

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87273-7 - Samuel Richardson: Correspondence with Aaron Hill and the Hill Family

Edited by Christine Gerrard

Excerpt

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RICHARDSON'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH
AARON HILL AND THE HILL FAMILY

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AARON HILL TO SR, SATURDAY 6 MARCH 1736

Richardson to Aaron Hill

Sunday 8 February 1736

MS: BL Add. 37232, f. 138. Autograph letter sent.

Sir

You have all the Letters that come by my hand. Thereby this shou'd be sign'd E. B., who knows no End of his Philosopher's Prayer.¹

SR

¹ This note by SR is written at the bottom of a letter from the writer Eustace Budgell to Hill dated 8 February 1736. SR is right to note that the initials should read 'E. B.' rather than 'A. B.' Budgell admits to using an amanuensis, which may explain the error. Budgell had sent his letter to Hill via SR because SR was the printer of Hill's theatrical journal *The Prompter* (co-edited with William Popple 12 November 1734 to 2 July 1736), the subject of his letter. Eustace Budgell (1686–1737), eccentric author, journalist and cousin of Joseph Addison, had lost most of his capital in the collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720. He contributed to *The Craftsman's* attacks on Walpole and edited the pugnacious newspaper *The Bee* (1735–7), finally drowning himself in 1737. The paper had recently printed the deistic 'Philosopher's Prayer' by the freethinker Matthew Tindal and had been attacked for it by the *Grub Street Journal*. *The Prompter* defended Budgell and Tindal, and was itself attacked in turn by the *Grub Street Journal*. Budgell's letter to Hill is one of complaint. He complains that Hill has not acknowledged his letters or that of another anonymous friend of his who had also sent him a letter in defence of the 'Philosopher's Prayer' – a letter which Budgell wishes Hill to print in *The Prompter*. Budgell urges Hill to apply to the writers of the *Grub Street Journal* 'a few Lashes of your Whip' but also disavows the fact that *The Prompter* mainly confines itself to theatrical matters and asks 'whether you have not a little too much confin'd yourself to that Subject to make your Paper read by the Generality of Mankind'. The wry humour of SR's note to Hill aptly conveys Budgell's prolixity.

Aaron Hill to Richardson

Saturday 6 March 1736

MS: FM XIII, 2, f. 3. Autograph letter sent.

Sir,

I have observ'd, from many angry, & indeed unjust, Personalities, in the Grubstreet Journal, pointing grossly at me, that I am misrepresented to the Author, or Authors, as the Defender of the *Philosopher's Prayer*, and Disliker of *The Man of Taste*;¹ not to

¹ The Rev. James Bramston's *The Man of Taste* (1733), a satirical poem in Pope's style. Bramston was an admirer of Pope. He was praised in the *Grub Street Journal*, which he went on to edit.

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AARON HILL TO SR, WEDNESDAY 30 JUNE 1736

mention other mistakes which they seem often to be led into about me.

As you know, that I have nothing to answer for on either of these Two Heads, having never seen any of those Papers till I read them in the published Prompters,² I shou'd take it as a Favour, if you wou'd, immediately find means to undeceive the Gentleman concern'd. – I am asham'd to give you this Trouble: but am altogether unacquainted with any of them myself: nor do I know who is their Publisher.

It is very disagreeable to me to find myself ill-treated, upon such mistaken Grounds of Resentment: and, It wou'd be more so to be forc'd into a Necessity of Defending myself, publickly. – I have always been an enemy to these personal Bickerings among Writers, & wish well to them all, with a sincerity, that (of how little service soever it may be) does not, at least, deserve to be treated unkindly.

I shall be very much oblig'd to you, if you can find some way to let This be known to the Gentlemen, whoever They are, that They may no longer misconceive Sir, Your most obedient Humble Servant

A. Hill.

² Hill's professed ignorance of the figures involved seems disingenuous unless his co-editor Popple was responsible for inserting the 'Philosopher's Prayer' in *The Prompter*.

Aaron Hill to Richardson

Wednesday 30 June 1736

MS: FM XIII, 2, f. 4. Autograph letter sent.

Dear Sir,

I have sent you the Finishing Prompter, for Friday next, but you will always be sure of, & may command me, on any Little, or different, occasion.¹

¹ See above, p. 3, *Hill to SR*, 6 March 1736. The 'finishing' *Prompter* was clearly the final issue but Hill implies here that SR might seek further essays of this type. Hill later contributed papers signed 'The Occasional Prompter' to the *Daily Journal*, another paper printed by SR.

