

# “The Brain-Sucker: Or, the Distress of Authorship”: A Critical Edition

INGO BERENSMEYER, GERO GUTTZEIT,<sup>1</sup> ALISE JAMESON<sup>2</sup>

**Note on the text:** “The Brain-Sucker: Or, the Distress of Authorship” was first published in *The British Mercury* in 1787, in two parts: the first part in “No. I. – May 12 1787”, pp. 14–27, and the continuation in “No. II. – May 26 1787”, pp. 43–48. *The British Mercury* was reissued in 1788, advertised as *A New Edition*. This edition survives in three copies. Our copy-text for the present edition is the Bodleian Library copy (shelfmark G Pamph 1192), which is identified with the siglum B in the notes below. This has been collated with Bodleian Library shelfmark Douce M 591 (siglum: D) and British Library shelfmark P.P.3557.mc (siglum: BL).

Our choice of B as copy-text is motivated by the fact that occasional changes in spelling and wording indicate that this represents a corrected state, improving some verbal infelicities and also making the text more credible, stylistically, as a farmer’s letter, e.g. by replacing the formal “unpensioned” with the more concrete agricultural “unsown” (15), and also by giving the poor writer ‘frowzy hair’ instead of a ‘prominent beard’ (26). In editing, we have aimed for a moderately modernized text, changing long ‘s’ to round ‘s’, marking quotations with inverted commas at the beginning and end, deleting quotation marks in indirect speech, and adapting punctuation to modern usage in places where this seemed necessary or desirable. Some spellings, such as “stopt” for “stopped” or “grin’d” for “grinned” have also been modernized in order to enhance readability. Footnotes belong to the original text. All emendations and textual variants are recorded in the endnotes. Page breaks in the original text are indicated in square brackets. The explanatory endnotes refer to the original page numbers.

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## THE BRAIN-SUCKER:

OR,

THE DISTRESS OF AUTHORSHIP.

*A Serio-Comic Caricature.*

In a Letter from Farmer HOMELY to an absent Friend.

*My dear friend,*

I have at length found out and brought back to his paternal cottage my unfortunate son Dick. Thou knowest that about nine months ago he stole away from us and left his poor mo-[14|15]-ther and I lamenting our misfortune and anxious for his fate. For some time before his departure, he had betrayed the strongest symptoms of insanity. He no longer minded his business with that attention for which he had formerly few equals. If he followed the plough, his furrows were crooked and unequal; if he scattered the seed, ’twas with a

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<sup>1</sup> This work was submitted to *Authorship* in March 2014 before Gero Guttzeit was considered as managing editor, a post he took up in November 2014. In order to avoid a potential conflict of interest, the entire peer review process of this submission was managed by the former managing editor of *Authorship*, Yuri Cowan (NTNU, Trondheim).

<sup>2</sup> The authors wish to thank Yuri Cowan and the two anonymous reviewers for their comments.

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careless and uneven hand, pouring profusely on some spots and passing over others altogether unsown. Sometimes he stopped short in the midst of his occupation—stared—grinned—giggled—ran, for some moments, with the greatest rapidity, and then returned with a grave and solemn step! Sometimes he looked up with a contumacious countenance towards heaven, shaking with impious audacity his clenched fist; at other times his arms were folded on his breast, his eyes fixed melancholy on the ground, and the tears trickled down his cheek. His conversation and manner of speech became wonderfully changed. He invented for everything a new name. The birds that whistled in the wood were the “syrens of the grove.” The cats that caterwauled under our window were “demons vile from hell, an hateful crew.” He contracted also a shocking habit of telling with pleasure the most egregious falsehoods or *transmogrifications*, as he called them: as, for example, how that Midas, a great king of Cassiteria<sup>3</sup> and pretended patron [15|16] of music, was discovered by his shaver to have ass’s ears; that the north wind had committed with a young Trojan the reproach of Sodom and Gomorrah; and that Endymion, the man of the moon, sometimes descended in the night and inhumanly filled with moonshine Dian, the miller’s maid, as she slept, unguarded girl, on the grass.

He became also exceedingly superstitious, supposing that the woods were frequented by familiar wizards or rural gods, as he called them; nymphs, pans, and satyrs, whom he described under forms the most fantastic. Nay, every tree he believed was animated by a certain species of beings whom he calls Hamadryades. And one day, when my Lord Noodle’s wood-cutter was felling in the forest a few trees, my son ran towards him, threw himself on his knees, and joining his hands together, “O! desist,” he exclaimed in a piteous tone—“O! desist, in the name of heaven and earth! In the name of whatever is worshipful and holy, desist from violating the sacred dwellings of the nymphs, from inflicting such inhuman gashes on the harmless Hamadryades, whose funereal shrieks carry consternation through the grove, awaken Echo terrified through all her haunts, and excite to sounds of pity the very rocks!”

Moved, terrified, thunderstruck by the tone of voice, by the manner and matter of this address, the peasant threw down hastily the axe and said, trembling, he hoped as how the Almighty would forgive him on the day of judgment, if he [16|17] had been guilty of a crime, for he was a poor illiterate peasant; and the parson had never told him as how that trees had a soul to be saved. At this instant, my Lord Noodle happened to pass by and, after hearing the matter, ordered the wood-cutter to recommence his work and dismissed my son with the greatest indignity and derision. Dick revenged his cause, and the cause of the Hamadryades, by a copy of verses in which he called his lordship Goth and Vandal and other hard names; for which his enraged honour would have taken away my farm but for

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<sup>3</sup> He means Phrygia, no doubt. Cassiteria, or the land of tin, is the ancient name of Britain, on whose august throne no Midas ever sat.

the good offices of my friend the butler, who has a great deal of influence with Dorothy the cook, at whom his lordship has been casting a sheep’s eye for some time past.

My son, as thou knowest, was wont to be very sober and was never seen, at an unseasonable hour, absent from home. But now he frequently stayed abroad all night; and when we asked him in the morning where he had been, he replied, sometimes he had been dancing by the light of Cynthia’s lamp with the Cytherian Goddess, the Graces and Woodland Nymphs. At other times he had followed, he said, the tiger-drawn car of thigh-born Bacchus, attended by shouting troops of satyrs, nymphs, and rural gods. Their amusement consisted chiefly, as far as I could understand him, in dancing and drinking. Each man and god shook with much enthusiasm a certain rod which he terms *Thrustus*.<sup>4</sup> The [17|18] lewd nymphs administered to lubberly satyrs lascivious flagellation. Their music consisted mostly of Hibernian hautbois, and their orgies, as he calls them, commonly ended in an Irish brawl.

