

# Letters Concerning Poetical Translations eBook

## Letters Concerning Poetical Translations

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# Page 1

## LETTERS

### CONCERNING

Poetical Translations,

### AND

*Virgil's and Milton's*

*Arts of verse, &c.*

LONDON: Printed for J. Roberts, near the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane.  
MDCCXXXIX.

## LETTER I.

SIR,

I am now going to obey your Commands; but you must let me do it in my own way, that is, write as much, or as little at a time as I may have an Inclination to, and just as things offer themselves. After this manner you may receive in a few Letters, all that I have said to you about poetical Translations, and the resemblance there is between *Virgil's* and *Milton's* Versification, and some other Matters of the same nature.

To begin with the Business of Translation.

Whoever sits down to translate a Poet, ought in the first place to consider his Author's peculiar *Stile*; for without this, tho' the Translation may be very good in all other respects, it will hardly deserve the Name of a Translation.

The two great Men amongst the Antients differ from each other as much in this particular as in the Subjects they treat of. The *Stile* of *Homer*, who sings the Anger or Rage of *Achilles*, is *rapid*. The *Stile* of *Virgil*, who celebrates the Piety of *AEneas*, is *majestick*. But it may be proper to explain in what this Difference consists.

The *Stile* is *rapid*, when several Relatives, each at the head of a separate Sentence, are governed by one Antecedent, or several Verbs by one Nominative Case, to the close of the Period.

Thus in *Homer*:



“Goddess, sing the pernicious Anger of *Achilles*, which brought infinite Woes to the *Grecians*, and sent many valiant Souls of Heroes to Hell, and gave their Bodies to the Dogs, and to the Fowls of the Air.”

Here you see it is the Anger of *Achilles*, that does all that is mentioned in three or four Lines. Now if the Translator does not nicely observe *Homer’s* Stile in this Passage, all the Fire of *Homer* will be lost. For Example: “O Heavenly Goddess, sing the Wrath of the Son of *Peleus*, the fatal Source of all the Woes of the *Grecians*, that Wrath which sent the Souls of many Heroes to *Pluto’s* gloomy Empire, while their Bodies lay upon the Shore, and were torn by devouring Dogs, and hungry Vultures.”

Here you see the Spirit of *Homer* evaporates; and in what immediately follows, if the Stile of *Homer* is not nicely attended to, if any great matter is added or left out, *Homer* will be fought for in vain in the Translation. He always hurries on as fast as possible, as *Horace* justly observes, *semper ad eventum festinat*; and that is the reason why he introduces his first Speech without any Connection, by a sudden Transition; and why he so often brings in his [Greek: *ton d’ apameibomenos*]: He has not patience to stay to work his Speeches artfully into the Subject.



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Here you see what is a *rapid* Stile. I will now shew you what is quite the contrary, that is, a *majestic* one. To instance in *Virgil*: “Arms and the Man I sing; the first who from the Shores of *Troy* (the Fugitive of Heav’n) came to *Italy* and the *Lavinian Coast*.” Here you perceive the Subject-matter is retarded by the *Inversion of the Phrase*, and by that *Parenthesis*, the *Fugitive of Heaven* all which occasions *Delay*; and *Delay* (as a learned Writer upon a Passage of this nature in *Tasso* observes) is the Property of Majesty: For which Reason when *Virgil* represents *Dido* in her greatest Pomp, it is,

—*Reginam cunctantem ad limina primi  
Poenorum expectant.*—

For the same Reason he introduces the most solemn and most important Speech in the *AEneid*, with three Monosyllables, which causes great Delay in the Speaker, and gives great Majesty to the Speech.

—*O Qui Res Hominumq; Deumq;*—

These three Syllables occasion three short Pauses. *O—Qui—Res*—How slow and how stately is this Passage!

But it happens that I can set the Beginning of the *AEneid* in a clear Light for my purpose, by two Translations of that Passage, both by the same Hand; one of which is exactly in the manner of *Virgil*, the other in the manner of *Homer*: The two Translations are made by the Reverend Mr. *Pitt*. He published the first among some Miscellany Poems several Years since, the latter in his four Books of the *AEneid* about two Years ago.

### I.

“Arms and the Man I sing; the first who driv’n  
From *Trojan* Shores, the Fugitive of Heav’n,  
Came to th’ *Italian* and *Lavinian Coast*;—

### II.

“Arms and the Man I sing, the first who bore  
His Course to *Latium* from the *Trojan* Shore.—

The first Translation is exact in every respect: You have in it the Suspence and Majesty of *Virgil*. The second is a good Translation, though not at all like *Virgil*, but exactly like *Homer*: There is no Hesitation, but the Verse and the Matter hurry on together as fast as possible.



I have now shown you what is a *rapid*, and what is a *majestick Stile*. But a few more Lines of the Beginning both of the *Iliad* and of the *Aeneid* will make it still more plain.

ILIAD.



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“The Anger of *Achilles*, Goddess, sing; Which to the *Greeks* did endless Sorrows bring; And sent untimely, to the Realms of Night, The Souls of many Chiefs, renown’d in Fight: And gave their Bodies for the Dogs to tear, And every hungry Fowl that wings the Air. And thus accomplish’d was the Will of *Jove*, Since first *Atrides* and *Achilles* strove. What God the fatal Enmity begun? *Latona’s*, and great *Jove’s* immortal Son. He through the Camp a dire Contagion spread, The Prince offended, and the People bled: With publick Scorn, *Atrides* had disgrac’d The Reverend *Chryses*, *Phoebus’* chosen Priest. He to redeem his Daughter, sought the Shore, Where lay the *Greeks*, and mighty Presents bore: Deckt with the Ensigns of his God, he stands, The Crown, the golden Sceptre in his Hands; To all he su’d, but to the Princes most, Great *Atreus’s* Sons, the Leaders of the Host: Princes! and *Grecian* Warriors! may the Gods (The Pow’rs that dwell in Heav’ns sublime Abodes) Give you to level *Priam’s* haughty Tow’rs, And safely to regain your native Shores. But my dear Daughter to her Sire restore, These Gifts accept, and dread *Apollo’s* Pow’r; The Son of *Jove*; he bears a mighty Bow, And from afar his Arrows gall the Foe.

AENEID.

Arms and the Man I sing, the first who driv’n  
From *Trojan* Shores, the Fugitive of Heav’n,  
Came to th’ *Italian* and *Lavinian* Coast;  
Much o’er the Earth was He, and Ocean tost,  
By Heavenly Powers, and *Juno’s* lasting Rage;  
Much too He bore, long Wars compell’d to wage;  
E’er He the Town could raise, and of his Gods,  
In *Latium* settle the secure Abodes;  
Whence in a long Descent the *Latins* come,  
The *Albine* Fathers, and the Tow’rs of *Rome*.

Sept. 6. 1736.

*I am, SIR, \_&c.\_*

\* \* \* \* \*

*P.S.*

I Should not part with the Passage in *Homer* above-mentioned without observing that the Speech of *Apollo’s* Priest is wonderfully Peinturesque, and in Character. We plainly see the Priest holding up his Hands, and pointing with his Crown and Sceptre to Heaven.

“Princes! and *Grecian* Warriors! may the Gods  
(The Pow’rs that dwell in Heav’ns sublime Abodes)



It is a Priest that speaks, and his Audience is composed of Soldiers who had liv'd ten Years in a Camp. He does not only put them in mind of the *Gods*, but likewise of the *Place* where they dwelt, and at the same time points up to it. Neither is the Conclusion of the Speech less remarkable than the Beginning of it: The Priest of *Apollo* does not end in an humble supplicant manner like a common Suitor; but he frankly offers his Presents, and threatens the Generals and Princes he addresses himself to, with the Vengeance of his God if they refuse his Request: And he very artfully lets them know that his God is not a Deity of inferior Rank, but the Son of *Jove*; and that his Arrows reach from a great Distance. The next Line to those last mentioned I cannot omit taking notice of, because it contains, in my Opinion, one of the most beautiful Expressions in all the poetical Language. *To give to do a thing.*



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“Princes! and *Grecian* Warriors! may the Gods (The Pow’rs that dwell in Heav’ns sublime Abodes) *Give you to level Priam’s* haughty Tow’rs, And safely to regain your native Shores.

*Virgil* was so sensible of this charming Expression, that he has used it in the three following Passages, and I believe in one or two others in the very first *Aeneid*.

“—*Tibi Divum paler atque hominum rex  
Et mulcere dedit fluctus & tollere vento.*—

“—*Tu das epulis accumbere Divum.*—

“*O regina, novam cui condere Jupiter urbem  
Justitiaque dedit gentes fraenare superbas:*—

*Salvini* in his *Italian* Translation in 1723, dedicated to his late Majesty, is attentive to all the Beauties of the Passage in *Homer* last mentioned.

“—*A voi gl’ Iddii,  
Che l’Olimpie magioni abitan, dieno  
Espugnar ilio e a casa far ritorno.*”

## LETTER II.

SIR,

I Should now go upon the Comparison of *Virgil’s* and *Milton’s* Versification, in which you will meet with that Paradox, as you thought it at first, namely, that the principal Advantage *Virgil* has over *Milton* is *Virgil’s* Rhyme. But I beg leave to postpone that matter at present, because I have a mind to make some Remarks upon the second Line in the Translation of the beginning of the *Iliad* mentioned in my former Letter, in which the auxiliary Verb *did* (as our Grammarians call it) is made use of. The Line runs thus.

“Which to the *Greeks did* endless Sorrows bring.

It is commonly apprehended from a Passage in Mr. *Pope’s* *Essay on Criticism*, that all auxiliary Verbs are mere *Expletives*.

“While *Expletives* their feeble Aid *do* join,  
And ten low Words oft creep in one dull Line.

But this I believe Mr. *Pope* never intended to advance. *Milton* has used them in many Places, where he could have avoided it if he had pleased. I will produce one.



—“Him the most High  
Wrapt in a balmy Cloud with fiery Steeds  
*Did*, as thou saw’st, receive.—

*Milton* might have said,

“Receiv’d, as thou hast seen.—

But he thought the auxiliary Verb added Strength to the Expression, as indeed it does. I own where the auxiliary Verb is brought close to its principal, and *that* a thin monosyllable, as in the Line just now referred to, the Verse is very rude and disagreeable. But to prove that the auxiliary Verb may be employed properly, I will produce an Instance in rhym’d Verse, as strong as that of *Milton* just mentioned.

“Then *did* the roaring Waves their Rage compose,  
When the great Father of the Flood arose.



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*Pit's* 1st *AEneid*.

I believe it will not be disputed, but that this Line is as full, as sonorous, and majestick as if the auxiliary Verb had been left out, and the Author had used *compos'd* instead of *did compose*. The Expression is certainly more beautiful and more poetical; and the reason of it is, that it occasions suspence, which raises the attention; or in other Words the auxiliary Verb gives notice of something coming, before the principal thing itself appears, which is another Property of Majesty. Mr. *Dryden's* authority might likewise be added on this occasion; even in his celebrated Lines on *Milton* it is to be met with.

"*Greece, Italy, and England did* adorn.

In his Translation of the *AEneid* there are many Instances of the same nature, one of which I will mention;

"The Queen of Heav'n *did* thus her fury vent.

The Metre of this Line, as the Words are here rang'd, is not bad, as the Ear can judge; but it would have been extremely so, if he had writ it thus,

"The Queen of Heaven her Fury thus *did* vent.[A]

[Footnote A:

His Heart, his Mistress and his Friends *did* share.

*Pope, on Voiture.]*

From whence it appears that the auxiliary Verb is not to be rejected at all times; besides, it is a particular Idiom of the *English* Language: and has a Majesty in it superior to the *Latin* or *Greek* Tongue, and I believe to any other Language whatsoever.

Many Instances might be brought to support this Assertion from Great Authorities. I shall produce one from *Shakespear*.

