[*double rule*]

# ASMALL POET

I2S one, that would fain make himſelf that,
which *Nature* never meant him ; like a *Fa-*
*natic*, that inſpires himſelf with his own
Whimſies. He ſets up Haberdaſher of ſmall
Poetry, with a very ſmall Stock, and no Credit.
He believes it is Invention enough to find out
other Men’s Wit ; and whatſoever he lights upon
either in Books, or Company, he makes bold
with as his own. This he puts together ſo un-
towardly, that you may perceive his own Wit
has the Rickets, by the ſwelling Diſproportion
of the Joints. Imitation is the whole Sum of
him ; and his Vein is but an Itch or Clap, that
he has catched of others ; and his Flame like
that of Charcoals, that were burnt before :
But as he wants Judgment to underſtand what
is beſt, he naturally takes the worſt, as being
moſt agreeable to his own Talent. You may

know his Wit not to be natural, ’tis ſo un-
quiet and troubleſome in him : For as thoſe,
that have Money but ſeldom, are always ſhak-
ing their Pockets, when they have it ; ſo does
he, when he thinks he has got ſomething, that
will make him appear. He is a perpetual Tal-
ker ; and you may know by the Freedom of his
Diſcourſe, that he came light by it, as Thieves
ſpend freely what they get. He meaſures other
Men’s Wits by *their* Modeſty, and his own by
*his* Confidence. He makes nothing of writing
Plays, becauſe he has not Wit enough to un-
derstand the Difficulty. This makes him ven-
ture to talk and ſcribble, as Chowſes do to play
with cunning Gameſters, until they are cheated
and laughed at. He is always talking of Wit,
as thoſe, that have bad Voices, are always ſing-
ing out of Tune ; and thoſe, that cannot play,
delight to fumble on Inſtruments. He grows
the unwiſer by other Men’s Harms ; for the
worſe others write, he finds the more Encou-
ragement to do ſo too. His Greedineſs of
Praiſe is ſo eager, that he ſwallows any Thing,
that comes in the Likeneſs of it, how notorious
and palpable ſoever, and is as Shot-free againſt
any Thing, that may leſſen his good Opinion

of himſelf---This renders him incurable, like
Diſeaſes, that grow inſenſible.

If you diſlike him it is at your own Peril ;
he is ſure to put in a Caveat beforehand againſt
your Understanding ; and, like a Malefactor
in Wit, is always furniſhed with Exceptions
againſt his Judges. This puts him upon perpe-
tual Apologies, Excuſes, and Defences, but
ſtill by Way of Defiance, in a Kind of whif-
fling Strain, without Regard of any Man,
that ſtands in the Way of his Pageant.
Where he thinks he may do it ſafely, he
will confidently own other Men’s Writings ;
and where he fears the Truth may be diſcovered,
he will by feeble Denials and feigned Inſinua-
tions give Men Occaſion to ſuppoſe ſo.

If he underſtands *Latin* or *Greek* he ranks
himſelf among the Learned, deſpiſes the Igno-
rant, talks Criticiſms out of *Scaliger*, and re-
peats *Martial*'s baudy Epigrams, and ſets up
his Reſt wholly upon Pedantry. But if he be
not ſo well qualified, he crys down all Learning
as pedantic, diſclaims Study, and profeſſes to
write with as great Facility, as if his Muſe was

ſliding down *Parnaſſus*. Whatſoever he hears
well ſaid[[1]](#footnote-22) he ſeizes upon by poetical Licence ;
and one Way makes it his own, that is by ill
repeating of it---This he believes to be no
more Theft, than it is to take that, which others
throw away. By this means his Writings are,
like a Taylor’s Cuſhion, of moſaic Work,
made up of ſeveral Scraps ſewed together.
He calls a ſlovenly naſty Deſcription *great Na-*
*ture*, and dull Flatneſs *strange Eaſineſs*. He
writes down all that comes in his Head, and
makes no Choice, becauſe he has nothing to
do it with, that is Judgment. He is always
repealing the old Laws of Comedy, and like
the *long Parliament* making *Ordinances* in their
Stead ; although they are perpetually *thrown*
*out* of Coffee-Houſes, and come to Nothing.
He is like an *Italian* Thief, that never robs,
but he murthers, to prevent Diſcovery ; ſo ſure
is he to cry down the Man from whom he pur-
loins, that his petty Larceny of Wit may paſs
unſuſpected. He is but a Copier at beſt, and
will never arrive to practice by the Life : For
bar him the Imitation of ſomething he has
read, and he has no Image in his Thoughts.