And, in effect, at such times he appeared, as it were, astonished, his countenance was wild and staring, like a person’s intoxicated, and his body and visage bore the marks of much beating. He has been seen also by the peasants, scampering wildly through the woods, and the horror-struck hamlet have heard him howling through the night a mad song, of which, from their uncommon insanity, the following lines were distinguishable:

For peerless bards like these alone,  
The bards of Greece might best adorn,  
With seemly song, the monarch’s natal morn;  
Who thron’d in the magnificence of peace,  
Rivals their richest regal theme,  
Who rules a people like their own,  
In arms, in polish’d arts supreme;  
Who bids his Britain vie with Greece.<sup>5</sup>

Now I have often been tempted to suppose that those extraordinary beings who, in this manner, enticed my son amongst them, were no other than devils incarnate. For first the figure of those satyrs, as he described it, is exactly the proper and natural satanic form; and then as to the graces and goddesses and woodland nymphs who according to his account are ex- [18|19] ceedingly beautiful, the devil can put on, when he pleases, the appearance of an angel of light, which farmer Turnip, who married lately *Jane Imperious*, the fairest lass and greatest vixen in our village, now knows to his cost.

Parson Split-text, however, to whom I communicated my sentiments on this head, is by no means of my opinion.—“Amongst the burlesque group of beings with whom your son was attached,” says he, “an ass, according to his account, was no uncommon appearance. Now an ass is a sacred and holy animal, over which the powers of hell have no

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<sup>4</sup> He meant no doubt to say *Thyrsoi*.

<sup>5</sup> See last Birth Day Ode.

dominion. Baalam’s ass discovered the angel that was invisible to his rider; Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem riding on an ass; and riding on an ass, saith the Revelations, shall return on the last day to destroy Anti-Christ and to batter the whore of Babylon on all her seven hills. An ass,” continued the learned advocate of the long-eared species, “is an animal highly favoured by heaven, both in natural endowments and in the dispensations of fortune. In natural gifts what animal can compare with an ass? By their resemblance to which, in that respect, the Egyptians, as Jeremiah laments, were so dear to the daughters of Jerusalem. And as to exterior advantages, observe when Fortune scatters her favours among the crowd, and you will see Providence picking up, as they fall, every mitre, crown and coronet, and placing them on the head of an ass.” [19|20]

“There is in the deserts of Arabia a species of wild asses who, as the prophet Virgil informs us, conceive by the *spirit* alone and bring forth without the assistance of the male;<sup>6</sup> a privilege never granted but to one alone of the human race. Nay, the very pagans were so strongly impressed with an idea of the divinity of this animal that they chose in preference to all other animals an ass to carry their holy mysteries; and certainly there is no animal so *mysterious* as an ass, no animal so *patient of holy mysteries* as an ass. ‘For thou art an ass’ (exclaims the impostor Mahomet apostrophizing enigmatically the human race,<sup>7</sup> [20|21] in the 19th chap. of the Koran), ‘for thou art a patient Jack-ass of the valley, and upon this ass I

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<sup>6</sup> Continuoque avidis ubi subdita flamma medullis,  
Vere magis, (quia vere calor redit ossibus) illae,  
Ore omnes versae in zephyrum stant rupibus altis  
Exceptanque leves auras: & saepe, sinè ullis  
Conjugiis, vento gravidae (mirabile dictu)  
Saxa par & scopulos et depressas convalles  
Diffugiunt. GEORGICON, Lib. 3.

But, with Parson Split-text’s leave, these lines of the Prophet Virgil, as he affectedly, I hope not profanely, calls him, have no reference whatever to a *she-ass of Arabia*, but to certain coursers to whom this windy or spiritual conception is attributed.

<sup>7</sup> This in all probability was the animal that carried the Impostor to Paradise; an animal, as he describes it in the Koran, half ass, half mule. And, indeed, it is an animal obstinate in error, but open to the wiles of knavery, and easily seduced to the paths of folly. The poor creature has been horribly hacked since the beginning of time, in carrying to Paradise, or the regions of immortality, heroes, prophets, legislators, &c. Sometimes a rascal, who had sold for a dirty fee the freedom of his country, rode with insolence on its back. Sometimes, decorated with the title of Conqueror and reeking with the blood of the human race, a ruthless ruffian drove, with iron rod, the crouching ass up the paths of fame. At others, a bold impostor seized the reins, and tickling and terrifying by turns the ass’s ears, spurred him like a winged Pegasus to the regions of glory everlasting. Nay, we have sometimes seen a poet, a stage-dancer, a hero, and a fiddler mount him unmercifully all together and ride him post-haste to immortality.—Mr. Hastings, it is said, had some time ago great hopes of riding this poor ass in quality of GREAT MAN; but the creature, grown refractory, has given him a fall and kicks at present most malevolently at all his attempts to get upon his back. However, if the mighty ROHILLOPHONOS cannot ride the *popular ass* to the regions of immortality, there is no doubt of his escaping on the *Queen’s ass* to the city of refuge.

will build my church, and the powers of wicked wit shall not prevail against it.”<sup>8</sup> But forgive, my friend, the digressive loquacity of a crazy old man.—I return to my son.

The commencement of Dick’s distemper may be dated from the arrival of farmer Tinsel’s son George, who paid us a visit a few months ago. This youth, who had been educated at Cambridge, communicated to my son all the learned maggots with which his own brain [21|22] was infected. At his departure he left with my son a few books, which served to nourish and increase the disorder. Observing their detested effect on his understanding, I committed them to the flames. For the first time, my son dared to open his lips against his father; for the first time, my ears were offended by the harsh sounds of filial reproach. A few days after this affair he quitted, unobserved, the paternal nest. Conceive, my friend, if you can, the consternation of a father, the loud and dolorous lamentation of a fond mother at the flight of her only child. The whole village were sharers in our sorrow, for Dick had endeared himself to his fellows by a frank, generous, friendly disposition; and every girl in the parish lamented his loss; for besides his natural gallantry he was tall, handsome, of a happy physiognomy, a certain venereal fire emanated irresistible from his black eyes, and a broader pair of shoulders few Hibernians could boast. Nancy was unconsolable; Nancy, the lovely brunette, who was wont to be the joy of his heart, the object of his fondest hopes; her loud and frantic grief, which prudence vainly laboured to restrain, terminated at length in silent but consumptive despondency, *in green and yellow melancholy*. Various were the conjectures which we formed as to the route he had taken and the way of life he had embraced. Sometimes we imagined that he had enlisted in a troop of strolling players; at others, we supposed [22|23] that he had emigrated to Heliconia, Pindus or Parnassus, those foreign countries whose outlandish praises were perpetually in his mouth.

A letter from him, at London, about three months after his departure, relieved us from this uncertainty. He was sensibly affected, he said, by the stab which his abrupt departure must have given to the parental bosom; but that he could resist no longer the powerful vocation of Phœbus, the deity to whom, in future, the labours of his life should be devoted. “Tell my lovely Nancy,” he proceeds, “that from her presence nothing could have divorced me except the more attractive allurements of the *sisters nine*, in whose good graces, at length, all my wishes are absorbed.”

Conceive, if you can, my dear friend, the horror, the anguish of my soul, when I learned from his own mouth, as it were, that my son had forsaken the faith of his forefathers, turned Saracen, and lived in a state of incest with *nine sisters!*

This sad piece of intelligence threw his poor mother into a violent brain fever, from which she did not recover for seven months. As soon as the state of her health permitted me to leave her, I posted up to London, in order, if possible, to reclaim this abandoned boy,

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<sup>8</sup> The beauty of this passage depends upon a pun in the original, which cannot be translated. *Hamor*, in Arabic, signifies literally an *ass* and metaphorically a *stone*.

or rather to cure him of a fatal distemper that had unhinged his understanding and caused his afflicted parents to press with hurried steps to the grave. [23|24] I spent several days in London in fruitless enquiries after my son. I learned at length the place of his residence. I posted immediately to Grub-street.—I hurried up seven pair of stairs, while a hundred various sensations agitated my breast; indignation at his imprudence, pity for his misfortune, and joy at the idea of pressing once more in my arms my darling boy.

