

Byron's Early Satires and the Influence of Churchill

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Between March and June 1811 as he travelled in Greece and Malta, Byron wrote a fragmentary imitation in heroic couplets of the first lines of Horace's *Satire* 1.4. The imitation was never completed, but survives in holograph fair copy on a single leaf bound up with the second corrected manuscript of *Hints from Horace*, which Byron was working on in May and June of the same year.¹ Reproduced in full, the poem runs to 18 lines:

Dryden and Buckingham in Charles's reign,
And Foote in George's – took men's names in vain.
All evil doers doomed to be described,
Were lashed along, however high they bribed,
And every Indian thief and English rogue,
Or other follower of the Vice in vogue,
Adulteress or duellist – felt the rowell,
No matter which, – two Pagets or one Powell! –
Whate'er was done – the Cat escaped the bag –
And Peers found small protection in Scan. Mag.! –
These and their followers laughed at great and small
Till desperate Churchill's Muse outthundered all,
Whose verse by turns half angry, half facete,
Moves or must run on most unpolished feet.
But all this roughness of his rhyming prose
We pardon (like a Poodle) for his nose,
Than which there never was Satiric snout
So sharp at smelling mortal foibles out. –²

Frederick Beaty is unusual in noting the interest of this poem as an early statement of Byron's concept of the English satiric tradition, and suggests in particular that it 'raises a tantalising question about Byron's relationship to Charles Churchill'.³ He identifies what is still an overlooked facet of Byron's identity as a satirist: just what role did Churchill play in the early years of Byron's development?⁴

Horace's *Satire* 1.4 is a polemical intervention into contemporary theoretical debates about the nature of satire and the social function of the satirist. It begins with a brief history of the satiric lineage from which Horace conceives his own poetry to derive. His idea of the tradition connects together Lucilius, the poet whom the Romans regarded as the inventor and generic exemplar of their verse satire, with the major poets of the Old Comedy (Aristophanes, Cratinus and Eupolis), on the basis that these were all men who were unafraid to speak out against vice and expose criminals publicly. As Niall Rudd has shown, the lineage of satiric truth-telling Horace constructs is a piece of rhetorical 'special pleading' that deliberately obscures other Hellenistic and Roman influences on Lucilius' satire, sketching out instead an illustrious tradition of satiric continuity that brings his own verse together with that of Lucilius and the

poets of the Old Comedy.⁵ The verse he is writing now, he says, is intended to be of the same generic kind as the poetry ‘Lucilius wrote in former days’, and hopes to measure up to Lucilius’ great wit and the ‘keen-scented nostrils’ that his satiric master has for sniffing out a potential satiric target.⁶ But his praise for Lucilius is by no means unconditional. Lucilius’ poetry is said to lack polish: he was ‘harsh in framing his verse’, wrote too much too quickly (‘in an hour [...] he would dictate two hundred lines while standing, as they say, on one foot’), and was not fond of going back and editing his work [ll. 8-11]. Later, in his *Satire* 1.10, Horace elaborates on his criticisms, explaining that Lucilius’ failings as a versifier have much to do with the limitations of the age he lived in and the unsophisticated audience he was writing for: had he been born in the present time, he would have endeavoured to polish his verse to a higher standard.⁷

From this account of Horace’s argument in *Satire* 1.4, it seems clear that in the ‘Imitation of Horace’ Byron follows his source text carefully and wittily. He substitutes, as Beaty points out, Dryden, Buckingham and Foote for Aristophanes, Cratinus and Eupolis; and in place of Lucilius, he has Churchill, who learned his craft from the laughing satirists of Charles and George’s reigns but whose ‘Muse’ eventually ‘outthundered all’ [l. 12].⁸ Like the Old Comedy poets and Lucilius in Horace’s satire, the four satirists Byron mentions are distinguished for their fearless exposure of ‘evil doers’ and ‘follower[s] of the Vice in vogue’ [ll. 3, 6]; but Churchill is singled out for the extraordinary acuteness of his ‘nose’ for human failings (‘there never was Satiric snout / So sharp at smelling mortal foibles out’ [ll. 17-18]) just as Lucilius is admired for his ‘nostrils’ in Horace’s poem. And, like Lucilius, Churchill is criticised for the ‘roughness’ of his verse, which might just as well be ‘rhyming prose’, and ‘Moves or must run on most unpolished feet’ [ll. 14-15].

Byron’s criticisms here contain a note of admiration as well as censure, because they allow Churchill to speak for himself even as he is being spoken for. His choice of the word ‘roughness’ recalls Churchill’s positive description of his own style as a versifier in *The Apology* (1763), where he claims that he would let his muse ‘Perish’ if she ever sought to ‘refine / Th’ gen’rous roughness of a nervous line’ [italics mine]. Likewise, the point about ‘rhyming prose’ touches on another self-reflexive moment in *The Apology*, where Churchill attacks contemporary critics for forcing poets to ‘murder’ sense and ‘transpose’ their syntax, ‘Lest Poetry approach too near to Prose’.⁹ In both these cases, judgements that look like outright attacks on Byron’s part actually work as opportunities for Churchill to defend himself as he would in his own poetry: the allusions have the effect of turning his shortcomings around to look at them from another perspective, so that they can be seen as virtues. In this way, Byron’s version of the Lucilius-Horace relationship not only confers on Churchill Horace’s praise of Lucilius, but also tempers Horace’s criticisms of Lucilius with sympathetic nods to Churchill’s unconventional way of thinking about his craft.

