

*Dramatic Transition***A Faustus for the Theatres**

In the winter of 1723, the best-known transitions were those of the pantomime. Two versions of *Harlequin Doctor Faustus*, one at Lincoln's Inn Fields and one at Drury Lane, had 'met with such prodigious success' that 'there are scarce any in the Country, especially young People, who have had but a bare mention of it, that do not long as much for the Sight of the Doctor, as a French Head, or a new Suit of Cloaths'.<sup>1</sup> Those who did attend a performance at Drury Lane would see the doctor enter, studying his infernal contract 'with the greatest Inquietude' but – 'after several Pauses, and Shews of Anxiety' – eventually signing it 'with Blood drawn from his Finger by a Pin which he finds on the Ground' (p. 1).<sup>2</sup>

Lightning and Thunder immediately succeed, and *Mephostophilus*, a Daemon, flies down upon a Dragon, which throws from its Mouth and Nostrils Flames of Fire. He alights, receives the Contract from the Doctor, and another Daemon arises, takes it from him, and sinks with it. The Doctor earnestly endeavours to get clear of the Fiend, but he soon stops his Flight, and by a caressing Behaviour quickly dissipates the gloomy Consternation that he painfully labour'd under; and now the Doctor, fill'd with unusual Gladness by every Action, shews his rising Joy. (pp. 1–2)

The anonymous author of this *Exact Description* here presents the spectacular opening dumb show of the pantomime (for few had speaking parts) as a series of transitions. Faustus moves from 'Inquietude' to terror to 'unusual Gladness' and 'rising Joy'. Those transitions structure a series of dynamically iconic moments that veer between the minutiae of a mimed pinprick to the descent of Mephistopheles upon a dragon. While such a sequence was particularly striking, other pantomimes also offered similar opportunities for transition. John Weaver's *The Loves of Mars and Venus* (1717) has, for example, Vulcan expressing 'his Admiration, Jealousie;

Anger; and Despite' in a dance with the goddess of love, while she 'shews Neglect; Coquetry; Contempt; and Disdain'.<sup>3</sup> Such traces of transition are significant because, as Darryl Domingo has argued, 'pantomime and poetics came to share a critical vocabulary' in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> This chapter builds upon Domingo's observation to examine the 'shared vocabulary' of transition specifically, demonstrating how Aaron Hill attempted to purify this feature of the pantomime and so crystallised a set of aesthetic norms around transition whose influence can be traced throughout the 1700s. Yet for all Hill's efforts, the debt that his approach to drama owes to Harlequin can never be quite erased, and certain writers remained ready to find the lowbrow spectacle of pantomimic surprise in the artful transitions of a tragic actor.

The development of dramatic transition must begin with the recognition of the effectiveness of pantomime, and the *Faustus* entertainments of the early 1720s are the most striking examples of the form's appeal. John Thurmond's production, with its fire-breathing dragon, was so successful that it soon inspired a rival version of the same story from Lewis Theobald and John Rich at Lincoln's Inn Fields. This pantomime also yokes extremes of emotion: an infernal spirit tempts *Faustus*, played by Rich himself, into signing his contract by summoning the spirit of Helen of Troy, yet the doctor's love-struck gaze turns with a 'start' into surprise and disappointment when she and the demon both vanish (p. 25). Later, the doctor uses his new powers to play tricks on others: his servant 'with the utmost Shew of Pleasure' prepares to drink a glass of his master's wine, only 'to his unspeakable Terror and Surprize, the Bottle flies out of his Hand, and the Wine vanishes in a Flash of Fire'. His joy has become 'the greatest Dread and Perplexity', and the slapstick comedy of the moment turns on this transition (pp. 28–29).

Rich and Theobald's *The Necromancer, or Harlequin Doctor Faustus* surpassed Thurmond's entertainment to become one of the most frequently performed works of the eighteenth century, with over 300 recorded performances between 1723 and Rich's retirement thirty years later.<sup>5</sup> Like all pantomimes, the looseness of the form allowed for considerable variation between each staging, with the addition or subtraction of episodes to cater for new fashions or scenic capabilities.<sup>6</sup> Such popular and variable entertainments brought pantomime to the centre of English theatrical culture.<sup>7</sup> For the theatre aficionado Aaron Hill and many others, such success was not a welcome development. Hill wrote sarcastically, in the seventy-seventh issue of his *Plain Dealer* periodical, of having found a 'new, and unbroken Mine, of Theatrical Treasure!' in an obscure

German tome, which he is certain will work in ‘the Contention of our Rival Stages’ as ‘the never-to-be-forgotten, the Triumphant *FAUSTUS HIMSELF* was of Happy *High German* Original!’<sup>8</sup> Having sketched out a parodic plotline about a peasant raised ‘*among Beasts*’, then tamed by a ‘Dwarf’ to perform acrobatic impersonations of squirrels, cats, and apes, Hill concludes with a dark vision of the future pantomimes such a tale will spawn.

By the second Week, after *Christmas*, we shall see a Dozen or two, of Bull-Dogs round the Tail of *Shepherd*, on *Drury-Lane-Stage*, without being able to *bite him*, while he *curvets* and *barks* with his *Back up*, and wheels safe, in *their Center*; — And *Mr. LUN*, at the other House, crawling up the Edge of one of his Scenes, and *sticking to the Roof*, like a *Spider* over the Heads of a *shouting Pit!* where he will *spin* himself into their good Graces, ’till their Necks are half broke, with the *Sublimity* of their Entertainment!<sup>9</sup>

This image of Rich (as ‘*Mr. LUN*’) turning himself into a spider and breaking the necks of his fascinated audience is perhaps the strongest but by no means the only attack made by Hill on pantomime. Having worked briefly as a manager himself at Drury Lane (1709–10) and the Haymarket (1710–11), Hill would have known how attractive a popular pantomime must have been to the perpetually cash-strapped theatres, but his writings testify to his belief that repeated staging of such entertainments came at a high cultural price.<sup>10</sup> Numerous articles in *The Prompter*, a periodical Hill produced with William Pople, take up this argument. A letter from ‘Verax’ in issue thirteen reported that the sender had saved a ‘poor, lean, ragged Phantom’ by the name of ‘*Common Sense*’ and heard her lament her departure from a stage where ‘Pantomime *introduced her constant Attendants*, Absurdity, Noise, Nonsense, and Puppet-Show’.<sup>11</sup> On 13 December 1734, Hill wrote of a recent visit to the theatre as though he were entering the wreck of English civilisation.

METHOUGHT, I found myself amidst the *Ruins of Palmyra, in the Desert*; in a solemn, pompous VOID; with here and there, a *broken Column*, an unburied *Pediment*, or tottering *Arch*, in Prospect; to remind me, that, tho’ over-run with *Weeds*, and nested-in, by *Insects*, This Empty Scene of Desolation, Horrid, as it now appear’d, had, *heretofore*, been grac’d with *Majesty*, and envied for its *Elegance*.<sup>12</sup>

This apocalyptic vision is all too easy to interpret. Hill had begun his article with the observation that ‘IN a Nation, which is declining to its *Period* [. . .] *There*, the STAGE, will be the first, to *feel*, and *manifest*, the Infection.’ Pantomime (and Hill’s other frequent target, Italian opera) were the

symptoms of a broader social and cultural malaise. In a letter to David Mallet in 1733, Hill spoke of how, given the recent programming choices of theatre managers, 'our *minds*, are like *sick men's stomachs*, too weak, to digest what is not minced and put into our *mouths*, by those, whose *taste* must prescribe for us'.<sup>13</sup>

The theatre had sold itself to the devil: making money from spectacular pantomimes at the expense of the nation's spirit. As Ned Ward put it in *The Dancing Devils* (1724), works like the Faustus entertainments were 'Fit only for the Approbation | Of Mortals in the lowest Station'.<sup>14</sup> Yet Hill was not without hope. He wrote to James Thompson on 5 September 1735 and wondered whether a certain way of acting and scriptwriting, one as full of surprises as a pantomime, might not reverse the decline of the English stage.

I know, indeed too well, that nothing *moral* or *instructive*, is expected or desir'd, by the modish frequenters of a Theatre; But is it therefore, impossible, they should be *surpriz'd into* correction? — The *passions* are the *springs* of the *heart*; and when powerfully struck out by the *writer*, and imprinted as strongly, by the *actor*, in their *representation*, can *force* their way over the *will*. (Hill, *Works*, II, p. 127)

The hope that Hill expresses here is by no means particular to him. Nearly forty years earlier, in the wake of Jeremy Collier's *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698), John Dennis and Charles Gildon, among many others, had argued that, through the performance of the passions, the stage could educate and improve the nation.<sup>15</sup> Yet Hill will be my focus in this chapter because, of all those writing about the stage in the first half of the eighteenth century and before, none provide so wide-ranging an example of thinking about the theatre. In his periodicals (both *The Plain Dealer* and *The Prompter*), his poetry, and his private letters, Hill considers almost every aspect of the theatre, from its current deplorable state to its potential for redemption and from the details of a particular performance to the specific techniques an actor would need to master in order to perform. Of course, as Christine Gerrard has shown, Hill's extraordinary career stretched far beyond the theatre too, and Brean Hammond has gone as far as calling this man 'the cultural glue that held the age together'.<sup>16</sup> By focusing only on Hill's writing about the theatre, I do not wish to deny his status as 'cultural glue'; rather, I consider Hill's remarkable breadth of interests as one of the reasons why his writing about acting was so comprehensive. Hill was alive to many, indeed most, of the intellectual movements of his day, and he found in the theatre an arena

where lots of them met. It is striking, for instance, that while his periodical *The Prompter* began as a venue for general social commentary (able to offer prompts to ‘every Performer, from the Peasant to the Prince, from the Milk-maid to her Majesty’), its coverage of attempted theatre reform in 1735 swiftly led the periodical to focus directly on the English stage as a microcosm of the nation.<sup>17</sup>