But permit me, my dear friend, to throw a veil over a scene of wretchedness undescribable that stared me in the face as I entered the room. I pulled the latch—the door creaked upon its hinge—my son started terrified—he turned upon me his hollow eyes, astonished and ashamed—his voice issued from his famished jaws faltering and faint. “My father! my father!” he cried.—“My son! my son!” I exclaimed with agonizing voice; and I fell upon his neck, and we wept bitterly, and our mingled tears watered the floor; I raised him, a poor, feeble, emaciated creature from the floor, I led him tottering downstairs; I helped him into a hackney coach, and we drove to the tavern where I lodged. No sooner had I alighted than I ordered a copious repast to be made ready with the greatest dispatch. All this while we had not uttered a single syllable. My son sat on the side opposite to me, his face between the palms of his hands, and reclined on the table. The smell of dinner getting ready began to operate on his organs.—He raised his head—the dinner was coming [24|25] upstairs—he rose from the table—he rushed with frantic appetite to the door, as the cook was entering the room. The terrified Frenchman dropped from his hand a basin of turtle soup and, falling on his knees, entreated forgiveness: “Ayez de pitie sur moi, me vill bringa de roast beef presentie—me vill bringa de roast beef presentie,” he cried, for he imagined that the famished savage’s fury was occasioned by his introducing a dish so little suited to the keenness of his stomach. Heedless of the cook’s protestations, Dick threw himself prone upon his belly and began to lap like a dog the soup, as it ran fat and filthy on the floor.—The waiter brought in a shoulder of mutton, which he snatched with starved avidity, tore like a famished wolf, and finished in the twinkling of an eye; twenty successive plates were ushered in and vanished in a moment. The waiter and I stood blessing ourselves and rubbing our eyes with incredulous amazement.

At length, when he had made an end of about twenty pounds of butcher’s meat and drank a proportionable quantity of strong beer, we ventured to raise him from the floor, saturated like Messalina but not satisfied with flesh. I sent for a barber to shave him and called for a basin of warm water to wash his hands and face; a task which was not effected without difficulty, for the collected filth of several months had formed on his hands a crust like an alligator’s scales, his face intersected with frequent lines of partico- [25|26] loured nastiness, resembled a map of the terraqueous globe; and Susan, rubbing her eyes and yawning early on a winter morning, might have mistaken for a frozen mop his hair, frowzy as it was and matted with filth. I filled him a few glasses of port wine and began to enquire his adventures.

“Soon after I arrived in this city,” he said, “to which by the rage of scribbling I was unhappily seduced, I fell into the hands of a certain bookseller, who was distinguished in the literary world by the appellation of the Brain-Sucker. He hired for me a garret in Grubstreet, at eighteen pence a week. Here I laboured almost night and day under his direction; spinning out my brains in odes, epigrams, satire, panegyric, composing the nosegay of flattery or pointing the bidden abuse, just as it pleased the meanness or malevolence of my employer. Meanwhile, my situation was far from being comfortable. The holes and dilapidations in the roof of my garret admitted the rude invasion of Boreas not less than the gentle visitations of Apollo; and my salary, which did not amount to a moiety of the pay of a journeyman tailor, was hardly sufficient to prevent a divorce between soul and body. In fact, my diet consisted chiefly of water-gruel, tea, and similar sops, which, promoting a pernicious wakefulness of mind, weakened and diluted the constitution. I sometimes remonstrated on this head with my tyrant; but in answer to my complaints, he generally brought forward [26|27] the noted maxim of a celebrated Parnassian physician,<sup>9</sup>

Poets and painters never should be fat:

contended that hunger was the greatest sharpener of wits, and that leanness and want were the only paths to the temple of immortality. In fact, had you delayed your visit but a few days longer, I should by this time have been immortal. But while I starved in my melancholy tenement on the productions of my brain, the bookseller was accumulating money from several of my happier pieces, which had the good fortune to be acceptable to the public. I wished much to emancipate myself from his tyranny—but how was this to be done? He had advanced me money, had fixed me by engagements, had secured me by bonds, body and brains; in short, I was his property and whatever—(*To be continued.*)

## THE BRAIN-SUCKER:

OR,

## THE DISTRESS OF AUTHORSHIP.

*A Serio-Comic Caricature.*

In a Letter from Farmer HOMELY to an absent Friend.

[*Concluded from page 27 of our last.*]

*My dear friend,*

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Pindar, Esq.

Body and brains; in short, I was his property, and whatever”—At this instant a carriage came rattling and stopped at the door. [43|44] My son broke off in the midst of his phrase; the sweat burst upon his forehead; his features relaxed into idiotic terror. “Save me, save me!” he cried, “the Brain-sucker! Odes! Epigrams! Water-gruel!—Save me, save me! the Brain-sucker! Odes! Epigrams! Water-gruel!”

I caught him as he fell senseless in my arms. I threw a pailful of cold water on his face and applied to his nostrils a bottle of hartshorn, and in the space of twenty minutes he began to discover some faint symptoms of returning life. I then conveyed him to bed and gave him a generous draught of excellent port. Soon after he fell into a sound sleep; and, determined to watch him all night, I called for pipes and tobacco and took post in an easy chair close by his bedside. About midnight he began to toss and tumble exceedingly in bed. I drew the curtain. His hair stood up with porcupine erectness; his visage was writhed into an expression of horror undecipherable. He shrieked, jumped out of bed and, his eyeballs bursting with terror from his head, he ran yelling horribly round the room. Excess of fear fixed me to my seat, or I certainly should have made my escape, for I firmly believed that Belzebub had taken possession of his body. At length he sunk exhausted on the floor, struggling faintly and moaning with an accent so moving that the very walls seemed to quiver with compassion.

I put him once more to bed. A shower of tears gave ease to his labouring soul. I made him drink a few glasses of port, and when he was a lit- [44|45] tle composed, requested him to relate the cause of the alarming phenomena I have just described.

“I dreamed,” said he, “that I had passed the river Styx, and that I stood a trembling shade before the gloomy tribunal of Rhadamanthus. My Evil Genius deposed against me all the wicked or foolish actions of my life. He testified, in particular, that misled by the *ignis fatuus* of literary fame I had left, forlorn in the winter of life, my aged parents and had brought, by my perverseness, their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

“For this misdeed I was condemned to pass suspended in the bleakest current of the north-east wind, and plunged alternately in the fiery streams of Phlegeton, seven thousand successive years.

“The ministers of wrath were conducting me to this punishment when the infernal Nemesis, rising up, cried out sternly: ‘Stop!’ and addressing herself to the throne, ‘O! impartial arbitrator of the nether regions,’ she said, ‘this perverse genius has dissembled a crime infinitely more heinous than any that he has disclosed. This man has written an Apology for Mr. Hastings!’

