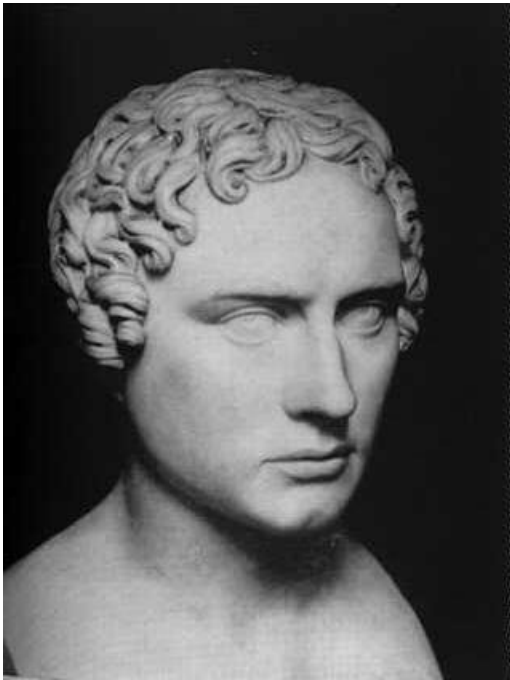


HINTS FROM HORACE



INTRODUCTION

BYRON AND HORACE: “the great little poet’s wrong”¹

Byron refers to Horace more often than he does any other poet except Shakespeare. There is at once characteristic aptness and characteristic irony in this, for Horace was a kind of Roman Southey – with genius. Where Byron is far from scared about giving political offence to the establishment, Horace never even thinks of doing so – one of his longest verse-letters,² and several of his Odes, are addressed in terms of respect, nay reverence, to the Emperor Augustus, and his *Carmen Seculare* (a title appropriated by Byron for *The Age of Bronze*, a poem the reverse of Caesarist) was commissioned by the Emperor himself. Horace is committed to the political status quo of his time and place. Byron would never write the English equivalent of

Caelo tonantem credidimus Iovem
Regnare; praesens divus habebitur
Augustus adiectis Britannis
Imperio gravibusque Persis.³

[We believe that Jove is king in heaven because we hear his thunders peal; Augustus shall be deemed a god on earth for adding to our empire the Britons and dread Parthians.]

or,

... ego nec tumultum
nec mori per vim metuum tenente
Caesare terras.⁴

[Neither civil strife nor death by violence will I fear, while Caesar holds the earth.]

1: *Don Juan* XIV, 77, 2.

2: Hor. Epis. II, i.

3: Hor. Od. III, v, 1-4.

4: Hor. Od. III, xiv, 14-16.

Many more examples could be adduced, of Horace's intense patriotism and Caesarism,⁵ a Caesarism all the more intense for being, like Southey's conservatism, that of a turncoat, a renegade: for Horace had fought at Philippi on the side of Brutus and Cassius.

Byron is patriotic, but not in the Horatian, still less the Southeyan mode. He is more likely to write,

Yet still there is unto a patriot Nation,
Which loves so well its Country and its king,
A Subject of sublimest exultation –
Bear it, ye Muses, on your brightest wing!
Howe'er the mighty Locust, Desolation,
Strip your green fields, and to your harvests cling,
Gaunt Famine never shall approach the throne –
Though Ireland starve, great George weighs twenty stone.⁶

Southey, on the other hand, wrote masses of verses just like those of Horace – in theme, if not in quality.

The next great difference between Byron and Horace is a consequence of the first difference – Horace is confident of his audience, his addressee – he writes knowing that in Mæcenus his Satires will find a sympathetic reader; and his Epistles all have identifiable recipients. As a poet he has a clear social role, in which he flourishes. Byron has no such addressee, and no such clear-cut role: indeed, he would despise anyone who, in Regency England, had. John Murray, one obvious candidate, is sent-up in the addresses to him; and the super-addressee of *Don Juan* is, as one would expect, proclaimed in the first line of its Dedication:

Bob Southey! you're a poet – poet Laureat,
And representative of all the race ...

In an age where to be a Horace is to be like Southey, it's best to be an anti-Horace; and this, for some of the time, Byron is – though without ever losing touch with what makes Horace, paradoxically in his eyes, great.

The one poem by Byron which he confesses to having modelled on Horace (apart from *Hints*) is *The Prophecy of Dante*, which is derived in part from the fifteenth Ode of Horace's First Book.⁷ However, the parallel does not work, as Horace's Nereus' prophecy of the Trojan War would surprise and frighten Paris, its recipient, because for him the Trojan War is in the future, whereas what Byron's Dante "prophesies" is, for his audience (the modern one – Byron's Dante is not given, as is Horace's Nereus, an audience of his own contemporaries) already in the past, and therefore unsurprising.

Horace keeps before our eyes an ideal of stoic moderation, which Byron is amusing and frank about his own inability to meet. He even (perhaps with irony, perhaps not) relishes his own avarice,⁸ which Horace often warns against:⁹ though Byron implies a wish that he had more youthful vices to cultivate. We may wish, after soaking-in Horace's smug and almost non-stop moralising, that he had a few entertaining vices to write about as well. It's true that he is sometimes envious, but never without excellent moral grounds.¹⁰ He writes about his affection for Lyciscus,¹¹ or his lust for Chloë,¹² and even of his jealousy over Lydia;¹³ he encourages a friend to think positively about his desire for a slave girl;¹⁴ but there's nothing abandoned or lost about his passions or any of those he describes,¹⁵ as there are almost always about those Byron describes.

5: See Hor. Odes, IV, 2, 4, 5, 15.

6: *Don Juan* VIII stanza 126.

7: See *PoD*, Preface.

8: *Don Juan* I, 216, 7-8.

9: For example, Hor. Sat I, I, 41-67; Od. II ii.

10: See Hor. Epodes iv.

11: Hor. Epodes, xi.

12: Hor. Od. I, xxiii.

13: Hor. Od. I, xiii.

14: Hor. Od. II, iv.

15: Though he seems to be contemplating adultery with Lyce at Od. III, x.

Byron shares many of Horace's values, of temperance and abstinence – particularly in the later cantos of *Don Juan* – and uses them to berate the extravagances of his own age. At one point, he even attributes a moral idea to Horace which is not Horatian but traditional.¹⁶

Here he is addressing the Duke of Wellington:

I don't mean to reflect – a man so great as
You, my Lord Duke! is far above reflection;
The high Roman fashion, too, of Cincinnatus,
With modern history has but small connection;
Though as an Irishman you love potatoes,
You need not take them under your direction –
And half a Million for your Sabine farm
Is rather dear! – I'm sure I mean no harm.¹⁷

Horace's Sabine farm, given him by his patron, Maecenas, was (if he is to be believed) a model of peace and rural economy. Parliament has voted Wellington £500,000 for his victories in Spain and at Waterloo: the sum is so vast as to defy even Byron's imagining. English public schools, which make their sons read Horace, as Harrow made Byron read him, and hold up the unpretentious and retiring Cincinnatus as an example of austere patriotism, are practising the most transparent hypocrisy. Yet Byron's tone maintains always an Horatian urbanity ("I'm sure I mean no harm").

Elsewhere, in personal as opposed to civic matters, Byron shares Horace's vision wholeheartedly, without irony or subversive games:

"*O dura Ilia Messorum!*" "Oh
"Ye rigid Guts of reapers!" – I translate
For the great benefit of those who know
What Indigestion is – that inward Fate
Which makes all Styx through one small liver flow –
A Peasant's sweat is worth his Lord's estate;
Let *this* one toil for bread, *that* rack for rent –
He who sleeps best may be the most content.¹⁸

"*O dura Ilia Messorum!*" is slightly adapted from Horace, *Epodes* III, 4:

*Parentis olim si quis impia manu
senile guttur fregerit,
edit cicutis allium nocentius,
o dura messorum ilia!
quid hoc veneni saevit in praecordiis?*

[Let he who impiously strangles an aged parent eat garlic – deadlier than hemlock; how tough must the guts of peasants be! What poison is this courses through my body?]

This seems to be a curse upon Maecenas for sending Horace a meal laced, for a joke, with too much garlic. Indigestion was something of which Byron had much experience.

Sometimes, on the other hand, Byron takes a stanza of Horace out of context, making it mean something which in Horace the complete poem refutes. When near the end of *Don Juan* Canto I he creates a larger-than-usual Horatian cluster, it's ambiguous:

"Non Ego hoc ferre m calida Juventâ
"Consule Planco", Horace said, and so *
Say I; by which quotation there is meant a

16: *Don Juan* XIV, 77, 3.

17: *Don Juan*, IX, 7.

18: *Don Juan*, IX, 15.

Hint that some six or seven good years ago
(Long ere I dreamt of dating from the Brenta)
I was most ready to return a blow,
And would not brook at all this sort of thing
In my hot Youth – when George the third was King.

* Me jam nec femina, – – –
Nec Spes animi credula mutui
Nec certare juvat mero, – – – –

The first line-and-a-half is from the last verse of Horace's Ode, III, xiv: *I should not have born such things in the heat of my youth when Plancus was consul*. The Ode is in fact a chauvinist, pro-Augustus poem; Horace is cursing anyone who might prevent him partying on the Emperor's return. His tone is one of jolly defiance to an imaginary enemy (no-one is *likely* to forbid him to get drunk). Byron makes Horace's lines an ally in his own trivial war against the periodical reviewers. The *Don Juan* note is from a discreetly cut version of Odes, IV, i, 29-32: *Me [nor lad] nor maid can more delight, nor trustful hope of love returned, nor drinking bouts [nor temples bound with blossoms new.]* Byron would have us think it means that he is past all the temptations of the flesh, whether hetero [or homo]; but in his Ode, Horace at once undercuts his own effect, and shows himself still to be emotional, after all:

sed cur heu, Ligurine, cur
manat rara meas lacrima per genas?

[But why, O Ligurinus, why steals now and then adown my cheek a tear?]

Sometimes Byron plays very wicked games with his Horatian original:

... we all know that English people are
Fed upon Beef – I won't say much of Beer
Because 'tis liquor only and being far
From this my Subject has no business here;
We know, too, they are very fond of war,
A pleasure, like all pleasures, rather dear –
So were the Cretans – from which I infer
That Beef and Battles both were owing to her.

This "echoes" Horace, Odes IV iv, 29-36

fortes creantur fortibus et bonis;
est in iuencis, est in equis patrum
virtus, eque imbellem feroces
progenerant aquillae columbam.

doctrina sed vim promovet insitam,
rectique cultus pectora roborant;
utcumque defecere mores
indecorant bene nata culpae.

[Tis only from the sturdy and the good that sturdy youths are born; in steers, in steeds appear the merits of their sires; nor do fierce eagles beget timid doves. / Yet training increases inborn worth, and righteous ways make strong the heart; whenever righteousness has failed, faults mar even what nature had made noble.]

The Roman poet assures us that the genes of his race will always prevail militarily over its enemies (the entire Ode is a meditation on the defeat of Hannibal). Byron tells us that the British, like the Cretans, are powerful in battle because of their addiction to roast beef and ale, and implies that they win such

events as Waterloo because, like the Cretans, somewhere back down the line one of their maternal ancestors, like Pasiphäe, fucked a bull, and created a nation of Minotaurs.

Near the start of the first Canto of *Don Juan*, Byron quotes, in a note, the ninth ode from Horace's fourth book:

Brave men were living before Agamemnon *
And since, exceeding various and Sage,
A good deal like him too, though quite the same none;
But then they shone not on the Poet's page,
And so have been forgotten: – I condemn none,
But can't find any in the present age
Fit for my poem (that is, for my New One)
So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan. –

* "Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona, &c." – Horace.

Horace is, in the Ode to which Byron alludes, assuring his friend Lollius that his fame, unlike that of such Homerically non-privileged heroes as those before Agamemnon, will last, owing to Horace, who has written this poem about him; although it has to be said that Lollius is not a name which has gone into the myth-book, despite his poetic friend's confidence. Byron – faced with the era of the Napoleonic Wars – with such names as Nelson, Wellington, Suvorov, Kutuzov, Ney, and Murat to choose from, to say nothing of Bonaparte himself – as rich a potential cast as that of Horace – rejects the lot in favour of a mythical fornicator. Horace would have been bewildered.

Horace is without the need to play offensive games with his reader's ideas. For him, even getting drunk is only justifiable if the weather's really bad,¹⁹ or if something serious is being celebrated, such as the return of the Emperor, or of a long-lost friend.²⁰ The same is often true of Byron, who, in *The Isles of Greece* from *Don Juan* III, writes a drinking song on a serious political theme – though in his case, drink is a way of escaping from the horror and futility of the political scene contemplated, which in Horace it never is.

Both Horace (in his Satires, not in his Odes) and Byron in his ottava rima work are pleased about the resemblance between their poetic style, and conversational prose. Horace writes,

... neque, si qui scribat uti nos
sermoni propiora, putes hunc esse poetam.²¹

[... nor would you count anyone poet who writes, as I do, lines more akin to prose.]

Horace mentions the idea casually, but Byron takes great pride in it:

I perch upon an humble promontory
Amid Life's infinite Variety,
With no great care for what is nick-named Glory,
But speculating as I cast mine eye
On what may suit or may not suit my Story;
And never straining hard to versify,
I rattle on exactly as I'de talk
With Any body in a ride or walk.²²

It's a different attitude to poetic diction. Horace would, I expect, though he'd be proud of his ability to write as he speaks, see his Satires and Epistles as lesser creations than his Odes, but Byron regards the chatty *Don Juan* as his masterpiece.

19: Hor. Epodes xiii.

20: Hor. Od. II, vii.

21: Hor. Sat. I, iv, 41-2.

22: *Don Juan* XV, 19, 6-8

Here are the eightieth and eighty-first stanzas of *Don Juan's* thirteenth canto. Byron is writing about the reputations, and the actual morals, of upper-class English ladies, and a quotation from Horace climaxes his meditation:

With other Countesses of Blank, but rank,
At once the "Lie" and the "Elite" of Crowds,
Who pass, like Water filtered in a tank,
All purged and pious, from their native Clouds;
Or paper turned to Money by the Bank,
No matter how or why, the passport shrouds
The "*passée*" and the past; for good Society
Is no less famed for tolerance than piety.

That is up to a certain point, which point
Forms the most difficult in punctuation –
Appearances appear to form the joint
On which it hinges in a higher station –
And so that no Explosion cry "Aroint
"Thee Witch!" or – each Medea to her Jason –
Or (to the point with Horace and with Pulci)
"Omne tulit punctum – *quæ* miscuit utile dulci."

The last line here is 343 of the *Ars Poetica*: it is the only phrase in the poem written in his second self-exile which is taken from the poem which he translated before he returned from his first self-exile. The whole Latin passage (see below) runs

Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,
lectorem delectando pariterque monendo;
hic meret aera liber Sosis, hic et mare transit
et longum noto scriptori prorogat aeuum.

[He (not she) gets every vote who combines the useful with the pleasant, and who, at the same time he pleases the reader, also instructs him. That book will earn money for the Sosis, this one will cross the sea and extend immeasurably the life of a famous writer.]

Now Byron, in the *Don Juan* passage, is not interested in being useful, or in instructing the reader, in Horace's sense (though he is interested in money and fame). He is saying that English ladies (referred to in the change from *qui* to *quæ*) are whores, but that English society ignores the fact as long as the ladies don't go too far – though how far "too far" is, is hard to determine. He is being ironical about Horace's naivety in thinking of morals in the way a good citizen thinks of them, or of instruction in the way that a good moral teacher thinks of it. He is, in fact, sending everyone up rotten – not only Horace, but also English ladies, and any readers who may share Horace's eager attitude to moral instruction.

Although in *Don Juan* XV, Byron shows himself well able to write poetry about food, we sense that when Horace writes about food,²³ he, unlike Byron, could and probably does prepare the dishes himself. Byron seems to regard luxurious food as a trap; Horace does, too, but is, equally, able to write about the pleasure of good, moderate food, which Byron rarely does.

Hobhouse

In the matter of rank, Horace is frank and happy about his own status as the son of a freedman²⁴ (Byron misrepresents these important lines in his note to *The Age of Bronze*, line 535). Byron is aware of his own status as an aristocrat, a fact which Hobhouse laments in his diary, quoting Horace to illustrate.²⁵ Hobhouse's use of Horace is also instructive. He seems to know the poet as well as Byron does. The first

23: For example, Hor. Sat. I, iv, 63-9; or II, viii, 42-53.

24: Hor. Sat. VI, 1-6.

25: Hobhouse quotes Hor. Epis. I, xviii, 86-7 in his diary entries for April 10th and June 1st 1810..

letter from him to Byron which we have²⁶ starts with a quotation from Horace. He quotes a different passage from the same Epistle on reading for the first time Byron's cruel ballad *My Boy Hobby, O*;²⁷ and on parting from Byron off Zea in 1810, he quotes Horace yet again.²⁸

Byron's version of the *Ars Poetica*

Hints from Horace is by far Byron's largest attempt at confronting Horace and transmuting him into something Byronic. It was never published in Byron's lifetime. It is important to see that he wrote it a whole year after he'd finished drafting cantos I and II of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which task he had finished by March 28th 1810. Drafted in Athens between March 2nd and 11th 1811, *Hints* did not appear until the Moore / Wright edition of 1832. This might seem strange for what should be (if it really took an Horatian form) such a politically innocuous – even conservative – text. Byron made two attempts at publishing it: they stand as bookends on either side of his “romantic” period, in 1811 and 1820/1, and operate as a kind of rebuke to the seeming success he enjoyed during that time.

He announced the poem's commencement in a letter to Hobhouse from Athens, on March 5th 1811:

Since my last letter 27 Ult. I have begun an Imitation of the “De Arte Poetica” of Horace (in rhyme of course) & have translated or rather varied about 200 lines and shall probably finish it for lack of other argument. – The Horace I found in the convent where I sojourned for some months.²⁹

On March 18th he continues, widening his target area:

I have just finished an imitation in English verse (rhyme of course) of Horace's “Art of Poetry” which I intend as a sequel to my “E[nglish] Bards,” as I have adapted it entirely to our new school of Poetry, though always keeping pretty close to the original. – This poem I have addressed, & shall dedicate to you, in it you fill the same part that the “Pisones” do in Horace, & if published it must be with the Latin subjoined.³⁰

Hobhouse is apprehensive about this news, for, he reports, he started a version of the poem himself when sailing back to England the previous year.³¹ Perhaps afraid that some of his letters may go astray, Byron writes again on May 15th, this time from Malta (he's coming home from Greece):

I have completed an Imitation of Horace “De Arte Poetica” in which you perform the part of *both* the “Pisos.” I have taken a good deal of pains with it, but wish you to see it before I print, particularly as it is addressed to you. – In one part (I deviate and adapt from the original) I have apostrophized you as a lover of (“Vive la Bagatelle”) and it is curious that I should *afterwards* receive a letter from you on the subject of your projected society with that Motto. – I had written the lines without being at all aware of such an intention, and am of course pleased with the coincidence as well as your idea. But more of this in England.³²

It's clear from other letters³³ that Byron's intention of publishing *Hints* with the next (fifth) edition of *English Bards* comes near to realisation. Writing from Reddish's Hotel, London, on July 15th 1811,³⁴ he reports the manuscript to be with the publisher Cawthorne, who brought out four editions of *English Bards* prior to Byron's departure for the east.

But in just over a month his enthusiasm has cooled – for John Murray has accepted *Childe Harold I and II*. On August 25th 1811, Byron writes from Newstead to the unfortunate and soon-to-be-peripheralised Cawthorne:

26: BB 27 (letter of January-February 1808).

27: He quotes Hor. Epis. II, ii 139-40 in his diary entry for April 16th 1820

28: He quotes Hor. Od. III, vii in his diary entry for July 17th 1810.

29: BLJ II 42. B. quotes *Henry V*, III, i, 21.

30: BLJ II 43.

31: BB 66. While at sea in 1809, H. made translations of Horace, *Epistles*, Book I, X, and *Odes*, Book III, XXIX.

32: BLJ II 45-6.

33: BLJ II 49, 53-4, 59, 127, 131,

34: BLJ II 59-60. See also II 73-4, and 80.

Sir, – I am in doubt what to do with the “Hints from Horace.” – Before it can be published I must have some friend in town, who understands the original thoroughly, to overlook the press, & I am inclined to think it had better be delayed till the Satire is reprinted, & so come out in the humbler light of an appendage to the aforesaid. – Besides I have another thing in Mr. Murray’s hands, and I don’t like firing on the Public with a *double Barrell* at least one had better be *discharged* at a time, particularly as the *Captain’s* prose being as it were connected with my rhimes, & coming out at the same time, should make us appear such pestilent scribblers, as this volley of Quarto’s & Foolscap Octavos certainly will. – Why, we shall want a press to ourselves, & if we go on with “Weeks at Bath” & Travels, & Satires, & Imitations, & poems descriptive & what not, your Neighbor Mr. Eyre the trunk-maker will thrive prodigiously. – – I am very undecided, but in the mean time the M.S. will do very well where it is, unless you send it Eyre’s before it’s time.³⁵

The *Captain* is Hobhouse, now in the militia, “Weeks at Bath” is a reference to his satire *The Wonders of a Week at Bath*, published at this time, and *Travels* is his *A Journey through Albania, and other Provinces of Turkey*, which is in fact not to be published for another two years.

Byron published neither *Hints*, nor the fifth edition of *English Bards*. Perhaps he realised it would be strange for the romantic poseur of *Childe Harold* to be known also as the author of such an apparently classical work as *Hints from Horace*.

When he left England in 1816, Byron left with Murray a Power of Attorney insisting, among other things, that if *Hints* were to be published, the lines on Jeffrey (589-626) must be omitted.³⁶ He would remember this later – though Murray would not.

In stanzas 74 to 77 of *Childe Harold’s* fourth Canto, written in 1817, Byron makes what he claims is his farewell to Horace. The reference to Mount Soracte is from Horace, Odes, Book I, ode 9:

... I’ve looked on Ida with a Trojan’s eye;
Athos, Olympus, Ætna, Atlas, made
These hills seem things of lesser dignity,
All, save the lone Soracte’s height, displayed
Not *now* in snow, which asks the lyric Roman’s aid

For our remembrance, and from out the plain
Heaves like a long-swept wave about to break,
And on the curl hangs pausing: not in vain
May he, who will, his recollections rake,
And quote in classic raptures, and awake
The hills with Latian echoes; I abhorred
Too much, to conquer for the poet’s sake,
The drilled dull lesson, forced down word by word
In my repugnant youth, with pleasure to record

Aught that recalls the daily drug which turned
My sickening memory; and, though Time hath taught
My mind to meditate what then it learned,
Yet such the fixed inveteracy, wrought
By the impatience of my early thought,
That with the freshness wearing out before
My mind could relish what it might have sought,
If free to choose, I cannot now restore
Its health; but what it then detested, still abhor.

Then farewell, Horace; whom I hated so,
Not for thy faults, but mine; it is a curse
To understand, not feel thy lyric flow,
To comprehend, but never love thy verse:
Although no deeper Moralist rehearse
Our little life, nor Bard prescribe his art,
Nor livelier Satirist the conscience pierce,
Awakening without wounding the touched heart,

35: BLJ II 81.

36: See Robin Byron, *Hints From Horace: An Unpublished Note by Lord Byron*, BJ 16 (1988) pp 86-7.

Yet fare thee well – upon Soracte’s ridge we part.

