Parodies of the romantic age.

Stones, Graeme.

PARODIES OF THE ROMANTIC AGE

VOLUME 3

Edited by Graeme Stones

COLLECTED PROSE PARODY

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INTRODUCTION

That parody is so easily associated with verse is unfortunate. The link is partly a result of formal repetition: the source-poem's shape and rhythms being reiterated by its parody. Recognition is automatic, safe, mechanical. Prose parody is necessarily looser, closer to irony, more nuanced and uncertain. If it is harder to identify securely, it is often more rewarding. Lacking the structural props of poetic parodists, those who work in prose must be doubly thoughtful with content, more immediately imaginative. Francis Jeffrey, who became a rather improbable champion of Romantic parody in a consideration of the Rejected Addresses in 1812, wrote that the real art of a parodist attending to an author is 'to make the revival of his style appear a natural consequence of the strong conception of his peculiar ideas'. Reviving style without metrical support encourages prose parodists to be attentive to ideas, convincing and recreative with their natural consequences.

Happily, when similarities between source and parody are hazy, so too are oppositions. Prose parodies are often less terminal, more collusive and playful with those ideas they borrow. Many of the entries in this volume have been chosen for this quality of joie de vivre. Bret Harte's Miss Mix is a disgraceful rendering of Jane Eyre, but so obviously in love with its governess that it begs to be forgiven. Austen's Love and Freindship and Beckford's Azemia both parody the literature of sentiment, but each has its own unique appeal, one bracingly chilly, the other warm and teasing. The 'Hampshire Farmer' from Rejected Addresses stumps up to the stage's apron with his boots and vocabulary as earthy as William Cobbett at his best. Other entries are even looser, only tenuously dependent on a source. Erich Raspe's Adventures of Baron

von Munchausen² has its beginnings in the parody of a flesh-and-blood Baron (or more strictly, in recreating a man who parodies himself for his own amusement). The Adventures are also littered with specific literary parodies. But Munchausen on his travels, like Quixote, Tristram Shandy, Joseph Andrews, Peregrine Pickle or Leopold Bloom, has a momentum all his own.

The association of Romantic parody with verse is also partly a result of the elevated role of poetry in the minds of Romantic writers: it was proclaimed as the language of prophecy. Parodies such as the Peter Bell series became famous, or infamous, in challenging the poets of the period. When poems flowed from repetitions in the finite mind of the infinite I AM, poetic parodies were close to blasphemy. In an age when parodic verse was so conspicuously bold, prose parody might be expected to adopt a lower status. On the contrary, the form seems to take umbrage and gain energy from this displacement. If Hazlitt thought of prose as a democratic art, parodic prose is even more so. Several examples of this levelling, irrepressible demotic vitality are included here. James Hogg, rebuffed by Edinburgh's literati, sets the editor of The Spy to stalk them, noting idiosyncracies with which to prick pretensions. On trial for subversive parody, William Hone conducts his own passionate and eloquent defence, making fools of the establishment and its legal representatives. 'Monk' Lewis, ridiculed by High Romantic writers, critics and reviewers, shows he knows more about the ridiculousness of the human condition than any of them, and makes a fortune out of dramatizing it.

If Coleridge appears rather often in this collection — one way or another he features in six extracts — it is because he so wonderfully evokes the paradoxes of Romanticism. Of all the major writers, it is Coleridge who most idolizes originality. He abhors borrowings of all kinds and parody above all, yet he is himself the most osmotic of writers. A consummately Cretan liar, Coleridge claims no man owns the truth:

I regard truth as a divine ventriloquist: I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed, if only the words are audible and intelligible.³

and then he parades other men's truths as his own, and the only. He is also inimitably gifted in the use of confession, always one step ahead of his weaknesses and his critics. 'A tired experience of twenty years' he writes wearily in *Biographia*,

has taught me, that the original sin of my character consists in a careless indifference to public opinion, and to the attacks of those who influence it.⁴

Implying a virtue within an admitted sin, in the middle of a narrative actually characterized by a vice the opposite of that to which he has just confessed, all in a tone of rueful sincerity, is a feat of inversion only Coleridge could carry off. These bewitching, palimpsestic strategies make him a natural parodist himself. Watching Coleridge at work with self-parody, in the excerpt from *Biographia* included in this volume, is an education in the subtleties of the art.

Reading these prose parodies is restorative in several ways. The relationship between source and imitation, which in verse is often too visible and abrasive, becomes elusive and intriguing. The unnatural separation of artist and parodist – largely the result of Romantic poetics – falls away, and in its place returns a sense of the ancient working partnership achieved by fine parody, in which collusion and countering co-exist. That sense is likely to carry with it a Bakhtinian appreciation of parody's ubiquity:

It is our conviction that there never was a single strictly straightforward genre, no single type of literary discourse – artistic, rhetorical, philosophical, religious, ordinary everyday – that did not have its own parodying and travestying double, its own comic-ironic contre-partie. What is more, these parodic doubles and laughing reflections of the direct word were, in some cases, just as sanctioned by tradition and just as canonized as their elevated models.⁵

In all their infinite variety, Romantic prose parodies are living proof of laughing reflections in every type of literary discourse.