“Horror-struck at mention of this circumstance recoiled from me the circumambient shades! Tartarus echoed from all its dismal caverns a groan of indignation. Hell rose up against me and pointed all her serpents hissing in my face. ‘Vengeance! Vengeance!’ exclaimed a gathering cloud of spectres as, headed by Revenge and urged on by the Furies, they rushed eager and [45|46] clamorous towards the throne. ‘Vengeance! Vengeance!’ they exclaimed, pointing to their deadly wounds; to their limbs fractured with



torture; to the wanton marks of ignominy on their backs; to their women withered with want; to their princes suspended on a gibbet or hunted down like wild beasts; to their babes butchered on the breast or bayoneted in the womb of their expiring parents! ‘Vengeance on a villain who has contributed to mislead the justice of a generous nation; who has endeavoured to defraud hell of a victim, which long ere now should have howled writhing on the rack of torture, or rather enriched the infernal regions with new punishments, horrible and exquisite as the crimes he has committed!’

“Frequent flashes of lightning burst meanwhile from the black cloud which concealed, in awful obscurity, the sublime front of Rhadamanthus. His eyeballs, flaming with indignation, appeared like two torrents of fire, which the terrified Sicilian marks at sunset rising red and threatening through the dun robe of smoke that envelopes the tall summit of Mongibello. Hell shakes with universal trepidation. A voice of ten thousand thunders roars deep and horrible from the throne: ‘Seize him, ye ministers of wrath! Seize him, ye imps of exquisite torture, and drag him, the scoundrel—to Grub-street! for hell affords no punishment proportioned to his guilt.’

[46|47] In order to put in execution this most horrible decree, the infernal legion rushed upon me, and endeavouring to elude their talons I exhibited those symptoms of terror that alarmed you so much.”

This frightful dream had taken such hold of his terrified imagination that sleep seemed to have fled irrevocable from his eyes. I plied him with port to no purpose. I even administered, in vain, a double dose of opium. At length I bethought me of a never-failing soporific: I went to the bag that held my foul linen and pulled out a fragment of the CRITICAL REVIEW, of which I had sacrilegiously despoiled a temple of Cloacina. I began to read—the sound stole powerfully somniferous on my son’s senses—in five minutes he was fast asleep. The fragment dropped from my hand; I fell back in my easy chair.

When I awoke in the morning, I found my son still in a deep sleep. As soon as he opened his eyes, I caused him to put on clean linen, a species of luxury to which for seven months past he had been utterly a stranger; and after breakfast we set off in the York mail, and in four and twenty hours we found ourselves at home.

I leave your feelings to suggest the joy of a fond mother at the unhoped-for recovery of her only child. Dick’s return was a day of jubilee for the whole village. Nancy began to raise her head like a drooping rose after a gentle shower of rain. Dick advances rapidly to his former vigour and blooming health. The dreadful distemper that [47|48] made such woeful havoc in his brain is radically exterminated. He has abandoned forever the heathenish worship of Apollo, swears that he would not exchange a single smile of his lovely Nancy for the last favours of the *Nine Sisters*, and that he would rather plant cabbages on his paternal estate than cultivate with Homer, Ossian, and Virgil the very summits of Parnassus.



## Textual Notes

### Textual Witnesses

(1) Siglum B. Copy-text for this edition: Bodleian Library shelfmark G Pamph 1192: “POLITICAL TRACTS 1788-1789”. The *British Mercury* is item nr. 5 of 16.

(2) Siglum D. Bodleian Library shelfmark Douce M 591. The plate “THE BRAIN-SUCKER, | or the Miseries of Authorship. Designed & Etched for the British Mercury. Published May 9. 1787” is folded and inserted between p. 14 and 15, size 20 by 17.5 cm.

(3) Siglum BL. British Library shelfmark P.P.3557.mc, ESTC number T 135275. This copy of the text was consulted in its digital facsimile accessible via *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*.

### Substantive Variants

Page nr.	B (copy text)	D	BL
15	altogether unsown	totally unpensioned	totally unpensioned
21	reeking	streaming	streaming
22	vainly	in vain	in vain
23	perpetually	perpetual	perpetual
24	exclaimed with agonizing voice; and I fell	excla med, and fell [missing type]	exclaimed, and fell
24	alighted than	alighted when	alighted when
26	hair, frowzy	beard, prominent	beard, prominent

### Variants and Emendations

14 *friend*] *Friend* found out] ~, cottage] ~, knowest] ~, us] ~,

15 misfortune] BL, D; ~, B. attention] ~, unequal;] ~: spots] ~, altogether unsown] B; totally unpensioned BL, D. stopped short] stopt short, grinned] grin'd looked up] ~, countenance] ~, shaking] ~, audacity] ~, everything] every thing wood] ~, window] ~, were “demons] “~ ^~ falsehoods] ~, as, for example,] ~^ ~ ~; Cassiteria] ~, *fn.* ancient] antient

16 shaver] ~, Trojan] ~, night] ~, moonshine] ~, wizards] ~, gods,] ~^ beings] ~, calls] ~, Noodle's] B, BL; Nood e's D (*missing type*). “O! desist,”] B; O! desist, BL, D. exclaimed] ~, tone –“O!] ~!-- ^~! B; ~ --! ^~! BL, D. In] B; in BL, D. holy, desist] B; ~! Desist BL, D. rocks!”] B; ~! BL, D. down hastily the axe] ~, ~, ~ ~, trembling, he] ~, “~

17 saved.] ~.” pass by and,] ~ ~, ~^ work] ~, son] ~, verses] ~, Vandal] ~, farm] ~, sober] ~, But now] ~, stayed] staid lamp] ~, tiger-drawn] tyger-drawn rod] ~, consisted] ~,

18 distinguishable:] ~. suppose] ~, beings] ~, graces] Graces goddesses] Goddesses, woodland nymphs] Woodland Nymphs,

19 group] groupe angel] ~, rider] B; ryder BL, D. day] ~, Anti-Christ] ~, head of an ass.] B; ~.” BL, D.

20 "There] B; ^~ BL, D. asses] ~, alone] ~, pagans] Pagans animal] ~, animals] ~, 'For thou] "~ ~ ass' (exclaims] ~^, (~ impostor] Impostor *fn. 1:* But,] ~^ coursers] ~, *fn. 2:* sold] ~, fee] ~, Conqueror] ~, reeking] B; streaming BL, D. fame] Fame impostor] Impostor spurred him] ~, Pegasus] ~, poet] Poet stage] Stage hero] Hero fiddler] Fidler, together] ~, poor ass] ~, creature,] ~^ fall] ~, *popular ass]* ~ Ass *Queen's ass]* ~ Ass

21 Koran), 'for] ~)^ ^~ it."'] ~.^"

22 Conceive,] ~^ gallantry] ~, irresistible] irresistible vainly] B; in vain BL, D. taken] ~, *fn.:* ass and metaphorically] ~, ~ ~,

23 Pindus] ~, countries] ~, perpetually] B; perpetual BL, D. He was] "~ affected, he said, by] ~," ~ ~, "~ "Tell] ~^ divorced me] ~, Conceive,] ~^ understanding] ~,

24 permit me,] ~, ~^ undescrivable] ~, exclaimed with agonizing voice; and I fell] B; exclaimed, and fell BL; excla med, and fell D (*missing type*). watered the floor;] B; ~. BL, D. downstairs;] down stairs; B; down stairs, BL, D. alighted than] B; alighted when BL, D.