—*This to me*

*In dreadful Secrecy impart they did.*

The Auxiliary Verb is here very properly made use of; and it would be a great loss to *English* Poetry, if it were to be wholly laid aside. In Translations from the *Greek* and *Latin*, I believe it wou'd sometimes be impossible to do justice to an Author without this Help: I think the Passage in *Homer* before us, I mean the two first Lines of the *Iliad*, are an Instance of this kind. They have been translated by many Persons of late, *Dryden*, *Manwaring*, Mr. *Tickel*, and by Mr. *Pope* twice, and not by any one of 'em, as I apprehend, in the Spirit of *Homer*. As to Mr. *Pope's* two Translations, I don't understand why the latter ought to be preferr'd to the former. Mr. *Pope's* first Translation stood thus.

The Wrath of *Peleus'* Son, the direful Spring  
Of all the *Grecian* Woes, O Goddess sing.

Mr. *Pope* had reason to be dissatisfy'd with the *O* in the second Line, and to reject it; for *Homer* has nothing of it. But now let us see how the Vacancy is supplied in Mr. *Pope's* new Translation.



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*Achilles' Wrath, to Greece the direful Spring  
Of Woes un-number'd, Heav'nly Goddess, sing.*

Is not *Heav'nly* as much an Expletive as *O*, and can either of these Couplets deserve to be plac'd in the Front of the *Iliad*? I could wish Mr. *Pope* would return these two Lines once more to the Anvil, and dismiss all Expletives here at least. But enough of Expletives.

I shall now say something of *Monosyllables*, which seem to be absolutely condemn'd in the second Line of the two Verses just mention'd from Mr. *Pope's Essay on Criticism*.

And ten low Words oft creep in one dull Line.

Mr. *Dryden* indeed has said in several Places, that the vast Number of *Monosyllables* in our Language makes it barbarous and rough, and unfit for Poetry. I am apt to think Mr. *Pope* gave into Mr. *Dryden's* Sentiment a little too hastily. I own *ten low Words* too frequently creep on in one dull line, in a Poet's Works, whom Mr. *Pope* has formerly celebrated with no mean Encomiums.

The following Lines afford an Example in this respect.

At the beginning of the third Book of the *Davideis*, this is the Description of *Goliah's* Sword.

"A Sword so great, that *it* was only *fit*  
To take off his great Head, who came with *it*.  
*Cowley*.

Here are ten *dull* Words most certainly in one *dull* Line.

"To take off his great Head, who came with *it*.

And miserable is the Metre in which they creep on. But hundreds of *monosyllable* Lines are to be found in *Milton* that are as sublime, as beautiful, and as harmonious as can possibly be written. Look only into the Morning Hymn in the fifth Book.

"Speak ye who best can tell, ye Sons of Light.

Again,

"Thou Sun! of this great World both Eye and Soul.

Again,

"And when high Noon hast gain'd, and when thou fall'st.



Again,

“With the fixt Stars, fixt in their Orb that flies.

Again,

“Breathe soft or loud; and wave your Tops, ye Pines.

Again,

“Bear on your Wings and in your Notes his Praise.

Can it be said that ten dull Words creep on dully in any one of these Lines? But Examples may likewise be given in rhym'd Verse, of the Harmony of *Monosyllables*. Harmony consists in mixing rough and smooth, soft and harsh Sounds. What Words can be rougher than such as these, *Rides, Rapt, Throws, Storms*; or smoother than these, *Wheel, Hush, Lull*?

“Then mounted on his radiant Carr he *rides*,  
And *wheels* along the level of the Tides.  
*Pit's* 1st Aeneid.

How rough is the first Line, how soft the latter! As soft as the Original, which is a Masterpiece.



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“*Rapt* by his Steeds he flies in open Day,  
Throws up the Reins, and skims the watry Way.

“Has given to thee great *AEolus* to raise  
Storms at thy sov’reign Will, and *smooth* the Seas.

“He spake, and speaking chas’d the Clouds away,  
*Hush’d* the loud Billows, and restor’d the Day.

“Mean time the Goddess on *Ascanius* throws,  
A balmy Slumber and a sweet Repose.  
*Lull’d* in her Lap to Rest, the Queen of Love,  
Convey’d him to the soft *Idalian* Grove.

*Pit’s 1st AEneid.*

Where can a smoother Line than this be found in our Language?

“*Lull’d* in her Lap to Rest, the Queen of Love.

And it may be observed that this Line is all Monosyllables.

*Monosyllables* are likewise of great consequence on another account. The Strength of the *English* Language is greatly owing to them: For to them it is principally obliged for its Conciseness; and Conciseness is Strength. Now Conciseness is not only to express ourselves in as few Words as we can, but the Excellency of the Language shews itself, if those few Words are composed of few Syllables. And herein upon Examination, the Strength of the *English* Tongue will be found to lye; and for this reason it may be said to be more concise than the *Latin*; which will appear if *Virgil* is turned into *English*, I mean even *English* Verse. For Example:

“—*Ubi tot Simois correpta sub undas*  
*Scuta virum, Galeasq; & fortia Corpora volvit.*

“Where *Simois* Streams incumber’d with the slain,  
Roll’d Shields, and Helms, and Heroes to the Main.  
*Pit’s 1st AEneid.*

To discover which of these two Passages is the most concise, it is not sufficient to shew, that there are two whole *English* Lines, and but one Line and three Parts of another in the *Latin*. *Latin* and *English* Lines cannot be compared together, because in a *Latin* Line there are six Feet, and in an *English* Line but five. Again, in *Latin* Verse there must be in every Line one Foot of three Syllables, often three or four, or even five Feet of three Syllables, and sometimes four or five Syllables in one Foot. Whereas in an *English*



Line, there is hardly ever more than two Syllables in a foot. So that an *English* Verse cannot be compared with the *Latin* by the Line, or by the Foot, but only by the Syllables of which the Words are composed, which make the Feet in both the Languages. The Business then is to enquire whether we write or pronounce more Syllables in the *Latin* or *English* Verses here quoted: Upon Enquiry it appears that there are twenty nine Syllables in the *Latin*, and but twenty one in the *English*; so that the *English*



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is almost one third part less than the *Latin*; which certainly shews the former to be much more concise than the latter, there being nothing left out in the *English*, but the whole Thought is rather more fully expressed: And this we see is owing to *Monosyllables* both Verbs and Nouns, *Streams, Slain, Shields, Roll'd, Helms, Main*. In short the whole Passage is equal to the Original in Majesty and Harmony, and superior in Conciseness.

To give another Example or two of the same nature.

*“Urbs antiqua fuit, Tyrii tenuere Coloni,  
Carthago, Italiam contra, Tyberinaque longe  
Ostia, dives opum, studiisque Asperrima Belli.*

“Against the *Italian Coast*, of ancient Fame  
A City rose, and *Carthage* was the Name;  
A *Tyrian Colony*, from *Tyber* far,  
Rich, rough, and brave, and exercis'd in war.

Mr. *Pit's* *AEneid*.

“—*Facti de Nomine Byrsam,  
Sed vos, qui tandem, quibus aut venistis ab oris,  
Quove tenetis iter?*—

“Hence *Byrsa* nam'd.—But now ye Strangers, say,  
Who, whence you are, and whither lies your Way?

I have chosen here three Passages of three very different kinds, and in all of them the *English* appears to be much more concise than the *Latin*; neither is there any thing wanting in the Fulness of the Sense, or in Majesty, or in Harmony of Numbers, any more in the two last Passages than in the former. Another Instance of this kind might be produced out of *Virgil's* most perfect Work, the *Georgick*, although it wants the Advantage of being translated by such a Hand as Mr. *Pit's*.

*“Si vero Viciamq; seres vitemq; Faselum,  
Nec Pelusiacoe curam aspernabere lentis.*

“But if the Vetch you sow, or meaner Tare,  
Nor shall disdain th' *AEgyptian* Lentil's Care.

In the *Latin* there are thirty Syllables in the two Lines, in the *English* but twenty one. So that the *English* is almost one third more concise than the *Latin*; and at the same time *Virgil's* Sense fully expressed.



I will conclude this Letter with the Opinion of a Foreigner concerning our Monosyllables:  
A Person not at all prepossessed in favour of our Language.

“The *English* Language, besides the most significant Words borrowed from the *Latin*, *Greek*, &c. and often shortned, hath a vast Stock of its own, and being for the most part Monosyllables, no Speech is capable of expressing Thought in Sounds so few as the *English* does: This is easily observed by the Translations of the *English* into Foreign Languages.



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“The Strength and Conciseness that Monosyllables (especially in Verbs) produce, are of wonderful Use in Lyrick Poetry, because they Enter into any Foot or Measure of Verses, by different Transpositions; so that I dare venture to assert, there is no *Italian* or Foreign Song, which *English* Words will not suit; the Variety of Feet and Metres producing equal Variety of Mode and Movements in Composition. The want of this is what makes the *French* vocal Musick so confined and uniform; for I cannot recollect above two of their Verbs in use in the infinitive Mood, that are Monosyllables, and not one exact Dactile in all their Polysyllables.”

*Roener's Preface to his Melopeia Sacra.*

Sept. 13. 1736.

*I am, SIR, \_&c.\_*

### LETTER III.

*SIR,*

In comparing *Virgil's* and *Milton's* Versification, I shall begin with *Virgil*; and shew some of the principal Beauties of his Poetry in this respect: And here I must own myself not a little indebted to *La-Cerda*, *Pontanus* and *Pierius*, but above all to the most excellent *Erythraeus*, who has not only considered every Paragraph, every Line, every Foot, every Word, and every Syllable, but even every Letter in *Virgil*; and it is not easy to conceive how much may depend on a single Letter, very often the whole Harmony of a Line; and on this Account we have vast Obligations to *Pierius*; to him we owe this fine Verse, and many others.

*“Atq; rotis summas levibus pellabitur undas.—*

All the common Editions read *perlabitur*; which is horrid to the ear. But to go on with the Matter in hand. The principal Excellencies of *Virgil's* Versification consist of the several following Particulars.

1st, The continual varying of the Pause.

2d, The Inversion of the Phrase.

3d, The adapting of the Sound to the Sense.

4th, The mixing of the singular and plural Numbers.

5th, The giving Majesty and Strength to his Verse with the connecting Particles *Que* and *Et*.



6th, The *Collocatio Verborum*, or artful way of placing Words.

7th, The changing the common Pronunciation of Words.

8th, Verses contrary to the common Measure.

9th, 10th, and 11th, His *Alliteratio*, *Allusio Verborum*, and *Assonantia Syllabarum*.

As these three last Articles arise from Observations perfectly new at the time they were written by *Erythraeus*, namely, about 200 Years ago; and as new at this time, having been almost quite lost by I know not what Accident to the World; I must follow my Master, and use his Terms for his Discoveries, except where I differ a little from him.

1st, To begin with the first Article mentioned in this Letter, *The Varying of the Pause*. This Subject I have met with in several Books, but not fully explained in any one of them to my Capacity; for I must confess I should never have thoroughly apprehended the Varying of the Pause in any Language, if I had not thought of an Expedient to discover what is the common Pause in a Verse that each Language naturally stops at, of which I have any Knowledge.



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To find out this, I consulted the middling sort of Poets, or the first Practicers in this Art: In this Enquiry I observ'd from *Hesiod* and *Ennius* among the *Greek* and *Latin* Poets, and afterwards from *Ovid* with relation to the latter, and which I am now to speak of, that the common Pause or Stop in all *Latin* Heroick Verse (to say nothing of the *Greek*, which agrees with it in this Respect) is upon the 1st Syllable of the 3d Foot. For Example,

*“Ante mare & tellus | & quod tegit omnia, caelum, Unus erat toto | Naturae vultus in orbe, Quem dixere Chaos | rudis indigestaque moles; Nec quicquam, nisi pondus, iners; | congestaque eodem Non bene junctarum | discordia semina rerum. Nullus adhuc mundo | praebebat lumina Titan; Nec nova crescendo | reparabat cornua Phoebe, Nec circumfuso | pendebat in aere tellus—*

Here we have eight Lines all paused in the same Place, except one, (the 4th); and in this kind of Measure the *Metamorphosis* is generally written; from whence I collected the natural Pause in the *Latin* Language to be as abovementioned: I then consulted the best Poem of the best *Latin* Poet, which begins with these Lines.