Elsewhere in this five-volume edition, attempts are made at textual purity, pursuing editions back to first origins, or at least to fullest, most reliable printings. This is not the case here, where texts may be thoroughly disreputable. That of *Gulliver Revived*, for example, is

specifically chosen for its debased nature. Texts of other entries are likely to be those most conveniently to hand, or whose form reduces the need for annotation, or which come from idiosyncratic printings that for one reason or another add to their interest. I am grateful to Nora Crook, of Anglia Polytechnic University, for suggesting the rare and long-forgotten article by William Squibb, and to John Strachan who suggested and edited the Chaldee manuscript and Walter Scott's *The Betrothed*.

GRAEME STONES

NOTES

- 1 Edinburgh Review, vol. 20, no. 40 (November 1812), p. 435.
- 2 Republished here in the form of Gulliver Revived.
- 3 Biographia Literaria, ed. James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate (London: Routledge, 1983, The Bollingen Series), vol. 1, p. 164.
- 4 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 44.
- 5 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austen: University of Texas, 1981), p. 53.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

(to Gulliver Revived, Anon., 1799 and 1801)

Baron von Munchausen first bullied his way into print in 1785, with the Narrative of his Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia, and rapidly became 'synonymous with the bravado every man has and most men condemn'. He was a most successful braggart. Eight English editions followed within eight years. Gottfried Bürger saw two German translations through the press before 1790, and a French version appeared within the same period. These were but early rumbles of a landslide:

Unnumbered and innumerable editions have followed since then, in every language from Finnish to Erse (not excepting Esperanto), illustrated by Crowquill, Cruikshank and Gustave Doré, tricked out by Theophile Gaultier and countless anonymous hands. The trait which the Baron symbolizes is crude but it endures, and for popularity, if not for complexity, he stands beside Oedipus and Quixote.²

Early editions were the work of Erich Raspe, born c.1737, a gifted and resourceful rogue who arrived in London from Germany in 1775, on the run. As Professor at the Collegium Carolinum in Cassel after 1767, and later the city's librarian, he siphoned off coins and antiques to the value of two thousand rixdollars and disappeared with the cash only one step ahead of retribution:

advertisements were issued for the arrest of Councillor Raspe, described without suspicion of flattery as a long-faced man, with small eyes, crooked nose under a stumpy periwig, and a jerky gait.³

Raspe was no common villain. He studied at the Universities of Göttingen and Leipzig, rubbed shoulders with the finest minds of his time, uncovered a neglected pile of Leibnitz manuscripts and published a highly influential new edition, translated Ossian's poems

into German, wrote a treatise on Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry, and much else besides. He was by turns scholar, antiquary, mineralogist and always an opportunist: inquisitive, acquisitive, unscrupulous and unstable. Raspe hatched one scam after another to secure himself:

Like many impressionable and vivacious men – like Boswell, for instance, whom he resembles in some ways – he moved from despair to hope, from trough to crest without ever gaining equilibrium midway.⁴

Baron Munchausen's Narrative, written in Cornwall, ought to have made his fortune but Raspe failed to keep hold of this book, published anonymously and never acknowledged as his. After the second edition of 1786 it passed into the hands of another bookseller, who re-issued it as Gulliver Reviv'd: The Singular Travels, Campaigns, Voyages and Sporting Adventures of Baron Munnikhouson commonly pronounced Munchausen; as he relates them over a bottle when surrounded by his friends. Raspe's original 49 octavo pages soon swelled, embellished by other hands.

The Baron was based on flesh-and-blood, a military acquaintance of Raspe's from his days at Göttingen. Hieronymous Karl Friedrich von Munchausen served in Russia, and was made Captain of Cuirassiers by the Empress Elizabeth. Thomas Secombe's description is delightfully expansive. Whether it is strictly factual hardly seems to matter in this context:

He kept open house, and loved to divert his guests with stories, not in the braggart vein of Dugald Dalgetty, but so embellished with palpably extravagant lies as to crack with a humour that was all their own . . . [It seems probable] that Munchausen, being a shrewd man, found the practice a sovereign specific against bores and all other kinds of serious or irrelevant people, while it naturally endeared him to the friends of whom he had no small number.

He told his stories with imperturbable sang froid, in a dry manner, and with perfect naturalness and simplicity. He spoke as a man of the world, without circumlocution; his adventures were numerous and perhaps singular, but only such as might have been expected to happen to a man of so much experience. A smile never traversed his face as he related the least credible of his tales, which the less intimate of his acquaintance began in time to think he meant to be taken seriously. In short, so strangely entertaining were both manner and matter of his narratives, that 'Munchausen's Stories' became a by-word of appreciative acquaintance. ⁵

Raspe's recreation of him, like the additions of later authors, was topical and recognized as such by a notice of the first edition in the *Critical Review* of December 1785:

This is a satirical production calculated to throw ridicule on the bold assertions of some parliamentary declaimers. If rant may be best foiled at its own weapons, the author's design is not ill-founded; for the marvellous has never been carried to a more whimsical and ludicrous extent.⁶

The book's borrowings, allusions, parodies and slights, proliferating with each edition, would keep a sleuth occupied for years. Defoe and Swift are prominent immediately; Dr Johnson's tour of the Hebrides, Cook's travels, and Burke on the French Revolution all become so. John Drinkwater's History of the Siege of Gibraltar (1783) is visible, with Constantine John Phipps's Voyage towards the North Pole (1774) and the Tour through Sicily and Malta by Patrick Brydone (1773). Secombe discovers that:

Prototypes of the majority of the stories may either be found in Lucian or in the twenty volumes of *Voyages Imaginaires* published at Paris in 1787.⁷

Two more actual military buffers are in the background. Baron de Tott's French memoirs were translated into English in 1785 and are frequently alluded to; Baron Friedrich von Trenk's German into French in 1787. Opinions differ on the leakage from the second of these into Raspe's creation.

