

Introduction

Olivia Elder was born on 21 January 1735, the daughter of John Elder (1693–1779), a prominent New Light Presbyterian minister, who ministered to the congregation at Aghadowey, near Coleraine. Like most Presbyterian ministers in eighteenth-century Ulster, John Elder had to supplement the meagre sums donated to him by his congregation by farming. One of his contemporaries, the Revd John Kennedy, minister of Benburb, Co. Tyrone in the 1720s, described how, in addition to baptizing, marrying, burying and visiting his congregation, he attended markets, bought and slaughtered cattle, quarried stone, carted manure, planted hedges, sowed and reaped his fields.¹ Details from everyday life on a farm and explorations of the implications of Presbyterian theology both appear in the verse of Olivia Elder.

Once she found she had a facility for verse – which seems to have happened when she was in her early thirties – Olivia Elder declared herself ‘a poetess’ and started making fair copies of her work in a quarto notebook, now NLI, MS 23254. The book (which is described below in the ‘Note on the text’) passed, on her death, to her niece and from her to James Henry, the Dublin physician, poet and book collector. From him it came to the NLI.

Olivia Elder’s verse covers a remarkable range of subjects in a considerable variety of poetic styles. She was a voracious reader of English poetry, often placing an epigraph from a writer such as Pope, Thomson or Milton at the head of her poems; she also (probably because she had access to books through her father) knew some Latin and even a little Greek. She was not afraid to experiment with unfamiliar verse styles and her poems include epistles, elegies, a pastoral, an ode, some songs, many pieces of occasional verse and several satires referring directly to places and persons she knew. She also produced a parodic verse in Ulster Scots.

Among her most lively works are the verse letters she wrote to her friends. It is clear from these that they wrote back to her in verse and that, together, the women formed a small coterie of verse correspondents. Unfortunately none of the writings of Olivia’s friends has been found, and it seems that her verse is all that has

¹ See Constantia Maxwell, *Country and town in Ireland under the Georges* (London, 1940), p. 361; see also Patrick Griffin, *The people with no name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots, America’s Scots Irish and the creation of a British Atlantic world 1689–1764* (Princeton, 2001), pp 39–40 and references.

survived from this otherwise unknown group of lower middle class women writers living in rural Ulster in the eighteenth century.

Olivia Elder's satires are among the more surprising of her works. They are outspoken in a way that would be quite unacceptable today; she accuses specific clergymen – Presbyterians as well as ministers of the Church of Ireland – of dishonesty, corruption, cynicism, drunkenness and sexual misconduct. One of her most virulent attacks – on the rector of Coleraine – was, astonishingly, published in the *Freeman's Journal*, though this was her only appearance in print. In that poem, as in a poem like 'Matrimony at the Throne', she represents direct speech with great skill and her use of the couplet is much more sophisticated than that of many of her contemporaries.

It is interesting that Olivia Elder sought the friendship of Anna Lætitia Barbauld, the most significant English women poet of the 1770s and one whose work was widely admired and read by women writers throughout England and Ireland.² She also aligned herself with other women writers working in England and, in her own poems, refers to her position as a 'poetess' several times. It is possible that she contemplated publication as, twice in the manuscript, there are notes that might be directed to a compositor. But the poems were still in manuscript when she died in 1780.

Though Olivia Elder's work compares very favourably with that of other women poets writing in England and America at the time, her outspokenness and the vividness of her imagery make her poems stand out strongly even in that company. Hers is a highly distinctive, female voice and one that invites us to look again at cultural life in eighteenth-century Ulster.

² For Anna Lætitia Barbauld (1743–1825) see *ODNB*. Her poems were reprinted in Belfast by James Magee in 1774.

Note on the text

NLI, MS 23254 is an eighteenth-century quarto notebook, bound as issued in quarter calf with marbled boards. The pages of the MS are numbered 1–144 in a contemporary hand, though some pages (13–14 and 36–60) had been torn out after the MS was paginated and before its arrival in the National Library of Ireland. There are three blank leaves before the transcription of poems and seventeen unused leaves after the poems. The MS page numbers are given on the left margin and are placed between square brackets (e.g. [p. 22]). Cross references in the footnotes are to the relevant MS pages and not to the page numbers of this edition.

Provenance is confirmed by an inscription (in a later hand than the main text) inside the front cover: ‘The bequest of his aunt Olivia Elder to James Henry’.³ Several poems refer to the poet as Olivia or ‘Livy’ and notes throughout the volume confirm her authorship. Glued onto one leaf, at the end of the volume, is a contemporary silhouette of a man in a frock coat holding a book.

Authorial erasures and corrections: the manuscript is a holograph fair copy into which the poet, Olivia Elder, transferred or composed the texts. Though much of the material was entered at roughly the same time (the 1760s and 1770s), in a uniform hand, the poet went through her manuscript, probably not long before her death in 1780, making a few changes and amendments; some of these are in darker ink than the main transcription and in a shakier, less confident hand. Elsewhere, there are what seem to be suggested amendments in pencil; in these latter cases, the original is not scored out. If the new material is clear and legible, the corrected text is presented in this edition as the preferred text with the cancelled text scored out and in angle brackets < > following it. When amendments are uncertain or illegible, the original text is retained, though words that have been struck through are so recorded. Where the author herself inserted the material or an unnecessary extra letter or word, this is marked with angle brackets < >.