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AARON HILL TO SR, WEDNESDAY 30 JUNE 1736

As to *Alzira*,² my only Reason for bringing it on at this season, was to give Mr Giffard's³ Company a fair Opportunity of fixing Themselves at the polite End of the Town, in view to continue here, to their Rival's mortification – which Mr Rich wou'd in the Winter have been jealous enough to have hinder'd, by refusing to lett them his Theatre.⁴

I was willing to wait the success of it's Reception, to see how far It might be worth my Desiring you (as I now do) to accept of the Copy, as a Present. If it had been *lost* by the ill choice of the *Season*, I wou'd have waited a Better, before It cou'd have deserv'd to be yours. But, as it seems Running into some Degree of Regard, It is most heartily at your Service and I will send you the Copy, as soon as the Company get another writ out, for their Prompter, having us'd mine hitherto for that Purpose. – I am doubtful whether it ought to be *printed*, now, soon, or in the winter – Please to decide That, yourself – and how far the Time of it's being under the first Run of it's Acting, and the preventing a Likelihood of some other Translations appearing,⁵ if they observe This delay'd, may counterbalance the Difference between a full Town, and a thin one.

² *Alzira*, Hill's translation of Voltaire's tragedy *Alzire*. It was first staged at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 18 June 1736. Hill's earlier translation of Voltaire's *Zara* had received critical acclaim during a two-week run at Drury Lane in January 1736. Hill was keen to capitalize on his previous success and translated *Alzire*, first publicly performed at the Comedie-Française on 17 January 1736, within three weeks. *Alzira* is set in Peru under Spanish colonial rule. Its plot centres on a love triangle between Gusman, tyrannical son of the Spanish governor Don Alvarez, Alzire, an Incan princess who has converted to Christianity, and Zamor, her former Incan lover. It concerns the relationship between Christianity and paganism and was seen to promote the value of religious tolerance and forgiveness. Hill believed that in *Alzire* Voltaire 'extends Humanity to its due Compass; that is, till it includes the *World*, with his *Family*' (Hill, *Works*, I, 243).

³ Henry Giffard, theatre manager. In 1732 he had taken over the unlicensed Goodman's Fields theatre in the East End of London.

⁴ In 1736–7 Giffard rented the Lincoln's Inn Fields in the West End (the 'polite End of Town') from the manager John Rich, who also ran the recently built Covent Garden theatre.

⁵ SR decided to publish Hill's *Alzira* in August 1736 instead of waiting for the usual autumn season because, as Hill hints, a rival translation of Voltaire's *Alzire* might have been published earlier.

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AARON HILL TO SR, FRIDAY 2 JULY 1736

I have, herewith, return'd you *Motray's* 3 volumes,⁶ and the 2 *Translations*. – The *Spectacle*,⁷ my Daughters, will take the Liberty of keeping a little longer but will, by no means, strain so far on your great, and obliging, Good nature, as you were so kind⁸ to allow them, tho they are Sensible of the Acknowledgements due to you, to desire me to send 'em you, in their Names. I have now the further Favour to beg, of Perusing your *Chamber's* (imperfect at Letter S.)⁹

Your—*Breval*, 1st and 2nd¹⁰

Your—*Morgan's Algiers* – which I noted from the Catalogue you were so good as to send me.¹¹ I am Dear Sir, most sincerely, Your obedient and affectionate Servant

A Hill.

30th of June, 1736

⁶ Aubrey de la Motraye's *Travels through Europe, Asia, and into part of Africa* (1st edn 1723) is listed in a 3 vol. edn in *Books printed for, and sold by John Osborn and Thomas Longman, at the Ship in Pater-noster Row* (1735).

⁷ Noël Antoine Pluche, *Spectacle de la nature: or, Nature display'd* (2nd edn, London, 1733). SR printed the fourth volume of the seven-volume work in 1739.

⁸ 'good' is deleted and 'kind' is a superscript insertion.

⁹ Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols. (London, 1728). Chambers was an apprentice of John Senex, whose shop was in Salisbury Court when the first edition of the *Cyclopaedia* was published in 1727. The second edition did not appear until 1738. See Sale, p. 99.

¹⁰ John Breval, *Remarks on Several Parts of Europe*, 2 vols. (London 1738). SR was the printer. Breval published an earlier series of *Remarks* in 1726.

¹¹ Joseph Morgan, *A Complete History of Algiers*, 2 vols. (1728, 1729). SR was not the printer though may have had an interest as he subscribed to earlier plans for a subscription edition. See Sale, pp. 98–9.