He spoke too soon. In 1820, his years of fame being over, *Childe Harold* behind him, and *Don Juan* well under way, he became again interested in publishing *Hints*. In a P.S. to Murray of March 28th he wrote from Ravenna:

I have some thoughts of publishing the “hints from Horace” written ten years ago – if Hobhouse can rummage them out of my papers left at his father’s – with some omissions and alterations previously to be made – when I see the proofs. – –³⁷

Murray seems to have been in no hurry to respond, and on June 8th Byron tried a letter to his earlier Piso-equivalent, Hobhouse:

I wish you would ferret out at Whitton – the “Hints from Horace”. I think it (the Pope part) might be appended to that Popean poem – for publication or no – as you decide. I care not a damn. – – Murray was in a violent hurry for poetry – I sent it – & now he is reluctant.³⁸

Hobhouse moves as slowly as did Murray, but by September 21st Byron responds with pleasure to something which he’s written:

The “Hints &c.” are good are they? As to the friends we can change their names unless they rhyme well – in that case they must stand. Except Scott and Jeffrey and Moore. – Sir B. Burgess and a few more I know no friends who need be left out of a good poem.³⁹

Two days later he returns to being peremptory with Murray:

Get from Mr. Hobhouse and send me a proof (with the Latin) of my Hints from H[orace] &c.; – it has now the “*nonum prematur in annum*” complete for its production – being written at Athens in 1811. – I have a notion that with some omissions of names and passages it will do – and I could put my late observations *for* Pope among the notes with the date of 1820, and so on. – As far as versification goes it is good – and on looking back to what I wrote about that period – I am astonished to see how *little* I have trained on – I wrote better then than now – but that comes from my having fallen into the atrocious bad taste of the times – partly. – – It has been kept too nine years – nobody keeps their piece nine years now a days – except Douglas K[innaird] – he kept his nine years and then restored her to the public. – If I can trim it for present publication –⁴⁰

On November 6th Hobhouse, who had praised the poem in a previous 1820 letter which we don’t have (his taste in poetry was very conservative), answered:

I have looked out the *Hints* – by heavens we must have some “cutting and slashing” in order to qualify them for the present state of your friendships literary & others – but as I said before the hints are good – good to give though not likely to be taken ...⁴¹

And on November 23rd Byron again repeats⁴² that a trimmed version be published separately, with his name on it.

By 1821 Byron was in the midst of his controversy over Bowles’ edition of Pope. *A Letter to ***** (John Murray Esq^r) on the Rev. W. L. Bowles’ Strictures on the Life and Writings of Pope* was written from the 7th to the 10th of February 1821, and published by Murray on 31st March. Byron linked his defence of Pope with the earlier attempt at writing in Horaces’s (and therefore Pope’s) style and tradition.

On January 4th he again asks Murray to retrieve *Hints*, so that he can “alter parts & portions,” saying “I will omit nothing and alter little; the fact is (as I perceive) – that I wrote a great deal better in 1811.”⁴³

37: BLJ VII 60.

38: BLJ VII 114.

39: BLJ VII 178

40: BLJ VII 179. Kinaird’s “piece” is Maria Keppel, his partner for most of the previous decade.

41: BB 302.

42: BLJ VII 238.

43: BLJ VIII 56, 60.

On January 11th he reports himself in his journal as correcting it.⁴⁴ But Murray only sends half the proof sheets, even though he set up a fuller set.⁴⁵ By March 1st it Byron has had a full set of proofs, but he's still dissatisfied:

I have received the remainder of the *Hints without* the Latin – and *without* the *Note* upon Pope from the Letters to E[dinburgh] B[lackwood's] M[agazine]. – – Instead of this you send the *lines* on *Jeffrey* – though you knew so positively that they were omitted – that I *left the direction that they should be cancelled appended to my power of Attorney* to you previously to leaving England – and in case of my demise before the publication of the “Hints”. – Of course they must be omitted – and I feel vexed that they were sent. Has the whole English text been sent regularly continued from the part broken off in the first proofs? – And Pray request Mr. Hobhouse to adjust the *Latin* to the English – the imitation is so close – that I am unwilling to deprive it of it's principle merit, it's closeness. – – I look upon it and my Pulci as by far the best things of my doing – *you* will not think so – and *get* frightened for fear I shall charge accordingly – but I know that they will *not* be popular – so don't be afraid – publish them together. – –⁴⁶

(The edition below gives him what he wanted, with Horace “adjusted”, and the note on Pope.)
Byron complains continually;⁴⁷ but the project fizzles out.

Byron remodels his model.

Some passages in *Hints from Horace* are excellent examples of translation, or should we say, transposition:

Tu quid ego et populus mecum desideret audi,
si plosoris eges aulaea manentis et usque
sessuri donec cantor. “Vos plaudite” dicat.
Aetatis cuiusque notandi sunt tibi mores,
mobilibusque decor naturis dandus et annis.
Reddere qui uoces iam scit puer et pede certo
signat humum, gestit paribus concludere et iram
colligit ac ponit temere et mutatur in horas.⁴⁸

[Listen to what I and the general public along with me desire, if indeed you wish applauding listeners to wait for the final curtain and to remain seated until the singer says “Give us a hand now”; you must note the characteristics of each stage of life and you must grant what is appropriate to changing natures and ages. A child who just now has learned to repeat words and to stamp the ground with a firm footstep takes great pleasure in playing with other children and heedlessly conceives and abandons anger as well as changes moods hour by hour.]

This becomes

If you would please the public, deign to hear
What soothes the many-headed monster's ear;
If your heart triumph when the hands of all
Applaud in thunder at the curtain's fall;
Deserve those plaudits – study Nature's page,
And sketch the striking traits of every age;
While varying Man and varying years unfold
Life's little tale, so oft, so vainly told,
Observe his simple childhood's dawning days,
His pranks, his prate, his playmates, and his plays;
Till Time at length the mannish tyro weans,
And prurient Vice outstrips his tardy teens!⁴⁹

Perhaps “the many-headed monster,” and the last two lines, are unnecessary developments.

44: BLJ VIII 21.

45: CPW I 416.

46: BLJ VIII 88.

47: BLJ VIII 60, 61, 69, 77.

48: Ars Poetica 153-60.

49: HfH 213-24.

Elsewhere, however, Byron goes further. He does far more than just translate Horace: he dresses him in such new, Byronic garb that although the figure is recognisable, the style of the clothing is not. Here are lines 396-401, in which Horace makes a large claim for the ethical power of poetry:

Fuit haec sapientia quondam,
publica priuatis secernere, sacra profanis,
concubitu prohibere uago, dare iura maritis,
oppida moliri, leges incidere ligno.
Sic honor et nomen diuinis uatibus atque
carminibus uenit.⁵⁰

[Once it was deemed wisdom to keep what was public separate from what was private, what was sacred from what was not, to issue prohibitions against promiscuity, to set down laws for those who are married, to build towns, to inscribe laws on wooden tablets. In this way honor and renown came to poets, inspired by the gods, and their songs.]

Here is Byron's version of the same:

Verse too was Justice, and the Bards of Greece
Did more than constables to keep the peace;
Abolished cuckoldom with much applause,
Called county-meetings, and enforced the laws;
Cut down Crown influence with reforming scythes,
And served the Church, without demanding tythes;
And hence, throughout all Hellas and the East,
Each Poet was a Prophet and a Priest,
Whose old established Board of Joint Controuls
Included kingdoms in the care of souls.⁵¹

It is not clear that Byron believes poetry to have the moral power and authority which Horace claims for it: he is, by bringing in as much amusing English detail as possible, laughing at the very idea that it might. The amusing English detail is in fact ill-judged, if Horace's serious effect is to be emulated: there were, after all, no tythes in Greece, and no Board of Joint Controul, and in English history poets never had such power, never called county-meetings, and certainly never abolished cuckoldom. Did they, we therefore wonder, thinking about Byron's equivalences, really have it in Rome?

Sometimes Byron goes off on a track where Horace would never have led. Horace gives him no equivalent to the following:

The Muse, like mortal females, may be wooed;
In turns she'll seem a Paphian, or a prude;
Fierce as a bride when first she feels affright,
Mild as the same upon the second night;
Wild as the wife of Alderman, or Peer,
Now for His Grace, and now a Grenadier!
Her eyes beseem, her heart belies, her zone –
Ice in a crowd, and Lava when alone.⁵²

The desire to shock is not part of Horace's motive in writing.

It is in the crowded specificities of his satire that Byron changes his focus from that of Horace. Horace refers only in glancing to the poets he dislikes, such as Accius at line 258, or Ennius at line 259. Byron lays it on thick left and right, adding prose notes to his verse if he feels a negative point hasn't been made with sufficient emphasis. Fascinating is the way he already despises Southey, in 1811 only known to him as a name in print, not as a person, still less as a turncoat and rumour-monger. The way, in his note to line 191, he sneers covertly at the then unknown and now obliterated George Townsend, is mean. Another long prose note, to line 734, implies that for working-class people to write poetry is for them to aspire

50: Ars Poetica 396-401.

51: HfH 669-78.

52: HfH 689-96.

above their station. Given the working-class origins of, for example, William Gifford, already in 1811 one of Byron's idols, this is a mite insensitive.

Hints from Horace and the theatre

Byron was an amateur of the theatre throughout his life. Not having to make his living at it, he knew, as Alfieri had in the previous century, that a great poet should also aspire to be a great tragic dramatist, but, also like Alfieri, felt that the business of staging, casting, rehearsing, and re-writing, was too squalid for a man of his rank. Not for him the practical attitude of a Shakespeare or a Molière. The elitist attitude affects his writing in *Hints*:

In sooth I do not know, or greatly care
To learn, who our first English strollers were;
Or if, till roofs received their vagrant art,
Our Muse, like that of Thespis, kept a cart;
But this is certain, since our Shakespeare's days,
There's pomp enough – if little else – in plays;
Nor will Melpomene ascend her Throne
Without high heels, white plume, and Bristol stone.

Old Comedies still meet with much applause,
Though too licentious for dramatic laws;
At least, we moderns, wisely, 'tis confest,
Curtil, or silence, the lascivious jest.⁵³

Now one could argue that the conditions of the theatre in Byron's day were inferior, that spectacle, and heavy cuts to accommodate it, were the norm, and that most acting was orotund in a way that we should find intolerable. And yet the lines (329-36) in praise of the comedian Samuel Foote, a talent Byron could only have heard about, and those criticising Walpole's Licensing Act (351-70), show that Byron understood the need for theatre as a source of social comment, as a vital way of holding a mirror up to the world. Byron is trying to have to both ways – or rather, he is trying to face two ways at once, and doesn't realise it.

Horace is an experienced Olympian, speaking as an authority, knowing what to select and what to ignore. *Hints* is, as Byron says of Keats in the note which I have appended, "the volume of a young person learning to write poetry, and beginning by teaching the art." Byron is an arrogant tyro, just starting out, fascinated and overwhelmed by the pullulating literary and theatrical morass in which he is soon to get, in literary, social, moral, and political terms, lost. In 1811, in reality, this admirer of Horace ignored the lessons of the *Epistola ad Pisones*: when he'd recovered, nine years later, he realised what had happened, and tried to atone by another attempt at publishing it.

A good way of putting the difference would take us back to my opening paragraph, about Southey: if Horace were to be shown a Latin translation of Southey's original *You are Old, Father William*, he would nod with solemn agreement. Byron would laugh like a drain at Edward Lear's parody; but Horace, humorist though he was, wouldn't see the joke.

Hints from Horace is the sixth version in English of the *Ars Poetica*. Others are by Ben Jonson (published 1640); the Earl of Roscommon (1680); John Oldham (1681); H. Ames (1727) and W. Clubbe, who published his version in Ipswich in 1797. There are numerous parodies and travesties.

THIS EDITION

Byron always wanted *Hints* to be printed with Horace's Latin adjacent.⁵⁴ This is the first edition ever to do so: I have even gone one stage further, and included a translation, too. Byron's text is to the left, a translation of Horace's original to the right, and the Latin in the notes.

Hints should be read in conjunction with *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. I tried in annotating to draw attention to their similarities.

[Passages in red type and square brackets would have been cut by Byron from his projected 1821 edition.]

I have taken the translation (by Leon Golden) from

< <http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/DRAMA/ArsPoetica.html> >

and the Latin text from

<<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/horace/arspoet.shtml>>

I have added as a long end-note a section from *Some Observations upon an Article in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine N° XXIV, August 1819*, which Byron asked to be appended when, in 1821, the questions of publishing *Hints* arose again.

54: BLJ II 74, 83, and 112, VIII 79 and 88.

HINTS FROM HORACE

Being an Allusion in English Verse to the Epistle “Ad Pisonem de Ars Poetica” and Intended as a Sequel to “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers”

Athens, Capuchin Convent. March 12, 1811

Ergo fungar vie cotis, acutum
Reddere quæ ferrum valet, excors ipsa secandi.⁵⁵
HOR., De Arte Poet., ll. 304, 305.

Rhymes are difficult things – they are stubborn things, Sir.
FIELDING’s Amelia, Vol. III, Book and Chap. V.⁵⁶

PREFACE [1811]

Though it be one of the obnoxious egotisms of authorship to state when or where a work was composed, I must incur this censure by stating that the following Imitation was begun and finished at Athens, the only spot on earth which may partly apologize for such a declaration.

Two years have passed and many countries have been traversed since circumstance converted me into a Satirist. If my first volume of Rhyme had been suffered to pass quickly into mental obscurity, I would have quietly passed along with it. But a celebrated editor would be witty, and a variety of other facetious Gentlemen must needs be waggish and angry too with such perseverance, that after waiting a long time for a cessation of buffoonery and abuse, it became necessary for me to convince these persons how very easy it is to say illnated things and to sell them also. A Satire, if not very bad indeed, will generally meet with temporary success because it administers to the malignant propensities of our Nature. My literary pursuits were not very aspiring and I hope they would have been tranquil – if it has passed otherwise the fault is with the aggressors.

To those on whose compositions only I have animadverted, I have but written (for the most part) in verse what had very often been said of them in plain prose. – Had the attacks on me been merely confined to my rhymes, I should have been silent. For the present I have nothing to claim from Candour or Criticism. If this makes its way, it must be by its own merits, for it has no mercy to ask, or to expect. –

The Latin text is printed with the Imitation, not only to show where I have left Horace, but where Horace has left me. The English examples adduced will be found I hope with their merits justly estimated however awkwardly expressed.

PREFACE [1820]

However little this poem may resemble the Latin, it has been submitted to one of the great rules of Horace, having been kept in the desk for more than *nine* years.⁵⁷ It was composed at Athens in the Spring of 1811, and received some additions after the author’s return to England in the same year.⁵⁸

Who would not laugh if Lawrence, ⁵⁹ skilled to grace *	<i>If a painter were willing to join a horse’s neck to</i>
His classic canvas with each flattered face,	<i>a human head and spread on multicolored</i>
Abused his art, till Nature, with a blush,	<i>feathers, with different parts of the body brought</i>
Saw cits grow Centaurs underneath his brush?	<i>in from anywhere and everywhere, so that what</i>
Or should some limner join, for show or sale, 5	<i>starts out above as a beautiful woman ends up</i>
A Maid of Honour to a Mermaid’s tail?	<i>horribly as a black fish, could you my friends, if</i>
Or low Dubost, ⁶⁰ as once the world has seen, †	<i>you had been admitted to the spectacle, hold</i>

55: “I shall serve in place of a whetstone that has the power to render iron sharp but itself lacks the ability to cut.”

56: In modern editions, Book 8, chapter 5. The speaker is a hack author imprisoned for debt.

57: See below, line 656.

58: B. sends this brief preface to Murray on January 11th 1821: BLJ VIII 59.

59: Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-30) portrait painter. He wanted to paint B., but B. left the country.

60: Antoine Dubost, French painter.

Degrade God's creatures in his graphic spleen?
 Not all that forced politeness which defends
 Fools in their faults, could gag his grinning friends.
 Believe me, Moschus,⁶¹ like that picture seems 11
 The book, which, sillier than a sick man's dreams,
 Displays a crowd of figures incomplete,
 Poetic Night-mares, without head or feet.

Poets and painters as all artists know, 15
 May shoot a little with a lengthened bow;
 We claim this mutual mercy for our task,
 And grant in turn the pardon which we ask;
 But make not monsters spring from gentle dams,
 Birds breed not vipers, tigers nurse not lambs. 20

*back your laughter? Believe me, dear Pisos, that very similar to such a painting would be a literary work in which meaningless images are fashioned, like the dreams of someone who is mentally ill, so that neither the foot nor the head can be attributed to a single form. "Painters and poets," someone objects, "have always had an equal right to dare to do whatever they wanted." We know it and we both seek this indulgence and grant it in turn. But not to the degree that the savage mate with the gentle, nor that snakes be paired with birds, nor lambs with tigers.*⁶²

* I have been obliged to dive into the "Bathos" for the simile, as I could not find a description of these painters' merits above ground.

Si liceat parvis
 Compenere magna⁶³ –

Like London's column pointing to the skies
 Like a *tall Bully*, lifts itself and lies –

I was in hopes might bear me out, if the monument be a Bully. West's glory may be reduced by the scale of comparison. If not, let me have recourse to Tom Thumb the Great to keep my similitude in countenance.

† In an English newspaper, which finds its way abroad wherever there are Englishmen, I read an account of the dirty dauber's caricature of Mr H[ope] as a "beast," and the consequent action, &c.⁶⁴ The circumstance is, probably, too well known to require further comment.

A laboured, long Exordium sometimes tends
 (Like patriot speeches) but to paltry ends;
 And nonsense in a lofty note goes down,
 As Pertness passes with a legal gown:
 Thus many a Bard describes in pompous strain 25
 The clear brook babbling through the goodly plain;
 The Groves of Granta,⁶⁵ and her Gothic halls –
 King's Coll. – Cam's streams – stained windows, and old walls:
 Or, in adventurous numbers neatly aims

Often, one or two purple patches are stitched onto works that have begun in high seriousness, and that profess important themes, so that they sparkle far and wide; as when the grove and altar of Diana and the circling of swiftly flowing waters through the pleasant fields or the Rhine river or the rainbow are described. But this was not the place for such embellishments. And perhaps you know how to

61: Horace addresses his poem to the sons of Piso; B. his to Hobhouse, nicknamed "Moschus". Moschus was a Greek pastoral poet of the second century BC. See ll 341-50 below.

62: Humano capiti ceruicem pictor equinam
 iungere si uelit et uarias inducere plumas
 undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
 desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,
 spectatum admissi, risum teneatis, amici? 5
 Credite, Pisones, isti tabulae fore librum
 persimilem, cuius, uelut aegri somnia, uanae
 fingentur species, ut nec pes nec caput uni
 reddatur formae. "Pictoribus atque poetis
 quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas." 10
 Scimus, et hanc ueniam petimusque damusque uicissim,
 sed non ut placidis coeant immitia, non ut
 serpentes auibus gementur, tigris agni.

63: Virgil, *Georgics* IV, 176: "If we may compare small things with great". Compare *Henry V*, Chorus to Act V, 29.

64: Dubost caricatured Thomas Hope (1769-1831), future author of *Anastasius* (1819), and his wife, as Beauty and the Beast: Hope's brother-in-law mutilated the picture and Dubost sued him successfully.

65: Another name for the river Cam, which runs through Cambridge.

To paint a rainbow, or – the river Thames. * 30
 You sketch a tree, and so perhaps may shine,
 But daub a shipwreck like an ale-house sign;
 You plan a vase – it dwindles to a pot –
 Then glide down Grub-Street – fasting, and forgot;
 Laughed into Lethe by some quaint Review, 35
 Whose wit is never troublesome, till – true.
 In fine, to whatsoever you aspire,
 Let it at least be simple and entire.

*draw a cypress tree. What does that matter if you have been paid to paint a desperate sailor swimming away from a shipwreck? You started out to make a wine-jar. Why, as the wheel turns, does it end up as a pitcher? In short, let the work be anything you like, but let it at least be one, single thing.*⁶⁶

* “While pure Description held the place of Sense.” – Pope, *Prol. To the Sat.*, l 148.

The greater portion of the rhyming tribe –
 (Give ear, my friend, for thou hast been a scribe)40
 Are led astray by some peculiar lure;
 I labour to be brief – become obscure:
 One falls while following Elegance too fast,
 Another soars, inflated with Bombast;
 Too low a third crawls on, afraid to fly;
 He spins his subject to Satiety; 45
 Absurdly wavering, he at last engraves
 Fish in the woods, and boars beneath the waves!

*Most of us poets, o father and sons who are worthy of that father, deceive ourselves by an illusion of correct procedure. I work at achieving brevity; instead I become obscure. Striving for smoothness, vigor and spirit escape me. One poet, promising the sublime, delivers pomposity. Another creeps along the ground, overly cautious and too much frightened of the gale. Whoever wishes to vary a single subject in some strange and wonderful way, paints a dolphin into a forest and a boar onto the high seas. The avoidance of blame leads to error if there is an absence of art.*⁶⁷

Unless your care’s exact, your judgement nice,
 The flight from Folly leads but into Vice; 50
 None are complete, all wanting in some part,
 Like certain tailors, limited in art;
 For galligaskins⁶⁸ Slowshears is your man,
 But coats must claim another artisan. *
 Now this to me, I own, seems much the same 55
 As Vulcan’s feet to bear Apollo’s frame;
 Or, with a fair complexion to expose

*Near the gladiatorial school of Aemilius, a most incompetent craftsman will mold toenails and imitate soft hair in bronze but he is unsuccessful with his complete work because he does not know how to represent a whole figure. If I wished to compose something, I would no more wish to be him than to live with a crooked nose although highly regarded for my black eyes and black hair.*⁶⁹

66: Inceptis grauibus plerumque et magna professis
 purpureus, late qui splendeat, unus et alter 15
 adsuitur pannus, cum lucus et ara Dianae
 et properantis aquae per amoenos ambitus agros
 aut flumen Rhenum aut pluuius describitur arcus;
 sed nunc non erat his locus. Et fortasse cupressum
 scis simulare; quid hoc, si fractis enatat exspes 20
 nauibus, aere dato qui pingitur? Amphora coepit
 institui; currente rota cur urceus exit?

67: Denique sit quod uis, simplex dumtaxat et unum
 Maxima pars uatum, pater et iuuenes patre digni,
 decipimur specie recti. Breuis esse laboro, 25
 obscurus fio; sectantem leuia nerui
 deficiunt animique; professus grandia turget;
 serpit humi tutus nimium timidusque procellae;
 qui uariare cupit rem prodigialiter unam,
 delphinum siluis adpingit, fluctibus aprum. 30
 In uitium ducit culpae fuga, si caret arte.

68: Galligaskins are loose, wide hose or breeches, worn in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

69: Aemilium circa ludum faber imus et unguis
 exprimet et mollis imitabitur aere capillos,
 infelix operis summa, quia ponere totum

Black eyes, black ringlets, but – a bottle nose!

* Mere common mortals were commonly content with one Taylor and with one bill, but the more particular gentleman found it impossible to confide their lower garments to the makers of their body clothes. I speak of the beginning of 1809: what reform may have since taken place I neither know, nor desire to know.