Hill’s letter to Thompson, dreaming of a style of acting that would surprise an audience ‘into correction’, which is to say, into morally correct behaviour, in fact recapitulated an idea that had already surfaced earlier that year in *The Prompter*, as part of the publication’s new focus on theatrical matters. When writing publicly, however, Hill had made the striking choice to employ terms that betrayed his vision’s debt to the very pantomimes attacked elsewhere in its run as the scourge of English cultural life.<sup>18</sup> In an issue that observed the poor quality of many contemporary actors (and the social good that was thereby lost), Hill sketched a culturally redemptive art of acting, which, through spectacular performance of the passions, would make the imagination into a new, and better, ‘FAUSTUS for the *Theatres*’.<sup>19</sup> Hill reasoned that ‘THE whole, that is needful in order to impress any Passion on the *Look*, is first, to *CONCEIVE* it, by a strong, and intent *Imagination*’. A performer then had only to ‘recollect some *Idea of SORROW*’ and ‘his *EYE* will, in a Moment, catch the *Dimness of Melancholy*: his *Muscles* will *relax* into *Languor*; and his whole *Frame of Body* sympathetically *unbend* itself, into a *Remiss*, and *inanimate, Lassitude*’. Thus transformed by the exercise of his mind, ‘let him attempt to *speak HAUGHTILY*; and He will find it *impossible*. – Let the *Sense* of the Words be the rashest, and most violent, *ANGER*, yet, the *Tone* of his *Voice* shall *sound nothing but Tenderness*’. A transition into anger would instead require a new intellectual effort, ‘conceiving some *idea of Anger*’ to ‘inflare his *Eye* into Earnestness, and *new knit*, and *brace up* his *Fibres*, into an *Impatience*, adapted to *Violence*’. The spectacle thus produced, the assumption of sorrow and the transition from sorrow to anger, is as compelling as anything in the pantomime.

All, recovering from the *LANGUID*, and carrying Marks of the *Impetuous*, and the *Terrible*, flash a *moving PROPRIETY*, from the *Actor*, to the *Audience*, that *communicating* immediately, the *Sensation* it *expresses*, chains and rivets, our *Attention*, to the *Passions we are mov’d by*. *THUS*, the happiest Qualification, which a *Player* shou’d desire to be Master of, is a *Plastic Imagination*. – This alone is a *FAUSTUS* for the *Theatres*: and conjures up *all Changes* in a Moment.<sup>20</sup>

The 'FAUSTUS' of this paragraph is no Harlequin, but rather the trained power of the actor's mind, which, as it acts, stirs the performer's passions into an emotional spectacle as capable of holding audience attention as any of Rich's or Thurmond's antics. Attention, Hill knew, was key: his letters record a belief that, in drama, 'attention [...] ought, with all possible *art*, to be kept *fixed*, by the author' (II, p. 125), and it is such dangerously rapt absorption that his *Plain Dealer* article targets when it imagines Rich half-breaking theatregoers' necks as they try to follow his spidery movements. Once the audience's attention has been captured, then the theatre can, as Hill wrote to Thompson, attempt to surprise its clients into correction, letting the passions, or '*springs of the heart*', 'force their way over the *will*'.

Hill's writing combines references to the pantomime with language that makes performers and their publics seem like machines: their passions are '*springs of the heart*', and a performance 'chains and rivets' consciousness as actors' muscles '*relax*', their frames '*unbend*', and their minds '*new knit and brace up*' the nervous fibres of their bodies. Joseph Roach considers such language as evidence of Hill's debt to Cartesian physiology, especially its understanding of the body as a machine that operated 'under the mind's direction with high efficiency and in a predictable manner'.<sup>21</sup> Hill himself writes, for example, of the '*mechanic [...] NECESSITY*' that ensures your 'Voice shall *sound nothing but Tenderness*' when you '*recollect some Idea of SORROW*'.<sup>22</sup> In some respects, Hill's combination of Cartesian thought and pantomime practice is an easy one to make, since Harlequin's adventures also exploited both the machinery of the theatre and the Cartesian machinery of the performer's body. The *Faustus* entertainments make demands of trapdoors and of trapezoid muscles, of sliding flats and of swift reactions; although we now separate such mechanical and organic processes, such a distinction, as Roach argues elsewhere, was nowhere near so firm 300 years ago, before Romanticism and Darwin.<sup>23</sup>

It is the proximity between Cartesian understandings of the body and pantomime's practical reliance on the material affordances of Drury Lane and Covent Garden that helps to support Hill's dreams of a new *Faustus* for the theatre to recapture audience attention. John O'Brien introduces another key element when he describes such dreams as an effort to imagine 'how the power of *transformation* that had been thematized as an external force in the *Faustus* pantomimes of the 1720s could be internalized' (emphasis mine).<sup>24</sup> In the *Faustus* pantomimes alone, a salesman transforms into a woman, Harlequin morphs into a bear, and the dead return to

life. Other transformations, of humans into things and of one object into another, were common, and they helped pantomimes exercise what one reviewer called ‘an enchanting fascination that monopolizes the mind to the scene before it’.<sup>25</sup> Such moments of metamorphosis are behind Hill’s own explanation for why an actor’s ‘*Plastic Imagination* [. . .] is a FAUSTUS for the *Theatres*’: because it ‘conjures up *all Changes*, in a Moment’. Of course, the changes that Hill has in mind are not the vulgar surprises of the polymorphous Harlequin but those described earlier in his article, the changes from one passion to another, the mental work required to cross Cartesian categories and go from the ‘passive Position of *Features*, and *Nerves*’ found in ‘SORROW’ to the active power of ‘*Anger*’ convincingly. Although the process is still a mechanical one, the agent here is the imagination, which Hill calls ‘*Plastic*’, in Samuel Johnson’s sense of the word as ‘having the power to give form’ – the power, in other words, to reshape the body in the image of a passion.<sup>26</sup>

Quite how extensive that power is, though, only appears in the continuation of Hill’s article.

THUS, the happiest Qualification which a *Player* shou’d desire to be Master of, is a *Plastic Imagination*. – This alone is a FAUSTUS for the *Theatres*: and conjures up *all Changes*, in a Moment. – In one Part of a *Tragic Speech*, the conscious Distress of an Actor’s Condition stamping *Humility* and *Dejection*, on his FANCY, strait, His *Look* receives the Impression, and communicates Affliction to his *Air*, and his *Utterance*. – Anon, in the same Speech, perhaps the Poet has thrown in a Ray or two, of HOPE: At This, the Actor’s *Eye* shou’d suddenly *take Fire*: and invigorate with a *Glow of Liveliness*, both the *Action*, and the *Accent*: till, a *Third* and *Fourth* Variety appearing, He stops short, upon *pensive* PAUSES, and makes *Transitions*, (as the Meanings *vary*) into *Jealousy*, *Scorn*, *Fury*, *Penitence*, *Revenge* or *Tenderness*! All, *kindled* at the *Eye*, by the Ductility of a *Flexible Fancy*, and APPROPRIATING *Voice* and *Gesture*, to the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*.<sup>27</sup>

As before, Hill describes a change of passion. This time, however, the emphasis falls not so much upon the mechanical process by which the performer goes about ‘stamping *Humility* and *Dejection*, on his FANCY’ but rather on how such a process brings the author’s script to life through a sequence of theatrical metamorphoses. Indeed, no sooner has the actor mastered one passion than Hill hypothesises that he may be required to launch into another, shifting from ‘*Dejection*’ to its polar opposite, ‘HOPE’. Accordingly, ‘the Actor’s *Eye* shou’d suddenly *take Fire*’, with the speed of this change bringing a ‘*Glow of Liveliness*’. This is not, however, the end of



the process, and the actor, Hill makes clear, will continue to perform his Cartesian conjuring, as 'a *Third* and *Fourth* Variety' appear and he, like Proteus, 'makes *Transitions*, (as the Meanings vary) into *Jealousy*, *Scorn*, *Fury*, *Penitence*, *Revenge* or *Tenderness*!

When Faustus came to Drury Lane in the winter of 1722–23, he showed theatregoers the power of pantomime to create enthralling popular spectacles. Some of those in the audience, however, found the price of such performances to be too high. Aaron Hill – a man with interests in many parts of eighteenth-century society – saw in Harlequin's triumph nothing less than the debasement of English culture and said so, loudly and frequently, in his periodicals and letters. Yet Hill also saw an opportunity. The actor's imagination could supplant the tricks of the pantomime and become a new, but equally attractive, Faustus for the theatres. This was not as radical a move as it may now seem. In accordance with Cartesian physiognomy, the imagination of the actor would operate on the performer's body with the same mechanical precision as the stage technology that Harlequin's magic relied on. Such operations would transform the actor before the eyes of the audience: not from man to woman or dead to living (as in the work of Rich, Theobald, and Thurmond) but from jealous to scornful, furious to penitent, and enraged to tender. These emotional transformations, called transitions and occurring either 'suddenly' or in '*pensive* PAUSES', promised to redeem the English stage, supplanting the pantomime Faustus of 1723 with a sorcery of feeling, exercised by the actor's plastic imagination and capable of such affective magic as would reinvigorate tragic speech and surprise a stultified audience into correction.