Byron was not alone in using Horace’s *Satire* 1.4 as a framework for measuring his poetry against the achievements and faults of an influential predecessor. There are notable instances during the preceding century of poets adapting both *Satires* 1.4 and 1.10 with a similar purpose in mind. Byron would have been familiar, for instance, with Pope’s appropriation of the Lucilius-Horace relationship in his *Fourth Satire of Dr. John Donne* (1733), in which the selection of an epigraph from Horace’s *Satire* 1.10 on the subject of Lucilius’ rough versification directs the reader to think about Pope’s qualified admiration for Donne’s poetry in parallel with Horace’s qualified admiration for Lucilius’ satire.¹⁰ By viewing Donne as ‘the Lucilius to his

Horace', Pope is able to foreground Donne's brilliant wit and political daring, whilst intimating that his unpolished versification and rhetorical obscurity would not pass muster in a politer age.¹¹ Other imitators, meanwhile, found that by focussing on Horace's criticisms of Lucilius rather than his praise, the trope could be turned to defamatory effect. Rochester's 'Allusion to Horace' (1680), for instance, is a trenchant imitation of *Satire* 1.10 that expands on Horace's attacks on Lucilius and ignores the compliments in order to produce a scathing attack on Dryden's plays.¹² Where Horace grants Lucilius a sharp wit, Rochester merely allows that Dryden has just enough wit to please the unrefined tastes of contemporary theatre audiences: 'But that his Plays embroyder'd up and down / With witt and learning justly pleas'd the Town, / In the same Paper I as freely own'.¹³ William Gifford, similarly, adopts the framework of *Satire* 1.10 in *The Maeviad* (1795) as a way of continuing the attack on the Della Cruscan school he had begun in *The Baviad* (1791). 'Yes, I did say that Crusca's 'true sublime', / Lacked taste, and sense, and every thing but rhyme', he admits at the beginning of the satire, and proceeds to substantiate these criticisms over the course of the poem instead of backtracking on any of them.¹⁴

Gifford's satire, like Rochester's, indicates that poets felt they could appropriate the Lucilius-Horace relationship in more than one way to frame their concepts of the English satiric tradition. Byron may not have drawn consciously on these instances for his Horatian imitation (he knew Pope and Gifford's poetry in particular very well, but as Beaty reminds us in the context of the composition of *Hints from Horace*, his access to texts would have been limited during his travels); but his imitation nonetheless forms part of a lively neoclassical tradition of delineating one's relationship to an influential poetic predecessor by means of the Lucilius-Horace model.¹⁵

Byron conceived of his literary project at this point as first and foremost satiric. Whilst on his travels in 1811 he wrote *Hints from Horace* and *The Curse of Minerva*, and made plans once back in London in November to bring the two satires together with a new fifth edition of *English Bards* in a 'monstrous vol. of Crown Octavo' whose contents would be entirely satiric.¹⁶ The plans for the volume were abandoned when the *English Bards* fifth edition was suppressed for its inflammatory content in 1812; but in the meantime Byron's satiric energies had found other channels in the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), which he had been working on during his travels alongside *Hints from Horace* and *The Curse of Minerva*. As Jerome McGann, Robert Gleckner and others have pointed out, *Childe Harold* was originally conceived as a kind of 'satiric travelogue' written from comically conflicting viewpoints, which only in later revisions shaded into the 'meditative gloominess for which it is famous'.¹⁷ In its early incarnations it incorporated passages of bold personal attack, some of which, such as the stanzas on Lord Elgin's plundering of the Parthenon (ii. 11-15), remain in the published version.¹⁸ In 1811, then, it seems quite natural that Byron, conceiving of his literary abilities and inclinations as primarily satiric, would have looked for a career satirist against whom he might seek to measure his accomplishments, a Lucilius to his Horace – and Churchill, who had published nothing but satires and continued to be thought of as an eminent satirist during the early decades of the nineteenth century, would have struck him as a viable model.¹⁹

The question remains, however, as to why Byron might have selected *Churchill* in particular as the satirist who could best take the place of his Lucilius? Pope and Gifford, ostensibly, would have presented themselves as much more obvious models for a young poet

with conservative literary inclinations. Byron's strong admiration for both is clear to see in his poetry and letters, early and late: towards the beginning of *English Bards*, for instance, he says that his poem aims merely to 'venture o'er / The path, which POPE and GIFFORD trod before', and even after he has conducted the bulk of his satiric attack he defers modestly to the better showing that Gifford would make, were he to attempt the same satiric subject. 'When some Bard in virtue strong, / GIFFORD perchance, shall raise the chastening song, / Then sleep my pen for ever!'²⁰ He admired Gifford as a critic as well as a poet, writing in a letter on the reception of *Childe Harold* I and II that to have Gifford's approbation of the poem would be 'more welcome than 'all Bokara's vaunted gold, than all the gems of Samarkand''. Gifford, he wrote, 'has ever been my Magnus Apollo'.²¹ Pope he regarded as the greatest versifier in the language, defending his reputation as both poet and moralist against those whom (Churchill included) he perceived to have depreciated his worth.²² As A.B. England, Bernard Beatty and others have shown, in the early heroic couplet satires and the later *ottava rima* poems (the latter in particular) he displays a fine understanding of the mechanisms of Pope's rhetorical structures, and their relationship to various kinds of moral and social order in the world.²³ In *English Bards* and *Hints from Horace*, indeed, Byron works so deeply within a set of foundational images, tropes and attitudes derived from Pope and Gifford that it can be difficult to isolate individual allusions from the broader intertextual dialogue.