*“Quid faciat laetas segetes, | quo Sydere Terram Vertere, | Maecenas, | ulmisque adjungere Vites Conveniat, | quae cura Boum, | qui cultus habendo Sit Pecori, | Apibus quanta experientia parcis Hinc canere incipiam |.—*

Here I observed that this great Master had artfully avoided the common Pause till he came to the fifth Line; and he takes care to do it as much as possible throughout the whole Work; from whence arises one of the most material Differences in the Versification of *Ovid* and *Virgil*; and to produce more Examples would be a needless Labour. In this Place let me take Notice that it is on Account of Varying the Pause that *Virgil* makes his broken Lines in the *AENEID*, which suspend all Pauses, and the Ear is relieved by this Means, and attends with fresh Pleasure. Whoever intends to come up to *Virgil* in Harmony in Heroick Numbers in any long Work, must not omit this Art.

2d, The next thing to be attended to, is, *The Inversion of the Phrase*. This flings the Stile out of Prose, and occasions that Suspense which is the Life of Poetry. This *builds the lofty Rhyme* (as *Milton* expresses it) in such manner as to cause that Majesty in Verse of which I have said so much before, that there is no need of saying any thing more here.

3d. The third thing is, *The adapting the Sound to the Sense*.

Most People know such Instances of this Nature, as *Quadrupedante*, &c. and *Illi inter sese*, &c. But few attend to an Infinity of other Examples.

How is the Verse drawn out in length, and how does it labour when strong heavy Land is to be ploughed!



*—Ergo, age terrae  
Pingue solum, primis extemplo a Mensibus Anni  
Fortes invortant tauri.—*



## Page 11

How nimbly does the Verse move when the turning over very light Ground is represented!

“—*Sub ipsum  
Arcturum, tenui s[=a]t erit suspendere sulco.*—

How slow does the heavy Waggon proceed in this Line!

“*Tardaue Eleusinae Matris Volventia Plaustra.*—

How does the Boat bound over the *Po* in these two Hemisticks!

“—*Levis innatat alnus  
Missa Pado.*—

See Feathers dancing on the Water in this!

“—*In aqua colludere plumas.*—

No Stem of the Crab-tree is more rough than this Verse.

“*Inseritur vero ex foetu nucis arbutus horrida:*

Water is not more liquid than this.

“*Speluncisque lacus Clausos, lucosque sonantis.*—

*S. & L. liquescit Carmen instar aquarum, says Erythraeus* in his Note on this Line.

How gently flow the Streams in this Verse!

“*Unde pater Tiberinus, & unde Aniena fluenta.*—

What a roaring do the *Hypanis* and *Caicus* make in the next!

“*Sax[=o]sumque s[=o]nans Hypanis, Mysusque Caicus.*

But now observe how he raises his Song to honour his Favourite *Eridanus*!

“*Et gemina auratus taurino cornua vultu  
Eridanus; quo non alius Per Pinguia culta  
In mare purpureum v[=i]olent[=i]or [=i]nflu[=i]t amn[=i]s.*

The former Line strikes the Ear with *Mysus* and *Caicus*; here you have *Auratus*, *Eridanus*, and *Alius*. Then an Alliteration, *Per Pinguia*, and at last the whole Passage



rolls on in a Dactyl Line, and rushes into the Sea with an *Assultus* of the Vowel *i*, repeated five times in three Words.

“—*Violentior influit amnis.*

The following Line tours into the Skies with the highest Mountain in *Italy*.

“—*Gaudetque nivali  
Vertice se attollens pater Appeninus, ad auras.*—

This falls down as low as the deepest Valley.

“*Saxa per, & scopulos, & depressas convalles.*

In short there is nothing in Nature that *Virgil's* Verse does not convey to the *Ear*, and the *Eye*; so that this Subject is inexhaustible, and must be left to every one's particular Observation.

The learned *Morphophius* has a Passage relating to this Matter which comes in too properly here to be omitted.

“Solent Carminibus suae esse a Numeris Veneres, & certa quaedam Artificia, quae mirifice ornant versum, quales apud Virgilium, mirum numeri Poetici Observatorem, frequenter occurrunt, e.g. cum versus terminantur Monosyllabis, ut: *procumbit humi bos: nascetur ridiculus mus.* Vel cum Spondaeii multi adhibentur, ut; *media agmina circumspexit: Illi inter sese magna vi brachia tollunt.* Aut cum Dactyli & Spondaeii ita miscentur, ut REI NATURAM EXPRESSANT, ut cum de turri ruente ait:

“—*Convellimus altis  
Sedibus; impulimusq;, ea lapsa repente ruinam  
Cum sonitu trahit.*—



## Page 12

“Talia infinita apud Virgilium habentur quae homo in iis non exercitatus contemnat, doctus vero & prudens admiretur.

*Polyhist.*

There is also a Remark of the judicious *Columna* on a celebrated Line in *Virgil*, which is very much to the present Purpose.

*Unus Homo Nobis Cunctando Restituit Rem.]*

Virgilius de eodem loquens Aeneid I. 6. integrum hoc carmen sumpsit, ita tamen, ut spondeorum tarditate Fabii moram referret,

—tu Maximus ille es,  
Unus, qui nobis cunctando restituis rem.

*Enn. Frag.*

Sept. 21, 1736,

*I am, SIR, \_&c.\_*

\* \* \* \* \*

*P.S.*

The Passage in the learned *Muhlius*, which I should have inserted at the beginning of this Letter, I send you in a Postscript. You have seen it before, but it is worth reading more than once. You know it belongs principally to the Article that treats of *the varying the Pause*.

“Neque potest unus idemque semper tenor in carmine usurpari, sed debet is pro varia periodorum Poeticarum ratione distingui. Et ut insurgat decore & intumescat aliquando, iterumque remittat, ubi opus est, consequimur caesorum ac periodorum sola inaequalitate. Quod pulcerrime observat *Virgilius*, cujus alia mensura, alia pedum compositio est in narrationibus, descriptionibus, orationibus, & tanta periodorum numerorumque variatio, ut ad eam perfectionem nihil addi possit. Hujus rei quanta negligentia in *Statio*, *Lucano*, *Claudiano*, *Silio Italico*? Ubi admirabilis illa harmonia, suavitas, gravitas ipsorum pedum aequaliter, inaequaliter temperatorum, per clausulas verborum fractorum, ac intra regiones suas aliter aliterq; interceptorum? Ut de junctura illa literarum nihil addam, cum vocales ac consonantes ipsaeque syllabae ita miscentur, ut rei naturam tam apte jucundeque expriment, ut ea *geri* potius quam *cani*, *spectari* magis quam *audiri* videatur. Talia infinita sunt apud *Virgilium*, quae captum imperitorum longe excedunt, doctiores vero & prudentiores impense admirantur; quae nihil tritum, vulgare, hiucum nihil elumbe ac contortum patiuntur, at nescio quid virile & stupendum plane, ac majus humana voce videntur sonare. *Claudianus* certe istud fastigium non attingit, & quod in *Maroniana* dictione, in illa periodorum ac numerorum varietate



praeclarum putamus, vix est, ut ejus vel levem umbram ostendet. Sic eadem semper oberrat chorda, quod ridiculum existimat magnus iste dicendi magister.”

## LETTER IV.

SIR,

[Sidenote: IV.]

The fourth thing to be consider'd is, *Virgil's mixing the Singular and Plural Numbers*. This has a wonderful Effect, and is very diligently attended to by *Virgil*; but I believe never once thought of by *Ovid*, or any other *Roman* Writer in the Days of *Augustus*.



## Page 13

*“Quid faciat laetas Segetes, quo sidere terram Vertere, Maecenas, ulmisque adjungere vites, Conveniat: quae cura boum, qui cultus habendo Sit pecori, apibus quanta experientia parcis.*

Here you have *segetes* and *terram*, and then *vites*, and after that *pecori* and *apibus*.

Again,

*“—Camposque, & flumina late Curva tenent: ut molle siler, lentaeque genistae, Populus, & glauca canentia fronde Salicta. Pars autem posito surgunt de semine: ut altae Castaneae; nemorumq; Jovi quae maxima frondet Esculus, atque habitae Graiis oracula quercus.*

Here are *Siler* and *Genistae*, *Populus* and *Salicta*, *Castaneae* and *Esculus*, and *Quercus*.

Again,

*“Arma Virumque cano, Trojae qui primus ab oris Italiam, fato profugus, Lavinaque venit Litora. Multum ille & terris jactatus & alto, Vi Superum saevae memorem Junonis ob iram. Multa quoq; & bello passus, dum conderet urbem, Inferretque Deos Latio: genus unde Latinum Albanique patres, atque altae moenia Romae.*

These *two first Words* of the *Aeneid* are an Example of what I am taking notice of; and then we have in this Introduction *Italiam* and *Litora Lavina*, *Terris* and *Alto*, *Superum* and *Junonis*, *Urbem* and *Deos*, *Genus* and *Patres*.

But the most beautiful Passage of this Nature is in the *Georgics*. Here the thing to be done, and the Instrument with which it is to be done, are varied alternately.

*“Quod nisi & assiduis terram insectabere rastris,  
Et sonitu terrebis aves, & ruris opaci  
Falce premes umbras, votisq; vocaveris imbrem.*

*Terram rastris, sonitu aves, falce umbras, votis imbrem.*

Upon which *La Cerda* makes this Remark:

*“Placet Virgilius semper, sed cur placeat saepe ignoratur. In rebus quatuor recensendis numquam pluralem cum plurali, neque singularem cum singulari, quod minus ad varietatem: sed semper cum singulari pluralem. Unica terra multis rastris insectanda est, unica pluvia multis votis petenda. Contra, multae aves terrendae unico sonitu, multae umbrae unica falce compescendae.”*

Now in *Ovid* nothing of this Art is to be found.



*“Ante mare & tellus, \_& (quod tegit omnia)\_ coelum, Unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe, Quem dixere chaos: rudis indigestaque moles, Nec quicquam nisi pondus iners.*

Here are *Mare*, *Tellus*, *Coelum*, *Vultus*, *Chaos*, *Moles*, and *Pondus*, without any one word of the Plural Number amongst them.



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V. The next Particular to be taken notice of, is *Virgil's* uncommon Use of the Particles *Et* and *Que*.

“—*Multum ille et terris jactatus et alto;  
Multa quoque et bello passus—  
Et premere, et laxas sciret dare jussus habenas.*

And more frequently in his most finish'd Piece.

*Quid tibi odorato referam sudantia ligno. Balsamaque, et Baccas— Quod nisi et assiduis terram insectabere rastris, Et sonitu terrebis aves, et ruris opaci Falce premes umbras, votisque vocaveris imbrem. Si vero viciamque seres, vilemque Faselum.*

This Manner of using these connecting Particles, gives Majesty and Strength to the Verse. It gives Majesty, because it occasions Suspense and raises the Attention. For Example:

*Si vero Viciamque seres—*

Here the *que* hinders the Sense from being concluded, till you have read the rest of the Line,

*—Vilemque Faselum.*

But if the Poet had writ (supposing the Verse would have allowed it)

*Si vero Viciam seres—*

the Reader would have understood him without going any farther; and it is easily perceiv'd the Verse would have been very flat to what it is now. This double Use of the Particles gives Strength to the Verse; because, as the Excellent *Erythraeus* observes, the copulative Conjunctions are in Language of the same Use as Nerves in the Body, they serve to connect the Parts together; so that these Sorts of Verses which we are speaking of may be very properly called, Nervous Lines.

This Art *Virgil* most certainly learnt from *Homer*: for there is nothing more remarkable in *Homer's* Versification, nothing to which the Majesty of it is more owing, than this very thing, and I wonder none of his Commentators (that I have seen) have taken notice of it. There are four in the 23 first Lines of the *Iliad*, of this Kind. I will put the *Latin* for the sake of the generality of Readers.

