Appendix 5.15: from Edward Gardner, *Miscellanies, in Prose and Verse* (1798)

Edward Gardner (ca. 1752–1823) was a wine merchant. His *Miscellanies, in Prose and Verse* begins, in Volume 1, with an essay on "The Necessary Precedence of the Progress of Literature, to that of Civil Liberty; and their Mutual Connection, Illustrated by a Short View of the Outline of the History of Europe." The ensuing essays address literature, criticism, history, politics, morality, and religion. Volume 2 contains original poems by Gardner and by Thomas Chatterton (1752–1770) with a brief introduction. In his youth, Gardner was a friend of Chatterton, who is best known for his faux-medieval work, *Poems, Supposed to have been Written at Bristol, by Thomas Rowley, and Others in the Fifteenth Century* (1777). Thomas Rowley was imaginary, but Chatterton fabricated documents to verify his existence. Gardner finds a resemblance between a passage from Chatterton's Eclogue the First ("Here like a foule empoysoned leathel tree / Which slayeth everich one that commeth near," lines 42–3) and ED's description of the Upas or poison tree of Java (*LOTP* III:219–58). Gardner takes this as evidence of Chatterton's "forgery," since a fifteenth-century English poet could not know of the Upas: "The island where this tree grows was discovered in the 16th Century by the Portugueze" (Volume 2, p. 154).

Selection copied from Edward Gardner, *Miscellanies, in Prose and Verse*. Volume 1. Bristol: Biggs & Cottle, 1798.

from "*Rape of the Lock*"

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THE *Rape of the Lock*[1] still keeps its place as the most finished poem in our language. Its two rivals, "The triumphs of temper,"[2] and "The loves of the plants," must yield the palm of excellence, as a finished whole. Mr. Hayley, by spreading his colors on too wide a canvas, has weakened their effect; and Dr. Darwin, whose skill in poetical embellishment is superior to that of his rival, has exhibited no proof of invention, feeling, or passion; his per-

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formance contains a heap of splendid materials, thrown together without order or proportion; and his ornaments are so profusely laid on, that a chaste imagination would pronounce them *meretricious*.

from "Miss Seward, Dr. Darwin, Gray, and Collins"[3]

[p.162]

A late performance, entitled "The pursuits of Literature," has censured Dr. Darwin on account of the gaudiness of his poetical decorations. The author of this satire, we readily confess, possesses great powers for didactic verse. He appears to have formed the model of his poem on

that of the Dunciad,[4] and he has conveyed his critical opinions, not only in the text, but in very copious notes. This performance is popular, and without doubt is distinguished by very considerable critical acumen; but its celebrity may proceed as much from its satirical cast of sentiment, as from the justness of its observations.

Yet the genius of Darwin will always be considered as of the first order, that happy art which he has attained of embellishing a dry subject in natural history with all the graces of the most exquisite poetry, must

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entitle him to rank as one of the first of English Poets. In point of that enthusiasm of soul, that "ignis ardens animæ,"[5] which has been said to constitute the real poet, the author of the *Botanic Garden* is far superior to Pope.

Darwin's style, like that of Miss Seward, is a happy mixture of the Italian, with the Grecian school, but he is by no means a servile copier of either; he has paid (what every writer ought to do) a close attention to nature; he has depicted her lovely features in the most glowing and beautiful colours, and he has captivated the heart of the reader by a thousand new combinations of imagery, equally novel and just.

But Darwin is a naturalist and a philosopher of no mean stature, and he has evinced, contrary to the general, but erroneous opinion, that the two studies of natural

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history, and of the elegant arts, are not incompatible with each other; on the contrary, the effect is increased by the mutual polish which they communicate. Darwin has displayed such an exquisite art in the management of his materials, that his beauties rise upon us by a regular gradation, and we feel their excellency without perceiving the efforts of genius and judgment which created them.

Addison,[6] in his periodical essays, has justly boasted that he brought philosophy from schools and closets,[7] and introduced her to the company of fine gentlemen and fashionable ladies, into coffee-houses and taverns; and the author of the "Loves of the Plants," may claim the rare merit of uniting the utmost precision of natural history, with the most finished graces of poetical imagery and diction.

Slaves as we are to fashion, we should not suffer it to corrupt our national taste. The appeal is certainly just, when we object to the standard of Aristotle,[8] and resort to that of nature.

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[1] *The Rape of the Lock* (1712, 1717) by Alexander Pope (1688–1744).

[2] *The Triumphs of Temper* (1781) by William Hayley (1745–1820). ED met Hayley when he visited Derby in 1781. ED mentions Hayley in the first Interlude of *LOTP* (p. 51), and Hayley wrote commendatory verses for *The Botanic Garden*, printed in Volume 1, *The Economy of Vegetation*, 1795, 1799 (see Appendix 1.5).

[3] Anna Seward (1742–1809), poet and close friend of ED; Thomas Gray (1716–1771), poet and literary scholar; William Collins (1721–1759), poet.

[4] *The Dunciad* (1728–1743) by Alexander Pope (1688–1744), a mock-epic satire of contemporary writers, in the form of a poem with footnotes.

[5] Latin, burning (or eager) fire of the soul.
[6] Joseph Addison (1672–1719), writer for the periodicals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.
[7] A secluded room for private study.
[8] Aristotle (384–322 BCE), major Greek philosopher; presumably Gardner refers to his discussion of mimesis in *Poetics*.