Munchausen absorbs with aplomb anything he bumps into on his travels, growing ever stouter with the years. These accretions are usually regretted by purists and it is true there is a beguiling quality in the early Baron – so laconically mendacious. But Raspe's loose grip on him is symptomatic. Munchausen is too irrepressible to belong to any one man. His braggadocio is evergreen, adapting to the events of the day. The excerpts here are taken from a typically cheap edition, clumsily printed and illustrated, in which the fifth edition is bound in with A Sequel to the Adventures of Baron Munchausen, printed in 1801. The first two chapters are essentially Raspe's; the final one a timely addition, setting the bold Baron, champion of the Old Guard, against the upstart proletarians of the French Revolution, where he deftly subdues three

hundred fish-women by the sword – not with threats of blooodletting, but of dubbing, so that 'they all set up a frightful yell, and ran away as fast as they could for fear of being aristocrated by knighthood'.

NOTES

- 1 John Carswell, The Prospector (London: Cresset Press, 1950), p. 186.
- 2 Ibid., p. 186.
- 3 Thomas Secombe, ed., introducing *The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1895), p. xvii.
- 4 The Prospector, p. 124.
- 5 The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen, pp. xxiv-xxv.
- 6 Quoted by Secombe, ibid., p. vi.
- 7 Ibid., p. xxviii.

From GULLIVER REVIVED¹ ANON.

CHAPTER I*

The Baron relates an account of his first travels. – The astonishing effects of a storm. – Arrives at Ceylon; combats and conquers two extraordinary opponents. – Returns to Holland.

Some years before my beard announced approaching manhood or in other words when I was neither man nor boy, but between both, I expressed in repeated conversations a strong desire of seeing the world, from which I was discouraged by my parents, though my father had been no inconsiderable traveller himself, as will appear before I have reached the end of my singular, and, I may add, interesting, adventures. A cousin, by my mother's side, took a liking to me, often said I was a fine forward youth, and was much inclined to gratify my curiosity. His eloquence had more effect than mine, for my father consented to my accompanying him in a voyage to Ceylon, where his uncle had resided as governor many years.

We sailed from Amsterdam with dispatches from their High Mightinesses the States of Holland The only circumstance which happened on our voyage worth relating, was the wonderful effects of a storm, which had torn up by the roots a great number of trees of enormous bulk and height, (in an island where we lay at anchor to take in wood and water); some of these trees weighed many tons, yet they were carried by the wind so amazingly high, that they appeared like the feathers of small birds floating in the air, for they were at least five miles above the earth: however, as soon as the storm subsided, they all

^{*} The Baron is supposed to relate these adventures to his friends, over a bottle.

GULLIVER REVIVED

fell perpendicularly into their respective places, and took root again except the largest, which happened, when it was blown into the air, to have a man and his wife, a very honest old couple upon its branches gathering cucumbers (in this part of the globe, that useful vegetable grows upon trees); the weight of this couple, as the tree descended, overbalanced the trunk, and brought it down in an horizontal position: it fell upon the chief man of the island, and killed him on the spot; he had quitted his house in the storm under an apprehension of its falling upon him, and was returning through his own garden when this fortunate accident happened. – The word fortunate, here, requires some explanation. – This chief was a man of a very avaricious and oppressive disposition, and though he had no family, the natives of the island were half-starved by his oppressive and infamous impositions.

The very goods which he had thus taken from them were spoiling in his stores, while the poor wretches from whom they were plundered were pining in poverty. Though the destruction of this tyrant was accidental, the people chose the cucumber-gatherers for their governors, as a mark of their gratitude, for destroying, though accidentally, their late tyrant.

After we had repaired the damages we sustained in this remarkable storm, and taken leave of the new governor and his lady, we sailed with a fair wind for the object of our voyage.

In about six weeks we arrived at Ceylon, where we were received with great marks of friendship and true politeness. The following singular adventure may prove not unentertaining. After we had resided at Ceylon about a fortnight, I accompanied one of the governor's brothers upon a shooting party. He was a strong athletic man, and being used to that climate (for he had resided there some years), he bore the violent heat of the sun much better than I could; in our excursion, he had made a considerable progress through a thick wood when I was only at the entrance.

Near the banks of a large piece of water, which had engaged my attention, I thought I heard a rustling noise behind: on turning about, I was almost petrified (as who would not?) at the sight of a lion, which was evidently approaching with an intention of satisfying his appetite with my poor carcass, and that without asking my consent. – What was

