographically moved north to Scotland; only botany and natural history were advancing with momentum comparable to the earlier generations. The Swedish Linnaeus was pre-eminent in the next surge, his paradigmatic *Systema Naturae* having been published in 1735 with no need of an English translation as Latin was still the lingua franca among the virtuosi. Hill was an important player among naturalists thrashing out Linnaean principles during the 1740s and, however idiosyncratically, he worked at the centre of botany and natural history. His row with the Royal Society at the end of the decade could rock literate London precisely because he positioned himself in the epicentre of natural history's development.

Hill was a *bridge* between scientific and literary cultures.<sup>50</sup> He was *scientific* to the extent that he rose from apothecary, botanist, naturalist, collector to virtuoso; *literary* in his turn to Grub Street after he burned his bridges amongst the virtuosi. Yet this representation of Hill is reductive: from youth he pursued *both* fields simultaneously, an overlap rendering him of exceptional interest for the two cultures of the 1750s. His education at home, in his father's small but selective library, should never be minimized. Theophilus Hill tutored his son in ancient and modern languages, in grammar, semantics and etymology; with his father, Hill read classics of English literature, as he recounted years later in *The Inspector*, and at home he also acquired the basic rhetorical skills he deployed during his prolific but relatively short-lived career in London's Grub Street.<sup>51</sup> Few scientists of the 1750s, including those parading their university degrees, were as well versed or could write as fluently. This talent galled his enemies. More recently—since the controversy between C. P. Snow and F. R. Leavis in 1959 which set science and literature apart as two cultures—knowledge in *both* areas has become a bone of contention. Hill, despite his storehouse of character flaws, came as close as anyone of the 1750s to embracing the two realms within the constraints of mid-Georgian society.<sup>52</sup>

The overlap of these two cultures in the 1750s has been neglected or studied in discreet units of what we ordinarily term scientists and non-scientists—at least so far as basic allegiance to a professional group was concerned—and remains one reason why histories of the Royal Society between Newton's death (1727) and Joseph Banks's presidency (1775) have been lacklustre. Historians of science have plugged gaps in local knowledge but largely ignored supposedly peripheral non-scientific cultures, as have literary historians for scientific cultures. Strong affinities between science and non-science were clearly present at mid-century, partial proof of which was that the 'bridge' Hill represented was fraught because his contemporaries were closing ranks against the outsider. Another valiant example is Samuel Johnson, who held abundant scientific views on a wide range of topics but who did not have the practical knowledges Hill had as apothecary, botanist, mineralogist, geologist, medical practitioner, natural historian.<sup>53</sup> Johnson looked out for Hill during the 1750s—kept an open mind, too—but even Johnson was sceptical about the type of bridge-making Hill might provide. Instead, he answered George III's questions about him by conceding Hill's extraordinary ability—and his lack of veracity.

Whereas a bridge is a metaphor to account for activity lodged within one person who serves multiple cultures, a filter, as this book discusses, suggests what a culture *was*. The pluralistic literary and scientific cultures of the 1750s grew nowhere more swiftly in England than in London. Public settings, especially learned and experimental societies, foundations and other civic institutions, and the growth of convenient meeting points such as coffeehouses (by the 1750s numbering almost one thousand in London), helped to bring this change about. Not all sciences grew evenly: after Newton's death, physics and mathematics slowed down. Historians of science have demonstrated, more generally, the lulls in the aftermaths of towering figures, whether Newtons, James Clark Maxwells or Einsteins.<sup>54</sup>

Botany had been a gentleman's preoccupation in England during the Renaissance<sup>55</sup> when explorers brought back botanical booty from their travels. By the time Milton's *Paradise Lost* appeared in the Restoration, it became necessary to classify this abundance. Taxonomists grew active, especially in civic and university botanic gardens. Later in the seventeenth century, English taxonomer John Ray established the most elaborate and insightful classification system ever devised (he was also among the first experimental physiologists). His *Historia Plantarum* (1682) is usually regarded as the first botanical synthesis and textbook for modern botany. According to Alan Morton, Ray 'influenced both the theory and the practice of botany more decisively than any other single person in the latter half of the seventeenth century'.<sup>56</sup> But—and this is the relevant point for Hill in this book—throughout this period apothecaries, more so than physicians (of any type), were the professional group, especially in London, most closely aligned to botany.

Not, however, until the era of Pope, a generation before Hill, did botany take up the slack left by physics, as all sorts of 'gentlemanly botanists' began to botanize, gathering specimens, collecting and classifying them and writing short papers. The authors of these 'short papers' routinely submitted to the *Philosophical Transactions*, then the nation's authoritative scientific journal. Yet it was unable to adjust to the changes then occurring in the gradual transformation from dilettante to more professional science. Under Presidents Martin Folkes and George Parker (the 2nd Earl of Macclesfield), the Society languished; virtuosi and amateurs submitted their 'observations' without any rigorous system of (what we call) peer review. It was under Folkes's rule that Hill was rejected.<sup>57</sup> By the time Hill canvassed votes for election as a Fellow of the Royal Society,

the natural historians (who included botanists) composed a powerful and growing wing of the Society's membership. This shift from physics to botany positioned Hill as a bridge between different cultures forming with and without scientific ones.<sup>58</sup> And this linking of the cultures of science and non-sciences constituted a space in which Hill-the-Filter both represented his mid-Georgian society and confounded its norms.

The protocols and manners of the two groups had various types of overlap: the literati borrowed from science, especially in lexicography and linguistic studies.<sup>59</sup> But there was methodological difference in the weight put on logic and reason (scientists) compared with articulation and wit (literati) and deeper asymmetry related to disparities in patronage and preferment. Among the scientists, the hierarchy of university appointments (professors) counted for much. Linnaeus, important for understanding Hill's activities in the 1750s, was then not merely Sweden's leading scientist and Europe's too; he was also Sweden's most elevated professor in its most ancient university, Uppsala, recognized and decorated by the Crown. Recent scholarship has done much to restore women to the scientific picture, in understanding how collectors such as Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Portland, or Lady Banks were not merely acquirers but contributed, respectively, in important ways to natural history, especially conchology and entomology, and the chemistry of ceramics. The literati were less monolithically male and, despite constant resort to excluding those not educated at university, as in Hill's case, they had no clear equivalent distinctions. Examples abound from the awarding of honorary doctorates such as Samuel Johnson's Doctor of Letters at the University of Oxford, to the Professorship of Poetry, also at Oxford, founded in 1708 but with very light duties. Instead, codes of gentlemanly conduct functioned *de rigueur* as conditions for patronage. Scientists could also engage, as did the literati, in paper wars, as their *furor* with Hill demonstrated. But the risks in relation to patronage were colossal, as Hill discovered the hard way.

In patronage Hill was lucky only once, in 1757–1759, when the Earl of Bute, tutor to the Prince of Wales (the future King George III) decided Hill was the right figure for preferment. In the summer of 1757, Linnaeus sent Solander to London to tout the master's taxonomical theories and explicate them to English botanists who were slow to take them up. John Ellis, the leader of a coterie to secure the new post of naturalist at the British Museum, took up Solander's cause. Ellis was a successful linen merchant and devoted naturalist determined to advance British

natural history but dismayed when Bute gave out that he preferred Hill to Solander. Ellis' cabal did all they could to change Bute's mind but failed. Most germane for us in understanding scientific and literary cultures of the 1750s is Ellis' fusion of these different styles in manners, protocol and discursivity among natural historians—his inability to decode the subtleties. His letter to Linnaeus many years later, in 1768, is one of the era's most revealing documents extant for the two cultures then, not to mention the light it sheds on Hill's ongoing personal predicaments:

The reason he [Solander] was not introduced to the King was owing to Dr. Hill's being so great a favourite with Lord Bute: for if Sollander's [sic] merit had been known to the King, Dr. Hill must have sunk in the opinion of all persons that attend the court, as much as he is fallen in the opinion of all lovers of Botany and Natural History, on account of the little credit that is to be given to what he advances; for although he certainly has great abilities, the want of that fairness and exactness makes the world suspect him; and his writings are a mere drug.<sup>60</sup>

Ellis puts it bluntly: 'great ability' adjacent to 'the mere drug' of Hill's discursivity. No connections or amplifications are provided. How were those writings 'a mere drug'? Almost a decade later, Ellis' coterie was still chafing at Hill's successes in *both* cultures. To think Bute would reward such *discursive* deviation ('a mere drug') was one thing, despite the implicit compliment, yet Ellis carped that scientists did not write as Hill did. To imagine that such a parvenu could have risen as far with Hill's revolting manners and disregard for decency was another. But to have it as fact that Hill was already earning £2000 per annum as the highest-paid journalist in the realm was beyond Ellis' pale. Combination of the three defied his reason; Hill was living proof the two cultures had reached a transformative moment which had altered the accepted norms of ambition, competition and reward.

Another of 'Filter Hill's' talents was an uncanny ability to anticipate the new and topical in London, as many of the authors of chapters in this book demonstrate: what many were thinking but few articulating. A good example is his short treatise on hypochondriasis—known then as 'the hyp', or lowness of spirits resulting in concern for one's real or imagined maladies. Hill's was the first work on this topic addressed to a general audience.<sup>61</sup> A generation earlier, George Cheyne explicated 'hyp' in the *English Malady* (1733) as part of a larger disease cluster

he conceptualized (as did Robert Burton long before him) under the umbrella of ‘melancholy’. English physicians had written about the hyp before Hill did in 1766, especially Richard Blackmore (1725) and Nicholas Robinson (1729), as well as William Somerville in *The Hyp: A Burlesque Poem in Five Cantos* (1731).<sup>62</sup> The accepted wisdom was that the hyp’s aetiology was psychological despite plentiful somatic symptoms. Dr. Robinson had epitomized hyp this way in 1729: ‘that Disorder we call the Vapours, or Hypochondriasis; [has] no material distinctive Characters, but from what arise from the same Disease affecting different Sexes, and the Vapours in Women are term’d the hyp in Men.’<sup>63</sup> We would say a psychosomatic disorder.

Hill’s approach placed responsibility squarely on the metropolitan patient. He wrote for the non-specialist, printing the book in large font everyone could read without spectacles, and charging a nominal purchase price of only sixpence. The prose is simple without technical language and contains a fast-moving narrative that proved a page-turner. Humour abounds, as in an anecdote about Isaac Newton and Hill’s friend Dr. William Stukeley, the antiquarian and naturalist, purporting that studious types are absent-minded. Hill also promoted his own panaceas from his herbal repertoire. The opening statement loudly trumpets the main point:

To call the Hyp a fanciful malady, is ignorant and cruel. It is a real, and a sad disease; an obstruction of the spleen by thickened and distempered blood; extending itself often to the liver, and other parts; and unhappily is in England very frequent; physic scarce knows one more fertile in ill; or more difficult of cure.<sup>64</sup>

This *vade mecum* for hypochondriacs, especially in the city, contains nothing medically new apart from emphasis on the physical rather than the psychological facets. The fast-moving prose assumes more educated readers than William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine* had five years earlier (1761), yet is an accessible, even democratic read. Small surprise then that Hill’s enemy, John Ellis, lamented to Linnaeus that Hill’s ‘writings are a mere drug’.<sup>65</sup> The insult is that Hill writes *too well*—he can mesmerize audiences by stylistically drugging them. Yet *Hypochondriasis* was a sell-out, and readers in search of a general introduction to the ‘hyp’ were still buying the book in the Regency. Hill had landed on a new genre, a short introduction to a topic of pressing relevance.

Today it is no uncommon achievement to write trade books for general readers rather than peer-reviewed academic monographs, but to metropolitan mid-Georgians the trend was new and controversial, and raised many eyebrows. Historically, print culture of the 1750s was in flux, although statistical patterns and trends have not yet been definitively compiled.<sup>66</sup> It is difficult to make valid claims for Hill within this context. Yet he began to publish short works on topics of wide interest after the paper wars exhausted him; besides psychosomatic well-being, he wrote on anatomical nerves,<sup>67</sup> the human eye, the intricacies of sustaining a marriage, the upbringing of children and the management of old age.<sup>68</sup> One work stands out for its vogue among mid-Georgian readers, and—again—for peddling in a general book what Hill had earlier promoted as an apothecary: anxiety paradoxically soothes. Some explanation is necessary.

As *Fame and Fortune* brings to life, the pace of London life was accelerating so fast that many persons claimed they could not cope with its burdens. This specific lament speaks to us today within our equivalent culture of stress. Mid-Georgians were nervous, sleepless, fidgety and bilious, and they routinely came down with the ‘hyp’, as several chapters in this book demonstrate. Yet the 1750s trade in pills and potions, though vigorous, often had devastating side effects. Hill’s remedies were natural and organic and he was able to draw on his knowledge of botany, especially herbs, to develop them. Five of his remedies—valerian (a sedative to relax the nervous system and permit sleep), bardana or burdock root (used for a wide variety of medical conditions and especially for dry skin), sage (for centuries, prescribed for everything, especially fertility), water dock (a general laxative), and centaury (for digestive disorders)—made him rich, and a sixth, polypod (an ancient fern still dispensed today to ward off bacterial infection) came close. The first of his books describing panaceas was *The Virtues of Wild Valerian* (1758), followed by the virtues of honey ‘to prevent many of the worst disorders’ (1759), and then sage, water dock, centaury, polypod, as well as a book warning that tobacco could produce malignant ulcerations and cancer (1759). Successful printer of scientific books Robert Baldwin printed and published most of these works, as well as *The Hyp*, principally because they were lucrative.

It may not be apparent that the patenting of panaceas and printing of trade books forms the heart of an ordinary metropolitan apothecary’s activity.<sup>69</sup> But in mid-Georgian London, publication was becoming

ritually repetitive among medical types:<sup>70</sup> printers took on titles because earlier works on the topic had sold. Hill's contributions were less predictable because they launched out into new medical fields. For example, his treatise on *The Sleep of Plants* (1759) heralds the growing importance of sleep in a society racked by clanking noise, and achieves its soothing end through a botanical metaphor. After the 1750s, sleep swelled into a major area of concern whose mechanisms were debated by doctors and much discussed by the public in other types of didactic works, even in memoirs. Its physiology especially perplexed them. French physiologists including Descartes, Montaigne, Pascal and Diderot also debated sleep.<sup>71</sup> Then, in the 1730s, Linnaeus—who appears as a *leitmotif* throughout the essays in this book—demonstrated proof for what had long been suspected: that the withdrawal of light, not heat, caused plants to curl up and sleep. But Linnaeus' writings on this were barely known in England until Hill explicated their ideas.<sup>72</sup> Linnaeus' position was crucial: during daytime plants appear fully awake, their trefoils open, despite cold temperatures, yet remove the light at night—even on hot nights—and their leaflets fold in an erect position. At sunrise, even on frigid mornings, they open up again. For two generations, the sleep of plants intrigued philosophers and poets, as Shelley's famous poem attests.<sup>73</sup> For example, Robert Macnish (1802–1832), a reflective Scottish physician, included a chapter on the sleep of plants in his *Philosophy of Sleep* published during the Regency, noting the significance of light for the deprivation of human sleep.<sup>74</sup> Macnish, as Hill, recommended pharmaceutical remedy; if not valerian, as Hill had, then 'hyosciamus or the hop' and, if it failed, then opium. Medicine alone, he opined, could calm stressed souls. The 'confessions of opium-eaters', not merely Thomas de Quincey's later canonical disclosure, would have been less acute than they are if Hill had not prepared the way. The English public understood well why King George's III's doctors were so alarmed during their monarch's long bouts of troubled sleep.<sup>75</sup> Hill popularized the topic, made new theories accessible and offered affordable and safe remedies.

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

Given Hill's prolific, diverse and discipline-confounding works, it is impossible for one book to encompass the full range of his significance, or all the ways in which he pulled against the grain of mid-Georgian society. *Fame and Fortune* takes four broad categories—lives, literature,

public places and sciences—to advance reciprocal understanding of Hill and mid-eighteenth century London. In Part I—Lives—George Rousseau begins by revisiting *Notorious*, to explore the consequences of ambition, competition, reward, patronage, commercialism and consumption, which seemed to Hill’s contemporaries to be rapidly intensifying. Reflecting on biographical method, the framing of the subject, scope and historical difference, Rousseau suggests a new way to explain Hill’s unusual traits: through a possible—and possibly controversial—diagnosis of autism. In returning to his biography with different views, Rousseau reflects valuably on biographical ‘second thoughts’. Clare Brant maps the difficulties of Hill for biography onto paradigms of propagation, such as the propagation of heats, knowledges and lies, to explore how understandings of communal emotions and emotional communities can help explain some of the puzzles of Hill’s positioning. Emrys Jones homes in on the complex tensions in the binary opposition of friendship and enmity, and demonstrates what an illuminating case study Hill constitutes. Few topics debated by the Georgians were more frequently commented upon than the subtle nuances of friendship and enmity: John Hill’s ability to offend his erstwhile friends shows up both those norms and his peculiar adumbrations of them.

Part II focuses on literary aspects of fame and fortune. Beverly Schneller, an expert on the printer-publisher Mary Cooper, explains how printer and author formed symbiotic arrangements over long years that permitted each to survive in a cut-throat marketplace. She shows that no other writer of the period exploited Cooper’s unorthodoxies in Grub Street more than Hill. Min Wild revisits the clash between Hill and Christopher Smart, which occasioned Smart’s long mock-epic *The Hilliad*, to demonstrate how each figure adopted a perilous position: the Cambridge don who turned Grub-Street writer, and the upstart Londoner who struck out whenever it suited his purposes. Adam Rounce, also examining Hill’s literary quarrels, explores how the satirist Charles Churchill sought to take advantage of Hill’s failures as a ‘virtuoso’, a vestige of the gentleman-scientist newly imperilled in the 1760s by creeping professionalism. Julie Peakman describes Hill’s contributions to eighteenth-century erotica, a genre that played with scientific ideas about sex while also debunking them impolitely. These approaches do not exhaust Hill’s range of publication but map out future directions for exploration.

Part III deals with the public places favoured by Hill, especially spaces in the *beau monde* with which he was often associated and which he vividly described in *The Inspector*. Here, in fashionable society, every examining eye scrutinized class, politeness and sociability. The slippage of Hill's intermix frames the three essays in this section. Markman Ellis describes the centrality of coffeehouses in this reciprocity of man and place; through cliques situated in their dimly-lit booths, perceived norms of sociable behaviour were tested. Ellis observes that 'Hill's career ... is an unusually sensitive barometer for coffeehouse sociability in the polite world.' Analysing individual and group self-fashioning, Ellis substantiates how 'coffeehouses were also places of conspicuous public display, in which public and self-determined versions of the self could be developed and acted out'. George Rousseau next turns to the theatre, one of the most important types of public space in mid-Georgian London, to trace how the doctor-as-man-of-letters fashioned himself on the public stage where Hill, paradoxically, rarely acted. What Hill could not accomplish as player he achieved as author of *The Actor* (1750), a treatise on dramaturgy incorporating medical theory that deserves far more attention than it has received. Chris Ewers rounds out this Part by demonstrating how crucial new forms of space and mobility were to these self-fashionings. Different kinds of space, which are also defined by speed of motion, outline a post-Habermas public sphere beyond coffeehouse sociability: Hill's *Inspector* creates an urban ecology which enlarges peripheries, expands perceptions and increases readership, through relating outer and interior spaces to show the inexhaustible dynamic of the city.

In Part IV, *Fame and Fortune* focuses on two of the sciences to which Hill assiduously applied himself: botany and geology. Chris Duffin explains Hill's importance in geology, and Brent Elliott assesses his contribution to botany; both explain where he was original and why he was unable to be more innovative or influential. One important argument of this section is that, if Hill remains a figure of the second rank, then figures of the second rank nevertheless do important work propping up the first rank. The only world-class botanist of the era was Linnaeus. But the introduction of his thought into England cannot be unravelled without understanding Hill's role. Sarah Easterby-Smith further disentangles the botanical stakes by demonstrating how competitive the botanical public sphere had become by the 1760s. She makes a case for Hill's modesty among botanists and herb sellers with whom he interacted. As she comments, 'He, too, embedded his natural competitiveness within claims to

scholarly erudition, distinguishing himself from others by asserting his claim to botanical authority rather than by engaging in more underhand commercial competition.’ Natural history brought out a gentler side of Hill that rarely surfaced in his Grub Street wars.

We can imagine additional contexts than these to configure the new form of fame and fortune that consumed and often perplexed Londoners at mid-century. Our hope is that we have provided readers, especially those relatively new to mid-Georgian London, with some sense of its public faces. As George Rousseau observes of Hill’s role in these developments: ‘Historical figures as filters are not recognizable historical categories, not even when they emerge from the eighteenth century, and they require deftness to vivify; a further reason why self and celebrity, fame and fortune, are labels in need of clarification and refinement when they attach to him.’ Towards that goal this book is in large part dedicated.

## NOTES

1. For example, in the *TLS*; see Erekat (2013).
2. Allen (2013).
3. For example, at the University of Oxford’s TORCH programme. See Rousseau (2013) and <http://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/celebrity-rousseau>
4. Important reevaluation has nevertheless occurred in McLynn (2004); Byrd (1982) earlier called attention to the importance of the mid-Georgian period.
5. Many books on these topics have appeared since London historian Hugh Phillips wrote: see Phillips (1951, 1964), White (2013). A useful source published during the Regency is Malcolm (1808). H.B. Wheatley’s panopticon survey published before the Great War provided the first half of the twentieth century with its sense of that decade; see Wheatley (1909). A.S. Turberville (1952) did so to a lesser extent for the post-war period after 1945.
6. See Beasley (1982), Harris (1993), Sitter (1982).
7. For Hill’s warning of the moral implications of the earthquake tremors, see Rousseau (1968).
8. Roy Porter made an eloquent case for Hill’s role in geology’s development in Porter (1977).
9. The 1730s was a formative decade for this development, which gathered momentum during the next three decades; see Rousseau (2004).
10. See pp. 10–11.

11. See p. 67.
12. See Edwards and Ramsey (1961), for the case for the 1760s. Others start with the 1750s as the new marker; see Brewer (1986), Crawford (2001). Useful analysis of these decades is found in Gatrell (2006), Rogers (2012), Hitchcock and Shoemaker (2015); for the literary aspects, see Sitter (1982), Keymer and Mee (2004).
13. See Clarke (2016).
14. Hill attempted to ruin Smollett's literary career by printing the 'genuine memoirs' of Lady Vane two weeks before the appearance of *Peregrine Pickle*; see Smollett in Zomchick et al. (2014).
15. Carlile (2011) reiterates the point that female novelists did not have the clout of male novelists; Jerry Beasley (1982) made a similar claim for the 1740s.
16. See Hill (1762).
17. See Shawe-Taylor (2009). Saussure wrote in French and his 'travel letters' were not translated into English until the late nineteenth century.
18. Oliver Goldsmith, *Essays*, London: W. Griffin, 1765; Essay IV, 17.
19. See *The Adventurer*, 2nd edition, 4 vols, London: J. Payne 1754, Vol. 2 (No. 65) 248.
20. For its domestic democratisation, see McKeon (2005).
21. Sheila O'Connell, *London 1753* (London: The British Museum Press, 2003), 195–196.
22. For further discussion of this plate, see Rousseau (2012), 153–155.
23. *Ibid.*, 154.
24. O'Connell (2003), 219.
25. Quearmode (1750), 5–6.
26. Anonymous [1755], 53.
27. See Hughes (1987).
28. Martin Rowson (2007), 'Piss, Shit and Blood', *New Humanist* 18 (July); <https://newhumanist.org.uk/articles/1519/piss-shit-and-blood>
29. McLynn, 2–3.
30. Rogers (2012), 133; see also pp. 131–157, 'Tackling the Gin Craze'.
31. *LPH* (1982), 43–45.
32. See Gatrell (2013).
33. Johnson (1738), II, 182–183.
34. Rousseau (2012), 109.
35. *Ibid.*, 109.
36. Gatrell (2013), xi.
37. London: Printed for the Author and sold by T. Legg [1755].
38. Steedman (2013), 43.
39. *Ibid.*, 49.

40. A propensity that puzzled George Rousseau when writing Rousseau (2012); new research indicating that autistic types eschew alcohol had not yet been published. See Dryden (2014).
41. Rousseau (2012), 250.
42. Browne neither appears in any biographical dictionary, nor in secondary works on eighteenth-century crime; see McLynn (1991), Durston (2012). Betty Rizzo did not publish her research on Browne but sent George Rousseau a copy utilized in the chapter 'Riot at Ranelagh' in Rousseau (2012), 140–147. Rizzo and Rousseau both concluded that apart from Hill's hitting out at 'Clody' as 'empty-headed', the paper wars were the most likely source for Browne's public assault.
43. See *LDA* and Rousseau (2012), 143–144, for further details.
44. See Coke and Borg (2011).
45. *London Gazette* (9 May 1752), 3.
46. For example Clark (1982). Politics, local and national, is the one area in which Hill contributed nothing to the decade; and no matter to what degree he was a 'filter' for the age, a window to what his culture was becoming, it was not in political realms, unless personal patronage is construed as influential in, and intrinsic to, political development.
47. In his study of English quacks and fakers during the period, Roy Porter calls Hill an 'empiric', not a 'quack'; see Porter (2003), 111–112, 244.
48. See Fred Inglis (2010).
49. All made fundamental theoretical contributions except Radcliffe who was a hands-on society physician, even to the royalty of England.
50. For Filter Hill, see pp. 43–46, 56 n6.
51. If chronic gout had not debilitated Hill by 1760, his career would have continued as vigorously as it had in the 1750s. It was gout, not ferocious animosity, which impeded him.
52. Margaret MacMillan has arranged history's characters into more recognisably modern types: persuaders, darers, observers, those driven by curiosity and those by hubris. Even darer and hubris do not quite describe Hill, although the degree to which he was a free agent rather than puppet of his times is one of this book's subjects. See MacMillan (2015).
53. For Johnson's views, see Schwartz (1971).
54. See Gribbin (2002).
55. Eighteenth-century physician and botanist Richard Pulteney surveyed many of them in Pulteney (1790).
56. See Morton (1981), 94.
57. No recent book such as Weatherall and Library (2000) exists for the earlier period; see Rousseau (2012), 80–83; see also Miller (1989), Sorrenson (1996, 1999).
58. For comments on the shifts, see Jacob (1997), Gaukroger (2010).

59. William Wimsatt studied some of the differences in Wimsatt (1948).
60. See *LPH* 151, for the full text.
61. See Hill (1766). The only modern edition with annotations is by George Rousseau; see Hill and Rousseau (1969). The ‘hyp’ had been configured in the seventeenth century as the male version of female hysteria (i.e., requiring a womb) but, by the mid-eighteenth century, it was understood to afflict *both* sexes.
62. See Blackmore (1725) and Robinson (1729). The ‘hyp’ became a major topic among Romantic writers; see Reid (1821) who cites Hill’s treatise.
63. Quoted in Hill and Rousseau (2012) iv.
64. See Hill (1766), 3.
65. Quoted and discussed in Rousseau (2012) 223–224.
66. The best approximation is Raven (2014).
67. See Rousseau (2004).
68. See Hill (1758).
69. Hill patented his; for more detail about his patents, see Rousseau (2012), 305–308.
70. Essential to note how the term ‘publication’ is used here: broadly, widely, encompassing all medical types because they were then not yet separated in ways in the nineteenth century.
71. Summed up in Diderot’s famous article on sleep in the *Encyclopédie*, which Hill may have read, and in which Diderot analyses puzzlement over the perception that persons asleep often imagine themselves to be eating. See Fowler (2011).
72. See Hill (1757).
73. Percy Bysshe Shelley, ‘The Sensitive Plant’ (1820).
74. See Macnish (1830).
75. Macnish comments on many aspects of troubled sleep, as well as Linnaeus’ relation to sleep in the 1750s; see *ibid.*, 47 and 164.

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**George Rousseau** was the Regius Professor of English at King's College, Aberdeen, having previously held professorships at Harvard, UCLA, and, in Oxford, where he was the Co-Director of the Oxford University Centre for the History of Childhood until his retirement in 2013. His life of Hill, the first ever full-length biography, entitled *The Notorious Sir John Hill: The Man Destroyed by Ambition in the Age of Celebrity* (2012), was shortlisted for the Annabelle Jenkins Biography Prize of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

PART I

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# Hill and Lives

# The Biographer's Tale: Second Thoughts About 'Filter Hill'

*George Rousseau*

## THEORY RESISTING BIOGRAPHY

Most biographers, even those writing the *first life* of a subject, rarely get the opportunity to publish 'second thoughts'.<sup>1</sup> Those who do are best served by revisiting their main assumptions rather than the *petit* facts and fictions constituting the biographical subject, the bolts and hinges rather than bricks and mortar of their scholarly edifice. I mean the figure's fundamental pulse, the unfocused portions of the historical and sociopolitical context, and the omissions sufficiently consequential to derail the biography's fault lines. How to explain this bundle of energy and contradictions called John Hill and situate him during his decade of notoriety in the 1750s?

*Notorious* was the keyword by which I conceptualized Hill before I titled my biography. I would make four adjustments to it now, and also confirm I do not believe in 'definitive biography' as a valid first principle, as well as reiterate that, as I wrote, theory never lay far from the tip of my imagination:

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- historical theory in the revolution then occurring in the way civil societies function (the transformations from the world imagined by Locke and Shaftesbury to Hume and Adam Smith);
- social theory as it touched on developing manners and morals then being consolidated and codified by thinkers such as Addison, Steele, Shaftesbury, Johnson and Hume, as well as the main English poets and novelists;
- post-Lockean psychological theory at mid-century being challenged by newer Humean and anti-Humean notions of personhood and selfhood;
- scientific theory in the developing professions (medicine and other sciences) as it touched on the natural world in which Hill moved.

In *Notorious*, I selected a chronological structure, the one I imagined readers in search of ‘facts’ needed, but I also favour theoretical clusters in a second revaluation. One reason pertains to Hill’s type of *self*—not the stereotypic dunce imagined by Pope and all manner of Scriblerians a generation earlier, but the more outrageous Hill who practically went ‘viral’ at mid-century.<sup>2</sup> Cibber, Theobald, Bentley and Warburton displayed excessive characteristics in pedagogy or pretension, which made them natural fodder for Pope’s lampooning engine.<sup>3</sup> But Hill’s profile was different: part chancer, part opportunist, part tough-skinned rogue, he was also immensely able, hard-working and willing to strike out in several fields. The amalgam is difficult to assess and challenging to describe. I selected ‘notoriety’ and would again, in a second attempt, because I believed Hill sought celebrity more than anything. Yet, celebrity hurled him to the edges of polite society at mid-century. When I wrote *Notorious* (2009–2012), celebrity culture had not yet been constituted as an academic sub-discipline; it has swelled into a major preoccupation of diverse sorts of *dix-huitièmistes* in just one decade.<sup>4</sup>

Historian Herbert Butterfield’s injunction about the Whig interpretation of history—writing history with one eye on the present—was always with me despite its perils.<sup>5</sup> This was one reason I said so little about Hill’s posthumous reputation: the generational interstices of 1775 (when he died) and 1800 (the new century), or 1837 (the Victorian reclamation of the prior century), were lesser markers than the 1750s abutting 2000, when past and present began to coalesce in striking ways enumerated later. I was trying to demonstrate that Hill’s value to posterity was as a *filter* or a lens through which posterity could

view his contemporaries, rather than the newly discovered figure in his own right.<sup>6</sup> Hill can be reclaimed for eighteenth-century studies along lines exceeding one discipline: he is relevant to literature, science, medicine, the public sphere at mid-century. A filter, or lens, can only be perceived by historians in possession of the *whole* panorama—the whole eighteenth century, the broad English and European Enlightenment in all its complexity—or, as Smollett called it in 1753 referring to the form of the developing novel, by drawing a 'large diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life' rather than a narrowly-drawn canvas with selected types.<sup>7</sup> Hill, properly reconstructed, reflects crucial integuments of the mid-Georgian metropolitan public sphere, in Jürgen Habermas' famous phrase. The 'public sphere' is, of course, a metaphor suggesting borders and boundaries, insides and outsides. This positioning of himself—within and without—is, in part, what makes Hill such a slippery figure. No other English figure demonstrates, for example, Grub Street's developing factions and tribalism at mid-century so well. More drastically, Christopher Smart's excoriation of Hill in *The Hilliad* captured the changes that had developed between the 1720s milieu of Pope's attacks on the dunces and Smart's on Hill in the 1750s. One difference was privilege: Smart was no Pope but his excoriation of Hill speaks for Everyman, when viewed in Georgian contexts, in ways Pope's aloof voice exuding the confidence of privilege never imagined.

I ought to have said more in *Notorious* about *Hill-the-filter* than I did. Where else, for instance, can puffery of Hill's ingenious varieties be found? He published anonymously, often under aliases, then savaged his own work to puff it further; attack followed attack until the public was cajoled into thinking a furore was raging, never imagining it was manufactured by Hill. His activities in non-literary fields were also legion. The point is not that Hill was a polymath (despite displaying behaviours and knowledge that qualify him),<sup>8</sup> but that his activities in diverse arts and sciences shed light on how those professions were solidifying. A century earlier you could engage in both the arts and sciences without disparagement, as John Evelyn, Thomas Browne, John Locke and others did.<sup>9</sup> But during Hill's maturity in the 1750s it was becoming more difficult and aroused suspicion.<sup>10</sup> Few mid-Georgians can compete with Hill's diversity and ambition; hence, he belongs to the cultural and social contexts of the eighteenth century more robustly than merely to the realms of biography and literary analysis.

Further, along the lines of *filter* and *lens* I ought to have pursued Hill's role as *enabler*: the ground he prepared for future development. I proceeded chronologically forwards, as most biographers do, asking how he arrived at point B from A, but rarely gazing backwards from the vantage of a generation or two afterwards, and inquiring whether he played any role in shaping the future. Contemporary celebrity studies (more or less) retain the notion that, in England, Byron was the formative figure for transforming the 'birth of celebrity',<sup>11</sup> in the company of celebrated late eighteenth-century actors, while also maintaining that, in diverse walks of life, others were enacting roles to make the Byronic phenomenon possible: Garrick and Siddons and a host of other actors on the English stage, Reynolds and Gainsborough in painting, Newton and Sir Joseph Banks in science.<sup>12</sup> Little wonder then that Johnson had the idea at this time to form a 'Club' limited to one figure selected as the best-known representative—'celebrity'—from each field.<sup>13</sup> Charles Burney, the important Georgian musicologist who was later elected a member, wrote that Johnson aimed to form a group 'composed of the heads of every liberal and literary profession' and 'have somebody to refer to in our doubts and discussions, by whose Science we might be enlightened'.<sup>14</sup> The first club of seven members began to dine in 1764 at the Turk's Head Inn in Gerrard Street, Soho—a short walk from Hill's lodgings on the other side of what is now Regent Street. It is no accident that these advancements occurred early in the second half of the eighteenth century: the 1750s was a crucial decade in this formation and it was then that Hill-the-filter reflected what modern life was becoming (Fig. 1). Such developments in London, the principal site of the evolving geography of celebrity, means this culture needs to be rethought. But the relation of celebrity to self, celebrity to personhood, has remained ancillary; notoriety and selfhood (which extends beyond self) even more procrustean and under-developed.<sup>15</sup> Hill's character was grounded in ambition and drive, his inherent talent and native brilliance considerable, his moral fibre astonishingly absent despite devotion to his wife and children (he was a devoted husband and father to many children, and his wife Henrietta Ranelagh was loyal to him long after his death).<sup>16</sup> Physically, he was thin, gangling, about six feet tall and of generally strong constitution until broken by years of toil. He enjoyed good health until gout racked him and imposed its common co-factor in cardiac arrest, after which onset he markedly aged. He was psychologically burned out by his mid-fifties when he returned to Bayswater,



Fig. 1 'The Bedford Coffee House, Covent Garden, in the early 1760s'. Courtesy of Look and Learn/Peter Jackson collection

then consisting of countryside, meadows and fields abutting Kensington Palace; rarely travelling, he grew plants and sold them in England and abroad through agents. These unassailable facts stand, but the psycho-historical and psychoanalytical components of the composite picture in *Notorious* need to be calibrated; specifically, Hill's raw relations with others, the psychomedical facets of his competitive make-up, his own inflated sense of the niche he occupied locally and in the larger world, and his mind set as an amalgam of (in our presentist terms) narcissism and self-delusion.

The contradictions of his psychological nature are sundry. I offered little analysis in *Notorious* beyond speculating about Hill's hypomania (abnormal energy), intellectual promiscuity (runaway curiosity feeding into his versions of polymathy), and borderline personality defects. More recently, I have become persuaded that Hill was autistic.<sup>17</sup> His disregard for others, the refusal ever to make amends or step back, his inability

to read the social codes of his time, the radical failure to understand what constituted appropriate behaviour within the norms of his society: these and other lapses put flesh on the autistic temperament. Other diagnoses—Asperger’s, modern attention disorders such as ASD, an exorbitant libido sublimed into intellectual pursuits—are much less compelling.<sup>18</sup> Even if Hill’s place on an autistic spectrum is difficult to fix, a reading of him as autistic to some degree helps explain why Hill baffled his contemporaries in ways that Pope’s dunces of the 1720s and 1740s never did.

How else can one account for Hill’s precocity, his inability to decipher others’ responses, his rebuttals of criticism, and the quasi-solipsistic mental universe in which he operated? Even today, when autistic types have been finely honed, the border between autism and similar conditions is prone to slippage. Autistic-Hill shares some features with Asperger’s-Hill: the principal feature is the apposite nature of the approximate diagnosis cluster. The labelling of autistic persons in history is, of course, perilous and rarely a matter of ironclad proof. Nevertheless, persuasive cases have been launched for figures ranging from Michelangelo, Newton and Mozart, to Einstein, English quantum physicist Paul Dirac and computer scientist Alan Turing.<sup>19</sup> Further thought about Hill steers me in the direction of autism, and if I were rewriting *Notorious* I would marshal the available evidence to substantiate an autism diagnosis.

### BIOGRAPHY AS CONTAINER AND FRAME

During the 1990s, I struggled to find a frame for Hill. ‘Notorious’ seemed the most suitable term to fit Hill and place him in his wide sprawling historical context of metropolitan London life at mid-century.<sup>20</sup> The imaginary retorts I heard in my head—for example, that Hill might not be not worth the effort—ultimately depend on intuition, the internal censor all scholars rely on even when its teaching is never iterated. You need frames and models for any inquiry, and I had chased Hill for many decades on the (again, intuitive) assumption the pursuit would lead to something *beyond the man*. This ‘something’ was eventually crystallized into (for lack of a better noun) the ‘filter’, the Hill who reflects and sheds light on formative decades in the middle of the century. I tried polymathic Hill, dishonest Hill, eccentric Hill, filter Hill, unethical Hill, ruthless Hill: he was all these but none captured in isolation was satisfactory, neither did it advance the filter or lens. An anonymous satirical

print of 1753—'LUSUS NATURAE, or carracaturas of the present age'<sup>21</sup>—crystalized my research around notoriety. The print suggests that, however bewildered contemporaries were about Hill, they situated him among 'leading lights' of the age, in company with Johnson, Chesterfield, Cumberland, Lord Lyttelton and others.

Did the print include Hill simply because he had recently vindicated Mary Squires from Elizabeth Canning's outrageous claims of kidnapping?<sup>22</sup> Hill was not infamous in the criminal sense: he was never charged with fraud, never arrested, involved in legal suits or sent to jail, and he escaped debts. He appeared in 'Lusus' for overachievement not a lack of it. Each 'carracatura' in 'Lusus Naturae' *performs* stardom rather than merely represents it; otherwise the caricaturist would have served up a series of distorted portraits or grotesque representations in the manner of Hogarth and Rowlandson.<sup>23</sup> The 1750s were, of course, studded with famous personalities, not in the older sense of 'lives of the celebrated' (for merit or morals) but for their ability to mesmerize the public.<sup>24</sup> It was unthinkable that the Royal Society would not summon Mozart the *wunderkind* as a child of seven *to perform* before them, not merely display him as if an object in a Cabinet of Curiosities, or, at the decade's end, unimaginable that the Great and Good of fashionable London would not summon Laurence Sterne into their salons to see for themselves the eccentric parson from Coxwold.<sup>25</sup> Historians Lorraine Daston and Katherine Parks have made a case in *Wonder and the Order of Nature* that the mid-eighteenth century marked the end of 'miracle culture' and the start of a new demand for 'objectivity' as evidence in all empirical inquiry.<sup>26</sup> They see the 1750s as a significant period in this process. Similarly, Hill also signified the end of a long wave and the start of something else. I observed this in *Notorious*, but perhaps too tenuously, and I omitted to discuss the discrete activities of filtering and acquiring notoriety, as well as the further step from notoriety to celebrity as configured from Byron forwards (Fig. 2). This historical 'something else' also sheds light on the way celebrity is currently being configured in academia.<sup>27</sup> And I predict that when the new celebrity studies have run their course—perhaps in a generation—its mid-Georgian phase will find it impossible to omit 'Notorious Hill'.

Those recently acknowledged as 'notorious' (here surfaces the Whig interpretation of this trajectory) have been *notorious-for-something-outrageous*: an action, a position held, a political stance (Donald Trump going viral in 2015 to win the Republican nomination and presidency in America),



**Fig. 2** ‘A General Prospect of Vaux Hall Gardens, Shewing at one View the disposition of the whole Gardens’. Engraving by Johann Sebastian Müller after Samuel Wale, 1751. Courtesy of David Coke collection

or the late American doyen of letters and paragon of the rich, Gore Vidal, deemed notorious by virtue of conjuring bitchier bites about people than anyone else in his generation.<sup>28</sup> But many of the notorious are insiders; Hill, by contrast, was never an ‘inside’ figure. The last chapter of *Notorious*, which I titled ‘Forgotten Hill’, inquired why the *Vegetable System*, for example, was so rarely consulted and why no British botanist applied the idiosyncratic taxonomic system used there.<sup>29</sup> Yet, even Hill’s outsiderdom was tangential to his nefarious activities because he possessed no fixed centre: neither he nor his audience of readers and followers, then and now, has a defined constituency. Today, they are primarily academics among whom very little of Hill is read. Contrast this to contemporary scandalous figures who cut remarkable figures in the press and media, but attract little interest elsewhere other than as curiosities. Hill does not feel like anyone else in the 1750s. He seems to reach out to disparate and far-flung constituencies as if he were, more appropriately, a figure within the history of monsters, freaks and eccentrics.<sup>30</sup> As mid-Georgian herbalist, Hill was almost *non pareil* for his approach to the activity and the way he organized his life as herbalist;<sup>31</sup>



**Fig. 3** 'View of St. James's Square', c. 1752, by J. Bowles, from *Survey of London: Volumes 29 and 30, St. James Westminster, Part 1*, ed. F.H.W. Sheppard (London, 1960), Plate 130. Courtesy of British History Online

but this same herbalist rode out in his coach-and-six decked out in golden cane, white gloves and fine furs, then entertained lavishly in his accommodations in St. James's Square where he removed himself and family for the most calculated of reasons. High society and grandiose houses such as Norfolk House located at number 31 in the southeast corner of the square (Fig. 3)—where Princess Augusta Saxe-Gotha (mother of the future King George III) lived throughout the 1750s, with its music rooms and concert salons, leading into the grandeur of Pall Mall—provided the environment Hill craved to cut the fashionable figure he imagined himself as.<sup>32</sup> Hill himself paid the large sums involved for this life of display; he threw everything he made from booksellers into ostentation.<sup>33</sup> Celebrity and glamour (although the word was not yet used in our sense) were already being paired and, to these, Hill added his inimitable notoriety.

At this nexus of celebrity and the public sphere Hill demonstrates what was at stake in eighteenth-century modernity. This developing culture was composed of buyers, consumers, critics and readers clamouring for attention and profit, as well as people struggling to authenticate

their ideals of sincerity and sociability and intimacy. Sociability was paramount in the 1750s and extended to many forms in the public sphere, even to more recondite realms where groups of people collaborated and interacted with each other as if engaging in extended forms of distributed cognition. Filter Hill was active in several, especially in developing commercial markets relevant to his activities. He appeared to relish one group as much as another, moving equally confidently among Grub Street wits and serious botanical Linnaeans. Part of the difficulty in affirming that Hill represented the *end* of something and *beginning* of another is that he beavered away in so many areas: for these reasons, *Enlightenment Man in the Republic of Letters* is misleading and hazardously eclectic; *borderline* personality *type* too blatantly presentist and psychoanalytical; *eccentric* too oblique to describe the selfhood he inhabited.<sup>34</sup> One might do better, as I attempt here, to reconstruct him in parallel with the biography of a *decade*, the 1750s, a formative moment of modernity.<sup>35</sup>

Biographies of years and decades can be illuminating despite shortcomings. Recently, two prominent historians, Sheehan and Wahrman, compiled a ‘Tour through the Fifties’ in their study of the philosophies of eighteenth-century self-organization, and a third historian, Frank McLynn, has written a full-length biography of the year 1759, contending that ‘Although 1759 is not a date so well known in British history as 1215, 1588, 1688, there is a strong case to be made that it is the most significant year since 1066. ... In 1759—the fourth of the Seven Years War—the British defeated the French in arduous campaigns on four continents and also achieved absolute mastery of the seas’.<sup>36</sup> Hill’s seeds crossed the Atlantic many times but he never ventured across those oceans.<sup>37</sup> The decade’s growing confidence enthused its most ambitious persons, whether in Britain or abroad, and the national mood of the 1750s contributed something pivotal to the possibility of the filter phenomenon he represented. Sheehan and Wahrman seize on the 1720s and 1770s as equally transformative moments in the consolidation of the philosophical principles of Enlightenment.<sup>38</sup> During their ‘tour’ of the 1750s, they concede: ‘there is nothing we can see taking place in the 1750s that made this decade more susceptible to self-organization than the years before or after. Yet the voices in the following pages demonstrate well ... the breadth of self-organization by the middle of the eighteenth century.’ And you could say the same for some of the threads in

the rise of fame and fortune: in many, Hill's life and works demonstrate what was at stake.

The most striking aspect of Sheehan and Wahrman's ten representative figures and works (one selected for each year of the decade), is not the figure but the *range* of appearances: mainline to minor, metropolitan to remote rural, south to north, culled from every walk of life. Samuel Johnson appears in two different years and novelist-playwright Henry Fielding in one, for the formally subversive *Amelia*, while the obscure James Burgh, a schoolmaster and English miscellaneous writer, who was born and died in identical years to Hill (1714–1775), appears for a philosophical work on the dignity of human nature (1754).<sup>39</sup> Their 1750s tour aims to 'provide some texture for the spectrum of possible forms that the language of self-organization could take in mid-eighteenth century Britain.'<sup>40</sup> A similar goal can be reached for the configuration of fame and fortune, provided Hill is visible as a filter and it is recognized that there was a reciprocal relationship between Hill and the newly-emerging culture of London in the 1750s, one in which a humble Northamptonshire lad could be elevated to 'Sir John' by the end of his life. If Hill and the 1750s are connected, the result is an enhanced understanding of life in metropolitan London and its enabling forces.

The relationship between man and decade is perhaps nowhere more palpable than in mid-Georgian metropolitan daily life, tensions and anxieties, domestic arrangements and political practices, even smells and sounds. The 'confidence' McLynn situates as the result of naval supremacy filters down to Hill especially during his *annus mirabilis* in 1758–1759, when the *arriviste* no longer feels like a parvenu in search of a patron. By 1757, Hill had a patron, the beginnings of a *magnum opus* (*The Vegetable System* in 26 projected volumes) and a loyal wife in Lady Hill who bore him children almost at the rate of one per year. It was the culmination of a triumphant decade for *both* man *and* country in the ways McLynn describes, and the likes of which neither would soon see again: Hill's gout began to deracinate him shortly afterwards, and English conquests over the French in North America and India soon led to the loss of those colonies. It was a decade of exuberance for man and country, and a peak of energy for London.

Fame and notoriety in the 1750s also had something new in their coalescence. Imagine Hill lambasting the Royal Society not at mid-century, but a generation earlier when Swift penned *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), supposedly written by one 'Captain Lemuel Gulliver' who had no intention of being elected a Fellow. Swift, too, was an outsider who aimed

to ridicule the Society's publications.<sup>41</sup> After Swift's authorship became public knowledge there was no repercussion from the Royal Society whereas, in a flash, Hill became the Society's chief bête noir. Hill's reputation after the fiasco crippled his relation to conventional, mainstream booksellers, but he was not seen as a villain by the rest of London high society.<sup>42</sup> He was never farther than a couple of miles from Piccadilly, anything but camouflaged, hardly incognito ('the Inspector misses nothing', he claimed in one of his editorials, neither does anyone fail to recognize him),<sup>43</sup> nor did he attempt to disguise his authorship of works after his clash with the Royal Society, except when puffing himself (reviewing his own works, reviewing those reviews ad nauseam). When the 1750s commenced, Hill was 36, practically broke, widowed, parading with prostitutes, compelled to churn out words and push potions to support himself, forever searching for a patron. Spurned by science and respectable printers, he took his considerable belletristic talent underground. In the process, he became a filter of the decade's multiple anxieties. Historical figures as filters are not always immediately recognizable, and they require deftness to vivify, a further reason why self and celebrity, fame and fortune, are labels in need of clarification and refinement when they attach to Hill.

#### FAME AND CELEBRITY IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Leo Braudy's massive study *The Frenzy of Renown* has *Fame and its History* as its subtitle. His sweeping compilation tracing figures and fortunes from the Greeks to the present expends much energy distinguishing between the 'celebrated' and 'famous', yet the 'notorious' are only mentioned in passing.<sup>44</sup> Paving the way for celebrity studies, Braudy breaks fresh ground for 'Notorious Hill':

The eighteenth century begins the beginning of an international European fame culture in which an enormous variety of new social, economic, and political groups use the expanded powers of media to press themselves and their individual members into the vacuum of cultural authority, challenging the monarchies and aristocracies that had previously been the sole custodians of such singularity. ... Praise me because I am unique, but praise me as well because my uniqueness is only a more intense and more public version of your own.<sup>45</sup>

This new celebrity thrived on exteriors: visual, putative, published, rumoured, on display. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, shaping these developments across the Channel, wanted to be loved and recognized for his true self—in Braudy's words, for the man he really *is*. Yet, ironically, in this monumental shift in fame Hill defies the norms: his inside and outside were so well camouflaged no one could possibly guess who he really was. This is no contradiction to the previous point about flamboyantly parading himself in public, in fine clothes and a distinctive coach. The 'inside and outside' designated in Braudy's new configuration of fame à la Rousseau was pre-eminently psychological. Hill's celebrity in the 1750s, in contrast, was based on affectation and bravado. The 'rhyming apothecary', as he was known when he first came up to London, turned swaggering 'Inspector'.<sup>46</sup> If the new fame depended exclusively, as Braudy suggests, on a culture of recognition wherein visibility through publicity is the goal, then fame attained through honour and merit lost its former valence. It was sufficient to be well-known, as Hill was.

Compounding this inversion were the diverse contexts to which Hill belonged. Notoriety usually needs a single *field*, and Hill had many. This proliferation of fields made him a difficult subject for a biography. A chapter on Hill as active in the charlatan world, for instance, aimed to situate his early life within the diverse metropolitan milieu of the 1740s.<sup>47</sup> Surviving caricatures reveal Hill dressed as a 'foreign empiric' dancing on wooden makeshift stages, dramatically describing his pills and potions in rhymed verse. Once he began to publish scientific works (*Theophrastus*) and routinely appear in Grub Street (with bookseller Ralph Griffiths, as editor of the *British Magazine*), his niche in that prior world of spectacle dwindled (and, by mid-century, empirics had been marginalized by qualified physicians). Charlatantry survived as a possible route to notoriety in the new celebrity culture, especially if it involved animals—the 'Learned English Dog', paraded as 'a scholar and modern Pythagoras', was a London sensation during the 1750s, mentioned in 'The Inspector'.<sup>48</sup> Less beastly, Charlotte Charke, the actress turned transvestite, became as notorious for her different vocations as her male costumes worn in public. Itinerant criers still roamed London streets during the decade like the more stately 'Inspector', selling their wares and making themselves known to a public eager to purchase their goods. Hill should be situated among these denizens, too, provided we do not imagine his 'fame' as limited to these contexts.

## THE NOTORIOUS SELF

It is crucial to construe Hill's public persona accurately if we hope to relate him persuasively to his mid-Georgian metropolitan contexts. Designations of fraud or imposter did not attach themselves to him even when he was involved in the murk around Elizabeth Canning;<sup>49</sup> the confusion was over his humble origins, abilities, education, connections, patronage and the large number of strings to his bow. Perhaps this quest for precision of the persona propelled King George III in 1767 to ask Johnson what he thought of Hill when the 'Great Cham of Literature' was using the library in Leicester House.<sup>50</sup> The question put to Johnson was straightforward: why was everyone was talking about Hill? Johnson replied that Hill would have amounted to a very considerable person (he was still very much alive in 1767) if he had said nothing more than what he knew to be *true*. Johnson's verdict is apt. But Hill was not the proverbial liar. Had he confined himself to one-tenth of his endeavours or wrote *only* what he knew to be true, he would never have become notorious. Charles Burney's verdict, in a letter to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was that Hill was the ablest botanist of the century who never fulfilled his promise.<sup>51</sup> Hill's polymathy was integrally part of what made him suspect.

A biographer's *second thoughts* depend on whether his or her biography has been the *first* biography of the subject. Yet, even if it is revisionary, a second biography has different hurdles from the first. Biographers soaked in an epoch may mull over the era as much as the figure (Hill); my second assessment in the light of fame engages with both equally. I would speculate about Hill's alter ego—did he reflect on who he wanted to be?—and am anxious that I may not be asking pertinent questions. Hill sought absolute success and craved celebrity as if it were wealth in a literal sense—a literalist component of his temperament, which is compatible with a diagnosis of autism.<sup>52</sup> My further thoughts also extend to the belletristic canon. In *Notorious*, I should have emphasized more the degree to which he entangled himself with Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, Johnson, Smart, Sterne: his antagonisms had a pattern. Hill-as-filter will not explain his place in botany or geology or medicine or microscopy so straightforwardly, but 'Filter Hill' remains his main achievement if the aim is greater understanding of metropolitan London society at mid-century.

*Notorious* grappled with the challenge of defining the biographical subject's selfhood, or personhood, and it slowed my progress.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, the issue was not psychological but sociopolitical: to what degree he was the product of his times and, if so, how mid-Georgian London would be more germane towards an understanding of him than psychological selfhood. It was impossible to address a notorious Hill without invoking notions proximate to essential selfhood: character, temperament and life circumstance. The Hill of *Notorious*—hyperactive, pert, protean, ambitious, gifted, ruthless and unable to interpret social codes and protocols—remains essential Hill in my view, but not the further inference that one of these qualities constitutes his essential personhood.

Childhood is a staple of biography, and can help explain adult drives. Regrettably little is known about Hill's parents. His father Theophilus was more influential on John than *Notorious* suggested. A stoic Anglican vicar, well-read in the classics and medicine, he taught his son to read Greek and Latin, and opened his library of around two hundred books to him. He also instilled fear of the demons of luxury and opulence, against which Hill rebelled. The contrasts of father and son exceed these differences, but there is a lack of primary evidence. What is known, as I explained in *Notorious*, is that Theophilus bought his second son an apprenticeship to a London apothecary (which Hill abandoned) and that Hill ran away with itinerant actors while still an adolescent. Hill's mother is shadowy and nothing survives about his relation to his siblings apart from the distance he kept in maturity from his brother. How, then, to account for his defects and excesses, his hyperactive drive in maturity and ruthless relation to his contemporaries, if a condition such as autism were not driving it? His wife Henrietta remained loyal, but how could she have overlooked his defects and excesses unless she judged them virtues? All these discrete biographical facts beg for correlatives in the public sphere for someone as ambiguous as Hill.

Until *Notorious* appeared in 2012, scholars of the eighteenth century referred to bits of Hill's publications without much sense of the man. Their context was always local—this passage, that work, Hill's collecting for Milord So-and-so. For instance, Barbara Maria Stafford, an American art historian, refers to Hill's works astutely but without contributing any biographical information—or interpretation.<sup>54</sup> In undertaking Hill's biography, I wondered how a man who had been actor, apothecary, botanist, collector, controversialist, doctor, geologist, herbalist, journalist,

microscopist, mineralogist, novelist, anti-novelist, publisher, satirist, scribbler and much more, can be known without a frame to contain his activities and explain them. Hill's promiscuous spread took me first to a psychoanalytical approach, persuaded that I had some type of Georgian hypomanic anomaly or borderline personality at hand.

Juggle the disciplines in the Foucauldian sense and another context enters: English and European science. In the long nineteenth century, the history of science was not yet a history of professions or persons (except construed in the narrowest biographical sense) but of the rise of developing institutions—the Geological Society, the Linnaean Society, the Royal Institution—as enablers of the Industrial Revolution.<sup>55</sup> The Victorians compiled histories of these institutions, such as William Weld's volumes about the Royal Society.<sup>56</sup> Polydisciplinary-perverse Hill appears fleetingly in these books and some readers may have wondered why this 'outsider' was demonized.<sup>57</sup> To the Victorians, botany (Hill's primary scientific activity) was more 'gentlemanly' than astronomy, chemistry or physics—yet, even in histories of botany Hill was often omitted. Some Victorian compilations waxed lyrical about previous taxonomers, for example, John Ray, and great landscape gardeners such as Capability Brown, but were tight-lipped about Hill and his part in the introduction of the Linnaean system into England, which had not been documented and decoded until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>58</sup> The point is that, whereas Hill was renounced before the history of science developed as an academic discipline, he was altogether neglected when it did. Not even in recent histories of the Royal Society has he gathered any profile except to be excoriated. One wonders where he will figure in the current works reassessing the presidencies of Folkes and Macclesfield in the decades leading up to Joseph Banks's regime.<sup>59</sup>

The history of medicine was also complicit in reducing Hill's posthumous reputation. George Sarton, America's founding father of the discipline, migrated to Harvard in 1915, built its first department there, and started the journal *Isis* dedicated to 'the history of the sciences', including medicine. By 1970, the history of science and medicine was a well-developed discipline, when Dr. Eugene Redmond, an American doctor interested in medical history, claimed Hill was first to link the smoking of tobacco and cancer.<sup>60</sup> His research was flawed—Simon Paulli linked them earlier and, even if Hill published a whole tract on their link, he never performed any experiments to test the hypothesis.<sup>61</sup> In Britain, another twentieth-century physician was gathering Hilliana

systematically: Arthur Morris (1891–1982), the House Physician at St. Mary's Paddington, believed that Hill had been written out of medical history despite his importance in the mid-Georgian world. He even changed the name of his house in Sussex to 'Hillia' as proof of his ardour.<sup>62</sup> Morris left me his notebooks, which became vital resources for *Notorious*. Physicians after World War II chasing Linnaean topics were gradually formative in placing Hill on the academic map and revisited his contributions crossing medical–botanical lines.<sup>63</sup> As they intensified their research on the great Swedish taxonomer, they realized that the transmission of Linnaeus' scientific ideas throughout Enlightenment Europe was as crucial as the ideas themselves, and the introduction of Linnaeus into Georgian England became a legitimate research field.<sup>64</sup> These developments can seem remote from the interests of historians of print culture and material consumption in the generation after Pope, but they pierce to the nerve of the Hill dilemma: how to assess the endeavours of a figure without a fixed centre?<sup>65</sup>

### HILL VERSUS THE 1750S

I began this chapter by inquiring how Hill disappeared from the radar—he was only on it tangentially for one brief decade. Yet, a more productive approach would ask how Hill continued to refashion himself after his Achillean wounds of ejection and outsiderdom. When Hill surfaced in the dunciad atmosphere of the 1740s, he suddenly did *everything*—collecting butterflies, selling pills, potions, panaceas, herbs, treating patients, entering into deals with printers and writing journalism and books. And, performatively, Hill appeared to *be everything*: actor and apothecary, belletrist and botanist, doctor and mineralogist, player and theologian. Only the social history of an era can determine whether this was a one-off version of personal promiscuity enacted as *hubris* in overreaching, or predictable behaviour from a figure desperate to succeed. And it raises the further question about what was particular to the 1750s to allow or enable someone to reinvent himself in this protean way. It is not straightforward to assign cause and effect in these developments: did Hill reinvent himself to be a polymath, or did his latent polymathy, already surfacing in the 1740s, enable this refashioning? Polymathy, similar to fame, had also changed shape since the European Renaissance, and was transforming itself anew in mid-Georgian London. The seventeenth-century view that exceptionally fecund minds (Bacon, Bayle, Evelyn,

Malebranche, Leibniz, Newton) could rise to polymathic pinnacles was coming under fire and viewed sceptically.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the Republic of Letters was increasingly attracting devotees, on the Continent as well as in Britain, and it throws a juggernaut into the idea of Hill's relation to polymathy.<sup>67</sup> Hill, aware of its mechanisms, tried to court its ideals of good manners and morals, diligence in correspondence, the free flow and exchange of information, generosity shown to others within the Republic—but no one as autistically inclined as he was would pass the tests for membership. Hence, Hill was locked into a circle of never-ending refashioning that rendered him frantic and hyperactive, and often out of control. Had he been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in the 1740s, he would have embroiled himself there—if not in embezzlement like his quondam friend Emanuel Mendes da Costa, then in other ways. Outsiderdom seemed lodged in his genes, as was the giving of offence and wrenching of retribution. Even in the realm of affective friendship he was off the radar, never having a single epistolary friend of either gender. Perhaps these factors, too, were constitutive of his innate talent, driving ambition and belletristic flair; it may be his liabilities as much as his exceptional capacities which enabled him to survive in Grub Street, thrive in the growing botanical establishment and, in the early 1750s, become rich.<sup>68</sup>

My second biographical thoughts include imagining the future of Hill's survival: will he endure at all? As long as the social and cultural history of metropolitan Britain in the eighteenth century attracts interest, Hill will survive, if not for the figure he cut and ways he filtered society, then as a representative type of what London produced. As I reflect further on the years of writing *Notorious*, my sense is that mid-Georgian institutions of patronage posed more hurdles than other facets. Hill needed a patron if he were not to burn the midnight oil writing in his garret: though he found one in Lord Bute around 1757, it gave Hill only a brief respite (1758–1762) until Bute fell out of favour. By the early 1760s, Hill, racked with gout and bitter in disappointment, retreated to Bayswater where he continued to publish his books and sell his panaceas at home and abroad until his death in 1775. It had not been a life of missed opportunities—he did more or less as he pleased—but how different, how much less fraught it would have been if he had found his patron earlier, or kept him longer. I emphasized new forms of competition in *Notorious*, especially the mid-century's 'new competitive edge',<sup>69</sup> but I did not sufficiently unravel the difference between 'the

underlings' described there<sup>70</sup> who scraped livings together by collecting for great lords, and the naturalists who collected for themselves.

*Notorious* did comment on the fault line between Hill's *habitus* of London and his decade of greatest success, the 1750s, but it is a fraught territory, problematic because it combines local history and national history. Norbert Elias, the German sociologist of the civilizing process, alerted cultural critics to the importance of *habitus*—the locale or setting of social processes—when describing how social transformations occur.<sup>71</sup> Decadal thinking—the 1730s, 1740s, 1750s and so forth—suggests a temporal form of *habitus*. Judicious criticism of it—that decades are illusions of the historian's imagination, sleights of hand to facilitate generalities—requires little amplification. Thinking in decades, moreover, also encourages us to imagine each as necessarily *different* from its predecessors and successors: in the twentieth century, for instance, the Roaring Twenties, the Depressive Thirties, the Repressive Fifties. Doubts about the crudeness of such distinctions are legitimate. Nevertheless, it is hard to deny the mind's propensity to compile and organize information along convenient axes among which decades, like stereotypes, become formative. That is, decades evolve, decades are labelled (the Roaring Twenties), and—having been labelled—the label is assumed, perhaps with reservations, to be an accurate description. Plentiful aspects of America in the 1920s were *not* uproarious yet, despite their glaring defects, labels for decades can further understanding of their fragmentary components. Nevertheless, yoking Hill's *habitus* to his most successful decade—especially his *annus mirabilis* of 1758—did not rescue Hill from seeming a certain type of minor figure with whom not to engage.

Even now, despite a full-length biography (2012) and tercentenary conferences (2014), there is a shaky sense of Hill's existence. This forgetting has a long history. One exception I discussed in a chapter in *Notorious*, titled 'Forgotten Hill', was Isaac D'Israeli who vivified Hill as no one had before, so that for a moment, at the start of the nineteenth century, it seemed Hill again flickered among the lights of mid-Georgian London. D'Israeli spent years in the British Museum where he researched eighteenth-century literary quarrels. For him, these 'calamities and quarrels' epitomized early Georgian literary remains. He gathered the debris of a much cruder Grub Street than the one he found in London and Edinburgh during that decade of national political anxiety, the 1790s. With gusto, D'Israeli excavated Fielding, Smollett, Smart, Warburton, Orator Henley, Hill and bands of swarming smaller fry. At its

centre he situated the dynamo Hill, wondering what energized Hill ‘to fight’ so relentlessly. D’Israeli’s social anthropology of duncery retrieved Hill as its lynchpin. His hefty tomes of calamities, quarrels and other ‘curiosities of literature’ were widely read and often reprinted in Regency and Victorian England, especially after his son became England’s first Jewish Prime Minister. But no Victorian followed up D’Israeli’s leads. About ‘Botany Hill’ or ‘Geology Hill’ or ‘Medical Hill’, D’Israeli knew little; what he knew best was ‘*Grub Street Hill*’ and he fixed him there.<sup>72</sup>

No one should think dunciadic culture disappeared from the radar as Filter Hill did, despite the alteration of the metaphors: not ‘dunces at war’ or a few inspired ‘great writers’ (Pope, Richardson, Fielding) versus armies of the night (the countless hacks unknown after their deaths, such as Hill). Paper wars endured as they do now, and even bestselling authors such as Trollope, Thackeray, George Meredith and George Gissing researched post-dunciadic mid-Georgian Grub Street for their novels, Gissing explicitly for his *New Grub Street* of 1891. But none pinpointed the ‘madness’ D’Israeli found in literary quarrelling as the insignia of this brutally competitive decade. John Gross’s 1969 *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* reaches back to this mid-Georgian era, too, but is silent about the 1750s. Three years after the appearance of Gross’s book, in 1972, Pat Rogers’ important *Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture* closes its last page with Pope’s *New Dunciad* of 1741–1742. A case can be made that the temperature of literary combat diminished after Pope’s death in 1744 but the view endured that, after Pope’s, demise the Wits scattered, Dunces fled and dunciadic culture crashed.<sup>73</sup> It was the 1750s profile for a long time.