Aaron Hill to Richardson

Friday 2 July 1736

Printed Source: B, I, 5–7.

First printing: Barbauld, *Correspondence* (1804).

Dear Sir,

Late last night I found the books and letter which had been left at my house by your servant. I have been too long acquainted with the extent of your spirit, and the elegance of your manner, to wonder at any thing that does new justice to your character. Yet you

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AARON HILL TO SR, FRIDAY 2 JULY 1736

must allow me to remember, what your good nature is so willing to forget, that I continue a great deal longer than I ought, or intended, your debtor, on a considerable account, for printing bills, advertisements, & c.¹

You must also permit me to reflect, that you, who have so firm a possession of my esteem, have the most natural title in the world to my writings.²

To which let me add, that though, with view to do some service to an industrious company of actors, I suffered such a play as *Alzira* to appear in an improper season; yet I cannot be ignorant how far that must lessen, in all likelihood, the immediate demand of the copy. Nor can it be reasonable (indeed scarce honest), to be unmindful, in cases of this nature, that booksellers are less secure than they ought to be made, for want of an act of parliament, to appropriate and defend their just right in the copies they purchase.³ I must, therefore, entreat your leave, and the three gentlemen's, to return the inclosed note of Sir Francis Child's.⁴ I cannot receive it, without acting against the consent of my heart. Yet to ease, to the utmost degree possible, all that amiable confusion which, but in your own generosity, you could here find no reason for feeling, I will receive, in its stead, another, just half its amount; *upon condition you give me your word*, to make no future opposition to the pleasures I shall seek to enjoy, from a proper disposal of whatever may lie in the power of, Dear Sir, your most affectionate and most obedient humble servant,

A. Hill

¹ SR paid for all Hill's printing bills and advertisements. This practice continued throughout their acquaintance.

² This is the first of Hill's many suggestions that he repay Richardson by giving him the copyright of his works.

³ The booksellers wanted a perpetual right of copy over works they had purchased. The 1710 Statute of Queen Anne had granted a fixed-term right instead; copyright would be protected for 21 years for books already published, and 14 years for new books, renewable for a further 14 years if the author were still alive.

⁴ Sir Francis Child (1684–1740), director of Child's Bank. This is a banker's draft for an undisclosed sum. The 'three gentleman' may be members of one of the bookseller's congers SR was known to have worked with at this time. See Sale, pp. 96–7.

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AARON HILL TO SR, MONDAY 5 JULY 1736

Aaron Hill to Richardson

Monday 5 July 1736

MS: FM XIII, 2, f. 5. Autograph letter sent.

Dear Sir,

I receiv'd yours, with the Note of Sir Francis Child¹: and, since then, the 2 Volumes of *Chambers*;² but deferr'd writing, till to day, because I concluded you at Corney House, from Saturday.³

What you have done, in relation to the Bill, & the Advertisements, at once obliges, & confounds me – I mean, the Gracefulness & Generosity of your Spirit, in the Intention – For I do, & must consider myself as still *undischarg'd* in That Particular, and only *more* your Debtor, from the⁴ Disposition you have shewn to remit my Obligation.

I am uneasy in the Apprehension that I have been more troublesome than I intended to be, when I desir'd the Perusal of Chambers. I only meant the Imperfect one, that I found noted in your Catalogue.⁵ But, I perceive, It is one of Mr Richardson's Peculiarities, to first appropriate what is Defective, to Himself, while He thinks nothing Compleat enough, when he is to provide it, for Another.

Tomorrow, or Wednesday, I expect my Copy of *Alzira* from the House;⁶ & will, then, direct it to your Hand—yet the Manner, & Time, of its Printing & Publication, may be just as you, & the 3 other Gentlemen think Best.⁷ Whose Property it is, and for whose sake I wish it what I believe It will be a *stock* Play,⁸ of the most

¹ 'of Sir Frances Child' is inserted in superscript after 'Note'.

² See above, p. 6, *Hill to SR*, 30 June 1736.

³ Corney House, the country house in Chiswick that SR had recently started to rent. The Corney House 'tenements', formerly part of the Russell estate, adjoined the old seat of the Russell family.

⁴ 'my' is deleted and 'the' is a superscript insertion.

⁵ See above, p. 6, *Hill to SR*, 30 June 1736, n. 9. The second edition of Chamber's *Cyclopaedia* was planned for winter 1737 and more than twenty sheets were printed; but it was delayed by a bill passed by the Commons requiring 'improved' editions to list the improvements separately. This may be the 'imperfect' version listed in SR's catalogue. See Sale, pp. 99–100.