The strength of his regard provides a simple reason for the choice of Churchill. Byron could not think of either Pope or Gifford as the Lucilius to his Horace because he admired them too much. In *Satires* 1.4 and 1.10, as we have seen, Horace's position is that Lucilius' wit and bravery qualify him to be thought of as a great generic 'inventor', but these virtues are not in themselves enough to make him a complete satirist. One of the reasons for choosing Lucilius as a master is that his experiments in satire have not taken the genre as far as it can go or managed to refine it to perfection. Whereas the realms of comedy, tragedy, epic or pastoral have all in their different ways been taken to a state of high refinement, Lucilius' work in satire leaves space for Horace as an aspiring poet to make his mark.²⁴ Churchill, for Byron, was an appropriate Lucilius figure because his satires, unlike Pope or Gifford's, could be improved upon. They were rough and 'unpolished', as he put it in his imitation of *Satire* 1.4, and as such they allowed him to give vent to his ambitions in a way that setting himself up as the successor to Pope or Gifford could not.²⁵ Moreover, careful scrutiny of how Churchill defended his poetic practice would have given Byron licence to think of him as something of a contemporary Lucilius: Churchill actively cultivated the 'rugged', natural verse style for which Lucilius had been both attacked and admired, making a point in *The Apology* of rejecting the 'Soft', 'Smooth', 'tuneful' versification recommended by critical orthodoxy, and declaring that he would never 'mangle vigour for the sake of sound' [ll. 340-9].²⁶

There were other positive reasons for choosing Churchill. In 'Churchill's Grave' (1816), the short Wordsworthian piece he wrote after visiting the graveyard of St Martin-le-Grand in Dover the evening before he left England for good, Byron shows that he felt strong imaginative connections to another writer who had been famous for the suddenness and brevity of his fame.²⁷ (Hobhouse recalled that during the visit Byron 'lay down on' the plot of Churchill's grave and 'gave the man a crown to fresh turf it'.²⁸) His high respect for Churchill's poetry – and the thorough knowledge he had of particular satires – are plain to see in a letter of 1812 to Lord Holland on the subject of the 'Drury Lane Address', in which he invokes Dryden

and Churchill in the same breath as authorities for the hyperbolic conceit of having the Thames go up in flames: 'I hope no unlucky wag will say I have set it on fire, though Dryden in his *Annus Mirabilis* & Churchill in his 'Times' did it *before me*'.²⁹ And in another letter to Holland on the subject of the 'Address', Byron shows his admiration for Churchill as a versifier, drawing on the example of Churchill's practice in *The Rosciad* (1761) to substantiate his own technical decisions:

'Friends of the Stage – for whom our voice we raise'

had better be –

'Friends of the stage – to whom both players & play
Must sue in turn for pardon or for praise'

Churchill has *Player* as a monosyllable frequently.³⁰

This is a small adjustment, but it indicates that Byron's comments on 'roughness' and 'unpolished feet' in the 'Imitation of Horace' masked a genuine appreciation of Churchill's resourcefulness and dexterity in verse.

In the early nineteenth century *The Rosciad* was still the most distinguished and widely read satire on actors and acting, so it is not surprising to find Byron consulting it when he wanted to produce his own poem on the stage.³¹ In the case of the neoclassical verse satires he wrote or revised for the projected 1811 collection, it is clear enough likewise to see why he might have looked to specific poems of Churchill's for images, tropes and rhetorical formulations. In particular, there are significant indications in *English Bards* and *The Curse of Minerva* of the depth and breadth of his reading in Churchill, and the influence that some of Churchill's preoccupations and prejudices had over his satiric imagination in its early development. Both satires show him approaching images and narrative conceits of Churchill's in the fashion suggested by the Lucilius-Horace relationship in his *Satire* 1.4 imitation: as bold and vigorous satiric observations, whose occasional imprecision or obscurity leave room for a degree of refinement.

As both Claude Fuess and Jerome McGann have suggested, Byron's retaliation against the critical reviewers in *English Bards* (for what he took to be Jeffrey's attack on *Hours of Idleness* in the *Edinburgh Review*) took many of its cues from Churchill's *Apology*, which provided him with a model of how to transform bitterness at a personal critical slight into a fully developed satire on critical judgement in the republic of letters.³² (The model would have seemed especially appropriate to Byron given that the particular target of Churchill's attack on the critics – for his negative appraisal of *The Rosciad* in the *Critical Review* – was another Scotsman, Smollett.³³) As Fuess notes, some of Byron's arguments and lines of attack in *English Bards* are versions of similar ones in *The Apology*: both poems accuse critics of resorting to lies and misstatements in order to achieve a 'sharper hit' [*EBSR*, l. 71]; both suggest that critics are a 'coward brood' who 'in darkness prowl' [*EBSR*, ll. 429-30] or 'lurk enshrouded in the veil of night' [*Apology*, l. 58], rather than revealing their names to their victims.³⁴ Both satires, moreover, make a sustained metaphorical comparison between the high-handed judgements of critics and the arbitrary rule of legislators in the political sphere. Jeffrey, Byron writes, is a

‘Self-constituted Judge of Poesy’, and his edicts are ‘starch decree[s]’ [ll. 62, 1059]; he and his fellow *Edinburgh* reviewers are like

young tyrants, by themselves misplaced,
Combined usurpers on the Throne of Taste;
To these when Authors bend in humble awe,
And hail their voice as Truth, their word as Law;
While these are Censors, ’twould be sin to spare;
While such are Critics, why should I forbear?
[ll. 83-88]

Byron’s anaphoric last couplet paints ‘Critics’ as ‘Censors’, despotic ‘tyrants’ who seek to suppress independent thought and writing from their ‘usurp[ed]’ seat on the ‘Throne of Taste’. The phrasing ‘Throne of Taste’ looks back to a vicious dismissal of modish antiquarians in Gifford’s *Baviad* (‘mope-eyed dolts [...] plac’d / By thoughtless fashion on the throne of taste’), but in the particular context of fulminating against critical reviewers it goes back further, to the central conceit that Churchill uses to structure his satiric attack in *The Apology*.³⁵

Critics, Churchill argues, hold ‘court’ as ‘scepter’d sages’, reigning in ‘lethargic majesty’ [ll. 37-9]:

HOW could these self-elected monarchs raise
So large an empire on so small a base?
In what retreat, inglorious and unknown,
Did Genius sleep when Dullness seiz’d the throne?
Whence, absolute now grown, and free from awe,
She to the subject world dispenses law.
[...]
The Stagyrite, who rules from Nature drew,
Opinions gave, but gave his reasons too.
Our great Dictators take a shorter way –
Who shall dispute what the Reviewers say?
Their word’s sufficient; and to ask a reason,
In such a state as their’s, is downright treason.
True judgement, now, with Them alone can dwell;
Like church of Rome they’re grown infallible.
[ll. 83-98]

The language here is more densely party-political than Byron’s: the distrust of monarchical government that underlies the passage, coupled with the particular comparison between ‘absolute’ lawgiving and the tyranny of the ‘church of Rome’, places it in a recognisable tradition of later eighteenth century bourgeois radical thought and anti-Catholic sentiment.³⁶ What Byron does when he takes on the metaphor is to strip away the ideological padding and draw out what is most successful and pointed about its underlying conceit. His idea of critics as ‘usurpers on the Throne of Taste’, for instance, tightens up Churchill’s verse by connecting together two separate images (the concept of ‘self-elected monarchs’, and the line about ‘Dullness’ having ‘seiz’d the throne’ of ‘Genius’) via the unifying idea of Gifford’s attack in *The*

Baviad. Likewise, where there is some uncertainty in Churchill's verse as to whether the word 'tyrant' refers purely to political legislators or to literary ones as well ('thy dauntless fortitude hath borne / The bigot's furious zeal, and tyrant's scorn' [ll. 75-6], he writes of Voltaire), in Byron's usage the word is aimed unambiguously at the critical profession, and fits neatly into the overarching 'Throne of Taste' conceit. The rhyme of 'awe' and 'law', moreover ('To these when Authors bend in humble awe, / And hail their voice as Truth, their word as law') imitates the pattern of Churchill's 'awe' / 'law' couplet, but turns its meaning around to look at the same unequal power relationship from a different direction: Byron depicts contemporary 'Authors' busily cultivating the 'humble awe' that Dullness and her 'self-elected monarchs' in Churchill's satire have triumphantly shaken off, and imagines poets acquiescing meekly to the 'Law' that Churchill has Dullness first 'dispense' to her 'subject world'. The repetition of rhyme words remakes Churchill's point in a more resounding way by drawing attention to the fact that little about the situation has changed.

Byron wrote *English Bards* with two further poems of Churchill's in mind: the posthumously published 'Dedication' to his *Sermons* (1765) and *The Prophecy of Famine* (1763). The 'Dedication', Churchill's bitter mock-panegyric address to William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, was important because it supplied Byron with a structural model for the conceit of lavishing mock-praise on a satiric enemy, in this case Jeffrey. As Peter Manning has observed, the 'flourish of the salutations' and 'ironic [...] solicitude' with which Byron opens his verse paragraphs on Jeffrey ('Health to immortal JEFFREY!'; 'Health to great JEFFREY! Heaven preserve his life' [ll. 438, 460]) directly echo Churchill's opening address to Warburton in the 'Dedication':

HEALTH to great GLOSTER – from a man unknown,
Who holds thy health as dearly as his own,
Accept this greeting –
[...]
Health to great GLOSTER – nor, thro' love of ease,
Which all Priests love, let this address displease.³⁷

Other satirists in the intervening years had picked up on the dramatic uses of this mock-panegyric address: Thomas Chatterton, for instance, repeatedly raises an ironic 'Health to the Minister' toast to Lord North in his Churchillian satire *The Whore of Babylon* (1770).³⁸ Byron's lines in particular, however, indicate careful reading of Churchill for the purposes of creating a specific satiric effect, and suggest that he was in the habit of using Churchill as a basis for revising his work. In January and February 1809 he excised the attack on Jeffrey he had originally drafted, a piece of violent and unfocused invective ('Jeffries the wretch whose pestilential breath, / Like the dread Simoom, wing'd the shaft of Death...'), replacing it with the subtler satiric technique of mock-panegyric he had found in Churchill.³⁹ As Manning argues, contemporary readers would have spotted the deliberate echo of Churchill's conceit, reading it as a preemptive hint about the irony of Byron's solicitude for Jeffrey and a signpost towards 'the satiric treatment of Jeffrey that would follow'.⁴⁰

Byron also drew on Churchill for the second part of his revised Jeffrey passage in *English Bards*, the mock-heroic narrative of Jeffrey's duel in Edinburgh with Thomas Moore.

Here, the visionary appearance of ‘Caledonia’s Goddess’ to ‘hover o’er / The field’ and save her favourite Jeffrey from ‘the wrath of MOORE’ [ll. 490-1] looks back to the closing section of Churchill’s *Prophecy of Famine*, in which the avenging Scottish goddess ‘FAMINE’ arrives to proclaim to her starving countrymen – two threadbare and dirty shepherds named Jockey and Sawney – that the darkest days of Scottish poverty and hunger are over.⁴¹ Both prophecies present a darkly ironic national myth of Scottish ascendancy at the expense of English gullibility and passivity.⁴² Jeffrey, Byron writes, will ‘O’er politics and poesy preside, / Boast of thy country, and Britannia’s guide’, as long as ‘Scottish taste’ is permitted to ‘decide on English wit’ [ll. 500-503]; Churchill’s forlorn Scottish shepherds, long condemned to languish ‘in this barren corner of the isle’ [l. 423], will be led by the Earl of Bute and his ministerial placemen to invade the land of their English oppressors.