25 upstairs] up stairs basin] bason soup and, falling] ~, ~^ ~ forgiveness:] ~, bringa] B; bring a BL, D. belly] ~, ushered in] ~, length,] ~^ meat] ~, Messalina] Mesallina, shave him] ~, basin] bason difficulty,] ~: alligator's] allegator's particoloured] party-coloured

26 Susan,] ~^ hair, frowzy] B; beard, prominent BL, D. as it was] ~, wine] ~, flattery] ~, dilapidations] delapidations Boreas] ~, tailor] taylor

27 sharpener] sharpner tenement] ~, tyranny - but] tyranny - But body] ~,

43 *friend]* *Friend* rattling] ~, stopped] stopt

44 phrase:] ~;-- idiotic] ideotic terror.] terror; caught him] ~, senseless] ~, pailful] pail-full face] ~, to bed] ~, port] Port tobacco] ~, chair] ~, bedside] bed-side out of bed] ~, eyeballs] eye-balls faintly] ~, moving] ~, port] Port

45 fame] ~, parents] ~, punishment] ~, sternly:] ~, 'Stop!]' "~" 'O!]' "~ arbitrator] Arbitrator regions,'] ~" 'this] "~ genius] Genius crime] ~, Hastings!]' "~" circumstance] ~, caverns] ~, against me] ~, 'Vengeance! Vengeance!]' "~" spectres as,] ~, ~^ Revenge] ~,

46 'Vengeance! Vengeance!]' "~" torture] torrure women] ~, gibbet] ~, babes] ~, breast,] ~^ 'Vengeance] "~ committed!]' "~" cloud], awful] awful eyeballs] eye-balls marks] ~, sunset] ~, threatening] ~, throne:] ~, 'Seize] "~ guilt.]' ~"

47 talons] ~, imagination] ~, port] Port linen] ~, sacrilegiously] BL; sacr legiously B (*missing type*); sacrilegiously (*weak type on first 'i'*) D. read-] ~;-- senses-] ~;-- dropped] dropt hand;] ~;-- unhoped- for] unhoped for head] ~,

48 havoc] havock brain] ~, forever] for ever Apollo,] ~; *Sisters,*] ~; estate] ~, cultivate] ~, Virgil] ~,

## Explanatory Notes

Page 14 **Brain-Sucker**: “A person who takes credit for or benefits undeservedly from the intellectual labour of others; a plagiarist, a parasite” (OED). The connection with booksellers or printers is established in the OED’s first documented occurrence, 1781: “Ask those brain-suckers, the Booksellers” (from Daniel Turner, *A Short History of the Westminster Forum*).

14 **Serio-Comic Caricature**: This collocation appears to be quite unique. “Serio-comical” is first attested in 1749, in Smollett’s translation of Le Sage’s *Gil Blas* (OED). In combination with the literary mode of satire, “serio-comic” is used in George Colman’s preface to his translation of Horace’s *Ars poetica* (1783), and quite frequently in other publications of the 1780s, with reference to diverse genres such as play, dialogue or poem. A close thematic relation to the “Brain-Sucker” is George Keate’s *The Distressed Poet: A Serio-Comic Poem, in Three Cantos* (London 1787). Some of Keate’s lines (1, ll. 1-8) chime very well with “The Brain-Sucker”:

Say, why should POVERTY’S prediction  
O’ercloud the sprightly scenes of Fiction?  
Wherefore so long entail’d its curse,  
On all the numerous sons of Verse?  
Who scarce possessing from their birth  
A legal settlement on earth  
Exalted to a garret story,  
Live on imaginary glory. (1787: 1)

With poor Dick, Keate’s “*Aerial Bard*” (1. 10) shares the hard lot of “a garret story”, writing “*lofty odes*” of “*obscure sublimity*” (1.29-30) and being forced to write accusatory pieces against both political parties.

**Farmer Homely**: the first of many telling names in the story: “of humble background; having a plain or simple nature; unsophisticated; rustic” (OED). The attribute ‘homely’ is commonly associated with rural living and the peasantry in the eighteenth century.

15 **syrens of the grove**: a quotation from William Mason’s “Ode to the Honourable William Pitt”, 1782, l. 12 (*The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, For the Year 1782*; London 1783, 195-97). In context, the passage reads: “Shall then the poet strike the lyre,/When mute are all the feather’d quire,/And Nature fails to warm the syrens of the grove?” (ll. 10-12). The answer follows promptly: “He shall: for what the sullen Spring denies/The orient beam of virtuous youth supplies” (ll. 13-14), matching Dick’s eagerness to impose poetry on nature, especially the “birds that whistled in the wood.” The phrase also adds to the indication that the story begins in spring, the season of sowing and planting – tasks that Dick neglects.

**demons vile from hell, an hateful crew**: apparently not a direct quotation, though possibly intended as an allusion to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

**Midas**: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XI. “We find Midas king of Phrygia being constituted judge between him [Apollo] and Pan, who pretended to vie with him in harmony, and giving judgment for the latter, was rewarded with a pair of ass’s ears, to point out his bad taste” (Boyse/Cooke 63).

**Cassiteria**: from Gr. κασσίτερος, “tin”. “CASSITERION (*s. plu. cassiteria, in the history of fossils*) A genus of crystals frequently found in Devonshire and Cornwall” (John Ash, *The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language* [...], vol. 1, London 1775).

16 **the north wind**: Boreas, the Greek god of the north wind, “the most tempestuous and raging that blows” (Boyse/Cooke 161) is said to have abducted and raped Oreithyia, an Athenian princess and several other women; no homosexual activities (“the reproach of Sodom and Gomorrah”) are recorded.

**Endymion**: “the most celebrated amour” of Diana, the moon (Boyse/Cooke 87), here confused with a miller’s maid.

**moonshine**: the meaning “foolish or fanciful talk, ideas, plans, etc.” (OED) is well attested for the 1780s.

**Hamadryades:** “The Dryades inhabited the forests and woods, residing in their particular trees, with which they were thought to be coeval, as several instances prove [...]. The oak was generally their choice, either from its strength or duration. Some were called Hamadryades, whose existence was inseparably united to that of the tree they animated.” (Boyse/Cooke 171)

**Lord Noodle:** “a stupid or silly person; a fool, an idiot” (OED), well-established in the eighteenth century and revealing the author’s anti-aristocratic stance.