‘Filter Hill’s’ reinvention of himself incited new dunciads and hilliads. Pope’s *New Dunciad* of 1741–1742 certainly did not finish off the dunces. They proliferated after 1742 owing to the new print technology, the speed of publication and the greater purchasing power of all classes to buy books. Even the best-known works form a list too long to reproduce: Christopher Smart’s *The Hilliad*, the long mock-epic poem with Hill at its epicentre; William Kendrick’s *Pasquinade*; Garrick’s *Fribbleriad*; Paul Whitehead’s *The Gymnasiad*, down through the 1750s. Poetic dunciads were further reinvigorated by Charles Churchill’s *The Rosciad* (1762) enshrining Hill as master dunce: echoing Pope, now pert, now master, now Proteus. These were latter-day dunciads capturing their *fons et origo* in Pope’s scathing castigation of Lord Hervey in his *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* as ‘Sporus’ (‘that Thing of silk ... that mere

white Curd of Ass's milk'), while reinventing Hill as the newly crowned Theobald and Cibber. By the 1760s, dunciadic mentality had altered but not evaporated, and 'PROTEUS HILL' replaced the widespread sobriquet 'the Inspector'. If given the chance, my second thoughts would also invert 'Filter Hill' to explore the 1750s as *a filter for Hill*; that is, *what was Hill if the 1750s could turn him into the monster his contemporaries imagined him as?* It was the invention of a 'modern social imaginary' as palpable as any Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has described in his book of this title.<sup>74</sup> In no other decade could Hill's almost alchemical combination of talents and energies, idiosyncrasies and perversities have expressed itself so resolutely in metropolitan London. He could never have risen as he did in the provinces.

### BIOGRAPHY INTO HISTORY

Where has this retrospective tale taken us? I have suggested we advance by separating the 'too-complex strands': Hill the botanist, Hill the geologist, Hill the actor, Hill the speed-writer, and so forth; as well as Hill and money, Hill and pleasure, Hill and writing styles—never, however, losing sight of the crucial amalgam of puffery-publicity-visibility. And then taking a gigantic leap—perhaps too colossal—to unify them in Filter Hill: the figure who reflects and refracts, separates and strains, whose errant behaviour vivifies what it meant to circulate 'abroad' in public spaces in the 1750s, his decadal zenith. But historians of the Royal Society (for example) will not address the matter this way. They perpetuate Hill as bane and return to a Royal Society in decline after Newton's death with *persona non grata* Hill muddying the waters. The return to their comfort zone has been this way for decades. For example, American historian of ideas Dorothy Stimson (fl. 1940–1960) tracked down satires of the Society as proof of its post-Newtonian decline and found a cornucopia featuring 'botanical-Lothario-Hill' at its epicentre.<sup>75</sup> Stimson concluded Hill was a scourge but—more imaginatively—proposed that the Society deserved this exposé.<sup>76</sup> Historians of science have skirted the question but have never produced the research capable of deciding the matter.<sup>77</sup>

My 'second thoughts' conjoin, like tides of the sea, its low and high currents—Hill and the 1750s—despite attempts to keep them apart. On the one hand, the statistical fact that Hill was writing at a faster pace—and, occasionally, in more polished style—than many of his

contemporaries, even more swiftly than the prodigious, breakneck word producers (Richardson, Smollett, Johnson);<sup>78</sup> on the other hand, the observation buttressed by anecdotal evidence, that life in the 1750s was *itself* evolving more swiftly than in prior decades.<sup>79</sup> Every generation nostalgically remembers its predecessor as slower, simpler and calmer. Hill would not have been alone in justifying his pace as economic necessity, or as part of the acceleration of time in the decade. Yet, his pace and that of the decade are worthy of comparison, even if not symmetrically evolving. Other aspects of the two halves lend themselves less to statistical comparison, as in these paired, parallel halves:

Hill and patronage	general patronage in the 1750s
Hill's forms of competition	the new competition of the 1750s
Hill's pursuit of different fields	dabbling in the decade <sup>80</sup> as more than gentlemanly dabbling
Hill's silence about his alienation and celebrity in the 1750s	outsiderdom contrasted to his craze for celebrity <sup>81</sup>

Hill showed no anxiety that botany and Grub Street were antithetical to the three crucial components in which he was immersed: (1) the commodification of culture; (2) natural history; and (3) print culture.<sup>82</sup> These can almost appear as mid-Georgian equivalents of the more recent 'Two Cultures' of C. P. Snow and F. R. Leavis, and may be worthy of further flushing out.

This biographer's 'second thoughts' are headed towards Filter Hill's anticipation of future modernity. Lurking in the hinterland is the ghost of Filter Hill. The other Hill—Notorious Hill—looms larger, its shadow more prominent for complementing Hill's ultimate genius: the sense that notoriety, like celebrity, depends first and foremost on publicity, wide audiences, and the dispersed commodification of culture, as well as a public interior mirroring the anxieties and tensions of private ones. The four combine to guarantee name recognition among large groups of consumers, including purchasers and readers: the secular trinity of Puffery Hill (promoting himself everywhere), Inspector Hill (wandering through metropolitan London's streets to 'inspect' all because 'Everyone recognizes the Inspector') and Commodification Hill (trading on whatever was on hand: plants, seeds, persons, ideas, books, his reputation). Stated otherwise, publicity, widespread recognition and commodity culture all act in the service of the much

required name recognition. Timothy Ticklecheek (an alias, of course) end-of-century summary of the bygone days of the 1750s summed it up. He titled his pamphlet *The Cries of London, Displaying the Manners, Customs & Characters of Various People who Traverse London Streets ... with London & the Country Contrasted ... To which is added some poetry. With articles to Sell ... With London and the Country Contrasted*.<sup>83</sup> Here, the 'trinity' is neatly bound into a penny pamphlet, yet the message identical to our more modern versions of celebrity and notoriety: publicity, the wide public and commodity culture.

In conclusion, I still see 'the Inspector' gadding about those London streets—often on foot, but also in his carriage-and-six; widely parading himself to diverse groups in disparate neighbourhoods; poking in and out of lanes and mews; at markets and fairs; selling his wares, pills and potions; frequently 'cried out' in rhymed verse and accompanied by the copies of his books he carried with him. Ticklecheek's late-Georgian contemporaries understood this transition from fame to celebrity more intuitively than we do, living so much closer to its historical genesis. Hill, although largely forgotten by the turn of the nineteenth century, was intrinsic to it.

## NOTES

1. See Rousseau (2012), for the biography.
2. The phrase 'going viral' came into usage c. 2014 in relation to American presidential candidate Donald Trump, its seemingly perfect exemplar in our time. Parallels exist between this most recent media phenomenon and the puffing antics Hill displayed, and a new novel dedicated to its strategies has appeared as I complete this chapter in 2016. See FitzGerald (2016).
3. As do many eighteenth-century scholars, Henry Power considers Hill a monolithic, one-dimensional 'ARCH-DUNCE', a position against which this chapter argues; see Power (2015), 40. No detailed account of Grub Street culture exists for the generation commencing after 1750 similar to Pat Rogers' landmark study of the prior two generations; see Rogers (1972).
4. For celebrity culture and the Georgians, see Briggs (1991); Mole (2009); Inglis (2010); Worrall (2013). Stella Tillyard's books continue to demonstrate the validity of her description of eighteenth-century Britain as 'a crucible for celebrity'.
5. One of the main themes of Herbert Butterfield's view of presentist concerns when writing, or rewriting, history; see Butterfield (1931), 9–21 passim.

6. A filter clarifies, purifies, and reveals what has been dirty and impure; it strains through the purified liquid or physical material and leaves the rest as waste. A filter is a common physical object as well as metaphor, in the ways Charles Taylor describes the metaphors of 'social imaginaries' (see Taylor 2004), and it functions as both in this chapter: the *purification* from the filter resulting in the modern scholar's sense of a mid-Georgian world now almost three centuries removed, and the *waste* remaining inside the filter forming the image of Hill among his contemporaries as *persona non grata*, upstart, parvenu, all of which I aim to account for in the evidence for an autistic Hill. The image of the filter further applies to Hill because he illuminates the excesses of the 1750s; his frenzied paper wars and coffeehouse controversies reveal how dizzying and extreme those excesses had become. Some historians of science claim that Hill—as filter—also purified egregious practices within the Royal Society, but the point remains controversial and in need of evidence. Few biographical figures of the era can be filters: you could hardly label Samuel Johnson one. Johnson redefined his age as well as told it what it was. Hill, in contrast, changed no norms but, in his feverish attacks and defences, demonstrates how extreme the quest for self-definition had become. His was a form of cultural courage and exchange rarely evident in his times, and he suffered for it. He was indubitably of the second, and perhaps, the third class. But as filter, of the first class—here, Hill had few rivals.
7. See Smollett and Beasley et al. (1988), 3.
8. Hill's polymathy can be profitably compared with Matthew Turner's (fl. 1760–1788), known in his time far more for his radical freethinking and republican Whiggism, even for his blatant atheism, than for the chemical 'aether' he claimed could cure physical and mental afflictions, including convulsions, epilepsy, gout, hysteria, hypochondriasis, rheumatism and many other maladies. See his *An account of the extraordinary medicinal fluid, called aether* (1761), a hastily compiled pamphlet of only sixteen pages that provided little new in the field of medical therapy. However, Turner had profound polymathic interests; to further them, he formed a group of similarly polymathic men in Liverpool who met regularly to discuss wide-ranging subjects. These included Josiah Wedgwood and the eminent chemist Joseph Priestley, with whom Turner often discussed chemical topics. Yet, even Priestley had limited influence in chemistry. But Turner never ventured as far as south as London and was little-known outside his local Liverpool. Jenny Uglow says little about him in *The Lunar Men: The Friends who made the Future, 1730–1810* (London: Faber and Faber 2002), but see Utting (2002).
9. This point is expanded in Chap. 8 of this book.

10. Except under prescribed circumstances; by 'circumstances' I mean mid-Georgian perceptions of the disparity of the types of authority commanded by, for example, such scientific figures as Hans Sloane, Richard Mead and John Hill.
11. See Mole (2007).
12. Most contemporary studies push back the development of celebrity to the mid-Georgians; see, for example, Inglis (2010).
13. There is no authoritative study of the early years of Johnson's Club and its formation, but see Lewis Perry Curtis, *Esto Perpetua: The Club of Dr Johnson and his Friends* (Hamden, CT, 1963).
14. See Burney et al. (1988), 234.
15. Dennett (1992).
16. See my discussion later of Hill's possible autism.
17. Neuropsychiatrist and cultural commentator Francis Tustin has provided the most convincing evidence to date that historical figures, such as Hill, can be subjected to this type of retrospective analysis, although he does not distinguish the varieties of autism with Asperger's. The latter has been removed from the internationally authoritative *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5*, the most current classification.
18. It is irrelevant that these are modern diagnoses established long after the eighteenth century; historians routinely subject historical figures from Homer to Hitler, Moses to Mann, to subsequent medical diagnoses.
19. For further discussion, see Houston and Frith (2000).
20. On the complexity of the context, see Goff and Goldfinch (2013); Inglis (2013); Regan (2013); White (2013).
21. The only copy I have found is in the British Library dated 1753; see Rousseau (2012), 154–155, for discussion and illustration of the plate.
22. See pp. 110–114, for the Canning episode.
23. These conditions pointed to the figure's public positioning of himself, for which Richard Mead and Hans Sloane form productive comparisons. See also pp. 173–94 in this book.
24. George Ballard, the prolific biographer of British women, including women of the 1750s, published lists in 1752 when Hill's notoriety was peaking; see Ballard (1752).
25. Horace Walpole was persuaded that fame and success finished off Laurence Sterne, for example, who died shortly after his pinnacle of success; see HW, 15, 66.
26. See Daston and Park (1998), 276; 1750 is an approximate chronological marker for the authors.
27. For example, the TORCH programme at Oxford University entitled 'Mapping Georgian Celebrity'; see <http://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/mapping-georgian-celebrity>.

28. Parini (2015).
29. I am grateful to Brent Elliott (Royal Horticultural Society) for this information.
30. On monsters, freaks and eccentrics of mid-Georgian London, see Todd (1995); Huet (1993); Porter (1987).
31. See Chap. 14 for documentation.
32. For the Paris salons as antidote to London's, see Lilti (2015).
33. See Rousseau (2012), 155, with sources.
34. For its cultural construction in modernity, see Gill (2009).
35. Some of these matters are discussed by Lilti (2014).
36. McLynn (2004), preface, 2–5; Wahrman (2004), 235–236.
37. It is possible Hill crossed over to Ireland as a young man but no proof exists.
38. See Sheehan and Wahrman (2004), 235–236.
39. See Burgh (1794). Hill had also written on this topic; see Hill (1755).
40. Sheehan and Wahrman (2004), 249.
41. As documented during the 1920s by American literary historian Marjorie Hope Nicolson.
42. For its growth and assortment, see Black (1991).
43. 'The Inspector', 45.
44. Braudy (1986).
45. Braudy (1986), 384.
46. For the background to Hill as the 'rhyming apothecary', see Rousseau (2012), Chap. 3.
47. See Porter (2003).
48. Discussed in Bondeson (2013).
49. For examples of imposters during the 1750s, see Greig (2013), 218–228, who correctly *excludes* Hill.
50. Boswell describes the interview at length in Boswell (1934–1950), II, 33–41.
51. See Alvaro Ribeiro (1991), ed. *The Letters of Dr. Charles Burney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 189.
52. See n. 17, where Tustin comments on the autistic personality's *literalness*. His approach also raises questions about envy. If more evidence were available, it might be possible to interpret Hill's envy as psychiatrist Melanie Klein did the envy of her patients in addition to the historical and literary figures she discusses; see Klein (1975).
53. Modern philosophers are accustomed to imagining the possibility of no centre to 'selfhoods'; that is, that selves are sequences of deeds and thoughts without fixed and identifiable somatic or psychological centres. Selfhoods, or personhoods, as these philosophers maintain, are convenient fictions now shattered by rigorous post-modern philosophical thought and without physical existence. See Helen Small, *The Long*

- Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) for a full discussion of this development.
54. See Stafford (1994), 189.
  55. For the developing scientific professions c. 1800, see Morrell and Thackray (1981).
  56. Weld (1848).
  57. Blanche Henrey explains why Hill was demonized in botany; see Henrey (1975), I, 77–92.
  58. See Stafleu (1971).
  59. For the older view, see Rousseau and Haycock (1999), 377–406.
  60. Redmond (1970).
  61. Hill (1759).
  62. For Arthur Morris, see Rousseau (2012), 95, 334.
  63. Jardine et al. (1996); Larson (1994); Schabas and De Marchi (2003).
  64. Linnaeus' role in the scientific milieu of the 1750s, so notably underdocumented in the historiography, would need to play a role in any reassessment of the Royal Society during these decades. The earlier era, culminating in Newton's death in 1727, has been well-studied, as has the later commencing with Sir Joseph Banks' Presidency in 1778, but not the interregnum.
  65. The history of academic research also shaped the development of eighteenth-century research topics, with Hill's silhouette lingering in the background. After World War I, the American Ivy League universities took a major interest in British eighteenth-century writers. The reasons owe something to the then developing American obsession with family pedigree—which had been evident since Edith Wharton and Henry James put their stamp on it; by World War II heavily funded research editions of major figures were under way: the Harvard Chaucer, the Yale Johnson, the Yale Boswell, the California Dryden, definitive lives of Swift and Pope and Fielding. Entire academic careers were devoted to these pursuits. For example, George Sherburn, the professor of eighteenth-century literature at Harvard, made the collecting and editing of Pope's letters his life's work. Others at Yale settled for editing the *Covent Garden Journal*, Fielding's paper war engine against his opponents, primarily Hill. However, if you are courting pedigree as an American Ivy League professor in the early to mid-twentieth century, parvenu Hill is the last figure you will want to cultivate. Britain 1920–1950 had neither the inclination nor funding to sink thousands of dollars into the editions and lives of eighteenth-century authors so marginal as Hill.
  66. For the curve in the eighteenth century, see Buchwald and Feingold (2013); Lemay and Rousseau (1978); Robinson (2006).
  67. For the 'invisible Republic' in England, see Goldgar (1995).

68. I explained in Rousseau (2012) how difficult it was to put figures on Hill's wealth, not least because his bank accounts have never been located. However, Horace Walpole, who was closer than we are to sources for the figures, was amazed when he heard, c. 1751, how high they were; see HW, XV, 66. Hill's wealth peaked in the 1750s and dwindled in the 1760s after Bute withdrew his financial support.
69. Rousseau (2012), 57–60.
70. *Ibid.*, 57.
71. See Elias et al. (1996).
72. For more detail about D'Israeli's reconstitution of Hill, see Rousseau (2012) Chap. 20, and Rousseau (2006).
73. The controversy is summed up in Pope and Gilfillan (1856).
74. Taylor (2004).
75. See Stimson (1949).
76. *Ibid.*, 65–89.
77. Keith Moore, Librarian of the Royal Society, offered a revisionist paper at our tercentenary conference aimed to turn the tide, but more will be necessary to accomplish it. Part of the resistance to assemble the evidence stems from an agenda ruled by loyalty to particular disciplines: the history of science, which does not welcome notions of a privileged Society declining into complacency after Newton's presidency. The decade since 2006 has produced little scholarship of significance about the Society after 1730, though Folkes continues to be noted as a figure worthy of more attention.
78. Hill paid amanuenses but no detailed knowledge about them survives, as it does for Scriblerians in the prior generation.
79. The pace of modern life in the 1750s is noted in many correspondences; see, for example, Talbot (1770), *passim*; Carter (1809), III, 45–47.
80. Oliver Goldsmith assured the world in 1759 that the decade was losing one of its dominant attributes: the sense that an educated person could know everything; see Goldsmith and Friedman (1966), I, 449, citing *The Bee*, 4: 149–150. Goldsmith could not have maintained the same for the 1720s, neither did he live sufficiently long to say it for the turn of the century. He made his comments in part with Hill in mind when writing in *The Bee* about the 'Fame Machine', a work essential for the configuration of celebrity and notoriety during the 1750s.
81. Hill's silence about, and unawareness of, outsiderdom constitutes a further reason to support an autism diagnosis.
82. The three considered collectively are attracting new research; see, for example, Yale (2016).
83. See Ticklecheek (1797). *The Cries of London* is a nostalgic throw-back of 50 years, explaining what life in central London had been like.

Ticklecheek, who has never been identified, put his finger on the three crucial ingredients for the birth of modern celebrity: publicity, wide audiences, and the dispersed commodification of culture.

### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**George Rousseau** was the Regius Professor of English at King's College, Aberdeen, having previously held professorships at Harvard, UCLA, and, in Oxford, where he was the Co-Director of the Oxford University Centre for the History of Childhood until his retirement in 2013. His life of Hill, the first ever full-length biography, entitled *The Notorious Sir John Hill: The Man Destroyed by Ambition in the Age of Celebrity* (2012), was shortlisted for the Annabelle Jenkins Biography Prize of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

# The Propagation of Lives: Sir John Who?

*Clare Brant*

*'He did not merely glitter at a distance, and die as a vapour at the approach' ~ Lady Hill.*

The Edwardian revival of interest in the eighteenth century is significant in the history of ideas about the period: a number of writers were drawn to what they perceived to be its liveliness, especially in ways which ran counter to Victorian mentalités. In peopling their books with forgotten or lesser-known figures, Edwardian authors used metaphors to gesture to the nature of their recuperations. John Buchan's Scottish-focused *Some Eighteenth-century Byways and Other Essays*, for instance, uses the trope of tracks too minor to be called roads to evoke the paths he takes across a historical landscape. Austin Dobson, perhaps the most sympathetic to eighteenth-century culture, uses the metaphor of vignettes. Originally a term to describe decorative depictions of foliage (or little vines) in books, vignette came to refer to a design which shaded off without a definitive border; it assumed its modern sense of a brief description in the late nineteenth century. Dobson, who was also a poet, began his *Eighteenth Century Vignettes* with a cheerful verse prologue: 'I don't pretend to

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paint the vast/And complex picture of the Past'. These Edwardians, possibly simultaneously emergent modernists, were alert to the partial and incomplete nature of their projects, which they also understood as the partial and incomplete nature of historiography in general. Their preference for biographical accounts makes them of interest to scholars of life writing now, and relevant to studies of John Hill for freely acknowledging the uneven selection of lives from the past. As one substantial biographical collection observed, 'Many persons of great abilities have met with no literary advocates; while others, of doubtful claims, have had their "nothings monstered" by adulatory biographers'.<sup>1</sup>

So how should Hill be rated? He may be said to have great abilities and equally great liabilities: though spared adulation by his biographer George Rousseau, his claim to posterity's attention is still not free of doubts or puzzles. In this chapter, I draw on some ideas germane to life writing, both particular to Hill and general to the mid-eighteenth century, though I do not pretend to paint the vast and complex picture of either Hill or the past. Instead, in sympathy with metaphor as medium and metonym, I propose a series of propagations, or forms of propagation, as a way of looking at Hill from a life writing perspective. Propagation is suitably botanical: it is appropriate for Hill, whose steadiest success was arguably a mail-order business selling seeds which kept him from penury in later life, propagating more life. Propagation may also be thought an appropriate model for the use of a biography by subsequent scholars. The biography is a parent plant; successive authors snip bits off which transplant and flower in other ways (not all necessarily true to its parent). Propagation, like its agricultural cousin 'broadcast', means to spread an idea or promote a theory; similarly, a biography spreads and promotes a version of its subject.

I take a page of Some One's life,  
 His quarrel with his friend, his wife,  
 His good or evil hap at Court,  
 'His habit as he lived,' his sport,  
 The books he read, the trees he planted,  
 The dinners that he ate—or wanted:  
 As much, in short, as one may hope  
 To cover with a microscope.<sup>2</sup>

Dobson implies pages are ready-made, or made to be taken. Hill's enormous textual output includes little that articulates any inner life, and

yet it also eludes that prerequisite impersonality which Barthes thought necessary to kill off the concept of authorship. Hill also frustrates the biographer's need for prerequisite personality, though Rousseau's subtitle implies a dominant psychological dynamic: 'The Man Destroyed by Ambition in the Era of Celebrity'. Having a chronological overview, the biographer sees the end informing earlier phases, as in a report on a car crash that aggregates incidents of reckless driving along the way. This tag is teleological—that is, it points to a point where Hill was destroyed by ambition, an arc that curves over how ambition also created Hill. 'If you had to sum up Hill in a word, it must be "ambition"', says Rousseau, who then gestures to the etymological origin of ambition, from the Latin *ambire*, going around (especially to canvass votes), with a description of the curve particular to Hill's path: 'yet the striking feature is that future reversals produced more striving in an unending, upward spiral'.<sup>3</sup> Devoting an Afterword to discussing approaches he discarded, Rousseau admits he struggled to separate Hill's ability from his herculean persistence. Yet he settles on a relatively consistent biographical line: 'The narrative about him is one of uncanny ability wrecked by little loyalty to any professional group compounded by disturbed personality'. The nature, kind and degree of that disturbance are defined in carefully open terms: 'Whether primarily compulsive or hypomanic Hill was clearly a borderline psychological type.'<sup>4</sup> Narrative and temperament, or storiedness and subjectivity, co-exist in tension though by making that tension explicit, Rousseau enlivens his subject and leaves room for both further biographical thoughts and the refraction of Hill through separate disciplines.

So Hill is still a moving target, hard to pin down. In discussing writings about autobiography, Galen Strawson has argued passionately against the dominance of narrative and in favour of what he calls 'The Unstoried Life'.<sup>5</sup> Hill's profusions and contradictions are not easy for biography, though life writing may avail itself of methodologically looser means such as vignettes or propagations. Nonetheless, his undoubted significance, complications and peculiarities do inspire a return of the repressed biographical question: Sir John Who? (Fig. 1).

### THE PROPAGATION OF HEATS

Scholarly concentration on politeness, sociability, sensibility—all cultures of benevolence—means we tend not to see or understand the prevalence of their opposites—rage, quarrelling and ill feeling. As Dobson observed,



**Fig. 1** 'Portrait of Sir John Hill'. Mezzotint by Richard Houston after Francis Cotes, 1757. Courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London

‘This Age I grant (and grant with pride),/Is varied, rich, eventful;/But, if you touch its weaker side,/Deplorably resentful’.<sup>6</sup> The enmity Hill attracted had some roots in personal envy, but also in a culture where bellicosity flourished. It helps to enter this world of heatedness to see how the anger directed at Hill arose from conditions not exclusively personal. One might relate abusive responses to the specific psychology of wits contesting territory in the generation after Pope, where Grub Street exchanges were less lofty; equally, belligerence is evident within groups. Even organisations ostensibly dedicated to companionability and joviality were simultaneously host to heated behaviours. Take, for instance, the Tuesday Club. Founded in Annapolis in 1745 by a Scot, Dr Alexander Hamilton, its annals testify to tumultuous proceedings. On 10 December 1751, two members slipped the club’s silver seal into the pocket of a third as a practical joke. A hunt exposed the seal which then disappeared again, initiating another search. All the members co-operated in turning out their pockets, except for the President, Charles Cole. The club’s Chancellor, Alexander Malcolm, then denounced the President in a lengthy, thunderous and abusive outburst: Cole is a tyrant, an old fool, an old coxcomb, an arrogant prig who pisses on them, insults them and oppresses them.

This Speech of the Chancellor, was delivered with so Strong an Emphasis, accompanied with so much of the Pathos, with such a furious and pallid Countenance, that it struck many of the members with a panic, enraged the majority, and quite silenced his Ldship.<sup>7</sup>

Malcolm’s fury makes him dangerous: ‘he resembled an Infernal fury, more than a human Creature, his Long Crane like neck was stretched out to its utmost extent, his mouth, as he uttered his words, gaped horrendous, and seemed to spue forth fire, ... his countenance was pale & wan, and his eyes staring and flaring like two burning Candles, while his fists were Clenched h[ard]’.<sup>8</sup> Hamilton describes Malcolm in flammable terms, a ‘furious Incendiary’ who is also in the grip of another fiery passion—he wants the Presidency himself: ‘the fire of R[ebell]ion, like an Impetuous flame Confined within a close Chamber’. Cole, temporarily immobilised by shock, was violently searched by the other members; then to everyone’s astonishment he leapt up, ran to the fire, threw the silver seal into it and attempted to burn his presidential chair. The precious club emblems were rescued and his Lordship, realising his own

anger was mounting to fury, stalked out, leaving many of the members 'wrapt in admiration at his Lordship's heroic Command of his passions'.<sup>9</sup>

This is an odd episode to read: a practical joke in a gathering accustomed to knockabout and silliness crosses the line of tolerable. Getting over his shock, Cole 'found the vent holes of his Indignant bosom begin to enlarge, and his anger, threatened to rush forth with great violence and fury'.<sup>10</sup> The physiology of rage and the stages of anger are given weight and, although throughout the annals Hamilton pays homage to Fieldingesque comic exaggeration, this episode involves unexaggerated emotions too. Insult, indignation, anger, fury—resentments build up and boil over—or, in Hamilton's metaphors of natural forces, volcanic and heated, uncontrol threatens to become open. Symbolically, the fire in the club meeting room becomes a receptacle for heated emotions and emblems. What happens next is extraordinary. Cole stayed away, sick with the gout, and at a meeting on 7 January 1752 the club members wrote him verses condoling his misfortune and wishing him well. A surprised Hamilton commented on 'the Caprice and humor' of the club, who only three weeks before were manhandling the addressee. The members then requested his Lordship to resume the presidency, a peace-making offer he accepted. Hamilton cites Socrates' proposal that injuries should be overlooked, because only fools and madmen offer them, and evokes the Christian character as one who shows heroic patience, forbearance and forgiveness: thus, Cole forgives injuries, and in a heroic way not typical of the honour-mad duelling times. An episode of very heated exchange mysteriously cools down, accelerated by a little philosophy.

In *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*, George Lakoff notes that in the eighteenth century, the dominant model for metaphor and metonymy was anger as the heat of fluid in a container (hence, one boils over).<sup>11</sup> Thinking about methods for constructing the history of emotions, Barbara Rosenwein offers:

an alternative paradigm for explaining turning points in the history of emotions. Dominant emotional communities may themselves change, or they may lose purchase and become marginal. Meanwhile, some formerly marginal communities may come to the fore, whether because they gain political hegemony, because their activities garner prestige, or for some other reason. The norms of the emotional community of Pepys and Evelyn came to predominate in the eighteenth century Enlightenment not because of its political hegemony but because scientific studies gained enormous prestige in the wake of Isaac Newton's accomplishments.<sup>12</sup>

For Hill, one might suggest plural applications of Rosenwein's model. One is that he was part of a marginal emotional community—that of Grub Street writers, the mid-century successors of Pope's vituperative world of wits, a community which bordered and intermittently overlapped with the beau monde; in this world, aggression, ridicule and splenicism paid off. Another version is that Hill was so much on the margins of this marginal community that he should rather be thought of as an emotional micro-community in himself; his mix of aggression, insensitivity, prolixity and recurrent plagiarism are simply unique. Here, it is not straightforwardly emotion underpinning actions—perhaps 'drive' is a better term. Hill either did not notice or did not care that he jeopardised and wrecked friendships by stealing from his friends. Rousseau's second thoughts as a biographer suggest the spectrum of autism can explain Hill's peculiarities; his first thoughts suggest an additional or alternative factor, 'the sociology of fracas'.<sup>13</sup> Fracas comes from the Italian *fracassare*, to make an uproar: here, we have Lakoff's dominant model of something welling up, bursting out. Thus one may account for outbursts of anger towards Hill from Fielding, Smart, Churchill and many others, in terms of a culture in which satire cannot quite absorb and direct primal dislike.

A quick visit to *The Hilliad* demonstrates what is at stake. In making Hill his anti-hero, Smart re-ran the paradox facing Pope in *The Dunciad* that skewering opponents through satire gave them undeserved importance. Using, like Pope, the metaphor of brushing away annoying insects, in prose and verse Smart drew up a long charge sheet against Hill, threaded through with jibes at his effeminacy. Where Pope implied sexual ambiguity in Lord Hervey (in *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*), he put insubstantiality and gender confusion together:

Let Sporus tremble—'What? that thing of silk,  
*Sporus*, that mere white curd of ass's milk?  
 Satire or sense, alas! can *Sporus* feel?  
 Who breaks a Butterfly upon a Wheel?'

Hervey is a thing of silk, neutered. Smart similarly dismisses Hill, making Apollo say he is 'that slight Penumbra of a thing'.<sup>14</sup> Smart's Hill is insufficiently masculine in his writing, which Smart says has the superficiality of women's chatter in its insipidity, simpering, exclamations and chit-chat.<sup>15</sup> But for all his high-sounding claims to be protecting the

republic of letters and its ‘masculine beauties of stile’ against one more dunce, Smart is deeply disturbed by Hill’s fluency. (It is tempting to consider *écriture féminine* as a relevant descriptor here.) Rousseau observes that ‘Hill’s ambition roused an uncanny type of envy in other males ... men, in droves it seems, disliked him intensely’.<sup>16</sup> But it is more than dislike for Smart. The uncanny pertains not simply to fear of femininity (dangerously contagious in mid-century Britain), but also to something deeper, gut-level. It is not just dislike of dandyism that makes Smart sneer at Hill’s person: ‘If there be any praise the nails to pare,/And wreath in soft ringlets th’elastic hair,/In talk and tea to trifle time away;/The mien so easy and the dress so gay!’<sup>17</sup> Visceral loathing directs hatred of a person to that person’s person: body and dress choice become objects of contempt.

Eighteenth-century satirists had a rich vocabulary to express contempt, additionally supported by classical satire—and, as Smart’s satire shows, also supported by early eighteenth-century mock-heroic. One might expect vituperation to be a useful term, but it was not much used after its appearance in the fifteenth century until nineteenth-century writers took it up enthusiastically. But vituperation was in the air, and it seems more than coincidence that a new cognate of vituperation appears in 1727, coined by Pope in *Peri Bathous, or The Art of Sinking in Poetry*. In this attack (aimed at Ambrose Phillips and others), Pope proposes a rhetorical chest of drawers, with sections allotted for different kinds of contemporary writing: ‘The vituperative partition will as easily be replenished with a most choice collection [of arguments].’<sup>18</sup> Like anger filling and over-spilling a container, the emotion pent up in an interior space is given fullness and aggression. Where fire contained the possibility of being extinguished, vituperation had no such natural closure.

Typical elements of the hostility to Hill can be found in *A Letter from Henry Woodward, Comedian, the meanest of all characters (See Inspector No. 524) to Dr John Hill, Inspector-General of Great-Britain (the Greatest of all Characters (See all the Inspectors.))* Published by Mary Cooper in 1752, and possibly written by a group of Hill’s enemies,<sup>19</sup> Woodward’s riposte mocks Hill’s pretensions on stage, going through various parts he allegedly mangled, then attacks Hill’s claims to being a gentleman in physically hostile terms:

In blazoning out your Titles to this Character, Great Sir, I shall slightly pass over your Dress and Gallantries; your Simper and Leer from the

Boxes;—your indolent Waddle along the *Mall*;—your cut-ear'd Bob;—your *November* Paduasoy [a luxurious corded silk fabric];—your *Amandas*, *Daphnes* and *Chloes*.—Other Gentlemen have had all these—and perhaps all of them before they fell to your Lot.<sup>20</sup>

In a sharply witty turn, since Woodward is able to act parts, he can act the part of a writer, parodying Hill's Inspector as the author Dr Bobathill. Bobathill describes his day in crushingly banal detail:

At One I return'd to *my own House*, in *my own Chariot*, drawn by *my own Horses*, driven by *my own Coachman*, attended by *my own Footman*:—Such Circumstances in some Histories are immaterial; in mine they are otherwise. The Public desires to know every particular of my Life ...<sup>21</sup>

Hill's response was characteristically unpredictable. He replied in the loftiest prose, offering an epinicion or victory ode but in the distinctly vernacular persona of 'Samson Edwards', a cobbler—the logic being 'That I should write as like a Cobler as you write like a Gentleman'. In adding a wreath of owl's ivy to Woodward's laurels, Hill flags up Pope as an authority to keep his satirical melange looking like wit warfare.<sup>22</sup> Woodward's parody, much funnier than Hill's over-arch ironies, makes a serious joke: Bobathill picks up the eighteenth-century sense of 'bob' as hit or mock (Johnson's *Dictionary* gives cut, beat or cheat as meanings) but also reconfigures the stage character of Bobadill, a braggart in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* (1598) and a byword for cowardly boasting. Hill's inability to act on stage morphs into theatrical recasting of Hill as a boaster. The witty rhyme of types was unanswerable: Bobathill defined Hill as deserving object and culpable subject of satirical attack.

Returning to Rosenwein's model, the prestige of scientific studies may make emotional community possible, but it does not in itself create stable emotional community. One might lay aside arguments about discoveries and proofs—contumelies about matters of content—as debates within an intellectual community whose frequent heatedness does not necessarily damage it emotionally or its upholding of prestige as a common goal. But in Hill's times, the scientific community was not a clear-cut group. Individuals with common interests who did not have an institution or club faced rivalry and isolation. His biographer says of Hill's addiction to paper wars, 'His tendency to personal isolation did

not help, and he was not—as became clear at the Bedford—clubbable unless he could “rule”.<sup>23</sup> Here, Hill’s actions are not the only relevant domain. In 1758, he published a short work proposing that a free national botanic garden be established in the royal grounds of Kensington, to enable England to raise drooping botany to the level of its continental rivals. Besides patriotism, what allures Hill is a vision of emotional community:

It would collect together the scattered few, who in this unfavouring age, pursue the paths of science: the academic grove would be in some degree revived, and men would study together the works of the Creator in his great temple; the theatre of universal nature: under no interruption besides the notes of birds and the whispering of winds: in shade and in retirement.

Classical idyll seems less important to Hill than a fantasy of a collaborative community, calm and cool, which is significantly oral rather than print-based. Just as students could learn better from encountering actual plants than reading about them in books, so scholars of botany would learn more from exchanging ideas through discussion: ‘Knowledge would be increased much more, by free communication of their thoughts, than by the labours of the study, or the productions of their secluded hours’.<sup>24</sup> Instead, Hill is stuck with print culture which not only materialised and mobilised ideas, but also entailed an unpleasant world of personal frictions that readily flamed into anger. Benedict Anderson’s model of imagined communities enabled through print culture conjures up sympathetic readers;<sup>25</sup> for Hill, print culture was tangibly full of unsympathetic producers. Of course, it did not help that he himself was one: Hill’s satires ran full tilt against decorum by reimagining community in unflattering ways—particularly that of the Royal Society and its informal satellite meetings.

### PROPAGATION OF KNOWLEDGES

What do you call what is not community? Eighteenth-century thought habitually referred to the world, to factions and parties. There were communities of class and gender, and communities of interest. How do they relate to emotional communities? The *Annals of the Tuesday Club* show how past behaviours entail strangeness even to those present at the time. One might advance comparably peculiar behaviours from boardrooms or

factories or academic department meetings which equally do not show up in the annals of present life. Paradigms which explain a group do not necessarily explain individuals, especially those with uncertain or hostile relations to that group. Hill was sociable and he wanted to belong—to the Royal Society, to clubs, to the beau monde, to coteries of theatre and fashion and court. He does not seem to have been particularly political, except in furthering his own interests. He wanted to be on stage, an ambition serious enough for him to join Charles Macklin's innovative acting classes where he and others, including the future comedian Samuel Foote, learnt how to speak lines in a naturalistic way.<sup>26</sup> Roughly about one in ten of 'The Inspector' papers is explicitly religious: his piety has rational enthusiasm. He conforms to Anglicanism by advocating piety and is otherwise solidly deist, promoting reverence for the Creator through his works—and here Hill, who did lay preaching, uses a language of prayer with an invisible community attached.

Some 'Inspector' papers feature Hill's studies of the natural world and propagate specific knowledges. Here Hill is obviously happy. On some occasions he is alone, on others accompanied by a small and select group of students. It is a Socratic model, dignified, secure, propping his amour-propre. The quite possibly invented students give him a micro audience; his macro audience is his readers. All witness his teaching, share his delighted discoveries and learn to read the world through Hill as an interpreter, an authority, a demonstrator and developer of scientific method and reasoning, and one who often ends with a moralising reflection on the Great Chain of Being. In descriptions of creatures—their homes, their habits, their anatomy, their beauty—you see what he sees, as he sees it. With people he is stiffer: his satirical papers are often funny, sometimes surprisingly frank, but they evoke a more assumed assurance. In some instances, he seems genuinely unaware of decorum or societal norms. One 'Inspector' paper discusses libertinism in women, coolly proposing inconstancy is much the same for both sexes except that the way of the world makes divulgence of it much harder for women. The eighteenth century's usually rigid sexual double standard is not challenged here so much as ignored.<sup>27</sup>

In propagating knowledges of animals, plants and insects, Hill reveals a curious mix of disengagement from a human world yet re-engagement with it through nature. He often begins by saying he has gone out of London for pleasure somewhere greener; in 'Inspector' No. 7, he further withdraws from company at a friend's villa—because they have settled

into drinking, which bores him—and instead amuses himself in the garden watching a bee gather pollen from blossom. The loving description which follows constructs a distinct intimacy:

This little creature first settled on the top of one of the branches, and, for a moment, seemed to enjoy the scene as I did: she just gave me time to admire her sleek, silky coat, and glossy wings, before she plunged into a full-blown blossom, and buried herself among the thready honours of the centre. She wantoned and rolled herself about, as if in exstasy, a considerable time there; and in her motions greatly disconcerted the apparatus of the flower: the ripe heads of the thread filaments all burst, and shed a subtile yellow powder over the whole surface of the leaves, nor did the creature stop its gambols while one of them remained whole, or with any appearance of the dust in its cavity.<sup>28</sup>

The bee is both she and it, with behaviours analogous to human activity. Where Hill's enemies were still using the insect-insults refined by Pope, Hill communes with insects whose lives have a sociability as refined as that of humans. In another extended set piece, he is given a nosegay which includes a carnation that buzzes with hidden insects. Hill sets up a microscope to look at them:

The microscope, on this occasion, had given what nature seemed to have denied to the objects of contemplation. The base of the flower extended itself under its influence to a vast plain; the slender stems of the leaves became trunks of so many stately cedars; the threads in the middle seemed columns of massy structures, supporting at the top their several ornaments; and the narrow places between were enlarged into walks, parterres, and terraces.

On the polished bottoms of these, brighter than Parian marble, walked in pairs, or alone, or in larger companies, the winged inhabitants; these from little dusky flies, for such only the naked eye would have shown them, were raised to glorious glittering animals, stained with living purple, and with a glossy gold that would have made all the labours of the loom contemptible in the comparison.

I could at leisure, as they walked together, admire their elegant limbs, their velvet shoulders, and their silken wings; their backs vying with the empyræan in its blue, and their eyes, each formed of a thousand others, out-glittering the little panes on a brilliant; above description, and too

great almost for admiration. I could observe them here singling out their favourite females, courting them with the music of their buzzing wings, with little songs formed for their little organs, leading them from walk to walk among the perfumed shades, and pointing out to their taste the drop of liquid nectar just bursting from some vein within the living trunk: here were the perfumed groves, the more than myrtle shades of the poet's fancy, realized: here the happy lovers spent their hours in joyful dalliance; or in the triumph of their little hearts skipped after one another from stem to stem among the painted trees; or winged their short flight to the close shadow of some broader leaf, to revel undisturbed in the heights of all felicity.<sup>29</sup>

These insects are acting remarkably like idealised people in pleasure gardens. One might write Hill's account off as mere anthropomorphism but it arises from an unusual psychosocial process. Hill seeks a solitary way to commune with nature which is then represented in terms of human sociability. And the terms of Hill's anthropomorphism are distinctive. He reimagines insect lives as human lives, a beau monde living out perfect sociability in a miniaturised world with arts of dress, music and dance. Courtships and pairings manifest equality and ease: the flower-garden is arcadia and Ranelagh in one. It is also an odd sort of Eden, with the insects gloriously clothed and the naked eye unable to see them thus. It is tempting to suggest Hill is projecting a fantasy of happiness, imaged through his microscope. Littleness evokes miniaturization which Susan Stewart has analysed as a form of longing: the description of miniatures within a text can be considered, she says:

to be like Hooke's *Micrographia*—that is, to be a display of a world not necessarily known through the senses, or lived experience. The child continually enters here as a metaphor, perhaps not simply because the child is in some physical sense a miniature of the adult, but also because the world of childhood, limited in scope yet fantastic in its content, presents in some ways a miniature and fictive chapter in each life history ... remote from the presentness of adult life.<sup>30</sup>

Childhood comes into explicit view in *The Virtues of Sage* (1765), where Hill recalls an old man who slept on a bed of sage in the churchyard of Peterborough cathedral. 'Things that we see when boys are long remembered', Hill comments about herbal knowledges of old people and also about himself. Rousseau describes Hill's childhood as often solitary,

happier when not jostling for attention with his older brother, and possibly happiest when engaged with his father in botanical rambles.<sup>31</sup> Though Rousseau points out the importance of Hill in a new tradition of botanical writing whose imaginative personifications were perfected by Erasmus Darwin, it is suggestive for life writing in how its sensual couplings are not as simple as adult erotica. The child was father to the man; Hill's anthropomorphism supplies emotional community in the guise of entomological knowledge.

The propagation of natural knowledges connected Hill's childhood pleasure and adult passions, and perhaps compensated for loneliness in both. Catching insects was described by Thomas Legg in 1755 in terms of an activity associated with 'Dirty Black-Guards and poor Parent-less Children, who have not any Friend to take care of them, going about the Fields and Ditches where Wild-Honey-Suckles, Nettles, and Thistles grow, with Bottles in their Hands, and catching of Bees, Wasps, Lady-Birds, Blue Bottles, and other winged Insects'.<sup>32</sup> The miniature socialisation of insects in particular allowed Hill to turn the tables on Grub Street and escape into a fantasy life.

### PROPAGATION OF LIVES

When Samuel Johnson wrote his *Lives of the English Poets*, his preparatory notes show headings in which age is an organising principle: noting his subject's age at the top, *aetatis x*, Johnson infuses biographical narrative with expectations of how particular ages entail equivalent psychological stages of life. Youth, maturity and old age were powerful categories for Johnson, shaping concomitant fields of ambition, achievement and decay. Writing in 1750, aged 46, Johnson declared 'one generation is always the scorn and wonder of the other, and the notions of the old and young are like liquors of different gravity and texture which never can unite.'<sup>33</sup> In 1750, Hill was 36.

At our entrance into the world, when health and vigour give us fair promises of time sufficient for the regular maturation of our schemes, and a long enjoyment of our acquisitions, we are eager to seize the present moment; we pluck every gratification within our reach without suffering it to ripen into perfection, and crowd all the varieties of delight into a narrow compass ...<sup>34</sup>

If the 1750s were Hill's prime years, youth verging on maturity, his varieties of delight were crowded into a spectacularly wide compass. That variousness baffled his contemporaries. As Smart put it in *The Hilliad*, 'Yet strange variety shall check thy life—/Thou grand dictator of each publick show,/Wit, moralist, quack, harlequin and beau.'<sup>35</sup> And why was he so many things? Hill's activities coincided with mid-century developments in which reputation refracted through echo-chambers: besides an active literary sphere of newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, vindictory memoirs and satires, there was a less tangible but clearly powerful world of forms of talk, including rumour, gossip and slander, some of which turned up in print, just as print turned up in talk. Reputations were subject to both flux and fixity through what I have called elsewhere a choric dimension.<sup>36</sup> Although Hill's extant letters are not significant for literature, according to Rousseau, there is plenty of discussion of Hill in chorically significant ways in surviving correspondence. Albrecht von Haller, an illustrious German friend of Linnaeus, wrote to Johannes Gesner, another distinguished natural philosopher, about Hill's 1751 *A General Natural History of Plants*: 'They do not commend the second volume of Hill, they say it is a compilation of the method of Linnaeus, but I have not yet seen it.'<sup>37</sup> In 1756, writing about Hill's British Herbal, Haller's choric report was polarised: 'The man is of the shrewdest character and of the swiftest work. In fact they say that he uses other works for his own and that nothing is new of his own.'<sup>38</sup> In editing Hill's letters and papers, published thirty years in advance of his biography, Rousseau proposes their interest lies not in any literary or even scientific value, but because 'The letters reveal facts about a man whose life embodies a *type*, which, though still rare, was becoming increasingly evident in Georgian England.'<sup>39</sup>

Clinical psychology defines individuals in relation to types, with a floating grid of social norms. For eighteenth-century writers there was another floating grid, one of classical reference and allusion. 'Protean Hill' pinned down this slippery man where plain English could not: 'could you have imagin'd that there could Exist such a Being as Hill?' complained Garrick to Hawkesworth in 1759.<sup>40</sup> Ironically, given this unimaginability of Hill, Jung defined Proteus as a personification of the unconscious. In defining Hill through Proteus, his contemporaries may have personified a historical unconscious.<sup>41</sup>

How do we explain Protean Hill? If we refract Hill through academic disciplines, we can see the substance of his achievements (and failures)

in botany, geology, literature and journalism. But in separating out his works thus, we may miss how the span of Hill's productions, especially in the 1750s, includes an extraordinary range of books which played to market forces. Even a dedicated scholar may quail at the voluminousness of Hill's output in the 1750s: he wrote on plants, on herbs, on plant breeding, on gardening, on gout, on Canning, on acting, on snuff, on the classics, on nerves; he published essays, satires, herbals, fiction, farces and commentaries. Many of these are not short and even his biographer gives short shrift to some. Are we missing anything by skipping past these works? Does a closer look support the idea of Hill as polymath? In 1754, Hill published *On the Management of Children*, almost three hundred pages of dreary sententiousness in the persona (and clunky pun) of the Honourable Juliana-Susannah Seymour. This book of epistolary advices certainly upheld the sexual double standard, though the addressee is interestingly fixed as a single parent, a widowed niece. An epic of middlebrow advice literature, it recycled Juliana-Susannah from an even more ploddily conformist work the year before, *The Conduct of a Married Life*. Another whopping tome, *A Naval History of Britain*, published in 1756—ironically, the year Admiral Byng lost Minorca for which he was court-martialled and shot the following year—concedes on its title page a base text, the papers of Sir George Berkley. Even so, at 753 pages it is a Grub Street production of impressive diligence, substance and weight. It has a sycophantic tone towards monarchy—one chapter is titled 'The Queen becomes very popular'—but at the start of the Seven Years' War Britain bolstered itself with choric patriotism. From Hill's compilation, we might recuperate a core sample of that, joining up current antiquarian interest in early Britons with a national mood of mythologizing. His biographer may have had such productions in mind in his aphoristic overview of Hill's significance at the end of *Notorious*: 'He could write better than anyone who could write faster than he could, and faster than anyone who could write better.'<sup>42</sup> Philip Ross Bullock has argued for the importance of economics in biography: what sort of work *pays* an author, artist or composer?<sup>43</sup> The indefatigable Rousseau has uncovered no financial records for Hill; his correspondence leaves only a few traces, mostly complaints for losses on his beautiful and expensive botanical books. Since in the 1750s, Hill had a second wife and young children to support, hack work must have been expedient for income. How far does necessity redeem dull choices? Rousseau says of Hill: 'He could never face up to the truth that he was of the second—or

third—rank, creatively and imaginatively, and this psychological predicament is ultimately what is both engaging and pathetic about his life.<sup>44</sup>

One of Hill's biographies it is easy to overlook is the panegyric published by his second wife in 1779 as *A Short Account of the Life, Writings and Character of the Late Sir John Hill, M.D.* Henrietta, Lady Hill, defended her husband by presenting him as a man honoured by European royalty and respected worldwide. Arguing that 'those who range the wide fields of science' are liable to attract most detractors, she also dealt with lowbrow attacks: 'On turning over some news-papers, I find he has been aspersed by those petty, paltry sarcasms which are for ever hovering over dignity, virtue, and eminence deceased.'<sup>45</sup> Lady Hill dismisses these loftily. Her husband was a paragon of Philanthropy who used his medical knowledge and skills to heal the sick and poor. She also has an astonishingly alternative take on Hill's hostility to the Royal Society: she claims he actively did not want to be a member, and that he said in a letter to a French correspondent, a distinguished one, naturally, that he had the honour not to be a member; this letter Hill left lying open on a table where it was then read by a Fellow who divulged its contents to the Society and the world. In 1755, Lord Chesterfield was leaving open on a table a magisterial letter of rebuke from Samuel Johnson, expecting it to be read by visitors, so it was not an entirely implausible story.<sup>46</sup>

A fond widow might well be expected to adulate her husband in public, but what else can we learn from Lady Hill? Two points relevant to life writing emerge. One is that, although Lady Hill is deaf to detractors, she does engage with the same question as they—who was Sir John Hill really? By way of portico to the temple of Hill-worship, Lady Hill says this:

Sir JOHN HILL's Character is not built solely on the indefatigable powers of his understanding – on his fortitude, which set the most stupendous obstacles at defiance, and which explored the very recesses of Nature—nor—on the versatile capacity of shifting his attention, without distraction or disarrangement, from one subject to another, and *that*, perhaps its great contrary.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the epic trumpet-blowing, she recognises the variety of Hill unsettled his contemporaries. She invites us to consider whether to redefine it as versatility: 'His genius was extensive, and he gave it full scope.'<sup>48</sup>

Another important point viewable through Lady Hill is that of her husband's class. He is bred as an apothecary, she says, and she makes it sound most genteel: Hill attends lectures at the Apothecary Company in London, travels over the kingdom collecting rare and unusual plants, and attracts the attention of noblemen and experts round Europe. It is, again, a barely recognisable Hill if put alongside Henry Baker's bitter jeers in a letter of 4 December 1750. Hill, implies Baker, is still close to low life: 'several years ago he used to get a poor livelihood by picking up Weeds about the Countries, which he dryed and placed in Books, for a few People that would purchase them, being an Apothecary without Business'.<sup>49</sup> Between these polarised versions of Hill stands his biographer, who prefaced his edition of Hill's letters with a modest claim for Hill's importance to the development of the sciences in Britain and conceded: 'If Hill has never been acclaimed and given his deserved share of recognition, this is owing less to his achievement than to the type he embodies, one whose offensive personality blunted the precise outlines of the type.'<sup>50</sup>

Type, of course, is a term that brings together printing (as in type-setting) and psychology, which conveniently bridges any gap between eighteenth and twenty-first centuries and, in an elegant way, doubles for writer and works. Modern biographical terms make less concession to eighteenth-century discourses. Reviewing theoretical discussions co-edited by Hans Renders, Carl Rollyson proposes that:

Renders suggests the 'umbrella question of every biographer is: does our knowledge of the personal life of a certain individual add anything to the understanding of his public achievements?' But if biography is the study of an individual's life, and if that description is sufficient, then what makes biography, at its core, important is that the story of that individual's life is of intrinsic, not merely historical, interest. It is the person in his or her personhood that demands the biographer's attention.<sup>51</sup>

Rousseau gives Hill attention explicitly subject to further refinement: he repeatedly flags up that his is the first biography, implying subsequent ones. But arguably what makes *Notorious* intrinsically interesting is that Hill's personhood comes out as something perversely elusive. Or rather, Rousseau's explanations of Hill are twofold: that Hill is a person so driven by a wish to succeed that he tramples over friendships, mangles decorums and vainly promotes himself in pursuit of his ends, loosely

characterisable as fame and fortune. When Hill plagiarised da Costa's idea of writing a history of fossils, da Costa was appalled:

Nor was obtuse Hill remorseful: he was driven to arrive first in cutthroat competition. When the moral lapse stared him in the face, he failed to understand. We might call this psychological denial, but no apology, betrayal, denial, or morality occupied space in Hill's mental orbit ... he would win at any cost.<sup>52</sup>

It may be that this forceful psychological reading offers repulsion, rather against the grain of literary biography where it is more usual for attraction to join biographer and reader in a common enterprise of investing time in getting to know the biography's subject. Of course, literary biography as a genre does include instances of biographers who dislike or despise their subjects, and Rousseau comes close: Hill's 'troubled life can appear to be a parable of crazed ambition riddled with cowardice and narcissism'.<sup>53</sup> Rousseau also offers a more sympathetic explanation of Hill 'as a second son from humble origins whose father had no means to educate him'.<sup>54</sup> But that predicament was one shared by others in the world of natural history who did not overcompensate for it by amoral personhood. Moreover, scholars know that 'personhood' is an historical (and historicist) category. In Hill's world, 'person' is associated more with bodies than individuated identity, and what we might call 'personhood' has to be read through historicised terms such as character and reputation. Even so, Hill puzzles his biographer. Hence Rousseau's other line of explanation: that Hill defies the categories of explanation of his times. 'Hill was incoherent'.<sup>55</sup>

### PROPAGATION OF LIES?

Literary scholars of the eighteenth century might pause over Rousseau's choice of the word *Notorious* in his title. Like its cognate notoriety, it is a strong word. In texts of the 1750s, both were associated with wide public circulation. In 1757, attesting the efficacy of a laxative, a physician refused to swear an affidavit to the truth of the fact, preferring 'to rest the Credibility of them, upon their Notoriety, and my own Reputation'.<sup>56</sup> One pamphlet in the Canning affair alluded to 'a Matter of publick Notoriety ... known by almost every Inhabitant of the Parish'.<sup>57</sup> Where notoriety partnered public knowledge, notorious

partnered crime. Criminal biographies of the 1750s describe highwaymen, imposters and thief-takers as notorious: it was a good word to spice up titles. *The Lives and Adventures of the most Notorious Highwaywaymen* [sic] (anonymous, 1759) was typical. Less alluringly, notorious also described falsehood and imposture.<sup>58</sup> Does Rousseau's choice of 'Notorious' subliminally associate Hill with lying, fraud and villainy? Some of Hill's enemies made that association explicit. On 4 December 1750, Henry Baker wrote to his naturalist friend William Arderon describing Hill as 'a man who sets out with a notorious Falsehood' and whose exclusion from the Royal Society had resulted in two pamphlets of 'all the Lies, Scurrility, and Abuse that impotent Malice could furnish out'. Arderon replied with a warning against Hill as an 'ungrateful Monster' who intended to injure Baker; having himself refused Hill some fossils, 'This I suppose hath fired that Wicked Mans Malice, against me.'<sup>59</sup> A decade on, Hill's former friend da Costa told a Danish correspondent of 'the famous Dr. Hill scorned & abandon'd by all that knew him formerly on account of his scandalous tongue & his lying faculties'.<sup>60</sup> Hill's fall-out with Garrick was less clear-cut, in that Garrick admitted his own warm temperament and trod carefully. Nonetheless, his final letter to Hill, unsent, consisted of a terse accusation: 'There are some people so void of honour, Gratitude or Ev'n common Honesty, that it is both vain & injurious to hold any Correspondence wth them.'<sup>61</sup> Repulsion is evident here. Reflecting on the early eighteenth century, John Spurr remarks 'success and refinement are not the whole story. Again and again we are brought up with a jolt when we encounter the animosities and bigotry, the bizarre beliefs and casual cruelties just beneath the surface of Augustan life.'<sup>62</sup> Among the propagators of heats, lies and lives active at mid-century, it is still easier to discuss what John Hill wrote than who he was.

## NOTES

1. Clarke, 1882, I, 6.
2. Dobson, Prologue.
3. Rousseau (2012), 340.
4. *Ibid.*, 342.
5. Strawson (2015) 286.
6. Dobson, Epilogue.
7. Ed. Micklus (1995), 236–237.

8. Ibid., 238.
9. Ibid., 239.
10. Ibid., 243.
11. Lakoff (1987), 415.
12. Rosenwein (2010), 23
13. Rousseau (2012), 148.
14. Smart (1752), 39.
15. Ibid., vi.
16. Rousseau (2012), 343.
17. Smart (1752), 36.
18. Pope (1727), line 115.
19. Rousseau (2102), 158–159, claims Fielding, Garrick and Murphy were ‘Henry Woodward’.
20. Woodward (1752), 10.
21. Ibid., 14.
22. Hill, *A Letter to Mr Woodward, on his Triumph over The Inspector*, London: C. Corbett, n.d., 5; Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad* 1728, III, line 46.
23. Rousseau (2012), 192.
24. Hill (*Botanical Garden* 1758), 15–16.
25. Anderson (1982).
26. Kelly (2012), 91.
27. Hill (1753), ‘Inspector’ I, No. 8.
28. Hill (1753), ‘Inspector’ I, No. 7, 32.
29. Hill (1753), ‘Inspector’ II, No. 109, 140.
30. Stewart (1993), 45.
31. Rousseau (2012), 7–9.
32. Legg (1755), 51.
33. Johnson, *Rambler* 69 (13 November 1750).
34. Johnson, *Rambler* 111 (9 April 1751).
35. Smart (1753), 24.
36. Brant, co-ed. (1992), 244.
37. *LPH*, 46.
38. Ibid., 67.
39. Ibid., xiv.
40. Ibid., 110.
41. Adams (2013), 221, citing Jung, *Collected Works* (1959) 9, 2, para. 338.
42. Rousseau (2012), 323.
43. Bullock (2016).
44. Rousseau (2012), 145.
45. Lady Hill (1779), 19.
46. Brant (2006), 57.

47. Lady Hill (1779), 20.
48. *Ibid.*, 2.
49. *LPH*, 40.
50. *LPH*, xv.
51. Carl Rollyson, *Biography* 36.2 (Spring 2013), 394–395, 395.
52. Rousseau (2012), 48.
53. *Ibid.*, 341.
54. *Ibid.*, 48. Rousseau's dedicatee is defined as a second son.
55. *Ibid.*, xiii.
56. Touche (1757), 66.
57. Anonymous (1753), 6.
58. E.g. Mitchell (1759).
59. *LPH*, 40–41.
60. Rousseau (2012), 61.
61. *Ibid.*, 109.
62. Spurr (2011), 4.

#### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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# Sir John Hill and Friendship

*Emrys D. Jones*

## INTRODUCTION

On 11 June 1751, a few months into John Hill's career as Mr Inspector, one of his correspondents interrogated him in passing as to his understanding and experience of friendship:

I had once, Mr. Inspector! a Friend: If you have had one too, you feel the due Force of the Word; if not I must explain myself to you, by adding, that I do not mean by that Name what its general prostituted Sense expresses, a common Acquaintance; but a Man whom I loved because he deserved it, and whose fond Partiality made him suppose he saw as much Reason to esteem me.<sup>1</sup>

The letter-writer—identified only as 'J.B.' and possibly a front for Hill himself—did not dwell on the subject beyond this. The letter moves on to matters of love, telling the story of a young man tragically thwarted in romance and driven to suicide by a tyrannical father. But by using the discourse of friendship to legitimate this anecdote, and by exploring, albeit fleetingly, Mr Inspector's own investment in that discourse, the

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letter draws attention to a particularly problematic aspect of Hill's career and authorial persona.<sup>2</sup> Conflict between sociability and eccentricity was central to many of the 'Inspector' essays: in an earlier piece, Hill had reflected on the tension between the social authority of his inspectorial role and the hitherto unsociable nature of his personal character.<sup>3</sup> More widely, this tension also informed his fraught interactions with the scientific community, his lifelong attempts to secure patronage and professional approval, and his self-cultivated notoriety as a public figure.<sup>4</sup> The question of whether Mr Inspector has ever had a friend is thus also a bigger question about how he relates to the key ideas and customs of British society in the 1750s, a question that becomes all the more poignant if we read the letter as having been penned by Hill himself.<sup>5</sup>

In examining the diary of shopkeeper Thomas Turner (1729–1793), Naomi Tadmor has shown that the language of friendship in the 1750s was complex and contradictory.<sup>6</sup> Command of this language was a prerequisite for assured navigation of social and professional life; confusion of one sort of friendship for another, a phenomenon more likely in some contexts than others, would represent a serious challenge to social propriety and to systems of political management.<sup>7</sup> The sort of ideal friendship described in the letter to Mr Inspector, a relationship founded on moral admiration and affection, did not feature prominently in Turner's diary, but it was representative of an intellectual and philosophical tradition whose influence was extensive and whose implications had to be discreetly negotiated even by writers more concerned with friendship's worldly and instrumental forms.<sup>8</sup>

Aristotle had defined 'perfect friendship' as that between 'men who are good, and alike in virtue'.<sup>9</sup> Though the classical inheritance could be skewed and critiqued, and was understood in different ways by different people, one finds the same sentiment expressed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, hardening by Mr Inspector's time into a familiar truism and shibboleth. In an influential work of 1657, Jeremy Taylor had argued for friendship's compatibility with Christian doctrine, at the same time endorsing Aristotle's teachings with his statement that 'A Good man is the best friend.'<sup>10</sup> In the early eighteenth century, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury insisted that true friendship be 'founded on ... moral rule', and Alexander Pope would later borrow from Horace to describe himself as 'TO VIRTUE ONLY and HER FRIENDS, A FRIEND'.<sup>11</sup> Ideal friendship was celebrated in treatises and enshrined in architecture, Lord Cobham's Temple of Friendship at Stowe being an especially noteworthy and well-publicised example of the latter (see Fig. 1).<sup>12</sup> Novels also



**Fig. 1** ‘The Temple of Friendship at Stowe’ from *The Beauties of Stow: or a Description of the Pleasant Seat, and Noble Gardens, of the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Cobham*, 1750. Engraving by George Bickham. © The British Library

promoted the search for perfect friends, even when—as for Richardson’s *Clarissa* and for Sarah Fielding’s *David Simple*—such friendship eventually proved incapable of forestalling tragedy.<sup>13</sup> Ideals could be shown up as fragile. Equally, they could be distorted through exposure to public debate, forced into the service of numerous ideological or financial imperatives.<sup>14</sup> However, it was rare for a writer to reject these ideals entirely, or to question their value within society at large.<sup>15</sup>

It cannot be said that Hill rejects idealism either, yet in his private correspondence and his published works, we find a figure who struggled to a greater degree than many of his contemporaries with the ironies of friendship’s formulation, its privileged status in public discourse, and the discrepancies between its conceptual and practical applications. It would be wrong to expect absolute consistency of moral thought across a body of work so vast and, in the case of the *Inspector* essays, so speedily produced. As George Rousseau has pointed out, Hill was a conflicted individual in any case, and it would be a mistake to impose uniformity on his ideas or even his self-perceptions.<sup>16</sup> However, Hill’s attempts

to grapple with the topic of friendship are distinguished not simply by inconsistency, but by the same qualities of resistance and stubbornness (and idiosyncrasy) that characterised the man's professional trajectory and reputation as a whole. By exploring Hill's diverse representations of friendship and sociability, the present chapter does not seek to answer the question of whether he was capable of friendship, ideal or otherwise; instead, my interest is in how he both defied and capitalised upon the social orthodoxies of his period, at times flouting the prevailing social standards, but at other moments elevating the friendly ideal, taking it more seriously than many of his acquaintances and readers could possibly be comfortable with. In his approach to friendship, as in so many facets of Hill's public existence, he at once epitomised his era and found himself startlingly at odds with it. An account of his tortuous relationship with the concept is necessarily an account of friendship's wider currency in the 1750s and of its fluctuating value in relation to the pursuit of fame and fortune.