### **The Very Instant of the Changing Passion**

All, *kindled* at the *Eye*, by the Ductility of a *Flexible Fancy*, and APPROPRIATING *Voice* and *Gesture*, to the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*.<sup>28</sup>

This sentence recapitulates the process of performance described in the rest of *Prompter* 66. Referring back to the actor's '*Transitions*', it reminds us how such physical transformation owes its genesis to the protean powers of the imagination, or '*Flexible Fancy*'. On top of this, however, Hill is also searching here for a way of understanding why this type of performance would fascinate. His formulation of what the actor is aiming for, the fit of his performance to 'the very *Instant* of



the *changing Passion*, is his attempt to capture the peculiar tensions of a style of acting that relies on emotional transformation for stage effect. On one hand, the kind of performance Hill describes places great emphasis on the discrete and forceful rendition of a passion as it appears in ‘the very *Instant*’ (when hope replaces dejection or joy eclipses anger). On the other hand, however, the force of that iconic moment and its ability to engage an audience for any duration is predicated on the sense that no passion is simple or permanent but is instead dynamic: one emotional transformation will succeed another, each influences our understanding of those around it, and even a single passion is a complex and unstable entity. The passion, in Hill’s words, is thus always ‘*changing*’. By writing of ‘the very *Instant of the changing Passion*’, Hill seeks to describe a multidimensional union of arresting moment and temporal flow, forceful impression, and vivid instability. This productive tension constitutes the motor of compelling spectacle, and so what actors and authors must aim for. To achieve these ends, the combination of the iconic and dynamic, they require not just the true Faustus of imagination but rigorous analysis of the ebb and flow of emotion within a text.

Hill himself was aware of this. As early as the third issue of *The Prompter*, he attacks Colley Cibber for his inability to render ‘the rapid, ungovernable Impetuosity, of a *Hotspur*’, the ‘sanguinary, and disdainful, Subtleties’ of Richard III, and even, at the other end of the spectrum, ‘the dignified Inflexibility of a *Cato*’.<sup>29</sup> In short, Cibber is but one more proof that ‘It is a Prodigy to see an Actor, *General, Plastick, and unspicicate*’: he, like so many others, cannot shape his mind and body to follow the emotional nuance of his role (unless, as Hill points out, Cibber was playing a fop).<sup>30</sup> Hill, in later issues of his periodical, gives examples of such nuances, displaying remarkable sensitivity to the text in order to do so. In issue 103, Hill offers a comparison of Tamerlane and Bajazet, with attention to how each part should be performed. Tamerlane, for example, contains as much ‘Fire’ as Bajazet, but ‘That of *Tamerlane shines, inclos’d, and defended*’.<sup>31</sup> To prove his point, Hill offers several close readings.

“I WARN thee, to take HEED. ————— I am

a MAN:

“And have the Frailties, common to Man’s Nature.

“The fiery Seeds of WRATH are in my TEMPER:

“And may be blown, up so FIERCE a BLAZE,

“As Wisdom CANNOT RULE.

COU'D it have been *possible*, in plainer Words, to shew the *Struggles*, the *Restraints*, the active labour'd *Glowings*, of a *suppress'd Indignation*, painfully *withheld* by Recollection?<sup>32</sup>

Much of the work of Hill's analysis here is done in the body of the quotation, where small capitals, italics, and a dash make visible what he calls 'the active labour'd *Glowings*' of Tamerlane's mind. These markings are typical of Hill's quotation practice (and, in places, of his prose style too) and are worth considering in relation to recent work on the history of typographical markings. Dashes, in particular, have been analysed by Anne Toner as one of a group of what she calls 'ellipsis marks'.<sup>33</sup> Although she does not mention Hill in her study, his insertion of a dash at this point illustrates what Toner observes to be a crucial element of such a mark: that it 'in its essence yields to the performance of others'.<sup>34</sup> Hill's addition of a long dash to the original text of Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane* (1701) opens it up, revealing a place where the author's writing will yield to the actor's art. As Toner puts it elsewhere, such 'Ellipsis indicates to varying degrees, the submission of the text to external definition', and Hill's writing here carries out such a process on the behalf of the performer.<sup>35</sup> Of course, the dash is just one tool in Hill's arsenal of typographical techniques, whose usage aims to mark everything that a printed script elides but that the apprentice performer needs. What Toner's writing shows so well is that Hill's quotation practices are double-edged: on one hand, they illuminate the nuances that performance can give to written speech; on the other, they are – as a combination of capitals, italics, and dashes – more prescriptive than a single ellipsis mark, forcing the script into a carefully defined, submissive position.

Having thus worked over Tamerlane's speech, Hill goes on to point out the consequence of its newly visible pauses and emphases for the performer: 'shall an *Actor* be permitted to suppose, He *reaches This*, by smooth, untouched *Indolence?* the round, and easy *Oiliness*, of Utterance without *Mark*, or *Meaning?*'<sup>36</sup> In other words, the stage rendition of this passage must mark out the contours of its suppressed intense emotions with the same clarity as Hill's typographical innovation has done upon the page. Five further examples of Tamerlane's fire are then given before Hill clinches his argument with one final ingenious example.

HEAR him, when he *releases* the *Turk*, in Compliance with the Prayer of *Arpasia*.

"Sultan,—*be SAFE*-----REASON RESUMES *her Empire*

"*And I am, COOL, AGAIN.*

AND, here, *I think*, we may *Sum up the Evidence*. —Since *Reason* cou'd NOT RESUME, an Empire, which she has NOT LOST: nor cou'd *Tamerlane*,

with any propriety, have been said to *grow* COOL, AGAIN, unless He had been WARM in what forewent it.<sup>37</sup>

Hill's argument here demonstrates his attention not just to the particular moment of a passion but to the way such moments are part of a larger pattern of feeling. He argues for the intensity of Tamerlane's rage from the fact that it is retrospectively announced by Tamerlane himself. Such a textual clue amounts to a specific kind of implicit stage direction. However, rather than implicitly requiring a certain action, these directions are instead signals to the actor that they must have previously generated and exhibited a specific passion. Such directions can obviously appear in more than retrospective forms, and sometimes, as in Hill's first example, even turn on the name of the passion: Tamerlane experiences 'WRATH' even as he descants on it. The implicit signal for the actor to do the same is rendered explicit by Hill's commentary and typographical modification, both of which are proof of his sensitivity to this dimension of a playtext.

The theory and close textual analysis found scattered throughout *The Prompter* comes together in Hill's unfinished *Essay on Acting*. The work begins, for example, with an updated version of a method first published in *Prompter* 118.

1stly, THE imagination must conceive a *strong idea* of the passion.

2ndly, BUT that idea cannot *strongly* be conceived, without impressing its own form upon the muscles of the *face*.

3rdly, NOR *can* the look be muscularly stamp'd without communicating, instantly, the same impression, to the muscles of the *body*.

4thly, THE muscles of the body, (brac'd, or slack, as the idea was an active or a passive one) must, in their natural, and not to be avoided consequence, by impelling or retarding the flow of the animal spirits, transmit their own conceiv'd sensation, to the sound of the *voice*, and to the disposition of the *gesture*. (iv, p. 356)

The core of the *Essay*, however, is constituted by Hill's attempts to address two problems with this process. Lacking space in *Prompter* 118, he could only name them as 'two formidable Difficulties' and leave them to his *Essay*.

1st. – How, (in Every Part) to KNOW the Passions, rightly; and *distinguish* them, from One another.

2dly, – By what Means (the Passion once *distinguish'd*) to assume its active *Image*, and impress it on the *Imagination*?<sup>38</sup>

It is above all the question of how to distinguish between the passions that runs through the entirety of Hill's treatise. The second difficulty, that of

creating the iconic and dynamic combination of an 'active *Image*', is treated less directly, partly because the text is unfinished and partly because Hill maintains his faith in the infallibility of the Cartesian mechanisms for creating emotion: once a passion is distinguished and the imagination engaged, its uptake and expression is a matter of 'a *mere, and mechanic, NECESSITY; without Perplexity, Study, or Difficulty*'.<sup>39</sup>

Identifying the passions is the crucial first step. Making use of the greater space afforded to him in an essay, Hill starts by informing the reader that 'there are only ten dramatic passions', so-called because they 'can be distinguished by their outward marks, in action' (IV, p. 357). These ten passions – 'Joy, Grief, Fear, Anger, Pity, Scorn, Hatred, Jealousy, Wonder, and Love' – each constitutes the subject of one of the ten chapters of Hill's work.<sup>40</sup> They are also, of course, a structure for understanding all dramatic writing, not least because these passions are like Descartes's 'primary' passions: all other passions, according to Hill, are 'relative to, and but varied degrees' of them (IV, p. 357). This phrase is important, as it indicates to us that Hill does not see these ten 'dramatic passions' as stable monoliths, but rather elements of a dynamic experience (the same kind of experience he called 'the very *Instant of the changing Passion*'). It is striking, for example, that Hill, in his first chapter on 'Joy', is careful to urge the actor to seek out not just the individual passion but those moments where 'the writer had intended any change of passions' (IV, p. 358). The actor should not seek out passions as a static background for a scene or speech, but rather focus on the process by which that emotion rises, evolves in the moment, and departs.

Consider the very first example of a passion in Hill's *Essay*. 'JOY', we are told, 'is the passion, in the following transport of *Torrismond*'.