to be done in this horrible dilemma? I had not even a moment for reflection; my piece was only charged with swan shot, and I had no other about me: however, though I could have no idea of killing such an animal with that weak kind of ammunition, yet I had some hopes of frightening him by the report, and perhaps of wounding him also. I immediately let fly, without waiting till he was within reach; and the report did but enrage him, for he now quickened his pace, and seemed to approach me full speed: I attempted to escape, but that only added (if an addition could be made) to my distress; for the moment I turned about, I found a large crocodile, with his mouth extended almost ready to receive me; on my right hand was the piece of water beforementioned, and to my left a deep precipice, said to have, as I have since learned, a receptacle at the bottom for venomous creatures; in short, I gave myself up as lost, for the lion was now upon his hind-legs, just in the act of seizing me: I fell involuntarily to the ground with fear, and, as it afterwards appeared, he sprang over me. I lay some time in a situation which no language can describe, expecting to feel his teeth or talons in some part of me every moment: after waiting in this prostrate situation a few seconds, I heard a violent but unusual noise, different from any sound that had ever before assailed my ears; nor is it at all to be wondered at, when I inform you from whence it proceeded: after listening for some time, I ventured to raise my head and look round, when, to my unspeakable joy, I perceived the lion had, by the eagerness with which he sprang at me, jumped forward as I fell, into the crocodile's mouth! which, as before observed, was wide open; the head of the one stuck in the throat of the other! and they were struggling to extricate themselves: I fortunately recollected my couteau de chasse² which was by my side; with this instrument I severed the lion's head with one blow, and the body fell at my feet! I then, with the but-end of my fowling piece, rammed the head farther into the throat of the crocodile, and destroyed him by suffocation, for he could neither gorge nor eject it.

Soon after I had thus gained a complete victory over my two powerful adversaries, my companion arrived in search of me; for, finding I did not follow him into the wood, he returned, apprehending I had lost my way, or met with some accident.

After mutual congratulations, we measured the crocodile, which was just forty feet in length.

As soon as we had related this extraordinary adventure to the governor, he sent a waggon and servants, who brought home the two carcases. The lion's skin was properly preserved, with its hair on; after which it was made into tobacco-pouches, and presented by me upon our arrival in Holland to the burgomasters, who in return requested my acceptance of a thousand ducats.

The skin of the crocodile was stuffed in the usual manner, and makes a capital article in their public museum at Amsterdam, where the exhibitor relates the whole story to each spectator, with such additions as he thinks proper: some of his variations are rather extravagant; one of them is that the lion jumped quite through the crocodile, and was making his escape at the back-door, when, as soon as his head appeared, Monsieur the Great Baron (as he is pleased to call me) cut it off, and three feet of the crocodile's tail along with it; nay, so little attention has this fellow to the truth that he sometimes adds, as soon as the crocodile missed his tail, he turned about, snatched the couteau de chasse out of Monsieur's hand, and swallowed it with such eagerness, that it pierced his heart and killed him immediately!

The little regard which this impudent fellow has to veracity, makes me sometimes apprehensive that my *real facts* may fall under suspicion, by being found in company with his confounded inventions.

CHAP XVIII

A second visit (but an accidental one) to the moon. — The ship driven by a whirlwind a thousand leagues above the surface of the water, where a new atmosphere meets them, and carries them into a capacious harbour in the moon. — A description of the inhabitants, and their manner of coming into the Lunarian world. — Animals, customs, weapons of war, wines, vegetables &c.

A SECOND TRIP TO THE MOON

I have already informed you of one trip I made to the moon, in search of my silver hatchet: I afterwards made another in a much pleasanter manner, and staid in it long enough to take notice of several things, which I will endeavour to describe as accurately as my memory will permit.

I went on a voyage of discovery at the request of a distant relation, who had a strange notion that there were people to be found equal in magnitude to those described by Gulliver in the empire of Brobdingnag.³ For my part I always treated that account as fabulous; however, to oblige him for he had made me his heir, I undertook it, and sailed for the South Seas, where we arrived without meeting with any thing remarkable except some flying men and women, who were playing at leap-frog, and dancing minuets in the air.

On the eighteenth day after we had passed the island of Otaheité, mentioned by Captain Cook as the place from which they brought Omai, ⁴ a hurricane blew our ship at least one thousand leagues above the surface of the water, and kept it at that height till a fresh gale arising, filled the sails in every part, and onwards we travelled at a prodigious rate: thus we proceeded above the clouds for six weeks. At last we discovered a great land in the sky, like a shining island, round and bright; where, coming into a convenient harbour, we went on shore, and soon found it was inhabited. Below us we saw another earth, containing cities, trees, mountains, rivers, seas, &c. which we conjectured was this world which we had left. Here⁵ we saw huge

figures riding upon vultures of a prodigious size, and each of them having three heads. To form some idea of the magnitude of these birds, I must inform you, that each of their wings are as wide, and six times the length of the main-sheet of our vessel, which was about six hundred tons burthen. Thus, instead of riding upon horses, as we do in this world, the inhabitants of the Moon (for we now found we were in madam Luna) fly about on these birds. The king we found was engaged in a war with the SUN, and he offered me a commission, but I declined the honour his majesty intended me.

Everything in this world is of extraordinary magnitude; a common flea being much larger than one of our sheep: in making war, their principle weapons are radishes, which are used as darts; those who are wounded by them, die immediately. Their shields are made of mushrooms; and their darts (when radishes are out of season) of the tops of asparagus. Some of the natives of the dog-star are to be seen here; commerce tempts them to ramble: their faces are like large mastiffs, with their eyes near the lower end or tip of their noses; they have no eyelids, but cover their eyes with the end of their tongues when they go to sleep: they are generally twenty feet high. As to the natives of the Moon, none of them are less in stature than thirty-six feet; they are not called the human species, but the cooking animals, for they all dress their food by fire as we do, but lose no time at their meals, as they open their left side, and place the whole quantity at once in their stomach, then shut it again till the same day again in the next month; for they never indulge themselves with food more than twelve times in a year, or once a month. All but gluttons and epicures must prefer this method to ours.