*Atridesque, rex virorum, et nobilis Achilles.  
Redempturusque filiam, ferensque infinitum pretium liberationis,  
Atridaeque, et alii bene ocreati Achivi,  
Reverendumque esse sacerdotem, et splendidum accipiendum*



*pretium.*

Clarke's *Translation.*

VI. I come now to the *Collocatio Verborum*, of which there is no occasion to give any more than one Instance:

*"Vox quoque per lucos vulgo exaudita silentes*  
*Ingens.—*

The Reader cannot but perceive that the Manner of placing *Ingens* has a wonderful Effect; it makes him hear the melancholy Voice *groan through the Grove.*



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### VII. The changing the common Pronunciation of Words, as thus:

*"Fluvi]o]rum Rex Eridanus.—*

And

*"Strid]e]re apes utero & ruptis efferv]e]re costis.*

VIII. *Lines contrary to the common Measure, or rather without any Measure at all, viz.*

*"Quod fieri ferro, liquidove potest electro,  
Saxa per & scopulos & depressas convalles.*

IX, X, XI. These are the three Articles formerly mentioned, namely, the *Alliteratio*, the *Allusio Verborum*, and the *Assonantia Syllabarum*.

1. As to the *Alliteratio*. This is of several Kinds, it is *Initial, Single* and *Double*; sometimes *Treble*, or more frequent. It is likewise *Mix'd*, that is, both in the first Letters of the Words, and in the following Syllables. It is sometimes so often repeated, that it may be term'd *Assultus*, or an Attack upon, or a storming of the Ear.

The following are Examples of the *Single Alliteratio*.

*"Quid faciat laetas segetes, quo sidere terram  
Vertere, Maecenas, ulmisque adjungere vites,  
Conveniat: quae cura boum, qui cultus habendo.*

Again,

*"—Sed viva volare  
Sideris in numerum.—*

And,

*"—Asia longe  
Pulia palus.—*

Of the *Double initial Alliteratio*, this is an Example:

*"Totaque thuriferis Panchaia pinguis arenis.*

Of the *Treble* and more frequent initial *Alliteratio*, this is an Instance:



*“Et sola in sicca secum spatiatur arena.*

The *Mix'd Alliteratio*, and the *Assultus* are to be found in these two Lines:

*“Illas ducit amor trans Gargara, transque sonantem  
Ascanium: superant montes, & flumina tranant.*

In these two Lines the Vowel *a* is repeated fourteen times, and what an Effect this has upon the Ear, the Reader cannot but perceive.

2. Of the *Allusio Verborum*, the following are Examples:

*“Nec nocturna quidem carpentes pensa puellae.*

Again,

*“Hoc metuens; molemque & montes insuper altos.*

Again,

*“Stat sonipes, ac frena ferox spumantia mandit.*

Again,

*“Vitavisse vices Danaum.*

3. Of the *Assonantia Syllabarum* or *Rhyme*, there are in *Virgil* the several following Sorts.

1. *The plain direct Rhyme*, which is of two Kinds, *Single* or *Double*.

2. *The intermediate or casual plain Rhyme*.

3. *The scanning conclusive Rhyme*. So called, because it would hardly be perceived by the Generality of Readers, unless they first scann'd the Verse; but when they have done that in three or four Lines, the Ear will afterwards make the necessary Distinction without any farther trouble.



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I will explain and give Examples of all these several sorts of *Rhyme* in their Order.

1. To treat of the plain *Single* direct *Rhyme*. The following Verses are Examples of this sort of Rhyme: But to make them more like our own, I will divide the Verse into two Parts.

*“Poculaque inventis  
Acheloia miscuit uvis.*

*“Totaque Thuriferis  
Panchaia pinguis arenis.*

*“Et premere, & laxas  
Sciret dare, jussus habenas.*

*“Atque rotis summas  
Levibus pellabitur undas.*

*“O nimium coelo  
Et pelago confise sereno.*

Many more of these Lines might be produced, but these are sufficient.

Of the plain direct *Double* Rhyme (which is the Sort of Rhyme the *Spectator* speaks of No. 60, and which the Monks were in Love with) the following are Instances.

*“Hic labor extremus, longarum haec meta viarum.*

Again,

*“I nunc & verbis  
Virtutem illude superbis.*

Again,

*“Cornua veletarum  
Obvertimus Antennarum.*

2. Of the *intermediate plain Rhyme*, the following are Examples.

*“Imposuit, regemque dedit, qui foedere certo.*

And,

*“Descendo, ac ducente Deo flammam inter & hostes.*



In this Passage *Virgil* uses *Deus* in speaking of a *Goddess*, for no other Reason imaginable but to enrich his Verse with Rhyme.

3. Of the *scanning conclusive Rhyme* the following are Instances.

“*Sylvestrem tenui musam medi—taris [=a]—ven[=a]*.”

“*Nudus in ignota pali—nure j[=a]—cebis [=a]—ren[=a]*.”

From whence it appears that *Virgil's* Poetry is almost all Rhyme of one kind or other; and it is evident beyond Dispute that he generally concludes his strong, sounding, majestick Paragraphs with a full Rhyme, for which I refer to that fine Line already more than once mentioned, which sums up the Praises of *Italy*.

“*Totaque thuriferis Panchaia pinguis arenis*.”

And to the Conclusion of his finest work.

“*Hic vero subitum, ac dictu mirabile monstrum Aspiciunt: liquefacta boum per viscera toto Stridere apes utero, & ruptis effervere costis, Immensasque trahi nubes; jamque arbore summa Confluere, & lentis uvam demittere ramis*.”

And to this I will add the last Line of the Epilogue to the *Georgicks*.

“*Tytyre te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi*.”

Where the two several Hemisticks or Parts of the Verse Rhyme each to itself.

I would observe here that both *Ovid* and *Lucan*, for want of Judgment, begin with a full Rhyme; the consequence of which is, that the Conclusion of the Paragraph is less sonorous than the Beginning, which must needs have a bad Effect.

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*"In nova fert animus mutatas discere formas.*

Ovid.

*"Bella per AEmathios plus quam Civilia Campos.*

Lucan.

But a modern Writer, and a much better Composer of *Latin Verses* than either *Ovid* or *Lucan*, has with great Judgment taken care to follow *Virgil's* Example in this and many other Particulars. I mean *Vanerius*. There are a great Number of Lines in his *Praedium Rusticum* which are worthy of *Virgil* himself: I shall entertain you with some of them.

In his Kitchen-Garden, the following Passage is a Description of all the numerous Family of Colworts, or the Cabbage-kind.

*"Quid dicam quanta jactat se Brassica laude? Sive volubilibus redit in se frondibus, Orbesque Orbibus agglomerans, capitis sub mole laborat; Tornato similes Ebori seu candida Flores Ediderit, seu Coniacas imitata Cupressus, Seque suas plicat in frondes, & acumen in album Desinit, & tenui venit haud ingloria Mensae. Sive hieme in media cum caetera frigore torpent Loeta viret, Boreamque trucem, Caurosque malignos Despiciens, vacuis ultro Dominatur in hortis."*

In his Description of the Farm-yard, he paints the following several Sorts of Fowls in this Manner:

*"Se pictae cervicis Anas | & Garulus\_ Anser Tarda mole movent: | habitu Gallina modesto Progreditur: | Caudam Gallus Cristasque rubentes Erigit, | & motis sibi plaudit Laetior alis."*

And I cannot omit this most charming Verse which describes the Courtship of a Pigeon.

*"Saepe solum verrens Penna pendente rotatur."*

"Oft with his trailing Wing the wanton Dove  
Brushes the Ground, and wheels about his Love.

Such Verse as this must please in all Ages, and in all Countries, where the Readers have any Taste and Delicacy of Ear. All the Beauties of *Virgil's* Poetry are in these Lines; and you may observe in the four last mentioned,

1. How curiously the *Pause* is varied.

In the first Line it is upon the first Syllable of the fourth Foot.



In the second Line it is upon the first Syllable of the third Foot.

In the third Line it is upon the first Syllable of the second Foot.

In the fourth Line it is upon the last Syllable of the first Foot.

2. Observe the *initial Alliteration* in the first, second and third Lines.

In the first, *Anas* and *Anser*.

In the second, *Mole*, *Movent*, and *Modesto*.

In the third, *Caudam*, *Cristasque*.

The mixt Alliteration in the first Line where *Garrulus* is placed betwixt *Anser* and *Anas*, makes the Verse very sonorous; but the mixt Alliteration in the last Line where the Vowel *i* is repeated eight times in seven Words, is a very masterly Stroke;



## Page 18

“Eri\_g\_i\_t, & mot\_i\_s s\_i\_b\_i plaudi\_t loet\_i\_or al\_i\_s\_.”

—I\_lle h\_i\_nc concentus\_i\_n omn\_i  
Carmi\_ne D\_i\_v\_i\_n\_i vati\_s\_.—

Which *extempore* Remark is itself an Instance of what I am taking notice of as imitated from *Virgil*.

3. You will perceive the *Allusio Verborum* to have a very good Effect in the second Line.

“Tarda mo\_le m\_o\_vent, habitu gallina m\_o\_dest\_o.”

4. The mixing the singular and plural Numbers in the third Line is very judicious.

“Caudam Cristasque rubentes.

*Ovid* would have said,

“Caudam Cristamque—

Lastly, The full Rhyme in the fourth Line makes the whole Paragraph very harmonious. It is not improper to produce here the Conclusion of the Description of *AEolus's* Cave, which is one of the finest Passages in the *AEneid*.

“Sed pater omnipotens speluncis abdidit atris Hoc metuens, mo\_lemque &\_mo\_ntis  
insuper altos Imposu\_it, regemque dedit, qui foedere certo Et premere, & laxas sciret  
dare jussus habenas.

Would not any body think that *Vanerius* intended to vie with *Virgil* in this Place?

October 2. 1736.

I am, SIR, \_&c.\_

\* \* \* \* \*

P.S.

The Examples I have given in this Letter of *plain direct Rhyme* are only in *long* or *heroic* Verse, but I might have instanc'd in *Lyric Lines*. *Horace* abounds in Rhyme. In the first Ode we find

*Metaque fervidis Evitata rotis Palmaque nobilis Illum si proprio Condidit horreo*

and several others.



In two of his finest Odes the following Lines are as full Rhymes as can possibly be made,

*Nec venenatis Gravida sagittis Pone me Pigris Ubi nulla campis Arbor aestiva  
Recreatur Aura Aut in umbrosis Heliconis Oris Aut super Pindo Gelidove in Haemo.*

The two last are doubly rhym'd.

## LETTER V.

SIR,

I am now to consider *Milton's* Versification under the same Heads as I have considered *Virgil's*, so far as there is Opportunity of doing it.

I. To begin with *The Varying of the Pause*, which is the Soul of all Versification in all Languages. Verse is Musick, and Musick is more or less pleasing as the Notes are more or less varied, that is, raised or sunk, prolonged or shortned. In order to judge of the varying of *English* Versification, I first endeavour'd (as I have already said, with respect to the *Latin*) to find out the common Pause in *English* Verse, that is, where the Voice naturally makes some sort of Stop when a Verse is read. To this purpose I look'd into Mr. *Cowley's Davideis* (for it would be of no use to quote such Authors as *Quarles* and *Ogilby*, who never had any Reputation for Poetry; but this Gentleman has been stil'd, and is at present recorded in *Westminster-Abbey*, as *Anglorum Pindarus, Maro, Flaccus*) and there I soon found the common Pause to be upon the last Syllable of the second Foot. For Example:



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“I sing the Man | who *Judah's* Sceptre bore  
 In that Right-hand, | which held the Crook before;  
 Who from best Poet, | best of Kings *did* grow:  
 The two chief Gifts | Heav'n could on Man bestow.  
 Much Dangers first, | much Toil did he sustain,  
 Whilst *Saul* and Hell | crost his strong Fate in vain.  
 Nor did his Crown | less painful Work afford—

Here we have seven Lines, and all of them, except the third, paus'd in the same place.

Thus I discovered from *Cowley* in *English* what I perceived from *Ovid* in *Latin*. I then turned to the *Paradise Lost*, and there I found *Milton* even surpasses *Virgil* in this particular. *Virgil* uses the common Pause at the fifth Line of the *Georgicks*, but *Milton* does not use it till he comes to the sixth Line in his *Paradise Lost*.

“Of Man's first Disobedience | and the Fruit  
 Of that forbidden Tree | whose mortal Taste  
 Brought Death into the World | and all our Woe,  
 With Loss of *Eden* | 'till one greater Man  
 Restore us | and regain the blissful Seat,  
 Sing Heavenly Muse |—

It would be needless to produce more Examples to this purpose; and I believe I may venture to affirm that the Verse is varied at least with as much Skill in the *Paradise Lost*, as even in the *Georgick* itself: I am inclinable to think with more, because in this respect the *English* Language surpasses the *Latin*, by reason of its Monosyllables, of which I have said enough for any body at all versed in these Matters, to be able to make out what is here advanc'd. But before I quit this Article, I will observe that it is to the artful and uncommon varying the Pause, that the Harmony is owing in those two celebrated Lines of Sir *John Denham*.