"Oh heaven! she pities me.  
"And pity, still, fore-runs approaching love;  
"As light'ning does the thunder. – Tune your harps,  
"Ye angels! To that sound: And thou, my heart!  
"Make room – to entertain the flowing joy!  
(IV, pp. 358–59)

Hill's introduction to these verses is carefully phrased. This passage is a 'transport' that joy is 'in': but where exactly, though, is that joy? Does it arrive only at the end, when *Torrismond* himself pronounces the word? This would be confirmed by what appears to be Hill's own modification of the text: neither the exclamation marks nor the dashes here appear in any editions of John Dryden's *The Spanish Friar* (1681), and Hill's final line

carries both, making some implicit emotional direction explicit.<sup>41</sup> Yet the earlier lines do not lack these markers either and must thus be understood to denote how the individual passion of joy is far from uniform, containing within it its own variations in expression, its ebbs and flows, culminating in the final burst at the end of Torrismond's speech.

As this is Hill's first example, he does not explore such variation in detail, contenting himself with observing that the actor must have 'discovered, that the passion, in this place, is *Joy*' (iv, p. 359). Later in the *Essay*, however, such nuances within a passion come under close consideration, and it becomes clear that the work of distinguishing a passion's progress requires considerable skill. In his analysis of anger, Hill declares the existence of '*two modes*' for this passion, both of which he discerns in a speech from Thomas Otway's *The Orphan* (1680), separated here by a dash and an asterisk of Hill's own making.

“— I say, my sister's wrong'd;  
 “*Monima*—*my* sister: born, as high,  
 “And noble, as *Castalio*. —Do her justice,  
 “Or, by the gods! I'll lay a scene of blood,  
 “Shall make this dwelling horrible, to nature.  
 “I'll do't. \* — Hark you, my Lord!  
 “— — Your son — *Castalio* — —.  
 “Take him to your closet, and, there, teach him man-  
 ners. (iv, p. 372)

In a speech that is all 'furious, and intemperate *anger*', the lines prior to Hill's asterisk must be spoken 'with a fierce, vindictive air, and voice high rais'd, insulting, and impatient', while those after 'must, on the contrary, be expressed, by affectation of a slow, smooth'd, inward rancour, by a mutter'd ironical repression of voice' (iv, p. 373). The effect of such variation is to create compelling spectacle, for 'when [. . .] the rage breaks out, again', Hill continues, 'the representation becomes movingly varied, and natural'. Such an effect is no cheap trick, although it is as powerful as anything in a pantomime, for, in all this, as Hill concludes the chapter, 'the voice seems to preserve a kind of musical modulation, even in madness' (iv, p. 373).

Anger is far from the only passion whose nuances Hill explores. He divides jealousy into the '*doubtfully* suspicious' and 'the violence of positive *belief*' (iv, pp. 380–81), the latter of which is 'the utmost pitch, whereto Jealousy (as Jealousy) can by nature extend itself [. . .] For the next step beyond it, is *Anger*' (iv, p. 383). In the next chapter, Hill divides wonder into '*Amazement*' and '*Astonishment*': the former entails an 'involuntary

rigour of intensesness' (IV, p. 384), while in the latter 'the recoil of the animal spirits [...] drive the blood upon the heart with such oppressive redundancy, as [...] almost stagnates the vital progression' (IV, p. 385). All the gradations of jealousy are visible in Othello, while Hamlet's encounter with his father's ghost provides an excellent demonstration of amazement, which Hill finds himself breaking down, once more, into three separate movements: the 'starting spring', 'the shaken understanding', and 'the resolution of recover'd firmness' (IV, p. 386). The moment of the ghost's appearance is revealed, in Hill's *Essay*, as a moment where, at every instant, the passion changes subtly.

It is crucial, then, to distinguish here between the passion and its physical manifestation. As he works through his examples of each of the ten dramatic passions, Hill repeatedly proceeds from an archetype (joy is '*Pride possessed of Triumph*', anger '*Pride provok'd beyond Regard of Caution*') to a particular situation (IV, pp. 357 and 368). As this method is repeated, it becomes clear to the reader that Hill's analysis and textual markers serve to map out the course each speech imposes on the performer's passion. In some lines it should be intense, in others, less so; some phrases are to be hurried, while others are delivered with care. The performer is to summon the passion and then begin his speech, fitting it 'to the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*' as the scene unfolds. Returning to Hill's first chapter, adherence to such a rhythm of preparation and execution is at the core of his advice to whoever acts in Torrismond's transports.

When the actor has discovered, that the passion, in this place, is *Joy*, he must not, upon any account, attempt the utterance of one single word, 'till he has, first, compelled his fancy to conceive an idea of joy. And it would be his natural, tho' most difficult, way, to endeavour the effacement of all note, or image of himself, and forcibly bind down his fancy to suppose, that he is, really, *Torrismond*— (IV, p. 359)

In this paragraph, Hill offers an answer to the second of the difficulties he identified in *Prompter* 118: 'By what Means (the Passion once *distinguish'd*) to assume its active *Image*, and impress it on the *Imagination*?' To awaken the passion, the actor must annihilate the self and identify with the character completely: an effort that then prepares the imagination to take up the 'active *Image*' of the passion, capable of carrying him or her through the twists and turns of a speech. Yet no sooner has Hill offered this solution than he proposes an alternative. A successful performance of a passion may

be achieved 'by annexing, at once, the *look* to the *idea*, in the very instant, while he is bracing his nerves into springiness' (iv, p. 362).<sup>42</sup>

This second method has its limits, however. When Hill presents it, he already warns the reader that it is to be used only by those whose fancy is yet 'to become ductile enough' and so remains 'defective' (iv, pp. 361–62). Later in the treatise, the idea that one could encourage the imagination by pre-emptively adopting the physical expression of an emotion is undermined by Hill's observation of the similarities between passions. There is, he notes, 'no other difference but the turn of an eye, in the expression of *hatred* and *pity*' (since both emotions involve a degree of condescension) (iv, p. 379), and fear shares with grief a 'languor, in look, and in muscles', differing only in 'a starting, apprehensive, and listning [*sic*] alarm' (iv, p. 366). One hardly need imagine how badly wrong a performance could go if scenes of hate replaced scenes of pity, and grief took over from fear. And if the actor is trying to ignite their imagination using physical expression, that expression must be unfailingly precise to avoid such dangerous category errors. The only guarantee of passion is thus the prior establishment of a '*strong idea*', an imaginative creation with the force to hold the actor to the demands of the moment.

Yet this raises a further issue. If the best actors are to have entered into their passion before speaking their lines, then they will do so either quickly or slowly, generating pauses of varying lengths, which have the potential to alter fundamentally the rhythm of a production. Hill writes of such pauses throughout his work. In his description of 'a *Plastic Imagination*' as 'a FAUSTUS for the *Theatres*', he describes how a skilled actor 'stops short, upon *pensive* PAUSES, and makes *Transitions*' into the appropriate passion (which then, as Hill's marked scripts show, has its own internal variations).<sup>43</sup> The use of '*pensive*' here to mean 'meditative' or 'full of thought' is apt, given the *Essay*'s presentation of this moment as that in which the performer's imagination takes fire and the transition is made.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the term also serves to defend the actor, for it casts such pauses not as halting blanks but as moments of captivating emotional activity.

The impact and utility of such pauses are explored further in Hill's treatise. While he observes that such moments provide some physical respite, 'allowing frequent and repeated opportunities for a recovery of [the voice's] wasted strength, in easy and un-noted *Breathings*', he also argues for the spectacular potential of 'such beautiful and pensive pausing places' (iv, p. 368). Because the Cartesian mechanism Hill's actor relies on is the same as that supposedly at work in genuine passions, these moments will 'appear to an audience, but the strong and natural attitudes of



thinking; and the inward agitations of a heart, that is, in truth, disturb'd, and shaken' (IV, p. 368). Unsurprisingly, a number of Hill's letters to actors and actresses thus urge them to make use of such pauses and, in doing so, provide us with further information about what Hill considered to be the most effective rhythms of performance.

Many of these letters were sent with marked scripts, where, one can imagine, Hill offered a handwritten version of the dashes, italics, capitals, and exclamation marks that he employed in his published work. On 8 October 1733, Hill sent, for example, 'the whole part of *Imoinda*' (from Thomas Southerne's 1695 adaptation of *Oroonoko*) to Elizabeth Holliday, telling her that he had 'mark'd, with a star, the properest places for pausing' (I, p. 140). Hill adds that 'the measure of time in a pause, should vary according to the sense', although 'it will, in general, be enough to rest, as long as might suffice, to pronounce such a word as *power*' (I, p. 140). Such a detail suggests a genealogical connection between the pauses described by Hill and modern stagecraft's use of the 'beat', which describes either (in Stanislavskian traditions) the smallest unit of action in a play or (more generally) a brief moment of time. Hill combines the two definitions, suggesting to Holliday that she can effect a change of passions in the time it takes to say the word '*power*'.<sup>45</sup> Hill's choice of measurement indicates the importance of these pauses: they offer the actor a chance to demonstrate their own power to set the tempo of the production and manipulate audience response to the emotional units of the text.