There is but one sex either of the cooking or any other animals in the Moon; they are all produced from trees of various sizes and foliage: that which produces the cooking animal, or human species, is much more beautiful than any of the others; it has straight boughs and flesh-coloured leaves and the fruit it produces are nuts or pods, with hard shells, at least two yards long: when they become ripe, which is known from their changing colour, they are gathered with great care, and laid by as long as they think proper: when they choose to animate the seed of these nuts, they throw them into a large cauldron of boiling water, which opens the shells in a few hours, and out jumps the creature.

Nature forms their minds for different pursuits before they come into the world; from one shell comes forth a warrior, from another a philosopher, from a third a divine, from a fourth a lawyer, from a fifth a farmer, from a sixth a clown, &c. &c. and all of them immediately begin to perfect themselves, by practising what they before knew only in theory.

When they grow old, they do not die, but turn into air, and dissolve like smoke! As for their drink they need none: the only evacuations they have are insensible, and by their breath. They have but one finger on each hand, with which they perform every thing in as perfect a manner as we who have four besides the thumb. Their heads are placed under their right arm; and, when they are going to travel, or about any violent exercise, they generally leave them at home, for they can consult them at any distance: this is a very common practice and when those of rank or quality among the Lunarians have an inclination to see what's going forward among the common people, they stay at home, i.e. the body stays at home, and sends the head only, which is suffered to be present incog. and return at pleasure with an account of what has passed.

The stones of their grapes are exactly like hail; and, I am perfectly satisfied, that when a storm or high wind in the Moon shakes their vines, and breaks the grapes from the stalks, the stones fall down, and form our hail-showers. I would advise those who are of my opinion, to save a quantity of these stones when it hails next, and make Lunarian wine. It is common beverage at Saint Luke's. Some material circumstances I had nearly omitted. They put their bellies to the same use we do a sack, and throw whatever they have occasion for into it, for they can shut and open it again when they please, as they do their stomachs: they are not troubled with bowels, liver, heart, or any other intestines; neither are they incumbered with clothes, nor is there any part of their bodies unseemly or indecent to exhibit.

Their eyes they can take in and out of their places when they please, and can see as well with them in their hand as in their head! and if by accident they lose or damage one, they can borrow or purchase another, and see as clearly with it as their own. Dealers in eyes are on that account very numerous in most parts of the Moon, and in this

article alone all the inhabitants are whimsical; sometimes green, and sometimes yellow eyes are the fashion. I know these things appear strange; but if the shadow of a doubt can remain on any person's mind, I say, let him take a voyage there himself, and then he will know I am a traveller of veracity.

Vol. 2

CHAPTER XIV

The Baron makes a speech to the National Assembly, and drives out all the members. — Routs the fish-women and the National Guards. — Pursues the whole route into a church, where he defeats the National Assembly, &c. with Rousseau, Voltaire, and Belzebub, at their head, and liberates Marie Antoinette and the Royal Family.

PASSING through Switzerland, on my return from India, I was informed that several of the German nobility had been deprived of the honours and immunities of their French estates. I heard of the sufferings of the amiable Marie Antoinette, and swore to avenge every look that had threatened her with insult. I went to the cavern of these Anthropophagi, 6 assembled to debate, and gracefully putting the hilt of my sword to my lips, I swear, cried I, by the sacred cross of my sword, that if you do not instantly reinstate your king and his nobility, and your injured Queen, I will cut one half of you to pieces.

On which the President, taking up a leaden ink-stand, flung it at my head. I stooped to avoid the blow, and rushing to the tribunal, seized the Speaker, who was fulminating against the Aristocrates; and taking the creature by one leg, flung him at the President. I laid about me most nobly, drove them all out of the house, and locking the doors, put the key in my pocket.

I then went to the poor king, and making my obeisance to him – Sire, said I, your enemies have all fled; I alone am the National Assembly at present; and I shall register your edicts to recal the princes

and the nobility; and in future, if your Majesty pleases I will be your Parliament and Council. He thanked me, and the amiable Marie Antoinette, smiling, gave me her hand to kiss.

At that moment I perceived a party of the National Assembly, who had rallied with the National Guards, and a vast procession of fishwomen, advancing against me. I deposited their Majesties in a place of safety, and with my drawn sword advanced against my foes. Three hundred fish-women, with bushes dressed with ribands in their hands, came halloing and roaring against me like so many furies. I scorned to defile my sword with their blood, but seized the first that came up, and making her kneel down, knighted her with my sword; which so terrified the rest, that they all set up a frightful yell, and ran away as fast as they could for fear of being aristocrated by knighthood.

As to the National Guards, and the rest of the assembly, I soon put them to flight: and having made prisoners of some of them, compelled them to take down their national, and put the old royal cockade in their place.