Obſervation and Fancy, the Matter and Form
of juſt Wit, are above his Philoſophy. He
appears ſo over concerned in all Men’s Wits,
as if they were but Diſparagements of his
own ; and crys down all they do, as if they
were Encroachments upon him. He takes
Jeſts from the Owners and breaks them, as
*Justices* do falſe Weights, and Pots that want
Meaſure. When he meets with any Thing,
that is very good, he changes it into ſmall
Money, like three Groats for a Shilling, to
ſerve ſeveral Occaſions. He diſclaims Study,
pretends to take Things in Motion, and to ſhoot
flying, which appears to be very true by his
often miſſing of his Mark. His Wit is much
troubled with Obſtructions ; and he has Fits as
painful as thoſe of the Spleen. He fancies him-
ſelf a dainty ſpruce Shepherd, with a Flock and
a fine ſilken Shepherdeſs, that follows his Pipe,
as Rats did the Conjurers in *Germany*.

As for *Epithets*, he always avoids thoſe, that
are near akin to the Senſse. Such matches are
unlawful, and not fit to be made by a *Chriſtian*
Poet ; and therefore all his Care is to chuſe out
[^2]: [*footnote cont'd from prev. page*] *Quem recitas meus eſt, O Fidentine, libellus :*
*Sed male dum recitas, incipit eſſe tuus.    Mart. L. 1. Ep. 39.*

ſuch, as will ſerve, like a wooden Leg, to piece
out a main’d Verſe, that wants a Foot or two ;
and if they will but rhimes now and then into
the Bargain, or run upon a Letter, it is a Work
of Supererrogation.

For *Similitudes*, he likes the hardeſt and moſt
obſcure beſt : For as Ladies wear black Patches,
to make their Complexions ſeem fairer than
they are ; ſo when an Illuſtration is more ob-
ſcure than the Senſe that went before it, it muſt
of Neceſſity make it appear clearer than it
did : For Contraries are beſt ſet off with Con-
traries.

He has found out a Way to ſave the Expence
of much Wit and Senſe : For he will make
leſs than ſome have prodigally laid out upon
five or ſix Words ſerve forty or fifty Lines.
This is a thrifty Invention, and very eaſy ; and,
if it were commonly known, would much in-
creaſe the Trade of Wit, and maintain a Mul-

titude of ſmall Poets in conſtant Employment.
He has found out a new Sort of poetical *Geor-*
*gics*, a Trick of ſowing Wit like clover-graſs
on barren Subjects, which would yield nothing
before. This is very uſeful for the Times,
wherein, ſome Men ſay, there is no Room left
for new Invention. He will take three Grains
of Wit like the Elixir, and projecting it upon
the *Iron-Age* turn it immediately into *Gold---*
All the Buſineſs of Mankind has preſently
vaniſhed, the whole World has kept Holiday ;
there has been no Men but Heroes and Poets,
no Women but Nymphs and Shepherdeſſes ;
Tress have born Fritters, and Rivers flowed
Plum-Porrige.

We read that *Virgil* uſed to make[[2]](#footnote-23) fifty or
ſixty Verſes in a Morning, and afterwards re-
duce them to ten. This was an unthrifty
Vanity, and argues him as well ignorant in the
Huſbandry of his own Poetry, as *Seneca* ſays
he was in that of a Farm ;[[3]](#footnote-24) for in plain *Engliſh*

it was no better than bringing a Noble to Nine-
pence. And as ſuch Courſes brought the
*prodigal Son* to eat with Hogs : So they did him
to feed with Horſes,[[4]](#footnote-25) which were not much
better Company, and may teach us to avoid
doing the like. For certainly it is more noble
to take four or five Grains of Senſe, and, like
a Gold-Beater, hammer them into ſo many
Leaves as will fill a whole Book ; than to write
nothing but Epitomies, which many wiſe Men
believe will be the Bane and Calamity of Learning.