Holliday seems to have got the message. One week after his letter on pauses, Hill wrote again to congratulate her on her use of his markings (I, p. 151), which also included 'a few lines *thus*, under places where the voice is to be strong, high, and emphatical' (I, p. 140). Following on from this success, Hill then sent a marked-up version of the part of Torrismond to another actor, advising him to note the careful placement of pauses: 'First, for the sake of the sense; and next, for a *saving* to the *voice*' (I, p. 154). These are the same points about effect and economy made in the *Essay* and far from the only example of Hill's correspondence anticipating his theoretical writing (a sign, perhaps, of his desire to produce a practical method for professional performers). For instance, a marked script sent to the actor John Roberts turns, as the *Essay* often does,<sup>46</sup> to music, when it promises to show him how 'to quicken and inspirit the solemnity, where necessary, by musical variation, which will flow from a change, with the changing passions' (I, p. 169). At the same

time, as with Holliday, Hill goes into far more detail in his letters than his *Essay* (in its unfinished state) ever does. A long letter, probably sent to James Quin (who came out of retirement to play Othello at Drury Lane in the autumn of 1734),<sup>47</sup> also provides a supplement to Hill's theoretical work, making a specific argument for the validity of extended pauses in many of the Moor's speeches.

[Othello] says nothing, that is not *important*; therefore, *weight* should never be *absent*, in the *tone* that expresses it, no more than in the *look* that accompanies, or in the *action* that imprints it. A particular inference will follow this observation, with respect to *sentences*, where they have any thing strikingly peculiar, which should always be both preceded and closed, by a *pause* of considerable length; to awaken and prepare expectation, and the other to give time for reflection, that, so, the *image* may descend perfect, from the *ear* to the *understanding*. (1, p. 219)

The last sentence of this paragraph connects the experience of actor and spectator and defines the pause as a crucial element in the communication of the play's sentiments. In the first pause, the '*image*' moves from the mind of the actor to their body as they impress an idea upon their imagination and so transition into the appropriate passion and take up an attitude. In the second pause, as the actor closes off the passion, the '*image*' has the time to make the opposite journey in the spectator to that made in the actor, moving from the body to the mind, from the '*ear*' to the '*understanding*'. These are truly '*pensive*' pauses, moments of meditation and reflection that bring performer and public together in an appreciation of the text.

Such pauses thus serve to separate Hill's method from the unthinking spectacle of pantomime. As the actor prepares their passion, readying themselves to conjure with Faustian imagination, they demonstrate a level of intellectual discernment that is far removed from the acrobatics of popular entertainment. The actor must study their text in extreme detail, noting how '*the Meanings vary*' and what passions are unfolding in a moment. The audience, eagerly awaiting the transformative release of emotion through all the variations of an individual line, may be no different from those at a pantomime, delighted by the metamorphosis of a salesman or the intricate dance of Harlequin. Yet, as the spectacle of the tragic passion ends, Hill hoped that something of the '*strong idea*' that drove it may have been passed to them. They now have an otherwise lost opportunity to learn, to exercise both '*ear*' and '*understanding*', and, who knows, maybe even – as Hill wrote to Thompson – '*be surpriz'd into correction*'.

### Thought-Inflated Pauses

In his acting treatise and periodical articles, as well as in his poetry, Aaron Hill elaborated an entire method of acting. Working from a Cartesian understanding of man as a machine driven by spirit, he put the imagination of the actor, the true Faustus for the theatres, at the heart of his work. A performer following Hill's method would have to use their imagination to approach a text with sensitivity, seeking to distinguish each of the passions of their role and, on a microscopic level, the unfolding of each emotion in the course of a speech, fitting their work 'to the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*'. In such performances, transitional pauses, brief or long, played a key role: they gave the actor time to summon in the mind the appropriate passion, using the natural, '*mechanic* [. . .] *NECESSITY*' inherent in every human body, while also building a level of anticipation and interest in an otherwise jaded audience. Spectators could watch the emotion spread through the actor, transforming their body in a way not unrelated to the spectacular metamorphoses of the pantomime. These polymorphous '*pensive PAUSES*' and their transitions could vary in length and, for all their similarity to the tricks of Harlequin, differed in their status as a deeply intellectual process, preparing the actor to exhibit a detailed reading of the passions in their part, a reading Hill maps with dashes, exclamation marks, capitals, and italics. In the course of a performance, the spectator thus had the opportunity to receive, supercharged, the content of the play, to reflect upon it and, potentially, to be corrected by it too. Such an art, both captivating and cerebral, was designed to usurp the place of the lowbrow entertainment that Hill considered the ruin of the English stage, redeeming in the process the theatre as a positive influence over national culture and morals.

Hill's acting method, as I will show in this section, crystallised a set of ideas that, from 1740 onwards, came to dominate the celebration and censure of plays and players. The extent to which they were employed on the stage is, however, much harder to determine. Hill himself had little chance to put them into practice: he moved to Plaistow in 1738 and, hampered by a mix of financial and physical difficulties, found it increasingly difficult to attend the theatre in the last twelve years of his life.<sup>48</sup> However, he did continue to follow theatrical developments closely and apply his own thinking to evaluate new performers. One actor in particular impressed Hill enormously. After seeing this man perform *Macbeth* in 1744, Hill wrote an excited letter to Mallet, applying the terms of his *Essay*, to argue that this performer's 'peculiar talent lies in pensively preparatory

attitudes; whereby, awakening expectation in the audience, he secures and holds fast their attention' (II, p. 35). Soon, Hill would be in touch with the performer himself, praising his '*thought-inflated* pauses' (II, p. 156), offering to annotate Othello for him (II, p. 266), and trying to persuade him to take the leading role in productions of Hill's own plays (II, p. 248). This man was David Garrick, who made his London debut in 1741 and swiftly rose to the heights of his profession, becoming actor-manager of Drury Lane in 1747, a position he would hold until his retirement from the stage in 1776, three years before his death at the age of sixty-one.

For almost the entirety of his career, Garrick was at the heart of British theatre. Much writing about and by this artist focuses on the same concerns that preoccupied Hill. These concerns amount to the question of how best to perform the passions of a play so as to capture the attention of a potentially unruly audience who, as Garrick himself wrote in one of his epilogues, often appeared as 'Crowds of City Folks! – so rude and pressing!' with their 'Horse-Laugh, so hideously distressing!'<sup>49</sup> For Hill, and for many others, it was Garrick's use of the pause – the moment of transition from one passion to another or from one nuance to its neighbour – that was his defining characteristic. Yet these pauses were controversial, and in the division of opinion over Garrick's pauses and attitudes we can discern the complex origins of dramatic transition as an attempt to render the attention-grabbing strategies of the pantomime respectable and morally useful. Those who censured the actor-manager's pauses considered them as pantomimic; those who praised them found them pensive. Through it all, however, the pause is clearly recorded as playing a crucial role in taming a theatre public who, throughout the period, were as liable to hurl fruit and abuse at the stage as they were to burst into applause.

The first night of Samuel Crisp's tragedy *Virginia* (1754) could have gone either way. Richard Cross, the Drury Lane prompter, recorded that 'Mr Carey had his fiddle broke by an apple playing the first Music.'<sup>50</sup> Yet Garrick, at least according to Arthur Murphy's biography of him, produced a performance that left those present enthralled. Its greatest moment was 'Garrick's manner of uttering two words'.

*Claudius*, the iniquitous tool of the Decemvir, claims *Virginia*, as a slave born in his house. He pleads his cause before *Appius* on his tribunal. During that time, Garrick, representing *Virginius*, stood on the opposite side of the scene, next to the stage-door, with his arms folded across his breast, his eyes riveted to the ground, like a mute and lifeless statue. Being told at length that the tyrant is willing to hear him, he continued for some time in the same attitude, his countenance expressing a variety of passions, and the

spectators fixed in ardent gaze. By slow degrees he raised his head; he paused; he turned round in the slowest manner, till his eyes fixed on *Claudius*; he still remained silent, and after looking eagerly at the impostor, he uttered in a low tone of voice, that spoke the fullness of a broken heart, 'Thou traitor!' The whole audience was electrified; they felt the impression, and a thunder of applause testified their delight.<sup>51</sup>

Murphy's account sketches the same pattern of pensive, transitional pause and stunning execution that Hill expounds in his writing. Garrick speaks only when he has achieved 'the fullness of a broken heart', and so fulfils Hill's dictum that the actor avoid the 'utterance of one single word,' till he has, first, compelled his fancy to conceive an idea' of the passion of the scene. In addition to this, Murphy's comparison of *Virginius* to 'a mute and lifeless statue' that Garrick slowly animates owes a debt to the same Cartesian frameworks that Hill himself had employed. While this is not evidence for a direct connection between Murphy and Hill, it does indicate the extent to which both share a common critical vocabulary; one which, however, Murphy then departs from when he captures the effect of the animated Roman with a rather different kind of language. The 'spectators fixed in ardent gaze' are 'electrified'. Rather than the pneumatic action of animal spirits, emotional response now appears to be the result of galvanic forces. The paradigms for performing emotion were shifting.

Murphy's uneasy balancing of possessed statues and electrified audiences also appears in one of Garrick's few surviving comments on his own performance processes. Having been asked by Helferrich Peter Sturz (then secretary to Christian VII of Denmark) to comment on the acting of the French actress *La Clairon* (Claire-Josèphe L'Éris), Garrick wrote him – as Roach has shown – a reply that mixed ancient and modern paradigms of performance. Acting and science are as intertwined here as they are in Hill, but this letter of 1769 places new emphasis on the actor's capacity for feeling.