I then pursued the enemy to the top of a hill, where a most noble edifice dazzled my sight; noble and sacred it was, but now converted to the vilest purposes, their monument de grands hommes, a Christian church that these Saracens had perverted into abomination. I burst open the doors, and entered sword in hand. Here I observed all the National Assembly marching round a great altar erected to Voltaire: there was his statue in triumph, and the fishwomen, with garlands decking it, and singing Ca Ira! I could bear the sight no longer; but rushed upon these pagans, and sacrificed them by dozens on the spot. The members of the Assembly, and the fish-women, continued to invoke their great Voltaire, and all their masters in this monument de grands hommes, imploring them to come down and succour them against the Aristocrates and the sword of Munchausen. Their cries were horrible, like the shrieks of witches and enchanters versed in magic and the black art; while the thunder growled, and storms shook the battlements, and Rousseau, Voltaire, and Belzebub, appeared, three horrible spectres: one all meagre, mere skin and bone, and cadaverous, seemed death, that hideous skeleton: it was Voltaire, and in his hands were a lyre and a dagger. - On the other

side was Rousseau, with a chalice of sweet poison in his hand; and between them was their father, Belzebub!⁷

I shuddered at the sight; and with all the enthusiasm of rage, horror, and piety, rushed in among them. I seized that cursed skeleton Voltaire, and soon compelled him to renounce all the errors he had advanced; and while he spoke the words, as if by magic charm, the whole Assembly shrieked, and their pandemonium began to tumble in hideous ruin on their heads. I returned in triumph to the palace, where the Queen rushed into my arms, weeping tenderly. Ah, thou flower of nobility, cried she, were all the nobles of France like thee, we should never have been brought to this!

I bade the lovely creature dry her eyes, and with the King and Dauphin ascend my carriage, and drive post to Mont-Medi, as not an instant was to be lost. They took my advice and drove away. I conveyed them within a few miles of Mont-Medi; when the King thanking me for my assistance, hoped I would not trouble myself any farther as he was then, he presumed out of danger: and the Queen also, with tears in her eyes, thanked me on her knees, and presented the Dauphin for my blessing. In short, I left the King eating a mutton chop. I advised him not to delay, or he would certainly be taken; and setting spurs to my horse, wished them a good evening, and returned to England. If the King remained too long at table, and was taken, it was not my fault.

THE END

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

(to The Miller Correspondence, Anon. 1833)

In the late 1970s the great and famous in London and environs began to receive letters from a dogged and colourful correspondent:

139 Elm Park Mansions Park Walk London, S.W.10.

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher The House of Commons, London, S.W.1.

23rd March 1979

Dear Leader!

So they said a woman couldn't do it! They were forgetting Joan d'Arc, the maid of Orleans! She put it over the French with their bidets and so-called soixante-neuf and so will you!

Henry Root, retired wet-fish merchant, wrote to anyone who was anyone, with questions, suggestions, propositions and criticisms – eccentric, blimpish, persistent, and usually enclosing money on some pretext, to guarantee response. Almost all of his victims took him seriously, and the replies make joyful reading.

Henry has an antecedent in the Reverend George Miller, whose correspondence was published in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* in 1833:

Under shapes as various as those of 'old Proteus from the sea', he warily approached his distinguished correspondents, and suited his bait according to the swallow of the illustrious gudgeon for which he angled. To some he wrote for the character of an imaginary footman; in another case, an apocryphal amanuensis, or an ideal servant-maid. With some his correspondence was literary, with others philosophical; a tinge of politics coloured some, a touch of benevolent curiosity distinguished others.

Only the replies are published, with an introduction which performs literary or personal mock-exegesis based on these brief, nonplussed or tetchy answers. From Coleridge, via Maria Edgeworth, James Hogg, Letitia Landon, John Lockhart, Harriet Martineau, Mary Russell Mitford, Thomas Moore, Samuel Rogers, Walter Scott, John Wilson and more, the Reverend Miller elicits answers from many of the leading literary figures of the day. Mischievously, William Maginn is included: founder and editor of *Fraser's Magazine* and probably guide of George Miller's pen.

The 'Miller Correspondence' is typical of the pranks of Fraser's under Maginn's leadership. Set up to rival Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, which had begun to find Maginn's contributions too racy, Fraser's cheekily stole the elder's thunder in every area – but especially in parody:

above all it was to outdo the older journal in its special field of scurrilous satire, witty invective, and the high jinks of 'topical parodies and sham symposia'.²

Lest anyone unfamiliar with the magazine's content think this lowered the quality, the *Wellesley Index* catches the flavour superbly, writing of the 'extraordinary and surprising variety of its materials':

It is not simply that scholarly articles on Homer or Egyptian antiquities, Scottish and Irish stories, ecclesiastical warfare, political tracts, foreign travels, translation from Persian and Hebrew, satiric sketches of contemporaries, essays on German transcendentalism. and literary spoofs jostle each other in startling juxtaposition. The variety of style is even more striking; the tone is scholarly or polemical or conversational, and the brilliant wit can be light, ironic, ingenious, cruel – sometimes all in a single piece. The mixture is astonishing. Turn a page and you jump into another world.³

NOTES

- 1 The Collected Letters of Henry Root (London: Futura, 1982), (lacks page numbering).
- 2 The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 2 vols., v. 2, p. 304.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 304-5.

From THE MILLER CORRESPONDENCE. ANON.

Who the Reverend George Miller, from whom the correspondence we are about to publish takes its name, may be, is a question which we for the present decline answering.² It must be left to the sagacity of those ingenious persons, who amuse themselves or the public in the attempt to discover the author of *Junius's Letters*.³ We feel ourselves just now only at liberty to say that the Rev. George Miller is a lineal descendant of the great Joe Miller,⁴ whose now time-honoured tomb is to be found in the burying-ground of St. Clement's Danes, close in the neighbourhood of Tom Wood's hotel.