Editorial amendments: in this edition editorial amendments (e.g. the correction of obvious errors in transcription) are placed in square brackets [] or footnoted. If appropriate, the correct word is inserted after *recte*. Original page numbers are in square brackets throughout.

³ For James Henry (1798–1876), Dublin physician, poet, pamphleteer and classical scholar, as well as grand-nephew of Olivia Elder, see *DIB*.

Initial capitals: Olivia Elder was inconsistent in her use of initial capitals, but her usage has been retained, though it is often hard to tell whether an initial ‘s’ is intended to be lower or upper case.

Contractions: these (ye, yt, &, etc.) are retained since this printing is intended to replicate the manuscript as much as possible.

Punctuation: since the punctuation and accidentals are authorial, they are retained. Olivia Elder did not customarily start her notes with an initial capital. Her notes are marked by angle brackets.

References to people and places: many such references to people and places have been clarified by Dr Linde Lunney, whose initials (LL) are given after notes for which she is responsible.

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THE POEMS

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[p. 7]

To Mrs A.C.H., an account of the
Authors manner of spending her time¹

Written Octobr 20th 1769

When far from you, dear Anna, placed,
Think not my life I idly waste;
But when I tell you how it's pass'd,
You'll say it is an odd contrast,
And that I strangely spend my time
Between the mean, and the sublime.

I oft forsake both Pope and Swift
The House to sweep, and Pots to lift;
With Princely Queensb'ry leave his Gay,²
To call the folks from making hay;
Or Young³ upon the morning Star
To help the boy down with a Car:
Quit Tragick Queens in all their clutter,
And help to churn, or dress the Butter.

10

Oft from my hand the Pen I whisk out,
And in its place take up the Dishclout;
For spite of all sublimer wishes,
I needs must sometimes wash the dishes.

[p. 8]

No wonder if ~~that~~ my work but trash is,
When I'm obliged to lift the ashes:
Or that I sing in homely lays,
I'll site the Besom with the Bays.

20

¹ <this is placed by ye author at ye beginning as an apology for ye poorness of ye following performances: as little can be expected from one so variously and often meanly employed, the appology she afterwards Ironically makes for ye muse of Dr S——n she here makes in earnest for her own, viz: Can she in one art excell / When to her provence twenty fell.> Mrs A.C.H., though not positively identified, could be a member of the Higginbotham family of Coleraine. For another poem addressed to Mrs A.C.H., see [p. 109]. For lines about the muse of Dr S——n, see [p. 75]. A page number placed between square brackets refers to the page number in the original MS.

² The duke and duchess of Queensberry were patrons of the poet and dramatist John Gay; see *ODNB* entries for Charles Douglas (1698–1778), 3rd duke of Queensberry, Catherine Douglas (1701–77), duchess of Queensberry, and John Gay (1685–1732).

³ Edward Young (baptised 1683–1765): see *ODNB*.

Unfinish'd I must leave a fable,
 To go and scour the Kitchen table,
 Or from ye writing of a Poem,
 Descend my Neighbours turf to throw 'em:
 For trust me, I'm not quite unskill'd in
 A good turf stack the art of building,
 And yesterday, a sight uncommon,
 I help'd with one a poor old Woman. 30

Nay, at this very present writing,
 As this Epistle I'm inditing,
 When all are busy b[ea]ring hay to us,
 I'm forced to go and boil Potatoes.

In politicks I never dabble
 Nor e'er in party matters squabble,
 But sometimes curious, read the news,
 Then take a Brush and clean my Shoes.

Tho never at a school or College,
 Of ancient fables I've some knowledge; 40
 Yet Beauties Queen, and wisdoms Goddess⁴
 I quit to mend my whale bone bodice;
 Or like the Shepherd God Apollo,
 Leave wit and verse a Cow to follow.

[p. 9] Philosophy I seldom need it,
 My brain will hardly bear to read it,
 Yet I have got some little notion
 Of heavenly bodys, and their motion;
 And neither wonder, gape nor stare,
 When I hear learned folks declare 50
 The moon to be a peopled world,
 And round, each day, this Earth is whirl'd;
 And when I hear of Saturns Ring,
 I neither take it for a thing
 That's round the finger put for shew,
 Nor turns⁵ old God for modern Beau;
 But yet the stars I never survey
 Till wool and flax go topsy turvy.

⁴ Venus and Minerva.

⁵ meaning uncertain.