#### FRIENDSHIP IN HILL'S CORRESPONDENCE

Hill's extant private correspondence is not notable for effusions of friendly sentiment or for very much direct discussion of personal attachment at all. While one would not want to jump to conclusions based on the limited selection of Hill's papers and letters available to us,<sup>17</sup> it is striking—and consistent with the published considerations of friendship that will be examined later in this chapter—that the potential friendships glimpsed here are often thwarted by fussiness or clumsiness in Hill's handling of polite language. In the few places where he does invoke friendship, he tends to do so without due diplomacy or, conversely, with an attention to friendly form that is too obviously undermined by mercenary motives. This is not a matter of Hill being unfriendly as such, or even of his being too self-interested in the hunt for friendship. Rather, Hill deploys idealism and pragmatism at the wrong moments. In the process, he all too frequently lays bare the fragility and hypocrisy of friendly discourse itself, challenging, on the one hand, the proponents of virtuous social rhetoric and, on the other, those whose view of society rested on the confident, mutual accrual of social credit.<sup>18</sup>

One such instance of awkwardness in Hill's correspondence occurs in a 1758 exchange of letters with the botanist Richard Pulteney, later an

important proponent of Linnaean methods who would write of Hill's contributions to the field in his *Historical and Biographical Sketches of the Progress of Botany in England* (1790).<sup>19</sup> Pulteney is restrained but cordial in replying to Hill's initial letter. He thanks him for contacting him, yet acknowledges that Hill's schedule and profile are unlikely to leave much room for a sustained correspondence: 'I doubt not but your Avocations are many and great and such as will not leave me room to flatter my self with the hopes of being retained among the number of your correspondents.'<sup>20</sup> Pulteney's flattery is finely judged here; in refusing to flatter himself, he flatters Hill, and yet the overall effect of the statement is one of pre-emptive distancing, ruling out the prospect of friendship in a fashion that preserves the dignity of both men. Hill's reply works in quite the opposite way, aspiring to a sense of gracious condescension but instead suggesting a desperate pretension on the part of its author:

I cannot boast of time for a Correspondence of Ceremony, but I have added your Name to those to whom I write when I have any thing Worthy to tell them. You will hear from me on these Occasions and I shall remember your friendship and Love of Science when I send my works, such as they may be, as presents among my friends.<sup>21</sup>

Rousseau, in editing the letters, has rightly argued that the speed of Hill's reply, presumably written almost as soon as Pulteney's letter had been received, serves to undercut its self-importance.<sup>22</sup> Hill's eagerness ends up contradicting the respectable picture of him that Pulteney had been at pains to create. We also see here an imbalance between deference and flattery, a mishandled unction which Rousseau has noted elsewhere in Hill's correspondence as a mark of excessive pride and disregard for ceremony.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Hill's boast to Pulteney that he is dispensing with the usual ceremonies of correspondence seems designed to promote warmth and intimacy, a relationship built on a shared 'Love of Science' if not on emotional affinities.<sup>24</sup> However, such warmth is not fully earned or warranted by the circumstances of the correspondence, and it is undermined by the new, idiosyncratic ceremonies that Hill institutes in place of the old ones. The system of friendship that Hill outlines—closer to a mailing list than to the exceptionalism of Aristotle—constitutes a bewildering mixture of the personal and impersonal.<sup>25</sup> The fact that Hill asks for nothing in return from Pulteney seems to suggest that we are in idealistic territory here, but, in fact, the very one-sidedness of

the proposed relationship is problematic.<sup>26</sup> Hill volunteers to write and to ‘remember’ without any indication that he expects to receive moral or intellectual sustenance in return. His ‘works’ are distributed, it would seem, not in order that Hill enter into dialogue with his friends about them, but as an act of charity and self-publicity, executed according to Hill’s own convenience.<sup>27</sup>

The situation is yet more uncomfortable when Hill writes to those who evidently want nothing to do with him. In what has survived of his attempted correspondence with the naturalist John Ellis, we witness the aftermath of his blundering attempts at professional networking, the loneliness of Hill’s unconventionality accentuated by his failure to comprehend rejection:

[T]here is one Expression in your Letter so Singular, that I must desire it may be explaind. [I]t is that you are sorry you cant be acquainted with me. [T]here is something mysterious in such an Expression; and you will not wonder it gives me concern. You will easily guess I cannot want acquaintance; but I should not think my self worthy to live if any thing relating to myself could occasion a person of Understanding and Integrity to use that form of Excuse.<sup>28</sup>

There is something pitiful about this plea for further explanation, about Hill pondering his worthiness to live, and the rather paranoid way that he identifies mysteries in Ellis’s attitude. The word ‘friendship’ is not used; ‘acquaintance’, that common variety of social connection which had been disparaged in J.B.’s letter to the *Inspector*, is all that Hill aims for, and even this proves frustratingly inaccessible, subject to rules he seems not to understand.

As in his letter to Pulteney, Hill resorts to the trappings of idealistic discourse when they are not appropriate to the circumstances. There was no need to interpret Ellis’s rebuff in moral terms, and Hill’s willingness to do so might itself result in a deterioration of the moral discourse surrounding sociability. Coming from a different writer, his anxious words of self-examination could be read as humble and conciliatory, a brave insistence on the moral seriousness of sociable practice. Here though, the general impression is of defensiveness: Hill’s assertion that he does not lack for acquaintance is tailored to demonstrate that he does not actually need Ellis’s friendship, but it has the additional effect of making sociability itself seem a matter of filling quotas, a purely administrative

exercise. Moral standards are important in this exercise insofar as they qualify Hill to be included in an individual's network and allow for people of 'Understanding and Integrity' to be included in his. They do not, however, inform ongoing, reciprocal relationships and, once these moral criteria have been met, there is no sense that they will require further attention as a social attachment is maintained or nurtured. Hill's understanding of sociability, then—at least as it is conveyed in this letter—is based more on a tolerance of particularity than the pleasures and edifying consequences of mutuality. Indeed, although he describes Ellis's rudeness as 'singular', the passage as a whole invites us to consider Hill himself as the singular one—on the one hand, in the affront he has suffered, on the other, in his inexplicable pariah status. It is open to question whether such singularity, a key factor in Hill's fame and in his development as a public curiosity,<sup>29</sup> could ever be compatible with true friendship as it was conceived by most philosophical authorities.<sup>30</sup>

As will be shown in due course, Hill's published writings on friendship often argued in more convincing terms for the relationship's moral function and for the duty of one friend to point out the moral failings of another. It is ironic, then, that in contemporary responses to his correspondence, Hill himself is at various points described as a bad influence, his friendship a marker of immorality and his poor habits of sociability posing a threat of contamination for those around him. Writing to William Arderon in 1750, Henry Baker commented on 'the Honour' of being cursed by Hill: 'the only Hurt he can do you would be to praise you'.<sup>31</sup> It is curious how similar this thought is to that expressed by David Garrick at the end of the decade in a letter which, rather appropriately, he never actually sent: 'There are some People so void of honour, Gratitude or Ev'n common honesty, that it is both vain & injurious to hold any Correspondence with them.'<sup>32</sup>

Garrick's letter is the culmination of a period of fractious communication with Hill concerning his play, *The Rout*, about which Garrick had at first spoken encouragingly, but whose path to performance had been complicated by accusations of plagiarism and the theatre-manager's apparent apathy.<sup>33</sup> Once again, Hill's contributions to the correspondence had been characterised by the incoherent application of friendly language. Garrick's sense of something 'injurious' in contact with Hill was presumably exacerbated by the latter's cavalier attitude towards different categories of social bond:

[W]e ceased to be friends, upon the farce wherein Mr. Ap[ ] and my characters were introduc'd; tho' mine favourably. I have been, if an Enemy [sic], a generous one: I don't know any thing could shake your Reputation; nor that any thing can raise it but what I have written has been dictated by my Esteem for you, not your fault.<sup>34</sup>

Here, the ideas of friendship and enmity are flung at Garrick haphazardly, with little clear sense of what either one means. Hill's mention of Garrick's 'Reputation' implies that he is, first and foremost, interested in these concepts for their public implications; his frustration stems from the very fact that the relationship with Garrick—whether friendly or otherwise—has no power to affect his public standing. But how can it when Hill himself seems so uncertain of its worth? On the one hand, he presents himself as willing to dismiss the idea of friendship with Garrick altogether, apparently holding himself to loftier social standards than his correspondent. However, Hill has not rejected the flattery and mercenary motives that might be seen to corrupt friendship in the public sphere; he is still keen to adopt a 'generous' pose, to advertise his respect for the impresario in the guise of an enemy if he cannot do so as a true friend. In assuming such a stance, Hill attempts to capitalise on a trope familiar from the heroic literature of his age: the figure of the enemy soldier so impressed by his opponent's virtue and honour that he ends up corroborating these qualities, as a longstanding friend cannot, through his words and sometimes his deeds.<sup>35</sup> As will be shown at the close of the chapter, this was a trope which Hill used in his own writing, and it would certainly have been recognizable to Garrick as a staple of heroism on the stage. It is the stance of Shakespeare's Aufidius towards Coriolanus when he celebrates the latter as 'more a friend than ere an enemy' and when, finally, he laments the warrior's death (see Fig. 2, for a later eighteenth-century depiction of this archetypal moment).<sup>36</sup> Invoked in the context of Hill and Garrick's disagreement, though, the notion of such magnanimous enmity seems both absurd and cynical. This is not an occasion for mutual admiration or for the generous recognition of virtue. The correspondence between the two men never needed to be seen in Hill's terms of friendship and enmity, but it did need to be conducted with common politeness and courtesy, qualities which Hill conspicuously flouts and whose absence was ultimately the greatest provocation to Garrick:

The[re] is a certain Air of incivility in yr last Letter which I think is ye *Idlest* thing of all—I Use Every Gentleman with Justice & Good Manners, & Expect from Dr Hill a return in Kind.<sup>37</sup>



**Fig. 2** 'Tullus Aufidius: My rage is gone and I am struck with sorrow'. Engraving by Henry Singleton, supervised by C. Taylor, 1793. Courtesy of the Folger Library

## MR INSPECTOR ON FRIENDSHIP

Still, this author who lacked basic civility in so much of his private correspondence was capable of establishing cordial relations with the readership of *The Inspector*, and depended on that familiar rapport for his success as a published writer in the early 1750s.<sup>38</sup> By late July 1751, he was boasting of the new opportunities for social contact and influence that his columns had provided for him. While we should be wary of conflating the figure of Mr Inspector with Hill himself, that conflation is openly encouraged by the writer's dual emphasis on his professional experience and his personal accessibility:

I esteem it one of the greatest Advantages I owe to the having appeared in the Character of the Inspector, that I have been introduced by it to the Acquaintance of a very considerable Number of Persons whom it is a Happiness as well as an Honour to know; and many of whom I should, in all Probability, have otherwise remained a Stranger to. It is, I think, become a sort of Fashion to know the Inspector; and it is with no little Pride that I add a Truth I have hardly a Right to conceal on this Occasion, which is, that there are very few of our People of Fashion whom a Man not dazzled with Titles would wish to be known to, who have not on one Occasion or other honoured this Character with their private Notice, before they had any Guess at who it was that owned it.<sup>39</sup>

But what did Hill mean when he wrote of knowing and being known by such a great portion of fashionable society? There is uncertainty here as to whether this knowledge entails actual social contact, whether it requires that a reader be aware of the writer's true identity or whether, on the contrary, the 'Happiness' and 'Honour' that Hill describes are compatible with sustained anonymity. Discussing a similar claim in an *Inspector* column from some months earlier, Rousseau describes Hill's self-publicity along these lines as 'patently ridiculous', and it certainly is if we regard social knowledge as involving actual contact and conversation.<sup>40</sup> The logic of Hill's sociable language collapses in the above extract because he presents the 'Character' of Mr Inspector as a gateway to friendly association at the same time that he relishes the secrecy of Mr Inspector's identity. We are forced to conclude by the end of the passage that we have not been reading about genuine sociability at all, but about a fragile intimacy formed in the act of reading itself, requiring nothing beyond the reader's private absorption of Mr Inspector's thoughts and

opinions, and—like Hill’s correspondence with Richard Pulteney—containing no hint of reciprocity. This is something like the inward sociability that Hill had celebrated in another *Inspector* offering from earlier in the same month: a ‘Solitude’ which he lovingly described while confessing himself to be fonder of his own ‘Company’ than that of other people.<sup>41</sup> The Mr Inspector we meet in the passage above is solitary, too, despite first appearances. He delights that he is no longer ‘a Stranger’ to his readers but, for the most part, they must remain strangers to him, challenging the claims to social engagement of the *Inspector* project itself.

It would seem significant, then, that the word Hill uses in the passage is ‘acquaintance’ and not friendship. Indeed, Mr Inspector is forthright about his reluctance to commit and his enjoyment of acquaintance’s limitations:

As I am not fond of Obligations, nor have any Temptation to lay myself under them, these Acquaintances are kept up with a Spirit of Equality that very rarely is to be found among those of unequal Fortunes; and as I had no Favours to ask for myself, I had set out in this agreeable Perquisite of my Office, with a Resolution of never breaking in upon that Disinterestedness on which the great Pleasure of it depended, by urging any Requests in favour of others.<sup>42</sup>

The column goes on to describe an exception to this rule. Perhaps surprisingly, given the impression of solitary, disinterested commerce that has been created thus far, Mr Inspector describes his encounters with a ‘Person of Fashion,’ who believed himself under obligation to the writer. Mr Inspector states that he allowed the individual to discharge this sense of obligation by securing patronage for a third party, a ‘Man of Worth’ fallen upon hard times. The momentum of the anecdote is not towards an affirmation of particular friendship or of the values of reciprocity so tellingly absent in the earlier part of the essay. Hill leads us instead to a recognition of general beneficence and benevolence as the ends of social life.<sup>43</sup>

Hill’s admiration for more universal modes of sociability would be made all the more obvious when, in September 1751, he opened one of his *Inspector* essays with praise for ‘Man as a sociable Creature’, though here, again, his philosophical outlook would end up raising more questions than it answered.<sup>44</sup> Hill writes approvingly of the bonds that tie the human race together, each individual possessing ‘a natural Connection

with the rest, and a Claim to their Friendship and Acquaintance'. This sense of natural entitlement, seemingly admirable and suggestive of warm fellow feeling, in fact, leads Mr Inspector into some egregious violations of social etiquette. Upon entering 'a public Place', he sees no need for 'formal Introduction'. He writes of the surprise and wonder he provokes in those around him, as they see him 'fall into the easiest discourse in the world' with people he has never met before. As Hill discusses his satisfaction with these encounters, the reader is bound to suspect that his pleasure derives more from the spectacle he creates than from the social interactions themselves or, indeed, the potential of these interactions to result in sustained personal friendship. Hill's idea of a universal commonality is undercut by fascination with his own exceptionality. Close to the end of *The Inspector's* run, he would revisit this fascination with a greater sense of victimhood and pessimism. In a curiously oblique essay on the frustrations of social life, he comes to reflect on the situation of a man who, though 'perfectly acquainted with what he ought to speak', finds 'unsurmountable Difficulties in the determining how he shall say it'.<sup>45</sup> It is startling to find the bold and brash Mr Inspector so unsure of himself, preoccupied with his communicative inadequacies. However, his unease at this late stage is at least consistent with his dismissive attitude towards social convention in the earlier piece. He writes with exasperation of the dominance of habit over reason in matters of sociability, and implies that he has been disenfranchised through his desire for more orderly, accessible systems of conduct.

Treatises like this again point to idealism itself, and the misapplication of idealism, as the greatest obstructions to Hill's command of sociability's rhetoric. He seems to have intuited this himself at points. In another essay from the summer of 1751, a period particularly rich in social reflections from Mr Inspector, he followed up his standard assertions regarding the inherent sociability of mankind with a gradual re-appraisal of friendship's likelihood in a world of competition. Having originally described male friendship as 'the first Association among Men' and posited that it 'may continue inviolable' in some happy instances, he then allows the purity of his vision to overwhelm him.<sup>46</sup> It is the excessiveness of his idealism that makes his ensuing scepticism all the more severe:

Whoever understands the least Part of the Value of Friendship would wish it to last for ever; whoever knows the least of human Nature will see that a Duration of this kind, in such Intimacy, is not to be expected[.]

Hill's solution is friendship between men and women, relationships which, in his view, are not unduly challenged by rivalry.<sup>47</sup> Male friends have 'ten thousand Pursuits and Views in which they may interfere with one another', a prospect which leads Hill to ask, plaintively: 'what is to become of Friendship?' Yet, the question that offers Hill such torment only arises because of the strictness of his definitions. In imposing his understanding of 'the Value of Friendship', he assumes that true friendships will involve similarity of disposition and agreement in all things; that they will not require recurrent acts of concession and compromise. While Hill was not alone in making such assumptions,<sup>48</sup> his emphasis on absolute likeness between friends does set him at odds with a notable trend in eighteenth-century friendship discourse. Friendship between professional rivals or between people of different ideological persuasions, however rare in practice, had become a crucial conceptual touchstone in attempts to manage a factional political landscape and a cut-throat print market.<sup>49</sup> In fact, friendships that could withstand worldly pressures were often seen as more worthy than those without any friction at all. Shaftesbury had described polite sociability as 'amicable collision',<sup>50</sup> and some decades after Mr Inspector's heyday, Dr Johnson would put that principle at the heart of his *Lives of the Poets*, reserving special commendation for those writers who had demonstrated an ability to overcome or overlook difference in their choice of friends.<sup>51</sup> Hill seemingly wants no part in this tradition, despite his efforts elsewhere in *The Inspector* to manipulate the related trope of the friendly corrector, the friend who fearlessly informs us of all our flaws.

There is a certain inevitability to the fact that, of all friendship's obligations, this should be the one that attracted Hill the most. In the opening sentence of one 1752 *Inspector* essay, he advertised his love of controversy and antagonism, promoting a view of human nature which included them as essential correctives to vice: 'To offend is natural; to Beings so imperfect, so sway'd by Passions as we are, it is almost necessary.'<sup>52</sup> By logical extension, the true friend is the one who shows us no mercy in their appraisals and who does not shy away from causing offence. Hill was in the unfortunate position of admiring the friendly ideals espoused by the likes of Aristotle while at the same time despairing of humanity's ability to realise such ideals. In the principle of friendly objection, a principle so ubiquitous in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writings as to be something of a cliché,<sup>53</sup> he found an idea that could, briefly, unite these conflicting impulses:

Reproof from Friends, actuated only by that amiable Principle, and delivered with Candour, would seldom fail of its End: I know none among the social Duties that is easier in the Execution, none the Obligations to which are more sacred and indispensable, nor any that is calculated so eminently for the Benefit as well of the Community as of the Individuals.<sup>54</sup>

There is no Office of Friendship so difficult, no one of the social Virtues that requires such a Delicacy in the exerting, as that of telling the Person we love of a Fault[.]<sup>55</sup>

In this capacity, at least, Hill might have been a better qualified friend than many, but there is enough contradiction in statements such as these to draw his mastery of friendly discourse into question yet again. The obvious inconsistency is in Mr Inspector's fluctuating perception of difficulty. In these two columns, printed less than a month apart, he first states that reproving friends is easy and, then, that it is the hardest of all friendly duties. But there is another, still more worrying tension underlying these statements. Hill's sense of moral correction as a duty to society at large, a 'Benefit' to the 'Community,' might return him to a preference for universal benevolence over particular friendship. And as he moves on from the second of these extracts to discuss the 'Content of Heart' that can stem from the fulfilment of one's obligations, his reader glimpses again the proudly isolated, singular figure who prefers the certainty of his own company above all. He is a figure for whom friendships are better lost than nurtured through compromise:

I shall not attempt to deny, that many a Friendship has been broken by the Conduct I have been hitherto recommending; but I am equally sensible that every one of these have been Friendships better broke than kept.<sup>56</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

As already stated, the goal of this chapter has not been to impose a simplistic paradigm on Hill and his approach to the subject of friendship. His struggles with the topic and with the pursuit of friendship in his own life are less interesting in themselves than as indications of the discourse's complexity at that historical moment. In both his private and his published works, Hill comes across as someone alienated, through stubbornness or misunderstanding, from his era's conventions of sociability and the expectations embedded in its use of social language. This is not to

say that Hill spurned the discourse of sociability outright, but that he tried to mould its tropes and devices, its key ideas and customs, into something appropriate to his own curious standing in the world, something which was ultimately less concerned with the possibility of social communion than with the elevation of the individual and the failure of friendly idealism itself.

Michel de Montaigne attributed to Aristotle one of the most challenging and disputed statements concerning friendship: ‘O my friends, there is no friend.’<sup>57</sup> Montaigne understood the exclamation in relatively straightforward terms as Aristotle’s differentiation between common and perfect friendships; yet, the phrase has the capacity to point to more profound paradoxes in friendship’s formulation—paradoxes more recently explored by Jacques Derrida in *The Politics of Friendship*.<sup>58</sup> One does not need to be a committed deconstructionist to see the quotation’s value in illuminating the contradictions of friendship discourse. It seems particularly pertinent to Hill’s attitude, the fervour of his idealism and the ironic solitude that often accompanied it.

At an early stage of his rambunctious narrative *The Adventures of Mr George Edwards, A Creole* (1751), Hill includes his own gesture towards the impossibility of friendship, a piece of dialogue co-opting the trope of the friendly opponent but doing so haltingly, and with no little poignancy:

[I]n fine, he saw him cur’d; offer’d him his own Conditions, if he wou’d engage in his Cause; and, when he found his Loyalty to his Sovereign unshaken, gave him his Liberty; telling him, ‘You are my — tho’ you will not be my Friend: I think myself happy in having preserv’d a Life so valuable, tho’ it be to fight against me.’<sup>59</sup>

This incarnation of the generous enemy cannot bring himself to claim a right to friendship. As in Derrida’s quotation of Montaigne, belief in sociability’s ideals entails a simultaneous retreat, an admission that classical ideas of amity have no place here. On the battlefield occupied by Hill’s characters, as in the tempestuous social scene which he represented and sought to master through his writings, there is a temptation to seek in opposition and competition the nobility that cannot be found in friendship. Hill’s contemporaries may not always have approved or known what to think of his uncivil urges but there was a logic to his awkwardness, a self-defeating idealism which, like his self-cultivated celebrity, anticipated the literary preoccupations of the Romantic period.<sup>60</sup>

## NOTES

1. *The London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette* 86 (11 June 1751). All quotations from *The Inspector* and letters to the *Inspector* are taken from the original newspaper publication and not from later collections unless otherwise stated.
2. For general overviews of the development of friendship discourse throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Trolander and Tenger (2007) and Garrioch (2009). The application of this discourse in different spheres of literary life during the eighteenth century has been extensively documented across a number of academic studies. For its relevance to women writers of the period, see Todd (1980) and Myers (1990). Stern (1984) reflects on the discourse with particular reference to processes of mourning and to the relationship between Edward Gibbon and Lord Sheffield. For discussion of friendship's value in political circles somewhat earlier in the century, see Jones (2013).
3. See *The Inspector* 36 (published in *LDA* 50, 30 April 1751): 'I have been used to look upon myself as a sort of Nobody, a kind of Nonentity thrust in among People of Consequence, without being one of them, and as if constantly making my Way through a Crowd, without adding a Unit to its Number.'
4. In describing how Hill moulded himself into a public curiosity, George Rousseau describes it as a 'process of turning inwards' and sees Hill himself as 'an outsider.' See Rousseau (2006), 234, 238.
5. Rousseau states that most letters were genuine during the early stages of the *Inspector's* success, so it is just as possible that this was a legitimate correspondent. See Rousseau (2012), 108.
6. Tadmor traces 'interconnections between friendship, kinship, and patronage' in the diary, which Turner kept between 1754 and 1765. See Tadmor (2001), 170.
7. Tadmor lists seven varieties of friendship invoked by Turner, which were 'significant in forming a contemporary social order'. These included family connections, marital relationships, political association and business partnership. See Tadmor (2001), 174.
8. For a delineation of classical idealism surrounding friendship and for some reflection on the problems this posed for later writers, see Baltzly and Eliopoulos (2009).
9. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, VIII, 1156b.
10. Taylor (1657), 18.
11. Shaftesbury (1999) 206; Pope, 'The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, Imitated' (1733), in *Poems* (1963), 617.
12. For notable treatises of the early- to mid-eighteenth century, see Greated (1726) and Anon, *Beauty of Love and Friendship* (1745). The text from

which Fig. 1 is drawn, Bickham, *Beauties of Stow*, was made available in several editions between 1750 and 1756, with the temple itself having been constructed in the late-1730s.

13. For the shortcomings of even Clarissa's closest friendship—that between her and Anna Howe—see Tadmor, (2001), 261–265. The subtitle to *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744) describes its hero as being ‘in search of a real friend’. Recent studies have disagreed as to whether the narrative's conclusion in *David Simple: Volume the Last* (1753) demonstrates the futility of this search or the enduring importance of it. See Terry (2004) for the former reading and Mangano (2013) for the latter. On balance, I agree with Mangano that, while aware of idealism's pitfalls and contradictions, Fielding still credits friendship as a force for good within society and a means of framing the reading experience (2013, 186–187).
14. See Jones (2013), 3. A contrasting, sociological perspective, in which market forces facilitate the Enlightenment-era idealisation of friendship, is given in Silver (1990), 1475.
15. A rare figure who did oppose the rhetoric of ideal friendship was journalist James Pitt (d. 1763), discussed as a conspicuous anomaly in Jones (2013), 63.
16. See Rousseau (2012), xiii.
17. The standard edition of Hill's correspondence is *LHP*.
18. J. G. A. Pocock outlines these views as, respectively, a Tory and a Court Whig stance, the latter increasingly dominant in Britain in the mid-eighteenth century. See Pocock (1975), 460–461, 483.
19. For discussion of Pulteney's later, rather ambivalent thoughts on Hill, see Rousseau (2012), 224.
20. Pulteney to Hill, 6 February 1758, in *LHP*, 81.
21. Hill to Pulteney, 9 February 1758, in *LHP*, 82.
22. *Ibid.*
23. See Rousseau's discussion of Hill's correspondence with William Watson in (2012), 48.
24. Hill likewise appealed to the ‘Love of Science’ in his writing to Watson, as is also discussed by Rousseau (2012), 48.
25. Aristotle had argued that ‘there is a fixed number’ of friends that one can feasibly have, and that ‘those who have many friends ... are thought to be no one's friends’. See Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, IX, II71a.
26. There was, in fact, more leeway for the exchange of gifts and favours in the classical tradition than one might assume. Cicero stated that the ‘mutual interchange of kind services’ could be valuable in nurturing true friendships. Seneca praised the bestowal of benefits on friends as a potentially ‘virtuous act’. See Cicero, *De Officiis*, 59; Seneca, ‘De Beneficiis,’ in *Moral Essays*, III, 21–23.

27. Friendship conducted along lines of ‘conveniency’ would be specifically attacked by Adam Smith in the year following this exchange of letters. See Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 224–225.
28. Hill to Ellis, c. 1756–1757, in *LHP*, 69–70.
29. For Hill’s profile, partly self-fashioned, as ‘some type of inexplicable marvel’, see Rousseau (2006), 228.
30. For instance, Montaigne’s 1580 formulation of true friendship stipulated that friends ‘mix and blend one into the other in so perfect a union that the seam which has joined them is effaced and disappears’. It is difficult to see how any singularity could persist in such a case. See ‘On Friendship’, in Montaigne, *Essays*, 97.
31. Baker to Arderon, 4 December 1750, *LHP*, 40.
32. Garrick’s draft letter to Hill, 1 March 1759, *LHP*, 109.
33. For a full account of the saga surrounding the play, including its eventual failure on the stage, see Rousseau (2012), 231–236.
34. Hill to Garrick, [November 1758], *LHP*, 98.
35. The trope was sufficiently well-known as an absurd feature of French romances for Charlotte Lennox to mock it in *The Female Quixote* (1752). Her naïve heroine, Arabella, celebrates the ‘Greatness of Soul’ of those who love ‘Virtue in the Persons of [their] Enemies’. See Lennox (2008), 229.
36. Garrick had revived *Coriolanus* in the mid-1750s, with Henry Mossop in the title role, after several decades of the work’s neglect. For details of the production, see John Ripley (1998), 108–114. For discussion of how the ‘intimate enemy’, in fact, pushes Shakespeare’s hero toward destruction in this instance, see MacFaul (2007), 21.
37. Garrick to Hill, [c. November 1758], *LHP*, 98.
38. Rousseau notes that Hill positioned Mr Inspector as ‘a family friend’ and that this ‘familiar style’ only declined during the last six months of the publication. See Rousseau (2012), 114.
39. *LDA* 128 (30 July 1751).
40. The claim in question is taken from *Inspector* 57, featured in *LDA* 78 (1 June 1751): ‘I have been long sensible there is hardly a Man in Town more generally known than the Author of these Papers.’ See Rousseau (2012), 113.
41. *Inspector* 73 in *LDA* 105 (3 July 1751).
42. *LDA* 128 (30 July 1751). Knowingly or not, Hill’s argument here echoes the stance of John Locke in relation to the Royal Society of the previous century. For Locke’s ambivalent appreciation of close friendship and his recognition of ‘conversation with strangers’ as a potentially more secure and fruitful model of intellectual exchange, see Yeo (2009), 16.
43. Elsewhere, I have discussed benevolence as a virtue twinned with friendship in eighteenth-century public discourse but also liable to undermine it. See Jones (2013), 62–64, 129. Boswell reports Dr Johnson’s thoughts on the subject in *Life of Johnson*, 945–946.

44. *LDA* 176 (24 September 1751).
45. *LDA* 706 (14 June 1753). The final *Inspector* essay would appear on 30 June 1753.
46. *Inspector* 70 in *LDA* 100 (27 June 1751).
47. In this, Hill adapts the teachings of Jeremy Taylor, who had stated that ‘A Husband and a Wife are the best Friends’ and that friendships are ‘marriages too, less indeed than the other’. See Taylor (1657), 73–74.
48. Similarly, statements are made by an anonymous correspondent in *LDA* 319 (9 March 1752): ‘There is no Foundation of Amity like that which we owe to a Similarity of Temper.’
49. I have discussed this phenomenon, particularly with reference to Alexander Pope’s claims to a non-partisan sociability, in Jones (2013), 36.
50. Shaftesbury (1999), 31.
51. Richard Steele, for example, must receive ‘greater praise’ than Addison for their friendship, as ‘[i]t is not hard to love those from whom nothing can be feared, and Addison never considered Steele as a rival’ Johnson (1779–1781), V, 4–5.
52. *LDA* 300 (15 February 1752).
53. The prevalence of the idea is observed in Garrioch (2009), 170. Among the most prominent literary examples from Hill’s time is *Clarissa*’s encouragement of Anna Howe to ‘hold a looking-glass before me to let me see my imperfections’. See Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1: 65. For Mary Astell’s adoption of the same perspective in the previous century, see Broad (2009), 81.
54. *Inspector* 62 in *LDA* 90 (15 June 1751).
55. *Inspector* 77 in *LDA* 114 (13 July 1751).
56. *Ibid.*
57. See Montaigne, *Essays*, 99.
58. For Derrida’s exploration of the quotation, see (2005), 1–2.
59. Hill, *The Adventures of Mr George Edwards, A Creole*, 42.
60. For Hill as precursor to Romantic conceptions of the self, see Rousseau (2006), 218.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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PART II

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Hill and Literature

# John Hill and Mary Cooper: A Case Study in Eighteenth-Century Publishing

*Beverly Schneller*

If John Hill were a singer-songwriter today, Mary Cooper would be his recording label, his artistic agent (with a twist), and his merchandise manager. As an author, Hill needed booksellers to sell his works, and Cooper was the one who assisted most in the development of Hill as a writer on current events and topical issues. Her commitment to selling his writing played a key role in his ability to monetise his fame, build his reader base, and generate enough interest in him to make segments of the London intelligentsia want to talk about him. Hill helped himself by developing a reputation with the reading public as he took on various aspects of scientific thought, popular culture and the literary world. Working through Cooper, Hill achieved what an artist manager I know calls the ‘wow’, as he generated emotional responses among readers that made them want to engage with his writings. Just as fans today will follow a singer to a live concert for the ‘experience’ of the artist so, too, did mid-century readers follow writers whose works they valued by continuing to purchase from bookshops or borrow from lending libraries.

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By today's standards, the early modern book trade was lax in record keeping, especially in regards to that documentation which a biographer or historian might need to reconstruct a personal or a professional relationship. Thanks, however, to George Rousseau, Hill's biographer, and other historians of eighteenth-century culture and commerce, Hill's story has been much reconstructed. Within the history of the book trade, the story of John Hill and Mary Cooper is a case study in author–publisher relations, in building a reputation based on controversy, on the lifespan of that reputation, and in how reputation was created, managed and promoted in the middle years of the eighteenth century. This chapter will examine their entrepreneurial partnership and the essence of their commercial activity, and highlight what their efforts reveal about the dynamics of fame in the eighteenth-century *belletrist* world. I will also consider how Hill's character and his notoriety served them both.

### IN THE BEGINNING

As a starting point, it may be helpful to grasp a few basics about publishing books and pamphlets in the eighteenth century, about manuscript generation, the business of publishing, how copyrights worked, the way marketing and distribution of creative products were handled and how 'success' was measured in the middle years of the eighteenth century in the literary marketplace.

In the 1720s, the idea of publishing houses, as we know them, was developing as cheap printed books and newspapers became more widely available and could reach a wide demographic, both rural and urban. The inventory of a typical eighteenth-century bookshop included unbound printed texts and, sometimes, newspapers, prints, various medicines, homeopathic concoctions and globes. Books and pamphlets would be wrapped in thin blue paper and hand sewn at the margins before purchase, leaving the decision of whether to and how to bind them with the consumer. The bookseller, as the primary holder of the copyright, could have the manuscript he bought printed on his own press, if he owned one, or farm the work out to another printer. The business was composed of a variety of entrepreneurs starting with the author, who might have paid for his own printing and, as such, the initial press run. Next came the bookseller, who might use a distribution network or partner with other booksellers in the purchase of the manuscript from the author. The primary bookseller would have used other people in the

book trade to distribute the copies around London and its environs. The bookseller and the printer had the option to market together or separately, using the newspapers to buy ‘This Day is publish’d’ advertisements from the news offices. In order to sell the works, the bookseller or the printer, or both, had to work with the governing bodies: the Office of the Secretary of State, who registered the text (known as the ‘copy’) for a fee and ensured it projected nothing libellous, and the Stationers’ Company, who also registered the copy for a fee to allow the work to be sold. Everyone made some money in the sale of the product, depending on their roles. Since the 1980s, when the history of the book became a recognized and distinctive field, we have been able to learn much more about the business of bookselling, especially from James Raven’s *Bookscape* and his other studies of the book trade.<sup>1</sup>

Authors sold their works once, usually for a rate agreed between author and bookseller. Alternatively, the author and the printer struck a deal and the printer would deliver the copies to those booksellers with whom he dealt. There were no royalties in the eighteenth century and copyrights were managed as real property; the manuscript text was treated as a form of real estate under the Statute of Anne (1709/10). The notion of intellectual property derives from this, also known as the Copyright Act of 1709. To make a living, many eighteenth-century authors, including Hill, Henry Fielding and Tobias Smollett, worked across many genres—novels, plays, pamphlets, non-fiction and journalism—to make a living as an author. The bookseller would determine the market price, handle the distribution of copies to other shops and pay for the newspaper advertisements. No one genre, at least in the period in which Hill was active, seems to have dominated the market. My research into Cooper’s book trade suggests that her profits came from volume of sales; most of her publications were priced at 1s. 6d. Additional evidence on market value can be found in trade sale catalogues used to resell inventory when a bookshop closed, or from printers’ ledgers which show the amounts paid for subsequent printings.

Author–publisher contracts survive randomly from the 1750s, the period when John Hill was most active. Two such documents were drawn between Hill and the Stationers’ Company bookseller, Thomas Osborne, signed in December 1752 and in February 1753. They offer useful details to the scholar of the book, including the author’s address at the time of the sale, the full titles as registered at the sale and the scope of the rights purchased. As an example, the second contract

between Hill and Osborne records that ‘John Hill Hath Sold assigned Transferred and Setover and by these presents Doth Sell assign transfer and Setover unto the Said Thomas Osborne a certain manuscript ... together with all benefit and Advantage of printing publishing vending or otherwise disposing of the same and every part thereof To have hold Receive and enjoy the Said manuscript’ with rights owned not only by Osborne but also by ‘his Executors Administrators and Assigns to his and their own proper use and uses forever’.<sup>2</sup> These formulaic bills of sale ‘assign’ or transfer John Hill’s copies of his natural history books to Osborne for the sum of £472. 10s: this contract was Hill’s sole chance to make a profit on these books, which had no assurance of sale once Osborne owned them.

As today in the entertainment industry a would-be artist has to have a saleable product. Hill had to develop a strategy if he wanted to rise to the top in a crowded marketplace of writers. While pamphlets on controversial topics brought income, Hill cast a slightly wider net: he challenged the authority of a major cultural institution when he attacked the Royal Society; he published essays on the front page of *The London Daily Advertiser*, and he wrote prose and dramatic works. In the case of Elizabeth Canning, discussed later, in which he took on Henry Fielding as an opponent, Hill sided with the gypsy woman and bawd accused of abducting a young servant girl and, for his first novel, he intentionally chose a title and crafted a text so closely aligned to that of his rival Smollett that purchasers were deliberately confused, to Hill’s advantage. In these endeavours, his partnership with Mary Cooper was essential to his ability to get his work before the public. Though George Rousseau has argued Hill was a *genius manqué*,<sup>3</sup> he was also an astute businessman who knew his writings would appeal to the public if handled correctly. For Hill’s writings, especially his prose satires on scientific matters, showed a serious concern for what constituted knowledge, who owned knowledge, how it was to be shared and how it was to be understood by the public.

### ENTER MARY COOPER

To succeed in shaping both knowledge and taste, Hill needed a publisher reputable enough to attract buyers to established bookshops in and around Paternoster Row. Cooper, too, saw the path to new market opportunities through her role as Hill’s publisher and bookseller.

Cooper was networked with a host of leading book industry entrepreneurs—Robert Dodsley, Andrew Millar, Charles Akers, George Woodfall, William Strahan and others. Hill had his own partnerships with Thomas Osborne, with whom Cooper also dealt, and with Robert Baldwin, who after Cooper's death would succeed her as Hill's primary publisher and bookseller.

Information about Mary Cooper's trade in the early 1980s was sporadic at best and inaccurate, as I found as I researched my doctoral dissertation on her career. I reconstructed the contents of her Globe bookshop in Paternoster Row using newspaper advertisements, imprints from title pages of books for which she was the primary publisher or a distributing copy-owning publisher, bank accounts where she might have kept her funds, correspondence of authors, printers' ledgers, and other texts and paratexts that provided what evidence of her business career remains. During the Blitz, the area where her shop was located was heavily damaged and, if there were any documents dating to her trade, they are long gone. The work of other historians of the early modern book trade, including Paula McDowell, Terry Belanger, James Raven, Betty Rizzo, Michael Treadwell and George Rousseau, informed my work.

Hill would have engaged Cooper as a publisher in probably one of two ways. Either he called at her shop directly, or he became acquainted with her through her business dealings with other publishers or printers whom he knew. Cooper's account books or any correspondence she may have had appear not to have survived, making it difficult to achieve a reasonable measure of accuracy about her business transactions. The title page imprints of her publications are merely a loose guide to her business history, unfortunately, since these were on occasion falsified to protect the author of the work. Entry of her copies in printers' ledgers and her fourteen entries in the Stationers' *Register* offer more concrete evidence of the more than 2700 titles she advertised in London newspapers. Between 1745 and 1761, Cooper published fourteen of Hill's seventy-three works, with increased activity in 1753 around the disappearance of Elizabeth Canning. Rousseau reports that when, in 1760, Hill's play *The Rout* closed within forty-eight hours of opening, Hill wrote to Cooper demanding she reimburse him for his losses in having the play printed for sale through her shop, which she declined to do. In a way, you could say Hill was trying to change the contracts between writers and publishers in this unusual request for the time. The business model was such that, once the author sold the copy to the printer or the bookselling publisher,

no additional revenues or reimbursements for what Hill was seeing as lost revenue would have been available.

### UNDERSTANDING THE HILL–COOPER BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP

Though Cooper was not the only woman in the London book business in the 1740s, the volume of her publications and her relationship with printers and other booksellers suggests she was by far the most stable and influential businesswoman among her contemporaries. Anne Dodd, often mentioned as a street seller or hawker, had seventy imprints in which she was listed as ‘sold by’ between 1723 and 1743. Mary Fenner, who first appears in the *London Magazine* in 1741, had nine titles listed as ‘Printed for M. Fenner’. Similarly, Mary Fletcher, who was active between 1729 and 1751 in Oxford continuing the trade of her husband James, was a publisher of sermons and religious tracts. Tace Sowle, a Quaker printer and publisher, enjoyed a career of roughly 20 years, and the widow of Francis Newbery, Elizabeth, maintained her husband’s trade from the mid-century for nearly 30 years. Of these, Paula McDowell has studied Sowle in detail in *The Women of Grub Street* and Margaret Hunt has counted Cooper as among those women whose careers led to greater press freedom, given their propensity to influence public opinion with pamphlets relating to public policy and foreign affairs.<sup>4</sup>

Cooper entered the trade as a widow. Born in 1707 in Somerset as Mary Morgan, she married Thomas Cooper in 1732.<sup>5</sup> Thomas was an apprentice to the prominent Cornhill book trader John Walthoe, and by 1735 Thomas had his own shop on Paternoster Row. The couple had four children between 1732 and 1741. Thomas Cooper’s death notice in *The Daily Advertiser* on 9 February 1743 suggested he left a sizeable fortune, but just as valuable were his established trade relationships with printers and booksellers who dominated the London trade. Mary Cooper released her first title as ‘sold by the widow Cooper’ with Robert Blair’s poem *The Grave* in December 1743, and she also co-published Pope’s *The Dunciad* with Mary Fenner on the imprint. She did not own her own newspaper, though she was a shareholder in *The Daily Gazetteer*, and she projected nineteen other periodicals of which *The Centinel*, edited and authored by Thomas Francklin, was the most successful with a press run from 1756 to 1758.<sup>6</sup> After Mary Cooper’s death on 5 August 1761, she was succeeded by her sister Jane, who married John Hinxman,

a bookseller in York, also in 1761; he died in 1763. Jane sold the contents of the *Globe* in two lots in 1764, having continued the business at a lesser level of intensity and with the same trade preferences—only sixty-six titles in 3 years and partnering with James Dodsley, after Robert's death.

Unlike her frequent business partner Robert Dodsley, Cooper stocked the *Globe* with books on a wide range of subjects by diverse authors.<sup>7</sup> Effective management, ability to stay clear of the law and her husband's reputation provided her a steady clientele in both book production and sales. These were the traits that would have drawn authors to her and made the *Globe* a valued investment at her death.

In 1972, Keith Maslen, one of the leaders of what became the field of book history, proposed a fresh analysis of the term 'bookseller', dividing it to include what he called 'topping booksellers', while Michael Treadwell in 1987 broke new ground with an elaborate classification system for members of the book trade which introduced the term 'trade publishers'.<sup>8</sup> Since there was so little known about belletristic publishers or trade publishers at the time, these terms gathered a good deal of interest. As I pursued my study of Cooper through the 1990s, I focused on what types of works Cooper published most commonly and how they functioned in the marketplace, which led me to label her as a 'news publisher'. While Treadwell had focused on how belletristic publishers used trade publishers to conceal their investments and involvements with controversial or libellous works (to which John Hill was attracted, for instance), I interpret Cooper as having capitalized on readers' interests in news pamphlets and sensational materials, applying a broad definition of news as current events and topical issues. Cooper was the central urban distributor of these types of ephemeral works: James Raven says she 'dominated' within her publishing sphere.<sup>9</sup> Cooper's inventory enabled her to reach a wide audience of consumers and her partnerships with Dodsley and other publishers provided a collaborative network that served booksellers, publishers, printers and hawkers, as well as the public.

Cooper's relationship with John Hill spanned 1745–1759: it is one of the better documented author–bookseller relationships and they had the longest author–bookseller interaction of anyone with whom Cooper dealt.<sup>10</sup> Within 22 years of her assuming the business, Hill was placing his work with her; we can only speculate on why this was. There is no evidence that she knew about him or that he had any dealings with Thomas Cooper, other than that in 1742 one of the last works Thomas

published was Pope's *The Dunciad, Book IV*. It seems as though Hill served Cooper's need to have topical and news pamphlets available to her customers rapidly—he was able to provide her with pamphlets on the Canning case, for instance, in about 14 days. Hill's writing interests seemed to fit with Cooper's inventory in news, science and the arts, and, finally, he seemed to be reasonable to work with in most cases, the issue of the refund on the *Rout* being the aberration. All of these explanations are speculative, as there is no documentation to support them.

Between 1745 and 1759, Hill wrote and Cooper published the following titles (all as Printed for M. Cooper, unless otherwise noted):

- Remarks on Squire Ayers Life of Pope*, 1745  
*The History of Mr. Lovell. A Novel.* (Advertised as *The Adventures of Mr. Lovell*), 1750  
*Lucina sine Concubita. A Letter Humbly Address'd to the Royal Society*, 1750  
*The History of a Woman of Quality; or, The Adventures of Lady Frail.* Printed for M. Cooper and G[eorge] Woodfall, 1751  
*The Oeconomy of Human Life, Part the Second*, 1751  
*Clio; or, A Secret History*, 1752  
*The Inspector's Rhapsody*, 1752  
*Letters from the Inspector to a Lady*, 1752  
*Some Observations on Writers of the Present Age.* Printed for M. Sheepy, M. Cooper, and G. Woodfall, 1752  
*The Story of Elizabeth Canning Considered by Dr. Hill*, 1753  
*The Fabric of the Eye*, Printed for J. Waugh and M. Cooper  
*The Old Man's Guide to Health and Longer Life*, Printed for M. Cooper and J. Jolliffe  
*To David Garrick, Esq; the Petition of the Letter I*, 1759 (advertised as *The Petition of the Letter I to Mr. Garrick in The Daily Advertiser, The London Magazine, and The Monthly Magazine* in April 1759)  
*The Virtues of Honey in Preventing Many of the Worst Disorders*, 1759

Addendum of uncertain provenance: *The Rout* (copies of this were printed and unsold, apparently due to the failure of the farce) and *Twenty-Five New Plants, Raised in the Royal Gardens at Kew*, Printed for

M. Cooper, 1773 (included in Rousseau's bibliography of Hill's publications in *Notorious*).

That last title was possibly in Cooper's sales of copies when the Hinxmans closed the shop and, since Hill was still active, but in declining health, he may have authorized or sought publication for support in his old age.<sup>11</sup>

Though the Canning affair of 1753 was to be central to Cooper and Hill's business relationship,<sup>12</sup> Hill had established himself in 1751 as Cooper's sensational and news-making writer, through a feud with Smollett. On 7 February 1751 he published a novel, printed for Cooper and George Woodfall, titled *A History of a Woman of Quality; or, The Adventures of Lady Frail*. As Zomchick and Rousseau explain in their 2014 edition of Smollett's novel *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* 'in which are included, *Memoirs of a Lady of Quality*', the book was advertised on 26 February 1751.<sup>13</sup> The mini-paper war that ensued between Hill and Smollett proved to Cooper that taking on an author with a following was profitable for her own trade and those of her partner booksellers. The flurry around the two novels with far too similar names did not die down until the summer of 1751. Thus, in 1753, as the story of Elizabeth Canning unfolded across the month of January, Cooper used Hill to promote a counter-narrative to Fielding's claims. Since Cooper was in business to make money, the idea of her having loyalty to the authors whose work she sold does not obtain. Readers would have known her bookshop by reputation as the place to go to buy the latest on topical matters.

### JOHN HILL MAKES A NAME FOR HIMSELF

Central to the business relationship between Cooper and Hill is the curious story of Elizabeth Canning. A servant in the home of a London carpenter, Edward Lion, Canning was given leave to visit her aunt and uncle, the Thomas Colleys. She was meant to return home on 1 January 1753, but she did not appear. On 21 January, she returned to her mother's home in a dishevelled state with an unusual narrative to explain her absence. Canning claimed that after relatives left her near the Bethlehem Hospital gate, she was abducted into a carriage by two strange men who took her to Enfield Wash. There she was held by a madam, Susannah Wells, in an attic room over the house's kitchen, where she was being starved into compliance to act as a prostitute. She said she escaped her

captors by jumping from the only window in the attic room, where she landed on the street, injuring her leg, and then made her way to her mother's home.

Hill, it would seem, watched this story unfold in the news. So did Cooper. He was not the first to write on the events as, in March 1753, Cooper started selling pamphlets, first with *The Case of Elizabeth Canning Fairly Stated*. Here, tracking 'This Day is publish'd' advertisements shows the fast pace of publications. Fielding's pamphlets on Canning went to first and second edition (second printing) on 21 and 22 March, with Hill coming along no later than 26 March for a 30 March published response. Two weeks later, Cooper published *Canning and Squires Fairly Opposed*, which set the stories of the victim against that of her main abductor. From the time Canning appeared before Fielding on 7 February 1753, the daily London papers carried the story, with *The Daily Advertiser* and *The Whitehall Evening Post* taking Canning's side, earning the name Canningites, and the opposition being well-represented by John Hill's own newspaper, *The London Daily Advertiser* and his pamphlets sold by Mary Cooper, including his detailed *The Story of Elizabeth Canning Considered by Dr. Hill*. The paper war between Hill and Fielding lasted for nearly fifteen months, and is expertly detailed by Betty Rizzo.<sup>14</sup>

Hill seemed to relish his role in recounting and embellishing the story of Elizabeth Canning, adding salacious details as indicated by his version of the abduction:

As she was returning home she was seized by two lusty fellows in Moorefields, directly at the Gates of Bethlehem Hospital: After they rifled her pockets, they took her into the Middle Walk of said Fields, where they stripped her of her gown, apron, hat, etc. *She crying MURDER!, one of the fellows struck her on the right temple which immediately deprived her of her senses ...*<sup>15</sup>

This has elements of what we would come to know as tabloid journalism, which then, as now, helps newspapers sell. Rousseau rightly notes that when Hill entered the accounts of Canning, his 'intervention changed its course'.<sup>16</sup> Using 'The Inspector' in a new way for periodicals, Hill undertook to expose the holes in Canning's story. Cooper's publication of his pamphlet investigations created pressure on Fielding to bring the true culprits to justice, if there were any, and to expose Canning as a fabricator in this crazy incident. Hill served a significant public purpose with his

relentless investigations, preserving justice in proving that Canning had scapegoated Mary Squires, who was pardoned because of his efforts. The Canning story was not eclipsed until July 1753, though by March it was moved out of the headlines by debates over the Jewish naturalization act and changes to the laws to prohibit clandestine marriages. Hill referred to both the Marriage Act and the Jew Bill in his final words on the Canning case published in 'The Inspector' that summer.

Hill's activities surrounding the Canning case and his use of Cooper to further his interests as a public figure contribute to the partnership between publicity and celebrity in the 1750s. Though Hill died in November 1775, his public life, for which his books and pamphlets were essential, contributed to subsequent decades' understanding of publicity and how it 'agitated and illuminated' popular opinion.<sup>17</sup>

#### HILL'S ATTACK ON SCIENCE WITH SATIRICAL PSEUDO-SCIENCE

John Hill's manifold interests and notoriety helped Cooper remain competitive in a crowded commercial market. Hill had begun his literary career with attacks on the Royal Society: his satirical publication *Lucina Sine Concubita* bore the imprint *Printed and sold by M. Cooper at the Globe in Pater-Noster-Row*. *Lucina's* subtitle claims 'that a woman may conceive and [be] brought to bed without any commerce of a man'. Rousseau proposes that Hill was influenced by the Catholic Joseph Needham's ideas on reproduction shared with the Royal Society, and the latter's debate before the Fellows that life springs from eggs in which the newborn is fully formed.<sup>18</sup> Hill proved a prolific commentator on science, publishing with Cooper in the 1750s on the biology of the human eye, on longevity through better diet and nutrition, and on the digestive system.<sup>19</sup> As Hill's reputation as a satirist and vocal purveyor of public opinion grew, he became the target of actual physical attack, as when he was beaten at Ranelagh in 1752. The interest the event garnered was captured by newspapers and pamphlets such as the anonymous *Whipping Rod ... For Scribblers*, published by Ralph Griffiths and sold by Mary Cooper. As an opportunist news publisher, Cooper, whom Rousseau labels 'irrepressible',<sup>20</sup> readily published *The Whipping-Rod*, meant to destroy Hill's reputation, alongside two works attributed to him—*The Man-Plant*, and a novel called *The Eunuch*.<sup>21</sup> Especially between 1750 and 1753, Cooper was instrumental in keeping Hill before the reading public. When, in 1752, Hill entered into his first paper war with

Christopher Smart, Cooper published the anonymous *The Geese Stripped of Their Quills* which called for both Hill and Smart to be expelled from the Republic of Letters,<sup>22</sup> amongst other pamphlets that debated the literary value of Hill's works and his creativity.<sup>23</sup> Embedded in the paper war is a larger discussion about literary taste and literary celebrity to which Hill's career and reputation contributed. Framed within those concerns were debates about whether a literary writer could have another occupation and remain authentic to an authorial calling, and the ethics of promoting oneself as a distinct literary subject. *The Hilliad*, published by Cooper and others, satirized the irrepressible industry that had become the figure of John Hill in the literary world.<sup>24</sup> When Hill took on Fielding over Canning, the stage was set for Fielding to have to prove himself an opponent in print worthy of John Hill, who already had a mixed and vocal following. If, as James Mulvihill suggests, the goal of publicity was 'rational public discussion', Hill used his Cooper-published works to create an appropriate voice which would keep his writings before the reading public.<sup>25</sup>

Hill and Cooper seemed to have mutually ended their publishing arrangements around 1760 over his farce, *The Rout*, when Cooper refused to honour the apparent verbal agreement on reimbursing printing costs after Hill failed to secure David Garrick to play the lead in a benefit performance. This matter occupied Hill from December 1758 to May 1759, when he took out his frustrations on Garrick in a pamphlet attacking his role as actor-manager and his perceived abuse of power in staging plays. Rousseau, narrating a short history of events, identifies Hill as the one who lost the most—and in several ways, given that he severed ties with his publisher Cooper; noted actor-manager Garrick; and Arthur Murphy, who for Hill was competition as a fellow dramatist.

### FAME AND THE MARKETPLACE

Cooper became indispensable to writers and other members of the book trade for what Rousseau describes as her 'crude commercialism'.<sup>23</sup> 'Crude' perhaps, but only from the lofty world of the belles-lettres, where making a profit is scorned? In writing about Hill and his publishers, Rousseau confirms that Cooper and Baldwin were essential to the rapid rise of Hill as a writer and public figure in eighteenth-century London. Cooper's business was one of quick turnover and turnout of titles; her shop was a leading location for pamphlets on how the Whigs

were handling the affairs of state. She had clear interests in Jacobite and anti-Jacobite topics, publishing one hundred and eighty titles on rebellion and Celtic themes from 1743 to 1761. Fielding authored five anti-Jacobite pamphlets and two periodicals, all of which she published. Her business was characterized by offering the public multiple points of view; hence, she benefited in the 1740s–1750s from being both Hill’s and Fielding’s publisher and, in turn, she provided a channel through the *Globe* that developed Hill and Fielding as popular and commercial successes. She pitted them against each other over Canning, after which each went their separate ways, with Hill taking on the Royal Society and Fielding the Jacobites.

Cooper’s business model, what she selected to fund and sell, suited much of what Hill wrote and wanted to publish: both relied on current events, controversies and commentaries to generate texts. Hill wrote well, and was willing to build and risk his reputation in attacking notable figures and established institutions. Cooper leveraged the reading public in a way that no other bookseller active in the 1750s did. We know more about Hill’s dealings with Cooper than most authors and, on several levels, he may be said to have defined her career as a publisher. While Hill did not make Cooper famous and it took four publishers to cover his wide range of interests, his relationship with Cooper illustrates how two entrepreneurs sustained a business relationship that led to advances in the availability and marketing of social knowledge in the 1740s–1750s, contributing to mid-eighteenth-century models of fame and fortune.

## NOTES

1. See Raven (2014a), (2014b), (2007).
2. *LPH* 51–53.
3. Rousseau (1978).
4. McDowell (1998); Hunt (1984).
5. Rousseau (2012) does not provide Cooper’s dates: they are 1707–1761. She was baptized on 26 December 1707.
6. For an overview of Cooper’s role as publisher of periodicals, see my ‘Mary Cooper and Periodical Publishing, 1741–1761’, *The Journal of Newspaper and Periodical History* 6.2 (1990), 31–35.
7. See Tierney (1998).
8. Maslen (1993) and Treadwell (1982).
9. Raven (2007), 374.
10. Rousseau (2012).

11. Manushag Powell reprints a large section of the fictional Adam FitzAdam's dialogue with Mary Cooper from Dodsley and Cooper's periodical *The World*. See Powell (2012), 222–224.
12. For discussion of the Canning case, see John Treherne, *The Canning Enigma* (1989), regarded by critics as a reasonable history of the events. See also Rousseau (2012) and Powell (2012), on Hill's involvement.
13. Zomchick and Rousseau (2014), xli–xli.
14. Rizzo, 'Notes on the Paper War between Henry Fielding and John Hill, 1752–1753', *The Library* 6th series (1985) 7.4, 338–353. The tradition of the paper war is European in origin, starting as a means of intellectual debate among private correspondents.
15. *LDA* 10 February 1753.
16. See Rousseau (2012), 232, and *LPH* 106–107.
17. Mulvihill (2011), xxiii.
18. Rousseau (2012), 67.
19. For a discussion of attitudes towards medical topics in the period, see Byrne (2013), especially 159–183 on pharmacopeia.
20. Rousseau (2012), 147.
21. *Ibid.*, 149–150.
22. *Ibid.*, 161.
23. Reviewing the paper wars between Hill and Fielding and Hill and Smart, Powell (2012) 85–130 reads Hill largely through gendered lenses, noting that the pamphlet writers' complaints against him were designed 'to show that his failure as a man was predicted by his authorial shortcoming, and vice-versa' (105).
24. For a booktrade-based discussion of *The Hilliad*, see Welsh (1885).
25. Mulvihill (2011), xxiii.

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# ‘The Ravished Organs of the Attentive Audience’: John Hill and Christopher Smart

*Min Wild*

The context for this chapter is the vigorous mid-eighteenth-century London ‘paper wars’; its subject, one salvo in the pen-and-ink tussle between John Hill and Christopher Smart.<sup>1</sup> This salvo is Christopher Smart’s parody of a number of John Hill’s daily essay-journal ‘The Inspector’, which appeared in the August 1752 number of Smart’s exuberant journal *The Midwife*.<sup>2</sup> In 1749, Smart, a Cambridge don and prize-winning poet, had abandoned university life; by 1752, he was a well-known figure in literary London. Not so very elevated now—a wit, hack and theatrical performer: in 1750, he had assumed the satirical persona of Mrs Mary Midnight, an elderly female midwife, to edit his successful and sparkingly irreverent magazine for the bookseller John Newbery; indeed, he was now impersonating the lady on the stage.<sup>3</sup>

Although his junior by eight years, Smart was senior to Hill—though only just—as a periodical editor. Paper wars amongst mid-century writers were endemic and, as George Rousseau has shown, Hill was not slow to pick a fight – but in Smart’s brilliantly ingenious parody some serious

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matters are at issue.<sup>4</sup> Hill's daily 'Inspector' column in the flimsy news-sheet *The Daily Advertiser* began on Monday, 4 March 1752, with pretensions to being a literary review, but it soon became primarily a vehicle for Hill's pronouncements on 'Town' *mores*.<sup>5</sup> The literary and the scholarly are Smart's chosen fields of attack, but driving them are imperatives of class, politics—the Leicester House circle, and patronage; of religion high or low; and of the spiritual versus the material.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the status of knowledge itself is under question, as the last antagonisms between the 'Ancient' men of letters and the new empiricists played themselves out; the differences emerge through close attention to Smart's lovingly precise parody and to its target.

The parody arrives early in the intensive Smart versus Hill paper war, and it is not the business of this chapter to recount the subsequent blows and counterblows which culminated in Smart's witty and devastating mini-mock-epic, *The Hilliad*: this appeared, after much puffery, in February 1753.<sup>7</sup> The *Hilliad* is a minor but significant document of mid-eighteenth-century literature, a belated participant in the long-running battle—as the Scriblerians saw it—against ill-educated, grasping and garrulous hacks: Pat Rogers, the twentieth-century scholar of Grub Street, hailed it as a worthy successor to the *Dunciad*.<sup>8</sup> The significance of Smart's earlier parody of 1752 is its status as forerunner and midwife to the *Hilliad*, and it merits attention on those terms: are the targets of the earlier parody the same? What are the widest cultural contexts in which this scrap of literary antagonism can be seen? This chapter examines the parody closely in its own right as satire, and takes its cues from Smart's own insinuations: it sets out the parameters of the quarrel as Smart saw them in its early days. This chapter, too, takes the war to be real, rather than one secretly engineered to capture attention and sales. Smollett, in 1751, noted such duplicity: 'this science, which is known by the vulgar appellation of *puffing*, they carried to such a pitch of finesse, that an author very often wrote an abusive answer to his own performance, in order to inflame the curiosity of the town'.<sup>9</sup>

After the *Dunciad*, most writers wanted to be on Pope's side, for 'the relation between ephemera and serious literature in mid-century was ... close'.<sup>10</sup> Hacks were distinguishable by the speed with which they sought, *ab ovo*, to establish their own non-dunciadic status, accusing everyone else of being an ignorant hireling. For instance, Hill's Inspector claimed that he had 'had the pleasure of a particular intimacy with Mr Pope', and that he 'had often heard him banter his own form [joke about his own disability]', and laugh at the opinion of women thinking

favourably of him'.<sup>11</sup> The Inspector (Hill put only a paper's breadth between himself and his periodical persona) is making Pope exemplify stoic acceptance of physical disadvantage. Knowledgeable contemporary readers would scoff at the idea that the foremost poet of the age would 'often' discuss such matters with a minor magazinier, especially if that reader was Smart, whose Latin translation of an extract from the *Essay on Man* gained Pope's approval.<sup>12</sup>

Escalation in war comes with blow and counterblow, and both parties claim victimhood: it is impossible to establish precisely what Hillian affronts led to Smart's August 1752 parody. The *Midwife* had ceased monthly publication after the January 1752 number—scholars usually suggest the reason was Smart's attention to his stage orations, conducted in the persona of Mrs Mary Midnight.<sup>13</sup> So, the August number was a sudden revival, partly to print some of Mrs M's tongue-in-cheek disquisitions as puffery for the stage show. At least three pieces in this number, though, can credibly claim Hill as a target.<sup>14</sup> Smart could have been responding to Hill's hijacking of Smart's joke piece from the *Student* magazine, on the fashionable practice of 'Humberging'.<sup>15</sup> Smart was more interested in spiritual than scientific truth, and a trigger was perhaps Hill's observation that Smart, in his prize poem 'On the Immensity of the Supreme Being', had misunderstood the physical nature of amber.<sup>16</sup> Chris Mounsey thinks that Smart was reacting robustly to Hill's claim in a July edition of 'The Inspector' that the *Midwife* had ceased.<sup>17</sup> Hill was evidently unamused by Smart's parody, for only four days after its appearance he reviewed acidly Smart's *Poems on Several Occasions* in the *Monthly Review*.<sup>18</sup>

The parody is introduced untitled in a short preamble by someone unspecified—not Mrs Midnight, who always loud-hails her own presence: 'The following paper, under the title of *Inspector*, [was] found one day last week at *Cuper's Gardens*'. About this claim may hang a cloacal aura, for Cuper's was one of the less savoury mid-century pleasure gardens. Even the better ones could stink; in a previous *Midwife* number, a poem found at Vauxhall Gardens was graphically depicted as destined for arse-wiping.<sup>19</sup> According to a spoof mortality statistic in the December 1752 *Gentleman's Magazine*, no fewer than 2079 books had died that year of 'yellow-fever in a jakes'. The apparent act of piracy in printing the paper is, then, excused by invoking 'Pope's conduct in relation to my Lord Bolinbroke'; how far this reference aims to disparage Hill's 'attempts to court' – or indeed, to counter—Bolingbroke is unclear.<sup>20</sup>

John Hill's Inspector frequently asserts his own popularity and, accordingly, the introduction to the parody 'expects the Thanks of the Town' for the piece:

whatever the present Age may think of it, we are confident Posterity will be very thankful to us for rescuing this learned and useful Piece from the Oblivion into which it was likely to fall [that looming jakes]. That which *Longinus* is so celebrated for, his illustrating his Precepts by his own Example, may likewise be said of the following Essay. (*Midwife*, III, 82–83)

By invoking precepts by example via Longinus, the parody announces its specific focus on literary matters: educated readers are to recall Pope's Longinus '[w]hose own Example strengthens all his Laws,/And is himself that great Sublime he draws'.<sup>21</sup> The parody won't just tell, it will also show.