Dear Authors! Suit your topics to your strength,
And ponder well your subject and its length, 60
Nor lift your load before you're quite aware
What weights your shoulders will or will not bear.
But lucid Order, and Wit's siren sense,
Await the Poet skilful in his choice;
With native Eloquence he soars along, 65
Grace in his thoughts, and Music in his song!
Let Judgement teach him wisely to combine
With future parts the now omitted line,
This shall the Author choose, and that reject,
Precise in style, and cautious to select; 70
Nor slight applause will candid pens afford
To him who furnishes a wanting word;
Then fear not, if 'tis needful, to produce
Some term unknown, or obsolete in use:
(As Pitt⁷¹ has furnished us a word or two, * 75
Which Lexicographers declined to do),
So you indeed, with care – but be content
To take this license rarely – may invent.
New words find credit in these latter days,
If neatly grafted on a Gallic phrase; 80
What Chaucer, Spenser did, we scarce refuse
To Dryden's, or to Pope's maturer Muse.
If you can add a little, say, why not?
As well as William Pitt, and Walter Scott;
Since they by force of rhyme and force of lungs 85
Enriched our Islands' ill-united tongues;
'Tis then, and shall be, lawful to present
Reform in writing, as in Parliament.

* Mr. Pitt was liberal in his additions to our

*Pick a subject, writers, equal to your strength
and take some time to consider what your
shoulders should refuse and what they can bear.
Neither eloquence nor clear organization will
forsake one who has chosen a subject within his
capabilities. Unless I am mistaken this will be
the special excellence and delight of good
organization, that the author of the promised
poem, enamored of one subject and scornful of
another, says now what ought to be said now
and both postpones and omits a great deal for
the present.⁷⁰*

*Also in linking words you will speak with
exceptional subtlety and care if a skillful
connection renders a well-known term with a
new twist. If, by chance, it is necessary to
explain obscure matters by means of new images
it will turn out that you must devise words never
heard by the kilted Cethegi, and license for this
will be given if claimed with modesty. Words
that are new and recently coined will be
received in good faith if they are sparingly
diverted from a Greek source. Why then will the
Roman grant to Caecilius and Plautus what is
denied to Virgil and Varius? If I am capable of
doing it, why am I grudged the acquisition of
some few words when the tongue of Cato and
Ennius enriched our ancestral language and
revealed new names for things? It has always
been permitted, and it always will be permitted
to bring to light a name stamped with the mark
of the present day.⁷²*

	nesciet. Hunc ego me, siquid componere curem,	35
	non magis esse uelim quam naso uiuere prauo spectandum nigris oculis nigroque capillo.	
70:	Sumite materiam uestris, qui scribitis, aequam uiribus et uersate diu quid ferre recusent, quid ualeant umeri. Cui lecta potenter erit res,	40
	nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo. Ordinis haec uirtus erit et uenus, aut ego fallor, ut iam nunc dicat iam nunc debentia dici, pleraque differat et praesens in tempus omittat, hoc amet, hoc spernat promissi carminis auctor.	45
71:	William Pitt (1759-1806) Tory Prime Minister. See <i>EBSR</i> , 1016.	
72:	In uerbis etiam tenuis cautusque serendis dixeris egregie, notum si callida uerbum reddiderit iunctura nouum. Si forte necesse est indiciis monstrare recentibus abdita rerum, et fingere cinctutis non exaudita Cethegis	50
	continget dabiturque licentia sumpta pudenter,	

Parliamentary tongue; as may be seen in many publications, particularly the *Edinburgh Review*.

As forests shed their foliage by degrees,
So fade expressions, which in season please; 90
And we and ours, alas! are due to Fate,
And works and words but dwindle to a date;
Though as a Monarch nods, and Commerce calls, *
Impetuous rivers stagnate in canals;
Though swamps subdued, and marshes drain, sustain
The heavy ploughshare and the yellow grain,
And rising ports along the busy shore
Protect the vessel from old Ocean's roar,
All, all must perish – but, surviving last,
The love of Letters half preserves the past; 100
True – some decay, yet not a few revive,
Though those shall sink, which now appear to thrive,
As Custom arbitrates, whose shifting sway
Our life and language must alike obey.

* Old ballads, old plays, and old women's stories, are at present in as much request as old wine or new speeches. In fact, this is the millenium of black letter: thanks to our Hebers,⁷⁵ Webers, and Scotts!⁷⁶

The immortal wars which Gods and Angels wage, 105
Are they not shown in Milton's sacred page?
His strain will teach what numbers best belong
To themes celestial told in Epic song.

The slow, sad stanza will correctly paint
The Lover's anguish, or the Friend's complaint, 110
But which deserves the Laurel – Rhyme or Blank?

Just as forests change their leaves year by year and the first drop to the ground, so the old generation of words perishes, and new ones, like the rising tide of the young, flourish and grow strong. We, and everything that is ours, are destined to die; whether Neptune, hospitably received on land, keeps our fleets safe from the north winds, a task worthy of a king, or a marsh, barren for a long time, and suitable for oars, nourishes nearby cities and feels the heavy plough, or a river has changed its course that was hostile to crops and has discovered a better route to follow, all things mortal will perish; much less will the glory and grace of language remain alive. Many terms will be born again that by now have sunk into oblivion, and many that are now held in respect will die out if that is what use should dictate in whose power is the judgment and the law and the rule of speech.⁷³

Homer has demonstrated in what meter we should describe the deeds of kings and leaders as well as gloomy wars. Lament, first, was enclosed in unequally paired verses and later also our grateful thoughts for answered prayer. Scholars disagree about who originally published these brief elegiac verses, and it still is before the court as a matter of dispute. Fury

73: et noua fictaque nuper habebunt uerba fidem, si
Graeco fonte cadent parce detorta. Quid autem
Caecilio Plautoque dabit Romanus, ademptum
Vergilio Varioque? Ego cur, adquirere pauca 55
si possum, inuideor, cum lingua Catonis et Enni
sermonem patrium ditauerit et noua rerum
nomina protulerit? Licuit semperque licebit
signatum praesente nota producere nomen.
Vt siluae foliis pronos mutantur in annos, 60
prima cadunt, ita uerborum uetus interit aetas,
et iuuenum ritu florent modo nata uigentque.
Debemur morti nos nostraque. Siue receptus
terra Neptunus classes Aquilonibus arcet,
regis opus, sterilisue diu palus aptaque remis 65
uicinas urbes alit et graue sentit aratrum,
seu cursum mutauit iniquom frugibus amnis,
doctus iter melius, mortalia facta peribunt,
nedum sermonem stet honos et gratia uiuax.
Multa renascentur quae iam cecidere, cadentque 70
quae nunc sunt in honore uocabula, si uolet usus,
quem penes arbitrium est et ius et norma loquendi.

74: Black letter is German, Gothic or Old English type: a black letter day is an inauspicious day.

75: Richard Heber (1773-1833) editor of early English poetry.

76: W. H. Weber (1783-1818) was Walter Scott's research assistant, an editor also of early English texts.

Which holds on Helicon the higher rank?
 Let squabbling critics by themselves dispute
 This point, as puzzling as a Chancery suit.

[Satiric rhyme first sprang from selfish Spleen. 115
 You doubt – see Dryden, Pope, St. Patrick’s Dean.] *⁷⁷

Blank verse is now with one consent allied
 To Tragedy, and rarely quits her side;
 Though mad Almanzor rhymed in Dryden’s days,⁷⁸
 No sing-song Hero rants in modern plays; 120
 While modest Comedy her verse foregoes
 To jest and *pun* † in very middling prose;
 Not that our Bens or Beaumonts show the worse,
 Or lose one point because the wrote in verse;
 But, so Thalia⁸⁰ pleases to appear – 125
 Poor Virgin! damned some twenty times a year!

armed Archilochus with his own iambus: both the comic sock and the grand tragic boot took possession of this foot, suited as it was for alternating dialogue and able to conquer the raucous shouts of the audience as well as naturally suited to action. The muse granted the lyre the task of reporting about the gods, the children of the gods, the victorious boxer, and the horse who was first in the race, as well as to record youthful anguish and wine’s liberating influence. Why am I greeted as a poet if I have neither the ability nor the knowledge to preserve the variations and shades of the literary works that I have described? Why, perversely modest, do I prefer to be ignorant than to learn?⁷⁹

* *Mac Flecknoe, the Dunciad, and all Swift’s lampooning ballads. Whatever their other works may be, these originated in personal feelings, and angry retort on unworthy rivals; and though the ability of these satires elevates the poetical, their poignancy detracts from the personal character of the writers.*

† With all the vulgar applause and critical abhorrence of puns, they have Aristotle on their side; who permits them to orators, and gives them consequence by a grave disquisition.

Whate’er the scene, let this advice have weight;
 Adapt your language to your Hero’s state:
 At times Melpomene⁸¹ forgets to groan,
 And brisk Thalia takes a serious tone; 130
 Nor unregarded will the act pass by
 Where angry Townly⁸² lifts his voice on high;
 Again – our Shakespeare limits verse to Kings,
 When common prose will serve for common things,
 And lively Hal resigns heroic ire 135
 To “hollaing” Hotspur * and the sceptred sire.

The subject matter of comedy does not wish to find expression in tragic verses. In the same way the feast of Thyestes is indignant at being represented through informal verses that are very nearly worthy of the comic sock. Let each genre keep to the appropriate place allotted to it. Sometimes, however, even comedy raises its voice and an angered Chremes declaims furiously in swollen utterances; and often the tragic figures of Telephus and Peleus grieve in pedestrian language when, as a pauper or exile,

77: These two lines – and the sentiment they express – have no equivalent in Horace. St. Patrick’s Dean is Swift.

78: Dryden’s *Almanzor, or the Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards* (1670); its protagonist was a ranter.

79:

Res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella quo scribi possent numero, monstravit Ho merus. Versibus impariter iunctis querimonia primum,	75
post etiam inclusa est uoti sententia compos; quis tamen exiguos elegos emisit auctor, grammatici certant et adhuc sub iudice lis est. Archilochum proprio rabies armauit iambo; hunc socci cepere pedem grandesque coturni,	80
alternis aptum sermonibus et popularis uincentem strepitus et natum rebus agendis. Musa dedit fidibus diuos puerosque deorum et pugilem uictorem et equom certamine primum et iuuenum curas et libera uina referre.	85
Discriptas seruare uices operumque colores cur ego, si nequeo ignoroque, poeta salutor? Cur nescire pudens praue quam discere malo?	

80: Thalia is the Muse of Comedy.

81: Melpomene is the Muse of Tragedy.

82: Lord Townly is the protagonist of *The Provok’d Husband*, by Vanbrugh and Cibber (1728).

* “And in his ear I’ll holla – Mortimer!”⁸³

*each of them, if he should care to touch the heart of the spectator with his complaint, abandons bombast and a sesquipedalian vocabulary.*⁸⁴

’Tis not enough, ye Bards, with all your art,
To polish poems – they must touch the heart!
Where’er the scene be laid, whate’er the song,
Still let it bear the hearer’s soul along; 140
Command your audience, or to smile or to weep,
Whiche’er may please you – anything but sleep,
The poet claims our tears; but, by his leave,
Before I shed them, let me see *him* grieve:
If banished Romeo feigned nor sigh, nor tear,⁸⁵ 145
Lulled by his anger, I should sleep or sneer.
Sad words, no doubt, become a serious face,
And men look angry in the proper place;
At double meanings folk seem wondrous sly,
And Sentiment prescribes a pensive eye; 150
For Nature formed at first the injured man,
And actors copy Nature when they can;
She bids the beating heart with rapture bound,
Raised to the Stars, or levelled with the ground;
And for Expression’s aid, ’tis said or sung, 155
She gave our mind’s interpreter, the tongue,
Who, worn with use, of late would fain dispense,
At least in theatres, with common sense;
O’erwhelm with sound the Boxes, Gallery, Pit,
And raise a laugh with anything but Wit. 160

*It is not enough for poems to be “beautiful”; they must also yield delight and guide the listener’s spirit wherever they wish. As human faces laugh with those who are laughing, so they weep with those who are weeping. If you wish me to cry, you must first feel grief yourself, then your misfortunes, O Telephus or Peleus, will injure me. If you speak ineptly assigned words, I shall either sleep or laugh. Sad words are fitting for the gloomy face, words full of threats for the angry one, playful words for the amused face, serious words for the stern one. For Nature first forms us within so as to respond to every kind of fortune. She delights us or impels us to anger or knocks us to the ground and torments us with oppressive grief. Afterward she expresses the emotions of the spirit with language as their interpreter. If, however, there is discord between the words spoken and the fortune of the speaker, Romans, whether cavalry or infantry, will raise their voices in a raucous belly laugh.*⁸⁶

To skilful writers it will much import, *It will make a great difference whether a god is*
Whence spring their scenes, from common life or Court; *speaking or a hero, a mature old man or*

83: *Henry IV I, I iii 222.* Hotspur threatens Henry with the name of the legitimate king of England.

84: Versibus exponi tragicis res comica non uult;
indignatur item priuatis ac prope socco 90
dignis carminibus narrari cena Thyestae.
Singula quaeque locum teneant sortita decentem.
Interdum tamen et uocem comoedia tollit,
iratusque Chremes tumido delitigat ore;
et tragicus plerumque dolet sermone pedestri 95
Telephus et Peleus, cum pauper et exil uterque
proicit ampullas et sesquipedalia uerba,
si curat cor spectantis tetigisse querella.

85: *Romeo and Juliet, III iii.*

86: Non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunt
et, quocumque uolent, animum auditoris agunto. 100
Vt ridentibus adrident, ita flentibus adsunt
humani uoltus; si uis me flere, dolendum est
primum ipsi tibi; tum tua me infortunia laedent,
Telephe uel Peleu; male si mandata loqueris,
aut dormitabo aut ridebo. Tristia maestum 105
uoltum uerba decent, iratum plena minarum,
ludentem lasciuia, seuerum seria dictu.
Format enim natura prius non intus ad omnem
fortunarum habitum; iuuat aut impellit ad iram,
aut ad humum maerore graui deducit et angit; 110
post effert animi motus interprete lingua.
Si dicentis erunt fortunis absona dicta,
Romani tollent equites peditesque cachinnum.

Whether they seek applause by smile or tear,
 To draw a Lying Valet⁸⁷ or a Lear, *
 A sage or rakish youngster wild from school, 165
 A wandering "Peregrine," or just plain "John Bull;"

*someone passionate and still in the full flower of youth, a powerful matron or a diligent nurse, an itinerant merchant or the cultivator of a prosperous field, a Colchian or an Assyrian, one raised in Thebes or in Argos.*⁸⁸

* I have Johnson's authority for making Lear a monosyllable –

"Perhaps where Lear rav'd or Hamlet died
 On flying cars new sorcerers may ride."

– and (if it need be mentioned) the *authority* of the epigram on Barry and Garrick.

All persons please when Nature's voice prevails,
 Scottish or Irish, born in Wilts or Wales;
 Or follow common fame, or forge a plot, 170
 Who cares if mimic heroes lived or not!
 One precept serves to regulate the scene,
 Make it appear as if it *might* have been.
 If some Drawcansir⁸⁹ you desire to draw,
 Present him raving, and above all law; 175
 If female furies in your scheme are planned,
 Macbeth's fierce dame is ready to your hand;
 For tears and treachery, for good and evil,
 Constance, King Richard, Hamlet, and the Devil!
 But if a new design you dare essay, 180
 And freely wander from the beaten way,
 True to your characters till all be past,
 Preserve consistency from first to last.

Either follow tradition or devise harmonious actions. O writer, if you by chance describe once again honored Achilles, let him be weariless, quick to anger, stubborn, violent; let him deny that laws were made for him, let him claim everything by arms. Let Medea be wild and unconquerable, Ino doleful, Ixion treacherous, Io a wanderer in mind and body, Orestes filled with sorrow. If you commit anything untested to the stage and you dare to fashion a novel character, let it be maintained to the end just as it emerged at the beginning and let it be consistent with itself.

'Tis hard to venture where our betters fail, *
 Or lend fresh interest to a twice-told tale;
 And yet, perchance, 'tis wiser to prefer 185
 A hackneyed plot, than choose a new, and err;
 Yet copy not too closely, but record
 More justly thought for thought, than word for word;
 Nor trace your Prototype through narrow ways,
 But only follow where he merits praise. 190

It is difficult to speak uniquely of common themes; and yet you will more properly spin the song of Troy into acts than if you are the first to bring to light what has not been known or recorded in literature. Material in the public domain will come under private jurisdiction if you do not loiter around the broad, common poetic cycle, and do not strive, as a literal translator, to render texts word for word, and if you will not, as an imitator, leap down into a narrow space from where shame or the rules applying to the work forbid you to extricate your foot; nor should you begin your work as the cyclic poet once did: "Of Priam's fate and renowned war I shall sing" What might someone who makes this pledge bring forth that will be worthy of his big mouth? Mountains will go into labor, but an absurd mouse will be born. How much more skillful is the one who does not

For you, young Bard! † Whom luckless fate may lead
 To tremble on the nod of all who read,
 Ere your first score of Cantos Time unrolls,
 Beware – for Godsake don't begin like Bowles!⁹⁰
 "Awake a louder and a loftier strain,"⁹¹ 195
 And pray, what follows from his boiling brain?
 He sinks to Southey's level in a trice,
 Whose Epic Mountains never fail in mice!
 Not so of yore awoke your mighty sire,
 The tempered warblings of his master lyre; 200

87: *The Lying Valet* by Garrick (1741).

88: Intererit multum, diuosne loquatur an heros,
 matususne senex an adhuc florente iuuenta 115
 feruidus, et matrona potens an sedula nutrix,
 mercatorne uagus cultorne uirentis agelli,
 Colchus an Assyrius, Thebis nutritus an Argis.

89: Drawcansir is a braggadocio character in Lord Buckingham's *The Rehearsal* (1671).

90: William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850) sonneteer and, later, editor of Pope, in which role B. attacked him.

91: The opening line of Bowles' *A Spirit of Discovery by Sea* (1805).

Soft as the gentler breathing of the lute,
 “Of Man’s first disobedience, and the fruit,”⁹²
 He speaks; but as his subject swells along,
 Earth, Heaven, and Hades echo with the song;
 Still in the midst of things he hastens on, 205
 As if he witnessed all already done;
 Leaves on his path whatever seems too mean
 To raise the subject, or adorn the scene;
 Gives, as each page improves upon the sight,
 Not smoke from brightness, but from darkness light;
 And truth and fiction with such art compounds, 211
 We know not where to fix their several bounds.

*toil foolishly: “Tell me, O Muse, of the man, who, after the capture of Troy, viewed the customs and cities of many different peoples.” He does not aim to extract smoke from the flaming light but rather light from the smoke, so that he might then describe spectacular marvels, Antiphates and the Scylla and Charybdis along with the Cyclops. Nor does he begin the return of Diomedes from the death of Meleager nor the Trojan War from the twin eggs. He always moves swiftly to the issue at hand and rushes his listener into the middle of the action just as if it were already known, and he abandons those subjects he does not think can glitter after he has treated them. Thus does he invent, thus does he mingle the false with the true that the middle is not inconsistent with the beginning, nor the end with the middle.*⁹³

* “Difficile est proprie communia dicere; tuque
 Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus
 Quam si proferres ignota indicataque primus.”
 HOR: DE ARTE POET: 128-130.

92: Milton, *Paradise Lost*, opening line.

93: Aut famam sequere aut sibi conuenientia finge
 scriptor. Honoratum si forte reponis Achillem, 120
 impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer
 iura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.
 Sit Medea ferox inuictaque, flebilis Ino,
 perfidus Ixion, Io uaga, tristis Orestes.
 Siquid inexpertum scaenae committis et audes 125
 personam formare nouam, seruetur ad imum
 qualis ab incepto processerit et sibi constet.
 Difficile est proprie communia dicere, * tuque [* This is the rejected motto for *Don*
 rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus [Juan: see also XIV, 7, 8.]
 quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus. 130
 Publica materies priuati iuris erit, si
 non circa uilem patulumque moraberis orbem,
 nec uerbo uerbum curabis reddere fidus
 interpres nec desilies imitator in artum,
 unde pedem proferre pudor uetet aut operis lex. 135
 Nec sic incipies, ut scriptor cyclicus olim:
 “Fortunam Priami cantabo et nobile bellum”.
 Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu?
 Parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.
 Quanto rectius hic, qui nil molitur inepte: 140
 “Dic mihi, Musa, uirum, captae post tempora Troiae
 qui mores hominum multorum uidit et urbes”.
 Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem
 cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat,
 Antiphaten Scyllamque et cum Cyclope Charybdim. 145
 Nec reditum Diomedis ab interitu Meleagri,
 nec gemino bellum Troianum orditur ab ouo;
 semper ad euentum festinat et in medias res [Quoted at *Don Juan* I, 6, 1-2.]
 non secus ac notas auditorem rapit, et quae
 desperat tractata nitescere posse relinquit, 150
 atque ita mentitur, sic ueris falsa remis cet,
 primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imum.

Mons. Dacier,⁹⁴ Mons. de Sévigné, Boileau,⁹⁵ and others, have left their dispute on the meaning of this sentence in a tract considerably longer than the poem of Horace. It is printed at the close of the eleventh volume of Madame de Sévigné's Letters, edited by Grouvelle,⁹⁶ Paris, 1806. Presuming that all who can construe may venture an opinion on such subjects, particularly as so many who *can't* have taken the same liberty, I should have held my "farthing candle" as awkwardly as another, had not my respect for the wits of Louis 14th's Augustan "Siècle" induced me to subjoin these illustrious authorities. I therefore offer firstly Boileau: "Il est difficile de traiter des sujets qui sont à la portée de tout le monde d'une manière qui vous les rende propres, ce qui s'appelle s'approprier un sujet par le tour qu'on y donne." 2dly, Batteux: "Mais il est bien difficile de donner des traits propres et individuels aux êtres purement possibles." 3dly, Dacier: "Il est difficile de traiter convenablement ces caractères que tout le monde peut inventer." Mr. Sévigné's opinion and translation, consisting of some thirty pages, I omit, particularly as Mr. Grouvelle observes, "La chose est bien remarquable, aucune de ces diverses interpretations ne parait être la véritable." But, by way of comfort, it seems, fifty years afterwards, "Le lumineux Dumarsais"⁹⁷ made his appearance, to set Horace on his legs again, "dissiper les nuages, et concilier tous les dissentiments;" and I suppose some fifty years hence, somebody, still more luminous, will doubtless start up and demolish Dumarsais and his system on this weighty affair, as if he were no better than Ptolemy or Copernicus and comments of no more consequence than astronomical calculations. I am happy to say, "la longueur de la dissertation" of Mr. D. prevents Mr. G. from saying any more on the matter. A better poet than Boileau, and at least as good a scholar as Mr. De Sévigné, has said,

"A little learning is a dangerous thing."⁹⁸

And by the above extract, it appears that a good deal may be rendered as useless to the Proprietors.