I sometimes sew, and sometimes knit:
 And oft in social circle sit; 60
 Leave mending of ye Kitchen fires,
 And pay a visit at the Squire's:
 Drink Tea and Coffy, laugh and chat,
 And hear him talk of this and that;
 How he himself must prime the Pudding⁶
 Or else he never gets a good one;
 Of method new his meat to cure up,
 Then swear it is the best in Europe;
 How cheap he purchases things new:
 [p. 10] Doubt if all he says be true; 70
 Or hear dull Storys where no wit is
 From stupid Rector,⁷ who more fit is
 For feasting Aldermen than Preacher,
 Else of good eating make his teacher.
 But to return from these digressions;
 Were I to tell of my professions,
 Of Cook, Slut, Butler, Laundry maid,
 Of ricks and housewifry my trade,
 You'd swear, I was the perfect ape
 Of Proteus, god of changing shape. 80
 What need I speak of candles dipping,
 Of Brewing, baking, and Tea sipping
 With Ladies, then entreat excuse
 Till I shew Nan to kill a goose.
 Or how I went from spinning tow⁸
 To entertain a Paris Beau;
 For once, when thus employ'd, I hapt on
 A visit from the sprightly Captain⁹
 Who comes with fishing tackle hear [*recte* here],
 And likes to taste my Bottled Beer; 90
 Or how from whitewashing a wall

⁶ <his Phrase for puting brandy in it.>

⁷ <Revd Mr B——d son to ye late B——p of D——y and Brother to the D——ne> i.e. Rev Henry Barnard, son of Bishop William Barnard (1697–1768); see *DIB* for Henry's brother Thomas Barnard (1728–1806), Samuel Johnson's friend, who was dean of Derry (1769–80) and later a Church of Ireland bishop.

⁸ 'tow' is the unworked stem or fibre of flax.

⁹ <Captain, now Major W——d Nephew to R——t W——d Esqr author of ye ruins of Palmira.> Robert Wood (c. 1717–1771) was a traveller and politician: see *DIB*.

- I'm dress'd, and dancing at a Ball;
 Sometimes engaged in Mirth and folly
 [p. 11] And oft immers'd in melancholy.
 You with my skill would never quarrel
 In tighting Hoops upon a Barrel;
 Nor wou'd believe with what art
 I play the Manteau makers part;
 What pictures of old fans have made;
 And grottos in the rural shade:¹⁰ 100
 How catgut, envied work have wrought on,¹¹
 For working muslin how thin Cotton,
 Now sprig¹² a gown, and now an apron,
 And now a steed I sometimes taper on,¹³
 Or learn to do some Dresden stitches:
 Then go and mend an old man's Bri[t]ches,
 And then begin ye very trade
 In tother world of Ancient Maid,¹⁴
 For planting flowers the ground I rake up
 Or make fictitious ones of Tea cup:¹⁵ 110
 Sometimes explain a learned Word,
 And sometimes glue a broken board.
 And now of all this strange account
 What think you is the just amount?
 Why sure a Nymph of such Eclat¹⁶
 Preceding Ages never saw,
 And Poets, in all after times
 Will sing her fame in deathless rhymes;
 [p. 12] Historians tell, adorned what reign is
 By such an universal genius; 120
 But hold — in vanity's despight

¹⁰ <A method of making pictures out of old broken china.>

¹¹ i.e. how I have wrought work which has been admired on [coarse] catgut as if it had been worked on muslin or thin cotton.

¹² to decorate with patterns of springs or sprays of flowers or plants.

¹³ 'steed' may be an error for 'sleev[e]'.
¹⁴ i.e. spinning.

¹⁴ i.e. spinning.

¹⁵ <a method of making flowers of broken china.>

¹⁶ pronounced 'eclaw' [eklō].

I'll set myself in proper light,
For tho' each sylable is true,¹⁷
I'll frankly own my dear to you,
What all my works themselves have shewn,
I'm Jack of all trades good at none.¹⁸

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¹⁷ <not exactly in the order yt they here follow one another tho' some of them did, as ye building ye turf stack, boiling ye Potatoes, entertaining Capt W. & some others.>

¹⁸ <this is a Poetical licence for which I have Mr Popes authority who for ye sake of ye Rhyme calls Minerva a God.>

Auricula,
a Poem inscribed to Miss M. L—y²⁰

*Can imagination boast
Amidst its gay creation, hues like these.*
Thomson²¹

Dear Nymph, whose worth so far transcends my praise,
Whose merit soars so much above my lays,
I dare no more, than tune my rustick voice,
To sing ye flower distinguish'd by your choice,
A[c]cept this labour of my infant muse;²²
Nor censure you, the trifling theme I choose;
With taste so Elegant and judgement true,
Can ought be trifling that's admired by you?
By all so much esteem'd, so much beloved,
The attempt at least, must be by all approv'd,
(Although to please I boast no other power,
To celebrate Marias fav'rite flower.

10

Let Roses breathe their frag'rance on the Morn,
And Regal Lillys summers pride adorn,
These sung so oft by all ye tunefull throng,
We tire of praises we have heard so long:
Fain wou'd my muse a newer subject try,
The beauteous of[f]spring of ye vernal sky.
But flaunting Emenonys²³ I leave to hide
In dark obscurity their empty pride,
And gaudy tulips shall unpraised remain,
With common flowers that strew the verdant plain.
Auricula, the sweetest flower I sing,
That e'er perfum'd the balmy breath of spring.

20

¹⁹ pp 13 and 14 have been torn out of the manuscript.

²⁰ Probably a young sister of Hugh Lecky, a substantial landowner in Agivey, the townland next to Aghadowey.

²¹ *Poetical works of James Thomson* (2 vols, Dublin, 1751), i, 22 ('Spring' lines 469–70); for James Thomson (1700–1748) see *ODNB*.

²² <this allmost ye authors first attempt in rhyme.>

²³ Presumably a mistake for 'anemonies'.