**Echo:** “ceases to be a mere sound, and becomes a nymph bewailing the loss of her Narcissus” (Boyse/Cooke 221).

**17 Goth and Vandal:** Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was published in six volumes between 1776 and 1789. Goths and Vandals, however, had by then already been an established presence in discussions of the “distress of authorship”. In the preface to the *Memoirs of the Society of Grub-Street* (vol. 1, London 1737), Pope is described as a pursuer of “the modern Goths and Vandals of Great Britain” (vi), i.e. the hack writers and booksellers of Grub Street. In *The Covent-Garden Journal* (no. 1, Jan. 23, 1752), Fielding writes of “an Army of Scriblers, who [...] seem to threaten the Republic of Letters with no less Devastation than that which their Ancestors the Goths, Huns, Vandals, &c. formerly poured in on the Roman Empire” (4).

**Cynthia:** “one of the names of Diana”, the moon (Boyse/Cooke 287).

**the Cytherian Goddess:** Aphrodite. “As soon as she was born she was laid in a beautiful couch or shell, embellished with pearl, and by gentle zephyrs wafted to the isle of Cythera, in the Aegean sea [...]” (Boyse/Cooke 92).

**Bacchus:** Bacchus’s mother Semele, when forced by Juno to see Jupiter in his full splendour, “perished in the flames, and with her, her offspring must have done so too, if the god had not taken it out and inclosed it in his thigh, where it lay the full time, when he came into the world and was named Bacchus” (Boyse/Cooke 34).

**Thyrso:** “Bacchus [...] is crowned with ivy and vine leaves, and bears in his hand a thyrsus [...], encircled with the same. His car is drawn sometimes by lions, at others by tigers, leopards, or panthers [...], and surrounded by a band of Satyrs and Maenades, or wood-nymphs, in frantick postures” (Boyse/Cooke 126); in a footnote on the same page, Boyse and Cooke explain that the thyrsus “was a wooden javelin with an iron head”.

**18 Hibernian hautbois:** “The Irish Hautboy” was a popular Irish tune in the eighteenth century (Cooper 162).

**Birth Day Ode:** The verse is taken from the “Ode for his Majesty’s Birth-Day” by the poet laureate Thomas Warton (1786), ll. 57-64. The competition between Greek and English poetry is a major topic of this ode; for the ‘homely’ farmer, who prefers a Christian frame of reference, it is insane and “satanic”.

**19 farmer Turnip:** This name does not correspond directly to any satirical stock character, yet the turnip is often employed descriptively, for example in “turnip-faced” and “turnip-headed” (OED). The name is hence also used in satire: E. A. Poe, for instance, has a character called “Tabitha Turnip” in *How to Write a Blackwood Article* (1838). Here it represents another caricatural element with a strong pictorial dimension.

**Parson Split-Text:** This name has satirical precedents in the eighteenth century. In Edward Ward’s *The Wooden World Dissected* (1708), a sea-chaplain stands upon deck and “falls to splitting his Text most methodically” (OED: split 4b). In “A Panegyrick on the D[ea]n, In the person of a Lady in the North,” Jonathan Swift had rhymed: “Proceed we to your preaching next:/How nice you split the hardest Text!” (Swift 1735, 284). The two satiric uses point to the technical term *divisio*, a part of and technique in the sermon that goes back to ancient rhetoric and the late medieval *ars praedicandi*. The term continued to be important in eighteenth-century homiletics (Edwards 16, 33). A “Parson Split-text” also appears in the English-American

preacher Thomas Cradock’s (1718-1770) “Maryland Eclogues”. Since they circulated only in manuscript form in the Chesapeake area, it is likely that there was no direct influence between him and John Oswald, but that the two authors had either found a common ancestor or coined the same name independently of each other.

**my sentiments on this head:** “Head” is also a homiletic or more generally rhetorical term (referring to the divisions of a sermon or the *topoi* in commonplace books), and thus continues the satire on Parson Split-text’s sermon.

**Balaam’s ass:** Balaam, son of Beor, a prophet, appears in the Old and New Testaments. The episode with the ass is in Numbers, 22:22-22:33, and was often portrayed in paintings, for example by Rembrandt (1626). Balaam appears in conflicting episodes (Numbers 22:5-24:25, 31:8, 31:16; Deuteronomy 23:5; Joshua 13:22 (24:9)); Nehemiah 13:1; Micah 6:5; 2 Peter 2:15 (here Balaam is named son of Bosor); Jude 1:11; Revelation 2:14). In the episode to which our text alludes, Balaam is summoned by Balak, king of the Moabites, to curse the Israelites. The ass on which Balaam rides sees an angel in the way and refuses to go on, for which Balaam strikes him three times. The ass speaks to him and Balaam discovers the angel who – had it not been for the ass – would have killed Balaam. – The spelling “Balaam” might (just) be intended as a phonetic joke on “baa-lamb”.

**as Jeremiah laments:** The only time an ass is mentioned in Jeremiah is 2:23-24. “How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: *thou art* a swift dromedary traversing her ways; 2:24 A wild ass used to the wilderness, *that* snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her” (Carroll/Prickett OT 829).

20 **Georgicon:** The passage (about mares in heat being impregnated by the wind) is from Virgil’s *Georgics* 3.271-77:

continuoque avidis ubi subdita flamma medullis,  
vere magis, quia vere calor redit ossibus: illae  
ore omnes versae in Zephyrum stant rupibus altis,  
exceptantque levis auras et saepe sine ullis  
coniugiis vento gravidae, mirabile dictu,  
saxa per et scopulos et depressas convallis  
Diffugiunt ...

In a contemporary English translation, this is rendered as follows:

Soon as the subtle flame their marrow fires,  
Chief in the spring (because in spring returns  
The genial heat) on the high rocks they stand  
Turn’d all towards the west, and the light air  
Receive, and oft, without the stallion’s aid  
Big with the wind (a wonder to relate!)  
O’er rocks and hills and through the humble vales  
They fly [...] (Mills 103, 3.368-375)

**the animal that carried the Impostor to Paradise:** The immediate source for this reference is probably *Hudibras* ll. 231-32: “Th’apostles of this fierce religion,/Like Mahomet’s, were ass and widgeon”, which is glossed by Zachary Grey as follows: “By the *ass* is meant the alborak, a creature of a mixed nature between an ass and a mule, which Mahomet said he rode upon in his night journey to heaven” (Butler 1: 34-35). “*Mahomet* describes it to be a Beast as white as Milk, and of a mixt Nature between an Ass and a Mule, and also of a Size between both, and of that extraordinary swiftness, that his passing from one place to another, was as quick as that of Lightning; and from hence it is that he hath the name of *Alborak*, that word signifying Lightning in the *Arabic Tongue*” (Prideaux 47).

**Mr. Hastings:** Warren Hastings (1732-1818), the governor-general of Bengal. Edmund Burke pressed charges of corruption and cruelty against Hastings, which led to his impeachment in 1787. After a lengthy trial, Hastings was finally acquitted in 1795 (see Marshall for a brief overview of Hastings’ biography). Next to Robert Clive, Hastings is the best known political figure connected with 18<sup>th</sup>-century British imperialism (see

Nechtman). His impeachment proceedings spawned numerous pamphlets and newspaper articles, including anti-Burke pamphlets written by John Scott, Hastings’ political agent and protégé (see Barker 71-72). – Here it is noteworthy that a long and complex chain of satirical references to religious impostors riding on asses to immortality culminates in the image of Hastings riding on “the *Queen’s Ass*” (Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Queen consort of George III).