There are similarities between the details of the two satiric arguments. Byron and Churchill both claim that the rise of the Scots has been made possible in large part by the weakness and susceptibility to corruption of the English. The power of the *Edinburgh Review*, Byron writes, is assented to by ‘Albion’s heedless sons’ and ‘grateful Britain’ [ll. 502, 520], whilst Churchill shows similarly that the gradual usurpation of English governance, law and commerce by Scotsmen under Bute has been facilitated by the efforts of ‘some pliant few’ among the natives: ‘Into the snare shall our kind neighbours fall / With open eyes, and fondly give us all’ [ll. 451, 497-8]. Churchill’s Famine claims Bute as her ‘Darling Son’, the chosen offspring who will save the fortunes of the Scottish race [l. 532]; Byron’s Caledonian goddess, likewise, elevates Jeffrey to ‘chieftain of the critic clan’ and adopts him as her own: ‘My son’, she cried, ‘ne’er thirst for gore again’ [ll. 507, 498]. The parallel between succession metaphors here – placing the arbitrary Stuart minister and the arbitrary critic-‘chieftain’ side by side – is important because it shows Byron drawing on Churchill’s xenophobia to lend the immediate sting of Jeffrey’s attack a broader historical significance it might not otherwise possess.⁴³ The intertextual argument of his satire frames the local provocation as part of an ongoing Scottish insurrection into English life and letters.

Byron returned to *The Prophecy of Famine* in the last of the three satires he intended for inclusion in the 1811 collection, *The Curse of Minerva*. *The Curse* – composed partially alongside *Hints from Horace* and the imitation of *Satire 1.4* during Byron’s stay in Athens, and partially on his return to London later the same year – has a single satiric plotline, dramatising the appearance of the goddess Minerva to the poem’s narrator as he sits amongst the ruins of the Parthenon. Minerva, symbolising by her reduced condition the ignominious state of contemporary Greece, mourns the despoiling of the temple at the hands of Lord Elgin and issues a curse on Elgin’s head. She then turns her attention to Britain, ‘lost Albion’, the nation that bore Elgin and whose larger political crimes have provided a pattern for Elgin’s own: ‘Hers were the deeds that taught her lawless son / To do what oft Britannia’s self had done’.⁴⁴ Before the concluding vision of British culpability is reached, however, there is a qualifying step in the argument. As Minerva makes her initial claim that all Britons are complicit in Elgin’s crime by virtue of their imperial arrogance (‘that blush of shame / Proclaims thee Briton, once a noble name’), the narrating persona interjects to protest that he is unhappy with the connection. A ‘true-born Briton’, he argues, ‘may the deed disclaim’, since Elgin’s actions come from a place somewhere north of the Tweed: ‘Frown not on England; England owns him not: / Athena! no; thy plunderer was a Scot’ [ll. 89-90, 126-8].

In the succeeding verses, the narrator develops the chauvinistic attack on Scotland and the Scottish that Byron had begun in his lines on Jeffrey in *English Bards*. 'And well I know', he argues,

within that bastard land
Hath Wisdom's goddess never held command:
A barren soil where Nature's germs confin'd
To stern sterility can stint the mind,
Whose thistle well betrays the niggard earth,
Emblem of all to whom the land gives birth;
Each genial influence nurtur'd to resist,
A land of meanness, sophistry and mist:
Each breeze from foggy mount and marshy plain
Dilutes with drivel every drizzly brain,
Till burst at length each watery head o'erflows,
Foul as their soil and frigid as their snows:
Then thousand schemes of petulance and pride
Dispatch her scheming children far and wide,
Some East, some West, some every where but North,
In quest of lawless gain they issue forth.

[ll. 131-46]

In its broad argument, this passage comes back to the satiric conceit at the heart of the Goddess of Famine's prophecy in Churchill's poem: 'scheming' Scotsmen refuse to remain in their own inferior country but instead 'issue forth' greedily to find their promised land elsewhere. On a local level, though, it also owes a good deal to the texture of Churchill's language in his sections of anti-pastoral description, where he sketches a miserable rural backdrop for the meeting of Famine with her two ragged Scottish shepherds. When Byron imagines Scotland's 'barren soil', he is thinking of a particular cluster of words and images in Churchill: the 'bleak and barren mountain's head' on which Jockey and Sawney dwell; the 'barren rocks' on which they try to keep their sheep; their effective imprisonment in 'this barren corner of the isle'; the 'barren desert' they hope to exchange for the 'rich plains' of England [ll. 276, 353, 423, 449].⁴⁵ Byron's 'niggard earth', likewise, has its echo in Churchill's phrase 'niggard nature' [l. 277]; his 'thistle', 'emblem' of the land's unproductivity and hostility, looks back to Churchill's 'thistles, arm'd against th'invader's head' [l. 316] which stand guard at the entrance to the boys' miserable cave; and the relatively unusual word 'drizzly', which Byron uses to comic metaphorical effect to suggest that there is something about the Scottish weather that makes Scotsmen think and behave the way they do, draws on Churchill's descriptive phrase 'drizly eve' [l. 310] and hams up its satiric potential.