When he writes, he commonly ſteers the
Senſe of his Lines by the Rhime that is at the
End of them, as Butchers do Calves by the
Tail. For when he has made one Line, which
is eaſy enough ; and has found out ſome ſturdy
hard Word, that will but rhime, he will ham-
mer the Senſe upon it, like a Piece of hot Iron
upon an Anvil, into what Form he pleaſes.

There is no Art in the World ſo rich in
Terms as Poetry ; a whole Dictionary is ſcarce

able to contain them : For there is hardly a
Pond, a Sheep-walk, or a Gravel-pit in all
*Greece*, but the antient Name of it is become
a Term of Art in Poetry. By this means ſmall
Poets have ſuch a Stock of able hard Words lying
by them, as *Dryades*, *Hamadryades*, *Aonides*, *Fauni*,
*Nymphae*, *Sylvani*, *&c*. that ſignify nothing at all ;
and ſuch a World of pedantic Terms of the
ſame Kind, as may ſerve to furniſh all the new
Inventions and *thorough-Reformations*, that can
happen between this and *Plato*’s great Year.

When he writes he never propoſes any Scope
or Purpoſe to himſelf, but gives his Genius all
Freedom : For as he, that rides abroad for his
Pleaſure, can hardly be out of his Way ; ſo he
that writes for his Pleaſure, can ſeldom be be-
ſide his Subject. It is an ungrateful Thing to
a noble Wit to be confined to any Thing---
To what Purpoſe did the Antients feign *Pegaſus*
to have Wings, if he muſt be confined to the
Road and Stages like a Pack-Horſe, or be forced
to be obedient to Hedges and Ditches? There-

fore he has no Reſpect to Decorum and Pro-
priety of Circumſtance ; for the Regard of
Perſons, Times, and Places is a Reſtraint too
ſervile to be impoſed upon poetical Licence ;
like him that made *Plato*[[5]](#footnote-26) confeſs *Juvenal* to be
a Philoſopher, or *Perſius*, that calls the *Athe*-
*nians Quirites*.

For *Metaphors*, he uſes to chuſe the hardeſt,
and moſt far-fet that he can light upon---Theſe
are the Jewels of Eloquence, and therefore the
harder they are, the more precious they muſt
be.

He’ll take ſcant Piece of coarſe Senſe, and
ſtretch it on the Tenterhooks of half a ſcore
Rhimes, until it crack that you may ſee through
it, and it rattle like a Drum-Head. When
you ſee his Verſes hanged up in Tobacco-Shops,
you may ſay, in defiance of the Proverb, *that*
*the weakeſt does not always go to the Wall* ; for ’tis

well known the Lines are ſtrong enough, and
in that Senſe may juſtly take the Wall of any,
that have been written in our Language. He
ſeldom makes a Conſcience of his Rhimes ; but
will often take the Liberty to make *preach*
rhime with *Cheat*, *Vote* with *Rogue*, and *Com*-
*mittee-Man* with *Hang*.

He’ll make one Word of as many Joints, as
the Tin-Pudding, that a Jugler pulls out of
his Throat, and chops in again---What think
you of *glud-fum-flam-hasta-minantes ?* Some of
the old *Latin* Poets[[6]](#footnote-27) bragged, that their Verſes
were tougher than Braſs, and harder than
Marble ; what would they have done, if they
had ſeen theſe ? Verily they would have had
more reaſon to wiſh themſelves an hundred
Throats, than they then had, to pronounce them.

There are ſome, that drive a Trade in writ-
ing in praiſe of other Writers, (like Rooks,

*Exegi monumentum ære perennius*
*Regalique ſitu Pyramidum altius*      *Hor*. L. 3. O. 30

that bet on Gameſters Hands) not at all to ce- lebrate the learned Author's Merits, as they would ſhew, but their own Wits, of which he is but the Subjec\_t. The Letchery of this Va- nity has ſpawned more Writers than the \* civil Law: \* For thoſe, whoſe Modeſty muſt notorious Va- pours imaginable. For if the Privilege of Love be allowed--\* Dicere quae\* puduit, ſcribere juſſit Amor,\* why ſhould it not be ſo in Self- Love too? For if it be Wiſdom to conceal our Imperfec\_tions, what is it to diſcover our Vir- tues? It is not like, that \* Nature \* gave Men great Parts upon ſuch Terms, as the \* Fairies  *uſe to give Money, to pinch and leave them if they ſpeak of it. They ſay--*Praiſe is but the Shadow of Virtue; \* and ſure that Virtue is very foolish, that is afraid of its own Shadow.