† About two years ago a young man named Townsend⁹⁹ was announced by Mr. Cumberland,¹⁰⁰ in a review (since deceased), as being engaged in an epic poem to be entitled "Armageddon."¹⁰¹ The plan and specimen promise much; but I hope neither to offend Mr. Townsend, nor his friends, by recommending to his attention the lines of Horace to which these lines allude. If Mr. Townsend succeeds in his undertaking, as there is reason to hope, how much will the world be indebted to Mr. Cumberland for bringing him before the public! But, till that eventful day arrives it may be doubted whether the premature display of his plan (sublime as the ideas confessedly are) has not, – by raising expectation too high, or diminishing curiosity, by developing his argument, – rather incurred the hazard of injuring Mr. Townsend's future prospects. Mr. Cumberland (whose talents I shall not depreciate by the humble tribute of my praise) and Mr. Townsend must not suppose me actuated by unworthy motives in this suggestion. I wish the author all the success he can wish himself, and shall be truly happy to see epic poetry weighed up from the bathos where it lies sunken with Southey, Cottle,¹⁰² Cowley, (Mrs.¹⁰³ or Abraham),¹⁰⁴ Ogilvie,¹⁰⁵ Wilkie,¹⁰⁶ Pye,¹⁰⁷ and all the "dull of past and present days." Even if he is not a *Milton*, he may be better than *Blackmore*;¹⁰⁸ if not a *Homer*, an *Antimachus*.¹⁰⁹ I should deem myself presumptuous, as a young man, in offering advice, were it not addressed to one still younger. Mr. Townsend has the greatest difficulties to encounter; but in conquering them he will find employment; in having conquered them, his

94: André Dacier (1651-1722) French philologist who edited Horace, 1681-9.

95: Nicolas Boileau (1636-1711) French poet and critic, like Pope and B., an imitator of Horace.

96: Philippe-Antoine Grouvelle (1757-1806) French diplomat and writer.

97: César Chesneau, sieur Dumarsais, French grammarian (1676-1756).

98: Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 215.

99: George Townsend (1788-1857) forgotten poet. B.'s "warning" is not well motivated.

100: Richard Cumberland (1732-1811) playwright and ex-fellow of Trinity; immortalised as Sir Fretful Plagiary in *The Critic*. See *EBSR*, 578.

101: *Armageddon* was finally published in 1815. It sank at once.

102: Amos Cottle (1768-1800) minor Bristol poet. His brother Joseph was a friend of Southey. See *EBSR*, 387.

103: Hannah Cowley (1743-1809) author of *The Siege of Acre* (1799); better known as a comic dramatist.

104: Abraham Cowley (1618-67) poet. Johnson's Life of him contains a famous analysis of the Metaphysicals.

105: John Ogilvie (1733-1813) author of *Britannia: a national epic Poem in twenty books* (1801).

106: William Wilkie (1721-72) "the Scottish Homer," author of *The Epigoniad* (1757).

107: Henry James Pye (1745-1813) the Poet Laureate in 1811. Southey succeeded him. See *TVOJ*, 92, or *EBSR*, 100.

108: Sir Richard Blackmore (d. 1729) author of several epics, including *Arthur* (1696) and *Alfred* (1723).

109: Antimachus is a Greek epic and elegiac poet of c. 400 BC. His works survives in fragments only.

reward. I know too well “the scribbler’s scoff, the critic’s contumely;” and I am afraid time will teach Mr. Townsend to know them better. Those who succeed, and those who do not, must bear this alike, and it is hard to say which have most of it. I trust that Mr. Townsend’s share will be from envy; he will soon know mankind well enough not to attribute this expression to malice.

If you would please the public, deign to hear
 What soothes the many-headed monster’s ear;
 If your heart triumph when the hands of all 215
 Applaud in thunder at the curtain’s fall;
 Deserve those plaudits – study Nature’s page,
 And sketch the striking traits of every age;
 While varying Man and varying years unfold
 Life’s little tale, so oft, so vainly told, 220
 Observe his simple childhood’s dawning days,
 His pranks, his prate, his playmates, and his plays;
 Till Time at length the mannish tyro weans,
 And prurient Vice outstrips his tardy teens!

Behold him Freshman! forced no more to groan 225
 O’er Virgil’s * devilish verses, and – his own;
 Prayers are too tedious, lectures too abstruse,
 He flies from Tavell’s frown to Fordham’s Mews;¹¹⁰
 (Unlucky Tavell! † Doomed to daily cares,
 By pugilistic pupils and by bears!)¹¹¹ 230
 Fines, Tutors, Tasks, Conventions threat in vain,
 Before hounds, hunters, and Newmarket Plain.¹¹²
 Rough with his elders, with his equals rash,
 Civil to sharpers, prodigal of cash,
 Constant to nought – save hazard and a whore, 235
 Yet cursing both, for both have made him sore:
 Unread (unless, since books beguile disease,
 The Pox becomes his passage to degrees);¹¹³
 Fooled, pillaged, dunned, he wastes his terms away,
 And unexpelled, *perhaps*, retires M.A. 240
 Master of Arts! As *hells* and *clubs* ‡ proclaim,
 Where scarce a blackleg bears a brighter name!

Launched into life, extinct his early fire,
 He apes the selfish prudence of his sire;
 Marries for money, chooses friends for rank, 245
 Buys land, and shrewdly trusts not to the Bank!
 Sits in the Senate,¹¹⁴ gets a son and heir,
 Sends him to Harrow, for himself was there;¹¹⁵
 Mute, when he votes, unless when called to cheer,
 His son’s so sharp – he’ll see the dog a Peer! 250

Listen to what I and the general public along with me desire, if indeed you wish applauding listeners to wait for the final curtain and to remain seated until the singer says “Give us a hand now”; you must note the characteristics of each stage of life and you must grant what is appropriate to changing natures and ages. A child who just now has learned to repeat words and to stamp the ground with a firm footstep takes great pleasure in playing with other children and heedlessly conceives and abandons anger as well as changes moods hour by hour. The beardless youth, with his guardian finally removed, rejoices in horses and dogs and in the grass of the sunny Campus; supple as wax to be fashioned into vice, he is rude to those who give him advice, slow at providing for what is useful, extravagant with money, filled with lofty ideas and passionate, but also swift to abandon the objects of his affection. When one has reached manhood in age and spirit, the objects of his enthusiasm are altered, and he seeks wealth and connections, becomes a slave to the trappings of honor, is hesitant to have set into motion what he will soon struggle to change. Many troubles assail an old man, whether because he seeks gain, and then wretchedly abstains from what he possesses and is afraid to use it, or because he attends to all his affairs feebly and timidly; a procrastinator, he is apathetic in his hopes and expectations, sluggish and fearful of the future, obstinate, always complaining; he devotes himself to praising times past, when he was a boy, and to being the castigator and moral censor of the young. The years, as they approach, bring many advantages with them; as they recede, they take many away. To ensure that, by chance, roles appropriate for old men are not assigned to the young and those designed for mature men are not given to children, you shall always spend time on the traits that belong and are suitable to the age of a character.¹¹⁶

110: G.F.Tavell was a Trinity tutor when B. was there. Fordham’s Mews was a red-light district of Cambridge.
111: The line describes B. himself, who when a student at Cambridge went out with boxers and kept a tame bear.
112: Newmarket, eleven miles from Cambridge, then as now the headquarters of English horseracing.
113: This may mean that he would get an “aegrotat” (=“he was sick”) excusing him from his final examinations.
114: The House of Lords.
115: As B. was.
116: Tu quid ego et populus mecum desideret audi,
 si plosoris eges aulaea manentis et usque

* Harvey,¹¹⁷ the *circulator* of the *circulation* of the blood, used to fling away Virgil in his ecstasy of admiration and say, “the book had a devil.” Now such a character as I am copying would probably fling it away also, but rather wish that “the devil had the book;” not from dislike to the poet, but a well-founded horror of hexameters. Indeed, the public school penance of “Long and Short”¹¹⁸ is enough to beget an antipathy to poetry for the residue of a man’s life, and, perhaps, so far may be an advantage.

† “*Infandum, regina, jubes renovare dolorem.*”¹¹⁹ I dare say Mr. Tavell (to whom I mean no affront) will understand me; and it is no matter whether anyone else does or no. – To the above events, “*quæque ipse miserrima vidi, et quorum pars magna fui,*”¹²⁰ all times and terms bear testimony.

‡ “Hell,” a gaming-house so called, where you risk little, and are cheated a good deal.¹²¹ “Club,” a pleasant purgatory, where you lose more, and are not supposed to be cheated at all.

Manhood declines, Age palsies every limb,
 He quits the scene, or else the scene quits him;
 Scrapes wealth, o’er each departing penny grieves,
 And Avarices all Ambition leaves;
 Counts cent per cent, and smiles, or vainly threats 255
 O’er hoards diminished by Young Hopeful’s debts;
 Weighs well and wisely what to sell or buy,
 Complete in all life’s lessons – but to die;
 Peevish and spiteful, doting, hard to please,
 Commending every time, save times like these; 260
 Crazed, querulous, forsaken, half forgot,
 Expires unwept – is buried – Let him rot!

But from the Drama let me not digress,
 Nor spare my precepts, though they please you less;

*Either a scene is acted out on the stage or
 someone reports the events that have occurred.*

sessuri donec cantor. “Vos plaudite” dicat.	155
Aetatis cuiusque notandi sunt tibi mores, mobilibusque decor naturis dandus et annis. Reddere qui uoces iam scit puer et pede certo signat humum, gestit paribus concludere et iram colligit ac ponit temere et mutatur in horas.	160
inberbus iuuenis tandem custode remoto gaudet equis canibusque et aprici gramine Campi, cereus in uitium flecti, monitoribus asper, utilium tardus prouisor, prodigus aeris, sublimis cupidusque et amata relinquere pernix.	165
Conuersis studiis aetas animusque uirilis quaerit opes et amicitias, inseruit honori, commisisse cauet quod mox mutare laboret. Multa senem circumueniunt incommoda, uel quod quaerit et inuentis miser abstinet ac timet uti, uel quod res omnis timide gelideque ministrat, dilator, spe longus, iners audisque futuri, difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti se puero, castigator censorque minorum.	170
Multa ferunt anni uenientes commoda secum, multa recedentes adimunt. Ne forte seniles mandentur iuueni partes pueroque uiriles; semper in adiunctis aeuoque morabitur aptis.	175

117: William Harvey (1578-1657) doctor to James I and Charles I. He discovered the circulation of the blood.

118: A public school exercise: to make Greek or Latin verses according to the rules of quantity.

119: Aeneas’ words to Dido at *Aeneid*, II 3: “Beyond all words, oh Queen, is the grief you bid me revive.”

120: *Aeneid*, II 5-6: “... the sights most piteous that I myself saw and whereof I was no small part.”

121: Compare *Don Juan*, XI, 29, 8, B.’s note.

Though Woman weep, and hardest hearts are stirred,
 When what is done is rather seen than heard; 266
 Yet many deeds preserved in History's page
 Are better told than acted on the stage;
 The ear sustains what shocks the timid eye,
 And Horror thus subsides to Sympathy: 270
 True Briton all beside, I here am French,¹²²
 Bloodshed 'tis surely better to retrench;
 The gladiatorial gore we teach to flow,
 In tragic scenes disgusts though but in show;
 We hate the carnage while we see the trick, 275
 And find small sympathy in being sick.
 Not on the stage, the regicide Macbeth
 Appals an audience with a Monarch's death,¹²³
 To gaze, when sable Hubert threats to sear
 Young Arthur's eyes,¹²⁵ can ours – or Nature bear? 280
 A haltered heroine * Johnson sought to slay,
 We saved Irene,¹²⁶ but half damned the play;
 And (Heaven be praised) our tolerating times
 Stint Metamorphoses to Pantomimes,
 And Lewis' † self with all his sprites would quake, 285
 To change Earl Osmond's negro to a snake!¹²⁷
 Because in scenes exciting joy or grief,
 We loathe the action which exceeds belief:
 And yet, God knows, what may not authors do, 289
 Whose Postscripts prate of dyeing "heroines Blue"?

*Actions that have been admitted to our consciousness through our having heard them have less of an impact on our minds than those that have been brought to our attention by our trusty vision and for which the spectator himself is an eyewitness. You will not, however, produce onstage actions that ought to be done offstage; and you will remove many incidents from our eyes so that someone who was present might report those incidents; Medea should not slaughter her children in the presence of the people, nor abominable Atreus cook human organs publicly, nor Procne be turned into a bird, Cadmus into a snake. Whatever you show me like this, I detest and refuse to believe.*¹²⁴

* "Irene had to speak two lines with the bowstring round her neck; but the audience cried out 'Murder!' and she was obliged to go off the stage alive" – Boswell's Johnson.¹²⁸

† In the postscript to *The Castle Spectre*, Mr. Lewis tells us, that though blacks were unknown in England at the period of his action, yet he has made the anachronism to set off the scene: and if he could have produced the effect "by making his heroine blue," – I quote him – "blue he would have made her!"¹²⁹

122: That is, adheres to the rules of tragedy as practised by Racine, rather than the conventions of Shakespeare.

123: Shakespeare does not show the murder of Duncan on stage. See *Macbeth*, II ii.

124:

Aut agitur res in scaenis aut acta refertur.	
Segnius iritant animos demissa per aurem	180
quam quae sunt oculis subiecta fidelibus et quae	
ipse sibi tradit spectator; non tamen intus	
digna geri promes in scaenam multaque tolles	
ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens.	
Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,	185
aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus,	
aut in auem Procne uertatur, Cadmus in anguem.	
Quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.	

125: Yet Hubert does not burn out Arthur's eyes at all – see *King John*, IV i.

126: Dr Johnson's tragedy *Irene* (1749) tells the story of a Greek martyr who refuses to apostasize at the fall of Constantinople. In the original, she was strangled on stage: but the audience's reaction was such on the first night that the execution was transferred to the wings.

127: Hassan, the African in Matthew Lewis's musical drama *The Castle Spectre* (1798). For Lewis, see *EBSR*, 265.

128: Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1904 Oxford edition) I 133.

129: *That Osmond is attended by Negroes is an anachronism, I allow; but from the great applause which Mr. Downton constantly received in Hassan (a character which he played extremely well), I am inclined to think that the audience was not greatly offended at the impropriety. For my own part, I by no means repent the introduction of my Africans: I thought it would give a pleasing variety to the characters and dresses, if I made my servants black; and could I have produced the same effect by making my heroine blue, blue I should have made her (The Castle Spectre, "To the Reader").*

Above all things – *Dan Poet* – if you can –
 Eke out your acts, I pray, with mortal man,
 Nor call a ghost, unless some cursed scrape
 Must open ten trap-doors for your escape!
 Of all the monstrous things I'd fain forbid, 295
 I loathe an Opera worse than Dennis¹³⁰ did;
 Where good or evil persons, right or wrong,
 Rage, love, and aught – but moralise in song. –
 Hail, last memorial of our foreign friends,
 Which Gaul allows, and still Hesperia lends! 300
 Napoleon's edicts no embargo lay
 On whores, spies, singers, wisely shipped away.
 Our giant Capital, whose squares are spread,
 Where Rustics earned, and now may beg their bread,
 In all iniquity is grown so nice, 305
 It scorns amusements which are not of price.
 Hence the pert shopkeeper whose throbbing ear
 Aches with orchestras which he pays to hear,
 Whom shame, not sympathy, forbids to snore,
 His anguish doubling by his own "encore;" 310
 Squeezed in "Fop's Alley,"¹³² jostled by the Beaux,
 Teased with his hat, and trembling with his toes;
 Scarce wrestles through the night, nor tastes of ease,
 Till the dropped curtain gives a glad release:
 Why this and more he suffers – can ye guess? 315
 Because it costs him dear – and makes him dress! *

A play should not be shorter or longer than five acts if, once it has been seen, it wishes to remain in demand and be brought back for return engagements. Nor should any god intervene unless a knot show up that is worthy of such a liberator; nor should a fourth actor strive to speak.
Let the chorus sustain the role of an actor and the function of a man, and let it not sing anything between the acts that does not purposefully and aptly serve and unite with the action. It should favor the good and provide friendly counsel; it should control the wrathful and show its approval of those who fear to sin; it should praise modest meals, wholesome justice and laws, and peace with its open gates; it should conceal secrets and entreat and beg the gods that fortune return to the downtrodden and depart from the arrogant.¹³¹

* In the year 1808, happening at the opera to tread on the toes of a very well-dressed man, I turned round to apologize, when, to my utter astonishment, I recognized the face of the porter at the very hotel where I then lodged in Albemarle Street. So here was a gentleman who ran every morning forty errands for half a crown, throwing away half a guinea a night, besides the expense of his habiliments, and the hire of his Chapeau de Bras." –

So prosper Eunuchs from Etruscan schools,
 Give us but fiddlers, and they're sure of fools!
 Ere scenes were played by many a reverend Clerk, *
 (What harm, if David danced before the Ark?) 320
 In Christmas revels, simple country folks
 Were pleased with Morrice-mummery, and coarse jokes;

The double pipe not, as now, bound with brass and a rival of the trumpet, but thin and simple, with few holes, was sufficient to assist and support the chorus and to fill still uncrowded benches with its breath; where, indeed, the populace, easy to count since it was small in

130: John Dennis (1657-1734) wrote in 1706 an *Essay on Operas in the Italian Manner*, deploring their immorality. See *EBSR*, 380.

131:

Neue minor neu sit quinto productior actu fabula, quae posci uolt et spectanda reponi;	190
nec deus intersit, nisi dignus uindice nodus inciderit; nec quarta loqui persona laboret.	
Actoris partis chorus officiumque uirile defendat, neu quid medios intercinat actus, quod non proposito conducat et haereat apte.	195
Ille bonis faueatque et consilietur amice et regat iratos et amet peccare timentis; ille dapes laudet mensae breuis, ille salubrem iustitiam legesque et apertis otia portis;	
ille tegat commissa deosque precetur et oret, ut redeat miseris, abeat Fortuna superbis.	200

132: Fops' Alley was an aisle at the Opera House where young bloods and dandies used to stand or sit.

Improving years with things no longer known,
 Produced blithe Punch, and merry Madame Joan,
 Who still frisk on with feats so lewdly low, 325
 'Tis strange Benvolio † suffers such a show;
 Suppressing Peer! To whom each Vice gives place,
 Oaths, Boxing, Begging, all save Rout and Race.

* The first theatrical representations, entitled
 "Mysteries and Moralities,"¹³³ were generally enacted
 at Christmas, by monks (as the only persons who
 Could read), and latterly by the clergy and students
 Of the universities. The dramatis personæ were
 Usually Adam, Pater Cœlestis, Faith, Vice, and
 Sometimes an angel or two; but these were
 Eventually supersede by *Gammer Gurton's Needle*.¹³⁴ –
 Vide Warton's History of English Poetry (*passim*).¹³⁵

† *Benvolio*¹³⁶ does not bet; but every man who
 maintains racehorses is a promoter of all the
 concomitant evils of the turf. Avoiding a bet is a little
 pharisaical. Is it an exculpation? I think not. I never
 yet heard a bawd praised for chastity, because *she herself* did not commit fornication.

Farce followed Comedy, and reached her prime
 In ever-laughing Foote's¹³⁸ fantastic time, 330
 Mad Wag! who pardoned none, nor spared the best,
 And turned some very serious things to jest.
 Nor Church nor State escaped his public sneers,
 Arms nor the Gown, Priests, Lawyers, Volunteers:
 "Alas, poor Yorick!"¹³⁹ now forever mute! 335
 Whoever loves a laugh must sigh for Foote.

*number, honest, pious, and modest came together. After a conquering nation began to extend its lands and a more extensive wall began to embrace the city, we started to appease our guardian spirit freely with daylight drinking on holidays, and then greater license arrived on the scene for rhythms and tunes. For what level of taste might an uneducated audience have, freed of toil and composed of a mixture of rustic and urban elements, of low life and aristocrats? Thus the flute player added bodily movement and excessive extravagance to the venerable art of past times and trailed a robe behind him as he wandered around the stage. So also the tonal range of the austere lyre increased, and a reckless fluency brought with it a strange eloquence whose thought, wise in matters of practical wisdom and prophetic of the future, was not out of tune with that of oracular Delphi.*¹³⁷

The poet who contended in tragic song for the sake of an insignificant goat soon also stripped wild Satyrs of their clothes and in a rough manner, with his dignity unharmed, attempted jokes because it was only by enticements and pleasing novelty that the spectator, having performed the sacred rites and having become drunk and reckless, was going to remain in the audience. But it is appropriate to render the

133: B. displays some ignorance about the medieval mystery plays (different from moralities), which had not been edited in his lifetime. They were not acted by priests but by the craft guilds: *hoi polloi*, not an elite.

134: Anonymous English comedy (1575).

135: Thomas Warton (1728-90) published a *History of English Poetry* between 1774 and 1781.

136: Benvolio is Lord Grosvenor (1767-1845) a famous horsebreeder whom B. probably met at Newmarket.

137: Tibia non, ut nunc, orichalco uincta tubaeque
 aemula, sed tenuis simplexque foramine pauco
 adspirare et adesse choris erat utilis atque
 nondum spissa nimis complere sedilia flatu, 205
 quo sane populus numerabilis, utpote paruos,
 et frugi castusque uerecundusque coibat.
 Postquam coepit agros extendere uictor et urbes
 latior amplecti murus uinoque diurno
 placari Genius festis impune diebus, 210
 accessit numerisque modisque licentia maior.
 Indoctus quid enim saperet liberque laborum
 rusticus urbano confusus, turpis honesto?
 Sic priscae motumque et luxuriam addidit arti
 tibicen traxitque uagus per pulpita uestem; 215
 sic etiam fidibus uoces creuere seueris
 et tulit eloquium insolitum facundia praeceps,
 utiliumque sagax rerum et diuina futuri
 sortilegis non discrepuit sententia Delphis.

138: Samuel Foote (1720-1777) comic actor and writer of farces and curtain-raisers.

139: *Hamlet*, V i, 180.

We smile perforce when histrionic scenes
Ape the swoln dialogue of Kings and Queens,
When “Crononhotonthologos must die,”¹⁴⁰
And Arthur struts in mimic majesty. 340

*Satyrs agreeable in their laughter and mockery
and to exchange the serious for the comic so that
no god, no hero is brought on who, having just
been seen in regal gold and purple, then moves
into the humble hovel of low class diction; or,
while avoiding the lowly earth, reaches for
empty clouds.*

Moschus,¹⁴¹ with whom once more I hope to sit
And smile at Folly, if we can’t at Wit,
Yes, Friend! for thee I’ll quite my Cynic cell,
And bear Swift’s motto, “Vive la Bagatelle!”¹⁴²
Which charmed our days in each Ægean clime, 345
As oft at home, with Revelry – and Rhyme.
Then may Euphrosyne,¹⁴³ who sped the past,
Soothe thy Life’s scenes, nor leave thee in the last!
But find in thine, like Pagan Plato’s bed, *
Some merry Manuscript of Mimes – when dead. 350

* Under Plato’s pillow a volume of the *Mimes* of Sophron¹⁴⁴ was found the day he died. – *Vide* Barthélémi, de Pauw, or Diogenes Laërtius, if agreeable. De Pauw calls it a jest book. Cumberland, in his *Observer*, terms it moral, like the sayings of Publius Syrus.