“Tho' deep | yet clear; | tho' gentle | yet not dull.  
 Strong | without Rage, | without o'erflowing | full.

This is one of those Mysteries in Versification which the late Duke of *Bucks* would not suffer Mr. *Dryden* to communicate to the Publick. To the same Art is owing the Delicacy of two of the finest Lines in all the *Latin* Tongue.

“*Te | dulcis conjux | te | solo in littore | secum,*  
*Te | veniente die | te | decedente | canebat.*

Of the same Nature are many Lines in *Milton*, of which this is one:

“Him first | Him last | Him midst | and without End.



II. I come now to the second Particular: *The Inversion of the Phrase*. Every Page affords Instances of this Nature.

“—Him the Almighty Pow’r  
Hurl’d headlong flaming from the ethereal Sky.

Again,

“—Up stood the Corny Reed  
Embattell’d in her Field.—

Again,

“—Him the most High  
Rapt in a balmy Cloud with winged Steeds  
Did, as thou saw’st, Receive.



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And in one of *Milton's* juvenile Poems we have

“Trip the pert Fairies.—

And,

“Revels the spruce jocund Spring.  
*Comus.*

III. The third thing to be consider'd, is, *The adapting the Sound to the Sense.*

Who does not hear the Warbling of a *Brook*, the Rustling of *Wings*, the rough Sound of *Trumpets* and *Clarions*, and the soft one of *Flutes* and *Recorders* in the following Lines?

“Fountains, and ye that warble as ye flow  
Melodious Murmur warbling, tune his Praise.

Again,

“—But Chief the spacious Hall  
Thick swarm'd, both on the Ground and in the Air,  
*Brush'd with the Hiss of rustling Wings.*

Again,

“Then strait commands, that at the warlike Sound  
Of *Trumpets* loud and *Clarions*, be uprear'd  
His mighty Standard.—

Again,

“—Nor with less Dread, the loud  
Ethereal Trumpet from on High '*gan blow.*

Again,

“—Thus they  
Breathing united Force with fixed Thought  
Mov'd on *in Silence to soft Pipes.*

Who does not see Porpoises and Dolphins tumbling about in the Ocean when he reads this Line?

“—On smooth the Seal, And bended Dolphins play: part huge of Bulk, Wallowing  
unwieldy, enormous in their Gate, Tempest the Ocean.—



How variously the Rivers run in these Verses?

“—So the watry Throng Wave rowling after Wave, where way they found, If steep, with Torrent rapture, if through plain Soft Ebbing.—

How is the Verse extended where the Whale lies at length upon the Ocean!

“—There Leviathan  
Hugest of living Creatures, on the Deep  
Stretch'd like a Promontory sleeps.—

How does the Line labour when the Elephant is working himself through the stiff Clay, whilst the lesser Animals sprout up as it were in an Instant!

“—Scarce thro' his Mould  
*Behemoth*, biggest born of Earth, upheav'd  
His Vastness.—

And,

“—Fleec'd the Flocks and bleating, rose  
As Plants.—

But I shall have occasion to take notice of this Subject hereafter.

IV. The fourth thing to be enquir'd into is, *The mixing of singular and plural Numbers*, in which *Milton* excels.

“—Flowers were the Couch  
Pansies, and Violets, and *Asphodel*,  
And *Hyacinth*, Earth's freshest softest Lap.

Again,

“—Through many a dark and dreary Vale They pass'd, and many a Region dolorous,  
O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp, Rocks, Caves, Lakes, Fens, Bogs, Dens, and  
Shades of Death.

Again,

“Sporting the *Lion* ramp'd, and in his Paw  
Dandled the *Kid*; Bears, Tigers, Ounces, Pardes,  
Gambol'd before them.—



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Again,

“—Sweet Interchange Of Hill and Valley, Rivers, Woods and Plains, Now Land, now Sea, and Shores with Forest crown'd Rocks, Dens and Caves.

Again,

“The glittering Guard he pass'd, and now is come  
Into the blissful Field, thro' Groves of Myrrh,  
And flow'ry Odours, *Cassia, Nard, and Balm.*

V. As to the fifth Remark upon *Virgil*, which relates to his using the Particles *Que* and *Et* in his Verse, there can be nothing of that nature in *Milton*. So that I proceed to

VI. The sixth thing to be observed, which is, *The Collocatio Verborum.*

*Milton* often places the Adjective after the Substantive, which very much raises the Stile.

“Strait he commands that at the warlike Sound Of Trumpets *loud*, and Clarions, be uprear'd His mighty Standard. That proud Honour claim'd *Azazel*, as his Right; a Cherub *tall.*—

Again,

“Thy Goodness beyond Thought and Pow'r *Divine.*—

And again,

“Then from the Mountain hewing Timber *tall.*

But the utmost of his Art in this respect consists in his removing the Adjective, the Substantive, and even the Verb, from the Line or Verse in which the Sense is previously contained, and the grammatical Construction inverted, to the Beginning of the next Line. This has a wonderful Effect; especially when the Word is a Monosyllable.

“Here finish'd he, and all that he had made  
*View'd*—and behold all was entirely good.

Again,

“Over their Heads triumphant Death his Dart  
*Shook*—But refus'd to strike.

This artful Collocation commands the Attention, and makes the Reader feel and see what is offer'd to him.



That this Effect is owing to the Collocation will appear by considering any one of the Instances now produc'd. For Example:

“Over their Heads triumphant Death his Dart  
Shook.—

This Passage makes the Reader see Death with his Dart in his Hand, making it over the Heads of the unhappy Creatures describ'd in the *Lazar-house*, as plainly as if the whole was painted upon Canvas. But let this Line be alter'd thus:

“Over their Heads Death shook his dreadful Dart.

How much of the Fire and Spirit of this Passage is lost, will be easily perceiv'd.

I was long of Opinion that *Milton* had invented this Art himself, for I knew he had it not from *Virgil*: The *Latin* Language is hardly capable of it. But by Accident I found *Milton* learn'd it from *Homer*, though it is plain what is *Art* in the former was *Chance* in the latter; which cannot be disputed when it is considered that in so many thousand Lines that we have of *Homer's*, there is I believe but one single Instance of this Monosyllable Collocation; but in *Milton* there are many, both Substantives, Adjectives and Verbs. The single Instance in *Homer* is in *Odysse* 9. in the Story of *Polyphemus*.



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[Greek: Sun de duo marpsas, hos te phulakas poti gaie / Kopt']  
*Hom. Odyss. \_&c.\_*

“Two of my hapless Friends with all his Pow’r,  
Like Dogs, the Monster on the rocky Floor  
DASH’D.—

Can any body be insensible of the Power of this Word, *Dash’d*, as it is here plac’d.

I remember an Instance of this Monosyllable Collocation at the Beginning of a Line in rhym’d Verse, which is very well worth inserting here. It is at the Conclusion of Mr. *Pit’s* 4th *AEneid*, when *Juno* sends *Iris* from Heaven in haste to relieve *Dido* from the Agonies of Death.

*“Tum Juno Omnipotens, longum miserata dolorem,  
Difficilesque obitus, Irim Demisit Olympo  
Quae luctantem animam, nexosque resolveret artus.*

“Then mighty *Juno* with a melting Eye, Beheld her dreadful Anguish from the Sky; And bade fair *Iris* from the starry Pole, *Fly*, and enlarge her agonizing Soul.

How is the Verse animated by the placing that Monosyllable, *Fly*, at the Beginning of the last Line.—The Reader sees all the Concern of *Juno*, and all the Hurry she is in to get the unhappy Queen released from the Pangs of Death.

*Milton* likewise uses his Monosyllables very artfully in placing them at the Conclusion of a Line, so as to divide the last Foot of the Verse, which has a very extraordinary Effect.

“Silence, ye troubled Waves, and thou, *Deep*,  
Peace.

Again he divides the last Foot by making a Monosyllable the Beginning of a new Sentence, which is very pleasing.

“—Up flood the Corny Reed Imbattled in his Plain, the humble Furz And Bush with frised Hair implicit. *Last Rose* as in Dance the stately Trees.

*Milton* also sometimes places two Monosyllables at the End of the Line, stopping at the 4th Foot, to adapt the Measure of the Verse to the Sense; and then begins the next Line in the same manner, which has a wonderful Effect.

“Now at their shady Lodge arriv’d, *both stopt*,  
*Both turn’d*, and under open Sky ador’d  
The God who made, \_&c.\_



This artful Manner of writing makes the Reader see them *Stop* and *Turn* to worship God before they went into their Bower. If this Manner was alter'd, much of the Effect of the Painting would be lost.

“And now arriving at their shady Lodge  
*Both stopt, both turn'd*, and under open Sky  
Ador'd the God, *&c.*—

This falls very short of the Original. So in *Latin*,

“*Jamq; domus ventum est umbrosae ad limina: sistunt*  
*Ambo, ambo vertunt, & aperto numen adorant*  
*Sub Coelo.*—

Alter these Lines, thus,

“*Et nunc Arborei ventum est ad limina tecti;*  
*Sistunt Ambo, Ambo vertunt, & numen Adorant*  
*Sub Coelo.*—



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There is here just the same Difference in the *Latin* as in the *English*.

I cannot omit two other Instances of *Milton's* wonderful Art in the Collocation of Words, by which the Thoughts are exceedingly heighten'd.

“Under his forming Hands a Creature grew Manlike, but different Sex, so lovely fair, That what seem'd fair in all the World, seem'd now *Mean*, or in her summ'd up.—

What a Force has that Word *mean*, as it is plac'd!

Again,

“I turn'd my Thoughts, and with capacious Mind Considered all Things visible in Heav'n, Or Earth, or Middle, all Things fair and good; But all that Fair and Good, in thy Divine *Semblance*, and in thy Beauty's heav'nly Ray United I beheld—

I presume there is no other Language in which Perfection equal to this is to be found: And I could give many more Instances of the same kind out of the *Paradise Lost*.

VII. The seventh Particular in *Virgil* was his *Varying the Common Pronunciation*, in which *Milton* has imitated him in several Places; the following is one Instance.

“—Thus to his Son au—[=di]—bly spake.

For so it must be read, and not after the common manner.

Again,

“Hoarse Murmur eccho'd to his Words Applause  
Thro' the in—[=fi]—nite Host—

And the like in many other Places.

VIII. *His Verses contrary to the Common Measure*. The following is an Example of this kind.

“Drove headlong down to the Bottomless Pit.—

Those who may be apt to find fault with such Arts as these (for Arts they are in *Virgil* and *Milton*) little think what it is to write 10 or 12 thousand Lines, and to vary the Sound of them in such manner as to entertain the Ear from the Beginning to the End of the Work.



## IX. I come now to the Alliteratio.

And 1. To speak of the single *Alliteratio*. This is so common in *Milton*, that you need but begin the Poem, or open any Page of it, and you will meet with it.

“Of Man’s *first* Disobedience, and the *Fruit*  
Of that forbidden *Tree*, whose mortal *Taste*  
Brought Death into the *World*, and all our *Woe*.”

Again,

“*Restore* us, and *Regain* the blissful Seat.”

And

“*Sing* Heav’nly Muse! that on the *Secret* Top.”

And a little lower,

“That *Shepherd* who first taught the chosen *Seed*.”

But I will produce an Example or two of this kind out of our Author’s juvenile Poems. His Verses upon the Circumcision are addressed to the Angels that appear’d to the Shepherds, and begin thus,

“Ye flaming Pow’rs, and *winged Warriors* bright,  
That erst with Musick and triumphant Song  
Through the *soft Silence* of the listning Night  
*So sweetly sung* your Joy the Clouds along.”



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All the Masters of Verse from *Chaucer* to *Milton*, and from *Milton* to this time, were sensible of this Art. *Dryden* attends to it more than any thing else.