When he writes \* Anograms, \* he uſes to lay the Outſides of his Verſes even (like a Brick-

layer) by a Line of Rhime and Acroſtic, and fill th eMiddle with Rubbiſh--In this he imi- tates \* Ben Johnson, \* but in nothing elſe.

There was one, that lined a Hat-Caſe with a Paper of \* Benlowſe'*s Poetry--* Prynne \* bought it by Chance, and put a new Demi-Caſtor into it. The firſt Time he wore it he felt only a ſinging in his Head, which within two Days turned to a Vertigo--He was let Blood in the Ear by one of the State-Phyſicians, and reco- vered; but before he went abroad he writ a Poem of Rocks and Seas, in a Stile ſo proper and natural, that it was hard to determine, which was ruggeder.

There is no Fear of Ac\_tivity, nor Gambol of Wit, that ever was performed by Man, from him that vaults on \* Pegasus, \* to him that tumbles through the Hoop of an Anagram, but \* Benlows \* has got the Maſtery in it, whether it be high-rope Wit, or low-rope Wit. He

son means was .......

has all Sorts of \* Echoes, Rebus's, Chronograms,/ &c.\* beſides \* Carwichets, Clenches, \* and \* Quibbles--*/ As for*  Altars \* and \* Pyramids \* in Poetry, he has/ out-done all Men that Way; for he has/ made a \* Gridiron, \* and a \* Frying-Pan \* in Verſe,/ that, beſide the Likeneſs in Shape, the very/ Tone and Sound of the Words did perfec\_tly/ repreſent the Noiſe, that is made by thoſe/ Utenſils, ſuch as the old Poet called \* ſartago lo-/ quendi. \* When he was Captain, he made all/ the Furniture of his Horſe, from the Bit to/ the Crupper, in beaten Poetry, every Verſe/ being fitted to the Proportion of the Thing,/ with a moral Alluſion of the Senſe to the/ Thing; as the \* Bridle of Moderation, the Saddle/ of Content, \* and \* the Crupper of Conſtancy;\* ſo that/ the ſame Thing was both Epigram and Emblem,/ even as Mule is both Horſe and Aſs.

Some Critics are of Opinion, that Poets/ ought to apply themselves to the Imitation of/ \* Nature, \* and make a Conſcience of digreſſing/ from her; but he is none of theſe. The an-/ tient Magicians could charm down the Moon,/ and force Rivers back to their Springs by the/

Power of Poetry only; and the Moderns will/ undertake to turn the Inſide of the Earh out-/ ward (like a Jugler's Pocket) and ſhake the/ Chesſ out of it, make \* Nature \* ſhew Tricks like/ an Ape, and the Stars run on Errands; but/ ſtill it is by dint of Poetry. And if Poets can/ so ſuch noble Feats, they were unwiſe to deſ-/ cend to mean and vulgar: For where the rareſt/ and moſt common Things are of a Price (as/ they are all one to Poets) it argues Diſease in/ Judgement not to chuſe the most curious. Hence/ ſome infer, that the Account they give of things/ deſerves no Regard, becauſe they never receive/ any Thing, as they find it, into their Compo-/ ſitions, unleſs it agree both with the Meaſure/ of their own Fancis, and the Meaſure of their/ Lines, which can very ſeldom happen: And/ therefore when they give a Character of any/ Thing or Perſon, it does commonly bear no/ more Proportions to the Subject, than the Fiſhes/ and Ships in a Map do to the Scale. But let/ ſuch know, that Poets, as well as Kings, ought/ rather to conſider what is fit for them to give,/ than others to receive; that they are fain to/ have regard to the Exchange of Language, and/

write high or low, according as that runs:/ For in this Age, when the ſmallest Poet ſeldom/ goes below more then moſt, it were a Shame for/ a grater and more noble Poet not to out-throw/ that cut a Bar.