- [p. 16] When April suns and showers have warm'd the Earth,
 To give the vegetable tribes their birth,
 Up springs ye charming flower in beauty bright,
 Repays the florist's cares & glads his sight.
 But first by slow degrees its gems unfold,
 Half tim'rous yet, to meet the pinching cold 30
 That oft at morn and Eve blows o'er ye leaves,
 Nips the young blossoms, and our hopes bereaves.
 Still bending down they droop their timid heads²⁴
 Till Phebus all his kindest influence sheds,
 Asham'd and backward, shrinking from ye sight,
 Till cheard by his warm rays they rise to light.
 Like humble worth, modest and diffident,
 Till some kind patron gives encouragement,
 And with benevolence's warmest smiles,
 The tim'rous mind of all its fears beguiles. 40
- Embolden'd now, they all their sweets disclose,
 Not less in fragrance than the opening Rose;
 Display their gracefull charms < painted cups > to ev'ry view,
 Those sweet rec[e]ivers of ye balmy dew.
 In gorgeous Robes arranged, of various dies,
 The richest tincture of ye vernal skys.
 Some like in virgin white to be arrayed,
 And some ye russet browns more sober shade:
 Some Love in Regal purple to be deckt,
 Others in crimson, all with silver speck'd: 50
- [p. 17] The sunbeams Lend their tincture to a few,
 Others delight in the ethereal Blue:
 Some love to immitate the painted Belle;
 And others ape ye powder'd Beau as well:
 But all, the Tulips empty pride dispise,
 Nor seek alone to please our ravish'd Eyes,
 Such grateful odours to ye brain the[y] send,
 Scarce sweeter can Arabian Forrests lend.
- Now crowded on the stalk they stand upright,
 Tho' shaded from ye suns meridian height, 60
 His rise injoy and when he disappears,
 His absence seem to mourn in pearly tears.

²⁴ 'heads' and 'sheds' are written 'head's' and 'shed's'.

On the strong stem the clust'ring flow'rets grow,
 Contending which shall best their Beauty shew:
 And while with Argus Eyes they near the head,
 Those shining Rings with glitt'ring dust o'erspread,
 Ye carefull Florists save them from the gale,
 Nor let the rain wash of[f] the painted Meal.²⁵
 O shade them quickly from th'inclement sky,
 Lest in their bloom they should untimely die.

70

Along the dewy borders as I walk,
 To view thy varied blossoms on the stalk,
 And as I on thy beauty standing²⁶ gaze,
 O may my thoughts ascend in hymns of praise
 To that unequal'd skill divine, that weaves
 [p. 18] The beauteous texture of thy velvet <shining> leaves;
 The wondrous artist whose fine pencil paints,
 And gives thy varied drap'ry all its taints;
 Whose breath perfumes you in ye fragrant smell,
 That still proclaims from whence its sweetness fell.

80

But see, alas! the drooping flowers fade,
 Nor can the mournfull Florist give them aid;
 The scent exhausted, and the with'ring bloom,
 Betoken sad their near approaching doom.
 And now they take their farewell of the skys,
 Forever fold their leaves, & close <shut> their dying Eyes.

²⁵ The whitish powder that sometimes covers the leaves of the auricula plant. Thomson has the lines 'Auriculas, enrich'd | With shining Meal o'er all their velvet Leaves' (*Poetical works of James Thomson*, i, 24 ('Spring' lines 536–7)).

²⁶ Conjectural reading.

To Miss E. L.²⁷
 written almost extempore

Dear Betty do not mount on Puff²⁸
 When you peruse this sorry Stuff,
 But if your patience you shou'd lose,
 Get up upon this hobbling Muse,
 And make excursions from —d—y²⁹
 To punish your too greedy livy.³⁰

But first peruse my whole petition,
 Which I present you with submission;
 Then if you think I censure merit,
 Pray do not blame my se[l]fish spirit, 10
 Think what ill company will do.—
 The mother and the daughter too,³¹—
 Enough good manners to corrupt —
 But here my speech you interrupt,
 And call it Scandal, tis confest,
 But pardon me I only jest.

Tis for some flower roots I sue, }
 They're by Miss L—ys³² promise due,
 As who should say, no thanks to you.
 And while my hands are in the dirt, 20
 I fain would have the Sailors Shirt:³³
 A little of the Christmas Rose,
 Some Polyanthos, hose in hose;³⁴

²⁷ The dedicatee was certainly called Betty and possibly Lecky, i.e. a member of the squire's family (see line 58).

²⁸ <puffs Nagg>: obscure. The phrase could mean 'don't bother to walk over to see me' (cf. 'Shanks's mare') or 'Puff' could have been the name of a riding horse.

²⁹ i.e. Aghadowey.

³⁰ i.e. Olivia [Elder].

³¹ <Mrs M—y and her daughter; (both remarkable for covetousness,) who had just left ye author.> Unidentified.

³² This must be an older, unmarried member of the Lecky family.

³³ Probably refers to chicory, grown for its root but with flowers of 'sailor blue'.

³⁴ Presumably a reference to the 'hose' or sheath enclosing the flower.

With your Miss Finn⁴⁰ to sit and talk.
 <When next a fowl goes on the spit
 Folly will singe as well as wit.>⁴¹

And now a serious word or two.
 Pray how does Mrs L——y do?
 Allso the Squire, and Miss Jennys sprain,
 I hope it does not give her pain?

