

Flagellum Pedantis
or,
The Whip-lash

Being a Panegyrical Discourse upon the Unnumbered
Excellences of my Good Lords the PROSODISTS

Together with Some Account of the Affront
of Late Offered to the Nation of Scholars
Assembled in Boylston Hall

Of all the causes that conspire to shake
A reader from his high resolve to take
Pleasure in Pope's unrivalled mastery,
The banefullest by far is: PROSODY,
That fell creation of pedantic brains,
Which blurs six lines for one that it explains,
Thus representing the divinest song:
Short long, short long, short long, short long, short long;
As if, to keep their numbers spruce and neat,
Bards, like poor dancers, needs must watch their feet.
But hear the truth; and hearing, feel my rage,
Ye who must chicken-foot it o'er the page,
Soiling with daubs and curlicues of scansion
The highest flights of metrical invention:
Not one true poet since the dawn of time
Was e'er ambitious to create an iamb.
Not poets, faith! but critical old fogies
Then named, and now luxuriate in, trochees.
Not one ill reader ever read the purer
For being shown where to put in caesura.
What sin of yours brought on, poetic nation,
So anapestiferous a visitation?
Useless to query the divine dispose!

Bards must submit to be led by the nose;
Exultant pedants clamp their chains on verse;
The state of learning goes from bad to worse;
Relief (like Wit) is nowhere to be found;
Flown hence is Sense, flown hence her minion Sound,
And Fate and Gloomy Night encompass us around.

Know then thy PROSODY: thou may'st dispense
With Nature, Passion, Wit and Eloquence.

Know then thy PROSODY: do not aspire
To get the jokes or warm thee at the fire
Of Pope's Poetic Passion: three straight p's
Outweigh ten such felicities as these.

And if Alliteration fail thy needs,
Thou may'st in equal lines discern unequal speeds.
Note the caesura, and thou may'st omit
Mention of all precedes or follows it.

These are the TRUTHS exhum'd fresh from the grave
Of Renaissance verse-manuals to save
Scholars and blockheads of the pedant sort
From the long inconvenience of thought.
They are, 'tis true, enfeebled quite with hoar,
But live in B-ll-tt's lecture one hour more.

Audax

FROM M. M.

To S.F. in re TOP SECRET DOCUMENT, code signature
AUDAX:

It is obvious, after careful examination of said document, why AUDAX wishes to keep it top secret. THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT BY AUDAX !!! It is obviously a hitherto undiscovered passage that Pope meant to include in Book IV of the Dunciad, but suppressed for unknown reasons. One may speculate that B-11-H was too dangerous a figure to attack publicly at that time - however I am more inclined to attach importance in this respect to the resonant & yet mysterious allusion to "chicken foot" in l. 12. As in the line "Let Sporus tremble -" so here ^{in this couplet} Pope suggests that he is ready to face his enemy head-on - "But hear the truth..." etc - yet must resort to a pseudonym for that enemy. This must be investigated further, of course - I intend to do so in at least one whole chapter w/voluminous appendix in my thesis. I assume AUDAX will release this passage, which he ^{the} probably found under the floorboards of Widener, to me for the sake of Scholarship and because ^{otherwise} I will reveal him/herself to the world as a plagiarizer - by - ~~accident~~ ^{by-intent} ~~intention~~ - it - not - ~~in~~ ~~from~~ Pope.

The passage has been tampered with, probably by AUDAX, sneaky floor-board type that he/she is, so as to look contemporary 20th century - note Eaton's Bond paper and the Brooklyn accent needed to make "purer" rhyme w/"zaesura" in ll. 19-20, - and of course the references to "Pope" himself in ll. 3+34 ^{that} really threw me off the track for awhile - to explain ~~them~~ ^{them} may require another whole appendix in my thesis on the twisted, floor-board reasoning & subtlety of AUDAX him/herself. My main chapter on this will be entitled of course WHO WAS CHICKEN FOOT? (see Twickenham edition 'Epistle to a Lady' + Appendix). My appendix #1 will be entitled WHO WAS

P.S. Rendezvous tomorrow (at 8:30?) fine + long anticipated. Rendezvous to follow that may be impossible for me. Nous voyons, as they say.

P.P.S. The rest of this page contains of course my real views + comments on code signature AUDAX, written as instructed in disappearing ink. — M.M.

anything so funny! whoops, suspect disappearing ink has also been tampered with. Henri soit qui mal y pense, as they say. Better eat this also, just in case.

To a Lady Who Had Supposed Him Capable of a False Attribution
Being a most wilful misunderstanding of a most
gracious compliment, together with some perfectly
unwarranted aspersions on the professional
character of the proposer

Not from this hand? A trumpery by Audax

Filched from some ancient scroll or musty codex?

Why, then, fair doubter, thinkest thou all wit

Passed from the world when Pope departed it?

Bridle thy tongue, lest it be intimated

Thy thesis in like wise was excavated

Up from beneath great Warren House's floorboard:

Who can say what lost treasures there are harboured,

What readings close, by Reuben B. confected,

Lie close there, for a generous thought rejected;

What discard wealth of Tillotson and Sherburn,

Gone with the wind, Judge Crater, and D. Durbin

(Or so 't was thought) might greet - perhaps has greeted! -

The ready pryer into corners fetid,

All destined to become the amorous spoil

Of one bent on a thesis without toil?

Keep thy aspersions, then, within some bounds,

Lest my insinuations make the rounds;

And know, before thou cut'st so broad a swath,

The CHICKEN RAMPANT stands athwart thy path!

Audacior



(his mark)