**Rohillophonos:** This is in all likelihood Oswald’s neologism for Hastings, denouncing him as a murderer of Indians. The only other instance of Rohillophonos we could trace is in Oswald, too. In *Ranae Comicae Evangelizantes*, he writes: “Solomon had it [a jewel] from the mighty Rohillophonos, who extracted it from the reeking bowels of a Pagan Princess, and brought it from the land of Ophir, with the royal spoils of butchered unbelievers” (31-32). He even explains the name in a footnote: “This word, Rohillophonos, though rough enough, in all conscience, does by no means smell of the Hebrew root; nor indeed do I recollect a single iota of this story in the Holy Bible. That the Hebrews might send, in the time of Solomon, a few pedlars to India, may, perhaps, be probable; but I think it impossible to prove that they ever had any settlements in that country. The ravages of this blood-thirsty race of vagabonds seems to have been confined by the narrow limits of Canaan” (31). Couched in satire, the rationale for why ‘Rohillophonos’ is not a Hebrew word is strongly anti-semitic. In terms of its etymology, φόνος is Greek for ‘murder’. ‘Rohillo-’ in all likelihood refers to the Rohilla, a pashtun people in Northern India, against which the East India Company fought under Hastings.

**21 in the 19<sup>th</sup> chap.:** There is no such reference in chapter 19 of the Koran in George Sale’s 1734 translation. Rather, the phrase parodies Matthew 16.18: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Carroll/Prickett NT 24).

**Hamor:** There does not seem to be any connection between ‘hamor’ and a stone; the word is Hebrew and not Arabic. There is, however, a pan-Semitic word at their origin: “Arabic ḥimār is the cognate of Hebrew ḥamôr”; ḥimār “does not refer to a wild ass but a tamed ass, i.e. a donkey” (Monferrer-Sala 211).

**farmer Tinsel:** No satirical stock character could be traced. “Tinsel” is obsolete as “Brushwood for hedging or fencing” (OED).

**22 green and yellow melancholy:** *Twelfth Night* 2.4.112.

**23 Heliconia, Pindus or Parnassus:** Mt. Helicon and Parnassus are both said to be the home of the muses. Hesiod narrates that he was inspired by the muses at the foot of Mt. Helicon in Boeotia (*Theogony* 22-34). Mt. Parnassus is sacred to Apollo, whose Delphian oracle lies on the slopes of the mountain. Pindus is the mountain range between northern Greece and what is today Albania. Its connection to poetry writing is not apparent (it is not mentioned in Boyse/Cooke).

**Phoebus:** Common epithet of Apollo. “Apollo had as his pur-view the arts, prophecy, and healing. At his chief shrine at Delphi the watchword was ‘Know thyself,’ the beginning and principal aim of human understanding. He is the god of rationality, harmony, and balance, known by the epithet Phoebus, ‘bright’ or ‘shining,’ by which he is equated with the Sun and more broadly the order of the cosmos.” (Morford/Lenardon, 765). The *New Pantheon* calls him “one of the most conspicuous Figures in Heathen Theology, indeed not unjustly, from the glorious Attributes ascrib’d to him of being the *God of Light, Medicine, Verse and Prophecy*” (Boyse/Cooke 67-68).

**the sisters nine:** The nine muses, the daughters of Zeus of Mnemosyne, and the arts to which they are usually grouped, are: Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Euterpe (lyric poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Terpsichore (choral dancing), Erato (love poetry), Polyhymnia (sacred music), Urania (astronomy), and Thalia (comedy) (Morford/Lenardon 125). The *New Pantheon* differs from this in the following way: Calliope (rhetoric), Melpomene (lyric and epic poetry), Terpsichore (music, some add logic), and Polyhymnia (harmony of voice) (Boyse/Cooke 86-87). That Dick is imagined as living with several wives (Muses) reappears as a motif in Yorke’s report on Oswald living with two wives in Paris (Erdman 62-3). The phrase “the sisters nine” also recalls sonnet 3 of Sir Philip Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* (1591), “Let dainty wits cry on the sisters nine”. The erotic and seductive aspect of the Muses and their detrimental effect on inexperienced devotees of the arts is



also emphasized in Keate’s *Distressed Poet*, ll. 115-18: “Like wantons, [they] lure, by winning ways/Th’ incautious youth who stop to gaze;/Seduce them up PARNASSUS’ steep,/Where scarce the *strong* firm footing keep” (1787: 7).

**turned Saracen:** Muslim, here obviously with a reference to polygamy.

25 **Messalina:** Valeria Messalina (c. 17/20-48), wife of Emperor Claudius. Figuratively, “(The type of) a licentious, lascivious, or scheming woman” (OED). The connection to food is not obvious, yet descriptions of her in that regard are likely to have been exaggerated as well. Also, Oswald might mock his own vegetarianism here, as Erdman argues, when Dick eats enormous amounts of meat to recover from his water-gruel diet (62).

**alligator’s scales:** Alligator is originally a Spanish word ‘el lagarto’, the lizard, which was “applied *par excellence* to the gigantic saurians of the New World” (OED).

26 **terraqueous globe:** “Consisting of, or formed of, land and water” (OED), a favourite phrase of Oswald’s that also appears in his earlier texts in the *Political Herald*.

**odes, epigrams:** common lyric forms in the eighteenth century that also haunt Dick’s nightmares (see below); “Oswald himself was well aware that poetry was *not* his forte: his grimmest chores in Grub-Street he defined as having to write odes (instead of editorials)” (Erdman 3).

**Boreas:** the north wind; see above. **Apollo** (Phoebus) = sunshine.

27 **Peter Pindar:** Peter Pindar was the nom-de-plume of John Wolcot (1738-1819), a “sometimes funny, always abusive, gossip *cum* political columnist in verse” (Engell 254). The quotation is the first line from ode V of his *Lyric Odes, to the Royal Academicians, for 1782*: “Painters and poets never should be fat - / Sons of Apollo! listen well to that:” (Pindar 1794: 25). According to the poem, excess of nourishment inhibits the creative spirit.<sup>10</sup>

44 **hartshorn:** “The horn or antler of a hart; the substance obtained by rasping, slicing, or calcining the horns of harts, formerly the chief source of ammonia” (OED). A form of smelling salts used to rouse someone from a faint, see for example an 18<sup>th</sup>-century reference in the OED from Richard Steele’s *Tatler* (No. 23, 1709): “Down she fell [...] Hartshorn! Betty, Susan, Alice, throw Water in her Face.”

**Belzebug:** This alternative form of “Beelzebub”, meaning “The Devil; a devil” (OED) was used until and including the eighteenth century.

45 **Styx:** One of the five rivers Hades, creating the boundary between earth and the underworld, “which it was necessary to pass in order to reach these infernal regions” (Boyse/Cooke 49) and “over which the shades of the departed were ferried by Charon” (OED).