T2here was a \* Tobacco-Man, \* that wrapped / *Spaniſh*  Tobacco in a Paper of Verſes, which/ *Benlows* had written againſt the \* Pope, \* which/ by a natural Antipathy, that his Wit has to / any Thing that's Catholic, ſpoiled the Tobacco;/ for it preſently turned Mundungus. This Au-/ thor will take an \* English \* Word, and, like the/ \* Frenchman, \* that ſwallowed Water and ſpit it/ out Wine, with a little Heaving and Straining/ would turn it immediately into \* Latin,\* as \* plun-/ derat ille Domos*--Mille*  Hocopokiana, \* and a thou-/ ſand ſuch./ / ##There was a young Practitioner in Poetry,/ that found there was no good to be done with-/ out a Miſtreſs: For he, that writes of Love/ before he hath tried it, doth but travel by the/ Map; and he, that makes Love without a/ Dame, does like a Gameſter, that plays for/ / #\*More the moſt] There is an appearance Defect or Error in theſe/ Words; but I leave it to the Reader to ſupply or correct./

Nothing. He thought it convenient therefore,/ firſt to furniſh himſelf with a Name for his/ Miſstress beforehand, that he might not be to/ ſeek, when his Merit or good Fortune ſhould/ beſtow her upon him: for every Poet is his/ miſtreſſe's Godfather, and gives her a new/ Name, like a Nun that takes Orders. He was/ very curious to ſit himself with a handſome/ Word of a turnable Sound; but could light/ upon none, that ſome Poet or other had not / made uſe of before. He was therefore forced/ to fall to coining, and was ſeveral Months be-/ fore he could light on one, that pleaſed him/ perfectly. But after he had overcome that Dif-/ ficulty, he found a greater remaining, to get a/ Lady to own him. He accoſted ſome of all/ Sorts, and gave them to underſtand, both in/ Proſe and Verſe, how incomparably happy it/ was in his Power to make his Miſtreſs, but/ could never convert any of them. At length/ he was fain to make his Landreſs ſupply that/ Place as Proxy, until his good Fortune, or/ ſomebody of better Quality would be more / kind to him, which after a while he neither/ hoped nor cared for; for how mean Toever her/ Condition was before, when he had once pre-/ tended to her, ſhe was ſure to be a Nymph and/

a Goddeſs. For what greater Honour can a/ Woman be capable of, than to be tranſlated/ into precious Stones and Stars? No Herald in/ the World can go higher. Beſides se found no/ Man can uſe that Freedom of Hyperbole in the/ Character of a Perſon commonly known (as/ great Ladies are) which we can in deſcribing/ one ſo obſcure and unknown, that nobody can/ diſprove him. For he, that writes but one/ Sonnet upon any of the public Perſons, ſhall/ be ſure to have his Reader at ever third Word/ cry out--What an Aſs is this to call \* Spaniſh/ paper and Ceruſe Lillies and Roſes, \* or \* claps In-/ fluences--\* To ſay, \* the Graces are her waiting Wo-/ men, \* when they are known to be no better/ than her Bawdes--that \* Day breaks from her/ Eyes, *when ſhe looks aſquint--Or that*  her/ Breath perfumes the Arabian Winds, \* when ſhe/ puffs Tobacco?/ / ##It is no mean Art to improve a Language,/ and find out Words, that are not only removed/ from common uſe, but rich in Conſonanats,/ the Nerves and Sinews of Speech, to raiſe a/ / ---

ſft and feeble Language like ours to the Pitch/ of \* High-Dutch,\* as he did, that writ

* Arts rattling Foreſkins ſhrilling Bagpipes quell.\*/

This is not the only the moſt elegant, but moſt po-/ litic Way of Writing, that a Poet can uſe; for I/ know no Defence like it to preſerve a Poem from/ the Torture of thoſe that liſp and ſtammer./ He that wants Teeth may as well venture upon/ a Piece of tough horny Brawn as ſuch a Line,/ for he will look like an Aſs eating Thiſtles.

He never begins a Work without an Invoca-/ tion of his \* Muse; \* for it is not fit that ſhe ſhould/ appear in public, to ſhew her Skill before ſhe/ is entreated, as Gentlewomen do not uſe to / ſing, until they are applied to, and often deſired.