Waving, however, further inquiry into the history of Mr. George Miller, we are about to introduce to public notice the results of his valuable labours. Smitten with a desire of collecting the autographs of the illustrious personages, in the author-line, existing in his time, he bent all the energies of his capacious mind to that important object. It was said long ago, that no more compendious way of procuring such curiosities could be imagined than discounting the bills of literary men, because you might in that case be perfectly certain of retaining their autographs, accompanied by notes. This, however, is somewhat too expensive, as the friends of literary gentlemen are well aware; and the Rev. George Miller (who, by the way, is not the Irish doctor of that name) felt it much easier to have recourse to a bland and agreeable artifice whereby to extort the desiderated signatures. Under shapes as various as those of "old Proteus from the sea," he warily approached his distinguished correspondents, and suited his bait according to the swallow of the illustrious gudgeon for which he angled. To some he wrote for the character of an imaginary footman; in another case, an apocryphal amanuensis, or an ideal servant-maid. With some his correspondence was literary, with others philosophical; a tinge of

politics coloured some, a touch of benevolent curiosity distinguished others. From all he received answers; and they have been forwarded to us by a kindness of a nature so distinct and peculiar, that we do not think it possible for us to describe it in terms at all adequate to the sublimity of its feeling. [N.B. We borrowed this last clause from a speech of Patrick Robertson.]⁶

We have about five hundred of the letters lying before us; but as they in their total bulk would fill the Magazine, we are compelled to make a selection. It is highly possible that we shall continue the series. In the mean time, we present our readers with the letters of

Bayly, Thomas Haynes Bulwer, Edward Lytton, M.P. Bury, Lady Charlotte Carlile, Richard

- 5. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor Croker, Right Hon. John Wilson, LL.D. Croker, Thomas Crofton, A.S.S.
 - Croly, Rev. George, LL.D. Cunningham, Allan
- 10. Edgeworth, Maria
 Eldon, Right Hon., the Earl
 of Hallam, Henry
 Hogg, James
 Holmes, William, W.I.
- 15. Hook, Theodore Edward

Hunt, Henry
Irving, Washington
Landon, Letitia Elizabeth,
L.E.L.
Lockhart, John Gibson, LL.B.

- 20. Maginn, William, LL.D.
 Martineau, Harriet
 Mitford, Mary Russell
 Moore, Thomas
 Norton, Hon. Caroline
- 25. Porter, Anna Maria
 Proctor, Bryan William,
 alias Barry Cornwall
 Rogers, Samuel
 Shee, Sir Martin Archer,
 P.R.A.
 Scott, Sir Walter, Bart.
- 30. Wilson, Professor John.

A tolerably extensive list—from Lord Eldon to Henry Hunt, from Sir Walter Scott to Lytton Bulwer, from Coleridge to Carlile. We publish them as they come to hand, with scarcely any attempt at classification; and the first that, as it were instinctively, clings to our fingers is that of L.E.L.

THE MILLER CORRESPONDENCE

I.—MISS LANDON. 7

The document of the fair L.E.L.—on this occasion really the *Improvvisatrice*—is as follows:

22, Hans Place.

MISS L. E. LANDON'S compliments to Mr. Miller, and thinks there must be some mistake in the note she received, as she knows nothing of the young person he mentioned.

But there is another Miss Landon in Sloane Street, and to her Miss L. E. Landon has enclosed the notes.

Saturday.—Miss Landon only returned home this morning.

II.—HENRY HUNT.8

Compare this with the vulgarian twaddle of the old Blacking-man. By the name!—in-door servant!—and, O ye gods! yours respectfully! He did not know but Miller might have a vote for Preston.

36, Stamford Street, Jan. 15, 183-.

SIR.

In reply to your favour by twopenny-post, I beg to observe that I have no recollection of any person by the name of Thomas Stevens ever having lived with me in any capacity; but I am quite sure no such person has ever lived with me as in-door servant.

I am, Sir, Yours respectfully,

H. HUNT.

III.—THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY.9

Haynes Bayly has a pair of notes. By the first, we learn that his benevolent desire of communicating the required information kept him a day in town, which, perhaps, might not have been convenient.

SIR.

I have just received your note dated 22d, in which you seem to allude to a former application to me respecting the character of some man. Your former note I never received, nor can I hear of any note at the Athenæum.

I beg you will therefore let me know the particulars; and as I leave town in the middle of the day to-morrow (Tuesday), I hope you will continue to let me hear from you before twelve o'clock.

Your obedient servant,

THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY.

Athenæum Club, Monday.

By the second, we learn that Mr. Bayly has had a relay of footmen. Eheu!

MR. HAYNES BAYLEY presents his compliments to Mrs. Miller, regrets he can give her no information respecting James Deacon. He has had occasion to change footmen but once, and can therefore state, without the possibility of mistake, that no person of that name ever lived with him.

Athenæum, Tuesday.

IV.—GEORGE CROLY. 10

Dr. Croly judiciously recollects the apparent identity of his name with Crawley. There is something capital and characteristic in the slapdash manner in which he exonerates himself from the trouble of attempting to decipher the address of his correspondent.

Monday, January.

SIR.

No servant of the name of Thomas Deacon has lived with me. But there may have been some mistake in the name, and there is a Mr. *Crawley* who lives in the neighbourhood, in Guilford Street, who may be the person in question. I have not been quite able to ascertain your address, but have set down the name of your street at hazard.