*“Beneath the Shade which Beechen Boughs diffuse, You Tityrus entertain your Sylvan Muse: Round the wide World in Banishment we roam, Forc’d from our pleasing Fields and native Home.*

Again,

*Arms and the Man I sing, who forc’d by Fate And haughty Juno’s unrelenting Hate, Expell’d and Exil’d, left the Trojan Shore: Long Labours, both by Sea and Land he bore.*

Mr. *Pope* begins his Poems with this Delicacy.

*“First in these Fields I try the Sylvan Strains, Nor blush to sport on Windsor’s blissful Plains. Fair Thames flow gently from thy Sacred Spring, While on thy Banks Sicilian Muses Sing; Let Vernal Airs thro’ trembling Osiers play, And Albion’s Cliffs resound the rural Lay. You, that too wise for Pride, too good for Pow’r Enjoy the Glory to be great no more.*

Mr. *Pitt* has the following Lines in his 2d *AEneid*.

*“So when an aged Ash, whose Honours rise From some steep Mountain tow’ring to the Skies, With many an Axe by shouting Swains is ply’d, Fierce they repeat the Strokes from every Side; The tall Tree trembling, as the Blows go round, Bows the high Head, and nods to every Wound.*

Sir *Philip Sidney*, who was very unhappy in Versification, seems to have despised this Beauty in Verse, and even to have thought it an Excellence to fix the Pause always in one Place, namely at the End of the second Foot: So that he must have had no more Ear for Poetry than Mr. *Cowley*. Not but that I am apt to think some Writers in Sir *Philip Sidney*’s time carried this matter to a ridiculous Extreme. Others thought this Beauty a Deformity, and concluded it so from two or three silly *Latin* Lines of *Ennius* and *Tully*, such as,

*O Tite, Tute, Tati, &c.*

And,

*O Fortunatam, natam, &c.*

without ever attending to *Virgil* in the least.

*Spencer* every where abounds in all his Works with *Alliterations*; I will produce but one, which is exceeding beautiful.



“The *Lilly, Lady* of the *Flow’ry Field*.”

Here is a double initial Alliteration, and a continual mix’d Alliteration of the liquid *L*, which makes the Verse so very musical that there are few such Lines in our, or any other Language.

*Fairfax*, who was one of the first curious Versifyers amongst us, embellishes his Lines continually with this Ornament.



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In his Description of a Troop of fighting Monks, in his first Book of his Translation of *Tasso*, are these Lines.

“Their jolly Notes, they *Chanted* loud and *Clear*:  
And *horrid Helms high* on their *Heads* they bear.

Than which Verses nothing can be more truly poetical.

But to go farther back than either *Fairfax* or *Spencer*, those celebrated Lines in our antient Translation of the *Psalms* owe their greatest Beauty to their *Alliteration*.

“The Lord descended from above,  
And bow'd the *Heavens high*,  
And underneath his Feet he cast  
The Darkness of the Sky.

“On *Cherubs* and on *Cherubims*  
Full *royally* he *rode*,  
And on the *Wings* of mighty *Winds*  
Came flying *all abroad*.

A Line of *Chaucer's* just now offers itself to my Memory, which has almost all the Arts of Poetry in it.

“A *Sheffield Whittle* bare *he* in *his Hose*.

There is a fine Alliteration in the Conclusion of the Line, Bare *he* in *his Hose*, and a mix'd one at the Beginning of it. The *h* in the first Syllables of the second and third Words mixes the Sound very agreeably; and lastly, the Inversion of the Phrase (where the Nominative is put immediately after the Verb) is extremely poetical. *Bare he*. *Chaucer* seems (to me) by the help of a delicate Ear, and a curious Judgment, to have learnt all his Graces from *Virgil*. 1. His Rhyme. 2. His Inversion of the Phrase: And 3. His Alliteration. The Varying of the Pause he does not seem to have attended to. But to return to *Milton*.

Having spoken sufficiently of the *Initial*, I come now to the *mix'd Alliteration*. And this latter is almost as common as the former, and is to be found in all such Lines as these.

“—And now is come  
Into the *blissful Field*.—

Every Ear must perceive how the *f* and the *l* are mingled in the two last Words.

Again,



“—Th[r=]o’ G[r=]oves of My[rr=]h.—

Here the rough *r* predominates as much as the soft *l* did in the first Part of the Verse.

Again,

“And *Flow’ry* O\_dours\_.—

Here the *Allusio Verborum* is introduc’d. *Flow’r* at the Beginning of the first Word, and *Dour* at the End of the second, make a most agreeable Harmony. The Line concludes with what may be call’d the *Assultus*, or the Attack upon the Ear.

“—C[=a]ssi[=a], N[=a]rd [=a]nd B[=a]lm.—

These five *A*’s in four Words at the End of the Line must make themselves perceiv’d if Words can do it. ’Tis of the same kind as *Virgil*’s,

“—*Tumid*[=a] *aequor*[=a] *pl*[=a]*c*[=a]*t*.

But it may be proper to add another Instance or two of the *Allusio Verborum*.



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“So talk’d the *spirited sly Snake*, and *Eve*  
Yet more amaz’d.—

Again,

“When from the *Boughs* a *savoury Odour blown*.

Again,

“Immediately the Mountains huge appear  
Emergent, and their *broad bare Backs* upheave  
Into the Clouds.—

Again,

“—Scarce from his Mould  
*Behemoth*, *biggest born* of Earth, upheav’d  
His Vastness.—

Spirited sly Snake.—Boughs blown.—Broad bare Backs.—*Behemoth* biggest born.

All these Passages are in the same Stile of Sound as *Virgil’s*— *Metuens*, *Molem*,  
*Montis*.

“*Hoc metuens, molemque & montis insuper altos*  
*Imposuit*.—

Observe how the *molemque & montis* labour in the Verse exactly in the same manner  
as

Broad, bare Backs, and *Behemoth* biggest born.

But here let me give you a few more Instances of the *Allusio Verborum*, or the mixing of  
Sounds of Words in rhym’d Verse.

“As o’er th’*Aerial Alps* sublimely spread  
Some aged Oak uprears his reverend Head.

*Pit’s* *AEneid*.

A Gentleman justly esteemed for his great Learning and excellent Skill in Criticism, but  
not of so delicate an Ear as Mr. *Pit*, would have had him writ, *As on th’Aerial Alps*.

But then the Verse would have wanted much of its Harmony, because *O’er* mingles in  
Sound with *A’er* which *On* does not; and the same thing would have happen’d in the



next Line, if it had stood thus— *Some aged Oak uplifts his mighty Head.*—Because *uplifts* and *mighty* have no Resemblance in Sound to each other, or to *Aged* and *Head*; but as the Line stands,

“Some aged Oak uprears his Reverend Head,

the Words all melt into one another, and the Musick dies along the Verse from the Beginning to the End. This is the greatest Delicacy of Poetry, neither are the other Graces wanting in this Verse. The Pause is properly varied, the first Line is entirely suspended. There is in it a double Alliteration, *Aerial Alps, sublimely spread*: And to conclude all, the Rhyme is as perfect as possible.

Octob. 11. 1736.

*I am, SIR, \_&c.\_*

\* \* \* \* \*

*P.S.*

In looking over this Letter I observe a Passage in *Milton*, which merits a very particular Consideration, and which I ought to have taken notice of before, when I was speaking of the Collocation of Words; the Passage I mean is, *For since I first, &c.* The entire Passage runs thus,



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“*Eve, easily* may Faith admit that all The Good which we enjoy, from Heav’n descends; *But*, that from *us* ought should ascend to Heav’n So prevalent as to concern the Mind Of God high-blest, or to incline his Will, Hard to belief may seem; *yet* this will Prayer, Or one short Sigh of human Breath, up born Ev’n to the Seat of God. For since I sought By Pray’r th’ offended Deity to appease; *Kneel’d* and before him humbled all my Heart, Methought I saw him placable and mild, Bending his Ear, \_&c.\_

How extremely fine is the Poetry of this Passage? How soft is the beginning, occasion’d by the Assonance of the two first Words, *Eve, Easily*, and of the five next all alliterated with the same Vowel, *A*

“—*May Faith admit that all.*

How solemn is the Pause at the 1st Syllable of the 3d Line! *But*—

And the Caesure upon the Monosyllable *Us* that follows immediately,

“*But*—that from *us*—

And the same Energy is plainly perceiv’d at the End of the 6th Line, where the Caesure is plac’d upon the Monosyllable *yet*,

“*Yet*—this will Prayer, \_&c.\_

But when we come to that Line,

“*Kneel’d*; and before Him humbled all my Heart,

such is the Force of the Word *kneel’d* in that Situation, that we actually see *Adam* upon his Knees before the offended Deity; and by the Conclusion of this Paragraph,—*Bending his Ear*, Infinite Goodness is visibly as it were represented to our Eyes as inclining to hearken to the Prayers of his penitent Creature.

## LETTER VI.

*SIR,*

[Sidenote: XI.]

I am now to proceed to the *Assonantia Syllabarum* or *Rhyme*. I have shown under this Head how much *Virgil* abounds in *Rhyme*; from whence I conclude, that it may be reasonably supposed *Rhyme* had its Original from a nobler Beginning than the Barbarity of *Druids* and *Monks*. It is very probable that *Chaucer*, *Dante*, and *Petrarch* learnt it from *Virgil*, and that other Nations follow’d the Example they had set them.



To say the *Bards* rhym'd in the Times of grossest Ignorance, merely by their own Invention, only proves that Rhyme is naturally harmonious. We are told by the Learned that the *Hebrew* Poetry is in *Rhyme*, and that where-ever any Footsteps of this Art are to be trac'd, *Rhyme* is always found, whether in *Lapland* or in *China*.

If it should be objected that the *Greek* Tongue is an Exception to this general Rule; that Matter perhaps may be disputed, or a particular Answer might be given. But that the *Latin* Language is a Friend to *Rhyme* is clear beyond all doubt; and the same is as true of all the living Tongues that are distinguished in the learned World.



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It is no wonder that *Verse without Rhyme* has so many Advocates amongst the Dealers in Poetry, because of its Facility. *Rhym'd Verse*, with all its Ornaments, especially the artful Way of varying the Pause, is exceeding difficult; and so are all the curious Productions of Art. Fine Painting, fine Musick or Sculpture, are all very hard to perform; it is the Difficulty that makes those Performances so deserving of Applause when they attain the highest Perfection. As to the Matter before us; *Rhyme* (as Mr. *Dryden* justly observes) never was *Milton's* Talent: This appears from his juvenile Poems. And when he sate down to write the *Paradise lost*, his Imagination was too vigorous, too lofty to be shackled by *Rhyme*. It must be own'd that a thousand Beauties would have been lost, which now shine with amazing Splendor in that Poem, if *Milton* had writ in the most exquisite *Rhyme*. But then on the other hand, it is as certain that upon the whole it would have been a more agreeable Poem to the Generality of Readers than it is at present. Of this Opinion was the learned Foreigner mentioned in a former Letter, a judicious Critick both in the ancient and modern Languages.

“Quicquid tamen ejus sit, ostendunt Miltoni scripta virum vel in ipsa juventute: quae enim ille adolescens scripsit carmina Latina, una cum Anglicis edita, aetatem illam longe superant, qua ille vir scripsit poemata Anglica, sed sine rythmis, quos, ut pestes carminum vernaculorum, abesse volebat, *quale illud decem libris constans, The Paradise Lost*, plena ingenii & acuminis sunt, sed insuavia tamen videntur ob *rythmi* defectum; quem ego abesse a tali carminum genere non posse existimo, quicquid etiam illi, & Italis nonnullis, & nuper Isaaco Vossio in libro *de Poematum cantu*, videatur.”

*Polyhist.*

However, we must take *Paradise Lost* as it is, and rejoice that we have in it, one of the finest Works that ever the Wit of Man produc'd: But then the Imperfection of this Work must not be pleaded in favour of such other Works as have hardly any thing worthy of Observation in them. Placing *Milton* with his blank Verse by himself (as indeed he ought to be in many other respects, for he certainly has no Companion) this Dispute about the Excellency of *blank Verse*, and even the Preference of it to *rhym'd Verse*, may be determined by comparing two Writers of Note, who have undertaken the same Subject; that is, *Virgil's Aeneid*.