Boldly titled *The Inspector*, the parody proper begins with a Latin epigraph: discount at your peril. It comes from Virgil's *Aeneid*, and, in a heavenly *reductio ad absurdum*, lampoons Hill's egoism. Here's Dryden's translation:

Know first, that heaven and earth's compacted frame  
And flowing waters, and the starry flame,  
And both the radiant lights, one common soul  
Inspires; and feeds, and animates the whole.  
(Bk. VI: 724–7)

Educated wits will see the point: Hill's moral universe has room for only one animating power: his own. In satire, fairness is an early casualty: the real Inspector never claimed divinity, even though a cursory look at his 'Saturday sermon' issues of 'The Inspector' reveals that he had unusually open access to the Creator's thoughts.<sup>22</sup>

Hill's marvellously enthusiastic natural philosophy is not the major target of Smart's parody. It could be: we know from his poetry that Smart saw God in every paw and petal of the natural world, and from elsewhere in the *Midwife* that he was something of an 'Ancient' about natural philosophy.<sup>23</sup> Smart would have opposed Hill's really rather well-reasoned 'Modern' case for human investment in pure as well as applied science, culminating in his declaration in the 1752 *Essays in Natural History and Philosophy* that 'I have Eyes open to all the Pleasures, all

the Advantages of the merely speculative Part of the Science.’ In the *Midwife*, Smart was scathingly opposed to materialist scientific experiments: he would have hated, for instance, Hill’s empirical but murderous crushing of the bellies of pregnant scale insects to expel eggs—‘we forced out from several [insects] considerable Numbers’—and would probably have discounted Hill’s scruples about this: ‘Tis a cruel Price we pay to these Investigations, when the Creature that is to furnish out the Entertainment, is made to pay its own Life as the Condition.’<sup>24</sup> Smart thinks Hill, at heart, a materialist, as his later startling insertion of vocabulary echoing the scandalous French *philosophe*, Julien Offray de la Mettrie, suggests:

The human Soul is so wonderfully framed, and so curious are the delicate Springs which set this Mechanism in Motion, that we are equally strained with too exalted Flights, or wearied with the slow and solemn Stile, that flutters now, now grovels on the earth. (*Midwife*, III: 88)<sup>25</sup>

But although the men differ over epistemology itself, literary style is Smart’s core topic. Smart wants to nail Hill the periodical essayist as a pontificating upstart not qualified to write. Here, we bark our shins on the harsh complexity of the British class system. Strictly, John Hill had the edge, since his father was a Cambridge-educated clergyman, and Smart merely the son of an estate bailiff. Smart had a well-educated father, though, and his own university education came courtesy of the Duchess of Cleveland: essentially, some aristocratic Northumbrians sent their bailiff’s clever and witty son to Cambridge.<sup>26</sup> In Hill’s case, however, no-one offered to pay fees and, according to Rousseau, he was ‘too unruly at that age’ to take much tutoring.<sup>27</sup>

This is the nub: the violent energy firing up this piece also powers all of Smart’s *Midwife* enterprise, from the choice of a female persona to the jokes about mechanical or ignorant critics that roar through it. It is a sense of outrage akin to Swift’s in the *Tale of a Tub* (1704): people who know nothing, can’t write, and whose dearest topic is themselves are getting into print on equal terms with scholars of the university. Pat Rogers lists the hack qualities satirised by Swift in his *Tale*, each of which is highlighted in this *Midwife* parody, and targeted again in the *Hilliad*: ‘pride, obscurantism, apostasy, plagiarism, ignorance and scurrility’.<sup>28</sup> In this earlier parody, though, two prior accusations emerge: Hill’s literary

criticism is trivial—happening on the same level as his fashion notes—and can't be divorced from his stodgy establishment politics.<sup>29</sup>

The parody proper begins with some typically Inspectorial self-promotion, as Smart's fake Inspector impudently assesses his social betters: '[o]ne of the greatest Geniuses as well as one of the most distinguished Characters that perhaps this or any other age ever produced'—the fake and the real Inspector both employ sycophantic hyperbole—'who is often pleased to compliment me upon my Writings' called in on him (III: 83).<sup>30</sup> Smart is mocking Hill's constant references to John Boyle, fifth Earl of Cork and Orrery, a noted figure in London literary circles: Rousseau describes Hill as 'sucking up [to him] for patronage'.<sup>31</sup> Given Hill's lack of formal learning, how infuriating it was for Smart—who was, indeed, comfortable in aristocratic circles denied to Hill—that his adversary used imaginary or exaggerated connections to bolster his shoddy criticism.<sup>32</sup> 'My footman', says the fake Inspector, 'always serves up a small Ebony Writing Desk, which was the gift of the lovely *Narcissa*, as regularly as my Tea-board'. The lady's name suggests he gave himself the desk, and much here is modelled closely on the real Inspector: he brags of his 'Escritore' and fine furnishings, and, often, of his popularity with the ladies.<sup>33</sup> '[S]erves up' looks like a *faux pas* implying ignorance of the *beau monde*, since even then it was food that was served up, not desks, and effeminacy, too, is indicated by this concern with delicate fashionable furniture.

A parody is a 'beside/against song', as Margaret Rose has explained—Fielding's exemplary parody *Shamela* was only written 11 years before this one.<sup>34</sup> The 'beside' part of the parodic equation is the most awkward for a writer on the attack because, in satire, the satirist must put substantial moral distance between himself and the sinner he chastiseth. Fredric V. Bogel, complicating Stallybrass and White's emphasis on binarism in satire as a literary mode, suggests that eighteenth-century satire worked with an 'opposition between identity conceived of as single, unitary and categorially secure, and identity conceived as double, divided and categorially permeable'.<sup>35</sup> 'Paper war' writers usually try to figure their duncious opponents as simple, simple-minded and 'categorially secure', while they themselves retain the luxury of containing multitudes, and inhabit the second group. Parody, conversely, might be seen as inimical to this distancing imperative, since it asks that the parodist climb inside the head of his victim and correctly identify his habitual modes of thought, in order to mimic them. Yet, as with Fielding's *Shamela* and

its fragmentary competing voices, the practice of temporarily inhabiting the self you are satirising can produce the most effective parodies. Satire-through-parody will emphasise the complex, adventurous subjectivity of the antagonist, while *ad hominem* satire-as-whinging will look like something your dim opponent does. While both men are writers for hire with pretensions to the cultural and moral high ground, Smart can fight on surer literary ground: his grasp of ancient languages is secure, his criticism is well-informed, his judgement and observation of style is accurate, and he has already shown himself a master at parodic annihilation of pompous diction.<sup>36</sup>

The fake Inspector’s imagined aristocratic guest reads—and adores—a half-finished issue of ‘The Inspector’. The real Inspector is fulsome in his references to Orrery, boasting of ‘the friendship with which the noble Author has ... honoured me’, and eulogising his writing: ‘His Lordship is a consummate master of style’.<sup>37</sup> So, it’s not surprising when, in the parody, the Lord ‘took Occasion to speak of Stile in general, which naturally led him to commend the happy Flow, that sliding Grace, that unaffected Eloquence, which, he was pleased to say, distinguished mine from all other Writings’ (*Midwife*, III: 84). There follows an Inspectorially-long sentence elaborating on the delight this praise incurs, exemplary of that Longinian illustration by example. Here’s the ‘sliding grace’ at work:

As it would be the utmost Vanity in me to disclose, so it would be something more than Prudence to conceal, that, which, to an Author of a less Florid Temper and Turn of Mind might, without any Violation of the most ingenuous Disposition, have communicated Sensations of the most pleasing Nature; Sensations that, in Spite of Philosophy, I must still own I have so much of Humanity about me, to feel, nay to be transported with their most charming Allurements. (*Midwife*, III: 84)

At the start, an attempt at balanced, antithetical Georgian style comes close to nonsense; this happens with the real Inspector, too.<sup>38</sup> The fake Inspector doesn’t know what ‘florid’ means: it’s not the ‘sensitive’ or ‘delicate’ he wants here. For the parody, it’s perfect, since floridity is Hill’s besetting literary sin. An *Oxford English Dictionary* definition for the period has ‘[o]f a person, addicted to the use of flowery language or rhetorical ornament’. Meaning gets ever more elusive as the vile sentence continues. While something is being disclosed to someone, what is really

signified here is that language itself is abused in Hill's muddy hands. Content is under attack, too, for, while in Derridean fashion meaning is being deferred, by the end of the sentence the slippage is between mere satisfaction at praise and sensual gratification. This is carefully deliberate on the part of Smart, for, in 'ravishing the organs' of his audience, the Inspector can run to the salacious. An especially unseemly pairing—ostensibly excusable as an its attack on libertinage—occurs in the original newspaper pieces, where an over-warm 'Saturday sermon' recommending marriage—the state in which every man 'reaches with easy Hands the unresisting, the complying Sweets; feasts upon the mellow Fruit, or presses the rich Cluster'—is followed on the Monday by a vivid and very closely described narrative where the line between rape and seduction is curiously blurred. The aristocratic victim ('Calista') recalls the fateful night in a letter to her undoer: 'You know you led me reluctant, trembling and averse to your appointed Rendezvous; I was chill with Horror as I entered.' She wakes in bed to find her seducer gone, and rouses the house: 'Naked as I was, I tore away the Bolts that stopped the Door.' These pieces appeared only days before the parody.<sup>39</sup>

In Smart's parody, the fake Inspector then makes a preposterous claim to originality, equating his writing with his dress, suggesting Hill's vanity leads him to make no distinction between the two. There is no Popean sense of language as the 'dress of thought'; dress is simply an ostentatious commodity.<sup>40</sup>

It has ever given me great Pleasure, to find the Judgement of the Town concur with my own Opinion so intimately in this Point, that the Stile is the most pleasing and commendable Part of my Writings. I confess it is what I pride myself upon; and it was not long after I first undertook *this work, singly, without any kind of Assistance, what no Man had ever attempted before me* [my italics], that I discovered there certainly is some Merit in easy Writing. My dress has also been admired by many, imitated by some, and yet I cannot account for my Excellency in either, other than that I never trouble myself about them, judicious Nature acting on these occasions the double Part of an Amanuensis and Valet de Chambre, with her usual Grace and unaffected Simplicity. (*Midwife*, III: 84–85)

Smart's Virgilian epigraph is apt and pointedly ironic—no man had ever attempted this before him? Periodical essayists of the time, notably Smart himself and Johnson, give due honour to Addison and Steele's

originary *Spectator*, but Hill borrows and debases in his introductory paper Mr Spectator's famous pledge to 'like Socrates' 'bring philosophy down from heaven' for his periodical, and cites no precedent.<sup>41</sup> The parody declares that Hill knows nothing, and yet, through his careless *sprezzatura*, all of Nature is co-opted to be his valet and secretary. Smart has noticed these issues of 'The Inspector' in which Hill does conflate writing and fashion, or attempts some criticism in which he mis-spells 'Gargantua' and misquotes Milton.<sup>42</sup>

The rest of the parody mocks the Inspector's literary pronouncements as the stalest of critical clichés, at least as old as Horace's *Ars Poetica*: light, shade, nature, *ars celare artem*. Style is discussed in terms of a flowing river, with characteristic fusty Latinate terms ('lutulent' meaning, of course, 'muddy') and Hillian antitheses where distinctions are not clearly explained or maintained. The fake Inspector writhes himself into erotic ecstasies recalling Shaftesbury's 1711 complaint that cheap writers use sex to seduce their readers.<sup>43</sup> He invokes 'the renovating Fire of the Tongue, whose Thunder charms, whose Eloquence persuades the ravished Organs of the attentive Audience'. The fake Inspector, just as the real one does, then extols proper political deference, linking correct style with order: 'the well disciplined Improvements, the regular Plantations of Industry and Art'.<sup>44</sup> Looking, then, for an analogy for ornaments of literary style, the fake Inspector lights upon a dubiously-placed piece of embroidery: 'We admire the luxuriant Fancy, the diffusive Ramifications, the interwoven Foliage of Cynthia's Pettycoat, the pleasing workmanship of her own fair Hands': here, the language also mimics Hill's quasi-lyrical nature writings. Finally, in a triumphant Smartian double-reference—where, in Hillian fashion, the subject of the sentence has long been mislaid—somebody 'loses the Substance while they grasp the Shade' (*Midwife*, III: 86), just as do readers of Hill's prose.

The closing bombshell of the parody is designed to annihilate any shred of authority Hill might have as a classicist. Hill's ignorance is wildly exaggerated in the parody but certainly he can stumble. In one paper, the real Inspector ranks the controversial and sometimes ludicrous Colley Cibber with Socrates. In another, he inadvertently values Homer at less than the 'Monthly magaziners' and, in one of his sermon papers about the treasures of the Bible, he evidently gives Smart the perfect gift, for here Smart found the inspiration for the close of his own parody.<sup>45</sup> The real Inspector says:

To be at once entertained and improved, is the full intent in reading; nor is it worthy a rational creature to accept the amusement without the advantage. He who would have both in the highest degree, must look up to the highest fountain of knowledge for them; he must drink from that eternal spring from which the purest of the others are but obscure and vague emanations. (*Inspector*, I, no. 94, 75)

Hill, again, seems to claim originality, but '[t]o be at once entertained and improved' is simply *utile et dulce*, the most hackneyed Horatian tag of all.

Hill's appropriation leads Smart to a delicious *reductio*: how smug would the Inspector be were he to *discover Horace*? So, in the parody he does:

There is a very ingenious Author, that if I mistake not, flourished much about the *Augustan Age*, who I am surprized to find so little, if at all, read, in our illiterate Times. I believe few Men have so extensive a Classic Acquaintance, if I may so distinguish by that name such who admire the Former; few, I believe, have a more universal Knowledge of Men and Books and Things in general than I have; yet in all the wide Circle of my Acquaintance, in the ample Circumference of my Reading, I have never found one that had the least Knowledge of his Writings. (*Midwife*, III: 86–87)

The fake Inspector reveals his find: 'Nor shall I be thought pedantic, tho' singular in my Notions, if I should venture to recommend Horace to the Town, an Author who I lately discovered in a dusty Corner of the *Philobiblian Library* in *Piccadilly*'. Horace was the most beloved Roman writer of the eighteenth century and, in fairness, often quoted by the real Inspector. The *Philobiblian* was real, and had non-conformist connections: there, Horace might well be among the cobwebs.<sup>46</sup> The fake Inspector then absurdly mis-describes the Roman's works, and puts down his 'faults' to the 'Times in which he lived'. The parody's message is unequivocal: the Inspector and his creator are impertinent, and judge where they lack knowledge.<sup>47</sup>

At the close, Hill's invocation of the fountain of knowledge (Pope's 'Pierian spring')<sup>48</sup> encouraged the parodist to re-open the subject of literary style:

[w]ho then would choose to drink a muddy Stream, when he can approach the crystal Fountain to allay his Thirst? Yet Experience teaches us, that he who flounces most will most disturb the Water. (*Midwife*, III: 88)

Sharp readers now see that the subject at issue has done some graceful sliding. These words refer to John Hill himself, the parody’s target: ‘the same Act which he intends shall wash him cleaner, stirs up the fetid Lees, that but obscure the Fountain, which was once so clear’. The real Inspector had been praising the Greek poet Lycophron, who then and now stands as a byword for literary obscurity, so this is the illiterate recommending the incomprehensible.<sup>49</sup> Smart has a tricky job here: the parody must unmask a writer, whose style is needlessly obscure, recommending clarity to his readers in obscure terms. Other parodic attacks on Hill, though zestful, are not so subtle.<sup>50</sup>

What is most important in writing, claims the false Inspector in his final paragraph, is ‘perspicuity’—a typical Latinate word which actually nails Smart’s target best, since it means ‘clear to the understanding’—‘to see through’. When the fake Inspector declares that ‘certainly that Author, whose Writings we are *obliged* to read twice, does not *deserve* to be read *once*’, Smart is asking us to reconsider the real Inspector’s daily effusions, and suggesting that John Hill’s title to literary distinction has been attentively seen through.

## NOTES

1. On ‘paper wars’, see Ainsworth and Noyes (1943), 63–71; Mahony and Rizzo (1984); Rizzo, (1985), 338–353; notes to *The Hilliad* in Williamson (1987), 443–446; Bertelsen, (2000), 99–121 and Bertelsen in Hawes (1999), 135–152; and Rousseau (2012), 107–169.
2. Smart, *The Midwife, Or, Old Woman’s Magazine* (London: T. Carnan, 1750–1753), III: 82–88 (published 4 August 1752). Scholars have so far only noted this piece in passing: Chris Mounsey (2001), 131–132, focuses on the botanical; Bertelsen (Hawes 1999), 143, notes that Smart ‘parodied the Inspector’s well-known vanity and fondness for self-aggrandisement’. Ainsworth and Noyes (1945), 65, miss this as a catalyst for Hill’s subsequent attack.
3. For a full *Midwife* anatomy, see Wild (2008).
4. Rousseau (2012), *passim*; for Hill’s puffery and quarrel with Fielding, 113. Ainsworth and Noyes (1945), 63, note that Hill and Smart’s

- 'natures' were 'diametrically opposed'. The first *Midwife* appeared on 16 October 1750.
5. 'The Inspector' began on Monday, 4 March 1752 (see Note 41) and appeared daily in the *London Daily Advertiser* (at first, titled *The London Advertiser*), not bi-weekly as Rousseau says (2012), 107, 116. Hill's contemporary John Kennedy thought Hill did not write alone, and some variations in Inspectorial style support this: 'What a pity it truly is, most indefatigable Sir, as you have such a most notable surprising knack of writing those so very valuable diurnal Inspectors, you should not vouchsafe kindly, frankly and freely, to give us the best receipt for the making them up': 'Whipping Rods' (1752), vi.
  6. The Leicester House circle was the loose conglomerate of opposition-minded aristocrats and politicians who constituted a kind of court-in-waiting around Prince Frederick, the then heir to the throne.
  7. For Rousseau's account of the 'war' with Smart, see (2012), 155–161.
  8. Rogers, (1972), 212.
  9. Smollett, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, 4 vols (London 1751), 2: 90.
  10. Hunter (1990), 194.
  11. John Hill, *The Inspector*, Vol. II (R. Griffiths, J. Whiston & c.; London, 1753), 262. To avoid clashes in paper numeration, page numbers are given for the edited bound volume Inspector papers, and dates for the *London Daily Advertiser* originals.
  12. Mounsey (2001), 49–51.
  13. Wild (2008), 47.
  14. 'Hill as a target': 'Dissertation on the Expediency of Setting a Standard', *Midwife*, III: 73–75; 'Mrs M to the Critics', III: 75–79; 'Epigram or Two', III: 95, and this parody.
  15. To 'humbug' is to deceive. Rousseau (2012), 102, 166–167 does not specify that it was Smart himself, as 'Chimaericus Cantabrigiensis', who first broached the topic in *The Student*, in 'Calliope', 21 November 1750. Hill uses the term later in 'Inspector' pieces, and his novel *The Adventures of George Edwards* (1751). A letter from 'Jeffrey Hum' could be a coded attack on Smart: *The Inspector*, I: 275ff.
  16. See the *Hilliad* prolegomena in Williamson's edition (1987), 226.
  17. Mounsey (2001), 131. Rousseau (2012), 155–168, gives an account of Hill versus Smart.
  18. *Monthly Review*, 8 August 1752: see Rousseau (2012), 157, and Mounsey (2001), 131.
  19. Cuper's Gardens attracted pickpockets and 'the profligate'; in 1753, it had its license refused: *London*, by David Hughson, ed. Edward Pugh (London, 1809), 518. 'The Memoirs of a Pamphlet reflecting on the Miss G—gs', MW, II: 228–234, and see Wild (2008), 116.

20. When he printed, without permission, sections of a Bolingbroke treatise: Dickinson, (1970), 278, 280–281, 290–292; ‘attempts to court’, Rousseau, (2012), 147, 194.
21. Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism* (1711), l: 675ff.
22. See, for example, *London Daily Advertiser*, 16 May 1752 (henceforth LDA).
23. For ‘ancient’ Smart, see, for example, *Midwife*, I: 151–154 and Wild (2008), 54–58.
24. ‘Eyes open to all the pleasures’: John Hill, *Essays in Natural History and Philosophy* (London 1752), 6; ‘forced out from several’, *ibid.*, 13; he also murders to dissect a microscopic aquatic ‘Animalcule’, *ibid.*, 96, 100; ‘a cruel Price we pay’, *ibid.*, 213. For Smart’s opposition to materialist scientific experiments, see Wild (2008), 188–193.
25. See the terms la Mettrie uses to describe the soul in *Man A Machine* (1749), 128, 135.
26. See Mounsey (2001), 23, 39–42, and Sherbo (1967), 19.
27. Rousseau (2012), 10.
28. ‘apostasy’: apart from the materialism, Smart disliked the whiff of non-conformist preaching in the Inspector’s ‘Saturday Sermons’. Rogers (1972), 198.
29. See Note 44.
30. ‘hyperbole’: see *Inspector* I: 64–68, 140–143, 222–223.
31. Rousseau (2012), 166, and see dedication to Inspector, Vol. 1.
32. ‘aristocratic circles’: not only with his father’s employers, but also with many in Prince Frederick’s Leicester House circle: see Mounsey (2013), 193–197, and *Inspector*, I: 10.
33. ‘Escritore’, *Inspector*, I: 140. It may also be worth noting that Smollett calls Roderick’s bride Narcissa in *Roderick Random* (1748): my thanks to the editors for this.
34. Rose (1993), 46.
35. Bogel (2001), 20.
36. The *Midwife* literary critical pieces are knockabout, but acute: they are itemised in Wild (2008), appendix 2, 199; for parodies of pompous diction, see *ibid.*, 200.
37. *Inspector*, II: 101.
38. For the best examples of the *Inspector* being nonsensical with antitheses, see the start of LDA, 11 July 1752, and this: ‘An earnestness and precipitation on both sides, in an engagement of this kind, is indeed so far from being a rational exception to the general rule, that it is the circumstance above all others under which it is most necessary to be complied with’: I: 210. Other examples are legion. He defends himself against the charge of bad writing: II: 151.

39. The sermon is in the LDA for 18 July 1752. Tellingly, the edited bound volume version excises this passage completely: I: 180–184. Calista's story is in the LDA for 20 July 1752. See also the rape accounts in *Inspector*, II: 120 and 134.
40. As in, for example, Hill's fantasias on iron, or blue periwigs: LDA, 8 May 1752 and 2 July 1752.
41. See *Midwife*, I: 260; *Rambler* nos. 117 and 126, and the *Daily Advertiser's* introductory self-description of Monday, 4 March 1751, reprinted due to 'extraordinary demand' on Wednesday, 6 March 1751. This is not titled or numbered as an 'Inspector' paper—as is the next, on Tuesday—but the style is all Hill, and describes the 'Introductory Dissertation' or 'Essay' to be expected with each paper. John Kennedy in 'Whipping Rods' (1752), vi, 15, noted Hill's plagiarism, citing a steal from Swift, and a neat compliment to Smart seems meant: 'As to his pilfering and imitating of his great predecessors, the spectators and tatlers, [Hill] performs it ... much like some vain dull Pantaloon, playing the smart, witty, active Harlequin.'
42. Gargantua appears as 'Garagantua': 'The Inspector', 10 July 1752; misquotation from Comus: *Inspector*, I: 205.
43. 'sex to seduce': Shaftesbury (1999), 90. Hill compares his public to a capricious 'giddy female': II: 151.
44. See, for example, the garden in *Inspector*, I: 28: 'liberty was now overturning all its constitution, and indulgence was suffering it to run into utter ruin'. For Hill's conventional conservatism, see, for example, II: 100.
45. In a fireworks analogy, Homer is likened to one rocket, where they are one hundred: I: 315, 317–318.
46. On the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century reception of Horace, see Money (2007), 318–333. For the Philibiblian, see 'William Heard': *Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Eighteenth-Century Writers and Writing*.
47. The fake Inspector's literary criticism is ill-informed and his numbers are out—see, for example, I: 140–143. Citing the 'times in which they lived' makes him a 'Modern': see Levine (1991), 2.
48. *Essay on Criticism*, II: I, 215.
49. The Inspector's first Lycophron piece is a mix of narcissism and faux-humility. One needs a 'very masterly Knowledge of the Language' for Lycophron: 'I have read him with Admiration'—but—'I may appear too assuming' with this 'Observation': LDA, 26 December 1751. Also, see *Inspector*, II: 187, and the Lycophron Cassandra translation: II: 308–312. Lycophron is in the LDA for 16 June 1752: 'that Lycophron whom few had read when I lately recommended him'. This maddening statement is close enough to the date of the *Midwife* parody to have been another catalyst for Smart's Horace joke. For Lycophron's obscurity, see his entry in the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*.

50. See Kennedy, ‘Whipping Rods’ (1752) and Henry Woodward’s ‘Mock Inspector’ parody, by ‘Dr Bobathill’, *Gentleman’s Magazine*, December 1752, 569–570, and Rousseau (2012), 159.

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# ‘Unassisted Hill’: Churchill’s Satire and the Fate of the Virtuoso

*Adam Rounce*

In a critical age keen to dip into the past, rediscover the most obscure of careers, and turn them into statements of subversion, knowing or otherwise, by the underdog against the all-pervasive establishment, there are some public figures who pre-emptively resist any attempt to fit them into such narratives. The multi-faceted Sir John Hill had such a peculiar career, and spent so much of it as the knowing butt of jokes and insults from across the cultural spectrum, as to almost pass beyond the normal workings of satire. Hill was just as likely to offer a self-mocking parody of his own talents as a bold apologia and, while many criticised almost every one of his numerous attempts to represent science, literature, and the theatre, he can be seen as embodying a more complex movement during the eighteenth century, whereby versatility is superseded by a need for expertise, and figures such as Hill, of no mean talent, are to some extent shunted aside. It remains to Hill’s credit, as the present chapter will seek to demonstrate, that his eccentricities rendered him, to an extent, more individual than any denigration of him as a mere placeman, amateur, or

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self-serving hack. On the other hand, such denigration, particularly the apparently partisan attacks in the 1760s from Charles Churchill, John Wilkes and the anti-Bute *North Briton* movement, are very revealing about the particular cultural moment, and Hill's unusual place within it.

## I

In his large-scale analysis of the development of fame across the last millennia, Leo Braudy has described 'the eighteenth century' as 'an age preoccupied with the question of self-definition in public'. In this sense, John Hill was born at the ideal time, given that particular sort of gusto and ambition that George Rousseau calls his 'genius at self-promotion'.<sup>1</sup> Hill was talented enough to participate in many fields, and anxious enough to want attention for them, even if it meant that the spreading of his talents was thin enough to leave him vulnerable to criticism, as a mediocrity or worse.

Even after his poetic career became energised (but also, arguably, reduced in terms of scope and breadth) by his enlistment in the movement of his friend John Wilkes against the unpopular ministry of the Earl of Bute, the satirist Charles Churchill would have placed Hill's various ambitions within his rationale of human psychology, which is unsophisticated but effective. Taking as its basis the tenor of Pope's 'ruling Passion' from the first *Moral Essay*, Churchill offers a parodic version of human understanding:

Explore the dark recesses of the mind,  
 In the Soul's honest volume read mankind,  
 And own, in wise and simple, great and small,  
 The same grand leading Principle in All.  
 Whate'er we talk of wisdom to the wise,  
 Of goodness to the good, of public ties  
 Which to our country link, of private bands  
 Which claim most dear attention at our hands,  
 For Parent and for Child, for Wife and Friend,  
 Our first great Mover, and our last great End,  
 Is One, and, by whatever name we call  
 The ruling Tyrant. SELF is All in All.<sup>2</sup>

It is a mark of Churchill’s satiric descriptions that apparently disinterested motives and deeds almost always tend towards a sort of narcissistic gratification, even (and especially) when they seem to be doing the opposite; the ruling tyrant cannot help itself. The particular aesthetic of Churchill’s poetry—a plain-speaking, bluff tone which, in its very lack of side, reveals the prejudices and failings of others—is repeatedly primed to reveal personal selfishness as the prime and most significant of human motives. In this sense, whenever Churchill wrote about a public polymath such as Hill—and even before he had attached his satire so decisively to Wilkes, thus making Hill as a benefactor from the patronage of Bute a natural enemy and sort of honorary Scotsman—the assumption is that Hill’s display of his varied talents is only a gratification of his ego, rather than a sincere and more modest representation of genuine accomplishment.

Churchill’s poetry is far more effective at irony and lampoon than in the areas of invective that require him to manipulate wider public opinion. Like many a satirist, Churchill is not often constructive, and the areas of his work that relate his Whiggish sympathies to the cause of ‘Wilkes and Liberty’—which is always represented as being exalted and above criticism—can ring slightly hollow. It is also the nature of Churchill’s satire—and one reason why, after its immediate and succeeding readership moved on, it fell away so greatly in popularity, and failed to re-engage a sustained audience in posterity—that there are few neutral figures within it who merely exhibit their skills; everybody is always pursuing some furtive angle or advantage, and their motives are almost always duplicitous, or at the least self-serving.

Churchill’s first mention of Hill is not especially topical, and comes in his first published poem—and the work which made his name—*The Rosciad* (1761), his satire on the London stage which is presented as a sort of inverse progress, with Garrick at the head of the profession, and sweeping aside the many briefly described figures who are often lucky to get away with being defined as meretricious. Churchill’s theatrical knowledge and awareness of gossip had been honed to an exacting degree, and the result was, as Lance Bertelsen suggests, ‘remarkable for the extremely sharp focus of its theatrical vignettes’.<sup>3</sup> It was also a masterstroke of publicity, in that a poem about the profession tapped into the interests and opinions of Churchill’s entire projected audience. Hill, of course, had trodden the boards himself with some success from early in his career, and his treatise *The Actor* (1750; revised and enlarged

1755) was in some ways a popularisation in English of Sainte-Albine's *Le Comédien* (1747), part of a repeated pattern whereby Hill is associated with the production of work which is not entirely his own. Its publication, and his chequered career on stage, had the unfortunate effect of leaving enough of an imprint in the popular imagination to allow Churchill to view him as a legitimate target, albeit hardly a current one.

The arrival of Hill in *The Rosciad* is marked by a loaded description:

With sleek appearance, and with ambling pace,  
And, type of vacant head, with vacant face,  
The Proteus H[ILL] put in his *modest* plea, —  
'Let Favour speak for others, Worth for me.' —

The ironised lack of modesty is something of a commonplace: his declaration that he has behind him humble intrinsic merit, as opposed to benefitting from favouritism or patronage, has precisely the opposite effect to that intended, drawing attention to Hill's relationships with the powerful by inference as effectively as any explicit mention of them. But he is also significantly nondescript, being protean not in special or spectacular qualities, but in being devoid of distinguishing features. Hill offers a sort of banality that is chameleon-like, changeable because so lacking in character. The rhetorical questions that follow imply something different to their supposed intention:

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—  
At once to play, prescribe, compound, compose?<sup>4</sup>

The mock praise is a way of making clear that Hill cannot possibly be talented enough to excel in all these areas (because nobody could be), and the apparently laudatory rhetorical address becomes instead a damning critique of Hill's superficiality and pretension, in trying to assume so many public roles (acting and theatrical writing; journalism,

medicine and scientific research) to any degree of skill or specialism, let alone excellence, at the same time. It will be noted that Churchill's criticism here is not of Hill as a dilettante or a fraud per se, though he leaves open the innuendo that someone trying so many different careers has perhaps failed in some of them, and their diversity is more by necessity, than a statement of excellence. It is also partly a reflection on the changing expectation of specialism inherent in such roles, and the way in which such supposed multi-faceted qualities therefore appear either specious or tokenistic, or even a submerged form of deceit.

Almost a century later, the editor of Churchill's works for the popular Edinburgh James Nichol edition, George Gilfillan (1813–1878, an interesting poetic figure in his own right and an opinionated authority on the poetry of the eighteenth century), illustrated the subsequent further movement towards specialism and individual expertise as demonstrated through specific disciplines, with 'science' no longer an all-purpose term for philosophy, natural science and other aspects; concomitantly, there is a more precise and quantifiable sense of a career or vocation as necessarily specialised, and Hill therefore comes out, in Gilfillan's gloss on this passage, as something of an impostor:

'Proteus Hill.' Sir John Hill, a celebrated character of that day, of incredible industry and versatility, a botanist, apothecary, translator, actor, dramatic author, natural historian, multitudinous compiler, libeller, and, *intus et in cute*, a quack and coxcomb.<sup>5</sup>

This follows Churchill's implied judgement too much to be entirely just, but the logic seems to link such industry and versatility with quackery and excessive conceit, and to suggest strongly that such attempts to shine in so many fields are in themselves suspicious.

A more sympathetic reading of Hill's reception is offered by Rousseau: 'potshots at "versatile Hill" could be taken in any field. It was the price of his adaptability.'<sup>6</sup> What Churchill and others exploited—often, somewhat unfairly—was that such adaptability could easily be represented as mediocrity and bad faith. Churchill's final comment on Hill in the *Rosciad* illustrates this: 'But WOODWARD came,—H[I]LL slipp'd away,/Melting, like ghosts, before the rising day'.<sup>7</sup> Even the reader unfamiliar with the reference is likely to interpret Hill as an ephemeral figure who cannot take any level of scrutiny, and disappears rather than face his detractors. This is somewhat disingenuous, as the reference is to a paper

war and physical conflict when Hill most certainly did not retreat (albeit not for any high-minded reasons) and, instead, embarrassed himself by his response.

Churchill's passing barb goes back to May 1752, when Hill, having insulted an Irish army officer in his 'Inspector' column, was a week later caned and kicked by this officer, Captain Mountefort Browne, in the very public setting of Ranelagh gardens.<sup>8</sup> Later in the year, in November, Hill used his column to argue against the actor Henry Woodward, who had been on the receiving end at Drury Lane of an insult from Thaddeus Fitzpatrick (who would in 1763 become notorious for leading the 'Half-price Riots' against David Garrick). Hill's intervention into an arcane incident of eighteenth-century punctilio (did the insulted commoner Woodward err and challenge the gentleman Fitzpatrick to a duel?) led to pamphlets against him from Woodward, and the alleged vanishing of Hill when Woodward sought him out to remonstrate, like Browne, more directly and physically.<sup>9</sup>

The machismo of Browne and Woodward of course does them no credit, and Hill's supposed reticence to face the latter is equally irrelevant; of more consequence is what Hill did, though, after his beating by Browne. Instead of trying to conceal his fate, his choice of action, unfortunately, was to expose his wounds and his situation to as wide an audience as possible. This was ill-advised, as any sympathy for Hill due to the violence he had suffered evaporated during his peculiar and very self-conscious promotion of his injuries. His conflicts had most certainly not made him humble.

It is not surprising that Henry Fielding's 'A Receipt to prevent the ill effects of a raging Vanity in an Author', in the *Covent-Garden Journal* of August 1752, takes Hill as its model. Fielding and Hill would later fall out over the latter's critique of Fielding's conduct and reasoning in the Elizabeth Canning affair, the most sensational public mystery of 1753; more immediately, Fielding had (as a magistrate) given bail to Mountefort Browne on 9 May, and was certainly not sympathetic to Hill's part in the affair. Bertrand Goldgar surmises that 'Hill had cut a ridiculous figure', in the months after the attack by Browne, adding conspiracy theories and innuendo to the hypochondriac updates of his health in his 'Inspector' columns, and embracing even this very bad publicity without dignity. He therefore 'was an obvious example to employ in any essay on the vanity and self-praise of authors'.<sup>10</sup> One of the oddest of Hill's works serves as central evidence of this: in December 1752, his

pamphlet argument with Woodward produced *The Inspector’s Rhapsody or Soliloquy, on the Loss of his Wig*, a poem that does Hill so little credit that most readers could only assume that it was composed by his enemies. Rousseau’s summary of it as ‘his version of the caning’, which attempts ‘mawkishly to capture his emotional pain’ as well as exploiting any potential readership interested in his response to his sufferings, is not a criticism so much as a description.<sup>11</sup>

Hill’s reaction to his troubles in this poem is not a profound self-examination. It begins as a pragmatic justification, rather than any idealistic defence of his conduct. On allowing himself to be beaten, for instance: ‘Better a living dog, than lion dead’ is a sentiment that places survival over pride, and has been a conclusion reached by many more persecuted figures than Hill, but it is strange to find it in this context, where it can hardly enhance his reputation. *The Inspector’s Rhapsody* seems, at points, to be an earnest exploration of Hill’s problems, combined with a whimsical cast of mind that, as its title suggests, seems more an exercise in performance than any sincere expression of the self, and is as interested in minutiae and trivia, as in self-justification. Where, he asks, is the Wig, ‘In which I look’d so spruce and debonaire?/That bright addition to my walnut phiz,/Shall vile *Hibernians* trample and be-piss?’<sup>12</sup> He seems happy to admit the more ludicrous side of his character and appearance, which then reduces the effect of the violence used against him, making it seem equally frivolous.

The poem’s hyperbole becomes, at points, less intentionally comic: eventually Hill presents himself as a martyr, but picks an unusual precedent for such heroic suffering:

Far from a tasteless world, I’ll pass my days  
Like great *Diogenes* despising praise.  
The happy sage, superior to renown,  
Smiles at the distant clamours of the town  
(*Inspector’s Rhapsody*, 5)

Diogenes of Sinope is famous for rejecting all earthly vanity, but all records suggest he hardly did so with a smile on his face, and found content instead in insults and offensive gestures; if Hill means to compare himself to Diogenes’ well-known riposte to Alexander the Great’s

acclamation, then the connection between the two is not obvious (though, then again, neither is the combination of self-defeating flagellation and boasting of *The Inspector's Rhapsody*).<sup>13</sup>

Hill's protean aspects in works such as this can only be seen as an admitted lack of substance, alongside a basic desire to appear and remain in the public eye—a fatal combination that has produced many a celebrity since—and, if that fails, to at least to earn a living. The best that can be said about Hill's attitude towards fame is that he is the very opposite of a hypocrite. His most striking declaration in the poem (entirely contradicting the earlier wish to be a noble martyr or prophet without honour) concerns literary fame which, at this point, interests him as little as the relative quality or lack thereof of his writing:

For fame let *Fielding* scratch his pensive head,  
 Fame I despise, I scribble but for bread;  
 Let him his labours polish and retouch,  
 He may write better but not near so much.  
 The barren gifts of *Phoebus* and the *Nine*,  
 I leave to him who has a place to dine.  
 Tho' call'd a coxcomb, frothy, pert, and dull,  
 Still rolls my chariot, and my belly's full.  
 (*Inspector's Rhapsody*, 7)

It is exceedingly rare for an author to argue that their enemies may worry over what they write, whereas they are satisfied in having written more than them, howsoever mediocre.<sup>14</sup> Poetic talent here is a luxury open only to those who do not have to worry about financial security. Hill's narrator may be called rude names and judged a failure and a dunce, but at least he lives adequately. This extraordinary, shameless declaration of his own meretriciousness is an appropriate keynote in this uneven, self-contradictory poem. Hill's depiction of himself recalls a famous insulting description of another poet-physician-scientist, Dryden's travesty of Sir Richard Blackmore's process of composition in his "Prologue" to *The Pilgrim* (1700): "At leisure Hours, in Epique Song he deals,/Writes to the rumbling of his Coaches Wheels".<sup>15</sup> Yet,

Hill appropriates the vitriolic sentiment, and turns it into a back-handed compliment.

In the next year, in his pamphlet contribution to the controversy surrounding the alleged kidnapping of Elizabeth Canning, Hill refuses to conceal his authorship: 'I have ordered my Name to be put to this Pamphlet, that I may not be supposed the Writer of those many other Pieces, where Ingenuity, or its Parent Hunger, may hereafter obtrude upon the World'.<sup>16</sup> That such high-mindedness could exist alongside such cynicism in his writing makes Hill protean indeed, though it also explains why some readers found his sincerity to be vitiated, given such contradictions. At times, Hill brings to mind Swift's infamous ironic declaration by a 'hack' author: 'I profess to *Your Highness*, in the integrity of my Heart, that what I am going to say is literally true this Minute I am writing'.<sup>17</sup>

## II

When Henry Woodward criticised Hill in November 1752, he delved into his theatrical memories, and produced a list of Hill's makeweight performances, incompetent roles and outright theatrical failures. To describe the tone of the argument as rather petty is something of an understatement—Woodward takes the opportunity 'to animadvert upon your unkind behaviour to Mr. *Cross* the Prompter'; Hill has obviously forgotten the 'extraordinary Pains he took with you in the Part of *Oroonoko*', though alas 'to very little purpose'.<sup>18</sup> Amongst these rather parochial examples of Hill's perfidy and ingratitude is Hill's supposedly dreadful performance as the botanist in Theophilus Cibber's adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* (1748), which allows Woodward to point out a rather glaring dramatic irony. Who, he argues, seeing you act the part, would have thought that you actually were a botanist?

that you wou'd have been *really* the Thing you feign'd so ill;—and that your Studies wou'd have redounded so much to the Good of your Country, by the incredible, nay uncredited Discoveries you have since made in *Moss*, *Mites*, *Cabbage-Leaves*, *Cherry-Stones*, *Stinking Oysters*, and *Cockle-Shells*. (*Letter from Henry Woodward*, 6–7)

Actors are necessarily involved with ideas of the authentic and false, and criticism of them often points out their merely superficial relationship to the subject of their role, but Woodward instead implies a link between Hill the bad actor and the bad scientist and scholar. If you played the

part so unconvincingly, why should the public take you seriously in the real role?

There are two other distinct charges to Woodward's satire, which are repeated in most attacks on Hill: his work is trivial and its materials insignificant or vulgar (hence the litany of colloquial or diminutive descriptions of his botanic ingredients), and, anyway, it is not all his own: Hill's results are 'incredible, nay uncredited', because they are (it will be hinted at or addressed directly in the years to come) plagiarised. Rousseau finds that plagiarism was a 'charge frequently made' against Hill.<sup>19</sup> When Churchill next turned his attention to Hill, it was in *The Prophecy of Famine* in January 1763, his flyting of the Bute administration and all things Scottish. Churchill includes Hill in with those who the hapless First Minister has rewarded for their cronyism, and asks how his 'English muse' can expect any favour from such a patron:

Can her weak strain  
 Expect indulgence from the mighty THANE?  
 Should he from toils of government retire,  
 And for a moment fan the poet's fire;  
 Should he, of sciences the moral friend,  
 Each *curious*, each *important* search suspend,  
 Leave *unassisted* Hill of herbs to tell,  
 And *all the wonders of a cockleshell*<sup>20</sup>

Again, the last word emphasises the grubby trivia of Hill's botanic discoveries, but the '*unassisted*' is more damning: Bute's patronage assists Hill, but the deliberate syntactic ambiguity also leaves 'unassisted' hanging, and draws attention to the presumed degree of assistance behind Hill's labours; the play on words also stresses '*unassisted*' almost as an honorific, which further undermines the idea of Hill working alone, and intensifies the innuendo of plagiarism. Once Churchill directed his poetry to anti-Butean satire—*The Prophecy of Famine* was composed with the need for satiric material for Wilkes's *North Briton* in mind—then Hill became a natural target, but the economy of the wit here manages, in a small passing comment, to identify one of the most vulnerable parts of Hill's reputation—that his work was ultimately not entirely his own.

The similarly opinionated Horace Walpole made the same points, in his letters, and in notes to his friend William Mason's poems, where he describes Hill as 'a physician, quack, botanist, author of a paper called *the Inspector*, and of various other things, especially of many folios of natural history, and above all, at the head of the plagiaries of the age'.<sup>21</sup> Walpole was eminently capable of presenting rumour and hearsay as immutable truth, but he does also seem to have been part of a trend: the charge of plagiarism is rarely directly substantiated, but the assumption seems to have been that works were either reliant on past sources (*The Actor* and *Le Comédien*), seemingly beyond the abilities of Hill, given his background and education (*Theophrastus on Stones*, of 1746), or more generally suspicious *en masse*, because of the extraordinary levels of industry needed by one individual to produce so many works in different areas.

Walpole's blunt appraisal of Hill's alleged plagiarism is part of his wider distrust of cronyism as practised by Bute, the former tutor to King George III; Walpole has a somewhat snobbish suspicion of the new king's favourites, who are symbols of mediocrity like Hill: 'I am sorry to say this journeyman is one of the first men preferred in the new reign', he complains, and it is the recruitment of such average and unexceptional talents that irks him:

Dr Hill, though undoubtedly not deficient in parts, has as little title to favour in this reign, as [Sampson] Gideon the stockjobber in the last; both engrossers without merit. Building, I am told, is the King's favourite study; I hope our architects will not be taken from the erectors of turnpikes.<sup>22</sup>

Hill is not lacking in some talents, 'in parts', but is not impressive on the whole; Sampson Gideon, the Jewish stockbroker, was denied a baronetcy from the administration of the Duke of Newcastle because of his religion. More pertinently, like Hill he is an 'engrosser'—he takes over and absorbs a whole market or area, but with no distinction or creativity, performing mechanical actions, rather than adding to the gaiety of nations, or at least distinguishing himself. The caustic final remark—that the King might as well end up appointing architects from the drab and utilitarian constructors of roads—positions Hill as part of a dull modern meretriciousness, where results and output are more important than style or quality. Within this typically exaggerated protest at modern dullness, Walpole points up the greatest problem for Hill's reputation: the more areas he seemed to conquer superficially, the greater the criticism against

his different types of production for being functional, under-achieved, unexceptional, or disingenuous in intent.

Hill was viewed disparagingly, albeit without the more nuanced side of Walpole's critique, in the *North Briton*, where Churchill and John Wilkes based their depiction around the idea of Hill as a stooge and placeman. When it is considered that Wilkes and Churchill were busy including anyone with Buteite sympathies or patronage into their satire, Hill comes off relatively lightly, and is not treated as a figure of any importance. Instead, he is a quack scientist who is impugned by being part of the new regime, and is prepared to manipulate the evidence to suit his masters. *North Briton* 24 (13 November 1762) is a parody of the ongoing peace talks with France over ending the Seven Years' War, and takes the form of a 'Dialogue of the Living', where pseudonymous figures (obviously Bute and his chief negotiator, the Earl of Bedford) discuss what concessions can be made. The very valuable sugar islands of Guadeloupe can be sacrificed, because 'The sugar-cane is a paltry plant—Dr. *Hill* only recommends the great virtues of the *sugar-stick* itself, to be drawn out by inward suction ... Let us therefore give up all the sugar islands to the French.'<sup>23</sup> Hill is guilty of the most unscientific absurdity, praising worthless and unhealthy confectionary, and returning the priceless source of such sugar to the enemy, gratis. A slightly earlier issue had included a poetic allegory, 'The Dream', which is a symbolic account of the British court under Bute and the Scottish, with the lily and rose banished by the thistle, and various weeds and ugly plants filling the gap. The poet is then brought back to reality:

When a damn'd fly upon my nose,  
Which surely ow'd me no good-will,  
Wak'd me at once, and as I rose,  
Whom shou'd I see but DOCTOR HILL.<sup>24</sup>

The *North Briton* took a blunderbuss to its targets, and Hill here appears as a more sinister figure than he could ever have resembled: the accident of the poet seeing him upon waking is meant to suggest the network of intrigue and conspiracy that Bute has put in place, and that Hill and his other creatures are now busily acting out (as well as the connection between Hill's botanical work and the symbols of roses, thistles and the

rest). Such conspiracies seem absurd in retrospect—given his level of industry, Hill would have been too busy collecting or writing to carry out Bute’s nefarious instructions—but are indicative of ways in which Hill’s reputation allowed him to be described on a scale from the meretricious to the sinister.

Ultimately, most of the criticism of Hill seems to have been partly rooted in reasonable objections to different aspects of his writing and public career (plagiarism, desire for fame, hack-work), combined with a more nebulous and less rational suspicion rooted in Hill presenting his expertise in a variety of fields. To excel in one area was becoming more common than the Hillian model of variety, otherwise a Churchill or Walpole would be on hand to mock your failures, or fix your public reputation as a journeyman, rather than a Proteus.

In *The Ghost* (1762–1763), his long, experimental poem which encompasses both an earlier Shandean aesthetic and later anti-Buteite politics, Churchill is less restrained than earlier in his attack on Hill, who is now seen merely as a quack doctor; quacks are part of a wider metaphor in the poem, for mediocrity, inauthenticity and deliberate deceit (of which the titular Cock Lane Ghost episode of 1762 is the centre).<sup>25</sup> Churchill is contemptuous of:

*Those*, who PHYSIC twirl,  
Full fraught with death, from ev’ry curl;  
Who prove, with all becoming State,  
Their voice to be the voice of Fate,  
Prepar’d with *Essence*, *Drop*, and *Pill*,  
To be another WARD or HILL,  
Before they can obtain their Ends,  
To sign Death-warrants for their Friends<sup>26</sup>

The company that Hill keeps shows Churchill’s contempt for him as an alleged medical fraud: the recently deceased Joshua Ward (1685–1761) had been lampooned by Pope three decades earlier, but his quack panaceas are now lumped in with Hill’s more innovative herbal medicines.<sup>27</sup> Churchill’s satire is not at its most subtle: in *The Ghost*, a variety of minor and major public figures represent cynical functions and actions

rather than coming to life as individuals; the concept of the quack doctor fits perfectly the poem's obsession with those who offer something on the surface but (like the Cock Lane Ghost itself) have no real substance, being in fact an imposture. Churchill's placing of Hill within such a world of deceit is not fair, but is a consequence of both his varied talents and their suggestion of an absence of specialisation.

The most famous person ridiculed by Churchill in *The Ghost* is Samuel Johnson, who was an ill-suited part of the faintly ludicrous committee set up to investigate the Cock Lane phenomena. Churchill sees Johnson's fame, too, as an adverse reflection on contemporary culture: he is 'Pomposo', and his followers merely taken in by his richly obscure vocabulary, signifying nothing. Johnson, too, Churchill claims, is not the authentic and sincere figure he seems:

POMPOSO; *Fame* around should tell  
 How he a slave to int'rest fell,  
 How, for *Integrity* renown'd,  
 Which Booksellers have often found,  
 He for *Subscribers* baits his hook,  
 And takes their cash—but where's the book?<sup>28</sup>

The final reference, showing Churchill's genuine ability to find a wound or weak spot, is to Johnson's edition of Shakespeare, proposals for which had been issued in 1756; the edition would not, of course, appear for nine years, until 1765, after Churchill's death, though he is unwilling here, in 1762, to give Johnson the benefit of any doubt: Johnson is as sharp and money-grubbing as the rest of the literary world.

Churchill's satire is unforgiving. It would seem small consolation to John Hill perhaps but, though he may come out of it no better than most of his contemporaries, he also comes out no worse than far more substantial and revered people such as Johnson. Looking back at the various comments and rumours concerning Hill and his works in the 1750s and 1760s, the most famous example, perhaps, is also far less judgemental, and comes from Boswell's account of Johnson's interview with King George III, in 1767: 'The King then asked him what he thought of Dr. Hill. Johnson answered, that he was an ingenious man, but had no veracity', and Johnson goes on to demonstrate this through an example

of Hillian exaggeration, concerning microscopes. But then Johnson pauses in his recollection:

‘I now, (said Johnson to his friends, when relating what had passed) began to consider that I was depreciating this man in the estimation of his Sovereign, and thought it was time for me to say something that might be more favourable.’ He added, therefore, that Dr. Hill was, notwithstanding, 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.<sup>29</sup>

It is telling that Johnson takes Hill’s weakness to be excess, in terms of knowledge and ambition; he was not content enough with his actual talents and accomplishments but, instead, projected them as being greater than they were. It is a more generous estimate than those of Walpole or Churchill, who assumed that Hill had in some way or other not properly deserved his relatively modest success, but it also points to the problem of Hill’s heterogeneity, and such attempts at virtuosity. All do not all things well, and even such a polymath as Johnson is hinting that the future Hill would be better to concentrate on one thing, rather than risk the diffusion of abilities. It was a message directed at Hill repeatedly, and it marred and undermined his reputation, even as he continued cheerfully to ignore such detractors.

## NOTES

1. Braudy (1986), 371; Rousseau (2012), 148.
2. *The Conference*, in *The Poems of Charles Churchill*, ed. D. Grant (1956), 237.
3. Bertelsen (1986), 75.
4. *Poems*, ed. D. Grant (1956), 6.
5. Churchill’s *Poetical Works*, ed. Rev. G. Gilfillan (1855), 5.
6. Rousseau (2012), 296.
7. *Poems*, ed. D. Grant (1956), 6.
8. Churchill had insulted Browne in ‘The Inspector’ for 30 April 1752. *LPH* 49.
9. Rousseau (2012), 112.
10. Fielding (1988), 325.
11. Rousseau (2012), 148.
12. Hill, *The Inspector’s Rhapsody* (1752), 3.

13. For the various versions of Diogenes' probably apocryphal request for Alexander to get out of the light, see *Sayings and Anecdotes*, ed. R. Hard (2012), 53.
14. For other examples of such self-laceration, especially in the work of Richard Savage, see Rounce (2013), 51–55.
15. *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. E. N. Hooker et al. (1956–2000), 6: 264.
16. Hill, *The Story of Elizabeth Canning Considered* (1753), 10.
17. Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. Walsh (2010), 23.
18. *A Letter from Henry Woodward* (1752), 4.
19. Rousseau (2012), 43. See also 48, 50, 59–61, for Hill's falling out with Emanuel Mendes da Costa, and the latter's suspicions.
20. *Poems*, ed. D. Grant (1956), 201–202.
21. William Mason, *Satirical Poems*, ed. P. Toynbee (1926), 54. Quoted in Walpole, *Letters*, ed. Lewis et al. (1937–1983), 28: 199 (18 May 1775), where Mason mockingly offers to rival Hill's 'tincture of spleenwort' with his own pills.
22. Letter of 3 January 1761; Walpole (1937–1983), 16: 42. Walpole is reacting to Hill's appointment as master gardener of the Royal gardens at Kensington announced in December 1760, but which did not actually happen.
23. *The North Briton* (1763), 6.
24. *Ibid.*, 31.
25. The 'Cock Lane Ghost' concerned the efforts of one Richard Parsons to attack the character of a bad debtor and ex-lodger of his, William Kent, by the imposture of the ghost of Kent's dead wife speaking through Parson's daughter, and claiming that Kent had poisoned her. For more detail, see *Poems*, ed. D. Grant (1956), 483–485.
26. *The Ghost*, Book 4. *Poems*, ed. D. Grant (1956), 142.
27. See Nicolson (1968), 177–196.
28. *The Ghost*, Book 3. *Poems*, ed. D. Grant (1956), 126.
29. Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (1934–1950), 2: 38–39.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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# John Hill and His Erotic Satires

*Julie Peakman*

During the eighteenth century, writers of erotica began to divert themselves with new reports on findings in botany, reproduction and electricity, and it is this subject matter—which I call ‘scientific erotica’—to which John Hill contributed. This type of erotica emerged as satirical skits on scientific findings. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘skit’ as ‘a quizzing or satirical reflection *upon*, or hit *at*, a person or thing’ which certainly applies to Hill’s works under examination here.<sup>1</sup> Hill’s erotic satires were used as a method of attack on members of the Royal Society, and were a reaction to claims made by its members in their lectures and their published papers in their journal *Philosophical Transactions*. The reason for the attack was the slight which the Society had made on Hill in not making him a member, and their refusal to recognise Hill’s contribution to science.

Eighteenth-century science was not yet organised into semi-autonomous disciplines, but was still an essentially undifferentiated field called ‘natural philosophy’. However, specific periods can be pinpointed when writers of erotica responded to leaps made in science, and incorporated themes from three particular topics—that of botany, that of reproduction,

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and that of electricity. Writers of erotica often reacted to some of the newer scientific ideas emanating from the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*—both articles based on empirical observation and experimentation, and articles containing spurious and wildly-exaggerated assertions. The first type, the botanical theme, emerged in satirical erotica in the 1730s, a result of developments in the subject made by Carl Linnaeus exemplified in his sexual classification of plants, and in new publications written by botanists such as Philip Miller.<sup>2</sup> Satirical poems and parodies quickly followed in which shrubs and trees took on the characteristics of the human genitals; for instance, in works such as *The Natural History of The Frutex Vulvaria, or Flowering Shrub* (1732) and *Arbor Vitae: or, the Natural History of the Tree of Life* (1741), its male counterpart. Second, by the 1750s, findings about the reproductive process emanating from the Royal Society were published in *Philosophical Transactions*, and this is where John Hill turned his attention, writing erotic parodies on experiments being made on the fertilisation of eggs without the need for male intervention. In a similar vein, in the 1770s, a burst of activity on electrical experiments was quickly followed by erotic satires. As early as 1733, Stephen Hales in his *Statistical Essays* had promoted the idea of electricity as a biological property which affected nerve and muscle function. Benjamin Wilson's *Essays Towards an Explication of the Phenomenon of Electricity Deduced from the Aether of Sir Isaac Newton* (1746) brought together papers he had read before the Royal Society. A letter titled *Experiments and Observations Tending to illustrate the Natural Properties of Electricity* (1745), written by William Watson to its President, acquainted the Society with findings he had recently made. Again, these experiments were parodied in satires in which genitals were embodied in electrical fish such as *The Electrical Eel* as the penis and *The Torpedo* as its female counterpart. Within this brief overview, looking at all three emerging scientific topics and the satirical responses to them, it is clear that Hill's satires fit neatly into a popular eighteenth-century genre of erotic writings around science. It is the second of these categories, Hill's erotic satires on reproduction, that I want to explore in more detail.

A brief background will help to provide some understanding of Hill's character, and why he wrote these satires when he did. He had started off as an apprentice to an apothecary, then set himself up in a small shop in the Strand selling his own herbal remedies. He studied botany and was eventually employed by Lord Petre and the Duke of Richmond. He became friends with botanist Emanuel Mendes da Costa, who appears to

be Hill's only close friend at that time. As George Rousseau has pointed out, it was da Costa and William Stukeley who first introduced Hill to other members of the Royal Society, where Hill made the acquaintance of Martin Folkes and Henry Baker, two of the most prominent members of the Society. However, da Costa was to accuse Hill of plagiarism when Hill took over his friend's idea to write about the history of fossils (although the two books turned out quite differently). After the loss of his friendship with da Costa, he failed to find the two requisite nominees for membership to the Society.<sup>3</sup>

Up until then, Hill had been a prolific writer who managed to combine medicine and botany with popular works. By the 1750s, he had written some serious well-respected scientific works, including a translation of Theophrastus' *History of Stones* (1746), *A General Natural History. A History of Fossils* (1748) and *A Treatise on Plague and Pestilential Fevers* (1750); his papers *A Letters Concerning the Matter of Seeding Mosses* and *A Letter Concerning Windsor Loam* had appeared in the Royal Society's journal in 1746.<sup>4</sup> He had written a novel *The History of Mr Loveill* (1750); he also wrote for periodicals including the *Monthly Review* and *British Magazine*, as well a wide variety of pamphlets and essays. For reasons as to why he had been refused membership, we need to take a look at what the code of conduct was for the Royal Society itself and what it espoused in its journal.

The texts emanating from the Royal Society had at their core an ideal of genteel culture. The *Philosophical Transactions* were 'dialogic'—in other words, addressed to known parties (other members) with a focus on co-operation. At the heart of this discourse was politeness, civic conduct and established personal friendships between gentlemen. This included personal ties, gentlemanly connections and face-to-face contacts. These relationships were seen as the main way to validate members' own scientific investigations.<sup>5</sup> Given that the type of research of this group was mainly experimental, the 'discovery' of science therefore depended on co-ordinated efforts of all those involved, undertaken within a set of conventions. Intergroup friendships were essential for group solidarity, but these conventions also threw up barriers to entrance for people outside the group. A man had to be accepted as being part of 'a society of gentlemen' if he were to gain entrance to the Royal Society—he had to show modesty and a willingness to follow certain rules of conduct which encompassed the society's regulation. Most of the members were financially independent, usually from the upper

classes, and had leisure time for the study of nature, collecting flora, fauna and minerals, or recording astrological events. They were free to follow their hobbies, were at the top of the social structure and were reliant on no one but themselves, since it was assumed their integrity could be trusted.<sup>6</sup>

As George Rousseau has shown, Hill was none of the above.<sup>7</sup> He was vain, uncouth, thick-skinned and solitary. He was certainly no man of leisure, had no university education and had to work hard for his living, selling herbs, writing books and working for patrons when he could find them. He appears to have been an unscrupulous and fickle character. He had too much of the celebrity about him, ever desperate to turn his hand to anything in his bid for recognition, a trait which was noted by the members of the Royal Society. He yearned for the Society's recognition, but its members had already observed his lack of modesty and cut-throat eagerness, which they saw as unfitting behaviour. When he failed to gain entry to the prestigious Society, he took retribution in vengeful attacks through sexualised satires. To this extent, Rousseau's suggestion of Hill's rudeness as being linked to a personality disorder makes perfect sense as to why Hill did not fit in to the Society's membership.

Failure to gain entrance to the Royal Society devastated Hill. The fact that Hill was industrious and clever and had a string of publications behind him, which many Fellows of the Royal Society did not, must have peeved him yet further. All his efforts had amounted to nought. Since he no longer felt it necessary to modify his behaviour, the rejection set Hill off on a spiral of ungentlemanly behaviour. According to Rousseau, he began to whore and philander, as he 'womanized and pranced about in fine clothes and gloves'.<sup>8</sup> By 1750, Hill had ditched his wife and gained a mistress, Madame Diamond. More significantly perhaps, in light of his erotic satires, he was mixing with a known pornographer, namely Ralph Griffiths, who had recently published *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (which would come to be known as *Fanny Hill*) and helped him to launch the *Monthly Review*.

While editor of *The British Magazine* (1746–50), Hill began to write scurrilous pieces condemning the Royal Society, but he was not the first to lampoon its members. In 1700, lawyer William King in his *The Transactioneer with some of his Philosophical Fancies: In Two Dialogues* had already suggested the *Philosophical Transactions* was a ridiculous collection of miscellanea, confused and muddled in its presentation.<sup>9</sup> Hill's attack in *Review of the Works of the Royal Society of London, Containing animadversions on such of the Papers as deserve Particular Observation*

echoes King in condemning ‘the more trivial and downright foolish articles’.<sup>10</sup> Parodying the ideas and style of the *Philosophical Transactions*, Hill would go on to attack his former allies Martin Folkes and Henry Baker in *A View of the World of the Royal Society* (1751). Despite counter-attacks on him as a failure and a charlatan, Hill appeared to maintain a link with Linnaeus, to whom he dedicated *The Sleep of Plants and Cause of Motion in the Sensitive Plant Explain’d* (1757).<sup>11</sup> However, his skits on reproduction were to show another side of his public persona.

### EROTICA AND REPRODUCTION

Hill’s sexual satires parodied serious scientific proposals about the propagation of living creatures. Three pieces of his erotic satire are relevant here. In the first tract, *Lucina Sine Concubitu* (which I will call *Lucina* for short), Hill went by the pseudonym of ‘Abraham Johnson’; the second, *A Letter To Dr. Abraham Johnson* was purportedly by ‘Richard Roe’; the third, entitled *A Dissertation on Royal Societies. Occasioned by the late pamphlets of Dr. Abraham Johnson and Dr Richard Roe*, Hill wrote anonymously. These tracts raised three main concerns which had emerged as a result of recent scientific exploration of reproduction. The first was the diminished role of women in reproduction, second was the problem of unwanted offspring, and third was the entry of both science and the male physician into the female domain of childbirth.<sup>12</sup> Two contemporary issues were further played out: that of conception without the aid of a man; and that of pneumatic conception, or the notion of animalcula or ‘seeds’ being propagated by air. Hill’s satires overturned some of the serious assertions made by prominent physicians of the day on the matter of the role of men and women in the reproduction process.

*Lucina Sine Concubitu* came out as a pamphlet and went on sale for the price of one shilling (Fig. 1).<sup>13</sup> It was published by Mary Cooper, a woman whose family name was known for at least one previous racy pamphlet.<sup>14</sup> The number of editions and translations into Italian, French and German showed its widespread appeal both in Britain and in Europe.<sup>15</sup> As many of the contributions in epistolary format appearing in the *Philosophical Transactions*, the tract is headed ‘A Letter Humbly Address’d to the Royal Society’, leaving the reader in no doubt at who it is aimed.

In *Lucina*, Hill takes advantage of the public scaremongering which had been concurrent with the rise of male midwifery, notably that male physicians were now active in the birthing chamber. Previously, these had been all-female ‘secret’ spaces excluding all men, including male relatives.

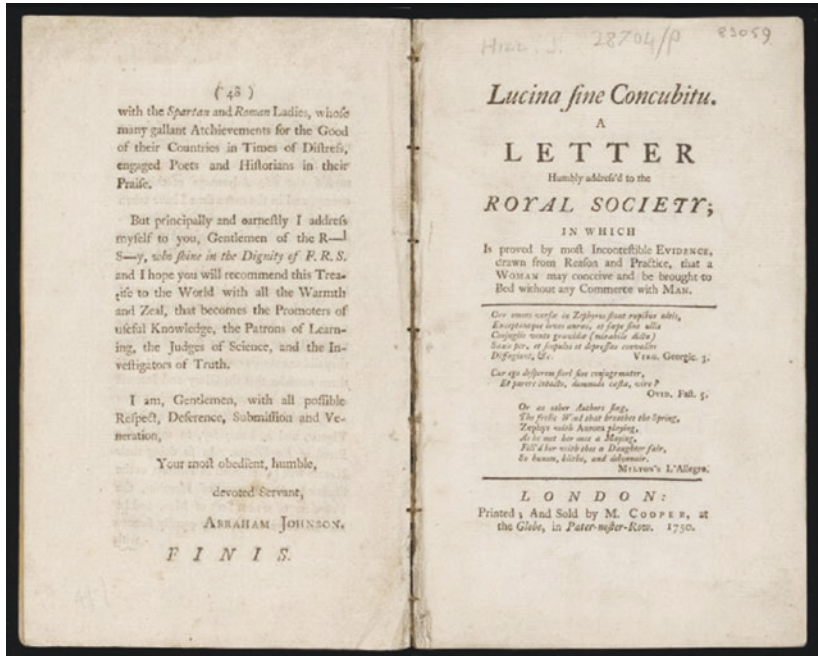


Fig. 1 Title page of *Lucina sine Concubitu* (London: M. Cooper, 1750). Courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London

As a result, there emerged a fear of the male midwife as a new-fangled physician who now had access to the bodies of men's wives, sisters and daughters, and could be seen as a potential philandering seducer.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, male midwives had also gained a reputation for being gullible, forged in part from the case of Mary Toft in 1726, in which John Howard, an eminent surgeon and male-midwife, had been fooled into affirming that Toft had given birth to multiple rabbits, her deception only exposed sometime later.<sup>17</sup> In *Lucina*, Hill's narrative follows the actions of the gullible fictional male midwife who has landed himself in trouble after diagnosing the pregnancy of a young unmarried daughter of a neighbouring gentleman. The young woman, upon being confronted with this suspicion of her pregnancy, 'turned up a Face of inexpressible Innocence and Amazement, and immediately fainted away into her Mother's Arms'. The girl proclaimed her innocence, declaring that she had never to have been touched by a man. In an attempt to

explain her predicament, the physician was veering towards an excuse for her, when confronted by the girl's irate mother, 'I really found myself inclining to Compassion. But the good old Lady soon put a stop to these Womanish Emotions of my Spirit, falling upon me with the most outrageous abuse, for *daring to asperse her Daughter's Reputation in that wicked ruffianly Manner*, vowing *it was a Lie, a damn'd Lie*, and *she wonder'd her Husband could bear it without Resentment*.'<sup>18</sup> Unable to bring himself round to the idea of the young woman having had sexual intercourse with a man, the narrator begins to try and find alternative possibilities. Even after the delivery of her baby, she entreats him to find an alternative explanation to her predicament. He explained 'Such earnest Protestations, delivered with so many moving Tears, wrought upon me so strongly, that, I knew not how, I found myself strangely inclined to believe her, even against the Remonstrances of Reason and Experience'.<sup>19</sup>

In his rush to find explanations, the narrator falls upon 'Mr Woolaston's' book *Religion of Nature Delineated*. This popular work, published in 1722 by William Wollaston (1660–1724), had sold 10,000 copies in a few years and gone through at least six editions by 1738. Wollaston had suggested that preformed animalcula might be 'dispersed about, especially in some opportune places, are taken in with aliment, or perhaps the very air ... and being thence transferred into the wombs of the females, are there nourished more plentifully, and grow, till they become too big to be any longer confined.'<sup>20</sup> Our narrator similarly ponders 'why might not the Foetus be as compleatly hatched in the seminal Vessels of the Woman ... whether Animalcula did really float about in the Air, and slide down the Throat as he [Mr. Woolaston]<sup>21</sup> described?'<sup>22</sup>

The narrator of *Lucina* in Hill's parody continues Wollaston's line of ideas; he claims that women have no need for men in the reproductive process and aims to prove that women may conceive without the need for men. He refers the reader to the poet Virgil as the 'great Natural Philosopher' who 'confidently asserts, that it was very common for Mares to become pregnant, without any Coition, only by turning their Faces to the West, and snuffing up the Wind in that Quarter ... it occurred to me, that what had happened to a Mare, might for this very Reason, happen to a Woman'.<sup>23</sup> What is more, he intends to prove it unlike 'a droll Set of Gentlemen, who think themselves authorized to tell any Lies in Print, and afterwards to quarrel with the World for not believing them'<sup>24</sup>—another irreverent swipe at the Royal Society from Hill.