The interplay between the two anti-Scottish passages, though, comes down to more than just verbal echoes. Byron also adapts for his own purposes the substance of the Goddess of Famine's prophecy about the future of Britain. In Churchill's poem, Famine presents a rich vision of Scottish progress at the expense of the subjugated English:

For us, the earth shall bring forth her increase;

For us, the flocks shall wear a golden fleece;
 [...]
 For our advantage shall their harvests grow,
 And *Scotsmen* reap, what they disdain'd to sow;
 For us, the sun shall climb the eastern hill;
 For us, the rain shall fall, the dew distil;
 When to our wishes NATURE cannot rise,
 ART shall be task'd to grant us fresh supplies.
 His brawny arm shall drudging LABOUR strain,
 And for our pleasure suffer daily pain;
 TRADE shall for us exert her utmost pow'rs,
 Her's, all the toil; and all the profit, our's;
 For us, the Oak shall from his native steep
 Descend, and fearless travel thro' the deep,
 The sail of COMMERCE for our use unfurl'd,
 Shall waft the treasures of each distant world;
 [ll. 455-72]

Churchill's description of golden economic and political prospects here would have been familiar to eighteenth century readers as a nod to the genre of nationalist panegyric.⁴⁶ The Goddess' vision of the Scots' triumphant insurrection into the blessed land of England is a satirical twist on a number of poems that celebrate Britain's happy position as a nation of natural bounty, commercial prosperity and political freedom. There are sustained echoes, for instance, of Father Thames' Virgilian prophecy in the concluding section of Pope's *Windsor-Forest* (1713), which among other things supplies Churchill with the conceit of the 'Oak' leaving its forest to 'travel thro' the deep' as a trading ship; but the passage also derives ideas and images from patriotic Whig panegyrics, such as James Thomson's *Liberty* (1735-6), Richard Glover's *London* (1739) and John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757).⁴⁷ In each of these poems, Britain's particular felicity as the home of flourishing arts and industries is shown to be a direct consequence of the freedom that its citizens enjoy as political actors. Churchill's mock-panegyric works because it plays knowingly on this traditional emphasis on liberty: in *Famine's* progress vision, the Scots will be free, but only because the English are not. Scottish liberties must be bought by subjecting Englishmen to a second age of Stuart tyranny under Bute.

Byron's prophetic vision of Britain's future is one of regression and enervation rather than progress. Minerva sees the nation's historical dominance in military, economic and political spheres waning, and its vaunted power all but 'vanish'd': 'Your strength a name, your bloated wealth a dream' [ll. 210, 260-2]. Instead of the flourishing vision of commerce and arts offered by *Famine*, Minerva supplies one of decline in the economic and political spheres:

The idle merchant on the useless quay,
 Droops o'er the bales no bark may bear away;
 Or back returning sees rejected stores
 Rot piecemeal on his own encumber'd shores:
 The starv'd mechanic breaks his rusting loom,
 And desperate mans him 'gainst the common doom.
 Then in the Senate of your sinking state,

Show me the man whose counsels may have weight.
[ll. 267-74]

For Famine's picture of thriving international trade, Minerva has an 'idle merchant' on a 'useless quay'; for the 'treasures of each distant world' that Famine's 'sail of COMMERCE' brings back for eager Scottish consumers, Minerva has a pile of 'rejected stores' that 'Rot piecemeal' on Britain's 'encumber'd shores'. Where Famine revels in the idea of Scottish wants driving the English labour market ('His brawny arm shall drudging LABOUR strain, / And for our pleasure suffer daily pain'), Minerva shows artisan labourers made desperate by lack of demand, the 'starv'd mechanic' breaking his own 'rusting loom'. And whilst Famine gleefully imagines Scotsmen usurping England's 'limbs of counsel' and corrupting her 'Statesmen' [ll. 474-5], Minerva has no faith in the survival of any stabilizing political forms in Britain's 'sinking state': 'Vain is each voice where tones could once command, / E'en factions cease to charm a factious land' [ll. 275-6].

Read in one way, Minerva's prophecy of decline is the equal and opposite number of Famine's vision of progress, because it confirms the disastrous effects on England and the English of the very same events that would look like triumphs from a Scottish perspective. According to this reading, Byron's satire is doing little more than repeating the point that Churchill's makes, but on the basis of a fresh provocation and with a new cast of historical actors: Elgin, like Jeffrey, is just another Bute, a 'scheming' Scotsman 'in quest of lawless gain' in a foreign land [ll. 144-6]. But Byron's poem, I want to suggest, is braver and more interesting than this reading allows for, because it has a degree of self-reflexivity and self-scrutiny that Churchill's satire is entirely without. Despite his sustained intertextual dialogue with *The Prophecy of Famine*, Byron is selective about how much of Churchill's politics he takes on when he adopts his images and tropes. Putting the Churchill-like dismissal of Elgin's 'bastard land' into the mouth of his narrative persona allows him to distance himself from its excesses by making it look peevish and jingoistic; likewise, by having Minerva insist on Britain's complicity in its own ruin, Byron is able to draw on Churchill's vision of Scottish progress and English decline without subscribing to the convenient scapegoat narrative it offers. The play of multiple dramatic voices here, as Gleckner has suggested, makes *The Curse* into the sort of self-scrutinising satire that is capable of holding 'several modes of truth' in suspension at the same time, a complex and adequate version of satiric truth-telling that has more in common with the questioning dramatic texture of *Childe Harold* than with the polemical single-mindedness of *English Bards*.⁴⁸ Its engagements with Churchill are sceptical rather than straightforwardly imitative, keeping Churchill's satiric energies in play as *one* way of looking at things, but not the only one.

In *Beppo* (1817), Byron returned to Churchill once more. About halfway through his story, the narrator digresses briefly from admiring Italy and Italian women to recall the things he misses about his homeland:

'England! with all thy faults I love thee still,'
I said at Calais, and have not forgot it;⁴⁹

‘England! with all thy faults I love thee still,’ is eminently quotable. The sentiment and the phrasing come, as Byron knew, from both Cowper’s *Task* (1785) and, before Cowper, Churchill in *The Farewell* (1764), one of the last satires he published in his lifetime (‘Be England what She will, / With all her faults She is my Country still’).⁵⁰ Byron, though, is not quoting either Churchill or Cowper, but himself. As a standalone line, ‘England! with all thy faults I love thee still,’ is a clearly signposted allusion. Read in the context of the following line, though, its meaning changes: the quotation marks are revealed to be not indications of an intertextual dialogue but markers of the poet’s own speech, as he absorbs Churchill and Cowper’s voices into the anecdotal substance of what he ‘said at Calais’. In *Beppo*, if Churchill’s verse is present at all, it is as an unacknowledged element of Byron’s larger cultural utterance, or part of the sum of what it means to be Byron. He is no longer the Lucilian figure whom Byron drew on consciously and attentively in the earlier neoclassical satires, appropriating images and structural conceits from individual poems when the subject matter of a satire seemed to demand it, finding much to admire in Churchill’s vigour and wit but revelling too in the space for refinement and precision that Churchill’s looser craftsmanship gave him. Horace sought in Lucilius a generic forefather he could learn from and leave behind, and for Byron Churchill seems to have meant something very similar.