What shall I say to you my dear Friend about the *Clairon*? Your desecration [*sic*] of her, is as accurate as if you had open'd her alive; she has every thing that Art and a good understanding, with great Natural Spirit can give her – But then I fear (and I only tell you my fears, and open my Soul to You) the Heart has none of those instantaneous feelings, that Life blood, that keen Sensibility, that bursts at once from Genius, and like Electrical fire shoots thro' the Veins, Marrow, Bones and all, of every Spectator. – Mad<sup>m</sup> *Clairon* is so conscious and certain of what she can do, that she never (I believe) had the feelings of the instant come upon her unexpectedly. – but I pronounce that the greatest strokes of Genius, have been unknown to the Actor himself,

'till Circumstances, and the warmth of the Scene has sprung the Mine as it were, as much to his own Surprize, as that of the Audience.<sup>52</sup>

In Roach's analysis, Garrick places new emphasis on the actor's capacity for feeling in two ways: he promotes, first, the vitalist principle that 'Spirit no longer merely works on matter' (as in Descartes) but 'spirit emerges from a particular organization of matter', and, second, he implies that the sensibility of the performer operates 'on a physical plane below conscious thought'.<sup>53</sup> These two factors, the new attention to the vitalistic 'Life Blood' and the actor's unconscious springing of a mine, have no precedent in Hill. Yet, at the same time, Garrick's account of performance might also be said to share a number of larger traits with Hill's own writing: 'Surprize' is as crucial here as it is in Hill's visions of an audience '*surpriz'd into correction*', and Garrick's awareness of the 'feelings of the instant' echoes Hill's own examination of the performer working 'to the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*'.

Hill and Garrick thus draw on different but overlapping discourses about human emotion, and both still tend towards a similar conclusion of arresting emotional expression, of the kind described in Murphy's account of *Virginia's* opening night. Crucial to the effect of that performance was Garrick's use of the pause, a technique not discussed in Garrick's letter to Sturz but much remarked upon by others, including Sturz's compatriot, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, who, with the foreigner's eye for detail, recorded the mix of action and immobility in Garrick's rendition of Hamlet's encounter with the ghost of his father. Hill had also analysed this famous coup de théâtre in his *Essay*, breaking it down into three stages: the 'starting spring', 'the shaken understanding', and 'the resolution of recover'd firmness' (iv, p. 386). Lichtenberg's description provides an account of the first two of Hill's three stages, emphasising how they compel audience attention, freezing an otherwise restless audience 'as though they were painted on the walls of the theatre' ('als wären sie an die Wände des Schauplatzes gemalt') and causing a silence so complete that 'even from the farthest end of the playhouse one could hear a pin drop' ('man könnte am entferntesten Ende des Theaters eine Nadel fallen hören'). Thanks to Lichtenberg, one can argue that Garrick's rendition of this scene was so absorbing because of its ability to exploit, through a rhythmic pattern of action and pause, the nuances of emotion identified by Hill. The appearance of the ghost is the trigger for Garrick to 'start', one of a few technical terms for a sharp ('plötzlich') expression of emotion. In this case, the actor makes use of his entire body and costume to express his shock and fear: his

hat falls to the ground; he staggers across the stage and needs the support of Horatio and Marcellus to stay upright. In this position or attitude a new pause opens up, during which the audience can see (and absorb) the Hillian impression of the idea upon him, even before he speaks, breaking another period of silence, this time at the ‘end of a breath’ and with a tremulous softness (‘nicht mit dem Anfange, sondern mit dem Ende eines Odemzugs und bebender Stimme’) that everyone present would strain to hear.<sup>54</sup> The precision of Lichtenberg’s account offers a glimpse into the subtleties of Garrick’s art while at the same time emphasising how every nuance serves to capture audience attention through a careful balance of transitions: from silent expectation to shock to a frozen terror.<sup>55</sup> By the time Garrick is ready to speak, his breathless voice fits perfectly with his shaken physical state. Hill would have recognised such techniques, although there is no evidence to indicate that his work was known to Lichtenberg, who only visited England and saw Garrick in the 1770s, long after Hill’s death.

The similarities between Hill and Lichtenberg do, however, indicate the extent to which Hill’s writing crystallised a set of critical priorities that would develop in the second half of the eighteenth century, drawing strength from new scientific paradigms (such as vitalism) and the specific talents of those who studied the theatre. Lichtenberg’s detailed descriptions owe something, for example, to his medical training, but he was hardly the only educated theatregoer to echo Hill’s thinking in a detailed account of Garrick’s performance. In 1775, the music theorist Joshua Steele published his *Essay towards Establishing the Melody and Measure of Speech*. Among much else, the work contains Steele’s attempt to record Hamlet’s ‘To be, or not to be’ soliloquy, first, in ‘the stile of a ranting actor’ (Figure 1.1) and then, a few pages on, as performed by Garrick himself (Figure 1.2).<sup>56</sup> Steele’s evaluation of each performance reveals the nuance with which a passion could be acted.

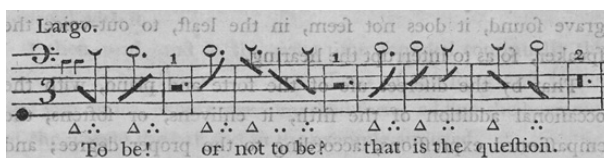


Figure 1.1 Steele’s notation of the ‘To be or not to be’ soliloquy in the style of a ‘ranting actor’ (p. 40). By permission of the British Library (shelfmark RB.23.b.3187).



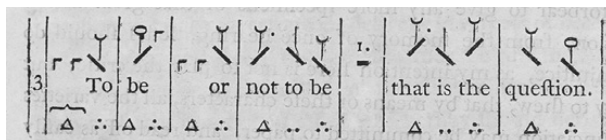


Figure 1.2 Steele's notation of Garrick's rendition of the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy (p. 47). By permission of the British Library (shelfmark RB.23.b.3187).

Steele gives his first, ranting, version a pitch, as it also serves to demonstrate the potential for a bass accompaniment to heighten the effect of speech. The angled bars beneath each crotchet and minim indicate 'Accent' (p. 24), with a curved bar used 'to shew that the sound hangs longer on the first part of the slide than on the last, on account of the vowels' (p. 38). In contrast to this, Garrick's rendition is without pitch or tempo, although Steele continues to use his triangles and dots, which mark 'several degrees of emphasis of heavy ( $\Delta$ ), light ( $\cdot\cdot$ ), and lightest ( $\cdot\cdot\cdot$ )' (p. 24). Peter Holland compares these two passages to demonstrate that Garrick's version is 'about speed', since it reduces the length of almost every syllable.<sup>57</sup> For Holland, this is, however, more than the 'bustle' that characterised Garrick's animated acting style: rather, it shows 'a search for the through-line of the speech, its architecture as important as its momentary effect'.<sup>58</sup> An important aspect of such a search, not examined by Holland, is the use of pauses, revealed with precision in Steele's transcriptions.

Both of Steele's versions begin with a two-beat pause. The next pause, which falls between 'To be' and 'or not to be' is three beats long for both Steele's ranter and Steele's Garrick, but, crucially, the Garrick version differs in its placement of that pause. Rather than having an entire bar of silence, Garrick is recorded as using anacrusis, cutting the monosyllable 'be' short and displacing 'or' into the last beat of the third bar. This echoes the metrical arrangement of the soliloquy's beginning. Steele's other notation marks here indicate that Garrick's 'or' was pronounced lightly, with a falling cadence, as opposed to the 'ranting actor' version, which devotes a whole bar, a rising cadence, and a strong emphasis on the first part of the syllable to it. To put this another way, one might say that Steele's hypothetical ranter discovers a strong transition between 'To be' and 'or not to be'. Garrick, on the other hand, is much more subtle, distinguishing the second half of Hamlet's balanced phrasing with a series of falling cadences after a carefully placed pause.

While the ranter hammers home the antithetical construction of Hamlet's soliloquy, Garrick's off-beat silences and softer sounds oblige his audience to fall silent and pay close attention to the unfolding of Hamlet's passion. Such nuance made Garrick proof, in Steele's view, that 'There is a perfection in the pronunciation of the best speakers' (p. 48).

For Lichtenberg, Murphy, and Steele (not to mention Hill himself), the transitions of the '*pensive* PAUSES' represented an excellent opportunity for evaluating the excellence of Garrick's acting. Yet such pauses were also crucial to those wishing to denigrate Garrick. Thaddeus Fitzpatrick published a pamphlet in 1760, where he claimed to list twenty faults made by the actor in a single performance of *Hamlet*. In every item, Fitzpatrick's dashes mark a horribly misplaced pause.

- 1 Oh that this too too solid—flesh would melt.
- 2 Or that the everlasting had not *fixt*—  
His Canon 'gainst self-slaughter.
- 3 As if increase of appetite had *grown* ——  
By what it fed on.
- 4 I think it was to see——my mother's wedding,
- 5 Their eyes purging——thick amber and plumb-tree gum.
- 6 He would drown——the stage with tears.
- 7 Or e're this,  
I should have fatted——all the region kites.  
With this slave's offal.
- 8 That presently  
They have proclaimed——their malefactions.
- 9 I'll have the players  
Play something like—the murder of my father.
- 10 The play's the thing,  
Wherein I'll catch—the conscience of the king.
- 11 Whether it is nobler in the mind, to *suffer*—  
The stings and arrows, &c.
- 12 And makes us rather bear—— —those ills we have.
- 13 Let not ever  
The soul of Nero enter—— —this firm bosom.
- 14 When church-yards yawn, and hell itself breaths  
out——contagion to the world.
- 15 O such a deed,  
As from the body of contraction plucks——

- 16 The very soul, and sweet religion *makes*——  
A rhapsody of words.
- 17 Proclaim no shame,  
When the *compulsive*—ardour gives the charge.
- 18 Mother, for love of grace,  
Lay not that flattering—unction to your soul.
- 19 It will but skin and film——the ulcerous place.
- 20 Why may not imagination trace——the noble  
Blood of Alexander, &c.<sup>59</sup>

As verbs are separated from their objects and adjectives from their substantives, Garrick appears as a performer incapable of the basic comprehension of a line. Indeed, a number of these examples demonstrate how a misplaced pause could alter the meaning and effect of a line completely. ‘The play’s the thing, | Wherein I’ll catch—’ is a particularly (and perhaps suspiciously) good example of this, as Garrick seems to diagnose his own tendency to work in catches or ‘short intervals of action’.<sup>60</sup> The ninth item in Fitzpatrick’s list, ‘I’ll have the players | Play something like—’, has a similar satiric insinuation.