The protagonist proposes that it is women who are the likely carriers of fertility, not men, and to test his theory, builds 'a wonderful

cylindrical, catoptrical, rotundo-concavoconvex Machine' which acts as 'a kind of Trap to intercept the floating Animalcula in that prolific Quarter of the Heavens'.<sup>25</sup> He relates how he caught tiny animalcula or 'Minims of Existence' floating in the air; upon examining them through the microscope, he 'plainly discerned them to be little Men and Women, exact in all their Limbs and Lineaments'.<sup>26</sup> He wants to carry out an experiment to impregnate a woman taking in these animalcula from air, but his choice is difficult. 'Sometimes I thought of taking a Wife, over whom I could usurp absolute Authority, and lock her up till the Day of her Labour',<sup>27</sup> but he is fearful 'she might grow desperate, when she should find I had only married her to try an Experiment upon her'.<sup>28</sup> He does eventually successfully impregnate a maid with his methods and concludes that the wind carries animalcula which women then inhale, resulting in the possibility that 'a Woman may be with Child in a single State, consistently with the purest Virtue'.<sup>29</sup> Here, Hill ridicules scientific postulations made by Royal Society members around fertilisation while simultaneously showing off his erudition (namely, his knowledge of the classics and other scientists' ideas) as well as drawing attention to popular works of natural philosophy.

*De Generatione* (1651) by William Harvey (1578–1657) had already become established as a landmark in the scientific revolution, and had formulated the basic process for formation of life, defining the egg as common to all animals. He believed that some plants and animals were produced spontaneously and believed they may have arisen from seed or eggs so small they could be carried unnoticed in the air. He had asserted, that 'many animals, especially insects, arise and are propagated from elements and seeds so small as to be invisible (like atoms flying in the air), scattered and dispersed here and there by the winds; yet these animals are supposed to have arisen spontaneously, or from decomposition because their ova are nowhere to be found'.<sup>30</sup> Other scientists had built on his work and helped establish the male's importance in generation. As early as 1677 (not published until 1679),<sup>31</sup> in a letter to the Royal Society, Leeuwenhoek had described his findings of 'spermatic worms' (spermatzoa) and 'animalcule' under the microscope. He also saw the multitudes of animalcules in rainwater as 'seeds' being carried up when rainwater evaporates in the heat of the sun to be returned to earth as rain. Huygens confirmed the findings of sperm, along with Hartsoeker, who reported the appearance of little eel-like animals in the semen of the cock. Women's role in reproduction was therefore being relegated to that of mere nourisher (Fig. 2).

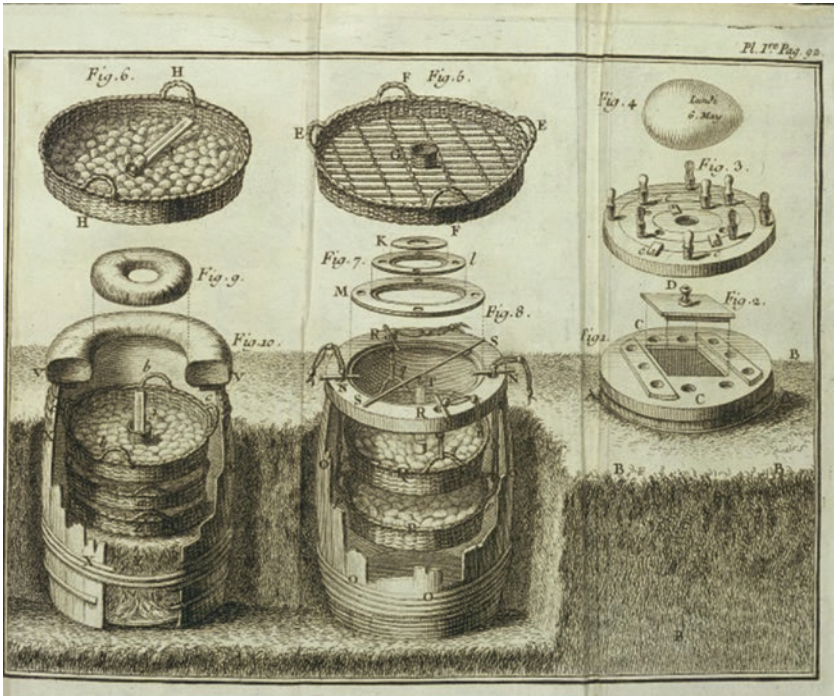
**Fig. 2** Spermatozoon.  
Homunculus in *Essay  
de dioptrique* by Nicolas  
Hartsoetker (J. Anisson:  
Paris, 1694). Woodcut.  
Courtesy of the Wellcome  
Library, London



Significantly, in *Lucina Sine Concubitu*, the narrator questions the need for male involvement in conception in the same fashion that contemporary scientists were questioning the contribution of the female in the reproductive process. Just as the role of the female was being diminished, the narrator turns these theories on their head, dispensing with the male role altogether. Again, similarly to the scientists, the protagonist ponders alternative methods of fertilisation. In Hill's satire, women are perceived to be naturally lascivious but, due to society's restrictions on their behaviour, they have become devious from the necessity of concealing their activities. Humorous jibes are directed at women on account of their sexual natures, the narrator suggesting a possible alternative to the state of affairs regarding female sexual licence. He proposes that, once parthenogenesis is understood, women will be able to sexually indulge themselves without fear of tarnishing their good names, and 'it will be easy for a young Lady to lose her Maidenhead without losing her Character'.<sup>32</sup>

Although this was a comic piece, rather than a call for sexual liberation, Hill was drawing attention to the problems women faced for their sexual activities. Unwanted pregnancies and a doomed reputation were seen as inevitable results of women's amorous dalliances; as the narrator ironically asks, 'how many unhappy Creatures have fallen under the Censures of a malicious World, been excluded from Visits, left out of Card-Parties, and pointed at by Prudes, only for the slight Inconvenience of happening to be brought to Bed [in childbirth] before Marriage?'

Scientists from Aristotle to Malpighi had gained much of their empirical knowledge of the process of generation from the study of eggs and embryonic chickens. In his second satire, Hill parodied a recently published work which had been praised by the Royal Society, the report by René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur (1683–1757) entitled *The Art of Hatching and Bringing Up Domestic Fowls by Means of Artificial Heat* (1750), first printed in Paris the previous year. In it, de Réaumur described the methods used in Egypt using 'ovens which are very different sizes, but in general capable of containing from forty to forty-score thousand eggs'.<sup>33</sup> He observed that dung generated heat and so thought it an admirable way to propagate chickens. Thus, Mr de Réaumur put his eggs into an earthen pot, and covered them in layers of dung. 'He made use of a cask, which he partly sunk in upright into a bed of Dung, and the other end which was uppermost, he opened for the setting into it



**Fig. 3** Poultry egg incubators, Plate 1 from *Pratique de l'Art de Faire Eclorre et d'Elever en Toute Saison des Oiseaux Domestiques de Toutes Especies, Soit par le moyen de la chaleur du fumier, soit par le moyen de celle du feu ordinaire*, by René-Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1751). Courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London

basket filled with eggs' (Fig. 3).<sup>34</sup> He failed and tried again, experimenting with various methods before success. While this was a serious work which had been communicated to the Royal Society, it was to become the butt of yet another of Hill's jokes.

Hill's second satire, a *Letter To Dr. Abraham Johnson, On the Subject of his new Scheme for the Propagation of the Human Species* (1750),<sup>35</sup> was a parody of de Réaumur's experiments. The protagonist explains:

I have plann'd out a spacious Area with Walks for the Ladies to take the Air upon, and with Ranges of my *artificial Uteri* disposed on every Side, into which they may at Pleasure drop their Load, whenever they are in a

Humour to take the necessary Steps for the procuring of another. In other Words, I have disposed all my intermediate Alleys into hot Beds of Dung; in these I have bury'd Rows of Wine-Casks not to forget a Set of Sugar-Tubs, and other Receptacles of proportion'd Size, for the more corpulent of my Customers; in each of these I have placed a Basket of soft Cotton, and in each I have suspended a Thermometer, to certify me to the utmost Exactness of the Degree of Heat.<sup>36</sup>

In Hill's visionary world, a separation was possible between sex and the propagation of children. Sex could be enjoyed for its own sake, and the incubation of progeny could be left elsewhere outside the body. Furthermore, the doctor in the narration proffers a means of avoiding pregnancy altogether using contraception in the form of eaglestone.<sup>37</sup> He states 'this grave Author at length comes to the Virtues and Uses of this famous Mineral, which I find is no other than that which has been long known among the good old Women of our Country, under the Name of the *Eagle-Stone*'. It could drive away apparitions, cure the toothache or, if worn on the arm by a woman with child, prevent her miscarrying. Conversely, if tied to her leg, 'or worn on any Part below the Seat of Impregnation', it would immediately bring on a miscarriage and 'bring forth the little Embryo, of whatever Age, or under whatever Circumstances, it may be fix'd there'.<sup>38</sup> Natural abortifacients were well-known in early modern England and used as a means of controlling fertility,<sup>39</sup> and the doctor advocates one particular abortifacient for use as a contraceptive method. He proceeds to buy up all the stocks of 'Eagle-Stone' he could find to sell to his 'patients'.

I published among the Neighbours, that every Woman that pleased might now repair to me, and dance without Fear of paying the Piper! that Pleasure was before them; and Virtue, that is to say Reputation, (for that is all the Ladies of the Age mean by the Word) was safe; That they might with me have all the Amusement that attended the being made with Child, and that they might be assured of being delivered from all the Effects of their Entertainment, at the End of a Week and three Hours, without the least Pain or Danger,<sup>40</sup>

The implication is that, but for the moral regulations controlling women's sexual behaviour and the risk of pregnancy, women would revert to their natural state, embracing sexual practices. While, in his satire, Hill mocked the views of the moral majority on female modesty, there was an implicit warning about how uncontrollable women might become if left

to their own devices. If unmarried women were not hindered by the fear of pregnancy, their natural sexual inclinations would blossom unfettered with no possibility of male control over their sexual behaviour. This satire therefore plays on that underlying male fear of cuckoldom which such unremitting female licentiousness might bring. This world would create a plethora of autonomous women, who could indulge their sexuality at whim, men losing their authority and power. As such, women were portrayed as a potential threat.

Hill's third satire under review here joins Hill's two pseudonyms in its title, *A Dissertation on Royal Societies. Occasion'd by the late pamphlets of Dr. Abraham Johnson, and Dr. Richard Roe*. Published in March 1750, it revelled in its vilification of the Royal Society, declaring:

every man is ready to cut the throat of him, who dares to know more than himself: the members of the Royal Society dread to receive a man of real knowledge among them ... Whatever foundation there may be for the scandalous things Dr. *Roe* has charged upon this society, nothing is more certain, that errors are to be found in their works, and too evident proofs of want of science at their meetings ... what must the *French* botanists think of us, when they are informed, that the seeds of a common herb, the bidens, which had fallen into a ditch, were picked out of it, and brought before the Royal Society, under the name of animals: when they see that not one man of that society, knew either what they were, or what was the difference between the seed of a plant, and an animal, but all join'd in the query, as to what would be the form of this creature when perfect, and return'd the thanks of their whole body to the curious an ingenious gentleman, who had made the blunder they were not able to set right, nor even to comprehend that it was one?<sup>41</sup>

Taking advantage of his position as editor of the *British Magazine*, Hill published his 'A Dissertation on Royal Societies' in its March issue of 1750, as well as selling it in separate pamphlet form.

Hill was directing this particular invective at a mistake made by Rev. Henry Miles and Henry Baker whereby they had falsely identified objects Miles had found in ditch water. Believing them to be tiny living animals, they related their findings in *Philosophical Transactions* but, embarrassingly for them, the objects turned out to be seeds.<sup>42</sup> In 'A Description of a Meeting of a Royal Society in London and a Coffee-House Conversation', the narrator relates an incident where he hears wildly exaggerated tales being told as he follows the fellows into a coffee-house. One gentleman tells of a frightful monster 'with Wings and Claws,

voided by a Lady, on taking a single Dose of his Worm-Powder; a second, of a living Wolf in one of his patient's Breasts, and a third, of a Toad in a Block of Marble'.<sup>43</sup> These wags collected at 'Wits Corner in the *Bedford* Coffee-House, and behind the sacred Veil at *Rawthmell's*',<sup>44</sup> coffeehouses being a meeting place for the discussion of London's natural philosophers, including members of the Royal Society.<sup>45</sup> Hill, who frequented the Bedford Coffee-House, obviously abhorred the ridiculous claims to which he had been party in discussions at this establishment by Royal Society members. He was not alone in his condemnation of such declarations. The *Gentleman's Magazine* mocked the Royal Society in reports made of a mother who gave birth to a leonine monster 'with nose and eyes like a lyon, no palate to the mouth, hair on the shoulders, claws like a lyon instead of fingers, no breast-bone, something surprising out of the navel as big as an egg, and one foot longer than the other'.<sup>46</sup>

In earlier sex guides, such as Nicholas Venette's *Mysteries of Conjugal Love* and *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, sexual activities were closely connected with the desire to conceive, with advice on the best way to perform in order to become pregnant. Hill's satires did the opposite. In his experimental world, sex could take place without pregnancy, and pregnancy without sex, freeing couples from both moral castigations and parental obligations. The disengagement of these two hitherto intertwined activities took place in Hill's mind more than three centuries before it was actually possible. In this sense, Hill was a visionary, able to imagine a world in which women were biologically free from men, where men were no longer necessary for conception. In overturning contemporary views (both religious and scientific), that the male was responsible for creating the vital force in the production of babies, he had attacked the speculators and their attempts to understand female fertility. Implicit in his writing, however, is the underlying (and common) assumption that women were sexually rapacious by nature.

In reality, at this time Hill was more interested in the damage he could cause to his detractors—and he seems to have hit his mark. As Rousseau points out, the Royal Society 'heard the gossip that it was an assault on their collective enterprise through the appalling deceit of pornography'.<sup>47</sup> What better could Hill have hoped for? Satires provided him with the platform to attack the conjectural theorists he so despised—namely, those members of the Royal Society. In doing so, he had created a grand libertine joke which fitted into a broad type of erotic satire specifically related to eighteenth-century scientific findings.

## NOTES

1. See <http://www.oed.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/view/Entry/181035?rskey=bsUXuI&result=2#cid>. Accessed 30 November 2015.
2. Philip Miller's publications included *The Gardener's and Florist's Dictionary, or a complete system of Horticulture* (London, 1724) and *Catalogus Plantarum Officinalium* (London, 1730). At Uppsalla University, Carl Linnaeus began his exploration of the sexual reproduction of plants in his PhD thesis *Praecludia Sponsaliorum Plantarum* in 1729, later publishing *Systema Naturae* in 1735 and *Genera Plantarum* in 1737.
3. Rousseau (2012).
4. *Phil. Trans.* 44 (1746): 60–66; and *Phil. Trans.* 44 (1746): 458–463.
5. Atkinson (1995), xxvi, xxvii.
6. *Ibid.*, 7–8.
7. Rousseau, (2012)
8. *Ibid.* 52–53.
9. Atkinson (1995), 23.
10. Preface quoted in Stimson (1949), 142.
11. Hill, *The Sleep of Plants and Cause of Motion in the Sensitive Plant Explain'd* (1757).
12. See Donnison (1977); Porter (1987); Wilson (1985).
13. *Lucina Sine Concubitu* was published both as a chapbook (which can be found in the British Library) and as an article in *British Magazine*, March 1750 (of which Hill was editor).
14. Cooper's husband had already published erotica in *The Secret of Pandora's Box* (1742); Peakman (2003) 26.
15. An Italian version was found by Dr Lyn Sbiroli and a Danish translation by Helmut Watzwalik according to Rousseau (2012), 334–335. Many English and French editions can be found in the British Library; a German version is held in National Library of Australia. For examples, see 'Richard Roe', *Concubitus sine Lucina, ou le Plaisir sans peine. Réponse à la lettre intitulée*, translated into French by Anne Gabriel Meusnier de Querlon (Londres, 1750); *Lucina sine concubitu. Lettre adresse'e a la Société Royale de Londres, dans laquelle il est pleinement démontré, par des preuves tirées de la théorie & de la pratique, qu'une femme peut concevoir & enfanter sans le commerce de l'homme*. Londres, [i.e. Amsterdam?] (Netherlands, Amsterdam, J. Wilcox, 1776); *Lucina sine concubitu, ou la génération solitaire par A. Johnson* [i.e. Dr. J. Hill. Translated by E.G. Colombe] (1750); *Lucina sine concubitu. Lettre adressée à la Société Royale de Londres. Dans laquelle il est pleinement démontré, par des preuves tirées de la théorie & de la pratique, qu'une femme peut concevoir & enfanter sans le commerce de l'homme* (Amsterdam 1752); *Lucina sine concubitu: d. i. ein Brief an die Königl* (Edinburgh: Priv. Print., 1885).

16. Porter (1987), 206–32.
17. On Toft, see Cody (2005), 120–51.
18. *Lucina*, 6.
19. *Lucina*, 7.
20. Wollaston (1722), 65. The copy used here was owned by Thomas Birch who inscribed on 9 June 1764, ‘This is one of the few copies printed off for private use, the first edition not being published until September 1724’. The sixth edition (1738) is prefaced by his life story.
21. ‘Mr. Woolaston’ is a reference to William Wollaston whose work is discussed in more detail later.
22. *Lucina*, 11.
23. *Ibid.* 17.
24. *Ibid.* 15.
25. *Ibid.* 15–16.
26. *Ibid.* 16.
27. *Ibid.* 19.
28. Playwright Edward Ravenscroft had also touched on the idea in *The London Cuckolds* (1681) where Wiseacres, an alderman, takes an innocent country wife in the belief that she will be a virgin and would remain sexually innocent. Thomas Day (1748–1789) would later try this Pygmalion-style scheme, attempting to educate a foundling girl as his perfect wife over whom he had absolute command.
29. *Lucina* 37.
30. Harvey, quoted in Gasking (1967), 19.
31. This had not been translated earlier because of regard for propriety and fear of the mention of sexual parts in vulgar words, Latin expressions even used in the translations. See Gasking (1967), 52.
32. *Ibid.* 38.
33. *The Art of Hatching and Bringing up Domestic Fowls by Means of Artificial Heat*. ‘An abstract of Réaumur’s work communicated to the Royal Society January last by Mr. Trembley translated from the French’ (1750), 3.
34. *Ibid.* 14.
35. ‘Richard Roe’, *A Letter To Dr. Abraham Johnson, On The Subject Of His New Scheme For The Propagation Of The Human Species: In Which Another Method Of Obtaining That Great End, More Adequate To The Sentiments Of The Ladies, Is Proposed; And The Reflections That Author Has Cast Upon The Royal Society Of London Are Answered* (London, M. Cooper, 1750), 13.
36. ‘Roe’, 18–20.
37. Eagle-stones were hollow stones composed of several crusts, having a loose stone within, which were supposed at one time to be found in eagle’s nests, to which medicinal values were attributed. *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*.

38. 'Roe', 25–6.
39. McLaren (1984).
40. 'Roe', 25–6.
41. [Hill] *A Dissertation On Royal Societies* (1750).
42. Rousseau and Haycock (1999).
43. 'A Description of a Meeting of a Royal Society in London and a Coffee-House Conversation' in *A Dissertation on Royal Societies*, 32–5.
44. In a footnote, he adds 'A Coffee-House in *Covent Garden*, where the People who esteem themselves wiser than the rest of the Company, are separated from them by a Curtain.'
45. Stewart (1992), 144–151.
46. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. 16 (1746), 270.
47. Rousseau (2012), 70.

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PART III

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Hill and Public Places

# The Doctor as Man of Letters: Mid-Georgian Transformations

*George Rousseau*

A standard twentieth-century handbook of theatre history, containing six-hundred pages, that compiles the pronouncements of ‘actors on acting’ from the Greeks to the present time, contains a lengthy chapter on eighteenth-century England.<sup>1</sup> The main figures are well-known: Thomas Betterton, Colley Cibber, Aaron Hill, Charles Macklin, David Garrick, Catherine Clive (‘Kitty’) and the formidable Sarah Siddons. But the sixth figure listed in chronological order of appearance in the book among the eight—John Hill—is not. The claims made for Hill are remarkable. For example, Hill’s treatise on dramaturgy, *The Actor* (1750), provides ‘a more thoroughgoing analysis of the actor and his art than any previous work’.<sup>2</sup> It also ‘provided the first comprehensive analysis of the qualities necessary to the actor ... Understanding, Sensibility, and Fire’, which Hill ‘placed foremost’ among skills actors needed to master.<sup>3</sup> More noteworthy, Hill ‘added to these basic attributes the need for a close relationship between the appearance and temper of the actor and the character he portrays’.<sup>4</sup> Without Hill’s book, English and French drama criticism

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of the late eighteenth-century could not have followed the course it did, according to the compilers, leading to Diderot's anti-emotionalist theatre criticism cautioning actors not to be overly emotional.<sup>5</sup> The tangled pathway from the Tudors and Elizabethans to Hill and Diderot forms some of the basic material of this chapter and proceeds by contextualizing Hill within the framework of the two cultures—a broadly based literature and science—he inhabited. Otherwise, his emphasis on 'Understanding, Sensibility, and Fire' can appear to have arisen from nowhere. Hill was steeped, of course, in the Lockean revolution that placed emphasis on ideas in relation to cognition and understanding, and their companion theories extolling the passions as the basis for the actor's much-needed nervous sensibility.<sup>6</sup> But Hill also developed his dramaturgy, as well as practice in writing prose satire, from his perspective as a student of natural history and the medical sciences. His yoking of medicine and acting was novel but did not seem idiosyncratic to him. Importing from one realm to another may be his primary contribution to dramaturgy, to what the actor, as well as writer, needs to know. My chapter aims to understand whether the handbook's authors are accurate about Hill's significance and, if so, why. To fulfill it, I need to explore his mind set, especially his role as a medical man active in different ways in the mid-Georgian theatre.

### TYPOLOGY OF THE DOCTOR AS MAN OF LETTERS

By the time Hill scandalized the Royal Society at mid-century in three devastating attacks, the 'doctor as man of letters' had accumulated a venerable pedigree.<sup>7</sup> Even a truncated list of the figures since 1500 makes the point: Thomas Campion, Sir Thomas Browne, Samuel Garth, Richard Blackmore, John Arbuthnot, George Cheyne, Richard Mead, Hans Sloane, John Armstrong, Tobias Smollett, Oliver Goldsmith, Erasmus Darwin and dozens of lesser-known figures, not to include Continental foreigners, such as Rabelais, who distinguished themselves in several fields, or Albrecht von Haller, the Swiss polymathic physician with whom Hill corresponded and who was a well-known poet before being recognised as a prominent physician.<sup>8</sup> All were trained in medicine, although all did not practice medicine. 'Doctor' in the eighteenth century had not yet been delimited to *medicine*. It referred to wide learning in *any* range of fields or a combination of them, as it had for centuries and as it does today in the conferral of the 'doctoral degree' to researchers in both arts and sciences; and certainly ever since the Medieval

Church applied the term to those who taught theology ('docere', the verb to teach), and as the earliest universities of the Middle Ages referred to those who wrote a learned dissertation. The term was applied to figures of unusual or extraordinary knowledge but, by the English Restoration, could also be invoked as a term of abuse—all depended on the case. Everyone knows that Samuel Johnson, the 'Great Cham of Literature', was often referred to as 'Dr. Johnson' for his erudition in the fields of morality and literature, and even his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) lists the *medical* usage of 'doctor' as only one of many types. Hill was known among his contemporaries as 'the Doctor' or 'the Inspector'—and, in some instances, even the 'Doctor Inspector'—both for medical proficiency and polymathic capability. 'Doctor' as restricted to *medicine* was a nineteenth-century application, and 'medic'—one who treats patients—an even later Victorian development to designate medical men and women on the battlefield (paramedic).<sup>9</sup>

Part of the challenge in presenting this topic entails definition prior to classification. My usage of 'doctors' is somewhat anachronistic insofar as I conjoin the medical designation (Dr. Arbuthnot, Dr. Hill, Dr. Smollett) with literary performance (Dr. Johnson). However, precedence for this approach exists: by the mid-seventeenth century, the Latin *medicus*—meaning physician from the Latin *mederi* (to heal)—is widely used. But the enigma of classification extends further to the so-called 'drop-outs'—John Locke, Goldsmith, Smollett, Keats, and others—trained at recognized medical schools and certified in medicine who never practised or who left the profession. Other hurdles also exist, such as the 'learned' in diverse fields to whom the term accrued as a means of ridicule and abuse. In this regard, the bias against polymaths devoting themselves to several fields was evident, and inimitable Hill raised its temperature.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, provided that provisos are established and slippage acknowledged in the use of the terms—doctor, man of letters, literature, science—certain patterns developed in the mid-eighteenth century. The purpose here is therefore twofold: first, to situate Hill within the tradition's *longue durée*, and then to demonstrate the ways the tradition itself was in flux at mid-century.

Two of Hill's predecessors epitomize the stakes. Samuel Garth, Physician to King George I and well-respected in the London medical fraternity, made his literary mark with a six-canto mock-heroic poem entitled *The Dispensary* (1699), which sold more copies in the first two decades of the eighteenth century than the poetry of Pope or Swift

combined.<sup>11</sup> Garth established himself in the front rank of verse satirists by ridiculing apothecaries who opposed establishing a London dispensary where the poor could receive advice and medicines. The ranking arbiters of taste—Addison, Steele, Pope himself—adjudged Garth an extremely gifted poet, a view tied to his satiric genre, yet by mid-century Garth was all but forgotten: so ephemeral had his target been (a medical dispensary).<sup>12</sup> Richard Blackmore, in contrast and also Oxford-educated like Garth, was reviled by the Wits, not least by Garth who considered Blackmore's verse leaden, his plays dead wood beyond resuscitation. Unlike Garth, Blackmore wrote epic poems, *The Creation* and *Prince Arthur*, drivel Pope and his circle considered so dull it put lawyers to sleep. Dryden denigrated Blackmore as 'Quack Maurus' and lambasted his poetry: 'At leisure Hours, in Epique Song he deals,/Writes to the rumbling of his Coaches Wheels'.<sup>13</sup> Ridicule of Blackmore was so extensive in the generation before 1750 it appears to resemble the onslaught against Hill. To Garth's and Blackmore's contemporaries they were doctors as well as men of letters, both professionally respected and much published, both regally decorated, yet defective poets to the Wits. Garth, alternatively, sailed through untarnished by animosity whereas Blackmore, like Hill, courted it wherever he went.

The contrast focuses on the convergence of literature and medicine in the half century before Hill wrote. Further comparisons are edifying. Consider what Cheyne, Sloane and Mead add to the picture:<sup>14</sup> Cheyne was a Scot, educated in medicine in Aberdeen, licensed by the College of Physicians in London, and one of Newton's mathematical protégés. After disagreeing with the master's astrophysical conclusions, he was ejected from the Newtonian circle and struck out on his own as a society doctor, eventually enlisting such celebrity patients as Pope, Swift, Fielding and Richardson. With the latter, Cheyne struck up a constant correspondence, and played a part in shaping the plot of *Clarissa*.<sup>15</sup> Cheyne also published non-fiction bestsellers on medical topics: depression and melancholia, gout, old age and the importance of religion for attaining a fulfilled life. Hans Sloane, in contrast, was born and educated in Ireland, married a wealthy sugar plantation widow whose fortunes permitted him to collect natural history, art works and rare books on a vast scale.<sup>16</sup> Once he returned to England from Jamaica, he practiced medicine, especially as a society doctor, wrote non-fiction, was elected President or Governor to the major London institutions (Royal Society, College of Physicians, Foundling Hospital), and donated his collections

to form the first national British Museum (to which Hill applied to be the first Keeper).<sup>17</sup> Richard Mead can appear to be a near copy of Sloane but was no imitation. ‘Polyhistor Mead’, as he was known for his poly-mathic interests and Greek learning, collected on an even grander scale than Sloane, and was considered as more eccentric by his contemporaries. He was a focal point in the intersections, then, of British art, medicine and antiquarianism, of unique note because he himself engaged all three fields.<sup>18</sup> The three figures are brilliant examples of the ‘doctor as man of letters’ within a single generation, whereas Garth and Blackmore were exclusively *poets*, the precise niche of all five depending on the aesthetic yardstick of measurement invoked, then and now. Hill lies apart from this evolving tradition—the salient matter in the contrast. The next generation after 1740, Hill’s generation, had its share of literary doctors (Akenside, Smollett, Armstrong, Goldsmith, Shebbeare), but not one cut the persona Hill did, neither in the public sphere or in his personhood, a point I tried to make in the Chap. 1 of this book.

### THE DOCTOR ON STAGE AS ‘RHYMING APOTHECARY’

The figure of the doctor on the stage also had an ancient pedigree as man of letters, player, playwright, dramatic critic and commentator. Herbert Silvette, an American literary historian, surveyed the British tradition to 1700 and explained why marginal or maverick medical figures were more suitable candidates for satire on the stage than conventional doctors (Sydenham is a perfect example of the latter type).<sup>19</sup> Silvette postulated that, whereas Shadwell’s play ‘The Virtuoso’ was one of the chief sources of satirical allusion to the Royal Society, Butler’s poem *Hudibras* was more scathingly dispraising, ‘establishing the benchmark for satire of the virtuoso’; and claiming that ‘a touch of quackery still remains [post-1700] the *sine qua non* of ante-mortem notoriety, if not posthumous fame’. The edict resounds for Hill, who acted a good deal, as it did for Dr. John Shebbeare in Smollett’s extensive ridicule of him in *The Adventures of Launcelot Greaves* (1767). There, Smollett’s ‘Ferret’ is modelled on Shebbeare (1709–1788), a physician turned political writer whose popular *Letters to the People of England* pretend he is a ‘political philosopher’ yet who never acted.<sup>20</sup> Both satirist and target, Smollett and Shebbeare, did not dare although the former composed a play, *The Regicide*.

Hill's dramatic interest, in contrast to Smollett's inconsequential one, manifested itself early, while still an adolescent in Northamptonshire.<sup>21</sup> Not yet fourteen, he ran away with itinerant actors, long before he turned to the stage in the 1740s in Goodwood and London. At Goodwood House, Hill acted on the Duke of Richmond's semi-professional stage and immersed himself with notable actors Richmond brought down from London. He fell in love with young Peg Woffington, a rising star although not yet famous, challenged her sponsor-mentor Owen MacSwinney to a duel, and heard all sorts of up-to-the-minute news of the Paris stage from Richmond's contingents of French visitors.<sup>22</sup> These included Montesquieu, the celebrated philosopher and author of *De l'Esprit des Lois*; naturalist René-Antoine de Réaumur (1683–1757), whose theories of seeds, insects and novel way of breeding chickens by artificial heat Hill used as the basis for his satire in *Lucina Sine Concubitu*. He also met Montesquieu's young son Jean Baptiste de Secondat (1716–1795), a devotee of natural history, who returned to his native Bordeaux and saw to it that Hill was elected a foreign member of Bordeaux's Academy of Sciences.<sup>23</sup> These foreigners saw Hill act on the Goodwood stage: actor and audience dazzling each other with exotic linguistic accents, *au courant* fashion and culinary customs.<sup>24</sup>

It was predictable when Hill left Goodwood around 1740 and installed himself as an apothecary at the Savoy, in London, that he would construe the stage as his second home. It formed a fixed region of his *beau monde* mind set, which he sought to refashion, almost compulsively, throughout this life. By day, he peddled pills and potions to put food on the table; by night, he visited the playhouses and pubs where he befriended players. His routine also included another kind of outdoor stage: the makeshift wooden platforms on which charlatans, empirics and mountebanks performed.<sup>25</sup> Some mountebanks, such as the celebrated 'Dr. Rock', wandered central London in their elegant horse-drawn carriages. Hill, too, appeared in ordinary neighbourhood squares newly sprawling within a few miles of Piccadilly Circus, often dressed as a 'foreign empiric' (Fig. 1). The area from Covent Garden and the playhouses to the west was his habitus. He combed its vicinity weekly, and became known as one of its most colourful quack apothecaries.

But his ambition swelled—to perform on real stages inside real theatres. He had frequented them for years by 1750, none more routinely than John Rich's stage in Drury Lane, where Hill committed the first of a long line of *faux pas* that bespeak his temperament and naiveté—what



**Fig. 1** ‘The Author [John Hill] in the Character of a foreign Empiric.’ Anonymous etching, c. 1742. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum, London

Chap. 1 of this book views as his autistic borderline personality. For his petulant antics, theatre manager John Rich disparagingly labelled him ‘the rhyming apothecary’.<sup>26</sup> Rich intended the slur as a mortifying insult,

but no one previously had been tagged with this label and Hill, forever ready to glorify himself, construed it as a compliment. So, too, others, as though the rhyming apothecary possessed noteworthy poetic abilities. Prior to 1740, Hill's profile was, first, as a gentleman's collector and, then, in 1735–1740, as a rogue actor and failed dramatist, his name banded about London's theatre quarters as someone not to be trusted; but Rich's ingenious designation unintentionally yoked pills and platforms, medicine and poetry, piquing the curiosity of Londoners wondering who in heaven's name this upstart was.

### ACTING TREATISES AND MEDICAL THEORIES

Then, in April 1750, Hill anonymously published *The Actor: A Treatise on the Art of Playing* brought out by eye-catching printer Ralph Griffiths. Some readers thought it the work of Aaron Hill, but it could not have been his because Aaron died in the opening weeks of 1750 and left no unpublished manuscripts.<sup>27</sup> *The Actor* resembled a scientific treatise on the theory of acting unlike anything published earlier in English and was altogether different from Hill's scathing satiric attacks. Its first reviews were positive,<sup>28</sup> as in the long notice in the *Monthly Review*, and, in the dramaturgic sphere, it elicited what Hill had already demonstrated in the geological (*Theophrastus*, 1746) and botanical (*General Natural History*, 1748). However, flash forward two centuries and enter prominent American theatre historian Joseph R. Roach, Sterling Professor of Theatre History at Yale University, who was so impressed with *The Actor* during the 1990s that he installed Hill as the centrepiece of his chapter entitled 'Vitalism and the Crisis of Sensibility' in *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*, an influential book for two decades still often cited.<sup>29</sup> Roach elevates John Hill to hero and diminishes Aaron Hill's dramaturgic theories as out-of-date by 1750. Our Hill's accomplishment, according to Roach, lies in marrying eighteenth-century sensibility to 'the science of acting':

Eighteenth century theatrical theory makes sense only if we take into account the scientific paradigm of which Garrick's 'Sensibility' is part ... Sainte-Albine's English translator, put this issue [importing sensibility to stage science] into sharper focus. In searching for an equivalent to sentiment, he chose 'sensibility', an individual's unique 'disposition to be affected by the passions'. He then claimed that this capacity inevitably

‘determines the force of the scene’ and is therefore ‘of more consequence in playing [acting] than in any other profession’.<sup>30</sup>

Hill was that English translator and Roach’s intellectual sequence is this: Sainte-Albine, Hill, medical theory of the nerves, nervous theory as the foundation for sensibility, and sensibility imported into dramaturgy. I adumbrated this elenchus in *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature, Culture and Sensibility* (2004) without delving into Hill’s dramaturgy.<sup>31</sup> A decade earlier, Roach had placed weight in Hill’s decision to structure his book in the form of a combined translation of, and commentary on, Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine’s treatise of 1749, *Le comédien*.<sup>32</sup> Eighteenth-century scholars often refer to Sainte-Albine’s book but few have read it. Hill turned to it, repeating his earlier successful tack as translator-cum-commentator on Theophrastus (1746). If his commentary on Theophrastus could sturdily launch a scientific career, a first English translation of Sainte-Albine could set him up as a dramatic authority, which he needed to break sturdily into Grub Street. He could churn out material in record time and his French was better than his Greek. More significantly, he could rely on medical theory he had learned, theory particularly concerning nervous sensibility, which he could not for a translation about stones and gems.

Roach, secure that Hill was *Le comédien*’s translator (a correct premise), and Sainte-Albine, a pioneer in eighteenth-century dramaturgy, explains why this was an important decision. Roach adjudged *Le comédien* as the first work ‘in the eighteenth century ... to incorporate the terms *sensibilité* and *sentiment* into theatrical history.’<sup>33</sup> His argument depends on two beliefs about early modern intellectual history. First, that the era’s scientific revolution (Newtonianism and broadly related currents) holds the key to understanding developments across all fields; second, that philosophers Michel Foucault and Thomas Kuhn explained more thoroughly than others in their books about paradigms and epistemic breaks *why disciplines alter*. These were the transformations occurring in both the sciences and humanities around mid-century in the aftermath of the Newtonian revolution.<sup>34</sup> Roach was also swayed by the fact (again, influenced by Foucault and Kuhn) that Sainte-Albine had been educated in Paris as an applied scientist who first came upon notions of *sensibilité* in scientific circles there, then moralized its cluster of concepts and, finally, imported these concepts into the science of the stage.<sup>35</sup> Hill liked the approach and saw caché in his undertaking

a translation. Roach also placed emphasis on Hill's terminology in *The Actor*: '[Hill] ... put these scientific issues into sharper focus ... searching for an equivalent to sentiment, he chose "sensibility", an individual's unique "disposition to be affected by the passions"'.<sup>36</sup> Roach makes grander claims than these for both Sainte-Albine and Hill in the *longue durée* of theatre history when glancing back to the Jacobean world:

Unless we know how Thomas Heywood's use of the term *animal spirits* in 1612 differed from Aaron Hill's in 1735, what the word *sensibility* actually signified to Sainte-Albine and John Hill, what Diderot meant when he referred to the human body as a *machine* ... Unless we have a clear understanding of all these issues and the science that stands behind them, we cannot hope to know what these theorists actually thought about the complex psychophysiological event that takes place on the stage.<sup>37</sup>

This 'complex psychophysiological event' was being problematized at mid-century in ways contemporary cognitive literary critics understand as they apply themselves to the eighteenth-century theatre and aim to understand the pathways from actor to audience as a single loop of extended cognition.<sup>38</sup> Hill anticipated that the loop extending from actor to audience should play a role in any general theory of acting.<sup>39</sup> Interaction between actor and audience in all eras has relied, of course, on an elaborate communication network extending beyond the actor's individual nervous physiology; otherwise the emotional component—the 'Understanding, Sensibility, and Fire' so necessary for sentiment—could not be communicated. To understand the interdependence, Roach aligns the dramaturgy of Sainte-Albine and Hill with Diderot, in Roach's view the three pillars of eighteenth-century stage science for incorporating sensibility into dramaturgic theory.<sup>40</sup> Higher praise for Hill than this cannot be found in his activities in either arts or sciences. It is also noteworthy that Roach wrote his *Studies in the Science of Acting* unaware of Hill's paper war activities or polymathic profile, assessing Hill entirely on *The Actor's* contents. Roach's argument stems from the idea that all Enlightenment acting styles—artificial, naturalistic and emotional—depend a priori on scientific theories the dramaturgist has tapped into. Crudely put, no science, no dramaturgy—a pattern evident from Ancients to Moderns. Finally, Roach's claim is that the process depended on Hill's relation to sensibility. *Studies in the Science of Acting* also credits Hill with developing his medical theory in treatises

about the nerves (*Construction of the Nerves ... and Nervous Disorders*), about hypochondria (*A Practical Treatise on ... the hyp*), the pharmaceutical treatment of anxiety and depression (*The Virtues of Wild Valerian in Nervous Disorders*), the new mid-Georgian longevity (*The Old Man's Guide to Health*), and—at the other end of life—in pediatrics (*On the Management of Children*). Hill's codification of these importations into a coherent scientific dramaturgy was to his (Hill's) credit.

It is a forceful position to take. Emanating from our leading scholar in eighteenth-century dramaturgy, it cannot be discounted. It assumes Hill absorbed David Hartley's *Observations on Mankind* (1749), which appeared only months before *The Actor*, and applied them by importing the developing philosophies of associationist sensibility and extending Sainte-Albine's dramaturgy.<sup>41</sup> Building on a Newtonian heritage and on Hill's own broad reading in science, medicine and natural history, *The Actor* becomes the most innovative English work of dramaturgy of the long eighteenth century. As Roach writes:

Hill retained Sainte-Albine's four categories: understanding, sensibility, fire (spirit), and figure. When Sainte-Albine said that the actor should be transported beyond himself by the spirit of the passion he portrays, he looked back ... to the phantom of true inspiration, the possession of the rhapsode by the god. ... John Hill combined several of these ideas ... when he wrote of the power of a great actor's 'fire' over the imaginative sympathies of his spectators.<sup>42</sup>

This is no middling praise for a figure venomously excoriated by his contemporaries and vilified in our time, and, more recently, dispraised in this book as a 'dwarf resting on the shoulders of giants'.<sup>43</sup> No one, according to Roach, was more fertile than Hill in importing ideas from contemporary medical science into dramaturgy. When future theatre historians reassess the lineage of eighteenth-century dramaturgic theory, they may disagree with Roach but, for now, Roach remains our most reliable student of 'science acting' then. Roach's view also alters the stereotype of the 'doctor-author' by viewing him as receptive to theories from different disciplines. By straddling these two cultures, the doctor as man of letters cherry-picked theories and fused them into new paradigms, as in the actor's delivery and the structural loops of nervous sensibility. Roach might have interrogated Silvette as to why he omitted Hill. Surely

Silvette would have mentioned Hill if he had known anything about him, rather than delimit Hill to (what Silvette terms) ‘the satirical heritage’.<sup>44</sup>

Neither Monro nor Silvette read Sainte-Albine in French or English, or compiled their books with a sense of Hill’s role in the transmission of dramaturgic evolution. Dramaturgy must now be added to the list of Hill’s achievements (as Charles Churchill listed them in *The Rosciad*: ‘Actor, Inspector, Doctor, Botanist’), no matter how inferior an actor Hill was: this on the proviso that nothing in Hill’s proposed theory of ‘emotional acting’ reflected his own ability in acting—a crucial distinction. Nor did *The Actor*’s theories play a part in the general record of rejection of plays on the stage down through the eighteenth century. Rejections, as in the celebrated furore between Garrick and Hill about which so much has been written, arose as the result of Hill’s offensive tactics, which elicited more furious expletives than ‘coxcomb’. His theatrical compositions (especially *The Rout*, 1758) lacked merit. Why was he not routinely satirized on stage? A half-century earlier he might have been, but satiric plays during Hill’s maturity rarely named names. More broadly, original plays inherently differ from scientific dramaturgic treatises—such as *The Actor*—and should not be conflated. Literary history is suffused with cases of great playwrights who never composed scientific treatises about the stage and vice versa. The maxim for *Fame and Fortune* is that indefatigable Hill was a creature of so many ‘parts’, it is difficult to generalize about the *whole man*—his *entire oeuvre*—even in a single delimited category such as the stage. He was incoherent, his activities too scattered, to fit a neat pattern or *labellisation*. Perhaps the 1750s were, too. *Pace* compiler of doctor-writers Thomas Monro,<sup>45</sup> but Hill resembles no other doctor-writer in England in the long eighteenth century, certainly not those discussed thus far in this chapter. He was *sui generis* and Roach has told us why.

### THE DOCTOR-WRITER IN THE COFFEEHOUSE

In his chapter, Markman Ellis explains aspects of the sociology—the forms of patronage, preferment and consequences for the public sphere—of the London coffeehouses. What remains is exploration of the particular establishment to which the biographical Hill attached himself—the Bedford—and his activities (some would say ‘machinations’) there. Most noteworthy is that the Bedford was an atypical coffeehouse. The *doctor as writer* had no recognized place in any coffeehouses of the

1750s because these establishments mainly organized themselves by established and recognizable professions: actors, lawyers, politicians, physicians and so forth, and the last group, doctors, wrote as accessories to their principal vocation in the practice of medicine and, when they did, it was quondam medical observations and reflections. This last caveat is vital: doctors did, indeed, publish—more than ever before.<sup>46</sup> But the Garths and Blackmores, Hills and Smolletts, Akensides and Goldsmiths, however apparent in mid-Georgian London, statistically remained a tiny minority compared with the dozens of medics—qualified and unqualified—practising in London, who sporadically wrote observations on medical matters but not literary works, novels, poems, plays and other genres. All this qualification raises issues of nomenclature: should the Smolletts and Akensides, for instance, who were qualified doctors graduated from recognized medical schools, be considered doctors or writers? Is some new classification needed? The answers matter when viewed in relation to medical doctors in London coffeehouses, and then more abstractly in the public sphere.

Conventional medics congregated at Rawthmell's located at 54 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, and also frequented the Grecian in Devereux Court by Temple Bar. Rawthmell's attracted antiquarians, collectors, naturalists and diverse types of 'projectors' interested in forming new clusters and societies for the propagation of knowledge, such as the Society for the Encouragement of Arts.<sup>47</sup> In these coffeehouses, functioning like Senior Common Rooms in contemporary Oxbridge colleges and American Ivy League universities, gossip abounded, cliques formed, friendships flourished, reputations were made and broken, public preferences agreed, only to be signed and sealed in the morrow's daylight. Coffeehouses such as Rawthmell's were semi-private meeting places outside the home, rather than public cafes catering to broad interests in open public spaces. They were also exclusively masculine, inherently gentlemanly, class-bound, self-selecting by schools and university colleges, and structured by unspoken assumptions about privilege and ideology, although they could appear otherwise if their internal arrangements (i.e., within the coffeehouse) were interpreted through the eyes of innocent or naïve observers.<sup>48</sup> Martin Folkes, President of the Royal Society since 1741 and an arch-enemy of Hill, was a daily habitué; he was so ensconced that one of Folkes' Fellows in the Society later contended Folkes chose the whole of his administration's Council and committee of officers from his 'Junto of Sycophants' gathered there.<sup>49</sup>

At Rawthmell's, Hill might have met the Royal Society he courted during his attempts at election, but afterwards he avoided the place and, instead, frequented the Bedford a few yards down the lane in Covent Garden, which attracted a broadly-based London theatre crowd.<sup>50</sup> No doctors or scientists gathered here. The Bedford stood under the Piazza, in the northwest corner, near the entrance to the Covent Garden theatre, and was less privileged and pedantic than Rawthmell's or The Grecian, another coffeehouse where medical doctors congregated. When Hill presided there during the 1750s, *The Connoisseur*—a six-page weekly edited by George Colman and Bonnell Thornton—observed that 'this Coffeehouse is every night crowded with men of parts. Almost every one you meet is a polite scholar and a wit. Jokes and *bon-mots* are echoed from box to box: every branch of literature is critically examined, and the merit of every production of the press, or performance of the theatres, weighed and determined.'<sup>51</sup> Wits they were, including Garrick, Hogarth, Smollett, Hill and many others, and they divided into cabals and held court as if *luminati* legislating over literary London.

Yet, this chapter begs us to ask what difference it made to be a doctor-writer at the Bedford as distinct from other types of 'Wits'. A visitor to the place would first have recognized that one's quantum of wit outstripped professional (or what we might call 'disciplinary') attainment: whatever your affiliation, whether to the theatre, or as author, politician and so forth, what impressed was the degree of perceived wit. But stand back to the historical context, too: the 'professions' were more fluid then than they have since become; men moved in and out more readily and frequently than we do; neither did the public stereotype them in the rigid ways we do. Medics were especially prone to fluidity because they failed to attract patients; in failing, they turned to the quill (in the 1750s Akenside, Smollett, Goldsmith, John Armstrong and dozens of lesser names). Not so much as original brothers of the quill, but medical brethren who had now *turned* brothers of the quill. Their refashioning was paramount. Third, was the reputation its members were making outside the coffeehouse. Habitues of established coffeehouses, not merely Bedfordians, were well aware the public spotlight was turned on them, their shenanigans and views reported 'abroad' in newspapers and monthlies, in other clubs and private drawing rooms.<sup>52</sup> What cut ice was not your professional affiliation so much as the figure you cut: how other habitues responded, respected you and continually gossiped about you after leaving the place. When French natural philosopher John

Theophilus Desaguliers, among the most ardent foreign popularisers of Newtonian science in London, fixed himself at the Bedford during the 1740s, his showmanship as a lecturer counted for far more than his grasp of Newtonian physics.<sup>53</sup>

Hill was not the solitary doctor-author at the Bedford. Smollett also briefly appeared and avoided Rawthmell's and the Grecian, perhaps because he had so thoroughly refashioned himself into an 'author' by 1750.<sup>54</sup> Yet, whereas Smollett rarely appeared, Hill fixed himself nightly as 'Bobathill' ('Bob' then suggesting mocking and hitting out at others), also as the 'Inspector' assuming the mantle of chief Wit. He claimed to be the heir of Addison and Steele, his proof delivery of the golden 'Lion' from Button's which Hill affixed to the Bedford's front door, and—as has Addison four decades earlier—surrounded himself with a group of 'Malevoli', 'evil critics' who debated all topics under the sun, issued verdicts, and aimed to influence t'Town. I described in *Notorious* the tactics Hill used in 'The Inspector' to vivify his installation, stretching over many months: how the mysterious lion and sphinx from Button's suddenly appeared; how a letter putatively arrived announcing the gold lion would be removed from Button's on a fixed date; and how busts of Addison and Steele were transferred to ensure Hill's resumption of their mantle.<sup>55</sup> Fact and fiction melded into one: the ploy was to arouse interest and puff Hill, whose callow tactic extended to personifying the 'roaring Lion' as a creature exhaling thoughts and feelings. 'The lion has again been aroused by injustice', Hill claimed; the chief villain, he contended, Fielding, whose malfeasance further raised the temperature of paper war. Lion-in-hand, Hill crowned himself 'Inspector-Lion of the Bedford' who 'roved' as well as 'reported', and, further to beggar belief, he asked his readers: 'is the same Lion who roared so instructively and agreeably at Button's Coffee-house in the Days of your renowned Predecessors Addison and Steele ... *me?*'<sup>56</sup> Fielding's cabal jeered while Hill's 'Malevoli' brayed in approbation. No 'doctor' earlier in the century had carried on so deliriously in any London coffeehouse.

This charged activity at the Bedford, whether calculating or nonsensical, appears from afar as collective madness gone amok. Would that a sociologist of Habermas' insight could turn his spotlight on it, for it was one thing to spin yarns about an unrivalled 'Inspector' and another to personify lions for ordinary English gentlemen in this jejune way. Hill needed the Bedford as the main site for consolidation of his public persona, as well as a functioning print culture economically viable for both

publishers and consumers. And he also relied on his ‘Inspector’ columns and Mary Cooper’s printing press. But the Bedford was superlatively imperative to his campaign for notoriety and, if this coffeehouse were quantified for its role in raising Hill’s profile, it would count no less than a third. It guaranteed that Hill’s tomfooleries were widely banded about, especially the affirmation that, by 1752, the London ‘Trinity of Wits’ was Addison–Steele–Hill, the first two long since dead by then. The geographical site could have been elsewhere, yet how convenient for Hill its centrality in Covent Garden and that the Bedford surrendered itself to him. He was in the right place at the right time.

Hill at the Bedford also raises questions about the image—or stereotype—of the doctor as man of letters. Compared with other well-published doctor-authors (the tradition we have been surveying from Garth and Blackmore forward, and then, at mid-century, Smollett, Goldsmith, Sloane, Mead, Akenside et al.), including the less celebrated who migrated to London hoping to make their fame and fortune (especially Scots such as doctor-satirist John Armstrong), Hill stands out for *difference* and defies the type. Indeed, it almost becomes irrelevant that he had been both medical and literary. Trace Garth and Blackmore, Mandeville and Cheyne, and, more recently, Mead and Sloane, and nothing similar to Hill presents itself in the coffeehouses. Whatever Hill touched would have made noise. Hill altered the horizon of central London coffeehouses and turned up the heat of its hostilities. Addison and Steele would not have been amused. What a different ethos these 1750s displayed to their decades.

### THE DOCTOR AS MAN OF LETTERS AS THINKER

Finally, the doctor-author as thinker: thinker in the sense of making philosophical pronouncements in any domain other than medical; thinker for commenting above the ordinary level and beyond the banal. The eighteenth century boasted qualified medics who made important contributions to knowledge beyond the medical sphere in which they had been educated (think no further than physician Mandeville’s economic thought in *The Fable of the Bees* of interest to economists from Marx to Keynes, or Dr. John Arbuthnot’s ‘social projects’ without which the Scriblerians could not have anatomized cultural life in the reign of Queen Anne, or Hume and Adam Smith the collaborative projects of the Scottish Enlightenment). Such distinction was especially true in Scotland

in the latter part of the century where the frenzy of Enlightenment hubbub stimulated them to write outside their narrow specialties. A contributory factor was the trend in Scottish universities of appointing medical doctors to chairs of moral philosophy (John Pringle, John Abercrombie, John Brown, Robert Watt were all medics in chairs of philosophy). Doctors also made their mark further south, in England, perhaps none more lastingly than the already-mentioned David Hartley in his associationist psychology in *Observations on Man* (1749).<sup>57</sup> Erasmus Darwin is a runner-up for botanical poems about ‘the loves of plants’, and he was also a noted philosopher of temperance.<sup>58</sup> Hartley and Darwin have been so well worked over—Hartley by Coleridgean scholars struck by Hartley’s influence on their figure, Darwin by students of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment interested in commercialization and the Industrial Revolution<sup>59</sup>—that I will not belabour the obvious here. Instead, I want to probe a more polymathic tendency in the period vis-à-vis disciplinary knowledge and the figure of the doctor as man of letters; not merely *medical* doctors but paramedical types, too (such as Hill), who worked in disparate sciences.<sup>60</sup>

These practitioners distinguished themselves in various disciplines in what seemed to be an outburst of polymathic activity that cultural historians are just beginning to retrieve, few more brilliantly than the Scottish mathematician Colin Maclaurin, who at sixteen published a philosophical treatise on the Newtonian mathematics of consumer desire.<sup>61</sup> The publication was remarkable for a lad of his age (he was the youngest person ever elected to a university professorship in the eighteenth century), as well as for the ideas formulated about conspicuous consumption and commodity culture. Maclaurin was not, of course, a *medical* doctor in any sense but qualifies here as ‘doctor’ for his precocious learning. But he was ignored until the aftermath of the French Revolution, when his views attracted the attention of British political radicals. The doctor-author type we have been surveying needs to be glimpsed through the comparative lenses of the *thinker*, especially the polymathic thinker. Should Hill figure in their ranks? Garth, Cheyne (perhaps the most sagacious thinker about melancholia and depression of the century), John Wesley (popular religious figure and author of manuals on domestic medicine such as the *Practice of Physic*, 1747), Hartley (as exceptional a psychologist as can be imagined in the Enlightenment), Priestley (who wrote widely on rhetoric in addition to chemistry), Erasmus Darwin, Thomas Trotter (naval physician, philosopher of neurology and poet).

The prickly enigma is that Hill's behaviour clouds assessment of him, just as it stumped Samuel Johnson when replying to his monarch about Hill's worth. As did these medical figures, Hill also published philosophical treatises such as *Thoughts concerning God and Nature* and ranged widely in his medical writings. He could squeeze into these near-front-line ranks, if his personality and paper wars can be excluded.<sup>62</sup> Roach, as we saw, decorated him for his dramaturgy, able to do so because he knew little about the rest of Hill's baggage. Augment stage science by a dozen other fields and an impressive profile emerges, even if Hill stood on the shoulders of greater giants. Even his didactic works of the 1750s are noteworthy. His *Oeconomy of Human Life* (1751) aims to expatiate about 'animal economy' and the role of organic form in human creatures. *Observations on the Greek and Roman classics* (1753) entails a vast survey of ancient literature in a long book, and contains intriguing bits of information about, for instance, Anacreon's sodomy, flaunted in Greek poetry and inspired in Hill by the sodomy debates in England in 1749.<sup>63</sup>

My conclusion aims to diminish the quantity versus quality argument—the claim that the aggregate weight of almost two hundred publications counts for more than the calibre of individual items—and, instead, enlists the plasticity of Hill's mind and the diversity of his output. If Hill amounted to a phenomenon in the history of eighteenth-century publishing, he was also notable for his mental malleability and stylistic resilience (nowhere more evident than in 'The Inspector'). Some fields (botany, dramaturgy, journalism, all with characteristic rhetorical flair) he admittedly cultivated more proficiently than others. Elsewhere (geology, medicine,<sup>64</sup> and astronomy), his insight was of the second or third order. Other areas (especially social commentaries such as *The Conduct of a Married Life*) have never been scrutinized for content because Hill's name remains unknown: as Clare Brant shrewdly asks in the second chapter of this book, John Hill who?<sup>65</sup> Abundant items (e.g., *The Management of the Gout*, *The Construction of Timber*) he wrote merely to publish without anything new to say. Other publications (*A Treatise on the Plague*, 1750) were timely and aimed to warn the public as they braced for another epidemic of plague. Hill's literary works have never been examined apart from their paper wars context and without hordes of enemies aborting the possibility of objective analysis.

Yet, a pattern emerges: Hill had a wizard's knack for anticipating what was coming—topics soon to be of the greatest widespread interest—and polished off the subject before anyone else could. Put into perspective

over the whole course of his lifetime, he published on a very wide variety of subjects, in different disciplines and genres, and excelled in a few. He was no Locke, Hume, or Adam Smith for the durability of content, nor a Swift or Pope in the satiric domain (although *Lucina*, as the *Modest Proposal*, is a memorable work increasingly joining the canon of prose satire now loved by students of British literature). On balance, it seems not excessive to claim that Hill *was* a thinker despite an inability to ratiocinate long and hard in any single domain or discipline. As the proto-Enlightenment doctor-author Albrecht von Haller, with whom I began this chapter, and Carl Linnaeus with whom Hill corresponded, Hill squarely fits into the century of Enlightenment. He was neither behind nor ahead of his times but, principally, a product and shaper of them. His contemporaries might have agreed, if they had not been so perpetually aggrieved and distracted by his misbehaviour.

## NOTES

1. Cole and Chinoy (1970).
2. *Ibid.*, 97.
3. *Ibid.*, 96.
4. *Ibid.*, 96.
5. *Ibid.*, 159–161.
6. See Rousseau (2007).
7. The only book-length study of the tradition from the Ancients to the mid-twentieth century is Monro (1951), who lists former studies of the topic but provides no definitions or criteria for the type itself. Medical men who published literature, including those who studied medicine but did not qualify (John Locke, Oliver Goldsmith, John Keats et al.), are included.
8. See Osler (1929), 117. In 1734, Haller's application for the post of Chief City Physician in Berne was rejected with the comment 'he is a poet, why should he want to be a hospital physician?' The early-mid-eighteenth century also had many qualified doctors, such as the illustrious John Radcliffe, who wrote so little that his pieces cannot count within this classification. However, the larger point stands, that almost all doctors then wrote substantial amounts of prose.
9. See Wulff (2004).
10. Andrew Robinson has surveyed the tradition in Robinson (2006).
11. See Sena (1986).

12. Students of satire who omit the historical contexts overlook the crucial degree to which almost *all* medical men of Georgian England scribbled satires in their pastime.
13. In Dryden's Prologue to *The Pilgrim* (1700); see *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. E. N. Hooker et al. (1956–2000), 6: 264.
14. The great Boerhaave, often claimed during the Enlightenment to be the most illustrious physician in Europe, deserves to be in this company, but he was Dutch and the discussion here aims to survey the British scene for context.
15. See Mullett (1943).
16. See Hans Sloane (1994).
17. See Rousseau (2012), 179–192, for Hill's canvassing for the post.
18. See Hanson (2009).
19. Silvette (1967), 150–152; 138 for Butler; 175 for Shadwell.
20. See Rousseau (1982), 129, and Richard Jones (2011).
21. My analysis of Hill's typology as a doctor-writer in this chapter makes the following assumptions, further developed in Chap. 1: that Hill's character lay somewhere on the autistic spectrum (impossible to pinpoint more accurately than this); that his autism contained two common co-morbid components: hypomania (excessive and unrelenting hyperactivity) and hyperlexia (precocious reading ability); that all three manifested themselves by early adolescence, when he displayed signs of hyperlexia that provided him with an extraordinary ability to read, to learn foreign languages and write them; that his hypomania led to domestic rebellion during early adolescence, pressing him to run away, first with gypsies and then with a troupe of itinerant actors, this last being his first immersion in the stage world. Hill's autism and two co-morbid components are important because they permit us to understand his very early attraction to the stage (which manifested itself throughout his life), his fluency in both reading and writing at great speeds, and the general hyperactivity that so enraged his contemporaries. He may not have read as early or as proficiently as John Stuart Mill did, but the evidence compellingly suggests the above diagnosis. For further analysis of the three, see Rousseau (2012), 339–341.
22. See Rousseau (2012), 21–23, for more detail about these episodes, although it is impossible to determine which roles in which plays Hill acted there.
23. For the evidence, see Hill and Rousseau (1982), 33–37.
24. A book awaits writing about Richmond's salon and stage at Goodwood in the two decades leading up to Richmond's death in 1750. See Brooks (2015), for actresses there.

25. The terms ‘charlatan’, ‘mountebank’ and ‘empiric’ are as confusing as ‘doctor’ in the early modern period and were often indistinguishable in the early Georgian period. One could be both physician and quack, since many, including Robert James and Richard Mead, sold their own nostrums (the prerequisite for quackery). Empiricism, like charlatantry and mountebankery, was frequently decried, but so was pure medical theory. All these terms were usually used disparagingly; that is, ‘by a Quack or Empirick, I mean any and every one of those who pretend to practice Physick without Knowledge of the *Praerequisita* to that most useful but most difficult Art’. See Guybon (1712), preface, and Burnby (1983).
26. See Rich (1739), 22, still the fullest source for Hill’s furore with Rich.
27. See Aaron Hill *The Art of Acting*, which he had published in 1735; it was collected in 1753, soon after his death, with the rest of his works and often confused with John Hill’s second and enlarged edition of *The Actor* (1755); see Hill (1753 and 1755).
28. See Lemay and Rousseau (1978), 115; *MR* 3 (July 1750), 189–197.
29. Roach (1993), chapter 3, 93–115. It remains curious that Roach’s prize-winning book did little to elevate Hill’s reputation among eighteenth-century scholars in the 1970s.
30. *Ibid.*, 96–99. Roach’s citations are from *The Actor* 126. The Sainte-Albine title page reads ‘Nouvelle édition, augmentée, corrigée’ but this was a common practice to add *caché* and I have never found an earlier version.
31. See Rousseau (2004).
32. Sainte-Albine (1749).
33. Roach (1993), 98.
34. See Kuhn (1970) and Foucault (1974).
35. Roach (1993), 98–99. The ‘importation’ and its development represent the leap.
36. *Ibid.*, 99.
37. *Ibid.*, 16.
38. See Ballaster (2018), Brooks (2015), Rupert (2011).
39. See Lutterbie (2011).
40. Roach’s fourth chapter, entitled ‘Diderot’, demonstrates Roach’s thorough familiarity with Hill’s *The Actor*, a pivotal point to which I shall return.
41. Roach (1993), 101; Roach bases his view on the ‘associationist’ components of Hill’s view of the actor’s emotions rather than external proof that Hill read Hartley’s *Observations*.
42. *Ibid.*, 101–102.
43. See Chap. 11 on Hill and geology.
44. Silvette (1967), 151.
45. See note 1 above.
46. For some of the statistics at mid-century, see Rousseau (1998).

47. See Lillywhite (1963), 477–478.
48. Brahma (1972), 48, states that women were forbidden at Rawthmell's.
49. These were Folkes' sycophants after he became President of the Royal Society in 1741.
50. I have found no evidence he frequented Rawthmell's.
51. *The Connoisseur*, No. 1, 31 January 1754. Satiric commentator Bonnell Thornton also edited *The Drury Lane Journal*, *Spring-Garden Journal*, and other periodicals in the 1750s, and eventually joined Fielding's Junta in the paper wars against Hill. Thornton was also a member, together with Charles Churchill, of the Nonsense Club.
52. They routinely appeared in the newspapers and in Hill's *Inspector*.
53. See Carpenter (2009).
54. If Smollett's snide comments about the Bedford in *Roderick Random* are indicative of his visit there, he did not enjoy himself; perhaps Hill offended or ridiculed him.
55. They were further annotated in *The March of the Lion* (1752) and replies to it.
56. *LDA*, 7 November 1751.
57. David Hartley's polymathy, based on the interface of theology, philosophy and science, radically differed from Hill's variety.
58. See Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia* (1791).
59. In addition to the biographies of Erasmus Darwin, see Uglow (2001).
60. Hill attended no university and could not be licensed by a College of Physicians, but he paid £50 to Marischal College, Aberdeen, for a degree, as did George Cheyne, to be able to call himself 'Dr'.
61. MacLaurin (1750).
62. I tried to make a case for it in *Notorious* (2012), 313–325.
63. Rousseau (1987).
64. His profile in the tobacco-causes-cancer debate would be higher if he had suggested experiments to test the hypothesis.
65. See Chap. 2.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**George Rousseau** was the Regius Professor of English at King's College, Aberdeen, having previously held professorships at Harvard, UCLA, and, in Oxford, where he was the Co-Director of the Oxford University Centre for the History of Childhood until his retirement in 2013. His life of Hill, the first ever full-length biography, entitled *The Notorious Sir John Hill: The Man Destroyed by Ambition in the Age of Celebrity* (2012), was shortlisted for the Annabelle Jenkins Biography Prize of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

# Coffeehouse Sociability, Science and Public Life in John Hill's 'The Inspector'

*Markman Ellis*

In the early 1750s, John Hill was one of the best-known, and least-liked, men of letters in London. As one of his wounded detractors wrote, Hill was a 'Coxcomb', and the key to his character was his vanity, subsequently dissected as consisting of his 'Vanity of Person', his 'Vanity of Importance', and his 'Vanity of ... Swift Writing, or Currency of the Quill'.<sup>1</sup> Hill's fame, and notoriety, rose in the decade after 1746, in almost direct consequence of the series of public scandals in which he was embroiled, both in person and in print. Yet, this was also the period in which he sought, and failed, to achieve recognition as a man of science. Hill was an awkward gentleman in an age that valued the successful performance of polite civility very highly. His actions give us an unusually colourful glimpse into the public cultures of politeness and sociability in London in this period.