I remain, Sir, Your obedient servant.

GEORGE CROLY.

V.—miss porter. 11

Miss Porter is gentle and considerate. The letter she answers is designated as "polite;" to her unknown correspondent she professes herself "obliged;" she "loses no time in replying;" and, with the most Christian charity, suggests the probability of a mistake, for the sake of the young woman herself. How strange is all this squeamish conscientiousness for the grand humbugger of the Seagrave narrative! Such is human inconsistency.

Esher, January 23d.

SIR.

I lose no time in replying to your polite letter inquiring the character of a young woman, who calls herself Amelia Rogers, and describes herself as having once lived with me as a lady's-maid.

THE MILLER CORRESPONDENCE

I must suppose that she has made some strange mistake, as I never had a servant of that name in any capacity; therefore am led to imagine, that one of the Miss Porters who live at Twickenham is the person she may have served. I trust, for the young woman's sake, that she has made such a mistake, and that she has not designedly represented herself falsely.

It would have given me pleasure, could I have replied satisfactorily to your inquiry as to the truth of her statement.

I beg to remain, Sir Yours obliged,

ANNA MARIA PORTER.

VI.—MISS MITFORD. 12

Our Village comes out of the scrape very well. The reference to "my father" is perfectly in keeping.

Three Mile Cross, Monday.

SIR.

I have no recollection whatever of any person of the name of Amelia Riley having lived with us as lady's-maid; my father also says that he can remember no such name, and it is unlikely that a person filling such a situation should have been entirely forgotten in the family. I cannot but suspect some mistake in the affair, and should recommend a reference to the lady with whom the young woman in question lived last.

I am, Sir, Your obedient servant.

M. R. MITFORD

VII.—MISS MARTINEAU. 13

The only "anonymous name," as an Irish M.P. once phrased it, in the whole recollection is that of Miss Martineau's amanuensis. She will not write, and her scribe cannot venture beyond G. M. What is the "preventive check" in this solitary case? Are the folks ashamed of their names? That Miss Martineau never visited the Continent is evident enough to those who have read any of her stories about the French.

SIR,

I am directed by Miss Harriet Martineau to inform you that there is some mistake on the subject of Berthier's representation, as she never had the pleasure of visiting the Continent.

(for Miss H. Martineau,)
I am, Sir,
Respectfully yours,

G.M.

17, Fludyer Street, October 5.

VIII.—MARTIN ARCHER SHEE. 14
Shee writes as he paints – very tame indeed.

Cavendish Square, Monday, January 24, 183-.

SIR.

If I had received any former letter from you, I should certainly not have left it unnoticed. I have no recollection of a person of the name of Thomas Eldridge having ever lived in my service, and I should suppose there must be some mistake in his statement.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient humble servant,
Martin Archer Shee.

IX.—ALLAN CUNNINGHAM. 15

There is a hardness and solidity about Allan Cunningham's style that reminds us of his original vocation. It is pleasant to find Scotia unadorned breaking out so beautifully as in the last sentence. The "wrong directed" [it would have been better if it had been wrang] and the "seeking to impose," are redolent of Caledonia stern and wild. It is pastoral, too, to find the date Monday morning.

MR. ALLAN CUNNINGHAM's compliments to Mr. George Miller, and assures him that he never received any other letter than the enclosed from him, and that he is not aware of having applied to any person on the subject alluded to—certainly not to Mr. Miller.

Either the enclosed note has been wrong directed, or some one is seeking to impose on Mr. M. in Mr. C.'s name.

27, Lower Belgrave Place, Monday Morning.

THE MILLER CORRESPONDENCE

X.—EDWARD LYTTON BULWER. 16

Dr. Johnson being asked, how it happened, that the smallest note he wrote or dictated was always correct, and even elegant in the turn of its phraseology, replied, "I made it my rule, early in life, always to do my best when I had my pen in my fingers." It appears to us, that the "Simius Maximus" of English literature has not adopted the salutary rule of the "Ursa Major;" at all events, a more boobyish, spoonish specimen of slipslop was never submitted to the sagacious eye of Miller than the following.

Richmond, Tuesday Morning.

SIR.

I am extremely sorry that you should have experienced any delay in receiving an answer to your inquiries. Your note dated the 22d, and just received, is the only one I have received.

I have not the smallest recollection of the name of William Jeffreys—I am quite convinced that no servant of that name ever lived with me two years, or a period of any length whatsoever, even if I should be mistaken in my present persuasion that no servant of that name ever entered my service. I therefore conclude that the man has made some mistake. He may very probably have lived with my brother, Mr. Henry Bulwer, whose address is 38, Hill Street, Berkeley Square.

I have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient servant.

E. LYTTON BULWER.

XI.—LADY CHARLOTTE BURY. 17

It is particularly edifying to find that Lady Charlotte Bury is very sorry, in letter the first, that any lady's-maid's character should be dubious.

LADY CHARLOTTE BURY, in reply to Mr. George Miller's application respecting Sarah Deacon, can only say that such a person has never lived in her service, in ANY capacity—certainly not in that of lady's-maid. But as Lady Charlotte Bury would be sorry to hurt any body's character, she hopes Mr. Miller has been exact in the name.

3, Park Square, Regent's Park, January 21, 183-.