Now to the Drama let us bend our eyes
Where fettered by Whig Walpole¹⁴⁵ low she lies.
Corruption foiled her – for she feared her glance;
Decorum – left her for an Opera Dance!
Yet Chesterfield, * whose polished pen inveighs 355
’Gainst laughter,¹⁴⁶ fought for freedom to our Plays,
Unchecked by Megrim¹⁴⁷ of Patrician brains,
And damning Dulness of Lord Chamberlains.
Repeat that Act! – again let Humour roam 359
Wild o’er the stage! – we’ve time for tears at home:
Let “Archer” plant the horns on “Sullen’s” brows¹⁴⁸
And Estifania gull her “Copper” spouse, †
The moral’s scant – but that may be excused,
Men go not to be lectured, but amused.
He, whom our plays dispose to Good or Ill, 365
Must wear a head in want of Willis’ skill,¹⁴⁹
Aye – but Macheath’s example¹⁵⁰ – Psha, no more!
It formed no Thieves, the Thief was formed before,

*Tragedy, indignant at spouting frivolous verses,
like the matron who is asked to dance on a
holiday, appears with some shame, among the
impudent Satyrs. I shall not, O Pisos, were I a
writer of Satyric drama, be fond only of
unadorned and commonly used nouns and
verbs; nor shall I strive so much to differ from
the tone of tragedy that it makes no difference if
Davus is speaking with audacious Pythias who,
having swindled Simo, now has gained for
herself a talent’s worth of silver, or the speaker
is Silenus, guardian and servant of his divine
foster child. I shall aim at fashioning a poem
from quite familiar elements so that anyone
might anticipate doing as well, might sweat
profusely at it, and yet labor in vain after having
ventured to do what I have done: so great is the
power of arrangement and linkage, so great is*

140: *Crononhotonthologos* by Henry Carey (d. 1743) a mock-tragedy (1734) similar to Fielding’s *Tom Thumb the Great*. The line is in fact *And Chrononhotonthologos shall Die* (*Chronohotonthologos*, V v 28).

141: This section is addressed to Hobhouse (“Moschus”).

142: “His favourite maxim was *vive la bagatelle*; he thought trifles a necessary part of life, and perhaps found them necessary to himself.” (Johnson, *Life of Swift*).

143: Euphrosyne is one of the three Graces: see Milton, *L’Allegro*, 12.

144: Sophron of Syracuse (fl. 430 BC) was a writer of non-dramatic colloquial dialogues. Plato is said to slept with a copy of them under his pillow, so it’s likely one was there when he died.

145: Sir Robert Walpole’s Licensing Act of 1737 retarded the progress of English drama by two hundred years.

146: Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773) opposed the Licensing Act. In his *Letters to his Son* he wrote, “The vulgar laugh aloud, but never smile; on the contrary, people of fashion often smile, but seldom or never laugh aloud.”

147: Migraines.

148: Both from Farquhar’s *The Beaux’ Stratagem* (1707).

149: Dr Francis Willis (1717-1807) who “exercised his eye” on George III when the king was mad.

150: Protagonist of John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728).

<p>And spite of Puritans and Collier's curse, † Plays make mankind no better, and no worse. 370 Then spare our Stage ye Methodistic men! Nor burn damned Drury if it rise again.¹⁵¹ But why to brain-scorched bigots thus appeal? Can heavenly Mercy dwell with earthly Zeal? For times of fire and faggot let them hope! 375 Times, dear alike to Puritan, or Pope. As pious Calvin saw Servetus¹⁵² blaze, So would new sects on newer victims gaze; E'en now the Songs of Solyma begin, Faith cants, perplexed Apologist of Sin! 380 While the Lord's servant chastens whom he loves And Simeon kicks,¹⁵³ § where Baxter¹⁵⁴ only shoves. </p>	<p><i>the grace that is added to words that are adapted from ordinary language. When Fauns of the forest are brought ontage, in my judgment, they should avoid behaving as if they had been born at the crossroads and were almost denizens of the forum or act ever as adolescents with their all-too-wanton verses or rattle off their dirty and disgraceful jokes. That sort of thing gives offense to an audience of knights, respectable heads of households, and men with substantial fortunes, nor do they accept with a patient spirit, or bestow a crown on, whatever the consumer of roasted chick-peas and nuts approves.</i>¹⁵⁵</p>
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* His speech on the Licensing Act is reckoned one of his most eloquent efforts.

† Michael Perez, the "Copper Captain," in *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*.¹⁵⁶

‡ Jerry Collier's controversy with Congreve, &c. on the subject of the drama, is too well known to require further comment.¹⁵⁷

151: The Drury Lane Theatre burned down on February 24th, 1809.

152: Michael Servetus (1511-53) Spanish theologian who denied the divinity of Christ and the Trinity; he was burnt for heresy by John Calvin (1509-64) at Geneva.

153: Charles Simeon (1758-1836) led the Evangelical movement in Cambridge. A fierce polemicist.

154: B. mistakes *Baxter* for William *Bunyan*, *An Effectual Shove to the heavy-arse Christian* (1768).

155:	<p>Carminē qui tragico uilem certauit ob hircum, 220 mox etiam agrestis Satyros nudauit et asper incolumi grauitate iocum temptauit eo quod inlecebris erat et grata nouitate morandus spectator functusque sacris et potus et exlex. Verum ita risores, ita commendare dicacis 225 conueniet Satyros, ita uertere seria ludo, ne quicumque deus, quicumque adhibebitur heros, regali conspectus in auro nuper et ostro, migret in obscuras humili sermone tabernas, aut, dum uitat humum, nubes et inania captet. 230 Effutire leuis indigna tragoedia uersus, ut festis matrona moueri iussa diebus, intererit Satyris paulum pudibunda proteruis. Non ego inornata et dominantia nomina solum uerbaque, Pisones, Satyrorum scriptor amabo, 235 nec sic enitar tragico diferre colori ut nihil intersit Dauusne loquatur et audax Pythias, emuncto lucrata Simone talentum, an custos famulusque dei Silenus alumni. Ex noto fictum carmen sequar, ut sibi quiuis 240 speret idem, sudet multum frustraue laboret ausus idem; tantum series iuncturaue pollet, tantum de medio sumptis accedit honoris. Siluis deducti caueant me iudice Fauni ne, uelut innati triuiis ac paene forenses, 245 aut nimium teneris iuuenentur uersibus unquam aut immunda crepent ignominiosaque dicta; offenduntur enim quibus est equos et pater et res, nec, siquid fricti ciceris probat et nucis emptor, aequis accipiunt animis donantue corona. 250</p>
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156: *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, by Giles Fletcher (1624).

157: Jeremy Collier (1650-1726), *A Short View of the Immorality of the English Stage* (1697).

§ Mr. Simeon is the very bully of beliefs, and a castigator of “good works.” He is able supported by John Stickles,¹⁵⁸ a labourer in the same vineyard: – but I say no more, for, according to Johnny in full congregation, “*No hopes for them as laughs.*”

|| *Baxter’s Shove to heavy-a—d Christians*, the veritable title of a book once in good repute, and likely enough to be so again.

Whom Nature guides, so writes, that every dunce
Enraptured thinks to do the same at once,
But after inky thumbs and bitten nails 385
And twenty scattered quires, the Coxcomb fails.

Let Pastoral be dumb; for who can hope
To match the youthful eclogues of our Pope?¹⁵⁹
Yet his and Phillips’¹⁶⁰ faults, of different kind,
For Art too rude, for Nature too refined, 390
Instruct how hard the medium ’tis to hit
’Twixt too much polish and too coarse a wit.

A vulgar scribbler, certes, stands disgraced
In this nice age, when all aspire to taste;
The dirty language, and the noisome jest, 395
Which pleased in Swift of yore, we now detest;
Proscribed not only in the world polite,
But ev’n too nasty for a City Knight!

Peace to Swift’s faults! His wit hath made them pass,
Unmatched by all, save matchless Hudibras!¹⁶¹ 400
Whose author is perhaps the first we meet,
Who from our couplet lopped two final feet;
Nor less in merit than the longer line,

This measure moves a favourite of the Nine.
Though at first view eight feet may seem in vain 405
Formed, save in Ode, to bear a serious strain,
Yet Scott has shown our wondering Isle of late¹⁶²
This measure shrinks not from a theme of weight,
And, varied skilfully, surpasses far
Heroic rhyme, but most in Love and War, 410
Whose fluctuations, tender or sublime,
Are curbed too much by long-recurring rhyme.

A long syllable adjacent to a short one is called an Iambus, a “quick” foot; for that reason Iambus commanded that the name trimeter be attached to the lines bearing his name although he delivers six beats a line and from first to last is the spitting image of himself. Not so long ago, in order that the trimeter reach the ears with somewhat greater dignity and deliberation, Iambus admitted the stately spondee into his ancestral rights, obligingly and tolerantly, but not so sociably as to withdraw from the second and fourth foot of the line. This Iambus appears rarely in the “noble” trimeters of Accius and, as for the verses of Ennius, hurled onto the stage in their ponderous sluggishness, he pursues them with the shameful charge of excessively hasty and slipshod workmanship or of sheer ignorance of the poet’s craft.¹⁶³

158: John Stickles may have been the Methodist preacher referred to by B in a letter to Augusta of December 9th 1816 (BLJ V 144), who exclaimed from the pulpit at some smiling parishioners, “no hopes for them as laughs.”

159: Alexander Pope (1688-1744) B.’s idol. His *Pastorals* were published in 1709.

160: Ambrose Phillips (1674-1749); his *Pastorals* were also published in 1709. Pope saw him as a rival.

161: *Hudibras* (1663-78), mock-epic by Samuel Butler (1612-80); much admired by B. for its polysyllabic rhymes.

162: Scott’s *Marmion* (1808) is in octosyllabics.

163: Syllaba longa breui subiecta uocatur iambus,
pes citus; unde etiam trimetris ad crescere iussit
nomen iambeis, cum senos redderet ictus,
primus ad extremum similis sibi; non ita pridem,
tardior ut paulo grauiorque ueniret ad auris,

But many a skilful judge abhors to see,
 What few admire – irregularity.
 This some vouchsafe to pardon; but 'tis hard 415
 When such a word contents a British Bard.

*It is not just any critic who will notice
 rhythmically flawed lines, and indulgence, far
 more than is merited, has been granted to our
 Roman poets.*

And must the Bard his glowing thoughts confine,
 Lest Censure hover o'er some faulty line?
 Remove whate'er a Critic may suspect,
 To gain the paltry suffrage of "Correct"? 420
 Or prune the Spirit of each daring phrase,
 To fly from Error, not to merit Praise?

*Because of that should I ramble around and
 write without any discipline at all? Or should I
 consider that everyone is going to see my faults
 and, warily playing it safe, remain within the
 hope of pardon? I have then, in short, avoided
 blame, but I have not earned praise.*

Ye, who seek finished models, never cease,
 By day and night, to read the works of Greece.
 But our good Fathers never bent their brains 425
 To heathen Greek, content with native strains.
 The few who read a page, or used a pen,
 Were satisfied with Chaucer and old Ben;
 The jokes and numbers suited to their taste
 Were quaint and careless, anything but chaste; 430
 Yet, whether right or wrong the ancient rules,
 It will not do to call our Fathers fools!
 Though you and I, who eruditely know
 To separate the elegant and low,
 Can also, when a hobbling line appears, 435
 Detect with fingers – in default of ears.

*Your mandate is to hold Greek models before
 you by day and to hold them before you by night.
 But (you say) your ancestors praised the meters
 and wit of Plautus; well (I reply), they admired
 both with excessive tolerance, not to say
 stupidity – if you and I just know how to
 distinguish a tasteless expression from an
 elegant one, and we have the skill to recognize
 the proper sound with our ears and fingers.¹⁶⁴*

In sooth I do not know, or greatly care
 To learn, who our first English strollers were;¹⁶⁵
 Or if, till roofs received their vagrant art,
 Our Muse, like that of Thespis, kept a cart; 440
 But this is certain, since our Shakespeare's days,
 There's pomp enough – if little else – in plays;
 Nor will Melpomene¹⁶⁶ ascend her Throne
 Without high heels, white plume, and Bristol stone.¹⁶⁷

*We are told that Thespis discovered the tragic
 muse's genre, which was unknown until then,
 and hauled his verse dramas around in wagons;
 these dramas, actors, their faces thoroughly
 smeared with wine-lees, sang and performed.
 After him Aeschylus, the inventor of the mask
 and the elegant robe, laid down a stage on
 modestly sized beams and taught the art of*

164: spondeos stabilis in iura paterna recepit
 commodus et patiens, non ut de sede secunda
 cederet aut quarta socialiter. Hic et in Acci
 nobilibus trimetris adparet rarus, et Enni
 in scaenam missos cum magno pondere uersus 260
 aut operae celeris nimium curaque carentis
 aut ignoratae premit artis crimine turpi.
 Non quiuis uidet inmodulata poemata iudex,
 et data Romanis uenia est indigna poetis.
 Idcircone uager scribamque licenter? An omnis 265
 uisuros peccata putem mea, tutus et intra
 spem ueniae cautus? Vitai denique culpam,
 non laudem merui. Vos exemplaria Graeca
 nocturna uersate manu, uersate diurna.
 At uestri proauis Plautinos et numeros et 270
 laudauere sales, nimium patienter utrumque,
 ne dicam stulte, mirati, si modo ego et uos
 scimus inurbanum lepido seponere dicto
 legitimumque sonum digitis callemus et aure.

165: B.'s patrician indifference to theatrical history and practicality is shown here.

166: Melpomene was the Muse of Tragedy.

<p>Old Comedies still meet with much applause, 445 Though too licentious for dramatic laws; At least, we moderns, wisely, 'tis confest, Curtail, or silence, the lascivious jest.</p>	<p><i>grandiloquent speech and of treading the boards in the high boot of the tragic actor. Old comedy followed in the footsteps of these tragic poets and not without much praise; but the license it assumed for itself descended into vice, and its force was justifiably tamed by law; the law was received with approval, and the chorus in disgrace became silent since its right to cause harm was abolished.</i>¹⁶⁸</p>
<p>Whate'er their follies, and their faults beside, Our enterprising Bards pass nought untried, 450 Nor do they merit slight applause who choose An English subject for an English Muse, And leave to minds which never dare invent, French flippancy, and German sentiment. Where is that living language which could claim 455 Poetic more, as Philosophic fame, If all our Bards, more patient of delay, Would stop like Pope – to polish by the way?</p>	<p><i>Our own poets have left nothing untried nor have they earned the least glory when they have dared to abandon the tracks of the Greeks and to celebrate domestic situations either by producing serious Roman dramas or native Roman comedies. Nor would Latium be more powerful in courage and in illustrious arms than in literature if the time-consuming effort required for a truly polished revision of the text did not give offense to every single one of our poets. O you, who are descendants of Pompilius, denounce any poem that many a day and many a correction has not carefully pruned and then improved ten times over to meet the test of the well-trimmed nail.</i>¹⁶⁹</p>
<p>Lords of the Quill! whose critical assaults O'erthrow whole quartos with their quires of faults, Who soon detect, and mark where'er we fail, 461 And prove our marble with too nice a nail! Democritus¹⁷⁰ himself was not so bad; He only thought – but you would make us – mad!</p>	<p><i>Because Democritus believes that native talent is a more blessed thing than poor, miserable craftsmanship and excludes from Helicon, the home of the muses, rational poets, quite a number do not trouble to cut their nails or shave their beards; they seek out lonely spots; they avoid the baths.</i></p>
<p>But truth to say, most rhymers rarely guard 465</p>	

167: Bristol stone is fake jewelley: diamonds made of paste, and so on.

168: Ignotum tragicæ genus inuenisse Camenæ 275
 dicitur et plaustri uexisse poemata Thespis
 quæ canerent agerentque peruncti faecibus ora.
 Post hunc personæ pallæque repertor honestæ
 Aeschylus et modicis instruit pulpita tignis
 et docuit magnumque loqui nitique coturno. 280
 Successit uetus his comoedia, non sine multa
 laude; sed in uitium libertas excidit et uim
 dignam lege regi; lex est accepta chorusque
 turpiter obticuit sublato iure nocendi.

169: Nil intemptatum nostri liquere poetæ, 285
 nec minimum meruere decus uestigia Graeca
 ausi deserere et celebrare domestica facta,
 uel qui praetextas uel qui docuere togatas.
 Nec uirtute foret clarisue potentius armis
 quam lingua Latium, si non offenderet unum 290
 quemque poetarum limæ labor et mora. Vos, o
 Pompilius sanguis, carmen reprehendite quod non
 multa dies et multa litura coercuit atque
 praesectum deciens non castigauit ad unguem.

170: Democritus (c.460-370 BC) was a Greek philosopher who anticipated atomic theory and found everything amusing.

Against that ridicule they deem so hard;
 In person negligent, they wear, from sloth,
 Beards of a week, and nails of annual growth;
 Reside in garrets, fly from those they meet,
 And walk in alleys rather than the street. 470

With little rhyme, less reason, if you please,
 The name of Poet may be got with ease,
 So that not tuns of helleboric¹⁷¹ juice
 Shall ever turn your head to any use;
 Write but like Wordsworth – live beside a lake,¹⁷² 475
 And keep your bushy locks a year from Blake;¹⁷³ *
 Then print your book, once more return to town,
 And boys shall hunt your Bardship up and down.

One will obtain the reward and the name of a poet if he never entrusts his head, incurable even by three times Anticyra's output of hellebore, to the barber, Licinus.

* As famous a tonsor as Licinius¹⁷⁴ himself, and better paid, and may, like him, be one day a senator, having a better qualification than one half of the heads he crops, viz. – Independence.

Am I not wise, if such some poets' plight,
 To purge in spring – like Bayes¹⁷⁵ – before I write? 480
 If this precaution softened not my bile,
 I know no scribbler with a madder style;
 But since (perhaps my feelings are too nice)
 I cannot purchase Fame at such a price,
 I'll labour gratis as a grinder's wheel, 485
 And, blunt myself, give edge to others' steel,
 Nor write at all, unless to teach the art
 To those rehearsing for the Poet's part;
 From Horace show the pleasing parts of song,
 And from my own example – what is wrong. 490

O what an unlucky fool I am! I have my bile purged just before spring arrives! No one else could write a better poem. But nothing is worth that effort! Instead, I shall serve in place of a whetstone that has the power to render iron sharp but itself lacks the ability to cut; while not writing anything myself, I will teach what nurtures and forms the poet, from what source his power springs, what his function and duty are, what is proper and what is not and in what direction poetic excellence leads and in what direction failure beckons.¹⁷⁶

Though modern practice sometimes differs quite,
 'Tis just as well to think before you write;
 Let every book that suits your theme be read,
 So shall you trace it to the fountain-head.

The foundation and source of literary excellence is wisdom. The works written about Socrates are able to reveal the true subject matter of poetry and, once the subject matter has been provided, words will freely follow.

171: From hellebore, a poisonous herb.

172: Implies Wordsworth to be a misanthropic recluse, as only one such could live in the Lake District.

173: *Not* the engraver and visionary. Benjamin Blake was a barber and perfumer with a shop in the Strand.

174: Licinius was barber to Julius Caesar (an important image-making job, given Caesar's self-consciousness about his baldness) and was made by him a senator.

175: Bayes is a caricature of Dryden in Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*. He takes purgatives to aid composition.

176:

Ingenium misera quia fortunatius arte	295
credit et excludit sanos Helicone poetas	
Democritus, bona pars non unguis ponere curat,	
non barbam, secreta petit loca, balnea uitat;	
nanciscetur enim pretium nomenque poetae,	
si tribus Anticyris caput insanabile nunquam *	300 [* B. quotes this line in his
tonsoni Licino commiserit. O ego laeueus	Roman Catholics Claims Speech in
qui purgor bilem sub uerni temporis horam!	the Lord, April 21st 1812.]
Non alius faceret meliora poemata; uerum	
nil tanti est. Ergo fungar uice cotis, acutum [The epigraph to this poem.]	
reddere quae ferrum ualet exsors ipsa secandi;	305
munus et officium, nil scribens ipse, docebo,	
unde parentur opes, quid alat formetque poetam,	
quid deceat, quid non, quo uirtus, quo ferat error.	

<p>He who has learned the duty which he owes To friends and country, and to pardon foes; Who models his deportment as may best Accord with Brother, Sire, or Stranger-Guest; Who takes our Laws and Worship as they are, Nor roars reform for Senate, Church, and Bar; In practice, rather than loud precept, wise, Bids not his tongue, but heart, philosophize: Such is the man the Poet should rehearse, As joint exemplar of his life and verse.</p> <p>Sometimes a sprightly wit, and tale well told, Without much grace, or weight, or art, will hold A longer empire o'er the public mind Than sounding trifles, empty, though refined.</p> <p>Unhappy Greece!¹⁷⁸ thy sons of ancient days The Muse may celebrate with perfect praise, Whose generous children narrowed not their hearts With Commerce, given alone to Arms and Arts. Our boys (save those whom public schools compel To "Long and Short" before they're taught to spell) From frugal fathers soon imbibe by rote, "A penny saved, my lad,'s a penny got." Babe of a city birth! From sixpence take The third, how much will the remainder make? – "A groat." – "Ah, bravo! Dick hath done the sum! He'll swell my fifty thousand to a Plum."¹⁷⁹</p> <p>They whose young souls receive this rust betimes, 'Tis clear, are fit for anything but rhymes; And Locke will tell you, that the father's right Who hides all verses from his children's sight; For Poets (says this Sage, * and many more,)</p>	<p>495</p> <p>500</p> <p>505</p> <p>510</p> <p>515</p> <p>520</p> <p>525</p>	<p><i>He who has learned what he owes to his country, what he owes to his friends, by what kind of love a parent, a brother, or a guest should be honored, what is the duty of a senator, what is the function of a judge, what is the role of a general sent into war – he, assuredly, knows how to represent what is appropriate for each character. I bid the artist, trained in representation, to reflect on exemplars of life and character and to bring us living voices from that source. Sometimes a tale that lacks stylistic elegance, grandeur, and skill but is adorned with impressive passages and characters who are accurately drawn is a greater source of pleasure and better holds the interest of an audience than verses that lack a vision of reality and are mere trifles to charm the ear.</i>¹⁷⁷</p> <p><i>To the Greeks, covetous of nothing except glory, the Muse granted inspired talent, to the Greeks she gave eloquence in full measure. Roman youths, on the other hand, learn by means of lengthy calculations how to divide a sum of money into a hundred parts. "You, there, Albinus's son, solve the following problem: If one-twelfth is subtracted from five twelfths, how much is left? Come on, you should have given me the answer by now!" "It's one-third!" "Well done, my boy, you'll surely be able to protect your investments." "Now suppose that one- twelfth is added to five-twelfths, what does that make?" "I've got it – one-half!"</i></p> <p><i>When once this corruption and avid concern for material wealth has stained the human spirit, can we really hope that poems will be written worth anointing and protecting with oil of cedar, and preserving in chests of polished cypress?</i>¹⁸⁰</p>
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177: Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons.
 Rem tibi Socraticae poterunt ostendere chartae, 310
 uerbaque prouisam rem non inuita sequentur.
 Qui didicit, patriae quid debeat et quid amicis,
 quo sit amore parens, quo frater amandus et hospes,
 quod sit conscripti, quod iudicis officium, quae
 partes in bellum missi ducis, ille profecto 315
 reddere personae scit conuenientia cuique.
 Respicere exemplar uitae morumque iubebo
 doctum imitatore et uiuas hinc ducere uoces.
 Interdum speciosa locis morataque recte
 fabula nullius ueneris, sine pondere et arte, 320
 ualdius oblectat populum meliusque moratur
 quam uersus inopes rerum nugaeque canorae.

178: Greece – where most of *HffH* was written – means to B. something different from what it meant to Horace.

179: A "Plum" was £100,000.

180: Grais ingenium, Grais dedit ore rotundo
 Musa loqui, praeter laudem nullius auaris;
 Romani pueri longis rationibus assem 325

Make sad mechanics with their lyric lore:
 And Delphi now, however rich of old,
 Discovers little silver, and less gold,
 Because Parnassus, though a Mount divine,
 Is poor as Irus, † or an Irish mine. ‡ 530

* I have not the original¹⁸¹ by me, but the Italian translation runs as follows: – “E una cosa a mio credere molto stravagante, che un Padre desideri, o permetta, che suo figliuolo coltivi e perfezioni questo talento.” A little further on: “Si trovano di rado nel Parnasso le miniere d’oro e d’argento,” – *Educazione dei Fanciulli del Signor Locke* (Venice, 1782), ii 87.