Fitzpatrick was far from the only critic of Garrick’s pauses. Theophilus Cibber gives the actor’s ‘unnatural Pauses’ a place in his own unflattering portrait of Garrick.

Yet I may not therefore be blind to his studied Tricks, his Over-fondness for extravagant Attitudes, frequent affected Starts, convulsive Twitchings, Jerkings of the Body, sprawling of the Fingers, slapping the Breast and Pockets:——A Set of mechanical Motions in constant Use,—the Caricatures of Gesture, suggested by pert Vivacity,—his pantomimical Manner of acting, every Word in a Sentence; his unnatural Pauses in the Middle of a Sentence;—his forc’d Conceits,—his wilful Neglect of Harmony, even where the round Period of a well express’d noble Sentiment demands a graceful Cadence in the Delivery.<sup>61</sup>

Cibber’s uncharitable prose exploits an uncomfortable association between the English Roscius and Harlequin. This association illuminates some of the consequences of Hill’s own attempt to install the ‘*Plastic Imagination*’ as ‘a FAUSTUS for the *Theatres*’. Garrick, whose acting fulfilled and exceeded Hill’s vision of a great performer, could (like parts of Hill’s theories) seem to owe a dangerous debt to pantomime. The potentially compromising overlap occurred in the way both pantomime and Garrick aimed to capture audience attention and relied, to a greater or lesser extent, on iconic physical transformation to do so. The crucial distinction between

the actor and the Harlequin was the former's intellectual capacity, his ability to analyse his script and express its every emotional nuance. Yet if Garrick (as both Fitzpatrick and Cibber claim) had no such discernment and scattered 'unnatural Pauses' throughout his act, then Garrick lost that which distinguished him from a lowbrow entertainer, becoming either a clown with his 'studied Tricks' or a mindless automaton, reliant on spiritless 'mechanical Motions'. Garrick was himself aware of such a danger and was careful to limit his engagement with pantomime. In a letter to his brother Peter in 1741, he confirmed the rumours that he had played Harlequin at the start of his career while minimising the importance of the experience.

As to playing a Harlequin 'tis quite false – Yates last season was taken very ill & was not able to begin the Entertainment so I put on the Dress & did 2 or three Scenes for him, but Nobody knew it but him & Giffard: I know it has been Said I play'd Harlequin at Covent Garden, but it is quite false.<sup>62</sup>

Beginning and ending with denial, this passage only admits to its author's time in motley as a way of illustrating Garrick's own kindness. It might thus be taken as a miniature version of Garrick's career-long engagement with this form of entertainment. The great actor only used the powers of pantomime for social good, or, as O'Brien puts it, in the wake of Hill's theories and Garrick's labours as actor and manager, the works of Harlequin 'had been co-opted, their physicality and, just as important, their willingness to perform no purpose more important than their audience's sensual gratification, now accepted as itself a socially useful end'.<sup>63</sup>

Of course, Cibber would beg to differ, and it is the shadow of pantomime that allows the study of a performer's pauses to be more than an exercise of praise: an actor could triumph and fail before an audience attentive to the use of transformational silence. In his *Treatise on the Passions* (1747), Samuel Foote, himself an established actor, focused on the transitions Garrick made in his pauses to offer a balanced account of his near contemporary and theatrical rival. At first, the work takes issue with the star's portrayal of Macbeth, arguing that Garrick's shifts between emotions in this role are no more than a claptrap (a moment designed to elicit applause) which appeals to the lowest common denominator. Foote holds that it is because 'The Transition from one Passion to another, by the suddenness of the Contrast, throws a stronger Light on the Execution of the Actor' that those 'drawn in to applaud' are not the 'Judicious' but 'the Groundlings, who are caught more by the Harmony and Power of the Voice than Propriety'.<sup>64</sup> The ease with which applause is won devalues it.

Foote advises that the practice of spectacular transition, no more than a cheap 'Trick', should thus now be discontinued, for 'We all now know how the Shilling came under the Candlestick'.<sup>65</sup> Yet later in the same volume, even this critique of Garrick's acting eventually gives way to grudging praise of his ability to marshal emotion. In Lear's 'Recovery from Madness, and Recollection of *Cordelia*', 'The Passions of Joy, Tenderness, Grief and Shame are blended together in so masterly a Manner, that the Imitation would do Honour to the Pencil of a *Rubens*, or an *Angelo*'.<sup>66</sup>

Foote's artistic references here offer insight into a further ramification of eighteenth-century thinking about performance. If the actor is successful in demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the text, pausing and deploying transitions between the passions at moments that bring the character to life, then the actor is more than a servant to the dramatist: they are an artist, 'a *Rubens*, or an *Angelo*', personally responsible for the production of a work of art, albeit one that takes ephemeral form on the body rather than in a more lasting medium. Such an implication appears in other acting treatises of the mid eighteenth century. *The Actor*, written by John Hill (no relation to Aaron), began as a translation of Rémond de Sainte-Albine's 1747 work, *Le Comédien*, suitably modified to fit an English context.<sup>67</sup> In the course of the text, Hill reveals a complex attitude to the performer's critical and creative independence. Hill opened his work with the argument that 'good understanding' is 'necessary to the player' in order to distinguish 'the different steps thro' which his author means to lead the passions and the imaginations of his audience; and by which he is to carry himself from opposite to opposite affections'.<sup>68</sup> The actor here is the servant of the author: by studying the text, he learns which emotions to trigger in himself in order to achieve the author's goal of engaging the 'passions and the imaginations' of those in the audience. Yet this relationship, we soon learn, is not as simple as it seems. In order to comprehend the author's intention, the actor must, as Hill recognises, also share some of the author's skills. Notably, the actor must be just as discerning as the author when it comes to the emotions he is to portray. In an unwieldy but not uncommon comparison of both poet and player to a painter, Hill ultimately comes to value both figures equally.

As the painter often gives us a prospect of an extensive country in a very little piece, the poet sometimes in the compass of a few lines, gives his actor a multitude of different impressions: in this case the one as well as the other is to exert his skill in distinguishing to us, that things tho' placed near to one another in the small bounds of the representation, are not neighbours to

each other in the one case in the heart, or in the other in the prospect which is the subject of the picture. The player ought to have as strict an attention to these differences, and as nice a judgment in them, as the poet; he must no more than the painter, confound those things together between which nature has plac'd a vast distance, because they are to be seen in a small compass: But then he must very nicely conduct himself in those sudden transitions, thro' which he is to make one passion succeed to another; and that perhaps its contrary.<sup>69</sup>

The key phrase here is that 'The player ought to have as strict an attention to these differences, and as nice a judgment in them, as the poet.' Both poet and player must be good judges of emotion, able to deploy extremely different passions 'in a small compass' even when 'nature has plac'd' such passions at 'a vast distance'.

As well as connecting actor and author, Hill's description of 'sudden transition' reveals another aspect of this approach to drama. In this critic's view, the concatenation of two extremely different passions is the work of 'nature'. The performance of successive 'contrary' emotions can thus become both a powerful and a natural spectacle, something which distinguishes it from the supposedly unnatural entertainment of pantomime wizardry. Of course, this pairing of the natural and the spectacular was by no means easy. Yet the achievement of such a complex state – where the changes of the passion are pushed to their limit at every instant – created some of the most celebrated performances of the eighteenth century. One such performance, celebrated in John Hill's 1755 revised edition of *The Actor* and many other places, was Charles Macklin's rendition of Shylock.<sup>70</sup>

Theatre historians have long described Macklin's re-interpretation of Shakespeare's Jew as a powerful malevolent figure with respect to his predecessors' comic renderings of the part.<sup>71</sup> With a realistic costume and demeanour supposedly modelled on Jewish merchants observed in London, Macklin also made an unprecedented claim for anti-Semitic verisimilitude.<sup>72</sup> Such a claim did not, however, limit the spectacular effect of his performed passions. In his own writing, the actor recalled how his scenes were 'well listened to' and 'made [. . .] a silent yet forcible impression on [his] audience'.<sup>73</sup> One moment in particular reveals how that impression was created through a careful rendition of extreme and opposed emotion. According to Macklin, Shylock, in an exchange with Tubal, undergoes 'the contrasted passions of joy for the Merchant's losses, and grief for the elopement of Jessica'. As this veteran actor well knew, such a scene opened 'a fine field for the actor's powers'.<sup>74</sup> The details of the