**Rhadamanthus:** one of the judges of Hades, along with Minos (his brother, son of Zeus by Europa) and Aeacus: they “examine the dead, and pass a final sentence on departed souls” (Boyse/Cooke 54). Rhadamanthus “was [...] a great legislator. It is said that having killed his brother, he fled to Oechalia in Baeotia [sic], where he married Alcmena the widow of Amphytrion. His province was to judge such as died impenitent” (ibid.). It is obvious, then, that he would be the one to pass judgment on poor hacks. Although inferior to the main judge, Minos, the OED notes he is “famed for his severity.”

**Evil Genius:** “(a person’s) good, evil genius: the two mutually opposed spirits (in Christian language *angels*) by whom every person was supposed to be attended throughout his life” (OED). See, for example, Nicholas Rowe’s *Tamerlane* from 1702: “Thou ... art an evil Genius to thyself” (IV. i. 1689). It also seems significant considering the use of “genius” for an author’s writing talent or skill. For example, in Samuel Johnson’s

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<sup>10</sup> The editors would like to thank Dr. Martin Spies for tracking down the source for this quotation.

*Dictionary* (1755), these senses [“A man endowed with superior faculties [...] Disposition of nature by which any one is qualified for some peculiar employment.”] are combined with the connotation of “genius” as referring to one’s “nature; disposition.” Here, evil could have the meaning of wicked or misled.

***ignis fatuus***: A term from medieval or modern Latin, translated as “foolish fire” (OED). “A phosphorescent light seen hovering or flitting over marshy ground, and supposed to be due to the spontaneous combustion of an inflammable gas (phosphuretted hydrogen) derived from decaying organic matter; popularly called ***Will-o’-the-wisp, Jack-a-lantern, etc.***” (OED). In folklore, its supernatural flickering light draws people from safety or the correct path; the light recedes or disappears when one draws near, “sometimes reappearing in another direction. This led to the notion that it was the work of a mischievous sprite, intentionally leading benighted travelers astray” (OED). In Book IX of *Paradise Lost*, Satan is compared to a will-o’-the-wisp as he persuades Eve to taste the forbidden fruit.

**Phlegeton**: In the *New Pantheon* “Phlegethon” is one of two rivers said to flow out of the Styx (along with Cocytus). “The waters of Phlegethon were represented as streams of fire, probably on account of their hot and sulphureous nature” (Boyse/Cooke 50). The spelling “Phlegeton” also occurs in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* 2.6.50, ll. 8-9: “[...] nor damned ghoste/In flaming *Phlegeton* does not so felly roste.”

**Nemesis**: “Nemesis was the daughter of Jupiter and Necessity. [...] She is represented with a stern aspect, having in one hand a whip, in the other a pair of scales.” (Boyse/Cooke 190-1) She is “the goddess of retribution or vengeance, who reverses excessive good fortune, checks presumption, and punishes wrongdoing” (OED).

**Tartarus**: A site of punishment in the underworld: a deep, dark pit where those who have been judged are sent to receive punishment and torture. According to the *New Pantheon*: “In the recesses of the infernal regions lay the seat of abuse of the wicked souls, called Tartarus, represented by the poets as a vast deep pit, surrounded with walls and gates of brass, and totally deprived of light. This dreadful prison is surrounded by the waters of Phlegethon, which emit continual flames. The custody of the unfortunate wretches doomed to this place of punishment, is given to the Eumenides or Furies, who are at once their gaolers and executioners” (Boyse/Cooke 55). The OED mentions its use as a synonym of hell.

**Furies**: Goddesses of the underworld (more specifically Tartarus) responsible for punishing wicked souls. They each had different names “but they went by the general appellation of the Furiae, on account of the rage and distraction attending a guilty conscience: of Erynniae or Erynnyes, because of the severity of their punishment; and Eumenides, because though cruel they were capable of supplication. [...] The Furies are depicted with their hair composed of snakes and eyes inflamed with madness, carrying in one hand whips and iron chains, and in the other flaming torches, yielding a dismal light. Their robes are black, and their feet of brass, to shew their pursuit, though slow, is steady and certain” (Boyse/Cooke 55-56).

**46 terrified Sicilian/Mongibello**: Mongibello is Italian for Mount Etna, an active volcano on the east coast of Sicily. See “Aetna” in John Barrow, *A New Geographical Dictionary* (London, 1759), vol. 1: “the highest mountain in Sicily, and a dreadful volcano. [...] The inhabitants, by an unusual conjunction, call it Monte Gibello, or by contradiction Mongibello, that is, Mount of Mounts [...]. Its last eruption was in 1753. Sometimes, as in 1536, 1537, and 1669, a dreadful stream of fire issues from it, like that of Mount Vesuvius near Naples. The prodigious quantities of burning matter often ejected from it, have caused a great deal of damage in the neighbourhood; but earthquakes from time to time attending these eruptions, have occasioned still great desolation in the island. To mention only that of 1693, on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> of January, when fifteen or sixteen towns, and eighteenth estates, with the men and cattle, were swallowed up; besides many other towns, villages, and estates mostly destroyed; near 93,000 souls perished. This devastation fell in particular upon 672 churches and convents” (n.p.). The “terrified Sicilian” would refer to a native’s fear of this volcano’s eruption.

**47 Critical Review**: A Tory periodical published between 1756 and 1817, originally (until 1763) under the editorship of Tobias Smollett.

**temple of Cloacina:** Bathroom, toilet. Latin cloaca = sewer. Early Christian authors supposed Cloacina to be the goddess of Rome’s sewage system. As John Gay notes in his *Trivia: or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London 1730), “Cloacina was a Goddess whose image *Tatius* (a King of the *Sabines*; found in the common sewer, and not knowing what Goddess it was, he called it *Cloacina*, from the place in which it was found, and paid to it divine honours” (24, fn.). The euphemism “temple of Cloacina” is first documented in print in Tobias Smollett’s *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (London 1751) vol. 2, ch. 4: “But, were it mine, it [a portrait of Cleopatra] should be hung up in the temple of Cloacina, as the picture of that goddess; for any other apartment would be disgraced by its appearance.” (216). Smollett also uses it in reference to a particularly dirty toilet in his *Travels through France and Italy* (1766). “The Temple of Cloacina: An Ora-whigial Entertainment” is an example of scatological satire from James Rivington’s *Royal Gazette* (5 Jan 1782). As a place to use and discard unwanted literary productions, the temple of Cloacina features in Hugo Arnot’s *An Essay on Nothing* (London 1776): “I desire that he [the gentle reader] will peruse this performance, and, if he shall then be of opinion that there were no motives sufficient to induce me to publish it, I make him heartily welcome to damn it to the temple of Cloacina, or the bottomless pit” (vi).

**48 Homer, Ossian, and Virgil** The authenticity or fraudulence of James MacPherson’s *Works of Ossian* was widely debated in Britain since their publication in the 1760s. MacPherson compared Ossian to Homer and Virgil in a ‘critical dissertation’ appended to *The Works of Ossian*: “Virgil is more tender than Homer; and thereby agrees more with Ossian; with this difference, that the feelings of the one are more gentle and polished, those of the other more strong; the tenderness of Virgil softens, that of Ossian dissolves and overcomes the heart” (4: 124). In 1782, William Shaw published a strong argument against MacPherson, so it is likely that this triad is one last proof of the narrator’s lack of education and refinement.

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