⁶ The Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre.

⁷ 'proper' is deleted, and 'Best' is a superscript insertion. See above, p. 7, *Hill to SR*, 2 July 1736, n. 4.

⁸ I.e. a play which forms part of a company's staple repertoire.

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AARON HILL TO SR, THURSDAY 8 JULY 1736

Popular Cast in more than One of our Theatres. I am, Dear Sir,
Your most Obedient Humble Servant

A. Hill.

July the 5th 1736

Aaron Hill to Richardson

Thursday 8 July 1736

MS: FM XIII, 2, f. 8. Autograph letter sent.

Dear Sir,

I send you, herewith, the Copy of *Alzira*, together with the Prologue, & Epilogue.—The Prompter of the Company having chosen to hold this Copy every night, (because pretty legibly written) had fill'd it with marginal marks, & referential memorandums relating to his Office, which, in striking out with my Pen, I have been oblig'd to make many Blobs – but, few, or none, in the Writing.¹

I am undetermin'd about a *Dedication*—It is a Kind of Address, I have a natural Aversion to: yet, I am inform'd from so many Hands, that the Prince was sensibly touch'd by the Verses, before *Zara*, & appears in so promising a Disposition to patronize *Meaning*, on the stage, that I am almost inclin'd to say something to him, on That subject, of a little *Length*, & a Turn, in some sort, *New*.² – If I thought It were capable of contributing, in never so small a Degree, toward the Benefit which would follow, to the Publick, from such an influence as the *Prince's*, openly countenancing a serious & manly Taste in our Theatres, I should not hesitate a moment, concerning this Purpose.

I return you, with a thousand Thanks, your *Brevals*, & your *Morgan*: In whose Places, please to favour me with *Norden's*

¹ See above, p. 5, *Hill to SR*, 30 June 1736; p. 7, *Hill to SR*, 2 July 1736; and p. 8, *Hill to SR*, 5 July 1736.

² The published version of *Zara* contained a verse dedication to Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707–51), praising him for his love of the arts and urging him to champion a 'protected stage'. *Alzira* contained a similar dedication in prose. Hill, like a number of his fellow poets, hoped that Frederick's royal encouragement would help transform the public taste in poetry and drama. See Gerrard, *Aaron Hill*, pp. 182–3.

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AARON HILL TO SR, MONDAY 19 JULY 1736

Cornwall, – *Buck's Richard the 3^d* – and *Bacon's 3 Volumes*.³ – You see I make use of your obliging Permission to Dear Sir Your most affectionate & obedient Servant,

A Hill

8th July 1736

³ For Breval and Morgan see above, p. 6, *Hill to SR*, 30 June 1736. The other books listed are John Norden, *Speculi Britanniae Pars: A Topographical and Historical Description of Cornwall* (1728); Sir George Buck, *A History of the Life and Reign of Richard III* (first published in 1646); *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon in 3 Volumes*, ed. Peter Shaw (1733).

Aaron Hill to Richardson

Monday 19 July 1736

MS: FM XIII, 2, f. 7, 9. Autograph letter sent.*Endorsement:* July 19, 1736 (in SR's hand).

Eaves and Kimpel list two separate letters from Hill to SR on this date. FM XIII, 2, f. 7, has no salutation but ends with a complimentary close and dateline, and is endorsed on the reverse in SR's hand with the date. FM XIII, 2, f. 9, opens with a salutation but has no complimentary close. The date has been inserted in SR's hand. We believe these are two parts of the same letter and have placed FMXIII, 2, f. 9 before FM XIII, 2, f. 7, running them on as a single letter.

Dear Sir,

I saw Mr Popple this Morning,¹ and have desir'd him, as I must you, & the other Gentlemen, to permit my Deferring my own Pleasure, in the propos'd Meeting, at Corney House, a little longer, because of a Variety of Things, that will take up my Time, for this week or 10 Days yet.

I think your Resolution of publishing *Alzira*, out of hand, a very good one – And, the rather, as it will not only be ready for supply of the Summer Demand, that may be occasion'd by its Acting just now; but stands fair for a New Encrease of Demand, when one of

¹ William Popple (1700/1–64), government official, poet and dramatist. He co-edited *The Prompter* with Hill between 1734 and 1736. In 1720 he and Hill's former friend and protégé the poet Martha Fowke had co-authored a popular collection of verse epistles, *The Epistles of Clio and Strephon*.