Now I will take all the Passages of that Poem mentioned in my Letters to you, and compare them in these two Translations: And if it shall appear by the Comparison that the *rhym'd Verses* have not only more Harmony and Conciseness, but likewise that they express *Virgil's* Sense more fully and more perspicuously than the *blank Verse*, will it not be easy to determine which of these two Sorts ought to be preferr'd?



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Octob. 22. 1736.

*I am, SIR, \_&c.\_*

\* \* \* \* \*

*P.S.*

When I was taking notice of *Virgil's* Arts of Versification, I should not have omitted his sudden varying the Tense of the Verb from the Preterperfect to the Present.

*"Non tua te nobis, Genitrix pulcherrima talem  
Promisit, Graisque ideo bis vindicat armis.*

This is very agreeable both as to the Verse and the Sense; for it makes the thing described more immediately present than it would be otherwise. I cannot just now recollect an Example in *Milton* of this nature, but I remember one in *Fairfax*, in a Couplet already cited.

*"Their jolly Notes they chanted loud and clear,  
And horrid Helms high on their Heads they bear.*

This is much more lively and peinturesque than if he had writ *bore*, and you will easily perceive it. It may be said, perhaps, that *Fairfax* used *bear* here for the sake of the Verse; let that be allow'd, but then it must be likewise granted, that *Virgil* uses *vindicat* instead of *vindicavit*, for the sake of his Verse, which he would not have done, if it had not been more beautiful than the common Prose way of writing: And as it is an Excellency in *Virgil*, so it is in *Fairfax*.

## LETTER VII.

*SIR,*

I am now to collect the Passages of the *AEneid*, mentioned in my former Letters, and bring them together with the *rhym'd* and *blank* Verse Translations.

The first Passage is this (not to take notice of the very first Lines, which Mr. *Pit* has translated in two different manners)

*"Sic cunctus pelagi cecidit fragor, aequora postquam  
Prospiciens genitor, coeloque invectus aperto  
Flectit equos, curruque volans dat lora secundo.*

*Dr. Trapp,*



“So all the hurry of the Ocean ceas’d,  
Soon as its God appear’d above the Waves:  
Who, managing his Steeds in Air serene,  
Flies swift with slacken’d Reins and loose Career.

Mr. *Pit*,

“Then did the roaring Waves their Rage compose,  
When the great Father of the Flood arose,  
Rapt by his Steeds he flies in open Day,  
Throws up the Reins, and skims the watry Way.

*“Atque rotis summas levibus pellabitur undas.*

Dr. *Trapp*,

“And with light Wheels upon the Surface rides,

Mr. *Pit*,

“Then mounted on his radiant Carr he rides,  
And wheels along the Level of the Tides.

Again,

*“AEole (namque tibi divum pater atque hominum rex  
Et mulcere dedit fluctus, & tollere vento)*

Dr. *Trapp*,

“—O AEolus (for thee  
The Sire of Gods, and King of Men impow’rs  
To smooth the Waves, or raise them with the Wind.)



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Mr. *Pit*,

“—Since mighty *Jove*, The King of Men, and Sire of Gods above, Gives thee, great *AEolus*, the Power to raise Storms at thy sovereign Will, and smooth the Seas.

Again,

*“Sit ait, & dicto citius tumida aequora placat,  
Collectasque fugat nubes, solemque reducit.*

Dr. *Trapp*,

“So spake the God, and sooner than he spoke  
Appeas’d the tossing of the Waves, dispell’d  
The Clouds collected, and restor’d the Sun.

Mr. *Pit*,

“He spoke, and speaking chas’d the Clouds away:  
Hush’d the loud Billows, and restor’d the Day.

Again,

*“—Fotum Gremio dea tollit in altos  
Idaliae lucos.*

Dr. *Trapp*,

“—And on her Bosom hush’d,  
Carries him to *Idalia*’s lofty Groves.—

Mr. *Pit*,

“Lull’d in her Lap to rest, the Queen of Love  
Conveys him to the soft *Idalian* Grove.

Again,

*“—Ubi tot Simois correpta sub undis  
Scuta virum, galeasque, & fortia corpora volvit,*

Dr. *Trapp*,

“Where *Simois* in his rapid Torrent rolls  
So many Warriour Bodies, Helms and Shields.



Mr. *Pit*,

“Where *Simois* Streams incumber’d with the Slain,  
Roll’d Shields, and Helms, and Heroes to the Main.

Again,

“*Urbs antiqua fuit, Tyrii tenuere coloni*  
*Carthago, Italiam contra, Tiberinaque longe*  
*Ostia, dives opum, studiisque asperrima belli,*

Dr. *Trapp*,

“Fronting th’ *Italian* Coast, and *Tyber*’s Mouth, Tho’ far remote, an ancient City stood.  
*Carthage* its Name, a Colony of *Tyre*, Mighty in Wealth, and rough in study’d War,

Mr. *Pit*,

“Against th’ *Italian* Coast, of ancient Fame,  
A City rose, and *Carthage* was the Name;  
A *Tyrian* Colony: From *Tyber* far,  
Rich, rough, and brave, and exercis’d in War,

Again,

“*Hoc metuens, molemque & montis insuper altos*  
*Imposuit, regemque dedit, qui foedere certo*  
*Et premere, & laxas sciret dare jussus habenas,*

Dr. *Trapp*,

“But fearing this, the Sovereign of the Gods  
Pent them in gloomy Caves, and o’er them threw  
Vast Piles of massy Rocks; impos’d a King,  
Who should by certain Measures know to curb,  
Or, when commanded, to indulge their Rage.

Mr. *Pit*,

“But *Jove*, the mighty Ruin to prevent,  
In gloomy Caves th’Aereal Captives pent:  
O’er their wild Rage the pond’rous Rock he spread,  
And hurl’d huge Heaps of Mountains on their Head;  
And gave a King commissioned to restrain  
And curb the Tempest, or to loose the Rein.



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*Hurl'd, huge, Heaps, Head, all in the same Line, imitate Virgil's Metuens, Molem, Montis.*

And again,

“—*Facti de nomine Byrsam;  
Sed vos qui tandem, quibus aut venistis ab oris,  
Quove tenetis iter?*—

Dr. Trapp,

“—And the Name of *Byrsa* gave In Mem'ry of the Deed. But, in your turn, At length inform me, who, and whence you are, *And whither bound?*—

Mr. Pit,

“Hence *Byrsa* nam'd: But now ye Strangers, say, Who? Whence you are? And whither lies your way?—

There is no Occasion to make any more Remarks upon these Lines.

Nov. 20. 1736.

*I am, SIR, \_&c.\_*

## LETTER VIII.

*SIR,*

It has been said by several Persons, especially by Foreigners, that there is no such thing as Measure or Feet, or long and short Syllables in *English Words*. This Mistake, I believe, is chiefly owing to *Vossius*, who has advanc'd it in his Treatise *De Poematum Cantu, &c.* As also, that the *French Language* is more fit for Heroick Verse than the *English*. To examine one or both of these Points will be the Subject of this Letter.

That our Language does not abound with Dactyls and Spondees is very true; but that we have Words enough which are perfect Iambick and Trochaick Feet is very certain, and this naturally makes our Verse Iambick.

*Divine, Attend, Directs*, are as perfect Iambicks as any *Latin Words* of two Syllables, and so are most of our Monosyllable Nouns with their Particles.



*The Lord, The Man, The Rock.* Every one must perceive that in all these Words, the last Syllable strikes the Ear more than the first, or, in other Words, the last is longer than the first, which is all that makes an Iambick *Latin* Foot.

The following Words, *People, Substance, Angels, Chearful*, and the like, are all Trochaick Feet; for it is easily observ'd, that the first Syllable dwells longer on the Ear than the latter.

I wonder that *Vossius*, who was a Canon of *Windsor*, did not perceive this in the Metre which he could not but often have heard at Church.

“All People that on Earth do dwell  
Sing to the Lord with chearful Voice.

Suppose these two Lines were alter'd thus,

“All ye People that on Earth dwell,  
Sing to the Lord with Voice chearful.

Here the natural Sound of the Words *People* and *Chearful* is very much alter'd, by their being wrong plac'd; or rather, the Verse is quite destroy'd: But to chuse an Example from *Milton*.

“And if our *Substance* be *indeed Divine*.—

Let this be alter'd,



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“And indeed Divine if be our Substance.—

Is not the Verse quite destroy'd by this Alteration? And does it not appear to be so, because *Indeed* and *Divine*, which are Iambick Feet, are plac'd as if they were Trochaick, and *Substance*, which is a Trochaick Foot, is plac'd as if it were an Iambick? But I might have omitted the altering of this Line of *Milton's*, if I had thought of one in *Cowley's Davideis*, which is as barbarous as it is possible for the Wit of Man to make a Verse.

“To Divine Nobe directs then his Flight.

*Lib. 3. v. 3.*

*Nobe*, Mr. *Cowley* says in his Notes, he puts instead of *Nob*, because that Word seem'd to him to be *unheroical*. But that is not what I am chiefly to take notice of. *Divine* and *Directs* are both Iambicks, but Mr. *Cowley* has made them both Trochaicks, which makes this Line so terrible to the Ear.

It is plain that *Vossius*, who came into *England* when he was pretty much advanc'd in Years, and in all probability convers'd chiefly in *Latin* or *French*, knew nothing at all of the Pronunciation of *English* Words. We have as certainly Feet or Numbers in our Language, as in the *Latin*; and indeed the *Latin* seems to me to be rather more arbitrary in this respect than the *English*. What Reason can be given why *ma* in *manus* is short, and *ma* in *manes* long? Why is *a* in *amens* long, and *a* in *amans* short, and the like of other Words too numerous to relate?

That all *English* Verses are *Iambick*, appears most plainly by considering Monosyllable Lines. For Example:

“Arms and the Man I sing, who forc'd by Fate.

Here *Arms*, *the*, *I*, *who*, *by*, appear to be shorter in their Sound than *and*, *man*, *sing*, *forc'd*, *fate*.

Again,

“Breathe soft or loud, and wave your Tops, ye Pines.

In this Line the same Difference is perceiv'd between *breathe*, *or*, *your*, *ye*; and *soft*, *loud*, *wave*, *tops*, *pines*.

Whence it is evident that these Lines are perfectly Iambick.

The Particle *and*, as well as some other Monosyllables, may be said to be common, like many Words in *Latin*; they submit themselves to be alter'd by the Voice in reading, and



may be pronounced either long or short: But this is not so in other Words. And here it may be proper to observe, that *Milton* has a very artful Way of varying his Numbers, by putting a Trochaick Foot at the Beginning of a Verse; and the Reason why he could do it, is, that the Verse is not enough form'd in that place for the Ear to perceive the Want of the proper Measure. The Examples of this kind are very numerous: I will mention but two.



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"*Angels*, for ye behold him, and with Song.

And again,

"*Fountains*, and ye that warble as ye flow.

Nov. 27. 1736.

*I am, SIR, \_&c.\_*

### LETTER IX.

*SIR,*

To reply to the Opinion that *Vossius* has given in favour of *French Verse* compared with *English*, I would observe in the first Place that what the *French* call Heroick Verse, is the very worst Sort of Verse that can be contriv'd. If the Excellence of Verse consists chiefly in varying the Pause, as I have shewn it does in the *Latin*, and could do the same in the *Greek* and other Languages; what must be thought of that Sort of Versification in which the Pause is most strictly preserv'd in the same Place in every Line, be it for 10 or 20 thousand together, especially in Verses of 12 Syllables? Perhaps an *Englishman* may not be a very proper Person to make this Objection to *French Verse*: I will therefore produce the Opinion of several of their own Writers.

*Ronsard*, in the Preface to his *Franciade*, owns that their *Alexandrine Lines* have too much prattle (*ils ont trop de caquet*) and that it is a Fault in their Poetry that one Line does not run into another, and therefore he wrote his *Franciade* in Verses of ten Syllables, and broke the Measure. The Author of the History of *French Poetry* confesses, that the constant Pause in their Lines makes the Poetry tedious; and the judicious and learned Translator of *Quintilian* says directly, that it is owing to the continual Sameness of Numbers that their Verse cannot please long. In reality, it is a kind of Stanza, and ought to be so writ.