Hill encouraged his readers to view him as a public man: as a man of science, as a man of letters, and as a society figure. His endeavours in these fields brought him renown and prosperity, even fame, but also

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scandal, exclusion and notoriety. The contradiction between these trajectories coheres around differing constructions of how to be a public man, a man known and accepted in society. This chapter compares the two divergent paths to recognition as a public man that Hill pursued in this period (broadly, 1745–1755): first, as a man of science, an aspirant to the Royal Society through his publications in natural philosophy; and, second, as a man of letters, through his publications as an essayist, satirist and newsmonger. Both avenues expected from Hill not only facility with writing and publication, and some ability in self-promotion, but also extensive skills of politeness, humility and sociability, in which he was repeatedly found wanting.

The coffeehouse was important to Hill's approaches to public fame, both as a natural philosopher and as a man of letters. Hill's career, it turns out, is an unusually sensitive barometer for coffeehouse sociability in the polite world. In the twentieth century, an historiographical consensus emerged that the public culture of eighteenth-century London was polite and sociable, and that a key arena for this polite public life was the coffeehouse, especially through its habits of rational and polite debate.<sup>2</sup> The coffeehouse was certainly one of the most characteristic aspects of public life in London: a business that sold coffee and other drinks (tea, chocolate, whisky), although customers were drawn to them as much for news, conversation and debate. Most coffeehouses provided newspapers for reading, and some had extensive libraries; most coffeehouses encouraged debate and discussion on a range of topics that mattered to their customers; many coffeehouses attracted and entertained particular kinds of people (booksellers at The Chapter, men of science at The Grecian, Scots at The Tiltyard). London coffeehouse sociability was famously open and egalitarian, accessible to any man in any condition, but was riven by exclusions: women of propriety were not expected to attend, though women worked in many coffeehouses; the demographic to which many coffeehouses appealed was comparatively well-off, polite and of the middling sort; the conversation ranged well beyond the simply polite to include politics, religion and commerce, all topics frequently marked by contention and dispute.<sup>3</sup> The coffeehouse, in short, was a space in which its fabled qualities of gentlemanly politeness and egalitarian sociability were important enabling *fictions*.

Coffeehouses were also places of conspicuous public display, in which public and self-determined versions of the self could be developed and acted out. John Hill modelled this idea in an essay for 'The Inspector' (No. 149), narrating the story of Jeffrey Hum, a young man of

22 years, who, having come down from university, is ambitious to make his way in the literary world. The would-be wit is directed to the coffee-house by 'smart young Fellows of my Acquaintance': they relate to him 'what were the principal resorts of the People who were most famous for it: George's Coffee-House was mentioned to me of the Number of the capital ones; and I made it one of my first Businesses to visit it'. Jeffrey Hum's career as a wit is disastrously short, as he insults a gentleman with his misdirected jests, and as a result is beaten up.<sup>4</sup> It is significant that the coffeehouse is imagined here as the location of mannered self-fashioning. Coffeehouses were constructed as places which allowed the self to be performed in its most public and ambitious mode.<sup>5</sup> As such, contemporaries thought of them as zones of spectacle, in which they could indulge various forms of voyeuristic and egocentric people watching. As Erving Goffman has taught us to notice, the key emotions of such places are not pleasure and confirmation, but embarrassment, humiliation, awkwardness and anger. Though notionally a space of egalitarian politeness, the coffee-house is a physically intimate space which reiterates established hierarchies and their associated forms of exclusion.<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey Hum's story confirms the coffeehouse as an emblematic location for mannered self-fashioning, but also as a contest which exposes the self to ridicule, and even violence.

### SCIENTIFIC AMBITIONS

During the 1740s, the young apothecary John Hill had polished his credentials as natural philosopher. This was fulfilling a boundary-crossing ambition: he was seeking to move from the apothecary's level of the artisan-mechanic tradesman to the genteel status of the virtuoso, the man of science. He had published a series of scientific works, including his translation of Theophrastus 'History of Stones' in 1747;<sup>7</sup> two papers in the *Philosophical Transactions*, one on soil and the other on mosses;<sup>8</sup> a translation of Pomet's *Compleat History of Drugs* in 1748;<sup>9</sup> and the first volume of his three-volume folio *General Natural History*, also in 1748.<sup>10</sup> These were essentially exercises in scholastic scientific writing, bringing together currently available knowledge using a process of compilation and translation, rather than observation, experimentation and classification.

This body of work had been mostly well-received, and he had made enough of a contribution to hope that he might find recognition from the Royal Society by being elected a Fellow. But, in this, his hopes were dashed, despite some assiduous networking with the president, Martin

Folkes, as well as other luminaries such as Henry Baker, William Watson and even Sir Hans Sloane. Hill was certainly disappointed at this failure. In this era, the Royal Society offered fellowships to at least two sorts of men: on the one hand, it offered them to those such as Emanuel Mendes da Costa and Thomas Birch, who, like Hill, hailed from the lower echelons of the middling sort, had not been to university, but were practising scientific and antiquarian researchers and writers; and, on the other hand, it offered them to gentlemen and noblemen who were interested in, but did not undertake, research in natural philosophy and antiquities—and to the occasional man who was both. In the account given by George Rousseau, Hill's ambition to be elected disappeared when he lost his key supporters, especially da Costa, who fell out with him when he realized Hill's plans for a 'History of Fossils' was in direct competition with his own work of the same title (Da Costa even thought Hill was plagiarizing his research).<sup>11</sup> Despite the collapse of his campaign to be elected a Fellow, Hill remained an assiduous follower of the Royal Society. Although he was no longer welcome at their regular official meetings in Crane Court, he could maintain contact with them at their unofficial gatherings in the coffeehouses they habitually attended, especially Tom's and the Grecian in Devereux Court by Temple Bar, and Rawthmell's in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.

An example of a Fellow of the Royal Society who operated in the 'gentleman philosopher' mode is Daniel Wray (1701–1783), who was elected an FRS when he came down from Cambridge in 1728 aged 27, although his first scientific publications—two antiquarian papers—did not find a public until the 1770s.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, Wray was an influential and well-connected man of letters in London, leading a life animated by scientific sociability as much as intellectual curiosity. In 1738, he wrote a long verse portrait of himself, unpublished in his lifetime, part of which described the daily life of a London virtuoso:

Just where the fancy leads, I stroll about,  
 And ramble with associates, or without;  
 At *Ripley's* fabrics laugh, or feed my eye  
 With *Rysbrach's* bust, or *Hogarth's* Charity;  
 From the *Comptroller's* boat survey the piers,  
 Or gape at *rattle-snakes*, and *Greenland bears*,  
 With rambling tired, with gazing satisfied,  
 Now *Rawthmell's* awful curtain opens wide,

To seat me in the friendly-jarring train  
 Who bow the knee at *Pellat's* gentle reign,  
 Where *Birch* displays his candid vehemence,  
 Keen to collect, and eager to dispense,  
 And where a *Ca'ndish*, tho' no *Chatsworth* lord,  
 Would charm with taste and sense the listening board.  
 My day with Peers and Claret now I close,  
 And factions in our little Rome compose;  
 On *Bourchier's* friendly summons I attend,  
 And to a nipperkin of Port descend:  
 The charms of science now with *Folkes* I taste,  
 Enlarg'd by freedom, and by friendship grac'd.<sup>13</sup>

Wray's portrait of the 'charms of science' describes the world of the republic of letters (this 'little Rome') in eighteenth-century London. He locates this world in a leisured ramble between an official barge on the Thames, from which he views, with the eye of both the connoisseur and surveyor (or engineer), the piers of the new bridge at Westminster, to polite sociability in coffeehouses, and private houses. This is a life of criticism and connoisseurship: making judgements about the new Palladian architecture of Thomas Ripley, Robert Walpole's house architect about whom everyone was snooty; to viewing the new Rysbrach bust of Milton, erected in Westminster Abbey,<sup>14</sup> or the new Hogarth painting on the theme of Charity entitled 'The Good Samaritan' at St Bartholomew's Hospital (unveiled in July 1737). It was also a life of science, moving from the spectacle of exotic animals display (rattlesnakes were on display at the Virginia Coffee-House near the Royal Exchange in 1738), to the assembly of natural philosophers at Rawthmell's Coffee-House, on the north side of Henrietta Street, which was 'much frequented by Dr Mead and other *Literati* at that time', as Wray comments in his own footnotes.<sup>15</sup> There, when he pushed through the curtain that separated the public or common coffeeroom, he entered a select space in which were assembled some of the most influential men of science in London at the time. He names three in particular: Dr Thomas Pellet, the President of the Royal College of Physicians;<sup>16</sup> and Dr Thomas Birch, the antiquarian, a fellow of the Royal Society and of the Antiquarians—and, like Wray, a beneficiary of the patronage of the Philip Yorke, the first earl of Hardwicke; and 'a Cavendish', probably the third son of the Duke of Devonshire, known as Lord Charles Cavendish (1704–1783).<sup>17</sup> As he describes it, the attraction of the assembly is friendship and discussion,

eulogizing the sociability and debate found there, before he goes off in the evening to drink claret and a nipperkin or small glass of port with Martin Folkes, president of the Royal Society from 1741: here, Wray sups deeply not only of wine, but also liberty and friendship.

Wray's scrap of verse helps develop a picture of the coffeehouse world of science and discussion within which Hill attempted to ingratiate himself in the late 1740s: a world of male sociability founded on the sodality of friendship and conversation. These men did real research in natural philosophy, and were assiduous supporters of their scientific institutions, but they were also a tight-knit social group, aware of the latest rumour and gossip, not only of scientific affairs, but also politics, religion and society. Their very wide interests in learning encompassed natural philosophy and antiquarianism, and, as such, included many activities that are some way outside what is now considered science, including history and numismatics, as well as the practice of belles-lettrist connoisseurship.

In the late 1740s, as Hill continued his work on large-scale publications in natural philosophy, his writing also demonstrates considerable curiosity about the social formations of scientific institutions. The central locations for science in London were institutions closed to non-members, such as the committee rooms, demonstration lectures and the libraries of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries, open only to Fellows and their guests. Less obviously, sociability for natural philosophers was also conducted in and through a series of unofficial clubs and dining societies, as Daniel Wray's poem notes. In the early 1750s, these included the Thursdays' Dining Club at the Mitre Tavern in Fleet Street, and Maty's Tea, organized by Matthew Maty and Thomas Birch, and held in various private houses.<sup>18</sup> These private events were also closed to outsiders, as they were invitation only, even when they happened in ostensibly open locations such as a tavern or coffeehouse. Men not unlike Hill in class and education were invited to attend: both the Thursdays' Club and Maty's Tea welcomed Thomas Birch in the same period, for example. But Hill was excluded from both the official and unofficial institutions of sociability of the London republic of letters. Almost the only recourse for Hill's ambitions for his scientific advance was those locations of casual sociability, amongst which the coffeehouse and tavern were central. Following the model proposed by Rob Iliffe about an earlier period, such places remained important to the Fellows of the Royal Society for their potential for open and unstructured encounters with, for example, foreign merchants and travellers, artisans and

mechanics, and the wider pool of learning and literature.<sup>19</sup> In this way, Hill's construction of the coffeehouse in his non-scientific writing is significant – especially in his work as a periodical essayist.

### THE COFFEEHOUSE ESSAY

Hill's engagement with the periodical press demonstrates his interest in how public assemblies, especially coffeehouses, fostered sociability, both within the republic of letters and beyond. In 1746, he was the founding editor of the monthly periodical *The British Magazine*, published by Charles Corbett, who also owned a newspaper, *The Whitehall Evening Post*, published three days a week. The first number of *The British Magazine* was published in April 1746 (for March), and its chief innovations were that it was priced at threepence per issue (later fourpence)—half that of its competitors, and that it was a smaller pocket-seized duodecimo, rather than the more conventional octavo. Hill's most significant contribution was to write essays, initially called 'The Occasional Spectator', after the manner of Steele and Addison's *The Spectator*—that is to say, genial moral satires.<sup>20</sup> After six issues, he transformed his offering into two complementary essays: one a more sententious and serious-minded essay called 'The Moralist', the other a lighter satire called 'The Visiter', which examined behaviour in 'Public Places and Assemblies', so that, as he went on to say, 'it may be a check upon the ill Behaviour of People of all Ranks'.<sup>21</sup> Hill appeals here to the Horatian model of satire as a form of moral correction, using ridicule to gently correct folly and the minor vices. In the guise of 'The Visiter', Hill wrote repeatedly about the social space of the pleasure gardens and the theatre, and occasionally about the coffeehouse. He was critical especially of extravagant male fashions adopted by beaux and fops, of supposedly polite but actually antisocial behaviour, and the promiscuous mixing of social ranks. This is unexceptional Spectatorial essay-ising, interesting especially for how it positions Hill, as a critic of social follies and peccadilloes, as an observer of everyday moral behaviour.

Having met with some success with the essays in *The British Magazine*, Hill began a more ambitious essay venture in 1751. Collaborating with the notorious but also innovative bookseller Ralph Griffiths, he was appointed editor of a new newspaper. This began publication on 4 March 1751 as *The London Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, but has become better-known using the title it adopted in April of the

same year, *The London Daily Advertiser*.<sup>22</sup> The founders, Griffiths as publisher and Hill as editor, announced in the first issue that they were ‘ambitious’ to make their paper ‘the general Channel of Literature and Amusement’, and proclaiming that ‘as Plato is said to have brought down Philosophy from Heaven to dwell with Men on Earth’ (in imitation of Addison’s famous claim in *The Spectator* No. 4), ‘we shall attempt to bring Entertainment from the Parties of the Great, to People less exalted above the common Level of Mankind’.<sup>23</sup> The venture entered a crowded London market already served by nine newspapers,<sup>24</sup> and, as a daily newspaper printed six days a week, it had to secure a regular source of new information and ‘news’. The answer to this was a daily essay, undertaken by Hill, called ‘The Inspector’, and initiated the next day, Tuesday, 5 March 1751. The first essay was an insightful and extended assessment of Thomas Gray’s ‘Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard’, which had been published on 15 February by Robert Dodsley. In itself, this was a subtle and intelligent critical analysis of contemporary literature—all of which made it intensely innovative. Soon after beginning ‘The Inspector’, Hill had the first fourteen numbers reprinted as an aid to social advancement: a copy he gifted to John Boyle, the Earl of Orrery (FRS), on 24 June 1751, is in the British Library (‘From the Author. Dr Hill: non r.s.v.p’).<sup>25</sup> A larger selection of 152 essays—less than a quarter of the total then published—were packaged up in two volumes in 1753 as *The Inspector*, published by a consortium led by Ralph Griffiths.<sup>26</sup>

‘The Inspector’ essays are one of Hill’s greatest achievements. For more than two years, Hill wrote in the order of one essay per day, Sundays excluded, in a run that extended to around 720 essays, on a wide range of topics including notices of literary publications, theatre reviews, moral philosophy, divinity and botanical enquiry, as well as gentle moral satire. The model was, again, Addison and Steele’s periodical essays for *The Spectator*, published daily in 1711–1712: like them, Hill adopted a controlling persona, the Inspector, and imitated their mode of satire by addressing the minor vices of polite society.<sup>27</sup> Not all the essays were satirical: like Addison and Steele, he mixed satire with serious philosophical enquiry, including, in his case, essays in literary and theatrical criticism, and natural philosophy. In ‘The Inspector’, Hill emerged as a Spectatorial essayist of very high quality. He was also enormously successful, winning a very enthusiastic and large readership.

Hill was fond of proclaiming his own success in ‘The Inspector’: he said in No. 57, for example, that ‘There is hardly a Man in Town more

generally known than the Author of these Papers'.<sup>28</sup> A number of essays drew attention to his carriage, an ostentatious vehicle that, in an act of spectacular personal vanity, sported his own spurious coat of arms. His person was also noteworthy in the essays. A beautiful young woman known as Draperia (probably fictional) wrote into say that 'I pride myself in having sometimes at Ranelagh attracted the Notice, and been favoured with the Glances of the Inspector himself'.<sup>29</sup> Another essay suggests that 'it has become a sort of Fashion to know the Inspector'.<sup>30</sup> Hill was also proud of the association with *The Spectator*, and covertly cultivated it. An early number of 'The Inspector' reported that some readers thought the essays were actually written by Addison:

A much greater Genius than either of these, asserted Yesterday, at Tom's Coffee-house, that you have no Merit as a Writer at all; but that you accidentally bought, at a late Sale at Mr T. Osborne's, some Manuscript Spectators of Mr. Addison, and have been publishing them ever since, under the Name of Inspectors.<sup>31</sup>

This was not the only joke he made reinforcing the connection between his essays and Addison and Steele's originals. The anonymous satirist of *Rules for Being a Wit* (1753) agreed by describing 'the immortal Inspector' as 'the Successor to *Addison* and *Steele*'—though the force of this was undercut when the satirist also stated that 'tis he that says just so'.<sup>32</sup>

Further essays celebrated 'The Inspector' as the doyen of the coffeehouse. London coffeehouses routinely provided the latest copies of newspapers and essays for their clientele to read: printed news and entertainment was considered a necessary supplement to the oral exchange of news in gossip and conversation. Hill's essay was distributed 'every Morning by the Hawkers' to 'All Coffee-Houses and Publick Houses' who 'chuse to take in the London Daily Advertiser'.<sup>33</sup> A correspondent to the Inspector on 4 June 1751 called 'R.B.'—again, probably Hill himself—testified to the centrality of the essay to his coffeehouse sociability. R.B. reported that:

It has been no small Mortification to me, every Day, for a Week past, to have been deprived the sight of your Paper, at one of the most considerable Coffee-houses in the City, which is supplied too each Morning with no less than four of them.—Upon a little Enquiry into the Cause of this constant Disappointment, the Waiter assured me, that the Complaint was

of late become general; and that your Papers were never to be found two Hours after the Hawker had left them, which was owing to Gentlemens putting them in their Pockets, after they had read them; and that this Practice was now become frequent in most other Coffee-houses.<sup>34</sup>

The popularity of ‘The Inspector’, R.B. suggests, makes the printed sheets a common object of pilfering. Another essay, No. 163, modelled how ‘The Inspector’ was read and consumed in the common space of the coffeehouse. A correspondent called Phares (‘the beacon’), confessed:

It is but Justice to you to confess I never frequented Coffee-houses, read News-papers, or meditated on Daily Essays of Morality, with so much pleasure since you have appeared in the Character of Inspector. ... Your Paper is the first I call for whenever I come into the Coffee-room, and I always think the Reading your Essay is a kind of Preparation, or Introductory Lecture to the profitable Reading of all the other Papers.<sup>35</sup>

As this correspondent suggests, the attraction of the coffeehouse is neither the coffee, nor the conversation of his fellow customers, but the print culture encountered there, especially Hill’s ‘Inspector’ essays. The ‘Inspector on the Table’ was as important to the coffeehouse experience as ‘a Dish of Coffee and a Muffin’ for another correspondent.<sup>36</sup> But the connection between ‘The Inspector’ and coffeehouse reading was not necessarily positive. John Kennedy, in his *Remarks* (1752), noted that ‘The Sale of his Paper, on which he grounds the Approbation of the Town, can I think be accounted for from this single Property, viz. That it may be considered as the Town *Opium*, and consequently encouraged at all Coffee-Houses, because it promotes the Consumption of the great *Antidote* to Sleep’, coffee.<sup>37</sup> In Kennedy’s strange metaphor, newspapers are the opium of the people, encouraged those who might profit from its antidote, the coffee-men with their coffee.

In the period when ‘The Inspector’ was attaining its celebrity, the periodical essay was having a major reawakening: in 1750, Johnson began the bi-weekly *The Rambler* (1750–1752), followed by Fielding’s bi-weekly *The Covent Garden Journal* (1752), and Arthur Murphy’s *The Gray’s Inn Journal* (1753–1754). In addition, 1749 saw the foundation of *The Monthly Review*, also by Ralph Griffiths. While these essay and review periodicals all have their merits, it is not unrealistic to claim that

Hill's 'Inspector' essays were the most important, innovative and successful among them. The *Rules for Being a Wit* declared:

the Ins[pecto]r is a Prodigy—such a one as you won't meet with in a Million.—And, I believe you, wou'd allow me to double the Number were I to inform you he has wrote no less then 620 In[specto]rs, beside such Quantities of Natural History, in Folio; Philosophy, Novels, Romances, Memoirs, &c. &c. &c, as wou'd more than replenish, a modern Library.<sup>38</sup>

None of this success would have endeared Hill to his competitors, nor to the men of science at the Royal Society.

### COFFEEHOUSE SOCIABILITY

So, what did the coffeehouse sociability mean to the Inspector? Hill was not a consistent apologist for their charms. In his 'Inspector' essays, he fractures their much vaunted openness and egalitarian spirit by locating the coffeehouse as the home of socially exclusive cliques and clubs. Rather than being egalitarian and open, coffeehouse sociability is, in his depiction, riven with petty distinctions and social embarrassments. The Inspector registers a range of distinct social groups in the coffeehouse, groups to which he does not belong, and does not wish to: notably wits, fops, pedants and critics. In No. 15, the Inspector notes how the 'Wits of the Coffee-house' assess a recent pamphlet, jokingly dismissing a pamphlet on uniting the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland by enquiries about whether it is to be by bridge or an artificial isthmus.<sup>39</sup> Repudiating the opinion of coffeehouse wits allows the Inspector to retain his own independence. Coffeehouse clientele failed repeatedly to live up to *The Spectator's* presiding fiction of polite, rational and moral conversation. (Fig. 1) In No. 168, Hill's Inspector described a religious enthusiast 'haranguing, at a Coffee-house, an Audience of Boys and People of Boy-like Understandings'.<sup>40</sup> In another 'Inspector' essay (No. 152), the correspondent called Phares offers a very pedantic discussion of the pedantry of literary critics. Carefully referencing Locke's 'Discourse on the Abuse of Words' in the *Essay on Human Understanding*, Phares describes how he overhears a conversation between two critics in a coffeehouse near the Temple on the subject of pedantry. Pushing into the matter further, he declares that 'Coffee-houses and other public Resorts of this Metropolis, abound with' not only the various forms of the 'Literary



**Fig. 1** ‘John’s Coffee House’, 1745. Etching by Callender (active mid-century). Courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund

pedant’, but also ‘the Political, the Theatrical, and a thousand more’.<sup>41</sup> Here, Hill satirizes the pedantry of coffeehouse discussion, which is not, he claims, conducted in the open, polite and gentlemanly mode promoted by *The Spectator*, but is narrow, contracted and given over to bitter quibbles. Both these satirical fictions were provided with evidence by the specialized audiences that gave some coffeehouses particular expertise and renown, such as the booksellers in *The Chapter* by St Paul’s, or the stock-jobbers in *Jonathan’s* in Exchange Alley. More relevant to Hill was the scientific assembly that met ‘behind the curtain’ at Rawthmell’s, noted in Wray’s poem, not least because he was excluded from that as well.

Another focus of the Inspector’s ire in the coffeehouse was the men of fashion, dismissed as fops and beaux. Is this just another group from which he is excluded? In ‘The Inspector’ No. 56, he attacks ridiculous follies of male fashion, perpetrated especially by French hairdressers, such as long wigs, ornamental swords and extravagant shoulder knots. The coffeehouse and the park are amongst the notable ‘places of public

Entertainment' for witnessing these follies. 'The Coffee-houses about Covent-Garden exhibit to us a Number of the one of these Species, those about St. James's of the other'.<sup>42</sup> An encounter in a coffeehouse between a 'Cult. Jun.', a plain young man, and a beau affords the topic of another essay, No. 172.

I am glad to find myself able now and then to get into a Coffee-house, to enjoy the Variety of Conversation which is frequently to be met with on such Occasions. It was at a noted Place of this kind, not far from St James's, that the Cause of my present Complaint to you happened: I was sitting at the End of a Table smelling my Coffee, and contemplating the Variety of Figures about me, when I was surprised by a violent Blow on the Legs.<sup>43</sup>

The blow has been effected by the beau's sword, fashionably long and worn modishly low across the calves. In the following altercation, the plain man rebukes the fop for his foolishly modish and luxurious dress, which does not guarantee his status as a gentleman. The plain man's rebukes send the beau scurrying from the coffeehouse, humiliated by the company's laughter.

The key to coffeehouse sociability was conversation. The connection had been established in Restoration coffeehouse satires, and had been famously reiterated by *The Spectator*. Hill's essays in 'The Inspector' defend the role of conversation, which he describes as 'essence of social Happiness', in the experience of the coffeehouse. In No. 6, the Inspector argues that conversation 'throws the Experience of every separate Member of Society into the common Stock; and gives to every private Person, in return, the Advantage of the joint Experience of the whole'. It is conversation that melds individuals into society. The quality and nature of coffeehouse conversation was accordingly a matter of interest to Hill. In the midst of his own scandals, the Inspector stated 'I have never supposed wrangling in Coffee-houses a Way of deciding Quarrels'.<sup>44</sup>

The aim of coffeehouse conversation, he declared, was the 'Rational Entertainment of the Mind'. Concerned by the exuberance of the coffeehouse debate, the Inspector considered forms of regulation that would control it. In 'The Inspector' No. 6, the Inspector observes:

The mixed Conversation at Coffee-houses, if it could be restrained within any Bounds of Order and Regularity, would be of the most advantageous

kind: How instructive must it be, to hear the Observations of twenty different People on the Variety of Objects that have occurred to them in the Course of the Day? How agreeable to meet with the Quintessence of a Multitude of Conversations, at the several parties the different People who make up the Company have been engaged in, collected, separated from its Superfluities and Redundancies and delivered to us concentrated, as it were, with all its Merit, in the Compass of a few Periods:<sup>45</sup>

But, the Inspector says, conversation has been turned into a vice by selfishness. Regulation of coffeehouse conversation, the Inspector continues, should proceed according to two principles: it ought to be ingenuous, on the one hand, and affable and modest, on the other. He advises that speakers should not hold another in contempt because he has an opposing view, should be cautious of condemning follies in others, ought to be reserved on subjects they know most about, so as not to triumph insolently over the company, and should avoid making themselves the subject of conversation. This position is both very Spectatorial, and not at all what Hill himself managed in person.

Coffeehouses were not only locations for the consumption of information, they were also central to its manufacture. In Hill's novel *The History of George Edwards*, published in 1751, the hero receives his education at Will's Coffee-house,

where, after picking up the News of the Day ..., without joining in any Conversation, he employed the Rest of the tedious Period [between dining and bed] in reading one after another all the Daily, and the Weekly Papers.<sup>46</sup>

Coffeehouse conversation was central to the production model of 'The Inspector', too, through the figure of 'the collector of news'. Identifying the coffeehouse as the location of gossip, rumour and scandal, the collector of news is related to the figure of the hack, the journalist and the newsmonger. These terms, all of which were current in the mid-eighteenth century, usually carried a pejorative connotation: they all described a form of vulgar professional writing. Of the 'newsmonger', Samuel Butler said, 'the whole business of his life is, like that of a spaniel, to fetch and carry news', without concerning himself with its truth. 'True or false is all one to him; for novelty being the grace of both, a truth grows stale as soon as a lie'.<sup>47</sup> A newsmonger mistakes novelty for truth,

and as such, in the satirist's view, is emblematic of the corruption of public culture.

In Hill's essays for 'The Inspector', the activities of the newsmonger are revised into a more polite notion of the 'collector of news'. In No. 665, Hill describes such a man, a contradictory figure at once 'a much more extraordinary and much less accountable Character' than most:

In the Park, for he is constant at all Places that cost nothing, no Mortal ever saw him speak to any living Creature, except where it was once to Lady Lucy's Dog ...: In the Street it is not uncommon to find him in familiar Chat with a Barber. He is at Coffee-houses, but having nobody to fix himself upon, he lays down his Penny at the Bar: And after putting down Notes of what People little suspect in his Memorandum-Book, he retires as he entered; as unnoticed as unknown by every Body.<sup>48</sup>

The collector of news is constant in his attendance at public places of sociability, from the park to the coffeehouse. Yet, he is unaccountably unconnected there, and uses his singular anonymity to collect in his memorandum-book bits of rumour and gossip, to parcel them up into news. In the coffeehouse, he is like Mr Spectator, present as an observer, but, unnoticed and unknown, not present as a participant.

A month later, in essay No. 690 (26 May 1753), the Inspector appears as a collector of news himself, conversing in a coffeehouse with a man named Caius:

I was a few Days since honoured with the Conversation of Caius in a Coffee-house. Accident had brought us together, and neither of us knew to whom he was speaking till afterward. Caius no more imagined he was communicating his Sentiments to the Writer of a Newspaper, than I was conversing with one of the first among Mankind.<sup>49</sup>

The Inspector socializes as a 'Writer of a Newspaper' or news collector, and does so without revealing his purpose and identity. There is a level of dissimulation involved that is not quite proper with regard to Caius's candid communication of his 'Sentiments' or opinions. In the conversation that follows, the Inspector describes Caius as a man involved in high politics (all men speak of him 'as conspicuous and considerable in the highest Degree') and, as such, he is often the subject of coffeehouse debate and gossip, though by 'Person and Appearance the plainest Man in the World':

It must frequently happen to Caius, to hear his own conduct arraigned of Crimes in which he has no Share; or praised for Things, in which his Modesty will not suffer him to suppose he had so great Concern: And without Question, he bears both with the same Composure. How admirable a Character! *Caius* in a Manner manages the Business of a People, without mixing himself among them; and is flexible in his Zeal for their Service, while he hears without Pain their Reproaches.

But, despite being the subject of Conversations critical of his actions, Caius is a man of ‘consummate Virtue’, who acts in the public good without expecting praise, nor even recognition from those who benefit from his actions.

In examining Caius’s conduct, the Inspector shows how his consistent and unrelenting application of moral virtue leads to him into adopting unpopular positions. Being consistent means that Caius must sometimes oppose the opinions of the common people:

Thus Men in private and in publick speak of *Caius*, and all they say is in the Particulars true. Thus they speak of him; but hear the Voice of Reason and there will appear a new Account of the same Actions.

In following Caius’s example, ordinary coffeehouse inhabitants have an appropriate role model. Caius has some of the same qualities as Eubulus, an exemplary citizen described in *The Spectator* No 49. Through conversations in the coffeehouse, Eubulus serves as a model for his ‘little diurnal audience’. The coffeehouse inhabitants’ ‘Veneration towards him [Eubulus] is so great, that when they are in other Company they speak and act after him; are Wise in his Sentences, and are no sooner sat down at their own Tables, but they hope or fear, rejoice or despond as they saw at the Coffee-house. In a word, every Man is *Eubulus* as soon as his Back is turn’d.’<sup>50</sup> In ‘The Inspector’, Caius is a more resistant figure, refusing to follow common opinion, and eschewing party and faction:

If he be told of the World’s Censure and Reproach, he will reply with the same unruffled Brow, ‘It is my ill Fortune not to be understood: If those who revile my Actions, knew my Thoughts, they would love men: Nor have I right to take Offence at their Mistakes?’

Caius’s stoical humility shows his ‘Merit in bearing undeserv’d Reproach without Resentment’. Despite his habit of pronouncing unpopular views,

Caius's moral consistency wins him followers. The Inspector concludes, 'It has been said, that Men are what they are in a great measure from Example.'<sup>51</sup> In a manner reminiscent of the Eubulus argument in *The Spectator*, Hill proposes in the emulative principle a key to moral reform.

Essay No. 690 further exhibits the work of the news collector: he works outwards from a conversational encounter in the coffeehouse, recording some matters of debate, reporting on gossip and reputation, and forging from the fragments a complete essay in a newspaper. Hill elevates the newsmonger into a moral agent, revising the historically enduring animus against coffeehouse gossip and the newsmonger. Instead of being seditious and destructive, the newsmonger's act of collecting, disseminating and commenting on coffeehouse gossip is transformed into an act of virtue. The role of coffeehouse conversation, in the Inspector's view, is central in circulating information and raw news in society, both as opinion and sentiment, and as gossip and rumour. The collector of news is closely allied, and provides access, to the opinion of the common people. Hans Speier, an important influence on Habermas's notion of the public sphere, argued in 1950 that it was in the early eighteenth century that a modern idea of 'public opinion' emerged: 'opinions on matters of concern to the nation freely and publically expressed by men outside the government who claim a right that their opinions should influence or determine the actions, personnel or structure of their government'. Speier saw an important role for coffeehouses in this process, as 'centres of news-gathering and news dissemination, political debate and literary criticism'.<sup>52</sup> Hill's essays demonstrate how the coffeehouse, in circulating gossip and news, contributed to an information economy located beyond the ministry and the court, embedded in the people and their sociability.

### PUBLIC SCIENCE AND THE COFFEEHOUSE

Public conversation in the coffeehouse also plays an important role in Hill's most direct attacks on the sociability of science. Hill's *Dissertation on Royal Societies*, published in 1750, is a kind of mock travel account, written by a 'Slavonian' nobleman (from Serbia or Croatia), comparing his experience of visiting the Royal Society in London with an earlier visit to the Académie des Sciences in Paris.<sup>53</sup> In his account of the latter, he praised the well-ordered, calm and rational nature of the meeting; whereas he is dismayed by the chaotic scenes he witnesses in London. At

the Royal Society (in Letter II), the members are a ‘motley Mixture of all Kinds of Men’, he says, including fops, noblemen, and mechanics, alongside the natural philosophers; their discussion was a ‘redoubled Clamour, the whole Assembly talking at once’; and the papers were delivered in a ridiculous recitative. The paper itself, an antiquated and out-dated astronomical study predicting a solar apocalypse, was hardly heard because the Fellows kept up a ‘Roar’ of ‘Chit-chat’, a ‘general Hum’ and ‘Monosyllabic Buz’ that ‘drowned the Voice of the Secretary’.<sup>54</sup> Hill’s satire was aimed at exposing the scientific corruption of the Royal Society, and it landed some telling blows. Hill claimed the papers were inconsequential and out-of-date; the proceedings of the assembly were chaotic and disorganized; and the discussion and debate of the fellows disreputable and unregulated. The most damning indictment was that many of the Fellows, including Officers, were not qualified to judge the quality of the research.

After the official meeting has broken up, the Sclavonian discovers that a group of fellows are ‘filing off the same Way’ towards a coffeehouse. The Royal Society met in their building in Crane Court, and the Fellows were in the habit of continuing their discussions in The Grecian coffeehouse, nearby in Devereux Court. ‘We entered a large Room together, and seated ourselves without Ceremony’, noted the Sclavonian.<sup>55</sup> This egalitarian spirit encourages the Sclavonian, but the Fellows merely exchange tales of ridiculous wonders—such as a ‘frightful Monster, voided by a Lady’ on taking a dose of worm-powder—and all the while talking together at the same time. When the topic turns to the conduct of the Royal Society itself, however, the Fellows grow suddenly secretive, and, discovering the Sclavonian among them, eject him from the coffeehouse.

A similar fate was meted out to Hill. The *Dissertation* was the second of three Scriblerian satires Hill wrote against the Royal Society in 1750: the first was *Lucina sine Concubitu*, which took the form of a vulgar mock-scientific treatise on human generation;<sup>56</sup> the third was *A Review of the Works of the Royal Society*, which satirized the form and content of the *Philosophical Transactions*, showing them to consist more of social pleasantries and status display than meaningful scientific research. In response to his provocations, the Fellows of the Royal Society closed ranks and excluded Hill from their company. He was refused entrance to the meetings of the Society at Crane Court, and was shunned at the coffeehouse, too. Baker noted that though ‘he used frequently to be

admitted to the Meetings of the Royal Society, but upon this Behaviour he is excluded from ever coming there again, nor will any Member of the Society be seen in his Company'.<sup>57</sup>

The Royal Society's refusal to allow open discussion in the coffee-house is further evidence of their intellectual corruption, Hill suggests. His satire recognizes that the coffeehouse allows the world of natural philosophy a space for open and public discussion of its methods and procedures. Hill also notes that the open egalitarian nature of coffee-house discussion was suborned by exclusivity, by ejecting critics from the debate, or retiring behind the curtain at Rawthmell's. Closing down the openness of the coffeehouse was not conducive to scholarly rigour and institutional method. Hill's criticism of the Royal Society is that it is corrupt, and that this corruption has been compounded by two errors: they have not followed their own rational procedures, and they have not exposed themselves to the glare of publicness.

### 1752 AND HILL'S PUBLICNESS

The year 1752 was the year in which Hill's notoriety knew few bounds. Embroiled in a scandalous series of public events, and subject to repeated criticism about his publications, Hill became the subject of a vituperative paper war. A blizzard of pamphlets and prints—at least eighteen—attacked Hill's public persona, the Inspector, and his public self. George Rousseau's biography untangles the strange currents of jealousy and distaste aroused by Hill's public spat with Captain Mountefort Browne, both at Ranelagh, where Hill was beaten, and in 'The Inspector', where Browne was ridiculed.<sup>58</sup> Hill participated vigorously in this polyvalent exchange, fanning the flames of contention whenever possible. 'The Inspector' essays were an important location for Hill's self-defence.

Edmund Burke noted the ambiguous gulf between Hill's person and his persona. In an unpublished mock-obituary entitled 'A Funeral Oration on the Inspector to be Pronounced in the Bedford Coffee House by Mr Macklin' (dated 1751, written 1752 or 1753), Burke argued that the paper war advertised the 'admirable distinction' which Hill 'Establish'd between the Inspector and Dr. Hill'—'a Distinction so Slippery that no knot could hold him':

If the Inspector was a libeller Dr. Hill was notwithstanding a good natured man; If the Inspector propos'd Marriage Dr Hill slipt out of the

Noose. On the other hand if Dr. Hill was a man of profess'd Bravery, the Inspector might have been conscientious in Duelling. if Dr. Hill suffered a publick Threshing, The Inspector felt no hurt in body or Reputation. ...

It is hard to sustain one Character well. He has done more, he has sustained two, two such as could separately have graced the most eminent persons, two such as none could have thought Compatible in one. He has held them in all things. At Ranelagh he was a Coxcomb, at home he was a Philosopher. At Ranelagh he endured a drubbing, at home he & Major England gave one.<sup>59</sup>

The repeated blurring of the gap between person and persona advertise Hill's attempts to become a fully public man, a figure of consequence and renown. Hill finds he cannot be both a satirical essayist and a man of science, or a hack and a gentleman. Hill was at the centre of public debate and gossip, and maintained his presence there through careful manipulation and cultivation of the news media. But that public presence counted against him in the polite world of Royal Society natural philosophy, where he also assiduously sought self-promotion. As a public man, Hill was an odd kind of failure.

As Hill's satirical essays make clear, coffeehouse sociability, and its discourse, is often anything but polite, rational and civil. In 'The Inspector', Hill attempts an argument about coffeehouses in general, like Mr Spectator; for example, both see them as an arena and motor for the reformation of manners. But Hill also sees coffeehouses through his conflicted negotiation with public life in the city. He is attracted to the idea of the coffeehouse and their association with habits of conversation, with refined and polite interaction, and promotion of open and egalitarian sociability. At the same time, he is also repelled by other aspects of public interaction he finds there, such as the unregulated nature of coffeehouse discourse, the tendency of coffeehouse debate to break down from polite sociability, even into violence, and by his repeated exclusion from barely visible inner circles. In 'The Inspector', Hill's own capacity as a public satirist and public writer, fails to make the coffeehouse add up to a coherent idea, even though, as a public man and a coffeehouse news-monger, he remains an adept user of its contradictions. Hill was aware of the dominant ideological fictions of coffeehouse openness, politeness, rationality, egalitarian and sociability, and knew them to be fictions.

## NOTES

1. Kennedy (1752), 22–25.
2. An argument associated with Habermas (1989).
3. Ellis (2004); Cowan (2005).
4. John Hill, ‘The Inspector’, No. 149, *London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, 23 August 1751.
5. Greenblatt (1980).
6. Goffman (1956), 264–271.
7. Hill, *Theophrastus’s History of Stones* (1746).
8. Hill, ‘A Letter from Mr. John Hill, Apothecary, to the President’, *Philosophical Transactions* 44, (1746–1747), 60–66; Hill, ‘A Letter from Mr. John Hill, Apothecary, to the President, concerning Windsor Loam’, *ibid.*, 458–463.
9. Pommet (1748).
10. Hill, *A General Natural History* (1748–1752).
11. Rousseau (2012), 31–50.
12. Wray, [(1771)]; *Archaeologia* (1770).
13. Wray, ‘[A Poetical Portrait of Mr. Wray written by himself]’, in J. Nichols (ed.) (1817), I, 30–31.
14. *Common Sense or The Englishman’s Journal*, 22 April 1738.
15. Wray (1817), 31.
16. Dr Thomas Pellet, FRS, owned the lease of two houses with Rawthmell’s widow (*London Gazette*, 3 March 1747). See Green (1970), 147–152. Pellet was a President of the Royal College of Physicians, and a close friend of Mead.
17. Jungnickel and McCommach (1998), 19–284.
18. Allibone (1976); Gunther (1984), 10, 53.
19. Iliffe (1995), 285–318.
20. Addison and Steele (1965).
21. John Hill, ‘The Visiter’, No. 1, *The British Magazine*, I (September 1746), 256–257.
22. *The London Advertiser and Literary Gazette*. The colophon of the first issue read ‘printed by E. Cowlrick at D. Browne’s near Charing-Cross, for R. Griffiths, in St Paul’s Churchyard’. From No. 40, 18 April 1751, it was retitled *The London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette* and, from No. 229, 25 November 1751 to No. 720, 30 June 1753, it was called simply *The London Daily Advertiser*. ‘The Inspector’ first appeared in the second issue; only after issue No. 121 (23 July 1751) did the Inspector number accord exactly with that of the newspaper.
23. *LDA*, 4 March 1751.
24. The Burney collection for 1751 suggests *The London Advertiser* joined: *London Evening Post*, *Whitehall Evening Post*, *Old England*, *General*

*Evening Post, London Gazette, Penny London Post, Read's Weekly Journal, The Rambler, St James's Evening Post.* British Library Burney Collection: Manuscript Catalogue, Vol. 3, 1719–1753, BL pressmark: RAM.

25. John Hill, *The Inspector* (1751), BL 12330.f.20.
26. John Hill, *The Inspector* (1753).
27. In this chapter, I refer to the editorial character of a periodical as a persona, in preference to the term 'eidolon' adopted by some critics. For an analysis of the two terms, see Powell (2012), 23–24; I agree with her analysis but not her conclusion.
28. 'The Inspector', No. 57, *LDA*, 1 June 1751.
29. 'The Inspector', No. 169, *LDA*, 16 September 1751.
30. 'The Inspector', No. 128, *LDA*, 30 July 1751.
31. 'The Inspector', No. 36, *LDA*, 30 April 1751.
32. *Rules for Being a Wit* (1753), 7.
33. Hill, *The Inspector* (1751), title page.
34. No. 80, *LDA*, 4 June 1751.
35. 'The Inspector', No. 163, *LDA*, 9 September 1751.
36. 'The Inspector', No. 165, *LDA*, 11 September 1751.
37. Kennedy (1752), 41–42.
38. *Rules for Being a Wit* (1753), 8.
39. 'The Inspector', No. 15, *LDA*, 25 March 1751.
40. 'The Inspector', No. 168, *LDA*, 14 September 1751.
41. 'The Inspector', No. 152, *LDA*, 27 August 1751.
42. 'The Inspector', No. 56, *LDA*, 31 May 1751.
43. 'The Inspector', No. 172, *LDA*, 19 September 1751.
44. 'The Inspector', No. 372 *LDA*, 9 May 1752.
45. 'The Inspector', No. 6, *London Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, 13 March 1751; Issue 9.
46. Hill, *The Adventures of Mr George Edwards, a Creole* (1751), 6–7.
47. Butler (1759), II, 296.
48. 'The Inspector', No. 665, *LDA*, 27 April 1753.
49. 'The Inspector', No. 690, *LDA*, 26 May 1753.
50. *The Spectator*, No. 49, Bond, I, 211.
51. 'The Inspector', No. 690, *LDA*, 26 May 1753.
52. Speier, (1950), 376–388, 376, 381.
53. John Hill, *A Dissertation on Royal Societies* (1750).
54. *Ibid.*, 21, 23.
55. *Ibid.*, 32.
56. Hill [Abraham Johnson (pseud.)], *Lucina sine concubitu* (1750).
57. *LPH* (1982), 40–42 (40).
58. Rousseau (2012), 139–151.
59. Edmund Burke (1997).

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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# The Inspector at Large: Investigating the Spaces of London

*Chris Ewers*

*In my last entry I found Cincinnati similar to a chessboard. True! But today I should prefer to compare it to a giant newspaper page.*  
—Moritz Busch

## THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

In 1751, when it became an open secret that ‘The Inspector’ writing columns for the *London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette* was none other than John Hill, a number of his former colleagues and rivals must have steeled themselves for a series of renewed attacks. After the Royal Society rejected his overtures to be elected a Fellow, Hill’s response showed a savagery that went beyond the normal bounds of the combative print culture of mid-century. In 1750, he published *Lucina Sine Concubitu* and *A Dissertation on Royal Societies*, which lampooned and criticised the work of the Society, while, in the following year, his *Review of the Works of the Royal Society* and a novel, *The Adventures of Mr. George Edwards, A Creole*, heaped more ridicule on the meetings at Crane Court. Now, armed with a daily

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column in a newspaper, it seemed Hill was in a position to redouble his assault. In the end, his erstwhile targets need not have worried: Hill took quite another way and, in the process, tried to reinvent himself, reimagine the relationship between London and the fashionable ‘Town’, and create a new, more refined reading public. That he did not quite succeed says as much about how the ideal of sociability was compromised by a competitive, commodified society as it does about his own failings.

It is true that the Royal Society and its offshoots, a string of private clubs for debating subjects ranging from botany to antiquarianism, did not get off completely scot free. There is a running joke in the Inspector columns about a deluded inventor advocating the use of electricity for cooking (not one of Hill’s more prescient moments), but Hill now places himself in a new relation to the type of scientific club he had tried so hard to join. When he later prints a mock letter from one of these clubs, which congratulates him on publishing the findings of their ‘Electrical Cook’, it is addressed: ‘To the INSPECTOR-GENERAL of Great Britain (From behind the Curtain, at the Bishopsgate-street Coffee-house’.<sup>1</sup> The men of science are depicted as obsessed with their self-enclosed world, and they are grateful to the Inspector for bringing their ideas to a wider public. Instead of a missive delivered from one partitioned space within one small coffeehouse, the Inspector inhabits a ‘General’ sphere that expands to encompass Great Britain. The club men are myopic (there is a sense of them peeping out from behind the curtain), while the Inspector is able to survey the whole nation. Hill, who had been refused admission to Crane Court in 1750 after his repeated attacks, knew what it was like to be left on the outside of such curtained-off spaces. His response is to position himself as one who has risen above such restricted ways of seeing, stating: ‘Impartiality was one of the first principles on which the office of the INSPECTORSHIP was established: friends, strangers, and enemies were to be treated by it with the same indifference’.<sup>2</sup>

The Inspector columns imagine a very different type of London to that found in mid-century fiction, including Hill’s own best novel, *The Adventures of Mr. George Edwards*, which was published in July 1751, four months after the first Inspectors started to appear. In the novel, Hill imagines London as a city full of closed, or restricted, spaces, and the plot involves George Edwards’ repeated attempts to unlock them. The novel begins with the description of an obscure doorway in lower Scotland Yard, protected by ‘a spiked Hatch’ and a ‘triple-bolted Gate’, belonging to the villainous Mr Jeremy Edwards.<sup>3</sup> The ‘triple-bolted Gate’ becomes a

leitmotif for the rest of the novel as George Edwards, arriving in London from the Caribbean, initially finds the foreign spaces of the Town barred to him. Gaston Bachelard has argued that this is a fundamental response to space: ‘The door schematizes two strong possibilities, which sharply classify two types of daydream. At times, it is closed, bolted, padlocked. At others, it is open, that is to say, wide open.’<sup>4</sup> In one scene, George Edwards walks along the Mall only to find himself driven along before a ‘jovial’ party:

which consisted of eight People, four of each Sex, who had arranged themselves together, a Man and a Woman alternately, and, joining Hands like Children at Threadneedle, form’d a straight Line that reach’d across the *Mall*, and consequently turn’d every body they met into one of the other Walks. (140)

Two of the party, Lady Sophist and Dr Killdarby, are engaged in an argument about the immortality of the soul (the latter armed by fresh arguments he has picked up from a newspaper column, entitled ‘The Inspector’) but are only too happy to set this aside and join in the game of making George Edwards the subject of their private entertainment. In a disturbing image, the party close ranks on him, forcing him to walk in front, leaving him ‘expos’d to Attacks from every Part of it’ (142).

*The Adventures of Mr. George Edwards* is part of a pervasive subgenre of the eighteenth-century novel, the ‘coming to London’ narrative. It was a particularly popular subgenre at mid-century and, in his preface, Hill references two of its most notable and best examples, Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749) and Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1748), while Tobias Smollett’s *Roderick Random* (1748) had also just been published with great success. In these novels, London is depicted, at first, as a closed space. The narrative arc of these novels usually charts the way the protagonists gradually learn to master the city, much as George Rousseau argues Hill underwent his own ‘London education’ in the decade leading up to his ‘Inspectorship’.<sup>5</sup> Hill’s Inspector columns bear this out; at one point, he admits:

I remember when I was a very young fellow, and just come upon the town ... I had dreadful panics upon me in regard to what were called the spirits of the age; fellows who, as themselves declared, had rather fight than eat.

In time, however, he learns not to be abashed by the fierce looks and cocked hats of men in coffeehouses, and with typically neat irony finds

he can gauge their ferocity in inverse proportion to the length of their 'instruments of death'.<sup>6</sup> George Edwards, like Tom Jones and Roderick Random, also learns how to read the spaces of London. After being excluded by the group in the Mall, he silences his chief tormentor, Lady Bloom, by turning her own acting skills back on her and using a stage whisper to make her the joke of the party (and the Town) instead of him. It is a model of urban space that is dominated by the idea of the 'in-crowd', of a 'club' that one must gain admittance to. It is similar to the idea of patronage, that there is an inner sanctum, a place behind the curtain, which provides the key to the city.

The Inspector's conception of London is much more open, and he is scathing about any attempt to find a secret 'centre'. One of his characters, Jeffrey Hum, arrives from the country and aspires to make a figure in the Town as a wit. He goes to George's coffeehouse and finds himself among an assemblage of notable wits, saying: 'I was now all attention: I made no doubt but that I had fallen into the very centre of what I was in search of'.<sup>7</sup> Instead of wit, he finds only 'unintelligible jargon' and humbug, the fashionable 'joke' of fooling people into believing a lie. Compared with this world of partitions and exclusions, the Inspector exists in a different, open sphere. In journalistic parlance, his column affords him an 'access-all-areas' pass, arguing that wherever 'there are subjects yet to be investigated, or disputes yet to be determined ... I shall never suppose the gates of it, or of any other, are shut against the INSPECTOR.'<sup>8</sup> He later adds:

When I consider man as a sociable creature, I look on the whole species as one great family. ... It is in this light that, when I come into a public place, I look upon myself as falling in with a party of my relations, and suppose there needs no formal introduction to their familiarity and conversation.<sup>9</sup>

Instead of a 'learning London' narrative, the Inspector assumes complete mastery of public space. It is an audacious move that places him in a position of superiority to those who had previously excluded him. It also involves a radical reimagining of city space, making the Town and the world 'behind the Curtain' seem limited in comparison.

## THE INSPECTOR'S ALTERNATIVE LONDON

The Inspector columns tend to fall into three different categories, each of which defines the space of the city in different ways. They can be summarised as: moral or fashionable fables of the Town; particularised, precisely located relations from the Inspector's experience, many of which develop into scientific inquiries; religious, ethical, or cultural essays. These are marked by contrasting modes of relation; the essays are rhetorical, the tales of the Town are novelistic, while the Inspector's anecdotes are closer to reportage.<sup>10</sup> They also have different 'spatio-temporal co-ordinates', helping to create a patterning of the city that is very much the Inspector's own.<sup>11</sup>

The columns that consider the Town, for instance, tend to imagine an indistinct city. The names of people are concealed, while places are often masked. Even when specific locales are used, such as Ranelagh or Vauxhall, these usually function as generic leisure spaces, and are no more clearly defined than the more frequent scene setting at 'the Play' or at 'a lady's levee'.<sup>12</sup> The sense of the Town as a real space, but lacking in exact locale, is mirrored by the fictitious names used for the protagonists. When one love affair is related, the names are changed to 'Damon' and 'Celia', with the Inspector adding: 'for the Public have no business with real names'.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, in the columns that deal directly with the Inspector's own experience, the spaces of the Town may again be described, but are now related in specific terms. Instead of 'the Play', the Inspector attends a named theatre, often with a particular performance in view. He also usually includes details such as his precise position in the audience; when he attends a charity musical event at the Haymarket, he informs the reader that he stands in the pit, under one of the boxes. Essays on ethics and religion are not usually thought of as 'spatial', but as part of Hill's cityscape they are partly defined by their refusal to be specific. When the Bible is discussed, its precepts are described as being 'as unlimited as space ... Truth is universal, and a native of all climes'.<sup>14</sup> In terms of geography, the moral essays denote a degree of transcendence, of encompassing the city and beyond, rather than being limited by locality.

The three types of column also have different temporal relations. The ethical and religious arguments claim 'eternal' truth and a 'duration as eternity', ranging across time to use Biblical and classical sources.<sup>15</sup> They purport to stand outside time, eliding temporal links, but in fact were usually reserved for Saturdays. This gave them a weekly, rather than daily,

rhythm, and made them less disposable as readers had an extra day of rest to consider their arguments, linking them with, if not attendance at church, at least a shared day set aside for moral contemplation. The writing on the Town covers a shorter duration and is framed as an inquiry into ‘the spirits of the age’. That this world of fashion, which is defined by its changeability, lasts for only a brief period, is made very clear. The Inspector’s censure of the art of the humbug, or his mockery of the sudden rage for men to carry a muff, relates to what will soon go out of fashion. The Inspector’s more personal experiences are closer to the usual time frame of news. His personal entries usually claim to have been written the morning or the day before publication, and tend to synchronise his experiences with those of the reader, often describing events at which they may have been present. In these papers, the column provides the same sense of simultaneity supplied by the ‘news’ section of the *Daily* newspaper.

The different types of paper are also distinguished by their relative ‘objectivity’. In successive papers, Hill can move from an abstract inquiry into knowledge; an investigation based on the common, shared experience of the Town and the current state of sociability; and his own, original and personal engagement with the city. It is quite an achievement. To write a newspaper column is generally regarded as the most difficult of the journalistic arts, and to have produced six a week for more than two years is remarkable. While a ‘straight’ news story aims at impersonality, and takes little out of a journalist, the skill of columnists is to merge their ‘private’ life with that of the public. Tom Mole has argued that ‘the growth of celebrity culture helps to blur the boundary between the private and the public experiences of individuals’, and columnists are, to some extent, paid for putting their lives and ideas on show.<sup>16</sup> Modern newspapers often use celebrities as columnists, but even when they do not, the column turns the writer into a celebrity of sorts. Hill certainly revels in the fact that the Inspector has turned him into a public figure. In the detail of Mrs Midnight’s Animal Comedians (Fig. 1), the man in the box (almost certainly Hill) is seen writing on a paper entitled ‘The Inspector’; a reference to a review of the show printed in Inspector No. 538 on 30 November 1752. What is notable is that Hill, leaning forward, is part of the performance. ‘Thou grand dictator of each publick show’ mocked Christopher Smart, missing the fact that Hill is not just judging public events, but joining them to his own narrative.<sup>17</sup>



Fig. 1 'Mrs Midnight's Animal Comedians', satirical print (etching) by John June, 1753. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

One of the great skills of writing a newspaper column is constantly to surprise and impress the reader by displaying not just fine judgement, but a wealth of experience, a breadth of connections, and a great stock of anecdotes and ideas. The columnist, in moving with ease between private experience and public events, creates an enlarged image of the self. The Inspector has an extraordinary range: in the first week of 1752 he provides a disquisition on the importance of reason to Christianity, mentions eating oysters from a newly discovered bed off Sheppey; he criticises a painter whose work he sees displayed in a Holborn street front; and jousts with Henry Fielding after the publication of *Amelia*.<sup>18</sup> As one of his 'correspondents' tells the Inspector: 'variety is the soul of all business the end of which is entertainment: I think I need not tell you this, who never write two papers upon the same subject'.<sup>19</sup>

It would be wrong to suggest that the different strands of the columns are rigidly demarcated. The supposed anonymity of the Town essays at times encouraged readers to try to unmask the real characters

behind the tag names. When Hill was assaulted by Mountefort Browne at Ranelagh on 30 April 1752, it was because Browne believed he was the 'Clody' who had been criticised by the Inspector. However, despite this blurring of boundaries, the three types of essays are still distinct enough to create a very particular representation of London and, by their variety, help to define each type of 'space'. For instance, treating the Town as a fable allows it to be de-particularised and contributes to the sense of fashionable society as de-humanised. In *The Adventures of Mr. George Edwards*, the entertainments of the Town, such as card-playing, turn the members of polite society into marionettes. At one rout, once the tables are set, 'the Company grew intent on their Diversion, and spent the succeeding five Hours in doing very little more than what Automaton of Wood and Wire might have perform'd as advantageously' (Hill 1751, p. 99). In the Inspector's fables of his Damons and Celas, changeable names suggests this generic nature of Town experience, that even this urban performativity lacks individuality.

In the columns that deal with the Inspector's experience, it is clear he is never an automaton but always his own man. Compared with the set spaces of the Town, he has an enlarged sense of the city, with a mobility that makes fashionable scenes appear unimaginative. Instead of the urban focus of the Town, the Inspector's vision is closer to Antonio Canaletto's view of London (Fig. 2), which foregrounds the proximity of the countryside. One can see why Hugh Phillips described mid-Georgian London as 'a city rising suddenly and precipitously out of a grass plain'.<sup>20</sup> Hill was living in Hart Street, just across from St George's Street in Bloomsbury, and would have enjoyed a vista of miles of open country a few yards from his door. The Inspector, taking one of his 'accustomed Morning's Walks', is surprised he can reach a country hamlet 'before I was aware ... so near this great Town.'<sup>21</sup> Just as a few walkers are seen heading out to the countryside in the Canaletto image, so, too, are the early Inspector columns full of the excitement of venturing beyond the normal confines of the city, enjoying an afternoon's ramble 'about the flowery sides, and the green summit, of the pleasant, the tree-topped *Primrose-hill*'; an expedition by coach to the woods and meadows of Harrow; or a journey on a barge to see a sailing match at Gravesend.<sup>22</sup> There are trips to such exotic locations as Kentish Town, Putney and Greenwich, all evidence of the new world of mobility that was expanding the life of the city with the increased availability of coaches for hire and



**Fig. 2** ‘London viewed from the north by Antonio Canaletto’ (pen and brown ink and grey wash over black chalk), 1746–1768. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

private use, and the turnpike roads that, by 1750, created a reliable road network that extended the possibilities for day trips and jaunts.<sup>23</sup>

The Canaletto image, which aims to encompass the city, is similar to the Inspector’s attempt to see London as an entirety. The image is a reminder that the spires of the churches were visible from everywhere, just as the Inspector’s religious essays are imagined as hanging over all the city, not just a single part. The image also suggests how comforting the Inspector’s composing of space must have been; the spires start to thin out in the newly developed West End, with London beginning to lose its human dimensions and becoming, in Vanessa Harding’s phrase, an ‘almost unmanageably difficult city’.<sup>24</sup> Canaletto’s viewpoint from the northeast allows him to focus on St Paul’s and the old City, but it is also de-centred, struggling to contain the westward expansion, even cutting the Foundling Hospital (which marked the northern extremity of London and was finished in 1747) in half in the middle foreground. The Inspector has no such problem negotiating the city; he moves with ease from the spaces of the Town to the adjacent countryside, from the West

End to the spires and the hamlets. A recurring pattern sees him engage in a routine social engagement only to take a different turn, and find something out-of-the-way to comment upon, just as, when he strikes out on a parallel between painting and acting, he congratulates himself for having ventured ‘into an untrodden path’.<sup>25</sup> His geographic mobility becomes an index of the mobility of his own mind; when he embarks for Gravesend to be a spectator at a race, he transforms the idle Town pursuit into a scientific investigation, returning with a sea urchin that his servants fish up from the bottom of the river.<sup>26</sup> It is a contrarian mobility, continually transforming ‘Parties of Pleasure’ into scientific or moral instruction. On the trip to Harrow, he and his acolytes walk up a hill to spare the horses and notice a stone cut in half by one of the coach’s wheels. The Inspector states: ‘as we are a party who professedly overlook no object that offers on these occasions’, they look inside the stone and find a cockleshell, deducing that the sea must have once covered even Harrow Hill.<sup>27</sup> As he points out, ‘The little excursions of the Inspector on parties of pleasure generally furnish the Town with an entertainment extremely different from what might have been expected.’<sup>28</sup>

After Hart Street, Hill hired a house in Arlington Street in St James towards the end of 1752, a very expensive and fashionable address, confirming a personal compass that veered to the north and the west of the city.<sup>29</sup> The polite spaces of the Town were well-established by the 1750s; Ranelagh, opened in 1742, involved a journey by boat, or a coach trip along the Chelsea Road with its adjoining fields; Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park had been improved in the 1730s; while the less socially exclusive Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens opened in 1732. The Inspector still manages to see these well-known spaces in his own way: he often walks in the parks at unfashionably early hours, while, when he goes to the Haymarket, he sits in the ‘obscure Corner of the Pit’, in order to see and be unseen.<sup>30</sup> He mostly inhabits the ‘politer end of the town’ but is still happy to travel to the old city with its emphasis on trade and business, including one trip to the déclassé Minories near the Tower of London:

My readers of this polite quarter of the town will be apt to smile at hearing that the Inspector spent two hours and a half one morning lately at an auction of household furniture in the Minories: but I am as eager in pursuit of characters, as the sportsman is that of a hare or a pheasant; and no more regard offending my delicacy than he does dirtying his shoes when the game is in view.<sup>31</sup>

The Inspector constantly hunts for subjects worth remarking on; during a trip to a friend's villa a few miles from town, he admits that 'while the company were high in mirth over the afternoon's bottle' he 'slipped out of the way' and becomes fascinated by observing bees collecting pollen.<sup>32</sup> He finds things of interest in the margins, in the places where those caught in the routine of the Town fail to look. One journey to Putney is typical:

That insatiable curiosity which I have long esteemed the source of one of the principal and most rational pleasures of my life, led me the other morning, while an agreeable party that I had attended at Putney bowling-green were galloping over the jovial hours to the sprightly tabor, to the edge of a little pond before the door, to see what quieter objects the unruffled face of nature, the burnt green, or the still pool afforded, that might court the contemplation of a mind devoted to the adoration of its Creator, and eager to find occasions of it amongst the minutest, the seemingly most inconsiderable of his works.<sup>33</sup>

What interests him, the crust on top of the pond, is regarded as 'inconsiderable' by his companions and would be dismissed by a 'common Observer' as 'dust' and 'filth', but when he gets the sample home he finds it 'swarmed with Life' under his glass. The microscope becomes a symbol of his more powerful eye and promotes a new way of seeing. The little bowl of water he has taken back home to study is 'extended to a sea by the power of the glasses', more than compensating him for missing a dance on a bowling-green. Similarly, by turning a sailing race into the chance to observe a sea urchin, the microscope allows him to change the expected *surface* observation into one of *depth*.

To undertake the office of an *Inspector*, vowing to act 'in the character of one who is to inspect into every thing that is proposed for the public service, and speak of it as it deserves' is to pursue a much more active, sustained and critical view than the more passive, desultory associations of a Spectator or a Rambler.<sup>34</sup> Hill prints one letter from a 'correspondent', who states how glad he is to have 'our Country under your penetrating Inspection'.<sup>35</sup> It is no accident that one of Hill's next pseudonyms is a Mrs *Seymour*, admitting that though he has ears to hear himself discussed, 'eyes are the more immediately useful organ for his office'.<sup>36</sup> As Rousseau suggests, Hill's Inspector has something of the detective about him, turning his persona into 'a combination of

the generic enlightenment spy and modern policeman'. That he is an Inspector at large gives his views even greater credibility, showing 'he was not merely generating these "opinions" from an idle armchair'.<sup>37</sup> In one column, he takes his microscope to the flowers of a nosegay and, in an extended metaphor, sees the winged insects on the leaves inhabiting a type of pleasure ground, a Vauxhall or a Ranelagh with 'walks, parterres, and terraces'.<sup>38</sup> As Clare Brant observes, insects were not an object of satire in Hill's cosmology, but he still uses them to re-frame the vantage point from which the fashionable world can be seen. The Town is miniaturised, regarded as insect-sized, while the Inspector's vision telescopes outwards, approaching a godview, suggesting the transcendence (the ability to climb beyond, in its Latin root *trans* and *scend-ere*) claimed by the 'Author-General of the age'.