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NOTES

¹ See Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1980-93), i. 454. This edition is hereafter cited as *CPW*.

² Byron, ‘Imitation of Horace. Satire 4’, in *CPW*, i. 337. Further references are to line number and incorporated in the text.

³ Frederick L. Beaty, *Byron the Satirist* (DeKalb, IL, 1985), p. 11.

⁴ Work on Byron’s early satires has tended to concentrate on their status as neoclassical imitations. See, e.g., Mary Clearman, ‘A Blueprint for *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: The First Satire of Juvenal’, *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 19 (1970), 87-99; Frederick L. Beaty, ‘Byron’s Imitations of Juvenal and Persius’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 15 (1976), 333-355; Jane Stabler, ‘The Genesis of Byron’s ‘Hints from Horace’’, *Translation and Literature*, 3 (1994), 47-65.

⁵ Niall Rudd, *The Satires of Horace* (Cambridge, 1966; repr. 1994), p. 89.

⁶ Horace, *Satire 1.4*, ll. 57, 8 in *Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA, 1926; rev. ed. 1929), pp. 52-53, 48-49. Further references are to line number and incorporated in the text.

⁷ Horace, *Satire 1.10*, ll. 64-71, in *ibid.*, pp. 120-1.

⁸ Beaty, *Byron the Satirist*, pp. 11-12.

⁹ Charles Churchill, *The Apology. Addressed to the Critical Reviewers*, ll. 352-55, 358-9, in *The Poetical Works of Charles Churchill*, ed. Douglas Grant (Oxford, 1956), pp. 46-7. This edition is hereafter cited as *PW*. Further references to *The Apology* are to line number and incorporated in the text.

¹⁰ See Harold Erskine-Hill, ‘Courtiers out of Horace: Donne’s *Satyre IV*; and Pope’s *Fourth Satire of Dr John Donne of St. Paul’s Versified*’, in A.J. Smith (ed.), *John Donne: Essays in Celebration* (1972), pp. 273-307: 295; the same suggestion is made less explicitly by Ian Jack, ‘Pope and ‘The Weighty Bullion of Dr Donne’s Satires’’, *PMLA*, 66 (1951), 1009-22.

¹¹ Erskine-Hill, ‘Courtiers out of Horace’, p. 296.

¹² See Howard D. Weinbrot, ‘The ‘Allusion to Horace’: Rochester’s Imitative Mode’, *Studies in Philology*, 69 (1972), 348-68.