60

My kindest compliments I send you
 And soon, I hope, I shall attend you,
 For Mothers foot is somewhat better;
 And so I shall conclude my Letter.
 How much I'm yours I need not tell,
 Farewell, my dearest friend, farewell.

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⁴⁰ The governess?

⁴¹ It is not clear if this couplet is intended to be alternative or additional to lines 53–4.

[p. 22]

The Invitation, to Miss E. L. a Rapsody,
written from the Bank at R.⁴²

Come, dear Eliza, come, and share with me
The musick of the Birds from ev'ry Tree,⁴³
The fanning gales that play around my Head
Among the Boughs that form my verdant Shade;
And woods that with new beauty now appear
Clad in the chearfull liv'ry of the year;

The prospect all around, how fresh and gay!
Each object gilded by the evening ray,
That gives th' enamel'd flowers more glossy hues,
While thro' the ambient air their sweets diffuse.

10

The feather'd choir, free from parental charge,
Now tune their throats, and leave their young at large.
To forreign care the cuckoo leaves her brood,
Fond to proclaim the summer thro' the wood.
The soft voiced Redbreast warbling thro' ye Grove,
Attunes the soul to harmony and love.
The Blackbird and the Thrush in bolder notes,
With emulation swell their tunefull throats:
While Linnets spread [*sic*] on ev'ry floury spray,
And soaring Larks tell ev'ry breeze tis May.

20

[p. 23]

The solemn Herds are grazing all around,
The gayer Lambs frisk o'er a rising ground,
While their fond Dams, thin nibbling on the Hill,
With frequent beatings, the sweet consort fill.
Come then my friend, enjoy this pleasing scene;
Together let us tread the daisy'd green,
Or in some shade, sit by the Rivers side
Pleas'd with the christall beauty of the tide;
And listning to the songs by nature taught
In sweet oblivion lose each painfull thought.

30

⁴² The dedicatee is probably Miss Elizabeth Lecky and the place perhaps Ruskey (LL).

⁴³ <the murmuring Brook that in its winding maze
Reflects ye sunbeams with a brighter blaze.

These two lines forgo [t]ten.>

Forget our disappointments and our fears,
Our passions calm, and banish all our cares;
Then on the wings of contemplation rise,
Leave this dull earth, and climb our native Skys:
There drink of pleasure from the fountain pure;
There find for every grief a sovrein cure.
And lest we in the paths of vice should stray,
Follow our heavenly guide who led the way.

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[p. 23]

On Friendship, occasioned by a dear friends
taking offence at an inadvertance

Friendship! thou dearest wish of life,
Thou sharpest pain it knows!
Alternate triumph in the strife,
Thy pleasures and thy woes.

[p. 24]

The richest cordial bounteous Heaven
Bestows on human race!
Yet oft with the sweet balm is given
A poison to our peace.

We eagerly drink in the sweet,
Nor fear succeeding smart,
Till lurking in the Cup, we meet
A thing that wounds the heart.

10

So exquisit the pain it gives,
We vow to taste no more,
Yet the same balm the pain relieves,
And still we thirst for more.

Thus when the Bees sharp sting is found
We ill can brook the pain,
But with the honey heal the wound,
And try the sweet again.

20

Indulgent Heaven the Blessing lent
To give us comfort here;
But yet denied it full content,
That we might seek it there.

[p. 25] I'll gratefull then, the good enjoy,
Bear patiently the ill;
Since death, that cant the bliss destroy,
Will all the poison kill.

Thus does the ~~sweet~~ Rose attract our Eyes,
And though we feel the Thorn,
So sweet so lovely is the prize
The trifling pain we scorn.

30

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[p. 25]

A Pastoral, written on the departure of Miss J. P.
from A——y,⁴⁴ which happen'd when there were great floods
after a lot of fine weather

Long had poor Collin⁴⁵ with a drooping heart,
Foreboaded the sad time when he must part
From his fair Delia, now become so dear,
That each short absence seem'd a tedious year.
And as the mournfull crisis still drew nigh, 5⁴⁶
The moments seem'd with double speed to fly;
With deep'ning gloom,⁴⁷ did every morning rise,
And whistling winds re echo'd all his sighs.
[p. 26] Hoarse thunders at a distance, muttering heard, 10
And lowering skys, presaging grief appear'd.
Too soon the swift wing'd hours the day brought on,
And Delia from her am'rous swain is gone.
Now flies he from the flocks and chearfull swains,
And to the lonely Grove, and wood, complains.
And while in untaught strains he made his moan, 15
Rocks, Woods and Caves re echoed every groan.
Ah hapless swain! he cry'd, the Rocks resound,
And hapless swain is echo'd all around.
Better thou ne'er hadst lived to see the day
That snatch'd the lovely Maid far hence <from thee> away! 20
How shall I now the tedious time beguile,
Depriv'd of her who made the moments smile?
Where e'er with her my happy steps I led,
The season all its kindest influence shed;
The Birds saluted us from ev'ry spray, 25

⁴⁴ Perhaps Agivey, the townland next to Aghadowey (LL). Miss J. P. – here 'Delia' – is unidentified.