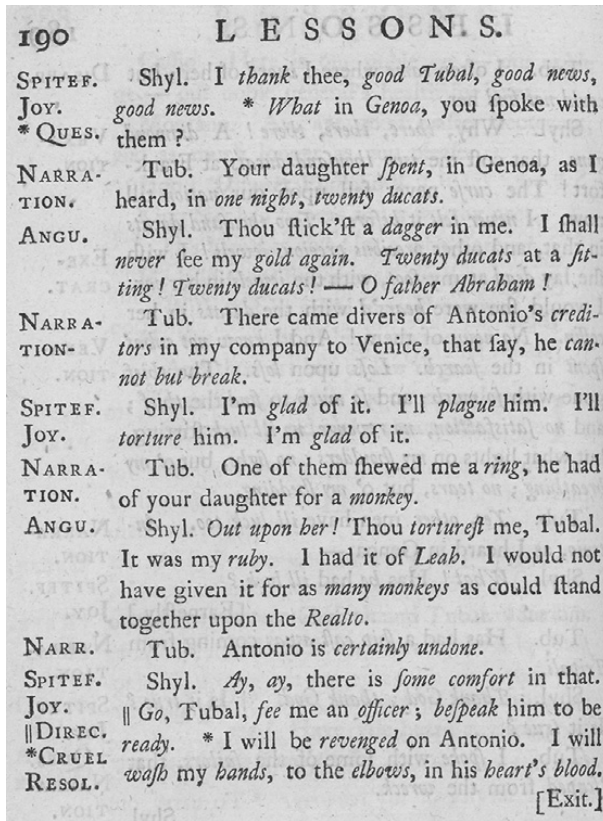


Figure 1.3 James Burgh's presentation of the Shylock-Tubal dialogue (p. 190). Image provided by the National Library of Scotland. CC BY 4.0.

prospect so relished by Macklin were recorded in 1761 by James Burgh, who published an annotated version of this scene in his *Art of Speaking* as an exercise for the aspiring orator (Figure 1.3). Such a reader, not yet capable of a professional performer's fine discernment, could follow Burgh's own delineation of the scene's emotion.

Burgh's annotations, paired with a range of italics and ornaments, map out the passions of this passage. At its heart, there is the repeated contrast between Shylock's 'SPITEFUL JOY' and 'ANGUISH', yet this alternating pattern, even in the section shown here, contains variation.<sup>75</sup> Burgh's asterisks mark, first, a shift to a 'QUEST[ION]' and then a concluding burst of 'CRUEL RESOL[UTION]', reached through



a moment of 'DIREC[TION]' set off with a double bar (||). The heavy use of italics gives some sense of the emphasis required from the performer, with that emphasis (to judge from the use of exclamation marks) being rather more explosive in passages of anguish than in those that deal with joy or resolution.

Burgh was not the only admirer of this scene. The writer, actor, and occasional teacher of oratory Francis Gentleman recalled Macklin's performance of this moment in his periodical *The Dramatic Censor* (1770), recording that 'never were transitions from one passion to another better supported than in this scene: distraction, grief, and malevolence succeed and cross each other admirably'.<sup>76</sup> Four years later, Gentleman went on to publish an edition of *The Merchant of Venice* as part of his work on *Bell's Shakespeare*. This edition, like many of the other plays in the series, appeared with the claim of having been set from the promptbooks of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and so offered the bookseller's clients the opportunity to buy a relic of performance for domestic consumption.<sup>77</sup> Gentleman's annotations and other paratexts are a key part of this offer. Perhaps with the *Censor's* review of Macklin in mind, he comments that 'This conversation, or rather rhapsody, with Tubal, contains some of the finest transitions for an actor that were ever penned; which, as we may say, harrow up attention, when properly expressed',<sup>78</sup> and this is just one instance of many attempts by the editor to draw attention not just to the beauties of Shakespeare, as many others had done before him, but to the *theatrical* beauties of these plays.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, the peculiar status of *Bell's Shakespeare* as a textual mimic of a visit to the theatre, complete with cast lists and long notes at the end of each act to serve as a surrogate for interval discussion, also means that this publication of the mid-1770s exemplifies many of the aesthetic priorities examined in this chapter.<sup>80</sup> Gentleman's 'Essay on Oratory', included in volume one of *Bell's Shakespeare*, uses the same vocabulary as Aaron Hill and Joshua Steele (to name only authors quoted in this chapter) to explain how 'READING and DECLAMATION consists of *emphasis, climax, modulation, pauses, breaks, transitions, tones, cadences, and gesture*' (1, p. 25). Elsewhere in this essay, Gentleman describes how certain moments are capable of engendering in the audience a 'sympathy of compulsion' (1, p. 22), an effect that Hill might recognise as a more sentimental version of the experience of a theatregoer '*surpriz'd into correction*'. As for the text of Shakespeare's plays, Gentleman's annotations are supplemented by numerous typographical markings, ranging from the insertion of dashes, exclamation marks, and question marks (all reminiscent of Hill's and

others' discussed above) to the use of marginal inverted commas to indicate passages that should be cut from performance.

These suggested cuts have earned Gentleman the title of Shakespeare's first bowdleriser, but they are better understood as further evidence for his edition's textual representation of a particular understanding of performance, one based on transition and crystallised by Hill.<sup>81</sup> Gentleman even extends this representational strategy to plays without stage traditions: volumes 7 and 8 offer versions of the second and third parts of *Henry VI* (never performed as such in the eighteenth century) and of *Titus Andronicus* (last performed for a single night at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1724).<sup>82</sup> The part of Aaron, with its 'unprovoked villainy' against the Andronici (VIII, p. 23), we are told, should be given to 'an actor of strong ideas, and adequate powers of execution' (VIII, p. 55). This is a remarkable statement for two reasons. First, it is an echo of Hill's own advice to actors to summon, before anything else, a '*strong idea* of the passion' to be represented, and so indicates the extent to which such a way of thinking about how to act endured across the eighteenth century. Second, this statement establishes an unequal relationship between idea and execution: providing that the ideas of the actor playing Aaron are strong enough, their powers of execution, their physical performance, need only be adequate. Hill would argue that the strength of the idea guaranteed the power of the execution, but the phrasing of Gentleman's note opens the path to a different interpretation, and one which risks the very power of performance that Hill wished to recover from the pantomime. If ideas matter more than execution and such ideas have their source in an imaginative engagement with text, then the wonders of Shakespeare and the beneficial powers of the stage are as available to the careful reader as to the actor or theatregoer. Macbeth's dagger soliloquy, Gentleman tells us, will 'act powerfully, even in the closet, as well as on the stage' (I, p. 82).

\* \* \*

There is a Faustian pact emerging here between page and stage. Such a pact is the third of three such bargains present in this chapter. The first, with its demons and fire-breathing dragons, is the spectacular opening of the Doctor Faustus pantomimes of the early 1720s, whose immediate and enduring success proved the power of an art that juxtaposed extremes of emotion.

The second is the trade Aaron Hill brokered with the pantomime. He believed that the actor could offer a refined version of pantomime transition through the use of a '*strong idea*'. These ideas, summoned in

a pensive pause, would trigger physical changes in the performer and so produce a spectacular display of emotion, one performed to the very instant of the changing passion and capable of carrying the moral message of the drama. By being founded in such strong ideas, this spectacle distinguished itself from those unthinking but entertaining displays of pantomimic transformation exemplified by the Faustus entertainments of Rich and Thurmond. Later writers, active during the career of Garrick, offer a similar understanding of performance: scientific paradigms may have changed, but the sense that audience attention could be maintained and directed through the rhythmic exhibition of those passions that the expression of an idea dictated did not. Pauses and their transitions were the subject of praise and blame, and negative criticism was quick to connect such acting back to the style of pantomime and so reveal Hill's theory for the infernal bargain it was. Yet rich transitions, for all their dangerous associations with pantomime, remained moments in which the actor could assert their artistic autonomy.

The third pact emerges from this situation and risks binding the actor to the scholar rather than the Harlequin. The new emphasis on the play of passions that the actor should bring to life as a reformed pantomime required that each performer undertake a close study of their text rather than of those established performance traditions judged by Hill and others as inadequate. This meant that the very thing that Hill intended to redeem the performance practices of serious theatre also encouraged the appreciation of the written word over its rendition before an audience and so undermined performance from a new direction, dematerialising it in favour of purely intellectual appreciation.

Such dematerialised appreciation, still nascent in Gentleman, is the subject of Chapter 5, but there remains one other, Faustian, point to be made here. Every example and metaphor I have employed so far points to the power of transition to induce critical cynosure. At its most extreme, a critic's focus on the individual's transitions between passions risks transforming dialogue into soliloquy and dramatic action into lyric expressions of feeling. Faustus is everything. The pantomime re-tellings of his story follow a single Harlequin scholar. Hill's letters of advice and worked examples only ever concern themselves with the performance of one person's part. Gentleman considers the Tubal-Shylock scene in *The Merchant of Venice* as a 'rhapsody' rather than a conversation: its 'finest transitions' are for 'an' actor, not both of them. Burgh, for his part, ascribes all of this passage's emotion to Shylock, merely noting 'Narration' next to

each of Tubal's lines. Macklin recalls only his performance here and, when designating the scene 'a fine field for an actor's powers', again makes a revealing use of the singular. The captivating rendition of the passions is thus the work of the star, taming the audience by focusing their attention on a single figure.

Lichtenberg sees only Garrick on the battlements of Elsinore, and Claudius, for Murphy, is no more than a target for the contempt of this actor-manager's Virginius. At the same time, the misplaced pauses of Hamlet are Hamlet's only, the claptraps of *King Lear* make only Garrick a two-bit conjuror, and in Cibber's unflattering portrait of this man, it is 'his pantomimical Manner of Acting', with 'his unnatural Pauses' and 'his wilful Neglect of Harmony', that are at issue. Transition emerges from such critical analysis as the property of a single man or woman. And few plays show this aspect of transition, or those other aspects discussed here, as well as the subject of Chapter 2: Aaron Hill's *Zara*.