- ¹³ John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, 'An Allusion to Horace 10 Sat: 1st Book. Nempe in composito dixi etc.', ll. 5-7, in *The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. Harold Love (Oxford, 1999), p. 71.
- ¹⁴ William Gifford, *The Maeviad. By the Author of The Baviad* (1795), ll. 1-2, p. 17.
- ¹⁵ Beaty, *Byron the Satirist*, p. 52.
- ¹⁶ Byron, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols. (1973-82), ii. 131. This edition is hereafter cited as *BLJ*.
- ¹⁷ Jerome J. McGann, *Don Juan In Context* (Chicago, 1976), p. 7. See also Robert Gleckner, 'From Selfish Spleen to Equanimity: Byron's Satires', *Studies in Romanticism*, 18 (1979), 173-205: 181-3; Beaty, *Byron the Satirist*, pp. 44-50.
- ¹⁸ See Gleckner, 'From Selfish Spleen to Equanimity', pp. 182-3; Beaty, *Byron the Satirist*, p. 49.
- ¹⁹ On Churchill's sustained reputation and readership during the early nineteenth century, see David J. Twombly, 'The Revenant Charles Churchill: A Haunting of Literary History', *Studies in Philology*, 102 (2005), 83-109: 88-90; Jane Stabler, *Byron, Poetics and History* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 48-9.
- ²⁰ Byron, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. A Satire*, ll. 93-4, 701-3, in *CPW*, i. 232, 251. Further references are to line number and incorporated in the text.
- ²¹ *BLJ*, ii. 91. On Gifford's importance for Byron as a satiric model, see Beaty, *Byron the Satirist*, pp. 9-10; Claude M. Fuess, *Lord Byron as a Satirist in Verse* (New York, 1912; repr. 1973), pp. 50-4, 71-3; P.M. Yarker, 'Byron and the Satiric Temper', in John D. Jump (ed.), *Byron: A Symposium* (1975), pp. 78-81.
- ²² On Churchill's role in the depreciation of Pope, see Byron, 'Some Observations upon an Article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*', in *Lord Byron: The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford, 1991), pp. 88-119: 104.
- ²³ A.B. England, *Byron's Don Juan and Eighteenth-Century Literature: A Study of Some Rhetorical Continuities and Discontinuities* (Lewisburg, NJ, 1975), pp. 21ff.; Bernard Beatty, 'Continuities and Discontinuities of Language and Voice in Dryden, Pope, and Byron', in Andrew Rutherford (ed.), *Byron: Augustan and Romantic* (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 117-35; Beaty, *Byron the Satirist*, p. 11.
- ²⁴ Horace, *Satire 1.10*, ll. 40-8, in *Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica*, trans. Fairclough, pp. 118-19.
- ²⁵ Beaty suggests that one reason Byron might have selected Juvenal's *Satire 1* as the loose basis for *English Bards* was that Gifford had already taken Persius' *Satire 1* for his *Baviad* and Horace's *Satire 1.10* for *The Maeviad*. See Beaty, *Byron the Satirist*, p. 36.
- ²⁶ On Lucilius' reputation amongst his early supporters and detractors, see Kirk Freudenburg, *The Walking Muse: Horace on the Theory of Satire* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), pp. 150-3.
- ²⁷ See Byron, 'Churchill's Grave, A Fact Literally Rendered', in *CPW*, iv. 1. Stabler, *Byron, Poetics and History*, p. 47, speculates on what the poem suggests about Byron's perception of similarities between Churchill's relationship with his audience and his own.
- ²⁸ Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Biography*, 3 vols. (New York, 1957), ii. 608. See also Andrew Bennett, *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 179-180.
- ²⁹ *BLJ*, ii. 207. See Stabler, *Byron, Poetics and History*, p. 49.
- ³⁰ *BLJ*, ii. 206. Churchill has 'Play'r' as a monosyllable a total of 8 times in *The Rosciad*.
- ³¹ Passages of *The Rosciad* are also present in the section on contemporary theatre in *Hints from Horace: Churchill's* lines, for instance, about actors who never vary their style of presentation invokes the example of the actor and playwright William Havard, whom Byron also mentions in the *Hints* as being so monotonously dull that on the one occasion he produced a better play, no one believed it was his. See Churchill, *The Rosciad*, ll. 315-18, in *PW*, p. 12; Byron, *Hints from Horace*, ll. 563-6 and l. 563n., in *CPW*, i. 309-10, 438.
- ³² Fuess, *Lord Byron as a Satirist In Verse*, p. 56; *CPW*, i. 398.
- ³³ On the attribution of the *Critical Review* piece to Smollett, see Valerie Wainwright, 'Tobias Smollett and the *Critical's* Reviews of Charles Churchill's Poems, *The Rosciad* and *The Ghost*', *Notes and Queries*, 60 (2013), 89-91.
- ³⁴ Fuess, *Lord Byron as a Satirist In Verse*, p. 57.
- ³⁵ Gifford, *The Baviad, A Paraphrastic Imitation of the First Satire of Persius* (1791), ll. 196-7, p. 31.
- ³⁶ On the development of these ideas in the age of Wilkes, see Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1990), pp. 169-99; on Churchill's position in particular, see Lance Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club: Literature and Popular Culture, 1749-1764* (Oxford, 1986), especially pp. 210-46.
- ³⁷ Churchill, 'Dedication' to the *Sermons*, ll. 1-12, in *PW*, p. 431. See Peter J. Manning, 'Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: The Art of Allusion', *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, 21 (1970), 7-11: 7-8. The *Eclectic* reviewer's discussion of *English Bards* makes the same observation, noting that 'the opening hemistich [...] seems to have been copied from the celebrated "Epistle to Warburton", though the acknowledgement of the imitation is accidentally omitted'. See *The Eclectic Review*, no. 5 (May 1809), p. 482.

³⁸ Thomas Chatterton, *The Whore of Babylon*, ll. 369, 427, 445, in *The Complete Works of Thomas Chatterton: A Bicentenary Edition*, ed. Donald S. Taylor in association with Benjamin B. Hoover, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1971), i. 462, 464.

³⁹ For the excised lines on Jeffrey, see *CPW*, ii. 242-3, ll. 438-559n. On the revision of this passage in *English Bards*, see *ibid.*, ii. 396-7.

⁴⁰ Manning, 'Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*', p. 8.

⁴¹ Churchill, *The Prophecy of Famine. A Scots Pastoral*, l. 407, in *PW*, p. 206. Further references are to line number and incorporated in the text.

⁴² On the xenophobic politics of this national myth and its connections to Churchill and Wilkes' propaganda in the *North Briton*, see Adam Rounce, 'Stuarts without End': Wilkes, Churchill, and Anti-Scottishness', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 29 (2005), 20-43: 27-33.

⁴³ See Manning, 'Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*', p. 10.

⁴⁴ Byron, *The Curse of Minerva*, ll. 220, 211-12, in *CPW*, i. 327. Further references are to line number and incorporated in the text.

⁴⁵ Fuess notes a broad parallel between the 'barrenness and dampness' of both visions of the Scottish landscape. See *Lord Byron as a Satirist*, p. 89.

⁴⁶ See C.A. Moore, 'Whig Panegyric Verse, 1700-1760', *PMLA*, 41 (1926), 362-401.

⁴⁷ 'Thy Trees, fair *Windsor*! now shall leave their Woods, / And half thy Forests rush into my Floods'. See Alexander Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, ll. 383-4, in *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt *et al.*, 11 vols. in 12 (1939-69), i. 189; James Thomson, *Liberty: A Poem*, v. 2-85, in *Liberty, The Castle of Indolence, and Other Poems*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford, 1986), pp. 127-9; Richard Glover, *London: or, The Progress of Commerce* (1739), ll. 378-435, pp. 20-3; John Dyer, *The Fleece: A Poem in Four Books*, ed. John Goodridge and Juan Christian Pellicer (Cheltenham, 2007), especially iii. 602-32, pp. 71-2.

⁴⁸ Gleckner, 'From Selfish Spleen to Equanimity', pp. 184-6.

⁴⁹ Byron, *Beppo*, ll. 369-70, in *CPW*, iv. 144.

⁵⁰ Churchill, *The Farewell*, ll. 27-8, in *PW*, p. 375. Cowper's lines are: 'England, with all thy faults, I love thee still / My country!' See *The Task*, ii. 206-7, in *The Poems of William Cowper*, ed. John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1980-95), ii. 144.