† “Iro pauperior:” a proverb: this is the same beggar who boxed with Ulysses for a pound of kid’s fry, which he lost and half dozen teeth besides.¹⁸²

‡ The Irish gold mine in Wicklow, which yields just ore enough to swear by, or gild a bad guinea.¹⁸³

<p>Two objects always should the Poet move, Or one of both – to please or to improve. Whate’er you teach, be brief, if you design For our remembrance your didactic line; Redundance places Memory on the rack, 535 For brains may be o’erloaded, like the back.</p>	<p><i>Poets wish to either benefit or delight us, or, at one and the same time, to speak words that are both pleasing and useful for our lives. Whatever lessons you teach, let them be brief, so that receptive spirits will quickly perceive and faithfully retain what you have said. Everything superfluous seeps out of the well-stocked mind.</i></p>
<p>Fiction does best when taught to look like Truth, And fairy fables bubble none but youth: Expect no credit for too wondrous tales, Since Jonas only springs alive from Whales! 540</p>	<p><i>In order to create pleasure, poetic fictions should approximate reality so that a play should not claim, on its own behalf, that anything it wishes must be believed nor should it extract a living child from the stomach of the ogress, Lamia, after she has dined. The centuries of elders drive away whatever is without serious value; the high and mighty Ramnes keep their distance from gloomy poems. He gets every vote who combines the useful with the pleasant, and who, at the same time he pleases the reader, also instructs him. That book will earn money for the Sosii, this one will cross the sea and extend immeasurably the life of a famous writer.¹⁸⁶</i></p>
<p>Young men with aught but Elegance dispense; Maturer years require a little Sense. To end at once: – that Bard for all is fit Who mingles well instruction with his wit; For him Reviews shall smile; for him o’erflow 545 The patronage of Paternoster-row;¹⁸⁴ His book, with Longman’s liberal aid,¹⁸⁵ shall pass (Who ne’er despises books that bring him brass); Through three long weeks the taste of London lead,</p>	

discunt in partis centum diducere. “Dicat
 filius Albini: si de quincunce remota est
 uncia, quid superat? . . . Poteras dixisse. – Triens. – Eu!
 Rem poteris seruare tuam. Redit uncia, quid fit?”
 Semis”. An, haec animos aerugo et cura peculi 330
 cum semel imbuerit, speramus carmina fingi
 posse linenda cedro et leui seruanda cupresso?

181: The originals run, “If he [*the child*] have a Poetick Vein, ’tis to me the strangest thing in the World, that the Father should desire, or suffer it to be cherished, or improved” and “. . . it is very seldom seen, that any one discovers Mines of Gold or Silver in *Parnassus*” (*Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, London, 1693, p. 207).

182: *Odyssey*, Book 18: Odysseus inflicts far more damage on Iros than B. implies.

183: B. could have read about this gold mine in de Latocnaye, *Promenade d’un Francais dans l’Irlande* (1796-7), chapter III.

184: Many booksellers had their premises in Paternoster Row, London.

185: Longman published Southey’s poetry.

186:

<p>Aut prodesse uolunt aut delectare poetae aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere uitae. Quicquid praecipies, esto breuis, ut cito dicta percipiant animi dociles teneantque fideles. Omne superuacuum pleno de pectore manat.</p>	<p>335</p>
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And cross St. George's Channel and the Tweed.¹⁸⁷ 550

But every thing has faults, nor is't unknown
That harps and fiddles often lose their tone,
And wayward voices, at their owner's call,
With all his best endeavours, only squall;
Dogs blink their covey,¹⁸⁸ flints withhold the spark,⁵⁵⁵
And double-barrells (damn them!) miss their mark. *

Where frequent beauties strike the reader's view,
We must not quarrel for a blot or two;
But pardon equally to books or men,
The slips of Human Nature, and the Pen. 560

Yet if an author, spite of foe or friend,
Despises all advice too much to mend,
But ever twangs the same discordant string,
Give him no quarter, howsoe'er he sing.
Let Havard's † fate o'ertake him, who, for once, ⁵⁶⁵
Produced a play too dashing for a dunce;
At first none deemed it his; but when his name
Announced the fact – what then? – it lost its fame.
Though all deplore when Milton deigns to doze,
In a long work 'tis fair to steal repose. 570

There are, however, mistakes that we are willing to forgive. For the string does not always return the sound that the hand and mind desire, and although you seek a low note, it very often sends back a high one. Nor will the bow always strike whatever it threatens. But where many qualities sparkle in a poem, I will not find fault with a few blemishes, which either carelessness introduced or human nature, too little vigilant, did not avoid. What then? Just as the scribe who copies books, if he always makes the same mistake no matter how much he is warned, has no claim on our indulgence, and a lyre-player is mocked who always strikes the same false note, so the poet who is frequently found wanting turns into another Choerilus who, amidst my scorn for his work, astonishes me the two or three times he is really good; I am also offended when great Homer falls asleep on us, but it is permitted for some drowsiness to creep into a long work.¹⁸⁹

* As Mr. Pope took the liberty of damning Homer, to whom he was under great obligations – “*And Homer (damn him!) calls*”¹⁹⁰ – it may be presumed that anybody or anything may be damned in verse by poetic licence; and, in case of accident, I beg leave to plead so illustrious a precedent.

Ficta uoluptatis causa sint proxima ueris,
ne quodcumque uolet poscat sibi fabula credi,
neu pransae Lamiae uiuum extrahat aluo. 340
Centuriae seniorum agitant expertia frugis,
celsi praetereunt austera poemata Ramnes.
Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, [This line is quoted at *Don Juan* XIII 81, 8.]
lectorem delectando pariterque monendo;
hic meret aera liber Sosiis, hic et mare transit 345
et longum noto scriptori prorogat aeuum.

187: That is, gets published in Ireland and Scotland.

188: Hunting dogs will “shut their eyes to a family of partridges.”

189: Sunt delicta tamen quibus ignouisse uelimus;
nam neque chorda sonum reddit quem uolt manus et mens,
poscentique grauem persaepe remittit acutum,
nec semper feriet quodcumque minabitur arcus. 350
Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
aut humana parum cauit natura. Quid ergo est?
Vt scriptor si peccat idem librarius usque,
quamuis est monitus, uenia caret, et Citharoedus 355
ridetur, chorda qui semper oberrat eadem,
sic mihi, qui multum cessat, fit Choerilus ille,
quem bis terque bonum cum risu miror; et idem
indignor quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus;
uerum operi longo fas est obrepere somnum. 360

190: CPW says “The quotation is not from Pope.” It is. See *A Farewell to London. In the Year 1715*, line 24.

† For the story of Billy Havard's tragedy, see Davies's *Life of Garrick*. I believe it is *Regulus, or Charles the First*.¹⁹¹ The moment it was known to be his the theatre thinned, and the bookseller refused to give the customary sum for the copyright.

As Pictures, so shall Poems be; some stand
The critic eye, and please when near at hand;
But others at a distance strike the sight;
This seeks the shade, but that demands the light,
Nor dreads the connoisseur's fastidious view, 575
But, ten times scrutinised, is ten times new.

*Poetry resembles painting. Some works will captivate you when you stand very close to them and others if you are at a greater distance. This one prefers a darker vantage point, that one wants to be seen in the light since it feels no terror before the penetrating judgment of the critic. This pleases only once, that will give pleasure even if we go back to it ten times over.*¹⁹²

Parnassian pilgrims! Ye whom chance, or choise,
Hath led to listen to the Muse's voice,
Receive this counsel, and be timely wise;
Few reach the summit which before you lies. 580
Our Church and State, our Courts and Camps, concede
Reward to very moderate heads indeed!
In these plain common sense will travel far;
All are not Erskines¹⁹³ who mislead the Bar:
But Poesy between the best and worst 585
No medium knows; you must be last or first;
For middling Poets' mediocre volumes
Are damned alike by Gods, and Men, and Columns.

*And you, the older brother, although you have been molded by your father's voice to know what is correct and you are wise in your own right, take and hold in your memory this warning: only in certain activities are we justified in tolerating mediocrity and what is just passable. A run-of-the mill expert in the law or pleader of cases is a long way from the skill of the eloquent Messala and doesn't know as much as Aulus Cascellius, but nevertheless he has a value. But neither men nor gods nor booksellers have ever put their stamp of approval on mediocre poets.*¹⁹⁴

[Again, my Jeffrey¹⁹⁵ – as that sound inspires,
How wakes my bosom to its wonted fires! 590
Fires, such as gentle Caledonians feel
When Southrons writhe upon their critic wheel,
Or mild Eclectics, * when some worse than Turks
Would rob poor Faith to decorate "Good Works."
Such are the genial feelings thou canst claim – 595
My falcon flies not at ignoble gain.
Mightiest of all Dunedin's beasts of chase!
For thee my Pegasus would mend his pace.
Arise, my Jeffrey! or my inkless pen

191: This famous theatrical failure happened in 1737. But the play was published – seven years later.

192: Vt pictura poesis; erit quae, si propius stes,
te capiat magis, et quaedam, si longius abstes;
haec amat obscurum, uolet haec sub luce uideri,
iudicis argutum quae non formidat acumen; 365
haec placuit semel, haec deciens repetita placebit.

193: Thomas Erskine (1750-1823) brilliant advocate.

194: O maior iuuenum, quamuis et uoce paterna
fingeris ad rectum et per te sapis, hoc tibi dictum
tolle memor, certis medium et tolerabile rebus
recte concedi; consultus iuris et actor
causarum mediocris abest uirtute disertis 370
Messallae nec scit quantum Cascellius Aulus,
sed tamen in pretio est; mediocribus esse poetis
non homines, non di, non concessere columnae. [These lines are quoted at *TVOJ* 91, 8.]

195: Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850) Scots advocate, and editor of the *Edinburgh Review*. When B. first wrote *HfH*, he thought Jeffrey had been responsible for the bad review *Hours of Idleness* had received in the *Edinburgh* in 1808 (line 605). Though he never knew the truth (the review was by Henry Brougham) by 1820 he had changed his opinion.

Shall never blunt its pledge on meaner men; 600
 Till thee or thine mine evil eye discerns,
 "Alas!" I cannot strike at wretched kerns."¹⁹⁶
 Inhuman Saxon! wilt thou then resign
 A Muse and heart by choice so wholly thine?
 Dear d? ? d contemner of my schoolboy songs, 605
 Hast thou no vengeance for my Manhood's wrongs?
 If unprovoked thou once could bid me bleed,
 Hast thou no weapon for my daring deed?
 What! not a word? – and am I then so low?
 Wilt thou forebear who never spared a foe? 610
 Hast thou no wrath, or wish to give it vent,
 No wit for Nobles, Dunces by descent,
 No jest on "minors," quibbles on a name,
 Nor one facetious paragraph of blame?
 Is it for this on Ilion I have stood, 615
 And thought of Homer less than Holyrood?
 On shore of Euxine or Ægean sea,¹⁹⁷
 My hate, untravelled, fondly turned to thee.
 Ah! let me cease! in vain my bosom burns,
 From Corydon unkind Alexis turns: † 620
 Thy rhymes are vain; thy Jeffrey then forego,
 Nor woo that anger which he dare not show.
 What then? – Edina¹⁹⁸ starves some lanker son,
 To write an article thou canst not shun;
 Some less fastidious Scotchman shall be found, 625
 As bold as Billingsgate,¹⁹⁹ though less renowned.]²⁰⁰

[* To the Eclectic or Christian Reviewers I have to return thanks for the fervour of that charity which, in 1809, induced them to express a hope that a thing then published by me might lead to certain consequences, which, although natural enough, surely came but rashly from reverend lips.²⁰¹ I refer them to their own pages, where they congratulated themselves on the prospect of a tilt between Mr. Jeffrey and myself, from which some great good was to accrue, provided one or both were knocked on the head. Having survived two years and a half those "Elegies" which they were kindly preparing to review, I have no particular gusto to give them "so joyful a trouble," except, indeed, "upon compulsion, Hal;"²⁰² but if, as David says in *The Rivals*, it should come to "bloody sword and gun fighting," we "won't run, will we, Sir Lucius?"²⁰³ I do not know what I had done to these Eclectic gentlemen: my works are their lawful perquisite, to be hewn in pieces like Agag, if it seem meet unto them: but why they should be in such a hurry to kill off their author, I am ignorant. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong;"²⁰⁴ and now, as these Christians have "smote me on one cheek," I hold them up the other; and, in return for their good wishes, give them an opportunity of repeating them. Had any other set of men expressed such sentiments, I should have smiled, and left them to the "recording angel;" but from the pharisees of Christianity decency might be expected. I can assure these brethren, that, publican and sinner

196: *Macbeth*, V vii 17: the lines expresses Macduff's frustration at not being able to confront and kill Macbeth.

197: B. alludes to his travels in Greece and Turkey, where he saw the Euxine (the Black Sea) in 1809-11.

198: Edina is the Goddess of Edinburgh, invented by B especially for *EBSR*: see *EBSR*, 483 et seq.

199: The London fishmarket, famed for the foul language to be heard there.

200: The square-bracketed lines on Jeffrey have no equivalent in Horace, and when he rethought the poem's printing in 1821, B. instructed that they should be cut: see BLJ VIII 88 (letter to Murray, March 1st 1821) and 178 (letter to Murray, August 13th 1821).

201: *The Eclectic Review* of May 1809 carried an article which also assumed the 1808 review of *HoI* to be by Jeffrey, and anticipated a duel between B. and the Scots critic.

202: Falstaff at *Henry IV I*, II iv, 228.

203: Sheridan, *The Rivals*, V iii (paraphrased); the lines are stuttered by Bob Acres, not David.

204: Ecclesiastes 9, 11: ... *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong* ...

as I am, I would not have treated “mine enemy’s dog thus.”²⁰⁵ To show them the superiority of my brotherly love, if ever the Messrs. Simeon or Ramsden²⁰⁶ should be engaged in such a conflict as that in which they requested me to fall, I hope they may escape with being “winged” only, and that the Heavyside²⁰⁷ may be at hand to extract the ball. –]

† *Invenies alium, si te hic fastidit, Alexin.*²⁰⁸

As if at table some discordant dish
Should shock our optics, such as frogs for fish,
As oil instead of butter men decry,
And poppies please not in a modern pie, 630
If all such mixtures then be half a crime,
We must have Excellence to relish rhyme;
Mere roast or boiled no Epicure invites,
Thus Poetry disgusts – or else delights.

*Just as at a gracious meal a discordant musical performance or a thick perfume or Sardinian honey on your poppy seeds give offense because the meal could have been put together without them; in the same way a poem that comes into existence and is created for the gratification of our mind and heart, if it misses true excellence by only a little, verges toward deepest failure.*²⁰⁹

Who shoot not flying rarely touch a gun; 635
Will he who swims not to the river run?
And men unpractised in exchanging knocks
Must go to Jackson²¹⁰ ere they dare to box;
Whate’er the weapon – cudgel, fist, or foil,
None reaches expertness without years of toil; 640
But fifty dunces can, with perfect ease,
Tag twenty thousand couplets when they please.
Why not? – Shall I, thus qualified to sit
For rotten boroughs, never show my wit?
Shall I, whose fathers with the Quorum²¹¹ sate, 645
And lived in freedom on a fair estate,
Who left me heir, with stables, kennels, packs,
To *all* their income, and to – *twice* its tax!
Whose form and pedigree have scarce a fault –
Shall I, I say, suppress my Attic Salt? 650

*The person who does not know how to play forgoes the athletic equipment in the Campus Martius, and someone who does not know anything about the ball, the discus, or the hoop stays away from the action in order to prevent the packed crowd of spectators from raising their voices in unrestrained laughter: But the person who has no idea how to create poetry still has the audacity to try. Why not? He is a free citizen, and was born that way, and especially because he is both rich (his property assessment places him in the equestrian class) and he has never been convicted of a crime.*²¹²

Thus think “the Mob of Gentlemen,” but you
Besides all this must have some Genius too;
Be this your sober judgement, and a rule,
And print not piping hot from Southey’s school,
Who, ere another Thalaba²¹³ appears, 655

Never will you say or do anything if Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, forbids it; you have good judgment, you have good sense. But if you shall, one day, write something let it first penetrate the ears of a critic like Maecius or your father or

205: Cordelia at *King Lear*, IV vii, 36-7.

206: Richard Ramsden (1762-1831) Senior Dean at Trnity.

207: Dr. Heavyside attended Lord Falkland after his duel with Sir Arthur Powell (see *EBSR*, 686 and nn).

208: Virgil, Eclogue II, 73 (the last line of *That horrid one*, / *Beginning with “Fomusum Pastor Corydon”* (see *Don Juan* I, 42, 7-8): *You will find another, Alexis, if this one scorns you?*

209: Vt gratas inter mensas symphonia discors
et crassum unguentum et Sardo cum melle papauer 375
offendunt, poterat duci quia cena sine istis,
sic animis natum inuentumque poema iuuandis,
si paulum summo decessit, uergit ad imum.

210: Gentleman John Jackson (1769-1845), heavyweight champion of England and B.’s instructor in pugilism.

211: On the magistrates bench.

212: Ludere qui nescit, campestribus abstinet armis,
indoctusque pilae disciue trochiue quiescit, 380
ne spissae risum tollant impune coronae;
qui nescit, uersus tamen audet fingere. Quidni?
Liber et ingenuus, praesertim census equestrem
summam nummorum uitioque remotus ab omni.

213: Robert Southey’s *Thalaba the Destroyer* was published in 1801.

I trust will spare us for at least nine years;
 And, harkee Southey! * pray – but don't be vext –
 Burn all your last three works – and half the next.
 But why this vain advice? once published books
 Can never be recalled – from pastry cooks!" 660
 Though "Madoc,"²¹⁵ with "Pucelle,"²¹⁶ † instead of punk,²¹⁷
 May travel back to Quito²¹⁸ – on a trunk! ‡
*myself; and then keep a lid on it until the ninth
 year comes around by storing your pages inside
 your house. You will always be able to destroy
 anything you haven't published; a word, once
 released, does not know how to return.*²¹⁴

* Mr. Southey has lately tied another canister to his tail, in the "Curse of Kehama",²¹⁹ maugre the defect of *Madoc*, etc., and has in one instance had a wonderful effect. A literary friend of mine, walking out one lovely evening last summer, on the eleventh bridge of the Paddington canal, was alarmed by the cry of "one in jeopardy": he rushed along, collected a body of Irish haymakers (supping on buttermilk in an adjacent paddock), procured three rakes, one eel-spear and a landing-net, and at last (*horresco referens*) pulled out – his own publisher. The unfortunate man was gone forever, and so was a large quarto wherewith he had taken the leap, which proved, on enquiry, to have been Mr. Southey's last work. Its "alacrity of sinking"²²⁰ was so great, that it has never since been heard of; though some maintain that it is at this moment concealed at Alderman Birch's pastry premises, Cornhill. Be this as it may, the coroner's inquest brought in a verdict of *Felo de bibliopolâ* against "a quarto unknown"; and circumstantial evidence being strong against *The Curse of Kehama* it will be tried by its peers next session in Grub-Street – Arthur, Alfred, Davideis, Richard Cœur de Lion, Exodus, Exodiad, Calvary, Fall of Cambria, Siege of Acre, Don Roderick, and Tom Thumb the Great,²²¹ are the names of the twelve jurors. The judges are Pye, Bowles, and the bell-man of St. Sepulchre's.

The same advocates, pro and con, will be employed as are now engaged in Sir F. Burdett's celebrated cause in the Scotch courts.²²² The public anxiously await the result, and all *live* publishers will be subpoenaed as witnesses. – But Mr. Southey has published *The Curse of Kehama*, – an inviting title to quibblers. By the bye, it is a good deal beneath Scott and Campbell, and not much above Southey, to allow the booby Ballantyne to entitle them, in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* (of which, by the bye, Southey is editor) "the grand poetical triumvirate of the day". But, on second thoughts, it can be no great degree of praise to be the one-eyed leaders of the blind, though they might as well keep to themselves "Scott's thirty thousand copies sold", which must sadly discomfort poor Southey's unsaleables. Poor Southey, it should seem, is the "Lepidus"²²³ of this poetical triumvirate. I am only suprised to see him in this good company.

"Such things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,

214: Tu nihil inuita dices faciesue Minerua; 385
 id tibi iudicium est, ea mens. Siquid tamen olim
 scripseris, in Maeci descendat iudicis auris
 et patris et nostras, nonumque prematur in annum
 membranis intus positis; delere licebit
 quod non edideris; nescit uox missa reuerti. 390

215: Southey's *Madoc* and *Madoc in Wales* were published in 1805.

216: Southey's *Joan of Arc* was published in 1796.

217: "Punk" in this case means fungus, or mould. Southey's books will either rot or be used to line trunks.

218: Quito is the capital of Ecuador; but Southey's *Madoc* travels to Mexico.

219: This note is a smokescreen. B. studied *Kehama* (1810) carefully, and used it as a subtext for *TVOJ*, written ten years later. Southey was for him, as he was for Shelley, a poetic and political *doppelgänger*, a fact which the world must never suspect.

220: B. quotes Falstaff's description of the speed with which he sank into the Thames, after having been thrown in in the buck basket, at *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, III v, first soliloquy.

221: The "jury" consists of eleven dead or dying epics, and one hilarious tragic lampoon: *Arthur* by Richard Hole (1789); *Alfred* by Joseph Cottle (1801); *Davideis* by Abraham Cowley (1656); *Richard the First* by Sir James Bland Burgess, (1801); *Exodiad* by Burgess and Richard Cumberland (1808); *Exodus* by Charles Hoyle (1802); *Epigoniad* by W. Wilkie (1757); *Calvary* by Cumberland (1792); *Fall of Cumbria* by Joseph Cottle (1809); *Siege of Acre* by Hannah Cowley (1801); *The Vision of Don Roderick* by Scott (1811) *Tom Thumb the Great* by Fielding (1730).

222: In 1811 the radical MP Sir Francis Burdett had been sued over money which he had, it was alleged, given for the upkeep of an illegitimate child; the case was settled out of court.

223: Lepidus formed the Second Triumvirate with Antony and Octavius Caesar: see *Julius Caesar*, IV i.

But wonder how the devil he came there.”²²⁴

The trio are well defined in the sixth proposition of Euclid:– “Because, in the triangles D B C, A C B: D B is equal to A C: and B C common to both; the two sides D B, B C are equal to the two A C, C B, each to each, and the angle D B C is equal to the angle A C B; therefore, the base D C is equal to the base A B, and the triangle D B C (Mr. Southey) is equal to the triangle A C B, the less than the *greater*, which is *absurd*, etc. – The Editor of the *Edinburgh Register* will find the rest of the theorem hard by his stabling; he has only to cross the river; ’tis the first turnpike t’other side Pons Asinorum. *

* This Latin has sorely puzzled the University of Edinburgh. Ballantyne said it meant the ‘Bridge of Berwick’, but Southey claimed it as half English; Scott swore it was the “Brig o’ Stirling”: he had just passed two King James’s and half a dozen Douglasses over it. At the last it was decided by Jeffrey, that it meant nothing more nor less than the “counter of Archy Constable’s shop.”