⁴⁵ <Mr J. M——y.> The man to whom this stock pastoral name is given may be a member of the Montgomery family (LL).

⁴⁶ Line numbers 5, 10, 15 etc. in manuscript, as here.

⁴⁷ <ye good weather had drawn to a conclusion exactly in the manner here described.>

- And every Landschape seem'd more fresh and gay;
 The chearfull sun dispersed each rising gloom,
 And ev'ry flower sent forth a Rich perfume.
 But now she's gone, behold all Nature mourn!
 With floods of grief the River fills its urn; 30
 Not softly murm'ring, as of late it crept,
 Lulling ye maid while on its Banks she slept;⁴⁸
~~But in hoarse torrents roaring o'er the Shoar~~
 [p. 27] Or as it roll'd its christall tide along,
 Its bubbling stop'd, hush'd by her charming song;
 But in hoarse torrents roaring o'er the Shoar, 35
 Laments that Delia it can hear no more.
 For her the sun denies his wonted light,
 And in a cloudy vail withdraws from <hides from the> sight;
 The gloomy skys express their grief in showers,
 And bent with tears appear the drooping flowers; 40
 The birds sit silent on the drip[p]ing trees,
 Or mourn her absence to ye hollow breeze;
 The flocks and Herds stand drooping all around,
 And not a Lamb frisks o'er the rising ground;
 The gay enamel'd fields are drench'd in rain, 45
 Since they can near [*recte* ne'er] receive her feet again.
 Where e'er I turn me round methinks I see
 Each object kindly sympathize with me.
 Lately in yo<u>n green mead the christal brook
 Reflected the tall ash⁴⁹ and croaking Rook, 50
 The trembling Osiers, Reeds, and verdant Grass,
 Seem'd lovely, pendant in the watry Glass:
 But now the sighing reeds, the dro[o]ping trees,
 The muddy wat<t>er Ruffled by the breeze,
 And Rooks that heavy through the branches fly, 55
 In melancholy prospect meet my Eye.
 [p. 28] Yet these to mourn her absence soon may cease,
 And nature reassume its chearful face,
 But I oppress'd with gloomy care must mourn,
 And like the widdow'd turtle live forlorn. 60

⁴⁸ <in the wood over ye River at R——y.> The place is probably Ruskey (LL).

⁴⁹ <ye Ash grove at A——y.> Agivey (LL).

Nature again may smile, the fields look gay,
 The birds may sing, and little Lambkins play,
 But I with ceaseless sighs must still deplore,
 That Delia to these plains must come no more.
 Nor in the bright'ning Lan[d]schape give relief 65
 When every object must renew my grief.
 Her beauty in the blooming flow'rs I find,
 And in the female dove her gentle mind,
 In yon gay Lamb her innocence appears,
 And in the Thrush her voice salutes my ears; 70
 Pure limpid streams that shew their sands below
 Her artless undisguised behaviour shew;
 Her breath is wafted from ye new mown hay,
 And Delias smiles are in the morning ray.
 Relentless fate! must I near [*recte* ne'er] her [*recte* hear] again 75
 Those graces, once the glory of the plain!

No more with her through flow'ry fields I'll rove,
 No more with her I'll tread ye sacred grove,
 Where yon old ruin'd temples lonely shade⁵⁰
 A pleasing Horror to the mind convey'd! 80
 Nor with her friend,⁵¹ the Nymph of yonder Hill,
 [p. 29] Whose wood-crown'd brow o'erlooks ye gurgling rill,
 Together we'll partake the social treat⁵²
 Beneath green boughs, upon the mossy seat.

No more for her I'll touch the trembling strings,⁵³ 85
 No more for her ye captive Goldfinch sings.
 Ah luckless Shepherd what avails thy art,
 These to detain but let the fair depart?
 Cheerfull and gay, with Delia by my side
 Oft have I angled in the christal tide,⁵⁴ 90
 And oft for her, with the delusive fly
 And slender line, deceiv'd the scaley fry;
 But sure my skills departed with the fair,
 The wily fish elude <will shun> the ill form'd snare.

⁵⁰ <ye old chappel near A——-y.> Agivey (LL).

⁵¹ <the author.>

⁵² <drinking tea in (*recte* on) the bank at R———>, i.e. Ruskey (LL).

⁵³ <he played on the violin and was also famous for catching & net[t]ing Birds.>

⁵⁴ <this is also litterally true[;] she did walk with him when fishing.>

I'll break my rod, my birds at large shall fly, 95
My violin untuned shall useless lye,
I'll hang my dog, and all my sports give o'er
For Delias gone and these can charm no more.

Thus mourned the Shepherd till the close of day,
And Philomel had join'd his midnight lay; 100
But lo! harsh Isabella⁵⁵ comes to chide,
No more he durst complain, but homeward hied.