I ſhall not need to ſay any this of the Ex-/ cellence of Poetry, ſince it has been already/ performed by many excellent Perſons, among/ whom ſome have lately undertaken to prove, that/ the civil Government cannot poſſibly ſubſiſt with-/ out it, which, for my Part, I believe to be true

* ſome have lately. *] This alludes to*  Davenant--See \* G---

in a poetical Senſe, and more probable to be/ received of it, than thoſe ſtrange Feats of/ building Walls and making Trees dance,/ which Antiquity aſcribes to Verſe. And though/ \* Philoſophers \* are of a contrary Opinion, and will/ not allow Poets fit to live in a Commonwealth,/ their Partiality is plainer than their Reaſons;/ for they have no other Way to pretend to this/ Prerogative themſelves, as they do, but by re-/ moving Poets, whom they know to have a/ fairer Title; and this they do unjuſtly, that/ \* Plato, \* who firſt baniſhed Poets his Republic,/ forgot that the very Commonwealth was poe-/ tical. I ſhall ſay nothing to them, but only/ deſire the World to conſider, how happily it is/ like to be governed by thoſe, that are as ſo per-/ petual a civil War among themſelves, that if we/ ſhould ſubmit ourſelves to their own Reſolution/ of this Question, and be content to allow them/ only fit to rule if they could but conclude it/ ſo themselves, they would never agree upon it--/ Mean while there is no leſs Certainty and Agree-/ ment in Poetry than the Mathematics; for they/ all ſubmit the to the ſame Rules without Diſpute or/ Controverſy. But whoſoever ſhall pleaſe to look/ into the Records of Antiquity ſhall find their/ Title ſo unqueſtioned, that the greatest Princess

in the whole World have been glad to derive/ their Pedigrees, and their Power too, from/ Poets. \* Alexander \* the great had no wiſer a Way/ so ſecure the Empire to himſelf by \* Right, */ which he had gotten by*  Force, \* then by de-/ claring himſelf the Son of \* Jupiter; \* and who/ was \* Jupiter \* but the Son of a Poet? So \* Caeſar */ and all*  Rome \* was transported with Joy, when a/ Poet made \* Jupiter \* his Colleague in the Empire;/ and when \* Jupiter \* governed, what did the/ Poets, that governed Jupiter?

1. *Whatſoever he hears well ſaid*, &tc. ] In this *Butler* alludes to
*Martial*'s Epigram to *Fidentinus*. [*footnote cont. next page*][^2] [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
2. [*footnote for next page*] *We read that Virgil uſed to make*, &c.] This alludes to a Paſſage
in the Life of *Virgil* aſcribed to *Donatus*. “ Cum Georgica ſcribe-
“ ret traditur quotidie meditatos mane plurimos verſus dictare ſo-
“ litus, ac per totum diem retracando ad pauciſſimos redigrere :
“ non abſurde carmen ſe urſæ more parere dicens, et lambendo
“ demum effingere. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
3. *As* Seneca *ſays he was in that of a farm*.] *Seneca* in his 86th
Epiſtle finds ſeveral Faults with *Virgil*'s Rules and Obſervations in
Huſbandry, as they are delivered in his *Georgics*, and adds of him ---
“ Qui non quod veriſſime, ſed quid decentiſſime diceretur, ad-
“ ſpexit ; nec Agricolas docere voluit, ſed legentes delectare.” [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
4. *So they did him to feed with Horſes*] This muſt be explained by
the ſame Writer of *Virgil*’s Life, who informs us, that *Virgil* in
his Youth ſtudied Phyſic, in which having made great Proficiency,
he repaired to *Rome*, and applying himſelf to that Branch of it [*footnote cont. next page*][^6] [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
5. *Like him that made Plato*, &c.] Who this Blunder is to be fa-
thered upon I cannot diſcover ; but that which he imputes to *Per*-
*ſius*, and another of *Juvenal*’s, a Paſſage of his own in a Part of his
Proſe Collections called *Criticiſms upon Books and Autohrs*, will ex-
plain --- *Persius*, ſays he, commits a very great Abſurdity, when
laying the Scene of his fourth Satyr in *Greece*, and bringing in *So*-
*crates* reproving a young Stateſmen, he makes him call the *Græ*-
*cians* Quirites. [*footnote cont. next page*][^8] [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
6. *Some of the old* Latin *Poets*, &c.] Thus *Horace*
 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)