† Voltaire’s Pucelle is not quite so immaculate as Mr. Southey’s Joan of Arc, and yet I am afraid the Frenchman has both more truth and poetry too on his side – (they rarely go together) – than our patriot minstrel, whose first essay was in praise of a fanatical French strumpet, whose title of witch would be correct with the change of the first letter.²²⁵

‡ Like Sir Bland Burgess’s *Richard*; the tenth book of which I read in Malta, on a trunk of Eyre’s, 19, Cockspur-street. If this be doubted, I shall buy a portmanteau to quote from.²²⁶

Orpheus, we learn from Ovid²²⁷ and Lempriere,²²⁸
Led all wild beasts, but Women, by the ear,
And had he fiddled at the present hour, 665
We’d seen the Lions waltzing in the Tower;
And old Amphion,²²⁹ such were minstrels then,
Had built St. Paul’s without the aid of Wren.
Verse too was Justice, and the Bards of Greece
Did more than constables to keep the peace; 670
Abolished cuckoldom with much applause,
Called county-meetings, and enforced the laws;
Cut down Crown influence with reforming scythes,
And served the Church, without demanding tythes;
And hence, throughout all Hellas and the East, 675
Each Poet was a Prophet and a Priest,
Whose old established Board of Joint Controuls²³⁰
Included kingdoms in the care of souls.

Next rose the martial Homer, Epic’s prince!
And Fighting’s been in fashion ever since; 680
And old Tyrtæus,²³¹ when the Spartans warred,
(A limping leader, but a lofty Bard),
Though walled Ithome²³² had resisted long,
Reduced the fortress by the force of song.

When men still roamed the forests, Orpheus, the priest and prophet of the gods, deterred them from slaughter and from an abominable way of life. On account of this he is said to have tamed savage tigers and lions. Amphion, the founder of the city of Thebes, also is said to have moved stones wherever he wished by the sound of his lyre and his seductive entreaties. Once it was deemed wisdom to keep what was public separate from what was private, what was sacred from what was not, to issue prohibitions against promiscuity, to set down laws for those who are married, to build towns, to inscribe laws on wooden tablets. In this way honor and renown came to poets, inspired by the gods, and their songs. After these, Homer achieved fame and Tyrtæus, with his poems, sharpened men’s minds for the wars of Mars; oracles were given in poetry, and the way of life was demonstrated, and the grace of kings was tested by Pierian songs; and entertainment was discovered, that entertainment which brought to a close periods of extended labor. I say this so that you will not in any way feel shame for the skilled muse of the

224: Pope, *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*, 171-2 (adapted: should read “... they got there”).

225: Joan of Arc was not canonised until 1920. Voltaire in *La Pucelle d’Orleans* (1755), like Shakespeare in *Henry VII*, did not treat her with the naïve respect that Southey did.

226: The joke is that unsold books are sold for scrap, and end up lining trunks, or wrapping cakes, pies, or hats.

227: For Ovid and Orpheus, see *Metamorphoses*, Book X.

228: John Lempriere, *Classical Dictionary* (1788); a well-known aid. Keats used it.

229: Amphion was the son of Zeus. He built Thebes by playing his lyre, and the stones moved themselves.

230: There were numerous Boards of Control, in charge of trade, customs, excise, forestry, fisheries, and so on.

231: Tyrtæus (c. 685-668 BC) Spartan poet who wrote inspiring war songs.

232: Ithome was a battle in which the Spartans defeated the Messenians, inspired by the songs of Tyrtæus.

When oracles prevailed in times of old, 685 *lyre and the divine singer of songs, Apollo.*²³³
 In song alone Apollo's will was told,
 Then if your verse is what all verse should be,
 And Gods were not ashamed on't – why should we?

The Muse, like mortal females, may be wooed;
 In turns she'll seem a Paphian, or a prude; 690
 Fierce as a bride when first she feels affright,
 Mild as the same upon the second night;
 Wild as the wife of Alderman, or Peer,
 Now for His Grace, and now a Grenadier!
 Her eyes beseem, her heart belies, her zone – 695
 Ice in a crowd, and Lava when alone.²³⁴

If verse be studied with some show of Art,
 Kind Nature always will perform her part;
 Though without Genius, and a native vein 700
 Of wit, we loathe an artificial strain,
 Yet Art and Nature joined will win the prize,
 Unless they act like us and our allies.

*Is it nature or art, the question is put, that makes
 a poem praiseworthy: I do not see what study,
 without a rich vein of natural ability, or raw
 talent alone, would be able to accomplish. Each
 asks for assistance from the other and swears a
 mutual oath of friendship.*

The youth who trains to ride, or run a race,
 Must bear privations with unruffled face,
 Be called to labour when he thinks to dine, 705
 And, harder still, leave wenching and his wine.
 Ladies who sing, at least who sing at sight,
 Have followed Music through the farthest flight;
 But rhymers tell you neither more nor less,
 "I've got a pretty poem for the Press;" 710
 And that's enough; then write and print so fast –
 If Satan take the hindmost, who'd be last?

*He who is eager to reach the desired goal at the
 race-course has endured much and
 accomplished much as a boy. He has sweated
 and he has frozen; he has abstained from sex
 and wine. The flute-player who plays the
 Pythian piece first learned his skill under a
 master he feared. Now it is enough to say: "I
 fashion wonderful poems; may the mangy itch
 take the hindmost; it's a disgrace for me to be
 left behind and to admit that what I did not
 learn, I simply do not know."²³⁵*

233: Siluestris homines sacer interpresque deorum
 caedibus et uictu foedo deterruit Orpheus,
 dictus ob hoc lenire tigris rabidosque leones;
 dictus et Amphion, Thebanae conditor urbis,
 saxa mouere sono testudinis et prece blanda 395
 ducere quo uellet. Fuit haec sapientia quondam,
 publica priuatis discernere, sacra profanis,
 concubitu prohibere uago, dare iura maritis,
 oppida moliri, leges incidere ligno.
 Sic honor et nomen diuinis uatibus atque 400
 carminibus uenit. Post hos insignis Homerus
 Tyrtaeusque mares animos in Martia bella
 uersibus exacuit, dictae per carmina sortes,
 et uitae monstrata uia est et gratia regum
 Pieriis temptata modis ludusque repertus 405
 et longorum operum in finis: ne forte pudori
 sit tibi Musa lyrae sollers et cantor Apollo.

234: Horace could never have written such a section as this, likening the Muse to a wanton woman.

235: Natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte,
 quaesitum est; ego nec studium sine diuite uena
 nec rude quid prosit uideo ingenium; alterius sic 410
 altera poscit opem res et coniurat amice.
 Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam,
 multa tulit fecitque puer, sudauit et alsit,
 abstinuit uenere et uino; qui Pythia cantat

no profession; but these Arcadians (“Arcades Ambo” – bumpkins both)²⁴⁵ send out their native nonsense without the smallest alloy, and leave all the shoes and small-clothes in the parish unrepaired, to patch up Elegies on Enclosures, and Pæens to Gunpowder. Sitting on a shop-board, they describe the fields of battle, when the only blood they ever saw was shed from the finger; and an “Essay on War” is produced by the ninth part of a “poet;”

“And own that nine such poets made a Tate.”²⁴⁶

Did Nathan ever read that line of Pope? and if he did, why not take it as his motto?

‡ This well-meaning gentleman has spoiled some excellent shoemakers, and been accessory to the poetical undoing of many of the industrious poor. Nathaniel Bloomfield and his brother Bobby have all Somersetshire singing;²⁴⁷ nor has the malady confined itself to one county. Pratt too (who once was wiser) has caught the contagion of patronage, and decoyed a poor fellow named Blackett²⁴⁸ into poetry; but he died during the operation, leaving one child and two volumes of “Remains” utterly destitute. The girl, if she don’t take a poetical twist, and come forth as a shoemaking Sappho, may do well; but the “tragedies” are as ricketty as if they had been the offspring of an Earl or a Seatonian prize poet. The patrons of this poor lad are certainly answerable for his end; and it ought to be an indictable offence. But this is the least they have done: for, by a refinement of barbarity, they have made the (late) man posthumously ridiculous, by printing what he would have had sense enough never to print himself. Certes these rakers of “Remains” come under the statute against “resurrection men.”²⁴⁹ What does it signify whether a poor dear dead dunce is to be stuck up in Surgeons’ or in Stationers’ Hall? Is it so bad to unearth his bones as his blunders? Is it not better to gibbet his body on a heath, than his soul in an octavo? “We know what we are, but know not what we may be;” and it is to be hoped we never shall know, if a man who has passed through life with a sort of éclat is to find himself a mountebank on the other side of Styx, and made, like poor Joe Blackett, the laughing-stock or purgatory. The plea of publication is to provide for the child; now, might not some of this *Sutor ultra Crepidam*’s²⁵⁰ friends and seducers have done a decent edition without inveighing Pratt into biography? And then his inscription split into so many modicums! – “To the Duchess of Somuch, the Right Hon. So-and-So, and Mr. And Mrs. Somebody, these volumes are,” &c &c, – there is but a quart, and he divides it among a dozen. Why, Pratt,²⁵¹ hadst thou not a puff left? Dost thou think six families of distinction can share this in quiet? There is a child, a book, and a dedication: send the girl to her grace, the volumes to the grocer, and the dedication to the devil.

There lives one Druid, who prepares in time
’Gainst future feuds his poor revenge of rhyme;
Racks his dull Memory, and his duller Muse,
To publish faults which Friendship should excuse.
If Friendship’s nothing, Self-regard might teach 741
More polished usage of his parts of speech.²⁵²
But what is shame, or what is taught to him?
He vents his spleen, or gratifies his whim.
Some fancied slight has roused his lurking hate, 745
Some folly crossed, some jest, or some debate;
Up to his den Sir Scribbler hies, and soon
The gathered gall is voided in Lampon.

245: B. became fond of this joke (from Virgil, Seventh Eclogue, 4), which implies “blackguards who hunt in pairs”. See *Don Juan* 93, 8 and XIII 45, 1; and in letters at BLJ IV 173 (Sternhold and Hopkins, the Tudor psalmodists) and X 67-8 (John Murray the publisher and Charles Murray of the right-wing Constitutional Association).

246: Pope, *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*, 190.

247: But the Bloomfields were from Suffolk.

248: See *ESBR* 765-6, B.’s marginalium

249: Bodysnatchers like Burke and Hare.

250: Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* XXV 10 36. *Ultra crepidarius* (“every inch a cobbler”) became the nickname of B.’s idol William Gifford.

251: Pratt edited Blackett’s *Remains* in 1811.

252: Compare *Beppo*, 57, 8: ... *soil with parts of Speech the parts of dress*.

Perhaps at some pert speech you've dared to frown,
 Perhaps your Poem may have pleased the Town: 750
 If so, alas! 'tis nature in the man –
 May Heaven forgive you, for he never can!
 Then be it so; and may his withering Bays
 Bloom fresh in satire, though they fade in praise,
 While his lost songs no more shall steep and stink
 The dullest, fattest weeds on Lethe's brink,²⁵³ 756
 But springing upwards from the sluggish mould,
 Be (what they never were before) be – sold!

Should some rich Bard (but such a monster now,
 In modern Physics, we can scarce allow),²⁵⁴ 760
 Should some pretending scribbler of the Court,
 Some rhyming Peer – there's plenty of that sort * –
 All but one poor dependent priest withdrawn,
 (Ah! too regardless of his Chaplain's yawn!)
 Condemn the unlucky Curate to recite 765
 Their last dramatic work by candle-light,
 How would the preacher turn each rueful leaf,
 Dull as his sermons, but not half so brief!
 Yet, since 'tis promised at the Rector's death,
 He'll risk no living for a little breath. 770
 Then spouts and foams, and cries at every line,
 (The Lord forgive him!) "Bravo! Grand! Divine!"
 Hoarse with those praises (which, by Flatt'ry fed,
 Dependence barter for her bitter bread),
 He strides and stamps along with creaking boot; 775
 Till the floor echoes his emphatic foot,
 Then sits again, and rolls his pious eye,
 As when the dying vicar will not die!
 Nor feels, forsooth, emotion at his heart –
 But all Dissemblers overact their part. 780

Just like the herald at an auction who collects a crowd in order to sell his merchandise, the poet who is rich in lands, rich in money lent out for interest, bids flatterers with an eye on profit to assemble. If in fact he is someone who can properly serve up a lavish banquet and go bail for a fickle, poverty-stricken client and can extricate someone from distressing lawsuits, I will be surprised if the blessed fellow can tell a liar from a true friend. You, then, if you have given, or plan to give, a gift to someone, must refuse to invite him, full of joyful gratitude, to a reading of poems you have written. For he will shout, "Beautiful!" "Great!" "Right on!" He will turn pale over them, he will even let dew drip from his friendly eyes, he will dance and pound the pavement with his foot. Just as hired mourners at a funeral almost say and do more than those who grieve from the heart, so a mocking critic will more easily be aroused than a true admirer. Kings are said to ply with many a cup and test with wine the person they strive to examine with regard to his worthiness of their friendship. If you plan to write poetry, the thoughts concealed within the fox should never deceive you.²⁵⁵

253: Compare *Hamlet*, I, v, 31-2: ... *the fat weed / That roots itself in ease on Lethe warf ...*

254: Repetitious. Compare above, 730 and n.

255:

Vt praeco, ad merces turbam qui cogit emendas, adساتores iubet ad lucrum ire poeta	420
diues agris, diues positus in fenore nummis. Si uero est unctum qui recte ponere possit et spondere leui pro paupere et eripere atris litibus implicitum, mirabor si sciet inter noscere mendacem uerumque beatus amicum.	425
Tu seu donaris seu quid donare uoles cui, nolito ad uersus tibi factos ducere plenum laetitiae; clamabit enim: "Pulchre, bene, recte", pallescet super his, etiam stillabit amicis ex oculis rorem, saliet, tundet pede terram.	430
Vt qui conducti plorant in funere dicunt et faciunt prope plura dolentibus ex animo, sic derisor uero plus laudatore mouetur. Reges dicuntur multis urgere culillis et torquere mero, quem perspexisse laborent	435
an sit amicitia dignus; si carmina condes,	

* Here will Mr. Gifford²⁵⁶ allow me to introduce once more to his notice the sole survivor, the “ultimus Romanorum,” the last of the Cruscanti – “Edwin” the “profound” by our Lady of Punishment!²⁵⁷ here he is, as lively as in the days of “well said Baviad the Correct.”²⁵⁸ I thought Fitzgerald²⁵⁹ had been the tale of poesy; but, alas! he is only the penultimate.

A FAMILIAR EPISTLE TO THE EDITOR OF THE “MORNING CHRONICLE.”

“What reams of paper, floods of ink,”
Do some men spoil, who never think!
And so perhaps you’ll say of me,
In which your readers may agree.

Still I write on, and tell you why;
Nothing’s so bad, you can’t deny,
But may instruct or entertain
Without the risk of giving pain, &c &c.

ON SOME MODERN QUACKS AND REFORMISTS.

In tracing of the human mind
Through all its various courses,
Though strange, ’tis true, we often find
It knows not its resources:

And men through life assume a part
For which no talents they possess,
Yet wonder that, with all their art,
They meet no better with success, &c, &c.

Ye, who aspire to “build the lofty rhyme,”²⁶⁰
Believe not all who build your false “sublime;”
But if some friend shall hear your work, and say,
“Expunge that stanza, lop that line away,”
And, after fruitless efforts, you return 785
Without amendment, and he answers, “Burn!”
That instant throw your paper in the fire,
Ask not his thoughts, nor follow his desire;
But (if true Bard!) you scorn to condescend,
And will not alter what you can’t defend, 790
If you will breed this Bastard of your Brains,*
We’ll have no words – I’ve only lost my pains.

Yet, if you only prize your favourite thought,
As critics kindly do, and authors ought;
If your cool friend annoy you now and then, 795
And cross whole pages with his plaguy pen;

If you ever read something to Quintilius, he used to say, “Please correct this point and that.” If you said that you could not improve them after two or three vain attempts, he would advise you to blot them out and to return the badly formed verses to the anvil. If you chose to defend your error rather than change it, he would expend not a word more nor waste any useless effort to stop you, alone, from loving your work and yourself without a rival. An honest and judicious man will be critical of dull verses and disapproving of harsh ones; next to those completely lacking in art he will smear a black line with a horizontal stroke of the pen; he will excise pretentious decoration; he will compel you to shed light on what lacks clarity; he will expose the obscure phrase; he will note what must be

numquam te fallent animi sub uolpe latentes.

256: William Gifford (1756-1826) *ci-devant* satirist, now editor of the *Quarterly Review* and translator of Juvenal (whose approach he preferred to that of Horace), was to become B.’s “literary father” (BLJ XI 117, 123). See *EBSR*, preface.

257: For Our Lady of Punishment, see CHP I, 20, 4.

258: B. refers to *A Familiar Epistle*, by T. Vaughan (*Morning Chronicle*, October 7th 1881 – after he returned to England). Vaughan had been mocked in Gifford’s *The Baviad* (1794) as *The profound Mr T. Vaughan*.

259: For “hoarse Fitzgerald,” see *ESBR*, opening line.

260: Milton, *Lycidas*, 11.

No matter, throw your ornaments aside –
 Better let him than all the world deride.
 Give light to passages too much in shade,
 Nor let a doubt obscure one verse you've made; 800
 Your friend's a "Johnson," not to leave one word,
 However trifling, which may seem absurd;
 Such erring trifles lead to serious ills,
 And furnish food for critics,† or their quills.

*changed and will turn out to be a veritable Aristarchus. He will not say, "Why should I displease a friend because of trivialities?" These "trivialities" will lead that friend into serious trouble once he has been greeted with unfavorable reviews and mocking laughter.*²⁶¹

* Minerva being the first by Jupiter's head-piece, and a variety of equally unaccountable parturitions upon earth, such as Madoc, &c. &c.

† "A crust for the critics." – Bayes, in "the Rehearsal."

As the Scotch fiddle with its touching tune, 805
 Or the mad influence of the angry Moon,
 All men avoid bad writers' angry tongues,
 As yawning waiters * fly Fitzscribble's lungs;
 Yet on he mouths – then minutes – tedious each
 As Prelate's homily, or placeman's speech, 810
 Long as the last years of a lingering lease,
 When Riot pauses, until Rents increase.
 While such a minstrel, muttering fustian, strays
 O'er hedge and ditch, through unfrequented ways,
 If by some chance he walks into a well, 815
 And shouts for succour with Stentorian yell,
 "A rope! help, Christians, as ye hope for grace!"
 Nor woman, man, or child will stir a pace.
 For there his carcass he might freely fling
 From frenzy, or the humour of the thing! 820
 Though this has happened to more bards than one;
 I'll tell you Budgell's story²⁶² – and have done.
 Budgell, a rogue and rhymester – for no good,
 (Unless his case be much misunderstood)
 When teased with creditors' continual claims, 825
 "To die like Cato," leapt into the Thames! †
 And therefore be it lawful through the town
 For any Bard to poison, hang, or drown:
 Who saves the intended suicide, receives
 Small thanks from him who loathes the life he leaves;

As when the evil itch or the disease of kings or the frenzied madness and wrath of Diana oppress someone, so sensible people are afraid to touch the mad poet, and run away from him. Inconsiderate children pursue and torment him. He, his head in the clouds, belches out his poems and loses his way; if, like a fowler whose attention is riveted on the blackbirds, he falls into a well or pit, no one will care to raise him up no matter how long he shouts, "Hey, fellow-citizens, look over here!" But if anyone takes the trouble to come to his aid and to lower a rope to him, I will say, "how do you know that he didn't throw himself down there on purpose and doesn't want to be saved?" Then, I'll tell the story of how the Sicilian poet perished. When Empedocles felt the desire to be considered an immortal god, cool as a cucumber he leaped into the burning fires of Aetna. Let the right be given, let permission be granted for poets to die. Whoever saves someone against his will does exactly the same thing as the person who murders him. Not just once has he done this, and if he is extricated now he will not become a mere mortal and put aside his infatuation with a death that will make him famous. Nor is it sufficiently

261: Quintilio siquid recitares: "Corrige, sodes, hoc" aiebat "et hoc"; melius te posse negares, bis terque expertum frustra; delere iubebat 440
 et male tornatos incudi reddere uersus.
 Si defendere delictum quam uertere malles,
 nullum ultra uerbum aut operam insumebat inanem,
 quin sine riuali teque et tua solus amares.
 Vir bonus et prudens uersus reprehendet inertis, 445
 culpabit duos, incomptis adlinet atrum
 transuorso calamo signum, ambitiosa recidet
 ornamenta, parum claris lucem dare coget,
 arguet ambigue dictum, mutanda notabit,
 fiet Aristarchus, nec dicet: "Cur ego amicum 450
 offendam in nugis?" Hae nugae seria ducent
 in mala derisum semel exceptumque sinistre.

262: Eustace Budgell (1686-1737) was a friend of Addison; he drowned himself in the Thames to avoid financial humiliation. He wrote *A Poem upon His Majesty's Late Journey to Cambridge and Newmarket* (1737).

And, sooth to say, mad poets must not lose 831 *clear why he practices the poet's trade. Did he*
The Glory of that death they freely choose. *sacrilegiously urinate on the ashes of his*
Nor is it certain, that some sorts of verse *ancestors or disturb a gloomy plot of*
Prick not the Poet's conscience as a curse; *consecrated land that had been struck by*
Dosed with ‡ vile drams, on Sunday he was found, *lightning? Whatever the cause he is certainly*
Or gat a child on consecrated ground! 836 *mad and just like a bear – if he has succeeded in*
And hence is haunted with a rhyming rage, *smashing the restraining bars of his cage – his*
Feared like a bear just bursting from his cage; *morose public recitations frighten off the*
If free, all fly his versifying fit,²⁶³ *educated and the ignorant alike; once he gets*
Fatal at once to Simpleton or Wit. 840 *his hands on a person, he doesn't let go until he*
But, *him* unhappy! whom he seizes, *him* *kills him with his reading – a leech who will not*
He flays with Recitation limb by limb, *release the skin unless gorged with blood.*²⁶⁴
Probes to the quick, where'er he makes his breach,
And gorges like a Lawyer, or a Leech.

* And the “waiters” are the only fortunate people can “fly” from them; all the rest, viz. The sad subscribers to the “Literary Fund,” being compelled, by courtesy, to sit out the recitation without a hope of exclaiming, “Sic” (that is, by choking Fitz. With bad wine, or worse poetry) “me servit Apollo!”

† On his table were found these words: – “What Cato did, and Addison approved, cannot be wrong.” But Addison did not “approve”; and if he had, it would not have mended the matter. He had invited his daughter on the same water-party; but Miss Budgell, by some accident, escaped this last paternal attention. Thus fell the sycophant of “Atticus,” and the enemy of Pope!

‡ If “dosed with” be censured as low, I beg leave to refer to the original for something still lower; and if any reader will translate “Minxerit in patrios cineres,” &c. into a decent couplet, I will insert said couplet in lieu of the present.

263: Compare the climax of *TVOJ*, when all fly Southey's attempt at reading *A Vision of Judgment*.