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⁵⁵ <a maiden aunt of his who hated Miss P.>

[p. 30]

An Elegy, on the death of Miss Mary Ann Knox;
who was shot in the Coach with her father and mother
Novbr 10th 1761, by John McNaughton Esqr,
who was afterwards handged for it.⁵⁶

*Like Blossom'd Trees o'erturn'd by vernal storm
Lonely in Death ye beauteous ruin lay.*⁵⁷

Young

Come mourning Muse, oh deign Celestial maid
To lend an<d> humble votery thy aid!
Come, from each scene where on Ideal woe
The graces of thy art thou dost bestow;
From theatre, where fancy'd Beauties mo[u]rn
Fictitious Heros, with distress are torn;
Let all the legends of romances lye,
And throw imaginations fables by;
A mournfull truth demands thy presence here <thy pitying tear>,
O'er murder'd innocence to drop a tear.⁵⁸ 10
No fable'd scene, no fancy'd tale of grief,
And yet so direfull it exceeds belief.
What groan was that! What Horrors meet my Eyes!
See where the slaughter'd Mariana lies!
See where ye wounded father⁵⁹ o'er her mourns!
See where the mother weeps and faints by turns!
Behold that lovely Bosom how it bleeds!
That Bosom ever prone to virtuous deeds.
How pallid now, and ghastly to the sight,
That form so late with glowing Beauty bright! 20
Oh wretched parents, fated to behold
Your darling hope all lifeless pale and cold!

⁵⁶ For the background to this poem, see *DIB* entry for John MacNaghten (1722–61).

⁵⁷ Edward Young, *The Complaint or Night Thoughts* (London, 1742 [Dublin, 1766]), Night III, lines 101–2.

⁵⁸ An amended line <Youth, beauty Innocence are butcher'd here> is inserted in the manuscript, but neither version is erased.

⁵⁹ <at this time it was reported yt Mr Knox was slightly and McNaughton mortally, wounded.> The poem was obviously started soon after the event it describes and before 15 December when John MacNaghten was famously 'half-hanged' outside Lifford Gaol.

Long did this beauteous flower your love engage,
 [p. 31] Your fondness still augmenting with its age;
 As days encreased its beauty daily grew,
 Some no [*recte* new] form'd grace presented to the view,
 And soft expanding, like the opening Rose,
 Did every beauty, every sweet disclose
 That charms the Eye, or can engage the sence,
 And joy and gladness round its sphere dispence. 30
 In vain was all your tender care employ'd!
 The lovely gem but blooms ~~<person doom'd>~~ to be destroyed.
 Full blown, mature, and ripening into fruit,
 Griefs canker worm first fast'ned on the root;
 Stern murder next his horrid arms prepared,
 And snatched what sorrows gentler hand had spared.
 Not Natures gentle stroke you have to mourn,
 By hands of savage violence it's torn.
 Natures soft stroke bids softer sorrows flow,
 But cruelty like this embitters woe. 40
 Sure Death, before, ne'er in such horror dress'd,
 To meet so soft a foe[,] so sweet a breast!
 Virtue and sence, and piety, combin'd
 With pleasing youth, and blooming beauty, join'd
 In bright assemblage, gave the Idea fair
 Of what, unfallen, the first of mankind were;
 A second Eden then confess'd Heavens aid,
 To shew how all things at the first were made:
 There, in untainted innocence, the fair
 Felt happiness unmix'd with pain or care; 50
 Her wishes allways follow'd reasons guide,
 [p. 32] And scarce a wish had bounteous Heaven denied;
 Till guilefull man a second Serpent prov'd;
 He lov'd the maid, for all who saw her lov'd;
 With Hell-taught arts and blandishments he came,
 And her young bosom soon return'd his flame:
 The vow[,] the dark engagement[,] next he sought,
 And in his Net the unwary fair was caught.
 This one false step she made, and this destroy'd
 The happiness her guiltless State enjoy'd; 60

Grief and repentance follow'd the rash deed,
 Dangers and fears, a direfull train, succeed,
 Attend her steps, and ever near her wait,
 Till from the villains hand at last she meets her fate.
 Is Mariana gone! Oh can it be?
 Mysterious Heaven! and was it thy decree,
 That so much worth a sacrifice should fall
 To fell revenge, and fondness turned to gall?
 Monster accurst! incarnate fiend! who cou'd
 Embrue his hands in slaughter'd beautys blood: 70
 The beauty once twas all his pride to love,
 The worth his own black bosom must approve.
 But does she meet the dreadfull fate alone,
 And does not too, th'infernal monster groan?
 He does, and hell rejoices at the sound,
 And bids her balefull powers enclose him round.
 'Tis hard to wish, so black so vile his crime,
 That heaven wou'd let repentance come in time.
 Mild charity herself, scarce forms a prayer,
 [p. 33] To save him from the hand of dire despair; 80
 And hard[l]y weeps, to think his hell begun
 Must through Eternitys duration run.
 Not to the victim of his rage we view;
 Her happy soul our kindest thoughts pursue:
 A band of Angels waft her to the Shoare
 Where crimes and death, and sorrow, come no more:
 With joy we see her gain the happy plain
 Where light, and life, and joy, forever reign.
 Tis this absolves heavens justice, and the grief
 Of sorrowing friends affords a sweet relief. 90

[p. 33]

A Fable. occasion'd by hearing that some people
pretended to ye vapours in order to pass
for wits and geniuses.

*It draws up vapours which obscure its rays:
But even those clouds at last adorn its way
Reflect new glories & augment ye day.*⁶⁰

Pope

All affectation we despise,
Nor can it long deceive our Eyes;
But of all kinds that mark a fool,
None sure deserves more ridicule,
Than from the spleen, to make pretence
To wit, to learning, or to sence.
Because sometimes the vapours follow
The genuine of[f]spring of Apollo.

