ii) A Better Resolution without Invoking Normal Ordering in $\mathcal{H}_I^I$:

   The September 2022 version of this volume eliminated much of the original material in this sub-section (including equations (7-101), (7-102), and (7-103)), which was overly complicated and not of great value. That material is herein replaced with the following paragraph.

   The evaluation of terms containing equal times contractions in Wick's theorem to show they equal zero in QED is best understood after digesting the material in the next chapter, so we show that evaluation in the appendix of Chap. 8.

The bottom line: For QED, equal-time contractions don't play a role in Wick's theorem (7-78).

For reasons to be seen, equal times contraction terms In Wick's theorem in QED are zero.