*Jeune & vaillant Heros  
Dont la haute sagesse  
N'est point le fruit tardif  
D'une lente vieillesse.*

Not to insist upon the *Prattle* (as *Ronsard* calls it) of these two celebrated Lines; for what does *Vaillant* add to *Heros*, or *haute* to *sagesse*, and what is the Difference between *tardif* and *lente*? I say to let this pass, the eternal Repetition of the same Pause is the Reverse of Harmony: Three Feet and three Feet for thousands of Lines together, make exactly the same Musick as the ting, tong, tang of the same Number of Bells in a Country-Church. We had this wretched sort of Metre amongst us formerly,



and *Chaucer* is justly stil'd the Father of *English Verse*, because he was the first that ever wrote in rhym'd Couplets of ten Syllables each Line. He found, by his Judgment, and the Delicacy of his Ear, that Lines of eight Syllables, such as *Gower* his Cotemporary wrote in, were too short, and the twelve Syllable-Lines too long. He pitch'd upon the other Sort just mentioned, and that is now found, by the Experience of so many Ages, to be the most



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majestick and most harmonious kind of Verse. Just the same Obligation the *Romans* had to *Ennius*: He first introduc'd the Hexameter Line, and therefore is properly called the Father of their Poetry; and it is judiciously said, that if they had never had *Ennius*, perhaps they had never had *Virgil*. If the *French* had taken *Ronsard's* Advice instead of following *Malherbe*, perhaps they might, and indeed they certainly would have arriv'd at a better Art of Versification than we see now amongst them: But they have miss'd their Way; tho' had it happen'd otherwise, they could never have equal'd the *English* in Poetry, because their Language is not capable of it, for two Reasons which I shall mention, and many others that I could add to them.

*1st*, Their Words do not sound so fully as ours, of which these Nouns are Examples, *God, Dieu. Man, L'Homme*. In both the *English* Words every Letter is perceiv'd by the Ear. In the *French* the first Word is of a very confused Sound, and the latter dies away in the e mute. So *Angels, Ange. Head, Tete*. And innumerable others. And in Verbs, *to love, to hate, Aimer, Hayir*. In the *English* the Sound is clear and strong. In *French* the last Letter is dropp'd, and the Words don't dwell upon the Ear like the *English*.

*2d*, They have too many Particles: To shew how much more their Verse is incumber'd by them than the *English*, I will give you an Example from a Passage in *Milton*.

“So spoke, so wish'd much humbled *Eve*, but Fate  
Subscrib'd not; Nature first gave Signs, imprest  
On Bird, Beast, Air; Air suddenly eclips'd  
After short blush of Morn.—

Now to put this Passage into *French* all the following Particles must be added.

*Le, La, Des, Les, Les, Le, Le, Un, Du*. Of which there is not one in the *English*: And what an Effect this would have in Heroick Verse, you will easily judge.

Upon the whole, *Vossius* was very little acquainted with *English* Heroic Poetry. *Hudibras* was the favourite Bard in his time, and therefore he does us the Honour to say, the *English* is extremely fit for that sort of Poetry which the *Italians* call *Sdrucchioli*, that is, Doggrel Verse.

Thus much for *Vossius*, and his *French* and *English* Poetry. I will now shew you a very different Opinion of another learned Foreigner, referr'd to more than once already, and I will give it you in his own Words.

“*Sane in Epico Carminum genere; Joh. Miltoni insigne poema, The Paradise Lost, Gallos omnes in epicis inseliciores longo post se*

*intervallo reliquit.*

Morhosi<sup>us</sup> Polyhistor.



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This judicious Critick gave the same Opinion of Mr. Cowley above 50 Years ago, which Mr. Pope has given of him lately in one of his *Horatian* Epistles.

*“Abr. Cowley seu Coulejus poemata scripsit, &c. Quae ad genium Virgiliani Carminis non accedunt: argutiis enim nimium indulget, ut Epigrammaticum potius quod interdum scribat, quam planum carmen: Ac praeterea non ubique purus est: quanquam Angli illum omnes veterum Poetarum numeros implevisse sibi persuadeant.*

Foreigners, I am apt to think, frequently judge with more Exactness of our Countrymen’s Performances than the generality of the Natives. I think the Judgment of another learned Foreigner very sensible, when he says upon reading *Virgilium Dryd]e]ni*, “That if the Original had been no better than the Copy, *Augustus* would have done well to have committed it to the Flames.” But the Author’s own Words are worth perusing.

*“Saepe, Maro, dixi, quantum mutatus ab illo es!  
Romani quondam qui stupor orbis eras.  
Si te sic tantum voluisset vivere Caesar,  
Quam satius, flammis te periisse foret.  
Vid. Fabric. Bib. Lat.*

December 4. 1736,

*I am, SIR, \_&c.\_*

### LETTER X.

*SIR,*

By what I have shewn in the preceding Letters, it sufficiently appears that *Virgil* and *Milton* had good reason to begin with *Hinc canere incipiam. Nunc te Bacche canam. Arma Virumque cano. Sing Heavenly Muse.* Their Verse is all *Musick*, and that is the reason why their Poems please, though ever so often read: And all Poetry that is not attended with Harmony, is properly speaking no Poetry at all.

Let the Sense be ever so fine, if the Verse is not *melodious*, the Reader will undoubtedly find himself soon overtaken with Drowsiness. But what I chiefly hope I have made out, is, that *Rhyme* does not owe its Original to *Druids*, or to *dreaming Monks*, since it is certain there is more *Rhyme* in *Virgil*, than there can be in any *English* Translation of his Works. *English* Verse never admits but of two Syllables that Rhyme in two Lines. But in *Virgil*, it is not easy to tell how many Rhymes there are in a single Line; as for Example,

*“O nimium Coelo, & pelago confise sereno,*

*“Et sola in sicca secum spatiatum arena.*



And the like. But what would you say, if I was to observe to you all that *Erythraeus* has writ of the Rhyme *Cum intervallo*, & *sine intervallo* in *Virgil*? Of the Rhyme *sine intervallo* there are four Examples in the two first Lines of the *Aeneid*, namely, in the first, *no—tro*, and *qui—pri*. In the second, *to—pro*, and *que—ve*.



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“*Arma virumque can[=o], tr[=o]jae qu[=i] pr[=i]mus ab oris Italiam,  
fat[=o] pr[=o]fugus, Lavinaqu[=e] v[=e]nit.*—

But for this particular, and the other just mentioned, I refer you to *Erythraeus* himself, if you would be fully instructed on this Subject. The Conclusion of this whole Matter is this: Rhyme is certainly one of the chief Ornaments of *Latin Verse*, even of *Virgil's Verse*: Most of his wonderful, harmonious Paragraphs are concluded with a full, strong, plain Rhyme: And if this is the Case; if *Virgil's Verse* would lose one of its chief Ornaments by being stript of Rhyme, What would *English Verse* do without it? Those learned Persons who in their Writings have treated Rhyme only as a needless *Gingle*, had not fully considered all that could be said on this Subject: *Rhyme*, as I have observed once before, has many Enemies because of its Difficulty, when accompanied with all the other necessary Arts of Versification. It is a particular Talent which very few are blessed with, and ought to be esteemed accordingly: But if we give way to the Disuse of it, and even suffer Blank Verse to be brought in Competition with it, Poetry will in a short time be lost in *England*, as it has been long since in *Italy*, and, if I mistake not, from this very Cause. They have Blank-vers'd *Homer*, *Virgil*, and *Milton*, and I believe all the *Classick Poets*: And if we follow their Example in giving Applause to this kind of Verse, we must expect the same Consequences. We should be the more to blame in this respect, because we have lately had so many excellent Writers of proper Verse amongst us, as *Addison*, *Rowe*, *Prior*, and many others; and have now *Mr. Pope*, *Mr. Pit*, and some whom I do not just now recollect.

*Milton*, as I observ'd already, is never to be mention'd as an Example in favour of Blank-Verse: To supply the Want of *Rhyme* in him, there are so many Arts of Verse, such Variety of Melody, that it would require no small Volume to point them out.

I have nothing more to add, but that it is a very surprizing thing, that *Milton* ever undertook to write in such a *Stile* as he has made use of, and yet more surprizing that he should be read by all sorts of People, considering that the *Stile* is more properly *Latin* or *Greek* than *English*.

I believe both these Things arise from the same Cause, which to me seems to be the *English Bible*; at least, as to the latter, it cannot be from any thing else. That *Milton* acquir'd his *Stile* from the *Common Bible*, is not at all improbable, though he understood the Original. It is certain he was entirely conversant with the *Bible*, and, in all Probability frequently made use of the *English Translation*. Now this Translation is, by Great Providence, (give me leave to call it so) adapted to the *Latin and Greek Collocation*, or Arrangement of Words; that is, the Words are placed in the *English* as they stand in those Languages, which, perhaps, you may not have so much attended to but that you may be glad to see some Examples of what I am speaking of.



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Psalm v. 3. *My Voice shalt thou hear in the Morning, O Lord; in the Morning will I direct Prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

Matthew xiii. 1. *The same Day went Jesus out of the House, and sat by the Sea-side.*

Matthew xxvii. 32. *And as they came out, they found a Man of Cyrene, Simon by Name: Him they compelled to bear his Cross.*

John ii. 11. *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee.*

John xii. 16. *These things understood not his Disciples at the first.*

John viii. 44. *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts of your Father will ye do.*

*“Verbo sensum cludere, multo, si compositio patiat, optimum est. In Verbis enim Sermonis vis inest.”*  
Quintil.

By these Passages, and innumerable others that might be produc'd, it appears that the *English Bible* is translated in such a manner as I have mentioned above: And as we see many Places in the *Paradise Lost*, which are exactly taken from this Translation, Why may we not conclude *Milton* acquir'd much of his *Stile* from this Book? I can give an Instance of another very learned Person, who certainly learnt his way of Writing from it. I mean the late Dr. *Clarke*. Nothing can be more clear than his *Stile*, and yet nothing can be more like the *Greek* or *Latin*, agreeably to the *English Bible*. I beg leave to produce one Instance from his *Exposition of the Church Catechism*.

*“Next after the Creed are in natural Order plac'd the Ten Commandments.*

Is there any thing in *Demosthenes* or *Tully* more inverted than this Passage? And yet the meanest Persons understand it, and are not at all shock'd at it; and this cannot possibly, with respect to them, proceed from any thing else, but their having been from their Childhood accustomed to this Language in the *Bible*, and their still continuing frequently to hear it in the publick Offices of the Church, and elsewhere: From whence I am apt to think Mr. *Pope's* Opinion is not to be subscrib'd to, when he says,

*“And what now Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.”*

It did not occur to that ingenious Writer, that the State of the *English Language* is very different at this time from what it was in *Chaucer's* Days: It was then in its Infancy: And

even *the publick Worship of God was in a foreign Tongue*, a thing as fatal to the *Language* of any Country, as to *Religion* itself. But now we have all that Service in the vernacular Tongue; and besides that, the *Bible* in *English*, which may be properly called the *Standard* of our Language: For this Book contains a Variety of every kind of *Stile*, the *Poetick*, the *Historick*, the *Narrative*, and all framed after the manner

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of the most learned Tongues. So that whilst this *Book* continues to be as publickly used among us as it is at present, the *English* Language cannot receive any great Alteration; but all sorts of learned Men may write, either in Verse or Prose, in the most learned manner in their native Tongue, and at the same time be perfectly understood by the common People. Indeed, if ever we should be so unhappy as to be depriv'd of the *publick Use* of that *Book*, all that came with it, must go with it; and then Farewel the *English Language*, Farewel *Milton*, Farewel *Learning*, and Farewel all that distinguishes Man from Beasts.

Decemb. 9. 1736.

*I am, SIR, \_&c.\_*

*FINIS.*

[Transcriber's Notes:

Several sequential lines of poetry had opening quotes; these have been removed for clarity.

Several lines have no closing quotes. These have not been corrected.

LETTER I: Superfluous opening quote removed: "Subject-matter

LETTER V.:

Section numbered '3.' in original; changed to 'III' for consistency.

LETTER X.:

Corrected typo: 'primns' changed to 'primus']