264: Vt mala quem scabies aut morbus regius urget
aut fanaticus error et iracunda Diana, 455
uesanum tetigisse timent fugiuntque poetam,
qui sapiunt; agitant pueri incautique sequuntur.
Hic dum sublimis uersus ructatur et errat,
si ueluti merulis intentus decidit auceps
in puteum foueamue, licet “succurrite” longum
clamet “io ciues”, non sit qui tollere curet. 460
Si curet quis opem ferre et demittere funem,
“qui scis an prudens huc se deiecerit atque
seruari nolit?” dicam, Siculique poetae
narrabo interitum. Deus immortalis haberi
dum cupit Empedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam
insiluit. Sit ius liceatque perire poetis; 466
inuitum qui seruat, idem facit occidenti.
Nec semel hoc fecit nec, si retractus erit, iam
fiet homo et ponet famosae mortis amorem.
Nec satis apparet cur uersus factitet, utrum 470
minxerit in patrios cineres, an triste bidental
mouerit incestus; certe furit, ac uelut ursus,
obiectos caeuae ualuit si frangere clatros,
indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus;
quem uero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo, 475
non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo.

BYRON'S 1820 NOTE ON POPE

Byron wished this passage to be appended to his proposed 1821 edition of *Hints*. It is from *Some Observations upon an Article in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine N^o XXIV, August 1819*, which was started on 15th March 1820, and not published in his lifetime. It was first published in *Works of Lord Byron*, ed. John Wright, vol 15, (1833). On September 23rd 1820 Byron wrote to Murray:

I have a notion that with some omissions of names and passages it will do – and I could put my late observations *for* Pope among the notes with the date of 1820, and so on ...²⁶⁵

The passage has never been placed where Byron wished. It makes much clearer his motive in wanting *Hints* printed in 1821.

I have annotated quotations only. For a very thorough annotation, see CMP 381-95.

Here I wish to say a few words on the present State of English Poetry. That this is the Age of the Decline of English Poetry will be doubted by few who have calmly considered the Subject. That there are men of Genius among the present Poets makes little against the fact – because it has been well said that “next to him who forms the taste of his Country, the greatest Genius is he who corrupts it.” No one has ever denied Genius to Marini, who corrupted not merely the taste of Italy, but that of all Europe, for nearly a Century.

The great cause of the present deplorable state of English Poetry is to be attributed to that absurd and systematic depreciation of Pope, in which for the last few years there has been a kind of Epidemical concurrence. Men of the most opposite opinions have united upon this topic. Warton and Churchill began it, having borrowed the hint probably from the heroes of the *Dunciad* – and their own internal conviction that their improper reputation must be as nothing till the most perfect and harmonious of poets – he who, having no fault, has had REASON made his reproach – was then reduced to what they conceived to be his level – but even *they* dared not degrade him below Dryden. Goldsmith and Rogers and Campbell, his most successful disciples, and Hayley, who, however feeble, has one poem “that will not willingly let die” (the *Triumphs of Temper*), kept up the reputation of that pure and perfect Style, and Crabbe – the first of living Poets – has almost equalled the Master. Then came Darwin, who was put down by a single poem in the *Antijacobin*, and the *Cruscans* – from Merry to Jerningham – who were annihilated (if *Nothing* can be said to be annihilated) by Gifford – the last of the wholesome English Satirists.

At the same time as Mr. Southey was favouring the Public with *Wat Tyler* and *Joan of Arc* to the great glory of the Drama and Epos – I beg pardon – *Wat Tyler*, with *Peter Bell*, was still in Mss. – and it was not till after Mr. Southey had received his Malmsey Butt, and Mr. Wordsworth became qualified to gauge it, that the great revolutionary tragedy came before the public and the Court of Chancery. Wordsworth was peddling his *Lyrical Ballads* – and brooding a preface to be succeeded in due course of years by a postscript, both couched in such prose as must give peculiar delight to those who have read the prefaces of Pope and Dryden – scarcely less celebrated by the beauty of their prose than for the charms of their verse. Wordsworth is the reverse of Molière's Gentleman “who had been talking prose all his life without knowing it,” for he thinks that he has been all his life writing both prose and verse, and neither of what he conceives to be such can properly be said to be either one or the other. Mr. Coleridge * – the future Vates, poet, and Seer, of the *Morning Post*, (an honour also claimed by Mr. Fitzgerald of the *Rejected Addresses*) who ultimately prophesied the downfall of Buonaparte, to which he himself mainly contributed by giving him the nickname of “the Corsican,” was then employed in predicating the damnation of Mr. Pitt, and the desolation of England in the two very best copies of verses he ever wrote – to wit, the infernal eclogue of *Fire, Famine, and Slaughter* and the *Ode to the Departing Year*.

* Goldsmith has anticipated the definition of the Lake poetry, as far as such things can be defined: “Gentlemen – the present piece is not one of your *common epic poems*, which come from the press like paper kites in Summer; there are none of your Turnuses or Didos in it; *it is an heroic description of Nature*. – I only beg you'll endeavour to make your Souls in unison with mine, *and hear with the same*

*enthusiasm with which I have written.*²⁶⁶ – Would not this have made a proper Proem to *The Excursion* – and the poet, and his pedlar? it would have answered perfectly for that purpose had it not been unfortunately written in good English.

These three personages – Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge – had all of them a very natural antipathy to Pope, and I respect them for it, as the only original feeling or principle which they have contrived to preserve. But they have been joined in it by those who have joined them in nothing else – by the Edinburgh Reviewers, by the whole heterogeneous Mass of Living English Poets – excepting Crabbe, Rogers, Gifford and Campbell – who, both by precept and practice, have proved their adherence; and by me, who have shamefully deviated in practice – but have ever honoured and loved Pope’s Poetry with my whole soul, and hope to do so till my dying day. I would rather see all I have ever written lining the same trunk in which I actually read the eleventh book of a modern Epic poem at Malta in 1811 – (I opened it to take out a change after the paroxysm of a tertian, in the absence of my Servant, and found it lined with the name of the Maker – Eyre, Cockspur Street – and with the epic poetry alluded to) than sacrifice what I firmly believe in as the Christianity of English Poetry – the Poetry of Pope.

But the Edinburgh Reviewers, and the Lakers, and Hunt and his school, and every body else with their school, and even Moore – without a School – and dilettanti lecturers at Institutions – and elderly Gentleman who translate and imitate, and young ladies who listen and repeat – Baronets who draw indifferent frontispieces for bad poets, and noblemen who let them dine with them in the Country, the small body of the Wits and the great body of the Blues – have latterly united in a depreciation of which their fathers would have been as much ashamed as their Children will be. In the mean time, what have we got instead? The Lake School, which begun with an Epic poem “written in six weeks” (so *Joan of Arc* proclaimed herself) and finished with a ballad composed in twenty years – as *Peter Bell’s* creator takes care to inform the few who will enquire. What have we got instead? A deluge of flimsy and unintelligible romances imitated from Scott and myself, who have both made the best of our bad materials, and erroneous System. What have we got instead? *Madoc*, which is neither an Epic nor anything else; *Thalaba*, *Kehama*, *Gebir* and such Gibberish, written in all metres and in no language. Hunt, who had powers to have made *The Story of Rimini* as perfect as a fable of Dryden, has thought fit to sacrifice his Genius and his taste to some intelligible notions of Wordsworth, which I defy him to explain. Moore has – – but why continue? All, with the exceptions of Crabbe and Rogers and Campbell, who may be considered as having taken their Station, will by the blessing of God survive their own reputation without attaining any very extraordinary period of longevity. Of course there must be a still further exception in favour of those who, having never obtained any reputation at all, unless it be among provincial literati, and their own families, have none to lose; and of Moore, who, as the Burns of Ireland, possesses a fame which cannot be lost.

The greater part of the poets mentioned, however, have been able to gather a few followers. A paper of the Connoisseur says that “It is observed by the French that a Cat, a Priest, and an old woman, are sufficient to constitute a religious sect in England.” The same number of animals, with some difference in kind, will suffice for a poetical One. If we take Sir George Beaumont instead of the Priest, and Mr. Wordsworth for the old Woman, we shall nearly complete the quota required – but I fear that Mr. Southey will but indifferently represent the CAT, having shown himself but too distinctly to be of a species to which that noble creature is peculiarly hostile. Nevertheless I will not go as far as Wordsworth in his postscript, who pretends that *no* great poet ever had immediate fame, which being interpreted, means that William Wordsworth is not quite so much read by his cotemporaries as might be desirable. This assertion is false as it is foolish. Homer’s Glory depended upon his present popularity; if he recited, and without the strongest impression of the moment, who would have gotten the *Iliad* by heart, and given it to tradition? Ennius – Terence – Plautus – Lucretius – Horace – Virgil – Æschylus – Sophocles – Euripides – Sappho – Anacreon – Theocritus – all the great poets of Antiquity were the delight of their cotemporaries. The very existence of a poet previous to the invention of printing depended upon his present popularity – and how often has it impaired his future fame? Hardly ever; history informs us that the best have come down to us. The reason is evident – the most popular found the greater number of transcribers for their Mss., and that the taste of their cotemporaries was corrupt can hardly be avouched by the moderns, the mightiest of whom have but barely approached them. Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso, were all the

darlings of the cotemporary reader. Dante's poem was celebrated long before his death, and, not long after it, States negotiated for his ashes, and disputed for the sites of the composition of the *Divina Commedia*. Petrarch was crowned in the Capitol. Ariosto was permitted to pass free by the public Robber who had read the *Orlando Furioso*. I would not recommend Mr. Wordsworth to try the same experiment with his Smugglers. Tasso – notwithstanding the criticisms of the Cruscanti – would have been crowned in the Capitol, but for his death.

It is easy to prove the immediate popularity of the chief Poets of the only modern nation in Europe that has a poetical language – the Italian. In our own – Shakespeare, Spenser, Jonson, Waller, Dryden, Congreve, Pope, Young, Shenstone, Thomson, Johnson, Goldsmith, Gray, were all as popular in their lives as since. Gray's Elegy pleased instantly, and eternally. His Odes did not, nor yet do they please like his Elegy. Milton's politics kept him down – but the epigam of Dryden, and the very Sale of his work, in proportion to the less reading time of its publication, prove him to have been honoured by his cotemporaries. I will venture to assert that the Sale of the *Paradise Lost* was greater in the first four years after its publication than that of *The Excursion* in the same number – with the difference of nearly a Century and a half between them of time, and thousands in point of general readers, notwithstanding Mr. Wordsworth's having pressed Milton into his Service as one of those not presently popular, to favour his own purpose of proving that our Grand-Children will read *him* – the said William Wordsworth. I would recommend him to begin first with our Grandmothers. But he need not be alarmed – he may yet live to see all he envies pass away – as Darwin and Seward, and Hoole and Hole and Hoyle have passed away – but their declension will not be his ascension; he is essentially a bad writer, and all the failures of others can never strengthen him; he may have a sect, but he will never have a public, and his "audience" will always be "few" without being "fit," except for the Bedlam.

It may be asked why, having this opinion of the present state of Poetry in England, and having had it long – as my friends and others well know – possessing, or having possessed, as a writer, the ear of the Public for the time being – I have not adopted a different plan in my own compositions, and endeavoured to correct rather than encourage the taste of the Day. To this I would answer, that it is easier to perceive the wrong than to pursue the right, and that I have never contemplated the prospect of filling (with *Peter Bell* – see its preface) permanently a station in the literature of the Country. Those who know me best, know this – and that I have been considerably astonished at the temporary success of my works – having flattered no person and no party, and expressed opinions which are not those of the general reader. Could I have anticipated the degree of attention which has been accorded, assuredly I would have studied more to deserve it. But I have lived in far countries abroad, or in the agitating world at home which was not favourable to study or reflection, so that almost all I have written, has been mere Passion, passion it is true of different kinds – but always always passion – for in me (if it be not an Irishism to say so) my *indifference* was a kind of Passion – the result of experience and not the philosophy of Nature. Writing grows a habit, like a Woman's gallantry; there are women who have had no intrigue, but few who have had but one only; so, there are millions of men who have never written a book, but few who have written only one. And thus written once, I wrote on; encouraged no doubt by the success of the moment, yet by no means anticipating its duration, and I will venture to say, scarcely even wishing it. But then I did other things besides write, which by no mean contributed either to improve my writings or my prosperity.

I have thus expressed publicly upon the Poetry of the day the opinion I have long entertained and expressed of it to all who have asked it, and to some who would rather not have heard it. As I told Moore not very long ago, "we are all wrong except Rogers, Crabbe, and Campbell." Without being old in years, I am old in days, and do not feel the adequate Spirit within me to attempt a work which should show what I think right in Poetry, and must content myself with having denounced what is wrong. There are I trust younger Spirits rising up in England who, escaping the Contagion which has swept away Poetry from our literature, will recall it to their Country, such as it once was and may still be.

In the mean time the best Sign of amendment will be repentance – and new and frequent Editions of Pope and Dryden.

There will be found as comfortable Metaphysics and ten times more poetry in the *Essay on Man* than in *The Excursion*. If you search for Passion, where is it to be found stronger than in the *Epistle from Eloisa to Abelard*? – or in *Palamon and Arcite*? Do you wish for invention – imagination – Sublimity – Character? Seek them in *The Rape of the Lock*, the fables of Dryden, the *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, and *Absalom and Achitophel*: you will discover in these two poets only *all* for which you must ransack innumerable metres, and – God only knows – how may *writers* of the day, without finding a tittle of the same qualities, with the addition of wit – of which the latter have none. I have not forgotten Thomas

Brown the Younger, nor the Fudge Family, nor Whistlecraft, but that is not Wit, it is Humour. I will say nothing of the harmony of Pope and Dryden in comparison, for there is not a living poet (except Rogers, Gifford, Campbell and Crabbe) who can write an heroic couplet. The fact is that the exquisite beauty of their versification has withdrawn the public attention from their other excellencies, as the vulgar eye will rest more upon the splendour of the uniform than the quality of the troops. It is this very harmony, particularly in Pope, which has raised the vulgar and atrocious cant against him, because his versification is perfect – it is assumed that it is his only perfection, because his truths are so clear – it is asserted that he has no invention, and because he is always intelligible, it is taken for granted that he has no Genius. We are sneeringly told that he is the “Poet of Reason,” as if this were a reason for his being no poet. Taking passage for passage I will undertake to cite more lines teeming with *imagination* from Pope than from any two living poets – be they who they may. To take an instance at random – from a species of composition not very favourable to imagination – Satire; set down the character of Sporus – with all the wonderful play of fancy which is scattered over it – and place by its side an equal number of verses from any two existing poets, of the same power and the same variety – where will you find them?

I merely mention one instance of many in reply to the injustice done to the memory of him who harmonized our poetic language. The attorneys’ clerks, and other self-educated Genii, found it easier to distort themselves to the new Models than to toil after the symmetry of him who had enchanted their fathers. They were, besides, smitten by being told that the new School were to revive the language of Queen Elizabeth – the true English – as every body in the reign of Queen Anne wrote no better than French, by a species of literary treason. Blank Verse, which, unless in the Drama, no one except Milton ever wrote who could rhyme, became the order of the day, or else such rhyme as looked still blanker than the verse without it. I am aware that Johnson has said, after some hesitation, he could not “prevail upon himself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer.” The Opinions of that truly Great Man – whom it is also the present fashion to decry – will ever be received by me with that deference which Time will restore to him from all; but with all humility, I am not persuaded that the *Paradise Lost* would not have been more nobly conveyed to Posterity, not perhaps in heroic couplets, although even *they* could sustain the Subject, if well balanced, but in the Stanza of Spenser, or of Tasso, or in the terza rima of Dante – which the Powers of Milton could easily have grafted on to our language. The Seasons of Thomspn would have been better in rhyme, although still inferior to his *Castle of Indolence* – and Mr. Southey’s *Joan of Arc* no worse, although it might then have taken up six months instead of six weeks in the composition. I recommend also to the lovers of Lyrics the perusal of the present Laureate’s Odes by the side of Dryden on St. Cecilia; but let him be sure to read *first* those of Mr. Southey.

To the heaven-born Genii and inspired young Scriveners of the day – much of this will appear paradox, it will appear so even to the higher order of our Critics; but it was a truism twenty years ago and it will be a re-acknowledged truth in ten more. In the mean time I will conclude with two quotations both intended for some of my old Classical friends who have still enough of Cambridge about them to think themselves honoured by having had John Dryden as a predecessor in their College – and to recollect that their earliest English poetical pleasures were drawn from the “little nightingale” of Twickenham.

The first is from the Notes to the poem of *The Friends*,²⁶⁷ pages 181-2:

It is only within the last twenty or thirty years that those notable discoveries in Criticism have been made, which have taught our recent versifiers to undervalue this energetic, melodious, and moral poet; the Consequences of this want of due esteem for a Writer whom the Good sense of our predecessors had raised to his proper Station, have been NUMEROUS AND DEGRADING ENOUGH. This is not the place to enter into the Subject, even as far as it affects our poetical numbers alone; and there is matter of more importance that equires present reflection.

The Second is from the volume of a young person²⁶⁸ * learning to write poetry, and beginning by teaching the art. Hear him:

But were ye dead
To things ye knew not of – were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school

267: *The Friends: a Poem* by Francis Hodgson (1818).

268: B. refers to Keats, who died the year after he wrote this passage.

Of dolts to SMOOTH, *inlay*, and *clip*, and *fit*,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. – *Easy was the task*:
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of Poesy. – Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did they know it! No, they went about,
Holding a poor, *decrepit* standard out
Marked with most flinty mottoes, and in large
The name of *one* Boileau!²⁶⁹

A little before, the manner of Pope is termed

... a Schism
Nurtured by *foppery* and barbarism,
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.²⁷⁰

I thought "*foppery*" was a consequence of *refinement*, but n'importe.
Further we have

The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet
Into the brain ere one can think upon it;
The silence when some rhymes are coming out,
And when they're come, the *very pleasant rout*;
The message certain to be done to-morrow. –
'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow
Some precious book from out its snug retreat,
To cluster round it when we next shall meet
Scarce can I scribble on, &c. &c.²⁷¹

Now what does this mean?
Again –

And with these airs come forms of elegance
Stooping their shoulders o'er a horse's prance.²⁷²

Where did these "*forms of elegance*" learn to ride – with "*stooping shoulders*"?
Again –

Thus I remember all the pleasant flow
Of words at opening a portfolio.²⁷³

Again –

yet I must not forget
Sleep, quiet with his poppy coronet,
For what there may be worthy in these rhymes
I partly owe to him, &c.²⁷⁴

The obligation is likely to be mutual. As balance to these lines, and to the Sense and Sentiments of the new School, I will put down a passage or two from Pope's earliest poems – taken at random –

... *Envy* her own Snakes shall feel,
And *Persecution* mourn her broken Wheel,
There *Faction* roar, *Rebellion* bite her Chain,
And gasping Furies thirst for Blood in vain.²⁷⁵

269: Keats, *Sleep and Poetry*, 193-206. Small caps and italics are B.'s additions.

270: Ibid, 181-3. B.'s italics.

271: Ibid, 319-327. B.'s italics.

272: Ibid, 331-2. B.'s italics.

273: Ibid, 337-8. B.'s italics.

274: Ibid, 347-50. B.'s italics.

275: Pope, *Windsor Forest*, 419-22 (Pope's italics).

Ah! what avails his glossie, varying Dyes,
His Purple Crest, and Scarlet-circled Eyes,
The vivid Green his shining Plumes unfold;
His painted Wings, and Breast that flames with Gold?²⁷⁶

Round broken Columns clasping Ivy twin'd,
O'er Heaps of Ruin stalk'd the stately Hind;
The Fox obscene to gaping Tombs retires,
And savage Howling fill the sacred Quires.²⁷⁷

Hail *Bards Triumphant!* born in *happier* Days;
Immortal Heirs of *Universal* Praise!
Whose Honours with Increase of Ages *grow*,
As Streams roll down, *enlarging* as they flow!
Nations *unborn* your mighty Names shall sound,
And Worlds applaud that must not yet be *found!*
O may some Spark or *your* Cœlestial Fire,
The last, the meanest of your Sons inspire,
(That, on weak Wings, from far, pursues your Flights;
*Glow*s while he *reads*, but trembles as he *writes*)
To teach vain Wits a Science *little known*,
T' *admire* Superior Sense, and *doubt* their own!²⁷⁸

Amphion there the loud creating Lyre
Strikes, and behold a sudden *Thebes* aspire!
Cithæron's Echoes answer to his Call,
And half the Mountain rolls into a wall.²⁷⁹

So *Zembla's* rocks (the beauteous Work of Frost)
Rise white in Air, and glitter o'er the Coast,
Pale Suns, unfelt, at distance roll away,
And on th' impassive Ice the Lightnings play;
Eternal Snows the glowing Mass supply,
Till the bright Mountains prop th' incumbent Sky:
As *Atlas* fix'd, each hoary Pile appears,
The gather'd Winter of a thousand Years.²⁸⁰

Thus when we view some well-proportion'd Dome,
(The *World's* just Wonder, and ev'n *thine* O *Rome!*)
No single Parts unequally surprize;
All comes *united* to th' admiring Eyes;
No monstrous Height, or Breadth, or Length appear;
The *Whole* at once is *Bold*, and *Regular*.²⁸¹

A thousand similar passages crowd upon me, all composed by Pope before his *two and twentieth year* – and yet it is contended he is no poet, and we are to be told so in such lines as I beg the reader to compare with these *youthful* verses of the “No poet.” Must we repeat the question of Johnson – “*If Pope is not a Poet where is Poetry to be found?*” Even in *descriptive* poetry – the *lowest* department of the Art, he will be found on a fair examination to surpass any living writer.

It may appear harsh to accumulate passages of this kind from the work of a young man in the outset of his career. But, if he will set out with assailing the Poet whom of all others a young aspirant ought to respect and honour and study – if he will hold forth in such lines – his notions on poetry, and endeavour to recommend them by terming such men as Pope, Dryden, Swift, Addison, Congreve, Young, Gay,

276: Ibid, 115-18.

277: Ibid, 69-72. This is probably where B. got the idea of Jackalls howling in the ruins of Ephesus.

278: Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 189-200 (Pope's italics).

279: Pope, *The Temple of Fame*, 85-8 (Pope's italics).

280: Ibid, 53-60 (Pope's italics).

281: Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 247-52 (Pope's italics).

Goldsmith, Johnson &c. &c. “*a School of dolts*” – he must abide by the consequences of his unfortunate distortion of intellect. But like Milbourne, he is “the fairest of Critics” by enabling us to compare his own compositions with those of Pope at the same age – and on a similar subject, viz. Poetry. As Mr Keats does not want imagination nor industry, let those who have led him astray look to what they have done; surely they must feel no little remorse in having so perverted the taste and feelings of this young man, and will be satisfied with one such victim to their Moloch of Absurdity.

* Mr. Keats died at Rome about a year after this was written, of a decline produced by his having burst a blood vessel on reading the article on his *Endymion* in the *Quarterly Review*. I have read the article before and since, and although it is bitter, I do not think that a man should permit himself to be killed by it. But a young man little dreams what he must inevitably encounter in the course of a life ambitious of public notice. My indignation at Mr. Keats’ depreciation of Pope has hardly permitted me to do justice to his own Genius, which, malgré all the fantastic fopperies of his style, was undoubtedly of great promise. His fragment of *Hyperion* seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as Æschylus. He is a loss to our literature, the more so as he himself before his death is said to have been persuaded that he had not taken the right line, and was reforming his style upon the more Classical models of the language.

November 12th 1821

Pope little expected that the “Art of Sinking in Poetry” would become an object of serious Study – and supersede not only his own but all that Horace – Vida – Boileau – and Aristotle had left to Posterity, of precept, and the greatest poets of all nations – of example.

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