### THE READER AND NEWSPAPER SPACE

Hill does not just reinvent himself but, like all good writers (and newspaper columnists), looks to create his own audience. This is obviously an elite readership, tailored to people for whom leisure, not work, is the daily grind, but it is still a very open and 'democratic' one within its privileged subset. His idea of the public sphere is far more extensive than the model associated with Jurgen Habermas: he sets up a network of correspondents and provides a letter-drop for women who were excluded from coffehouses. He argues that the public voice created by the Town is dependent on a small coterie of three or four opinion-formers, while 'the rest are *Echoes, or Echoes of Echoes*, to the third, fourth, and so on to the fiftieth degree of relation'.<sup>39</sup> The Town, instead of a commanding public voice, creates merely the 'confused murmur' of Chinese whispers, and he proposes a different form of popular opinion (led, of course, by himself and his readers).

The Inspector not only creates an expanded, inclusive readership but also aims to refine his audience, to help them transcend their own 'partial' views. The clearest description of how he imagines his relationship with his reader is told as a fable about a man with three wigs, which also relates to the three types of column, and three types of space, about which he tends to write:

A gentleman of my acquaintance has three wigs, a full tye, a bob and a bag; for the morning at the bar, for playing whist at a coffee house at

noon, and another for theatres at night, 'finding it proper to adapt his dress, as well as deportment, to these several duties of the day.' The tri-form hero of this observation was charmed to find people in one part of the town who liked him in his bob; in another those who revered him in his tye; and in a third a multitude who adored him in his bag.<sup>40</sup>

The gentleman became anxious at not pleasing all parts of the town together, so after giving up 'many vain schemes for the wearing all three wigs at once', tried to fashion one wig that was amenable to all, but being neither tye, nor bob, nor bag, he lost his admirers. The Inspector compares this with his own 'continued attempt of entertaining ten thousand people of different tastes and tempers', stating: 'As he had three species of wigs, I have as many kinds of papers; the amusing, the moral, the scientific.' He admits that 'even when I please most, I do not always please universally. I am told by one party that I am often too grave; by another that I am sometimes too abstruse; and by a third it is a shame I should devote my pen to such trifling subjects as sometimes employ it.'

This does not mean that the Inspector despairs of becoming a 'triform hero' in his writing. Realising that, although it is impossible for his friend to put on all his wigs at once, he is at least able to 'throw something of each turn into every paper' and 'find the way to make science agreeable to those who have not immediately studied it; to unbend the brow of too severe sobriety by an innocent pleasantry, and to make morality acceptable to the triflers of this ideal generation'. His conception of a 'general public' is rooted in knowable spaces: he writes for the reader who inhabits the law courts, or the coffeehouses, or the theatre, but is also to some extent extra-territorial. It is not just replacing a spatial community with an imagined one, creating the type of anonymous public identified by Benedict Anderson but, rather, an attempt to invent a public that is knowable, that has its roots in specific locales, but is able to move beyond the partiality that such spaces encourage.<sup>41</sup> He expects his reader to combine the moral, the entertaining, and the scientific, just as he moves from one type of essay to another. To some extent, the Inspector showcases the best of Hill, of someone refusing to use his column to settle scores, stating that, in his ideal of impartiality, 'the Author will, on all serious and important occasions, make it a point to lose his private self in the Character he assumes'.<sup>42</sup> The imagined readers are also expected to show the best of themselves, to rise above self-interest



**Fig. 3** ‘A View of the Mall in St. James’s Park, &c/Vue du Maill dans le Park de St. Jacques’, print (etching and engraving) made by Thomas Bowles after J. Maurer, published by Henry Overton and Robert Sayer, 1753. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

and the sort of limited views epitomised by letters sent ‘from behind the curtain’.

The Inspector, like most columnists, is able to create an intimacy with the reader using his first-person, direct address. Anderson argues that ‘the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’, and the Inspector promotes this type of open, social space.<sup>43</sup> When a gentleman who has fallen on hard times singles out the Inspector at the Mall to ask for assistance, he is able to help him by finding a buyer for a collection of rare coins. It is very different from the Mall scene described in *The Adventures of Mr. George Edwards*, with the Inspector adding: ‘The incident naturally led me into a reflection on the mutual convenience and advantage men are found to be of one to another; on their several connections and dependences; and on the benefits of a social life’.<sup>44</sup> It is an ideal image of the public spaces of the city similar to Thomas Bowles’ sketch of the Mall, (Fig. 3), where the virtually traffic-free walks (the carriageway was reserved for the King and his friends) lends itself

to regulated sociability. This anecdote is then expanded by the Inspector into ‘the consideration of generals’ which ‘made me eagerly wish that some means could be derived, by which the whole series of Individuals, of the same Age and Country, might be linked together into one great Family.’ He goes on to commend the idea behind the new *Universal Register-Office* in the Strand, and it is no surprise that such a scheme of connectivity meets his approval considering he prides himself on being ‘a person of an almost universal acquaintance’.<sup>45</sup>

The *London Daily Advertiser* also presents itself as an ‘open’ space, promoting an unfettered circulation of ideas, just as Fielding states in the *Champion* that his paper is ‘a Sort of Stage Coach, a Vehicle in which every one hath a Right to take a Place’.<sup>46</sup> At a time when newsprint was expensive, papers were meant to be shared (the Inspector takes a dim view of coffeehouse customers who pocket the paper to read in private, telling them it is an offence against sociability). Mirroring the ideal image of the Mall, the Inspector presides over an ordered and regulated newspaper space. His column usually fills a full page, six times a week. Stuart Sherman has argued that the format of Hill’s model, *The Spectator*, accustomed the reader to see one page, one voice and one article, on one particular day.<sup>47</sup> The design of the Inspector column is a similarly unitary performance, and there is a connection between the ordered space of Hill’s writing and his preference for the neoclassical, Georgian clarity of the new squares of the West End when he states that: ‘What is said of Architecture, is equally true of Stile; that simplicity is the source of all true beauty; and that a profusion of misplaced ornaments and figures, while they strike the eyes of children and ideots, accuse the structure, to the discerning eye, of barbarism.’<sup>48</sup>

If ‘straight’ news is a way of showing the unusual or the shocking among the everyday (a coach ride gone wrong, a night at the pleasure gardens that ends in a robbery), then the Inspector provides a portal that is much less random and alarming. His column also sees the familiar in a different way, but his new way of seeing is beneficial, creating order, not disruption. It does not take much, however, for the cracks in this unitary structure to appear; his readers only had to turn the page to see that his view of the city is full of contradictions. If the Inspector columns create their own ‘unitary’ image of the city, the complexity of the city, in turn, disrupts the other pages, creating the mosaic of news and adverts, notices and puffs that make up the other three pages of what is, after all, the ‘*London Daily Advertiser*’.

The clarity of the front page gives way to a more Gothic collection of subsections, different fonts, changing type sizes, headings in capitals, and advertisements underlined by scrolling designs. The Inspector column invests faith in the eye's ability to process information, but the commodified advertisement space introduces a sense of optic disorientation, the uneasiness produced by 'a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye', which Georg Simmel regarded as one of the central experiences of the city as it moved from the early modern to the modern period.<sup>49</sup> The Inspector prides himself on his ability to survey the city, yet the pages that follow insist this is a space that cannot be seen at one glance. 'FOR READY MONEY ONLY' screams one headline advertising wine, putting the Inspector's elision of trade in context and acting as a reminder that the paper is a commodity in itself, where the Inspector functioned as a brand name.<sup>50</sup> Hill is also not above puffing his own works; by a curious coincidence, his inquiry into a stone cut in two at Harrow is published on the same day as an advertisement informs the reader that, if they are quick, there are still a 'small number' of copies available of Theophrastus's *History of Stones*, by, of course, John Hill.

The 'news' pages create a different type of London. While the Inspector columns are a controlled performance, full of detailed arguments, structured stories, or scientific inquiries, the pages that follow offer scraps of information about robberies and sentences, post-boys losing mail, calls for society meetings, elections, mails from abroad, horse racing results, stock prices, news about shipping, dates of auctions of household goods, notices of plays to be performed, books and poems to be purchased. They are small parts of a story that are no longer fully told and placed in no obvious context or narrative pattern. Their only connection is what Anderson described as their 'calendrical coincidence'.<sup>51</sup> In the columns, variety is a deliberate choice of the Inspector, showing a degree of control over the alternating spaces of the city. In the news and classified sections, this variety becomes multiplicity. The stories that follow each other in the news sections are undivided, sitting side by side just like the juxtaposition of disparate elements that typifies London space. It is a complex, half-seen city (much like the Foundling Hospital is truncated in the Canaletto image). Unlike the Inspector column, the accent is on surface, not depth; events are glanced at, but rarely explained. It is also a very different view of social space. The Inspector conceives of a 'horizontal' relationship among his community of readers, but the hierarchy of news in the 'London' section of the paper is the

complete opposite. Running from top to bottom, it usually starts with royal affairs, moves through the aristocracy (including such vital news as ‘Lord Baltimore is greatly recovered of his late Indisposition’), and ends with robberies, accidents, and details about criminals being executed.<sup>52</sup> Instead of the horizontal Inspector papers, this is very much a vertical social ordering.

The Inspector’s claim to untrammelled mobility is also revealed as problematic. In his papers, he moves through a frictionless city, while the news section unwittingly reveals a London where traffic is beset by danger, class grievances and disruption. One piece suggests the disharmony that existed between different road users: ‘Yesterday in the Evening four Drays were fixed across the Street in Fleet-street, so as to prevent the passage of Coaches, &c. The Design of this being inserted is to acquaint the Master of those Draymen with the Affair, that he may prevent such a Nuisance for the future, as well as himself from being indicted.’<sup>53</sup> The antagonism between road users was also directed at the rich. The print, published in 1751, of ‘Stand Coachman, or the Haughty Lady Well Fitted’ (Fig. 4), depicts a reportedly true event where a lady allowed her coach to block the pavement. After a polite request for her to move was ‘most rudely denied’, a gentleman opened the door of the coach and walked through, to be followed by ‘the mobb’, and the print serves as a warning to those ‘who stop a Free Passage with a haughty Air’.<sup>54</sup> On the same day the Inspector extols the delights of walking to neighbouring hamlets, the news section publishes an account of two gentlemen robbed by footpads making a similar walk between Newington and the city.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, when he declares no gates are to be shut to the Inspector, a turn of the page shows that such freedom of movement is not universal, with a news piece about two Irishmen being sentenced to three months in Bridewell for vagrancy, and at the end of each month to be whipped along the length of Cheapside and Coleman Street just for good measure.<sup>56</sup> That Hill took to riding through London in an extravagant coach and six (usually the preserve of the nobility), which would have left a trail of grievances in its wake, suggests yet another contradiction between the Inspector’s free and open London mobility, and the combative and competitive traffic found in the rest of the newspaper.

The fissures between Hill’s behaviour and his ideal persona can also be detected in a growing problem of authorial composure. Hill’s much-vaunted impartiality and his desire to stand above personal grievances became increasingly strained. After his humiliation at Ranelagh at the



**Fig. 4** ‘Stand Coachman, or the Haughty Lady Well Fitted’, anonymous satirical print published by J. Wakelin. Etching, 1750. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

hands of Browne, few would have read his comments about the folly of duels without seeing their immediate application to his refusal to defend his honour. His increasingly frequent references to his critics, admitting that virtually every writer extant has ‘*had a flap at the Inspector*’, again undercuts his claim to be above the partisan.<sup>57</sup> Referring to a letter advising him to mend his conduct, Hill comments: ‘I have often wished it were possible to separate the writer from the man.’<sup>58</sup> Hill continues the subject in his next paper, saying the letter had reminded him ‘of many errors in my private life, which by no means became the writer of these Papers; examples from my conduct tending to discountenance the doctrines laid down from my pen.’<sup>59</sup> It is a long way from the sense of invulnerability with which the Inspector began.

The last Inspector appeared on 7 July 1753. Rousseau speculates Hill may have been hounded out and forced to ‘lie low’, noting the surprise elicited by Thomas Birch, the future historian of the Royal Society: ‘The

Inspector expir'd this Day without any previous Warning than that of his growing Weakness as a Writer.'<sup>60</sup> Rousseau counsels against the trap of looking for Hill in the Inspector, and all newspaper columns are, of course, acts of performativity. However, you could also argue that the Inspector is Hill trying to elevate himself beyond the personal faults that led him to become, in Rousseau's phrase, 'Notorious'. When one 'correspondent' writes: 'SIR, If you are not a gentleman of great humanity, there is no judging a man's heart from his writings', you sense this is the effect Hill hoped his column would have on his readers.<sup>61</sup> As he says plaintively at one point, 'The Papers, such as they are, are mine; they are all mine'.<sup>62</sup> The Inspector ends, but it may have helped Hill to finance the publication four years later of *Eden* (1757), an expensive folio edition on botany, including 60 plates and some hand-coloured prints. Certainly, it seems fitting that after his attempt at refining London space as the Inspector is compromised, he recreates a new, perfect garden space in *Eden* that seems an escape from urban multiplicity and disorder. However, even when turning his gaze away from the earthly city, he still accommodates his writing to the needs of print culture, arranging his paradise in 52 sections—a weekly newspaper column for gardeners.

## NOTES

1. Epigraph: Moritz Busch, *Travels between the Hudson and the Mississippi, 1851–1852*. Trans. Norman H. Binger. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971, 33. Reproduced with kind permission of the University of Kentucky Press. Cited by David M. Henkin in his excellent *City Reading* (1998). John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 155, *London Daily Advertiser and Literary Gazette*, 30 August 1751. In *The Inspector* in 1753, which collected nearly one third of the essays, the locale is identified as Rawthmell's Coffee House.
2. John Hill, *The Inspector*, 2 vols (1753), II, 104.
3. Hill, *George Edwards*, 1–2.
4. Bachelard (1994), 222.
5. Rousseau (2012), 53.
6. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 43, *London Daily Advertiser (LDA)*, 10 May 1751; Issue 59. The Inspector columns were at first numbered separately from the issue number of the newspaper until they were synchronised in July 1751.
7. *The Inspector (1753)*, I, 66.
8. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 72, *LDA*, 2 July 1751; Issue 104.
9. *The Inspector (1753)*, II, 79.

10. In his role as editor of *The British Magazine*, Hill had divided his essays into two, to be written by 'The Moralist' or 'The Visiter'. See Markman Ellis, Chapter 9.
11. The phrase, as is much of the theoretical approach of this chapter, is taken from Brosseau (1995).
12. *The Inspector* (1753), I, 33.
13. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 144.
14. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 94.
15. Ibid.
16. Mole (2007), 5.
17. Smart (1753), 155.
18. John Hill, 'Inspectors Nos. 264–268', *LDA*, 4 January to 9 January 1752.
19. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 182, *LDA*, 1 October 1751.
20. Phillips (1964), 11.
21. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 31, *LDA*, 22 April 1751; Issue 43.
22. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 51, *LDA*, 23 May 1751; Issue 70; 'The Inspector', No. 153, 28 August 1751.
23. See Pawson (1977), 136–150.
24. Harding (2001), 143.
25. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 122.
26. 'The Inspector' No. 153, see n. 23.
27. *The Inspector* (1753), I, 28.
28. *The Inspector* (1753), I, 68.
29. Rousseau (2012), 142.
30. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 32, *LDA*, 23 April 1751; Issue 44.
31. *The Inspector* (1753), I, 12; I, 40.
32. *The Inspector* (1753), I, 7.
33. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 63, *LDA*, 17 June 1751; Issue 91.
34. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 208, *LDA*, 31 October 1751.
35. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 50, *LDA*, 22 May 1751; Issue 69.
36. *The Inspector* (1753), I, 24.
37. Rousseau (2012), 108.
38. John Hill, 'Inspector' No. 243, *LDA*, 11 December 1751.
39. *The Inspector* (1753), I, 37.
40. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 143. A decade later, William Hogarth published his print, 'The five orders of Perriwigs as they were worn at the late Coronation, measured Architectonically', usually taken to be a satire on James Stuart and Nicholas Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens Measured*. The print makes a similar connection between different wigs, the various sections of elite society (from Episcopal to the beaux), and their relation

to space; in this instance, the columns and capitals of the five orders of Classical architecture.

41. Anderson (2006), 6.
42. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 200, *LDA*, 22 October 1751.
43. Anderson (2006), 7.
44. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 208, *LDA*, 31 October 1751.
45. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 99.
46. [Fielding] (1741), 173.
47. Sherman (1996), 116.
48. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 94.
49. Cited in Benjamin (1973), 37–38.
50. *LDA*, 19 April 1751; Issue 41.
51. Anderson (2006), 33.
52. *LDA*, 19 April 1751; Issue 41.
53. *LDA*, 18 April 1751; Issue 40.
54. See O'Connell (2003), 164–165.
55. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 31, *LDA*, 22 April 1751; Issue 43.
56. John Hill, 'The Inspector', No. 72, *LDA*, 2 July 1751; Issue 104.
57. *The Inspector* (1753), I, 65.
58. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 98.
59. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 99.
60. Rousseau (2012), 167.
61. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 103.
62. *The Inspector* (1753), II, 112.

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PART IV

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## Hill and Sciences

# A Dwarf on Giant's Shoulders: Sir John Hill and Geology

*Christopher J. Duffin*

## HILL THE GEOLOGIST

'The Dwarf ... on the Giant's Shoulders'<sup>1</sup>: that is Hill's candid assessment of his own position in the stream of geological thought in 1746. Late in the previous century, the foundations of historical geology had been laid by Niels Stensen; the relationship between geology and scripture was explored in a series of cosmogonies proposed by the theological thinker Thomas Burnet, and the natural philosophers John Ray and William Whiston. The early glimmerings of the mineralogical revolution were beginning to burn more brightly; the palaeontological revolution was in full swing following the demonstration that fossils were representatives of past life, and the nomenclatural revolution had just begun with Carl Linnaeus acting as its champion. The time was ripe for synthesis and the systematisation of a burgeoning body of geological knowledge. There was also a clear need for a new, modern, lucid and accessible guide to the wealth of material riches which the geological world was yielding to the increasingly fashionable fad for collecting rocks, minerals and

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fossils for personal cabinets of curiosity. It was an exciting and interesting time in the history of geology. A ‘much less Genius’ seeking to ‘see yet something farther’,<sup>2</sup> Hill climbed onto the shoulders of his intellectual antecedents—especially those of John Woodward, whom Hill rated particularly highly—and peered over the realm of geology. Did the vision of the Dwarf, largely forgotten in the annals of the history of geology, bring any clarity to the science? That is the question explored in this chapter.

Hill’s interest in rocks, minerals, fossils and earths, born of innate curiosity, clearly formed part of a thorough fascination for all things scientific, as demonstrated by the range of topics addressed in this part of his bibliography.<sup>3</sup> Personal fieldwork, the compilation and analytical study of his own collection of specimens, correspondence and conversation with other interested parties and extensive background reading informed Hill’s geological researches. These researches not only fed his publishing career and early ambitious quest for fame, but provided a productive symbiosis for his work as an apothecary, physician, gardener, herbalist, microscopist and botanist.

Hill’s enthusiasm for science and collecting grew out of his early experience with his father and his original training as an apothecary (he was apprenticed in 1730–1731), in which he mastered the elements of botany, mineralogy and zoology, since all three disciplines provided long-revered simples for *materia medica*. His scientific interests were further stimulated by his collecting for Robert, Eighth Baron Petre<sup>4</sup> from 1738 and, slightly later, as botanical assistant for Charles Lennox (Second Duke of Richmond, Lennox and Aubigny).<sup>5</sup> The latter association was the longer lived; Petre’s death in 1742 left Hill under the patronage of the Duke of Richmond, with whom he lived at Goodwood in Sussex before moving permanently to Westminster in 1743.<sup>6</sup> This time marked a period of intense creativity combined with great ambition, stimulated further by his meeting some of the foremost naturalists of the day, including some notable Fellows of the Royal Society forming part of the coterie surrounding Sir Hans Sloane,<sup>7</sup> who had just been replaced as president following a long and distinguished term. Hill formed a particularly strong friendship with Emanuel Mendes da Costa,<sup>8</sup> a Sephardic Jewish merchant and public notary, with whom he shared a passion for geology. The two discussed and corresponded at length over various minerals, rocks, fossils and soils, exchanging specimens and providing each other with duplicates from their collections. Da Costa himself was

a keen fieldworker, commenting to the traveller and zoologist Thomas Pennant (1726–1798): ‘I know I profited more in 6 months journey into Derbyshire and Cornwall by visiting caverns and mines than I did by study for the 10 years before the time I first commenced a fossilist.’<sup>9</sup> It is quite likely that Hill and Da Costa collected together.<sup>10</sup>

### WINDSOR LOAM

Following their first meeting, Hill and da Costa became increasingly close and carried out a brisk correspondence in 1745, sharing ideas, observations, insights from scientific literature and the results of their various experiments on minerals.<sup>11</sup> Writing on 11 December 1745, Hill gave da Costa an account of his investigations into the petrology of ‘Hedgerly Loam’.<sup>12</sup> The study resulted in Hill’s first geological publication, a letter published in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society in 1746. Hill took the opportunity while at Hedgerley, a few miles west of Gerard’s Cross in south Buckinghamshire, to visit the workings that had provided raw materials for high-quality bricks since Roman Times. Small pits were dug into the succession of mottled clays, up to thirty metres thick, belonging to the London Clay of the Ypresian (Lower Eocene) Lambeth Group (51–54 Mya). During the eighteenth century, the clay was in demand for fire bricks used to line a variety of furnaces including lime kilns, and especially as a luting material (sealant) smeared over the surfaces and at the joints of laboratory glassware that was to be heated strongly—it helped the glass to withstand the high temperatures. Adjacent deposits were useful in the production of tiles and ceramics. Hill was concerned about the remaining reserves of the clay, and made a case for geoconservation in the broad sense; he proposed careful management of the remaining resources assisted by the search for viable alternatives. Noting that the base of the bed is horizontal, and the clay seemingly confined to a single hill, Hill commented on rising prices—winning the clay was becoming more difficult, the costs of production were increasing and prices for the bushel being driven up in London. In a fairly rare comment about geological origins, Hill effectively followed the standard Deluge model for the time, championed by John Woodward in 1695 (suggesting that all fossiliferous strata had been deposited by the receding waters of the Flood) and suggested that the hill:

was in all Probability, the Surface on the first settling of the terrestrial and other Matter from among the Waters of the Deluge. The Earths which makes the Hill, seem to have been a prodigious Mass of Matter roll'd along by the irresistible Force of that immense Body of Water, and afterwards lodg'd Upon it.<sup>13</sup>

Before production prices became untenable, he wondered if it might be possible to produce the same lithology artificially. Therefore, he broke down the sediment in water, sieved it to separate the different grain size components to discover the proportions of each, and then set about looking for suitable individual replacements. He found that the arenaceous or sandy component was crucial in maintaining the thermal properties of the clay, and suggested that sands from Hampstead Heath could be mixed with London Clay from Highgate to produce a substitute. As it turns out, Hill need not have worried too much about the state of the reserves of loam at Hedgerley. Almost 100 years later, production was still going strong; Isambard Kingdom Brunel used thirty million bricks from the Hedgerley pits to line Box Tunnel, one of the most significant structures on the Great Western Rail Line from London to Bristol. The pits did not finally close until 1936.

In some ways, this first geological publication is representative of Hill's approach, maintained in his later geological works—always to concentrate on the specimens and to exercise independent and critical thought when interpreting them. At Hedgerley, Hill seized the opportunity to see the rocks for himself; following close scrutiny, he came to his own opinion, tried to think beyond the obvious and, with supporting experimental work, apply his conclusions to practical benefit.

### HILL AND THEOPHRASTUS' TREATISE ON STONES

As their friendship developed, Hill and da Costa began to plan a collaborative project, one outcome of which seems to have been the publication of Hill's translation of one of the most fundamental yet largely neglected geological texts from antiquity—Theophrastus' treatise *On Stones*. Hill probably undertook the bulk of his translation from around the time of his return to London from Goodwood in 1743, onwards.

Theophrastus (circa 371–circa 287 BCE), the famously prolific Greek author, successor to Aristotle and leader of the Peripatetic School for 36 years, probably composed *Peri Lithon* ('On Stones'), on the basis of

internal evidence, around 315 BCE as the second in a lecture series on natural solids; the first part in the series, 'On Metals', is lost.<sup>14</sup> The structure of the work gives the impression of being a series of notes and, as such, could conceivably have been one student's record of Theophrastus' disquisition, or to have issued directly from the pen of the teacher; in either event, there is little doubt that Theophrastus is the true author.<sup>15</sup>

*Peri Lithon* is the first volume ever written dedicated exclusively to the systematic study of minerals. Although almost certainly incomplete and containing frequent lacunae, the extant version attempts to classify minerals using Aristotelian principles, illustrated with fairly brief reference to some sixty different minerals, some of whose names are unique to Ancient Greek, posing some difficulties of interpretation for prospective translators. Copies obviously circulated through the classical world as the Roman writer, Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) refers to Theophrastus' work a number of times in the chapters on stones in his rather eclectic encyclopaedic collection, *Historia Naturalis*.<sup>16</sup>

Although thirteen manuscripts and fragments of *Peri Lithon* have survived to the present day,<sup>17</sup> only three (two of which are complete) were known by the 1740s, all of which are held at the Vatican.<sup>18</sup> The invention of the printing press based upon movable type by Gutenberg in 1450, and subsequently refined both by himself and others, meant that multiple copies of books could be produced in short order.<sup>19</sup> A parallel Greek and Latin edition, probably the most accessible to Hill, was produced by Johannes de Laet (1581–1649), one of the founding directors of the Dutch West India Company.

### HILL'S TRANSLATION

The oft-repeated claim that Hill's translation of *Peri Lithon* was the first vernacular rendering of Theophrastus' text, long believed to be true, seems to have been premature; the Neapolitan apothecary Ferrante Imperato (circa 1525–1621) included an abbreviated Italian translation in his compendium of contemporary mineralogical knowledge, *Dell'Historia Naturale*, written to accompany his museum collection.<sup>20</sup> Imperato's work was consulted more for his comments on individual items in his collection than for the extraneous information which it contained. The first edition of Hill's translation was published in September 1746 as Hill was approaching his thirty-second birthday. Far from the hack journalism that tended to mark his later work, this was an original

contribution—a labour of love that grew out of an intense and active fascination for science at an exciting, though understudied time in the development of the subject.

In his *Dedication to the Duke of Richmond*, Hill remarks on the ‘Misfortune’ of the relative inaccessibility (compared with animal and plant remains) of geological materials for study, being ‘buried under immense Quantities of Earth, where Nature first formed, or the Universal Deluge, or some other dreadful Catastrophe, has buried them, never by any natural Means to appear again’.<sup>21</sup> His stated aim is to illuminate this under-appreciated branch of natural history and thereby to stimulate the intellectually curious to embrace it as never before: ‘If what I have here endeavoured to set in a new Light, may incite others to enquire into this Branch of Natural Knowledge, I shall have my full Reward’.<sup>22</sup>

Recognising the foundational nature of Theophrastus’ work, Hill’s strategy is to employ his translation as a tool to release both the text from its blanket of obscurity and the science of geology from its self-imposed lack of rigour: ‘no Author is so often Quoted, no Author is so little understood, or indeed, has been so little read’.<sup>23</sup> In this, he seems to have been remarkably successful, as indicated by Rousseau: ‘in 1745 Theophrastus was not yet a household name: this would change in part owing to Hill’s translation ... The shift in emphasis was palpable’.<sup>24</sup> The barriers to be surmounted in the completion of this task he identified as being the numerous textual defects, lacunae, perpetuated copying errors, and unhelpful corrections by previous editors. Revitalisation of this ‘almost unintelligible’ text could only be achieved by an industrious, linguistically able and widely-read scholar with more than a superficial understanding of the subject matter; Hill presented himself as a uniquely qualified candidate. Prepared to scour other classical texts for further clues as to Theophrastus’ sometimes obscure meanings, Hill refused to be boxed in by the weight of opinion of earlier authorities: ‘I have everywhere ventured to think for myself’,<sup>25</sup> while respecting and often referring to the work of previous commentators, ‘I have nowhere servilely tied myself down to the opinions of any particular Author’.<sup>26</sup> His secret weapon was his intense interest in rocks, minerals and fossils, cultivated through fieldwork, correspondence, wide reading and the formation of an extensive (on the basis of the range of specimens which he consulted and cited as his own) personal cabinet of specimens amassed by personal collecting, exchange and purchase, with a particular emphasis

on materials with a pharmaceutical interest or potential—‘[I] have made the Bodies themselves my great Instructors and every where, where I could have them before me, formed my Descriptions from them’.<sup>27</sup> His commentary was consequently much longer than Theophrastus’ actual text.<sup>28</sup> A mark of his success was that, when French and German translations appeared, they did not work from original texts but translated Hill’s full English text, including his explanatory comments and discussion verbatim.<sup>29</sup> Hill’s translation did great service as the only English version available for 125 years, but modern scholars have indicated that his Greek text—with his carefully inferred changes, additions and insertions—is unreliable.<sup>30</sup>

Hill appended two letters to the Fellows of the Royal Society, one on the colours of sapphire and turquoise, and the other on various experiments with copper. In the former, Hill argued from his experiments that the distinctive blue colour of sapphire was due to the presence of copper rather than ‘Zaffer’ (an impure oxide of cobalt), contrary to prevailing opinion. He also believed turquoise to be coloured by the same metal. In the light of modern understanding, his conclusions were partially correct: turquoise is a hydrated phosphate of copper and aluminium; sapphire does not contain cobalt, but neither does it contain copper.

Hill tried to bolster his claim that copper was the colouring agent by putting it through a series of chemical and physical tests, reported in the second letter. This is most interesting because of his stated use of the blowpipe. Although known since Egyptian times,<sup>31</sup> it was only in 1679 that the blowpipe was suggested as having any potential in scientific investigation. Essentially a bent tube—glass in early instances and, later on, made of brass—the instrument design was perfected by medieval jewellers, metal workers and goldsmiths, eventually being adopted by chemists as a convenient heating tool in the late seventeenth century (Fig. 1). The experimenter blew a blast of air through the tube, directed over a candle flame to produce surprisingly high temperatures for heating samples which were held in small depressions on tiny pieces of charcoal. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that the blowpipe was being used for analytical purposes.

The German analytical chemist Andreas Sigismund Marggraf (1709–1782) had used a blowpipe, as had Johann Heinrich Pott in 1746, to confirm the isolation of phosphorus from urine in 1740, and in order to investigate the components of ceramics, respectively, but it was not used in mineralogy when Hill was writing. Axel Cronstedt is normally credited



**Fig. 1** Blowpipe kit (made by W. A. Taylor of Penzance) and reproductions of three mouth blowpipes which belonged to the English chemists William Hyde Wollaston (1766–1828), Smithson Tennant (1761–1815) and the Swedish chemist Tobern Olaf Bergman (1735–1784), nineteenth-century. Courtesy of the Science Museum/Science & Society Picture Library

as the first person to use the instrument systematically for chemical analysis of minerals.<sup>32</sup> Cronstedt's work (1758) was translated into English by his student in assaying techniques and blowpipe analysis at the Swedish Mint, Gustaf von Engeström (1738–1813), and the volume, edited by da Costa, included Engeström's *A Description of a Mineralogical Pocket Laboratory* (1770), describing the instrument itself. Hill's use of the blowpipe to analyse copper thus constitutes a rather early record for this particular piece of equipment. It is not clear how Hill came to hear about this instrument or, realising its potential as an analytical tool, set about obtaining one; perhaps this was one of the fruits of his close association with da Costa.

*The Natural History of Fossils*

Hill's translation of Theophrastus was generally well-received, and was enthusiastically promoted by a highly supportive da Costa.<sup>33</sup> A reviewer of the second edition (1774) commented that 'the learned world in general and particularly those who have carried their inquiries into this part of the history of Nature, have been long sensible of their obligations to the Editor and Translator of this tract of Theophrastus. No ancient writer received more elucidation, or was more happily restored; and no one ever wanted it so much' (Fig. 2).<sup>34</sup> With an enduring and critically acclaimed publication behind him, Hill proposed to write *A General Natural History*, of which the first volume would be concerned with fossils. In this, he plagiarised an idea original to da Costa, resulting in a split between the two of them from 1747, although civil relations were later restored.<sup>35</sup>

There was some tension at the time, especially in the hallowed ranks of the Royal Society, between those who studied natural philosophy (effectively mathematics, physics and astronomy) and those who studied natural history (botany, zoology and geology). Sir William Borlase (1695–1772), a Cornish antiquary, geologist and naturalist, published a general natural history of Cornwall in 1758. Here, he described natural history as the 'Handmaid to Providence', helping the student toward a greater understanding both of God and the true ordering of his works.<sup>36</sup> Natural theology, in which knowledge of God is sought through non-revealed sources, pervaded much seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writing on the natural sciences; Hill's intellectual forbears—the duly acknowledged Giants (Robert Boyle, John Ray, John Woodward, Carl Linnaeus) onto whose shoulders he climbed—were strong advocates of this perspective. Borlase's explanation reads like a mandate for Hill the pathological systematist who prefaced his volume, published in 1748, with similar, though often more robustly expressed comments in line with his often bombastic rhetoric, to those introducing his translation of Theophrastus.

A systematic treatment of rocks, minerals and fossils presented in a 'rational plan' was the great need of the day, and Hill makes a case for the timely production of his *Natural History of Fossils*: the study of geological materials was 'less cultivated' than that of other useful natural objects. Those texts that were available suffered from the authors being miserably ignorant of the true nature of the bodies they treat, taking

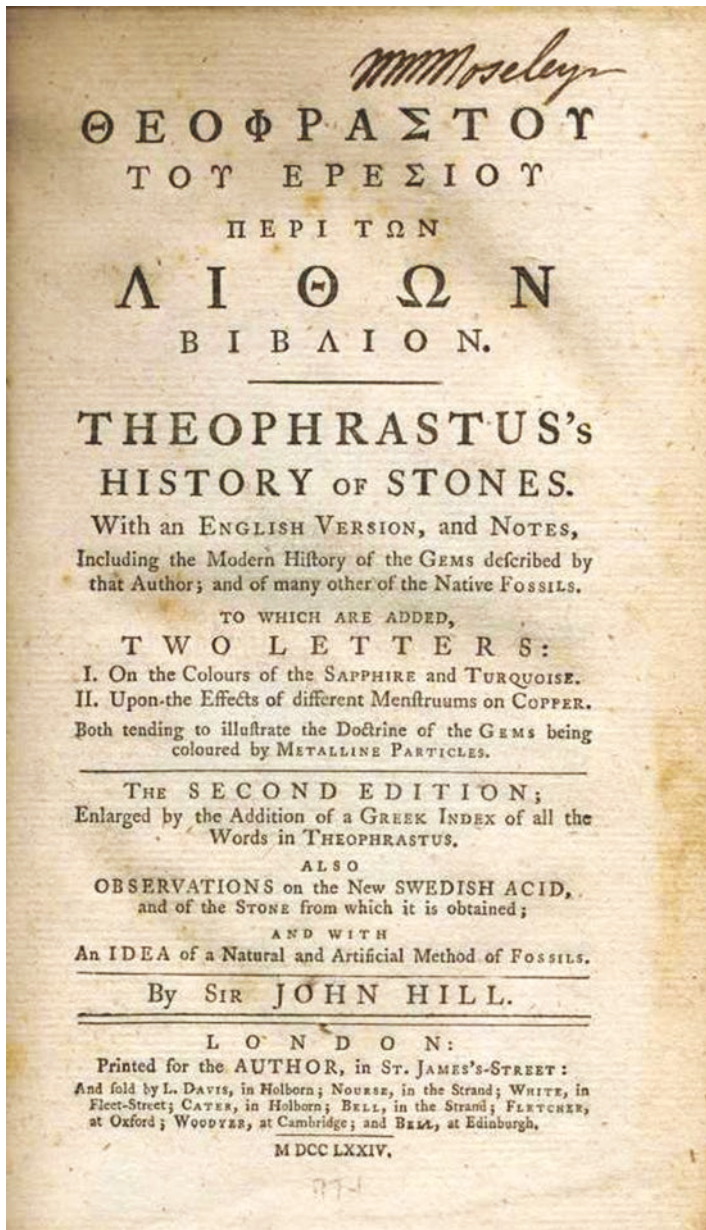


Fig. 2 Title page, Sir John Hill, *Theophrastus's History of Stones*. Second edition (London: 1774). Courtesy of Baldwin's Scientific Books

too much information on trust from the works of previous authorities without subjecting them to suitably critical scrutiny; it was necessary to return to the specimens themselves in order to correct the 'egregious errors' that now pervaded the science. Furthermore, geology had not benefited from the great strides made elsewhere in natural philosophy, and Hill was incensed at the misidentifications of various minerals which, by his account, seemed to pervade the available (but not specifically identified) literature. He used the example of Orpiment and Talc, which were prone to confusion because they both show 'foliaceous nature'—while using talc instead of orpiment is unlikely to cause a problem, the reverse cannot be said to be true, as orpiment is one of the main ores of arsenic! Colour and the presence of foliations were not deemed reliable diagnostic characters, but consideration of the full range of properties allowed distinctions to be made easily—thus, orpiment is flammable and inelastic, while talc is not flammable and the composite sheets are elastic, allowing appropriate identifications to be made.

In keeping with his approaches elsewhere, Hill included comments on the perceived medicinal virtues of the materials he described, indicating his reliance on the work and geological comments of previous authors, the giants to Hill's self-confessed dwarfism, such as Robert Plot, Niels Stensen (Steno), John Woodward, Michel Mercati, Ulisse Aldrovandi and Andreas Caesalpinus, as well as authors concerned with the *materia medica*—Étienne François Geoffroy and Hermann Boerhaave.<sup>37</sup> Hill's was essentially the work of a discriminating synthesist, toiling largely within a traditional framework and supplemented by original observations and experimental investigations on specimens from his own personal collection.

Hill seems to have been well-versed in contemporary descriptive mineralogy using standard characteristics including Density (relative only); Hardness (relative only); Grain size (relative); External form; Colour and its variation; Diaphaneity; Lustre; Fracture and cleavage (not distinguished as such); Fissility (ease of breakage); Elasticity; Habit; Crystallography, in so far as it was developed at the time (e.g., shapes of crystal faces); Ability to take a polish; Ability to give fire when struck with a steel; Occurrence (geographical and textural). His approach also showed some novel applications such as behaviour with Aqua fortis (Nitric acid), microscopic appearance, and response to blowpipe analysis and calcination.

So far as I have been able to determine, this is the earliest systematic use of the microscope in geology.<sup>38</sup> From his descriptions, Hill used both ‘simple’ (single lens) and compound (multiple lens) microscopes. Following the invention of the compound microscope around 1590, probably by Zacharias Jansen, a spectacle-maker from Middelburg in Holland, many improvements to both design and optics took place through the seventeenth century, stimulated considerably by pioneers of microscope studies such as Robert Hooke (1635–1703) and Antonie Philips van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723). The Dutch, English and Italians dominated microscope production, which became increasingly prolific and diverse through the eighteenth century. At the time Hill was writing, the main British compound microscope in use was a low-cost, highly functional instrument designed by Edmund Culpeper (c. 1670–1738) around 1725.<sup>39</sup> It consisted of a three-lens system arranged within a body consisting of an outer cardboard support tube within which fitted an inner vellum-covered body tube. A choice of five different objective lenses could be screwed into the nosepiece at the base of the body. The body was supported on an upper brass stage by a tripod of brass columns which was, in turn, mounted onto a lower platform by a further tripod. Focusing was accomplished by pushing the body tube up and down the inside of the support tube; the final focus position was maintained by the friction between the surfaces of the two tubes. This arrangement proved both cumbersome to manipulate and awkward to establish and maintain focus. Following the death of Culpeper and improvements in manufacture of engineered brass components, John Cuff produced, in the middle of the century, a more expensive brass instrument with a superior ratchet-based focusing system (including a fine focus wheel) (Fig. 3).<sup>40</sup> Moving away from the tripod design, the wooden box forming the base gave greater stability, and the open surface of the stage gave greater accessibility for manipulation of the specimen. Henry Baker, one of Hill’s more influential antagonists in his later clashes with the Fellows of the Royal Society, published an extremely popular book *The Microscope Made Easy* (1742) in which Cuff’s microscopes were favourably described and illustrated.<sup>41</sup> We do not know which instrument Hill might have used for his mineralogical, zoological and botanical studies, but it is likely to have been an example of either Culpeper’s or Cuff’s design.

The appearance of minerals under the microscope was part of Hill’s systematic treatment of the specimens but, unfortunately, the information he obtained was not particularly useful—he was often describing



**Fig. 3** ‘The cuff compound microscope’, by John Cuff (1708–1772). Courtesy of the Wellcome Library, London

impurities, reaction crusts and the effects of cleavage and fracture. Seemingly waylaid by the superficial appearance of the mineral, albeit examined in microscopic detail, he nevertheless did notice that spars broke into rhombic figures, irrespective of the form of the three-dimensional crystal. He tried relating this to the structure of the mineral, but it was not until 1784 that the geometrical law of crystallisation was proposed by René Just Haüy,<sup>42</sup> thereby effectively founding crystallography.

Calcination was a heating process that took place in a furnace (such as lime kilns in which temperatures of around 900–1300°C are required to produce quicklime from limestone). The material was heated in the presence of oxygen to a temperature below its melting point, and any decomposition noted. Hill also mentions the specific use of reverberating furnaces. These had been described in detail by Vannoccio Biringuccio (c. 1480–1539) some 200 years before Hill was writing and had been used in cases where extreme temperatures needed to be generated; the early production of steel during the early years of the seventeenth century, and the smelting of metals later in the same century took place in such furnaces. Their design involved separating the fuel from the material which was to be melted, thus protecting the product from contamination. The high temperatures were supplied to the specimen chamber by reflecting radiant heat onto it from the walls of the furnace itself—the process of reverberation. Using such furnaces in the service of science does not seem to have been commonplace; Sir James Hall (1761–1832) used them to melt samples of basalt in order to investigate the vulcanism theories of James Hutton,<sup>43</sup> and the production of small examples of such furnaces suitable for laboratory use were designed by Lavoisier (1743–1794) in 1790. Hill cites their use in the production of Zaffer, and used them to provide the ‘extreme Force of Fire’ with which to melt minerals and vitrify boles and earths as part of his standard testing of materials.<sup>44</sup> Thus, once again, Hill seems to have been quite progressive in both his choice and use of this laboratory technique.

### MINERALOGY AND MINERAL CLASSIFICATIONS

The main justification for his new mineral classification in *The Natural History of Fossils* was that the study of this group of specimens was ‘less cultivated’ than other branches of natural history and needed bringing up-to-date—‘perhaps no work in Natural Knowledge could be at present so desirable’.<sup>45</sup> Although much had already been written on the subject

by a wide range of authors including 'the great Linnaeus', Hill esteemed the content of their works to contain some 'valuable truths' tainted with a 'much larger store of less judicious matter' which had 'sprung from error or credulity'. Indeed, he states that even the 'greatest of the Authors of late Ages' left 'erroneous accounts' of fossils, shot through with 'egregious errors'.<sup>46</sup> Hill proposed to classify minerals using an empirical-deductive approach.

The pagan and Christian lapidary traditions and the work of the medieval encyclopaedists and later writers of Herbals mostly arranged their entries on minerals alphabetically, taking great care to present the numerous supposed magico-medical 'virtues' as part of their description, largely by repetition from an increasingly long list of earlier authorities. Colour, a notoriously unreliable criterion, was the main basis of mineral classification. The stimulus for the birth of a more modern approach to mineralogy was the sixteenth-century discovery and exploitation of rich and wide-ranging mineral deposits in what was northwest Bohemia, centred around what is now Jáchymov in the Czech Republic. In a departure from the alphabetical approach to classification, Conrad Gessner (1516–1565) attempted to organise minerals into groups based upon form in his foundational work, *De Rerum Fossilium*.<sup>47</sup> Georgius Agricola (1494–1555) spent some time (1527–1533) as City Physician ('Stadtarzt') at Joachimstahl, as Jáchymov was then called. Often referred to as the 'Father of Mineralogy', Agricola rejected notions of stones having special powers, and proposed a new mineral classification based upon physical properties—colour, density, diaphaneity, lustre, taste, odour, shape, texture, morphology, hardness, friability, smoothness, solubility, fusibility, brittleness, cleavage and combustibility.

During the seventeenth century, various influential texts were published which might be seen as holdovers from the earlier lapidary tradition. Two were important reference works for Hill. The Belgian, Anselm Boetius de Boodt (1550–1632), was imperial physician to Emperor Rudolph II in Prague. His *Gemmarum et lapidum historia* went through several editions, the last of which was combined with de Laet's translation of Theophrastus.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century cabinets of curiosity often contained significant collections of minerals which were described and commented on to varying extents in accompanying catalogues.<sup>49</sup> The tradition of collecting continued into the eighteenth century with the activities of Hans Sloane (and others), whose huge collection became the nucleus of the British

Museum holdings following Sloane's death in 1753. Indeed, Hill unsuccessfully sought a post there.<sup>50</sup>

During the eighteenth century, numerous classification schemes were proposed, all essentially modifications of the same format: Gmelin lists twenty-seven 'Systems of Mineralogy'—mineral classifications—in the period from de Laet's (1647) translation of Theophrastus to 1770.<sup>51</sup> The taxonomy of the natural world, including the geological realm, was dominated by the work of Linnaeus (1707–1778) whose aim was to reveal the hierarchically-ordered system that God had imposed on nature and so identify the 'natural kinds' implicit in creation. Linnaeus considered that each 'kind', animal, herbal or mineral, possessed a unique essence, expressed as a single character or property that determined what it was,<sup>52</sup> and to which all other characters were subordinate. His classification of plants based upon reproductive structures, and the binomial system of nomenclature was both appreciated and championed by Hill.<sup>53</sup> Linnaeus found that the application of similar taxonomic principles to minerals was fraught with difficulties.<sup>54</sup> This did not seem to deter Hill, however, who proposed a hierarchical classification scheme. In an echo of Linnaeus's philosophy, he found that a close examination of their 'different properties, qualities as well as figures' allowed him to elucidate 'the knowledge of their mutual alliances one with another, and they were easily ... arrang'd into the several Series nature had ordain'd of them'.<sup>55</sup> His new system of groupings, diagnosed by combinations or sets of characteristics, required the invention of a whole new nomenclature—'an undesirable though unavoidable task'. He intended to reflect the salient character combinations in single-word designations and used elements of Greek compounded together to produce his new terms. This led to the coining of such neologisms as the Pachodecarhombes, Ischnambluces, Stalactocibdela and the Oxuciae which, thankfully, were never adopted by the geological community! The eminently forgettable *Pauraedrastylum*, for example, indicated crystal composed of two pyramids without an intermediate column and composed of but few planes (what we would now call doubly terminated quartz). Perhaps this nomenclature was what prompted Henry Baker to describe Hill's *History of Fossils* as 'large, dull' and 'unintelligible'.<sup>56</sup>

Hill's classification system most closely approaches a 'natural' system—it was hierarchical and he used class, order, genus and species as his taxonomic units. It is arranged a little like a dichotomous key, but not necessarily with two options each time. Temporally caught between these

two taxonomic systems, his own attempt was partly a matter of expediency; his purpose was to 'lay down an arrangement of fossils ... without the skill of Chemistry, or the fatigue of experiments: without furnaces or aqua fortis'.<sup>57</sup>

Neither his classification system nor his new nomenclature met with enduring success. His classification scheme gives an impressive window into contemporary knowledge of minerals, but is largely a traditional approach embellished here and there by chemical investigations. His nomenclature was cumbersome and inelegant, although some terms fared better than others. Da Costa ignored the new names in his own volume. The slightly later French mineralogist, Jean Baptiste Louis de Rome de l'Isle (1736–1790) unashamedly reduced many of Hill's names to synonyms of more traditional names, for example, in his *Cristallographie* (1783) and Hill used none of his neologisms in any of his later works.

The last quarter of the eighteenth century was marked by a new approach to mineral classification, based largely on the work of the Swedish chemists Axel Cronstedt (1722–1756) and Torbern Olaf Bergman (1735–1784), and the German Abraham Gottlob Werner (1749–1817), geology teacher at the Freiburg Mining Academy. These classifications were based upon the chemistry of minerals and therefore dependent on the surge of discovery of analytical techniques that took place in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1774, the year before Hill's death, Werner proposed a utilitarian mineralogical classification scheme incorporating both physical and chemical properties—just the sort of thing that Hill was trying to produce himself. Werner's scheme was rapidly accepted.

### *Sparogenesis*

One of the problems faced by Hill when it came to classifying minerals was that a considerable number had no discernible external form, being found as earthy and powdery materials, reaction crusts and infillings (amorphous minerals). Those minerals exhibiting clear crystallinity with well-defined crystal faces were referred to as spars, of which calcareous spar (calcite) was a prime example; indeed, Hill's *Sparogenesis* limits its consideration to that mineral.

By the late seventeenth century, the view that transparent minerals were formed from 'concreted waters' had been replaced by a discussion

based upon the principles of alchemy as explained by Paracelsus (1493–1541), who adopted the medieval notion of the two hypostatic principles, sulphur and mercury, and added a third—salt, or the saline principle. These three were believed to determine the constitutions of all natural bodies by conferring upon them various distinctive qualities. The sulphur principle, for example, bestowed oiliness, inflammability and viscosity to a material, while the mercury principle resulted in the less well-defined properties of wateriness, ‘spirit’ and vapour. Although all three principles were believed to enter differentially into the constitution of every natural material, the saline principle was of prime importance in mineralogical theory, supposedly conferring rigidity, solidity, dryness and earthiness to the item. By the late seventeenth century, many different types of salt had been discovered (e.g., common salt, salts of vitriol, alum and niter); the process of crystallisation from the parent liquid was believed to be initiated by the presence of the saline principle or salt, and the form of the resulting crystal was the result of the ‘acid’ present in the original solution. Johann Wallerius (1709–1785) was firmly of the opinion that salt caused crystallisation, but believed that the saline principle needed to combine with earthy or metallic substances in order for the crystal morphology to be produced.<sup>58</sup> The Cornish antiquary, William Borlase (1695–1772), in a letter to da Costa referring several times to Hill’s *Natural History of Fossils*, noted that calcareous spars and diamonds both lacked any sign of metallic ingredients:

As therefore there is no Metal in our regularly-figur’d Spars, we must have recourse to another Origination; and Salt, as I take it, is most likely to be that active Principle, by whose Force the Fluid in which it is mix’d, be it pure Water, or lapideous Juice, is made to shoot forth into regular rectilinear Masses, agreeable to the original Shape and Figuration in which these Salts were first created. Tis by the Force of Salts that liquid Bodies are thrown into all the geometrical Planes, Angles, and more compounded Shapes, the Variety of which is no less surprising, than the Constancy and Uniformity of each particular Species; the same Salt shooting still onto the same Figure (as is plain from all artificial Crystallizations), when not streightened in Room, or other wise determined by heterogeneous Mixtures.<sup>59</sup>

Hill was not impressed with the idea of the saline principle. He could find no proof for its existence—indeed, his observations suggested otherwise:

Salts are acrid and dissolve in water. These Fossils have neither of those qualities; and who shall tell us that the property of forming itself into regularly angulated Figures is peculiar to Salts? We have no authority to believe it is wanting in Crystal [quartz] and spar; and we have the evidence of our senses that they have it.<sup>60</sup>

He accuses the proponents of the saline principle of tautology:

the foremost of the writers, who favour this system, because there are in Spars certain forms that do not agree with those of any known Salt, fancies for the formation of these that there exist Salts, not otherwise known to us but by this operation. When Theory can reach this height, it may do what it pleases: to create Causes, because we see Effects that seem to us to require them is to make all things easy; and at the cheapest rate.

Richard Kirwan<sup>61</sup> wrote the first systematic mineralogy in English that classifies minerals by their chemical composition. He stated rather unkindly, but probably correctly, that:

Previous to the year 1780, Mineralogy, though tolerably understood by many as an art, could scarce be deemed a science, being, for want of precise definitions of its objects, incapable of communication ... After many ineffectual attempts to obviate these difficulties ... descriptive language was at last reduced to as much precision as it was capable of receiving by Mr Werner in 1774, and by the union of external characters thus described with the results of chemical analyses, the denominations of most of the earths and stony substances then known, were finally settled by the same illustrious author in his Notes on Cronstedt, published in 1780. All the mineralogical collections, therefore, formed before that year, or even since, if arranged on other principles, are necessarily in many respects defective and erroneous.<sup>62</sup>

Ineffectual, defective and erroneous—not the sort of legacy Hill aspired to.

How to sum up Hill the geologist? His earlier geological works communicate a certain naïveté born of enthusiasm for the subject. He obviously desired to make a significant contribution, not least to establish his own academic credentials, to seek Fellowship of the Royal Society and to earn a living;<sup>63</sup> as Rousseau has remarked, ‘If you had to sum up Hill in a word, it must be “ambition” ... He craved to become a notable person—a “personage”—more than to find stardom or heroic grandeur’.<sup>64</sup>

Hill was clear about giving credit where it was due, but insisted that the specimens should be the items of focus, rather than the ideas and comments of former authorities, no matter how great their eminence. His greatest service was to bring the foundational work of Theophrastus to a more general audience, to educate the public and raise the profile of geology in his own lifetime. Although amongst the earliest to use a variety of analytical techniques, he never successfully made the innovations to which he aspired. Indeed, most of the significant advances in geology took place ten to 20 years after his death, as the chemical revolution gathered pace.<sup>65</sup> In this respect, it could be argued that he was born too soon. Despite this, the assessment of his role as being ‘seminal to the formation of a science of geology’<sup>66</sup> is not misplaced. The ‘Dwarf on Giant’s shoulders’ was a man of vision—he had a different perspective to his intellectual antecedents. He could see further as a consequence of his dedication to polymathic study, his experimental, empirical approach and dedicated and driven personality, but his visual acuity was somewhat dimmed by the strictures imposed by contemporary progress in related areas of endeavour.

## NOTES

1. Hill, *Theophrastus*, xxiii.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Lemay and Rousseau (1978), 113–129.
4. 1714–1742.
5. 1701–1750.
6. Rousseau (2012), 29.
7. 1660–1753.
8. 1717–1791.
9. Rousseau and Haycock (2000), 131.
10. Rousseau (2012), 40.
11. *LPH*, 9–24.
12. *LPH*, 21.
13. Hill, *Windsor Loam*, 460.
14. Mottana and Napolitano (1997); Mottana (2001).
15. Caley and Richards (1956), 4.
16. Baisier (1936), 3. Although certain items of Theophrastus’ oeuvre impacted on medieval thought, his influence on the Western medieval lapidary tradition seems to have been negligible (Schmitt 1971, 254; Walton 2001, 359). *Peri lithon* obviously made its way into the medieval

- Arabic tradition, which proved to be an important haven for numerous classical texts which might otherwise have been lost. Quoted by at least one Arabic encyclopaedist, it was also spuriously credited as the authority for various properties of stones in a number of works on sympathetic magic (Sharples 1998: 22; Walton 2001, 360).
17. Caley and Richards (1956); Richards (1963); Mottana and Napolitana (1997), 222.
  18. *Vaticanus Graecus* 1302; *Vaticanus Graecus* 1305; *Codex Vaticanus Urbinius Graecus* 108.
  19. The *Editio Princeps* of *Peri Lithon* is the sole incunabular version of the Greek text produced by Aldus Pius Manutius (Aldo Manuzio, 1449–1515) at Venice in 1497, and reprinted in 1552. The first Latin translation was published in Paris in 1578, overseen by the French classicist Adrianus Turnèbe (Adrien Turnèbe, 1512–1565). A further five editions, in both Greek and Latin, appeared during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Mottana and Napolitano 1997, 223ff).
  20. Imperato (1599), lib 22; Stendardo (2001); Mottana (2010); Duffin (2013).
  21. Hill, *Theophrastus*, vi.
  22. *Ibid.*, vi.
  23. *Ibid.*, xiv.
  24. Rousseau (2012), 41.
  25. Hill, *Theophrastus*, xvii.
  26. *Ibid.*, xiii.
  27. *Ibid.*, xxiii.
  28. Hill's commentary was almost five times (actually 4.84 times) the length of his translation as calculated from the number of lines of published text for each Section.
  29. Hill (1754, 1770).
  30. Caley and Richards (1956), 8. These authors make the comment that Hill's translation was a 'rather free' version as he 'reflected the spirit of his times and in many passages preferred elegance of expression to accuracy of statement'. Eichholtz (1965), 52, indicates that the Greek text used by Hill was based on that of Furlanus (1605), which was itself 'frequently unsound'.
  31. Jensen (1986), 124.
  32. Jensen (1986), 125; Burchard (1992), 254.
  33. Rousseau (2012), 42.
  34. Anonymous (1774), 401.
  35. Rousseau (2012), 47–48.
  36. Borlase (1758), iv.
  37. Hill, *Fossils*, Preface.

38. See Bradbury (2014), for an excellent introduction to the history of the microscope and microscopy.
39. Culpeper microscopes were still on sale in the early 1770s for three guineas each. Even cheaper models were available for two guineas (Bradbury 2013, 95).
40. Cuff (1708–1792) was a London spectacle-maker who, under the patronage of Henry Baker (1698–1774), revolutionised microscope design to give improved accessibility or manipulation of the specimen under view. The instrument maker George Adams the Elder (c. 1709–1773) included a catalogue at the back of the fourth edition (1771) of Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* in which a Cuff-type microscope is listed for six guineas (eight guineas, if supplied with a triangular foot).
41. Henry Baker was awarded the Copley Medal of the Royal Society (1744) for his work in microscopy.
42. 1743–1822, honorary Canon of Notre Dame.
43. Newcomb (2009), 35.
44. Hill, *Fossils*, 2.
45. *Ibid.*, preface (unpaginated).
46. *Ibid.*
47. Gessner (1565).
48. De Boodt (1647); earlier editions were dated 1609, 1636 and 1644.
49. Duffin (2013).
50. Rousseau (2012), 179–182.
51. Gmelin (1777), 84–151; Hill's system is mentioned on p. 133.
52. Laudan (1987).
53. Rousseau (2012), 215–227.
54. *Ibid.*, 74ff.
55. Hill, *General History*, preface.
56. *LPH*, 41.
57. Hill, *Fossils Arranged*, iii.
58. Wallerius (1750), 163ff.
59. Borlase (1753), 265.
60. Hill, *Sparogenesis*, 9.
61. Kirwan (1733–1812) was an Irish scientist, President of the Royal Irish Academy (1799–1812) and recipient of the Royal Society of London's prestigious Copley Medal (1782) for his work on the chemistry of salts.
62. Kirwan (1794), xi.
63. See Rousseau (2012), 43–53, 79–80, for detailed discussion.
64. *Ibid.*, 340.
65. See, for example, Porter (1981), Laudan (1987), and Fritscher and Henderson (1998).
66. Rousseau (2012), 334; Eyles 1969; Porter and Poulton 1978.

### AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Christopher J. Duffin** is the author of numerous articles on eighteenth-century geology and the co-editor of *A History of Geology and Medicine*. He was also the organiser of a conference to celebrate the tercentenary of Sir John Hill at the Geological Society, Burlington House, in 2014.

# Sir John Hill as Botanist: *The Vegetable System*

*Brent Elliott*

Sir John Hill's major botanical work, *The Vegetable System*, fills 26 folio volumes, published between 1761 and 1775. It was a feat of labour, sometimes with three volumes appearing in a year, illustrating an eventual total of over 4700 plants. It contained a pioneering discussion of the geographical distribution of plants, and very interesting period contributions to the debates over hybridization and plant teratology (the study of abnormal forms). It is acknowledged as an important contribution to the spread of the Linnaean system of nomenclature. But, despite all this, it is little visited, and is regarded as little more than a footnote in the history of botany. It used a system of classification that has never been followed by anyone else; its nomenclature was quirky, if entertaining; and its theoretical contributions have been ignored because they were buried at various points in a 26-volume series. There have been only a few discussions of *The Vegetable System* in the last half-century.<sup>1</sup> I hope in this chapter to attract greater attention to Hill's *magnum opus* and to demonstrate that it repays greater attention than it has received.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

Probably most people who encounter *The Vegetable System* are searching for illustrations of particular plants, having been referred to it by the *Index Londinensis*. So, since Hill's illustrations can be very good indeed, let us begin with this aspect of the work.

The great achievement of the book, and its major selling point, was its series of hand-coloured engravings. The 26 volumes—sometimes 27, for in many copies the index has been bound separately—contain 933 plates, for the most part at a rate of 60 plates per volume; altogether there are 4771 individual plant portraits. In most cases, the plate is devoted to a genus, with several species depicted. Volumes 12 and 13 each carry an appendix containing plates depicting a single plant; these were later published separately under the title of *Twenty-five New Plants, Rais'd in the Royal Garden at Kew* (1773). The first two volumes contain thirty-three plates illustrating the principles of plant anatomy, and there are some plates explaining Hill's system of plant classification scattered through the volumes.

Hill drew the plates himself, and he is identified on the title pages as the engraver. But can this be the case? There are many instances of discrepancies between the text and the engravings in the spelling of plant names, an unlikely event if the same man were responsible for both. Sometimes the name shown in the engraving suggests a misreading of a handwritten text (for example, 'Nipolian' for 'Nissolian', a copperplate 'p' substituted for a long 's'), and, in some cases, the error is such that it cannot be imagined that Hill was aware of it at the time of engraving (for example, 'Bayong' for 'Bryony'). It should not be thought, however, that Hill was being deceitful in claiming to have been the engraver. It was common in engraving establishments for the basic incision of frames, plate numbers and so on, to be assigned to the most junior members, and the most important parts of the image—faces or, in botanical illustrations, flowers—to be the work of the chief engraver. It is entirely likely that Hill had assistants who would have prepared the plates initially, and afterward fitted in the text around the floral images that Hill had engraved.<sup>2</sup>

Some plates are portraits of individual species and these have a tendency to be the best designed. But, as the work attempted to be complete in its coverage, many plates depict several species, and the effect can sometimes be cramped. The colouring has a tendency to uniformity,

especially in its use of greens. The Royal Horticultural Society's copy has a couple of plates in which the process of colouring seems to have been left incomplete; one of these (vol. V, plate 30: 'Dyeweeds, or Crotons') is shown in Fig. 1.

The sheer quantity of figures included in the plates makes for a certain degree of similarity in presentation; often the handling of the plants is very decorative, with the plants forming attractive patterns on the page (Figs. 2 and 3). In some cases, the degree of stylization results in exaggeration, as when the stems and leaves of *Echinophora spinosa* are shown as thin and flattened, belying Hill's own description of them as 'fleshy and firm', with segments 'thorny at the points'. The most exaggerated figure of all is of *Dorstenia contrajerva* (Fig. 4), long known in commerce as a root of alleged medicinal qualities. Its inflorescence, or hypanthodium, is flattened, rounded and cup-shaped; Hill drew it as virtually square. Had he actually seen a living specimen of the plant? Philip Miller had grown it successfully at the Chelsea Physic Garden, so ignorance is unlikely to be the explanation.

#### HILL'S NOMENCLATURE AND TAXONOMY

In the second volume of *The Vegetable System*, Hill switched from traditional descriptive or polynomial nomenclature to the new binomial system proposed by Linnaeus. Let me briefly explain the context for this decision.

Before the middle of the eighteenth century, there were no rules for the formation of plant names. Habit and normal Latin usage dictated a combination of generic name (e.g., *Ranunculus* or *Crocus*) and a modifying term or terms, which could differentiate the different sorts of the plant by colour (*alba*, *nigra*), size (*major*, *minor*), breadth of leaf (*latifolia*, *lanceifolia*), flowering time (*vernus*, *autumnalis*), country of origin (*orientalis*, *germanicus*), or other attributes (*fragrans*, *spinosis*). Botanists were happy to use binomials—names consisting of two words, such as *Ranunculus acris*—when there were not many sorts to distinguish, but the greater the number of sorts to be dealt with, the longer the names grew, as more and more features of the plant had to be itemized. One example is the seventeenth-century botanist Jacques Barrelier, who was happy to use the binomial *Cedrus libani* for the Cedar of Lebanon, a tree not easily confused with others, but when it came to buttercups and their relatives, he ended up using names like *Ranunculus tenuifolius*, *luteus*,



**Fig. 1** Incomplete colouring in a plate from John Hill, *The Vegetable System* [1759–1775], vol. 15, plate 30: ‘Dyeweeds, or Crotons’. Courtesy of the Royal Horticultural Society, Lindley Library



**Fig. 2** 'Asters', *The Vegetable System*, vol. 2, plate 54. Courtesy of the Royal Horticultural Society, Lindley Library



Fig. 3 'Thorn weed', *The Vegetable System*, vol. 5, plate 21. Courtesy of the Royal Horticultural Society, Lindley Library



Fig. 4 'Feverwort', *The Vegetable System*, vol. 5, plate 7. Courtesy of the Royal Horticultural Society, Lindley Library

*grumosa radice, soractensis seu italicus* for one plant (not now readily identifiable despite the profusion of epithets).<sup>3</sup> As early as 1621, the first dictionary of synonyms was published: Caspar Bauhin's *Pinax*, which for each of about six thousand plants gave the names previously used by Dodoens, L'Obel, Clusius, and other writers; the trouble was that eventually Bauhin's names became just another set of synonyms.

Linnaeus' innovation, first suggested in the 1730s, was that the plant name did not need to describe the plant but merely provide a handy way of referring to it, for which purpose a generic name and a single epithet would be enough. In 1753, he published his *Species Plantarum*, in which the epithets were printed in the margins with the descriptions forming the main text. This meant that virtually all known species of plants (8551 entries) were listed and briefly described in a single two-volume work, which was a great incentive to adopt Linnaeus' nomenclature. Hill was the first English botanist to do so, in his *Flora Britannica* (1760) and then, the following year, in the second volume of his *Vegetable System*. In 1762, William Hudson published his *Flora Anglica*, which adopted both Linnaeus' nomenclature and his taxonomy, and over the course of the next decade Linnaeus' reforms were increasingly taken up. When, in 1768, Philip Miller switched to Linnaean nomenclature in the eighth edition of his *Gardeners Dictionary*, the reform was brought to the attention of a wider public. As the decades passed and plant collectors discovered ever more new species, successive editions of Linnaeus' *Species Plantarum* increased in size, becoming multi-volume works. Eventually, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the attempt to publish all the world's plants under one title ceased; but the habit of using only binomials as plant names had been established, and was never to be abandoned.