[p. 34]

Permitted by the set[t]ing sun,
The Moon one night her race begun; 10
And mounted on her Brothers throne,
She rules the Hemisphere alone.
Then swelling with her new got honour,
Took state and dignity upon her:
Resolv'd within her mind streight way,
To imitate the King of day.
She sees that on th'Etherial plain,
He musters oft a humid train
Of vapours, that condens'd to clouds,
About his court attend in crowds; 20
Obsequiously at[t]endant wait <Obsequious at his bidding wait>
And <greatly> agrandize his power & State.
Behind them too he often hides,
And in majestick gloom he rides,
To shew his power by giving light,
While he withdraws quite out of sight.
Could I but these obtain, thought she,
I'd be adored as much as he.

⁶⁰ Alexander Pope, *An essay on criticism*, lines 471–3. 'It' is the rising sun.

Then call'd ye vapours from their bed,
And bid them Hover round her head. 30

Now troops of heavy misty clouds,
Her palid form compleatly shrouds:
Too weak and faint to peirce them through,
Her light is lost in every view:

[p. 35] No single ray the gloom pervades;
She leaves the world quite sunk in shades;
Nor can ye quickest eyesight trace
The smallest part of all her face.
Yet still with her weak fancy fired,
Thinks then she's sure to be admir'd: 40
<assures herself she's then admir'd:>⁶¹
And inly pleased with her own light,
Pursues her journey through the night;
Till Phebus rising in his car,
Dispels the vapours from afar;
Just time enough for her disgrace,
To shew her pale dejected face,
That shined at best with borrow'd rays,
Now lost in his superiour blaze.

⁶¹ An alternative to line 40, though neither version is erased.

[p. 35]

Some lines written extempore in a letter to a friend,
the morning after a violent Storm, which had produced
the effects here described.

The fields are all strewd with the golden grain,
And Ceres crowns the barren thistly plain:
Wanton the hinds, with wreaths of twisted corn,
The rugged brows of Briar, Furze and thorn.
Old leafless trees her lavish bounty share,
And wonder at th' unusual fruit they bear:

[p. 36] While feilds that own these gifts in ruins lye,
Exposed and naked to the angry sky;
And mourning seem, amazed and grieved to see
Their ravish'd spoils adorn each stunted tree.

10

The trees that yesterday in beauty shone,
Now mourn in rags their verdant honours gone;
And roots of Oaks, the tallest in the wood,
Possess the places where their branches stood.

So greatness oft, the glory of today,
Tomorrows adverse winds shall sweep away.
Thus Wolsy blasted by a Royal frown,
From all his height of glory tumbled down;
And stranger still, smit by a Royal smile,
From fames high sumit fell inglorious Boyle.⁶²
When on that Icy rock⁶³ men carve their names,
Storms not more fatal are than Sols warm beams.

20

⁶² <Speaker of the House of Commons, & adored by the nation for his patriotism, till he accepted of a peerage & gave up its interests.> The first reference is to Cardinal Wolsey (1473–1530), the second to Henry Boyle (1684–1764), speaker of the Irish House of Commons who was created earl of Shannon in 1756: see *ODNB* for Wolsey and *DIB* for Boyle.

⁶³ <see popes temple of fame.>

[p. 36]

Paraphrase on ye 7th, 8th, 11th, 12th & 13th verses
of the 51st chapter of Isaiah.

Hearken to me all ye that love my law,
That follow righteousness with Pious awe:

[Pages 37–60 inclusive missing from manuscript]

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[p. 61]

[Continuation of a poem on friendship written
for a newly married couple]

.... Along the quiet vale of life,
Still led by reasons ray,
Far from ambitious frantick strife,
Or follys of the gay:

May all your future days be past [*recte* passed],
And each returning year,
Look back with pleasure on the last,
From crimes and sorrows clear.

One only care my friendship knows,
That from your union springs;
Friendship! yt in my heart still glows,
And dictates what it sings.

10

Then will it, from a faithfull friend,
Be freedom deem'd too much,
If I should for the kindest end,
Your greatest failing touch?

Too much, I fear, wrapt up in self
You'll quickly both become,⁶⁴
And in the sordid love of pelf⁶⁵
Of which you know the Doom:

20

But laying higher virtues by,
Compared to those from earth;
Oh let not this one putrid fly,
E'er poison so much worth!

⁶⁴ <how prophetick ye muse has been in this, & 7th & 8th Stanzas of ye palinodia yt follows, every acquaintance yt lives near them can testify.>

⁶⁵ i.e. money and material possessions.

[p. 62] From no one vice so many springs;
 And look the world around,
 Such universal hate none brings,
 Nor such contempt hath found.

If in disgrace ye fear to live,
 Or mourn when friends grow cold; 30
 If friends or fame, can pleasure give,
 Then dread the love of gold.

This balefull weed its influence sheds,
 On ev'ry plant thats near,
 And where it in full vigor spreads,
 No virtue can appear:

Then Oh be warn'd, ye worthy pair!
 Let no deceitfull shoot,
 Tho colour'd o'er like virtue fair,
 Spring from the hatefull root. 40

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