Hill, therefore, deserves credit for having helped to introduce the Linnaean binomial system of nomenclature into the English-speaking world. In the event, Hudson's *Flora Anglica* was regarded by his contemporaries and successors as playing a more significant role. Hill's *Flora Britannica* was deemed by professional botanists to be a mediocre effort. Richard Pulteney said of that work that 'it was executed in a manner so unworthy of his abilities, that his work can have no claim to the merit of having answered the occasion'.<sup>4</sup> Hill's use of Linnaean binomials in *The Vegetable System* is unproblematic, but since it was a multi-volume work whose impact was spread over a number of years, it did not have the impact of Hudson's compact single volume.

Linnaean binomials took care of the Latin names but Hill also wanted to use English vernacular names for the plants he described, following the tradition of most English writers from Gerard in the sixteenth century to John Ray in the seventeenth. But these writers were generally treating plants native to the British Isles or else grown in British gardens, for which vernacular names were already in use and merely needed to be recorded. *The Vegetable System* was an attempt at recording the world's flora, and in many cases these were plants only recently discovered and introduced. Hill therefore invented many English names of his own, hardly any of which were ever used by anyone else. Sometimes, he anglicized the Latin names (*Impatiens* became Impatient; *Sophora*, Sophorell, and so on); in others, he selected from a standard range of suffixes (-weed, -wort) to create words such as Maudlewort for *Erinus* and Eastweed for *Morina*. One splendid example is *Linnaea* becoming Linneyswort. It is not recorded whether Linnaeus appreciated the compliment. Sometimes, there were etymological reasons for his coinages (Lizard's Tail for *Saururus*), sometimes cultural (Poetweed for *Parnassia*). But, in many cases, Hill's names appear to be simply arbitrary: Indibud for *Justicia*, Wrackrod for *Zannichellia*, Errowbane for *Loeflingia*, and the delightful Tufty for *Iberis*.<sup>5</sup>

While Hill adopted Linnaean nomenclature, he never accepted Linnaean taxonomy. Hence, no doubt, the irritation of Linnaeus on seeing a portion of Hill's work: 'I fainted at the sight of Hill's great work ... with the most beautiful plates of plants on each alternate page, but I could weep when I saw such a costly work without botanical science.'<sup>6</sup> Again, some background will be useful to provide a context for Hill's work.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there were no rules for the classification of plants: there were no accepted criteria to distinguish species from varieties, let alone any agreed categories above the level of genus. John Ray produced the first workable system, in his *Methodus Plantarum* (1682), dividing plants into flowering and non-flowering, the flowering plants into monocotyledons and dicotyledons on the basis of the number of their seed-leaves, and the dicotyledons into groups based on the structure of their flowers. The rival system of Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, published in his *Institutiones Rei Herbariae* (1700), became more widely adopted, especially on the continent; it used flower anatomy as its primary criterion of classification, ignoring Ray's use of seed-leaves. Linnaeus' taxonomic system, first proposed in

the 1730s and applied in *Species Plantarum* (1753), was, in effect, an even more radical simplification of Tournefort's system, based on the numbering and arrangement of the plant's sexual organs, in particular the anthers: a single anther placed a plant in Monandria, two in Diandria, and so on. Linnaeus' sexual system was first adopted in England by Patrick Browne in his *Natural History of Jamaica* (1756); Philip Miller adopted it in the seventh edition of his *Gardeners Dictionary* (1759); as noted earlier, Hudson's *Flora Anglica* was the first English work to adopt both Linnaeus' taxonomy and his nomenclature.

Hill remained a critic of Linnaeus' sexual system. In his *Sleep of Plants*, he spelled out his objections: 'If our opinions have differed, 'tis upon a single point; your arrangement of plants. In regard to that much greater article, the establishing their distinctions, and ascertaining their characters. I have always admired and revered you: to dispute your determinations then, were to deny the characters of nature.'<sup>7</sup> This seems to me a fair assessment of Linnaeus' system, which, after dominating European botanical writing for half a century, was attacked by a new generation of botanists and gradually abandoned. The attack started in 1789, with Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu's *Genera Plantarum*, which reintroduced Ray's distinction between monocotyledons and dicotyledons; over the succeeding decades, this became the basis for attempts at a 'natural classification' of plants. The Linnaean system held on longest in England, only finally disappearing in the 1850s; but then the acquisition of Linnaeus' collections by Sir James Edward Smith and his foundation of the Linnean Society had made England the effective centre of the Linnaean establishment, and Linnaeus virtually an English national hero.<sup>8</sup>

Hill used the number and arrangement of petals to similar effect for the classes of flowering herbs which, after the introductory sections on general plant anatomy and classification, constitute the bulk of *The Vegetable System*. Hill adopted the basic division, standard since Theophrastus, of herbs, shrubs and trees, but did not extend his work into the latter two categories. As for what Linnaeus called cryptogamic plants—those without flowers (algae, fungi, bryophytes and ferns)—Hill included them as the final categories of his scheme of herbs, but, again, did not give them more than the cursory treatment provided in his general introduction.<sup>9</sup> Table 1 shows the categories of Hill's classification.

It would seem obvious that it was Hill's illness and death that prevented *The Vegetable System* from being continued to include all the categories of plants that Hill had listed in his classification; the text and

**Table 1** Sir John Hill's classification of plants

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*Herbs bearing flowers*

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Visible

Assembled together in a common cup

With united chives:

Corollae tubulated	Class 1	Florets
Corollae tongued	Class 2	Semiflorets
Corollae radiated	Class 3	Radiates
With distinct chives	Class 4	Associates
Assembled in a distinct cup, forming a head or ball:	Class 5	Aggregates
Separate, on pedicles issuing from one point:	Class 6	

Separate, springing from various points:

Perfect, i.e. Chives and pointal in the same flower, or separate on the same plant

Compleat, viz. furnished with both cup and petal

Regular

1 petal	Class 7	One-petal'd
2 petals	Class 8	Two-petal'd
3 petals	Class 9	Three-petal'd
4 petals	Class 10	Four-petal'd
5 petals	Class 11	Five-petal'd
6 petals	Class 12	Six-petal'd
Many petals	Class 13	Many-petal'd

Irregular

1 petal	Class 14	One-petal'd
2 petals	Class 15	Two-petal'd
3 petals	Class 16	Three-petal'd
4 petals	Class 17	Four-petal'd
5 petals	Class 18	Five-petal'd
6 petals	Class 19	Six-petal'd
Many petals	Class 20	Many-petal'd

Incompleat, viz. only cup or petal, or neither

With petals without cup

1 petal	Class 21	One-petal'd
2 petals	Class 22	Two-petal'd
3 petals	Class 23	Three-petal'd
4 petals	Class 24	Four-petal'd
5 petals	Class 25	Five-petal'd
6 petals	Class 26	Six-petal'd
Many petals	Class 27	Many-petal'd

With cups without petals.

Of 1 leaf	Class 28	One-leav'd
2 leaves	Class 29	Two-leav'd

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(continued)

**Table 1** (continued)

<i>Herbs bearing flowers</i>		
3 leaves	Class 30	Three-leav'd
4 leaves	Class 31	Four-leav'd
5 leaves	Class 32	Five-leav'd
6 leaves	Class 33	Six-leav'd
7 leaves	Class 34	Seven-leav'd
8 leaves	Class 35	Eight-leav'd
Neither cup nor petal, But a husk	Class 36	Chaffy
Only chives & pointal	Class 37	Thready Imperfect, viz. Chives on one plant, pointal on the other
Chives alone	Class 38	Chive-flowers
Pointals alone	Class 39	Pointal-flowers Invisible to the naked eye.
Terrestrial		
With leaves	Class 40	Ferns
With articulated scales	Class 41	Mosses
With no sort of leaf, scale &c	Class 42	Mushrooms
Sea-plants	Class 43	Marines
Trees, shrubs, and undershrubs		

Source: *Vegetable System*, vol. 2, 45

[NB. *Chives* anthers; *pointal* ovary and stigma]

plates take us up only to his 35th class. But his widow, in her *Address to the Public*, discussing Lord Bute's financial contributions, said: 'After the *Vegetable System* was completely finished, Lord Bute proposed another volume to be added, which Sir John strenuously opposed, as he said it would only load the work both in matter and expense.'<sup>10</sup> And, indeed, the twenty-sixth volume, the one issued by Trueman alone, bore the designation of 'last' on the title page. Why would Hill have initially decided to end his work without having covered his last eight classes? I can only assume that it was his response to debilitation and ill health.<sup>11</sup>

In his fifth volume, Hill offered one of the first theoretical discussions of the geographical distribution of plants, and the first attempt known to me at defining an area in terms of its biology. He proposed, first, that 'there are a number of universal Plants, which grow in every kingdom; and are Vegetables of the Globe, not of this or that quarter of it. ... no part of the world has altogether distinct Plants from all others. The Alpine Plants are common to the high mountains, and the underwater Plants to

the deep Lakes of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.' He then argued that the degree of plant diversity decreased the nearer one approached the North Pole, so that the circumpolar regions had a uniform flora: 'in a certain latitude, that difference between American and European Plants, which has been fancied so absolute, ceases entirely'. At 83° North, the only land plants were mosses; at 82°, strawberries could be found, and violets at 76°. Knowledge of arctic regions in the mid-eighteenth century was not very extensive; Hill might have known Linnaeus' *Flora Lapponica* (1737) and Gmelin's *Flora Sibirica* (1747–1769), but Samuel Hearne's travels had not yet been published;<sup>12</sup> he might, of course, have had correspondence from travellers in his role at Kew. But what is most interesting was his attempt to deduce a law of plant distribution:

the northern Plants are, so far as hitherto named, extremely short or low: it is so universally, so far as I have seen, and height in Vegetables seems certainly, though not universally, to encrease with the Sun's power. The Mosses of 83 degrees Latitude, are the lowest of all Plants: the Strawberries of eighty-two lie on the ground, yet are a little higher than those Mosses; the Violets of Baffins Bay is somewhat taller than the Strawberry; and the Mouse-Ear of seventy-three, is, to all these, gigantick.

It would be vain and absurd, to suppose that all Plants followed this law of encrease exactly, for then the difference of soils and accidents could be allowed no power; and the Plants of every country would be all of one heighth: yet I must be permitted to say here, what will be proved in its due place by a multitude of instances; that notwithstanding the multitude of exceptions, there is such a law; and that were all accidents equal, which they never are, or can be, the effects would be more visible. The Mouse-Ear, which is in a manner universal in seventy-three, grows to three inches high; the Jerusalem Artichoak, which is native of 3 degrees, grows to 12 feet. We may trace in these extreme instances, the outlines of a proportional advance in growth, as in climate. The Jerusalem Artichoak is 70 degrees more South; and it is seventy times as tall. The Hollyhock of Borneo, has the same height of twelve feet; and Mouse-Ear its original three inches at the same distance North in Asia, as America.

These are the Extrems, so far as I have found; he that would fill up the intermediate degrees, must find the Plants on which the climate acts with least interruption; and he must measure these in places where they have their genuine stature. Nightshade upon the Downs, is three inches in height; upon a Dunghill, it is a yard or more; but neither of these is the true, that is, the natural height of the Plant.<sup>13</sup>

Hill's proposed law was of limited applicability; it did not take trees, for example, into consideration. (And nowhere did he say under what conditions 'the natural height of the Plant' was to be found.) But it was a pioneering thought experiment because it was capable of being empirically tested, so it is unfortunate that no one paid attention to it at the time. It might have furnished interesting data for Alexander von Humboldt's later studies of geographical distribution; Hill might have been intrigued by Humboldt's proposed correspondence between zones of altitude and latitude.

### HILL ON PLANT TERATOLOGY

Hill began *The Vegetable System* with a general treatment of plant anatomy, before going on to his system of classification. The first eight plates in the first volume record the progressive dissection of a hellebore. The titles are as follows: Black hellebore; Construction of the root; Transverse sections of the hellebore; Anatomie [*sic*] of the outer bark & inner rind; The blea and vascular series; Construction of the flesh; The cone clusters; Construction of the pith. As can be seen, Hill used his own special vocabulary for the English terms of plant anatomy, but as long as the reader can remember to call anthers 'chives', and the style and stigma the 'pointal', the descriptive texts for most of the plants will yield few difficulties.

The part of the anatomical discussion that is of greatest interest today is the treatment of plant teratology, the study of abnormal forms. The particular abnormality that Hill addressed was what he called 'Luxuriantcy of vegetation'. Gardeners of the Renaissance and seventeenth century had been fascinated by double flowers, hose-in-hose flowers, and other abnormal forms in plants, but no explanations of lasting value had been offered for the causes of such variations within a species. Hill made a valiant effort with his essay on the production of double flowers (two editions or rather printings, in 1758 and 1759, with the text of the later version identical but reset), and, in *The Vegetable System*, he was able to continue his investigation with fruit. He reported that a proliferous pineapple had been raised in Antigua, and sent to the Princess of Wales: 'I have been permitted to cut the proliferous Fruit asunder, to assist in this research, and by comparison of its construction with that of the natural and common PINEAPPLE, I think the course by which these new Shoots were protruded may be found' (Figs. 5 and 6). No mere speculative curiosity, this: Hill hinted at the possibility that, if such proliferation could be artificially stimulated, it could improve crop



**Fig. 5** 'Proliferous Pineapple', *The Vegetable System*, vol. 1, plate 13. Courtesy of the Royal Horticultural Society, Lindley Library



Fig. 6 'Sections of Pineapples', *The Vegetable System*, vol. 1, plate 14. Courtesy of the Royal Horticultural Society, Lindley Library

yields. Since the pineapple had arrived in England already pickled, there was no opportunity to test whether the proliferous flesh was worth eating. Hill's diagnosis continued:

the PINEAPPLE is not so properly a Fruit fixed upon a Stalk, as a Stalk swelling into a Fruit...

This is the structure of the Fruit of the PINEAPPLE, whose small Flowers are formed within those Tubercles, of all the parts, as in other Plants. But in the mean time that essential substance the Flesh of the Plant, which has continued its strait and upright course thro' the Fruit, when it has reached the summit, forms a new solid substance, ... which is the Rudiment of the Plant, and from which rises the Crown of Leaves. This terminates the growth; and this being ready to take Root, and grow again, Nature, in a manner, trifles with the Flowers, and is little solicitous about Seeds ...

We thus see from Reason, the necessity of what appeared so strange in this great Fruit: for if any cause could enlarge those Branches of the Flesh-Vessels which go to the Tubercles, in the natural state of the Plant, they must, instead of Filaments in a Flower, form new originations of Plants in those Tubercles: these must have their first growth on the Plant; that first growth is a Crown of Leaves, and, consequently, each Tubercle to which such a quantity of enlarged Branches went, must, instead of containing an inconsiderable Flower, burst into a full Crown ...<sup>14</sup>

The eighteenth century had added hybrids, or 'mules', to the list of oddities. The first artificially produced hybrid flower had been produced by Thomas Fairchild in the second decade of the century: 'Fairchild's Mule', a cross between a carnation and a sweet william. It would not be until after Hill's death that a deliberate programme of plant breeding would be undertaken by a nurseryman (Cape heaths, by William Rollisson of Tooting), so Hill had few instances of documented cross-breeding to draw on. But he was open to the possibility that hybridization could occur in nature, without human intervention. This was a controversial matter. The fact that plants in cultivation could come to differ from their wild forms was a matter of common observation, usually explained by the concept of degeneration; but all instances of hybridization that could be demonstrated satisfactorily occurred in the garden, and to some extent could be attributed to human agency producing unnatural circumstances.<sup>15</sup> Linnaeus, in 1760, offered the suggestion that many species within a given genus might have had a hybrid origin,<sup>16</sup> a hint at a nature that was dynamic and evolutionary, rather than static.

In his fifth volume, Hill illustrated a plant under the name of ‘Acura’ or ‘Harp’d Needle-weed’ which was probably a sport of a *Scabiosa*, but which he speculated might be ‘a Mongrel or Mulish Plant, produced between the flat Eryngio, and some one of the Scabious’s’. (*Scabiosa* and *Eryngium* belonged to the same class in Hill’s system, but in nobody else’s. Hill might therefore have thought them closely related enough to breed together, but anyone else would regard the possibility as freakishly unlikely.) The importance of Hill’s discussion, however, lay not in the identification of the particular plant, but in the implications he drew from it:

We know these mixtures sometimes happen among Plants; perhaps they are more frequent than we are aware. In general, the Plants thus produced are soon lost, because their Seeds will not grow; but this is not always the case. I have been told that the Dittany produced between the Sypline and Cretan, produces Seeds which sometimes vegetate; and I can speak with certainty of a Plant between the Welch Veronica and the common kind, of which I have many Plants now raised from Seed, and living.

We are not now to learn that a Mulish Plant may be produced between two Plants of different Genera; but as the mixture is less regular, perhaps it is a law of nature, that the Seeds of such shall not grow; we speak much in the dark of these things; for they want much, and have had yet very little observation; but from what I have yet seen, I think it will be found that among Mulish Plants, the Seeds of such as are produced between two species of the same Genus, will sometimes, though but seldom, grow; and that by degrees, the new offspring will lose all that it had of likeness to the female, and become the same with the male Plant entirely: on the contrary, that such of the Mulish Plants, as are produced from a male Plant of one Genus, and a Female of another truly distinct, never produce Seeds that will vegetate, however fair they may look, and that by these means, when the individuals so produced perish, the new Plant is for that time lost.<sup>17</sup>

This is probably the most emphatic discussion of the idea of natural hybridization in the eighteenth century and, despite the fact that it was triggered by a bad example, it is worth remembering as part of the background to the nineteenth century’s more systematic investigations of cross-breeding.

## PUBLICATION HISTORY

It is unfortunate that Hill's idiosyncrasies of vocabulary, his unhelpful system of classification and the sheer scale of his work deterred subsequent botanists from exploring *The Vegetable System*. Lurking within its twenty-six volumes were hints and theories that could have hastened the development of some of the new botanical disciplines of the next century.

Let us begin by looking at the publication history of the work. The imprint statement for the first seven volumes declares: 'Printed at the expence of the author. And sold by R. Baldwin, in Pater-Noster-Row, MDCCLXI'. This is a statement somewhat fraught with ambiguities. At the time, publisher and bookseller were not yet distinct roles; booksellers paid the author a portion of the costs of publication, and so had their names printed on the title page as authorized distributors of that title. The more costly the book, the greater the benefit of having contributions from multiple booksellers—who would generally be listed in order of the size of their financial commitment, the largest contributor being named first. With later volumes of *The Vegetable System*, up to nine different booksellers are named on the title pages. But, at the outset, only R. Baldwin is named, and the imprint statement specifies that Hill himself paid for the printing. As we now know, thanks to the researches of George Rousseau, this claim conceals the fact that the Earl of Bute provided the actual financing, up until 1764; after Bute dropped Hill, it became necessary for Hill to get larger contributions from booksellers.<sup>18</sup>

Table 2 shows the credits in the different volumes to the contributing booksellers, or publishers, as we might as well call them for the remainder of this discussion.<sup>19</sup>

It should be noted that there is no printer named anywhere in these imprint statements. There is evidence that more than one printer was employed during the course of the years over which the volumes appeared.<sup>20</sup> Let us look at the publishers in the order in which they became involved in the publication of *The Vegetable System*.

The original publisher, and the longest-committed, was R. Baldwin—not a single person, but a dynasty of R. Baldwins extending from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, whose major address was at The Rose, Paternoster Row. Richard Baldwin was still in charge of the firm when *The Vegetable System* began to appear, Robert Baldwin towards

**Table 2** The publishers of *The Vegetable System*


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Vols 1–7 (1761–1764):	R. Baldwin, London
Vols 8–15 (1765–1769):	R. Baldwin and John Ridley, London
Vol. 16 (1770):	R. Baldwin, John Ridley, John Nourse, Lockyer Davis, Thomas Becket, Peter Elmsley and J. Campbell, London
Vols 17–18 (1770–1771):	R. Baldwin, John Ridley, John Nourse, Thomas Becket, Peter Elmsley and J. Campbell, London
Vols 19–21 (1771–1772):	R. Baldwin, John Ridley, John Nourse, Thomas Becket, Peter Elmsley and J. Campbell, London; John Balfour, Edinburgh
Vol. 22–23 (1773):	R. Baldwin, John Ridley, John Nourse, Thomas Becket, Peter Elmsley, J. Campbell and Benjamin White, London; John Balfour, Edinburgh
Vols 24–25 (1774):	R. Baldwin, John Ridley, John Nourse, Lockyer Davis, Thomas Becket, Peter Elmsley, J. Campbell and Benjamin White, London; John Balfour, Edinburgh
Vol. 26 (1775):	T. Trueman, London

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the end; it was probably Robert who handled all the dealings with Hill. The Baldwins published other books by Hill, including his *Method of Producing Double Flowers* (1758), before the *System* was started; the next year, they also became one of the publishers of the seventh edition of Philip Miller's *Gardeners Dictionary*, and also of other works by Miller, James Lee, and later John Abercrombie's *Every Man his own Gardener*.

John Ridley, of St James's Street, continued to play a role in publishing Hill's works, being a contributor to the costs of his *Hortus Kewensis* (1769), *Construction of Timber* (1774), and the second edition of his *Exotic Botany* (1772); but the only other botanical or horticultural work with which I can trace his involvement was Nathaniel Swinden's *Beauties of Flora Display'd* (1778).

John Nourse, whose shop was at the Lamb without Temple Bar, was, of all the publishers associated with Hill's project, the one with the most prestigious achievement in botanical publication to his credit. He had been the publisher of Elizabeth Blackwell's *Curious Herbal* between 1737 and 1747, and had bought the copyright of that work, at one point prosecuting the bookseller Samuel Harding for selling a pirated edition. Blackwell's work was the most successful illustrated work on plants to be issued in Britain in the first half of the eighteenth century, so Nourse's addition to the list of Hill's publishers must have added to the prestige of *The Vegetable System*. Nourse was also a publisher of Hudson's

*Flora Anglica* (1762), Colin Milne's *Institutes of Botany* (1771), and Hill's abortive English edition of the *Hortus Malabaricus* (about which more will be said later).

Lockyer Davis, whose shop was at Lord Bacon's Head, near Salisbury Court in Fleet Street, was probably the most generally prestigious of all the publishers involved in *The Vegetable System*; in addition to his work as a bookseller and publisher, he was printer to the House of Commons, and, according to one title page, to the Royal Society as well. During the years in which he was helping to fund *The Vegetable System*, he also published Ellis' *Directions for Bringing Over Seeds and Plants* (1770) and James Lee's *Introduction to Botany* (1776); he was also involved with Hill's *Construction of Timber* and *Hortus Malabaricus*. After Hill's death, he became a regular publisher for the works of the prolific gardening writer John Abercrombie, whose *Every Man his own Gardener* was to become the longest-lasting of gardening calendars, appearing in revised editions every few years for nearly a century.

Thomas Becket, who worked at Tully's Head in the Strand during the years that Hill would have known him, was one of the publishers of Sir William Chambers' book on Kew and of the sixth edition of Miller's *Gardeners Dictionary* (1771), but, apart from that, he seems not to have been involved in botanical or horticultural publications until the end of the century, when he was the sole publisher of Thomas Barnard's little pamphlet *An Account of a Cottage and Garden near Tadcaster* (1797), an early work on the promotion of cottage gardens for the poor.

Peter Elmsley, of Southampton Street, Strand, was just beginning his career in 1770, and was to go on to become, in the words of Plomer, one of the best-known and most important booksellers in London. He contributed to the publication of several of Hill's books in the 1770s: *Exotic Botany*, *Twenty-five New Plants*, *The Construction of Timber*, *Hortus Malabaricus*. He went on to issue such rigorously botanical works as Forster's *Characteres Generum Plantarum* (1775), hardly a work intended for a mass market, and, in the 1780s, was to become the English distributor for the works of L'Héritier de Brutelle (the works which established the reputation of Pierre-Joseph Redouté as a botanical illustrator).

J. Campbell, in the Strand, is pretty much an unknown quantity. He may be James Campbell, formerly bookbinder to the King; this Campbell had a shop in the Strand by 1774, but he is otherwise undocumented as a publisher.

John Balfour, in Edinburgh, was nearing the end of his career when he became a participant in the publication of *The Vegetable System*. He had retired from his role as bookseller to the College and was acting as an independent bookseller. He also took part in Hill's *Hortus Malabaricus*, but his only other significant botanical publications were the English translation of Linnaeus' *Families of Plants* (1787), and the second edition of Withering's *Botanical Arrangement of British Plants*.

The last of the publishers to become involved with the project was Benjamin White, who launched himself as an independent bookseller around 1767 and had an eminent career. He is alleged to have been the brother of Gilbert White, and he was certainly one of the publishers of the first edition of *The Natural History of Selborne*. He was involved with many publications by Hill and Philip Miller, and later Sir James Edward Smith (the founder of the Linnean Society); he was a regular contributor to the issue of works from Kew and the Cambridge Botanic Garden; he was the sole publisher for the English editions of J. J. Rousseau's *Letters on the Elements of Botany*; and he became the English distributor for botanical works of Jacquin, the director of the botanical gardens at Schönbrunn.

The enterprise of publishing *The Vegetable System* suddenly reached a hiatus with the final volume. The names of all the former publishers vanished from the title page, to be replaced by that of T. Trueman, 'No 394, in the Strand' – a very shadowy figure, not mentioned in the great directories of the book trade by Plomer and Maxted, but recorded in the British Book Trade Index as extant between 1749 and 1781.

The increase in the number of publishers involved in Hill's project immediately suggests that, a decade after its inception, *The Vegetable System* had become a prestigious project, one with which dignitaries of the profession such as Lockyer Davis and John Nourse felt it worthwhile becoming involved. This impression leaves many questions about the financing of the work unanswered. Baldwin originally contracted for the production of the book with both Hill and his patron Lord Bute;<sup>21</sup> but if Bute discontinued his patronage in 1764, was the addition of a single additional publisher (Ridley) sufficient to cover all costs for over half a decade, before the sudden addition of five others? The sudden collapse in the number of publishers for the last volume strongly suggests a Hill whose prestige had fallen, and who was struggling for support. Only the previous year he had had nine publishers involved in the project, so what had happened to alienate them?

*The Vegetable System*, and its author, must have retained prestige throughout its course of publication; the evidence for this comes not only from the imprint statement of its volumes, but from the number of its publishers who also became involved in the publication of other books by Hill. Ridley was a publisher of his *Hortus Kewensis* in 1769; Ridley and Elmsley, together, of his *Exotic Botany* in 1772; both, plus Lockyer Davis, of his *Construction of Timber* in 1774.

Also in 1774 appeared Hill's last abortive project, the English edition of the *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus*. The *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus*, originally published by Rheede tot Drakestein between 1678 and 1703, was the first botanical study of the flora of India, and the dominant work on the subject until the nineteenth century; it is one of the very few pre-Linnaean works which still retain a validity for botanical nomenclature, since Linnaeus used its descriptions and illustrations to identify various plants not contained in his herbarium, and there have been no fewer than four modern works which have tried to identify conclusively the plants described in it. Hill started to produce a new edition of the work, with Linnaean names added, and the plates copied in a reduced format (with right-to-left reversal); the first volume appeared in 1774, and the project was curtailed by Hill's death the following year. John Nourse was the first-named publisher, and therefore presumably the largest contributor of funds, followed by Benjamin White, Peter Elmsley, Lockyer Davis and Balfour in Edinburgh (along with others). It seems evident that it was the prestige of *The Vegetable System* that determined these publishers to become involved with Hill's new enterprise.<sup>22</sup>

We do not know how financially successful *The Vegetable System* was; it is hard to imagine that it produced a great profit for the publishing houses involved, or that its early volumes would have been published at all without a wealthy patron to help bear the costs. But the work was—initially, at least—an intellectual success: the testimony of Albrecht von Haller, and to a limited extent of Linnaeus,<sup>23</sup> shows that it was greeted internationally with a tempered enthusiasm. But there came a point when Hill's idiosyncratic approach outweighed the benefits of the copious illustrations. The fact that his discussions of geographical distribution and of hybridization have never been noted by the historians of these subjects shows that, even in his own day, they were ignored. And so *The Vegetable System* sank from sight, consulted only for its illustrations, and remembered only for its role in the spread of the Linnaean binomial nomenclature. It deserves to receive greater attention.

## NOTES

1. Stafleu (1971), 210; Henrey (1975), 2: 103–108; Elliott (2011); Rousseau (2012), 249–252, 271–279.
2. Elliott (2011), 62–67.
3. Barrelier (1714), 499, 581.
4. Pulteney (1790), 2: 351.
5. Elliott (2011), 67–74.
6. Quoted in Henrey (1975), 2: 108.
7. Hill (1757), 2–3.
8. Elliott (2008).
9. Elliott (2011), 74–79.
10. Quoted in Rousseau (2012), 274.
11. See Rousseau (2012), 297–300.
12. Hearne (1795).
13. Hill (1761–1775), 5: 13–17; Elliott (2011) 82–86.
14. Hill (1761–1775), 1: 122–126.
15. Roberts (1929), 1–33; Zirkle (1935); Stace (1975), 19–25.
16. Linnaeus (1760).
17. Hill (1761–1775), 5: 53–54.
18. Rousseau (2012), 271, 277, 356–357.
19. Biographical details of all these booksellers are derived from Plomer (1932) and Maxted (1977), and supplemented by the British Book Trades Index ([www.bbti.bham.ac.uk](http://www.bbti.bham.ac.uk)).
20. Elliott (2011), 64.
21. Rousseau (2012), 271.
22. Rheede (1774); Henrey (1975), 2: 168–169.
23. Rousseau (2012), 271–272.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Brent Elliott** was Librarian of the Royal Horticultural Society from 1982 to 2007 and, since 2007, has been the Society's Historian. He is the author of *Victorian Gardens* (1986), *Treasures of the Royal Horticultural Society* (1994), *The Country House Garden* (1995), *Flora: An Illustrated History of the Garden Flower* (2001), *The Royal Horticultural Society: A History 1804–2004* (2004), *RHS Chelsea Flower Show: A Centenary Celebration* (2013) and *Federico Cesi's Botanical Manuscripts* (2015), a title in the Paper Museum of Cassiano dal Pozzo series. A former editor of *Garden History*, he is currently editor of *Occasional Papers from the RHS Lindley Library*.

# John Hill, *Exotic Botany* and the Competitive World of Eighteenth-Century Horticulture

*Sarah Easterby-Smith*

John Hill's first formal entrée into eighteenth-century botany came about as a result of his work as botanical gardener to Lord Petre. While employed at Thorndon Hall between 1736 and 1742, Hill met many of eighteenth-century Britain's most significant scholars of botany. These well-heeled virtuosi visited Petre's garden and conversed not only with the garden's aristocratic proprietor, but also with its skilled custodians.<sup>1</sup> Hill gained a reputation as a knowledgeable member of a burgeoning scholarly community. He forged connections, too, with his fellow gardeners and with commercial plant traders, who were both his peers and his rivals. Unlike most other gardeners, however, Hill used print to articulate his botanical expertise, to assert his credentials as a scholar and, thus, to gain distinction among his peers. Hill's botanical publications invite us to examine how he constructed his scholarly expertise in print, and how he positioned himself in relation to a wider metropolitan community of botanists, gardeners and commercial nurserymen.

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This chapter focuses on just one of Hill's many botanical publications, his lavishly illustrated *Exotic Botany Illustrated in thirty-five figures of Curious and Elegant Plants: Explaining The Sexual System; and Tending to give some New Lights into the Vegetable Philosophy* (1759). The book describes non-native plants recently arrived in Britain, which are arranged according to one of eighteenth-century Europe's newest taxonomic systems, that devised by the Swede Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778). *Exotic Botany* is significant for several reasons. It stands out from many of Hill's other botanical publications due to its innovative content and its beauty as an object.<sup>2</sup> *Exotic Botany* was written with an upper-end readership in mind, and its format and content respond to mid-eighteenth century conventions for 'polite' science. The text sits luxuriously within spacious folio pages and beautiful hand-painted plates accompany each description. The book also diverges from most contemporary British botanical literature because it uses Linnaeus's new sexual system. As Brent Elliott explains in Chap. 13, Linnaean taxonomy was little-known among British students of botany before the 1760s. The plants in *Exotic Botany* are arranged according to Linnaean classes, and the accompanying texts explain in English the fundamentals of the new system. It forms a surprising contrast to Hill's later *Vegetable System* (1761–1775), which rejects Linnaeus's taxonomy but adopts his nomenclature.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of its title, the book places as much emphasis on horticulture as on botany. Hill's *Exotic Botany* exposes a conceptual link between botany and horticulture that, although rarely articulated explicitly, underpinned both intellectual arenas in the mid-eighteenth century. Hill makes use of this connection to construct and promote his expertise as a botanist. *Exotic Botany* implicitly invites readers to consider Hill as someone who could combine high-minded botanical theory with the less-elevated practical expertise accrued by gardeners. The book was published at a key moment in Hill's life, when he was moving away from the less reputable journalism that characterised the middle decades of his career and towards his more respectable engagement with botanical science in the 1760s and 1770s. Reading between the lines of the text, then, tells us as much about Hill as about botany. *Exotic Botany* reveals how Hill used print to stake his claim as a serious scholar, and to differentiate himself from his horticultural and botanical peers in London in the late 1750s.<sup>4</sup>

## BOTANY, HORTICULTURE AND POLITE SCIENCE

Eighteenth-century ideas about botany, horticulture and science diverge from present-day expectations for science and scholarship. The modern disciplines of botany and horticulture were formulated during the Enlightenment; this process involved defining the content of each branch of knowledge and how it should be communicated. Participation in Enlightenment science was also characterised by very different social and cultural expectations about what it meant to be a scholar. *Exotic Botany* is situated within this milieu, which Hill exploited to assert his own expertise.

Botany, as most other eighteenth-century sciences, was not a professionalised discipline. Scholarly investigation into plants had been traditionally considered part of medicine. By the eighteenth century, botanical study had broadened out to become an independent branch of natural knowledge that focused primarily on questions of taxonomy and nomenclature. Yet, very few paid posts existed for botanists and it was not possible to gain a formal qualification in the science. The majority of botanical scholars, then, were private individuals who devoted varying degrees of spare time to the study of plants. These ‘amateurs’ could range from wealthy aristocrats such as Lord Petre to men and women of the middling ranks. Several botanical amateurs developed very high levels of expertise and participated actively within Enlightenment scholarly networks.<sup>5</sup>

Horticulture, or the science of gardening, became a clearly defined discipline over the eighteenth century. In London, ‘gardening’ was a trade with its own guild that regulated admission and apprenticeship. Most gardeners were manual labourers and were not required to learn botany. Yet, a new ‘scientific’ approach to gardening gradually emerged, where knowledge about botanical taxonomy, nomenclature and plant physiology underpinned experimentation in plant cultivation. By the turn of the nineteenth century, this combination was known as ‘horticulture’;<sup>6</sup> the foundation of the Horticultural Society of London in 1804 gave this new field of knowledge institutional standing.<sup>7</sup> John Hill’s *Exotic Botany* advocates the value of applying scientific knowledge to gardening, and vice versa.

But what *was* science in the Enlightenment? The distinction between ‘science’ and ‘art’ was formulated differently from the present day. Activities relating to theory or requiring the systematic application

of principles might be described as ‘science’, while ‘art’ comprised the practical application of all sorts of knowledge, including agriculture and gardening.<sup>8</sup> In the early modern period, furthermore, scholarship of the natural world had been conceived as ‘natural philosophy’: scholars considered both facts and philosophy about, for example, plants, animals or minerals, without necessarily separating them into the modern disciplines of botany, zoology and mineralogy. The eighteenth century ultimately saw the consolidation of these branches of knowledge into discreet disciplines, complete with norms for their practice and communication.<sup>9</sup> The eventual emergence of botany and horticulture as defined intellectual fields was the result of the collective work of botanically trained gardeners and amateurs of botany over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The eighteenth century also saw audiences for science widen from aristocrats to include gentlemen and members of the middling ranks. In Britain, broadening public engagement with the sciences was accompanied by concerns, however, about its effect on the ‘polite’ culture that was so highly valued among the middling and upper sorts.<sup>10</sup> While curiosity about the natural world was encouraged among the social groups mentioned, critics worried that too much scholarship might undermine the foundation of polite society.<sup>11</sup> ‘Deep learning’, Lord Chesterfield explained in 1749, ‘is generally tainted with pedantry, or at least unadorned by manners’.<sup>12</sup> *Exotic Botany* satisfies a contemporary need for books on science that offered enough information for polite readers to converse about a subject without going into excessive detail.

The association between the scientific study of plants and their cultivation in gardens meant that botany emerged as a popular science in mid-eighteenth-century Britain at the very same time that the commercial trade in plants expanded. In response to demand from a growing urban consumer public, the number of commercial nurseries advertising in London doubled from around 14 in the period 1700–1740, to approximately 28 in 1760–1800.<sup>13</sup> The wealthy created new landscape gardens and invested in the latest hot-house technologies to foster their tender, exotic specimens. Members of the urban middling ranks, including those without gardens, reputedly cultivated as much greenery as possible.<sup>14</sup> ‘At every house in town’, enthused Swedish botanist Pehr Kalm on a visit to London in 1748:

they had commonly planted ... partly in the earth and ground itself, partly in pots and boxes, several of the trees, plants and flowers which could stand the coal-smoke in London. They thus sought to have some of the pleasant enjoyments of a country life in the midst and hubbub of the town.<sup>15</sup>

As I have shown elsewhere, London's better-educated nurserymen helped to whip up public interest in both botany and gardening from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. Commercial nurseries marketed rare plants as specimens of interest to amateurs of botany, and some even offered botanical training either in print or in person through lecture courses.<sup>16</sup> The expanding public interest in botany and gardening prompted an unusual coupling of commerce with connoisseurship, an amalgamation that maverick Hill was adept at exploiting.

### *EXOTIC BOTANY* AND LINNAEAN TAXONOMY

*Exotic Botany* presents a cutting-edge botanical system in a format intended to please the eye and the mind. It focuses primarily on newly arrived plants from China, engaging with the widespread fashion for Chinoiserie that dominated early to mid-eighteenth-century culture.<sup>17</sup> The first edition cost the princely sum of £2. 12s. 6d., and Hill states on the title page that it was printed 'at the Expense of the Author'. No additional printer/publisher is named, and Hill actively solicited aristocratic subscribers to support the book.<sup>18</sup> In December 1758, he told the Earl of Bute that '[t]he Expencc [sic] of this has outrun my slender fortune', a fact he continued to emphasise in letters to other subscribers.<sup>19</sup> The dedication to Hill's prospective patron, Hugh Percy, the Earl of Northumberland, suggests that the latter may have contributed towards the production costs, as Bute would later agree to do for *The Vegetable System*.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, the costs of the second edition of *Exotic Botany* (1772) would be shared by four publishers: R. Baldwin, J. Ridley, Peter Elmsley and Richardson & Urquhart.

The book's treatment of Linnaeus is innovative for the 1750s. The subtitle announces that it offers 'some New Lights into the Vegetable Philosophy', by which Hill means recent developments in botanical classification. Hill explains in the preface that he had selected plants 'that served best to illustrate the Sexual System'—in other words, examples with which he could explain Linnaeus's new botanical classification. The

plants are then ordered according to Linnaean taxonomy. ‘The modern system’, Hill explains:

invented by LINNÆUS, arranges Plants into Classes, according to their Number, Situation, and Proportion of the dusty Buttons in the Flower, which grow usually upon slender Filaments, about the young Seed Vessel.<sup>21</sup>

*Exotic Botany* follows the taxonomic order devised by Linnaeus, offering between one and five specimens as examples of each class. The explanations are simplistic but clear. Describing the ‘Jacobæan Amaryllis’, for example, Hill explains to his readers that:

The six Filaments discover the Plant to be of this hexandrous Class; the sixth in order in the Sexual System: and the Character of that Class cannot be more strongly mark’d in any Flower. The ANTHERA, or Buttons, which crown the Filaments, are at first long and white; afterwards shorter and yellow.<sup>22</sup>

*Exotic Botany* does not offer a completely comprehensive treatment of the Linnaean System: there are no individual examples for the seventh and eighth classes, presumably because Hill did not have any suitable specimens. Nevertheless, the book includes entries for most of Linnaeus’ 24 classes.

Under Hill’s guidance, the readers of *Exotic Botany* would become familiar with the basic principles of Linnaean taxonomy. He assists his students by identifying potential points of confusion. The twelfth class, for example, ‘is one of the most complex Distinctions of the Linnaean System, and should be well fixed in the Memory’.<sup>23</sup> The explanations in the book lack detail, however, and do not provide a practical introduction to the new sexual system. Readers would not have been able to apply Linnaean taxonomy themselves, but they would have gained enough ‘lights’ to profess a basic knowledge of its principles.

Hill is generally remembered as a critic of Linnaean taxonomy, and his decision to arrange *Exotic Botany* according to the sexual system is surprising. British botanists in the 1750s and 1760s were divided over Linnaeus’ relentlessly artificial method of arranging plants: his detractors claimed that the classification warped the natural order, misrepresenting the relations between plants.<sup>24</sup> Hill shared this contemporary

scepticism.<sup>25</sup> Writing about the Linnaean class *polyandria* in another of his botany books, *The British Herbal* (1756), he noted that ‘Nature separates these plants, ... [but] Linneæus joins them.’<sup>26</sup> As Brent Elliott explains in Chap. 13, Hill’s opposition to Linnaean classification would extend to him devising his own taxonomy in *The Vegetable System*, the first volume of which was published shortly after *Exotic Botany*.

*Exotic Botany* presents us with a paradox, then, as Hill appears to promote a system that he rejects in his other botanical publications. But the book does not, in fact, offer a wholehearted affidavit for Linnaean taxonomy. Several entries emphasise that ‘the Doctrine of the LINNÆEAN School ... is not universal in the School of Nature’,<sup>27</sup> and that Linneæus’s classifications were too arbitrary to endure for long. Writing about how rhubarb had foxed taxonomists for centuries, for example, Hill notes that:

They err’d who plac’d it with the Docks, though its Flowers, Seeds, and whole Habit, naturally might have justified the Mistake in Times when the present Distinctions of Plants were not sufficiently known. The Certain Characters of the sexual System plainly separate it. Perhaps a natural Method will some Time change the Face of Things again. ... the Laws of the Present System, placed it in the ninth Class, the Enneandria.<sup>28</sup>

Hill also works his scepticism about Linneæus into the book in more subtle ways. He presents himself rhetorically as an expert whose knowledge is more or less equal to that of his Swedish counterpart. The first explanation of Linneæus’s ‘modern system’, quoted above, does not appear until the end of the first three pages and is notably brief. Likewise, though the descriptions of each specimen usually run to six paragraphs, the specific discussion of Linnaean taxonomy averages a mere two sentences. Hill includes asides that further humble Linneæus: regarding the twelfth class, he cannot resist adding gleefully that ‘the great Author of the System himself once mistook it’.<sup>29</sup> *Exotic Botany* may be structured according to Carl Linneæus’s taxonomic order, but the botanical authority is unequivocally John Hill.

Hill produced this book for readers who were new to the science of plants. At one point he refers to the ‘young Botanist’, implying that he envisages his audience as inexperienced, if not actually youthful.<sup>30</sup> The focus is on ‘Curious and Elegant’ plants—rarities with a clear aesthetic appeal—and the format of the book reflects this aesthetic emphasis.

*Exotic Botany's* illustrations conform to eighteenth-century botanical conventions in so far as they depict plants as single specimens against a white background, so that key features could be seen clearly. The illustrations are ostensibly botanical, but most lack the full range of details necessary for a comprehensive examination. The majority of the images do not show plants' roots, and do not include cross-sections of the flowers, for example. By presenting its scientific content in a form that was both aesthetically pleasing and fashionable, the book remained very much in keeping with mid-eighteenth-century norms for polite science.<sup>31</sup> Its large size and eye-catching illustrations would permit its owners to display ostentatiously their broad intellectual interests.

### HORTICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Although horticulture had not yet come into its own as a distinct intellectual field, *Exotic Botany* underlines the value of uniting knowledge derived from gardening with that derived from the scientific study of plants. This is the book's second innovative feature, which further differentiates it from many contemporary books on botany.

According to Hill, horticulture was useful in solving the taxonomic questions that preoccupied Enlightenment botanists. 'Experience', he states firmly in the introduction, 'will be the best guide.'<sup>32</sup> The ensuing text underlines that his 'experience' is, literally, down-to-earth. Hill grounds his descriptions of plants in his own practical expertise, using what he had learnt from the garden to clarify, and even correct, contemporary botanical conundrums. Early in the book, he discusses the 'Peloria'. Botanists had disputed whether it should be classed as a genuine specimen or as a variety (in eighteenth-century terms a 'mongrel'), the product of crossbreeding Veronica and Vervain (*Verbena*). 'All I can say', Hill helpfully offers, 'is that I have long cultivated the two Plants in the same Border, and near one another, but no middle kind has yet appear'd.'<sup>33</sup> Hill refers again to the value of practical experience in his discussion of the tea plant (Fig. 1). 'We have long question'd', he writes:

whether the Green and Bohea Tea were, or were not, the produce of the same Shrub: most thought they were ... I think it is otherwise. ... Whether this difference be the Case, must be found by Experience: and if they really be the Produce of two distinct Shrubs, we are yet to learn whether the Difference be as Species, or only as Varieties.<sup>34</sup>



**Fig. 1** 'Bohea Tea' from John Hill, *Exotic Botany* (1759). Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

*Exotic Botany* asserts the value to botanical theory of practical knowledge gained in the garden.

The texts that accompany each plate also explain how to cultivate the plant under discussion. The ‘Snowy Mespilus’, for example:

may be made a very agreeable Article in Clumps and Small Plantations, but as the Value of it will depend upon the fresh Green of the Leaves and the pure Colour of the Flowers, it must have a free Air; and be kept from the Shade of larger Trees. In this Case the Leaves will retain their Verdure in full Perfection; and the Flowers ... will have much more Beauty.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to practical advice Hill also highlights the plants that would ‘shew the Course of Nature in constructing DOUBLE FLOWERS [sic]’.<sup>36</sup> Double flowers are naturally occurring mutations in which additional petals grow in place of stamens and pistils. Most doubles cannot be pollinated, and are difficult to propagate. They were (and are) highly valued by gardeners for their extreme rarity and beauty, but have been subject to little botanical attention.<sup>37</sup> Linnaean botanists floundered when faced with specimens whose sexual organs had disappeared—this technically made them unclassifiable—and they dismissed these beautiful sports of nature as unscientific distractions.<sup>38</sup> Hill does not assert that double flowers should be considered as genuine botanical specimens: *Exotic Botany* describes the original (non-mutated) plants. He does make clear to his readers, however, which were more likely to produce beautiful, non-botanical blooms.

Further confirming the association between botany and horticulture, Hill stresses anything that could make ‘a very valuable Article in our Collections’.<sup>39</sup> He envisages here ornamental (rather than botanical) gardens in which collections of new exotic specimens were a particular feature.<sup>40</sup> *Exotic Botany* would enable its polite readers to select plants whose value was derived from their rarity and aesthetic beauty. The emphasis placed on these atypical blooms gestures towards the existence of a subculture of flower-appreciators. These wealthy admirers of nature sought to acquire a basic knowledge of current science and to collect beautiful plants for their gardens.<sup>41</sup>

The creation of such tasteful collections depended on the circulation of specimens as well as knowledge. Hill takes great care in *Exotic Botany* to credit the private collectors who had supplied him with the plants depicted in the book. As he explains in the Introduction, he has noted beside each image ‘[t]he place whence I received each [plant]’.<sup>42</sup>

His suppliers include aristocrats such as the Earl of Northumberland<sup>43</sup> and prelates including the Danish-Norwegian bishop Erik Pontoppidan.<sup>44</sup> Several plants were collected directly from fields and gardens in China or elsewhere by ‘Gentlemen’.<sup>45</sup> The book evokes an impressive correspondence network that stretched from Britain to China<sup>46</sup> Hill explains to his readers, furthermore, that he would regularly redistribute exotic seeds among the proprietors of other British gardens: ‘The Seeds of these Plants came over [to me] with the Specimens; and they [were sent to] ... four remote Parts of the Kingdom, where I have Correspondence with those who have Stoves’.<sup>47</sup> Hill portrays himself at the centre of a botanical exchange network, receiving, studying and then reallocating precious specimens.<sup>48</sup>

London’s horticultural community is also presented as a key source of information, especially regarding vernacular names and practical information about plant cultivation. Hill treats this lower-class community very differently, however, compared with his more elite correspondents. The allusions to gardeners’ knowledge are rather vague, and informants are not named individually. A footnote to the description of the ‘Blood Stained Hypericum’ explains that ‘It is discover’d, since Linnaeus publish’d his Species [Plantarum], therefore it has not yet been nam’d, except by Gardeners.’<sup>49</sup> On the ‘Heroic Piony’, he explains that ‘our Gardeners have, in the Course of many Ages, rais’d the vast double Flower of the same Name’,<sup>50</sup> and he notes later that ‘Our Gardeners know how essential this free Course of the Air is to the Perfection of Fruits’.<sup>51</sup> The community from which Hill had obtained this practical horticultural advice is presented as part of his network, but as socially differentiated from Hill and his scholarly associates.<sup>52</sup>

Hill does, however, repeatedly name one individual member of this community. Hammersmith nurseryman James Lee (1715–1795) (Fig. 2) is mentioned throughout the book, and receives Hill’s highest praise. Lee, Hill emphasises, was ‘a very excellent Gardener’<sup>53</sup> with an exceptional ability to bring tender exotic plants to astonishing levels of ‘Perfection’.<sup>54</sup> Lee was a leading member of the community of gardeners and plant traders mentioned earlier, and his Vineyard Nursery (which he ran jointly with business partner Lewis Kennedy) was ultimately credited with the introduction of hundreds of new plants into British gardens.<sup>55</sup> Like Hill, Lee was an early convert to the Linnaean System and, unlike the gardeners mentioned earlier, he also published on botany. His *Introduction to Botany* (1760) translated Linnaeus’s *Philosophia Botanica* into English; the low price of the book and its plain language made



**Fig. 2** Portrait of James Lee, from *An Introduction to the Science of Botany*, fourth edition, corrected and enlarged, by James Lee, son and successor to the author (London, 1810). Courtesy of King's College London, Foyle Special Collections Library

Linnaean science accessible to a socially diverse readership for the first time.<sup>56</sup> Lee's work as a supplier was underpinned by extensive horticultural skill and botanical knowledge, which Hill underlines in his various encomiums to the nurseryman.

James Lee and a handful of other commercial nurserymen (including James Gordon (c. 1708–1780), with whom Hill had worked while at Thorndon) represent an elite subsection of the metropolitan horticultural community. Enlightenment scholars appreciated the distinct forms of expertise developed among these well-educated nurserymen and gardeners. Amateurs of botany (who included some of the intended readers of *Exotic Botany*) visited London's nurseries with the explicit intention of conversing with the gardeners there, and thus learning from them.<sup>57</sup> These interactions have their roots in the seventeenth century, when commercial nurseries were first established in significant numbers in the capital city. This practice continued and extended over the eighteenth century, thanks to the further increase in the number of commercial nurseries within London, and as public interest in studying botany and horticulture soared.<sup>58</sup> The knowledge that the upper-end nurserymen were developing was a form of 'hybrid expertise', in which theoretical botanical knowledge was complemented by practical horticultural skill.<sup>59</sup>

A corollary of the cultural valorisation of hybrid expertise was a rise in the status accorded to well-educated gardeners. The Royal Society's shifting attitude illustrates this trend. As early as 1667, Thomas Sprat had celebrated the knowledge of 'artisans, countrymen, and merchants' in his *History of the Royal Society*, asserting that this was superior to that of 'scholars'.<sup>60</sup> By 1720 (while 6-year-old John Hill was out botanising in the Northamptonshire fields), London nurseryman Thomas Fairchild (1667–1729) was invited to attend a meeting of the Royal Society at which his experimental horticultural research was discussed. However, as historian Richard Coulton has shown, the assembled Fellows did not actually expect the nurseryman to speak; instead, his patron and promoter Richard Bradley (1688–1732) communicated Fairchild's work to his peers.<sup>61</sup> But the value placed on practical knowledge increased, and attitudes changed accordingly. The London cloth merchant and plant trader Peter Collinson (1694–1768), for example, was made Fellow of the Royal Society in 1728; his credentials for election were founded on a similar combination of practical and intellectual expertise that Thomas Fairchild had developed, and which Hill later espouses in *Exotic Botany*.<sup>62</sup> London's horticultural community was

responsible for pioneering research into plant physiology, growth and form. The credit accorded to its members gradually increased over the early eighteenth century. John Hill used *Exotic Botany* to promote the value to Enlightenment botany of his, and others' hybrid knowledge.

### COMPETITION AND DISTINCTION

Membership of mid-eighteenth-century London's horticultural community came, however, with its own complications. The upper-end plant traders who sought to make a commercial profit by trading in botanically interesting plants occupied the unenviably uncomfortable position of being both collaborators and competitors. In this respect, their situation was parallel to that experienced by members of the Republic of Letters. Upper-end traders such as James Lee sought to participate respectably in botanical circles, seeking to join a scholarly community with an international remit. The culture of Enlightenment scholarship, however, was dominated by a commitment to openness. A scholar would exchange specimens and information as gifts. Hill's proud statement about his willingness to redistribute the exotic seeds he received would situate him within this culture of generous information exchange. But the members of London's horticultural community also sought custom from an increasingly discerning public, and they sought patronage from their scholarly or social superiors. Canny plant traders and socially aspirant amateurs needed to distinguish themselves over and above their peers, but also sought to uphold a respectable reputation as knowledgeable associates. They consequently engaged in forms of self-promotion that were characterised more by tact and discretion than by overt aggrandizement.<sup>63</sup> The methods used to achieve this are, again, evoked within the pages of *Exotic Botany*.

The ways in which commercial nurserymen competed varied according to practitioners' social positions and educational levels. Those lower down the profession—the 'lesser sort' referred to earlier—often claimed consumers' attention by naming plant varieties after themselves, through which they might effectively continue to advertise their own nursery long after a plant had been sold. In a catalogue of Lancashire gooseberries from 1780, for example, three quarters of the 319 gooseberry varieties were named after a specific cultivator. The catalogue listed gooseberries named 'Red Mogul' and 'White Mogul', but also 'Mather's White Mogul' and 'Thorp's White Mogul'.<sup>64</sup> The gardeners

and nurserymen who were well versed in botany pursued a very different strategy. They sought to elevate themselves above their competitors by refraining from engaging in direct competition with each other, presenting themselves instead as respectable participants in botanical networks.<sup>65</sup> Hill may have been an irrepressible self-promoter, but within a scholarly context at least he presents himself as relatively modest. His discoveries speak for themselves—more or less.

Hill followed the pattern already established by the upper-end gardeners and commercial nurserymen. He, too, embedded his natural competitiveness within claims to scholarly erudition, distinguishing himself from others by asserting his claim to botanical authority, rather than by engaging in more underhand commercial competition. He manages to do this in *Exotic Botany* despite the fact that the book was not intended as a detailed work of science. Hill's claims to superiority are subtle, but nevertheless evident.

*Exotic Botany* features a genus that Hill claims to have discovered, and which, therefore, needs a scientific name (Fig. 3). The convention among Linnaean botanists was that Carl Linnaeus himself would name new discoveries, though he often used the moniker proposed by whoever had found the specimen. It was customary, furthermore, to devise a name by adapting the surname of a fellow botanist. Linnaean nomenclature consequently became a means of conferring honour (and therefore expressing authority) among botanists. Hill, however, refuses to obey the established convention. 'Men will wonder', he wrote, 'that I have not follow'd the Custom of modern Writers, and nam'd it for my Patron; or from some Friend who could return the Compliment. But ... [a] Name is useful when it coveys some idea of the Plant: I have therefore call'd this LEPIA.'<sup>66</sup> Driving the point home, Hill continued by explaining that:

I have comply'd so far with Custom, as to deduce it from the GREEK; but in the common Practice of naming Plants from Men, the folly is extream, and the Flattery fulsome. All laugh to hear a Tulip call'd the King of PRUSSIA, or an Auricula Prince FERDINAND. Why is the Ridicule less to name other Plants Mitchella, or Milleria; Catesbaë, or Collinsonia? The Botanist that can't preserve his Name by better Marks, does not deserve that it should be remember'd.<sup>67</sup>

Hill's criticism here is directed at two groups. First, he dismissively condemns breeders who gave fanciful names such as 'King of Prussia'



**Fig. 3** 'Lepia' from John Hill, *Exotic Botany* (1759). Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

or 'Prince Ferdinand' to cultivars (cultivated varieties). Flowers such as tulips and auriculas were known as florists' flowers and were collected across Britain by members of the middling ranks, especially artisans.<sup>68</sup> As with the gooseberries mentioned earlier, florists characteristically invented overblown names to promote their plants, styling them in ways that gestured either towards exoticism, or to their status as semi-luxuries. Hill attacked this lower-class practice as ridiculous because it attributed excessive associations to the flowers in question.<sup>69</sup>

Hill's second criticism was directed towards botanists who commonly named plants after each other: 'Mitchella', 'Mulleria', 'Catesbaea', 'Collinsonia'. Underpinning Hill's strictures was a critique of the system of honours within which Linnaean botanical scholarship had become enlaced. The customs that defined botanical naming were embedded within conventions in which the decision to name a plant was determined by someone who wielded authority—as a patron and as a scholar—over the wider network. Hill presents this practice as vainglorious and overblown, and thus not dissimilar from the immodest way in which traders named their cultivars. In naming his purported discovery 'Lepia', Hill asserts that he would no longer play the game according to the same rules as his botanical counterparts.

But Hill walked a fine line. He rejected one type of patronage—that emerging within Linnaean botanical networks. But he clung hard onto another—that exerted by aristocratic patrons whose authority and eminence was derived from their social position and not from any claim to scholarly proficiency. The book almost sighs with sycophantic paeans to Northumberland, Hill's own would-be patron, who in Hill's eyes was a 'great Friend and Patron, the Patron of all useful studies'.<sup>70</sup> He also dedicated one of the book's most stunning images, that of the *Poinciana*, to Northumberland (Fig. 4). The specimen had apparently flowered at Northumberland's seat where, according to Hill, the 'stoves' (or hothouses) 'are better proportioned for this Service, than any I have seen', and where Northumberland 'who has been so happy in his Attention to this Science, as to enrich EUROPE with more new Plants than could have been expected in the Time, and in the present State of BOTANY; so much having been attempted every where.'<sup>71</sup>

Hill uses *Exotic Botany* to aggrandize himself in contrast to other Linnaean botanists and, indeed, compared to Linnaeus himself. By presenting himself as a skilled authority, the book prepares the way for the



**Fig. 4** 'Poinciana' from John Hill, *Exotic Botany* (1759). Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

publication of Hill's own taxonomy in *The Vegetable System*. But the book also reaffirms Hill's dependence on aristocratic support for all his scholarly endeavours.

## CONCLUSION

John Hill's *Exotic Botany* was produced for affluent amateur readers who sought books that presented scholarly information in an aesthetically attractive way. Its tasteful presentation and simple explanations of Linnaeus's system respond to values central to polite culture in the mid-eighteenth century.

The book is significant for its novel treatment of natural knowledge. It stands out for its usage of Linnaeus: Hill translated and explained the new sexual system, but simultaneously incorporated a critique of the taxonomy devised by the so-called 'Father of Modern Botany'. *Exotic Botany* is perhaps even more noteworthy, however, for its integration of practical horticultural expertise and botanical knowledge. Its texts are testaments to the mutual benefits to be gained from combining both fields of knowledge. A further distinction is the book's attention to flowers that are aesthetically appealing but that fall outwith the parameters of taxonomic botany. Historians often describe eighteenth-century flower breeding as an activity practised only among the lower classes; namely, the artisan florists and gooseberry-growers discussed earlier.<sup>72</sup> The wealthy readers of *Exotic Botany* also sought out unusual blooms, including those considered to be irrelevant to scientific study.<sup>73</sup> This group of flower appreciators was socially and culturally distinct from the artisan florists and gardeners but, nevertheless, relied on their practical horticultural skill. Hill presents himself as a key intermediary between these different social groups, communicating horticultural findings to his elite readers.<sup>74</sup>

George Rousseau's biography examines how Hill negotiated the competitive commercial world of the press, located in Grub Street. This chapter's closing section entered an arena in which competition was played out on very different terms. Entrepreneurial traders and scholars within the Republic of Letters certainly sought to gain an edge on their rivals, but avoided direct expressions of antagonism at all costs. Like the elite nurserymen, Hill refrained from engaging in directly competitive behaviour and sought distinction, instead, through his contributions to scholarship, and through courting aristocratic patronage.

## NOTES

1. Rousseau (2012), 16–17.
2. In 1758–1759, Hill published at least one herbal or botanical book per month. Rousseau describes these as ‘potboilers’. Rousseau (2012), 242.
3. As in *The Vegetable System*, Hill uses vernacular English versions of Linnaean binomials for most of the plants in *Exotic Botany*. The footnotes give Latin names devised by botanists such as Linnaeus and Tournefort.
4. For more on how Hill used publication, especially the press, to construct his medical authority, see Rousseau (1998), 182–183.
5. On eighteenth-century botany, start with: Jardine et al. (1996); Drayton (2000); Spary (2000). On botanical amateurs, see Easterby-Smith (2013).
6. The word ‘horticulture’ has existed in English since the late seventeenth century, but acquired explicitly scientific connotations over the course of the eighteenth century. Lustig (1997), 1–2.
7. The Horticultural Society of London became the Royal Horticultural Society in 1861.
8. ‘Science, n.’. *OED Online*. December 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/172672> (accessed 12 January 2016); ‘art, n.1’. *OED Online*. December 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/11125> (accessed 12 January 2016).
9. The precise timing when ‘natural philosophy’ was separated into discreet sciences is the subject of historiographical debate. Start with Porter (2003), 14–15; Gascoigne (2003), 285–304; Yeo (1991), 24–49, esp. 43–44.
10. On the social divisions within eighteenth-century British society, and especially the reach of polite culture into the middling ranks, start with French (2000), 277–293; Klein (2012), 27–51.
11. Whitaker (1996), 75. On polite science, start with Walters (1997), 121–154; Shapin (1991), 279–327; Porter (1981), 1–18.
12. Chesterfield to his son, 12 September 1749, quoted in Shapin (2003), 172.
13. These figures are from archival research I have undertaken for my book, *Cultivating Commerce*, Chap. 1. The figures improve on those given in Harvey (1973).
14. On the expanding number of gardens in and around eighteenth-century London, start with Longstaffe-Gowan (2001); Laird (1999).
15. Pehr Kalm, ‘Small yards to each house’, 25 June 1748, in Kalm (1892), 85.

16. Easterby-Smith, *Cultivating Commerce*, Chaps. 1 and 3.
17. On the eighteenth-century British taste for Chinoiserie, start with Sloboda (2014), Chap. 4; Porter (2010).
18. *LPH*, 104, 105, 108, 113, 115.
19. *LPH*, 104, 113.
20. Rousseau (2012), 271. The Earl of Northumberland was granted a dukedom by King George III in 1766, and the dedication in the second edition of *Exotic Botany* (1772) accordingly addresses Northumberland as a Duke. For Northumberland's meteoric rise to political prominence, and on his relationship with Bute, see Cannon (2004).
21. Hill, *Exotic Botany* [EB], 2.
22. EB, 9.
23. EB, 18.
24. Stafleu (1971); Koerner (1999).
25. Rousseau, *Hill*, 216–217.
26. Hill (1756), 1.
27. EB, 20.
28. EB, 15.
29. EB, 18.
30. EB, 15.
31. Spary (2004); Wragge-Morley (2016); Easterby-Smith (2013).
32. EB, introduction.
33. EB, 8.
34. EB, 21.
35. EB, 17.
36. EB, introduction.
37. Meyerowitz et al. (1989), 209–210.
38. The rejection of double flowers was also founded on class-based assumptions: the art of breeding fanciful ornamental flowers was known as 'floristry', and was practiced by artisans. George (2007), 156–165.
39. EB, 2.
40. EB, 2.
41. Easterby-Smith (2013).
42. EB, introduction.
43. EB, 16, 17, 21, 28.
44. Erik Pontoppidan (1698–1764) was bishop of Bergen from 1747. His Linnaean *Natural History of Norway* was published in the early 1750s. Bregnsbo (2002); EB, 8.
45. EB, 13.
46. EB, 8.

47. EB, introduction.
48. On the formation of botanical exchange networks in the eighteenth century, see Spary (2000), Chap. 2.
49. EB, 28.
50. EB, 20.
51. EB, 6.
52. For more on how naturalists negotiated class differences, see Secord (1994a): 383–408.
53. EB, 29.
54. EB, 5. Lee is also credited as the cultivator of the Crimson Hibiscus on p. 24.
55. On James Lee, see Willson (1961); Jackson, (2004); Easterby-Smith, *Cultivating Commerce*, Chaps. 1 and 2.
56. Lee (1760).
57. Easterby-Smith, *Cultivating Commerce*, 59–61, 99–102.
58. For the development of commercial nursery gardens, see Thick (1998); Coulton (2005); Harvey (1974).
59. On ‘hybrid expertise’, see Klein and Spary (2010).
60. Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society* (1667), quoted in Drayton (2000), 36.
61. Coulton (2005), 179–180. Richard Bradley had been elected FRS in 1712. Egerton (2005).
62. On Peter Collinson, see Swem (1949). On the rising social positions of head gardeners, see Musgrave (2007).
63. Easterby-Smith, *Cultivating Commerce*, 63–76.
64. Maddox (1780), 115–118; Secord (1994b), 276, 285.
65. Easterby-Smith (2013), 535–537. Natural history traders, quack doctors and other medical practitioners used similar promotional techniques. See Dietz and Nutz (2005), 64–65; Barry (1987), 29, 31, 33–34.
66. EB, 29. ‘Lepia’ (*Zinnia* L.) means ‘fish scales’ in Modern and Ancient Greek. I am grateful to Dr Konstantinos Zafeiris for assistance with translating the word and checking its etymology. See also *LPH*, 76, 78.
67. EB, 29.
68. George (2007), 156–165.
69. Linnaeus also expressed the same critique. See George (2007), 161.
70. EB, 5.
71. EB, 16.
72. George (2007), 156–165.
73. Easterby-Smith (2013).
74. For more on the problems of communicating botanical knowledge between low-ranking gardeners and florists and socially elite botanists, see Gilmartin (2015) 43–45.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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