

Elizabeth Singer Rowe, "To one that persuades me to leave the Muses"

Description

[ELIZABETH SINGER ROWE]

•To one that perswades me to leave the Muses•

Forgo the *charming Muses!* No, in spight
 Of your ill-natur'd Prophecy I'll write,
 And for the future *paint* my thoughts at large,
 I waste no paper at the *Hundreds* charge:
 I rob no *Neighbouring Geese* of Quills, nor slink
 For a collection to the Church for ink:
 Besides my *Muse* is the most gentle thing
 That ever yet made an attempt to *sing*:
 I call no Lady *Punk*, nor Gallants *Fops*,
 Nor set the *married world an edge for Ropes*;
 Yet I'm so scurvily inclin'd to Rhiming,
 That undesign'd my thoughts *burst out a chiming*;
 My *active Genius* will by no means sleep,
 And let it then its proper channel keep.
 I've told you, and you may believe me too,
 That I must this, or greater mischief do;
 And let the world think me *inspir'd, or mad*,
 I'll surely write whilst paper's to be had;
 Since Heaven to me has a *Retreat assign'd*,
 That would inspire a less *harmonious* mind.
 All that a Poet loves I have in view,
Delight some Hills, refreshing Shades, and pleasant Valleys too,
 Fair spreading Valleys cloath'd with lasting green,
 And Sunny Banks with gilded *streams between,*
Gay as Elisium, in a Lovers Dream,
 Or *Flora's* Mansion, seated by a stream,
 Where free from sullen cares I live at ease,
 Indulge my Muse, and wishes, as I please,
 Exempt from all that looks like want or strife,
I smoothly glide along the Plains of Life,

30

Thus Fate conspires, and what can I do to't?

Besides, I'm *veh'mently in love to boot*,

And that there's not a *Willow Sprig* but knows,

In whose sad shade I breathe my direful woes.

But why for these dull Reasons do I pause, 35

When I've at hand my genuine *one, because!*

And that my Muse may take no counter Spell,

I fairly bid the *Boarding Schools* farewell:

No *Young Impertinent*, shall here intrude,

And vex me from this blisful solitude. 40

Spite of her heart, *Old Puss* shall damn no more

Great *Sedley's Plays*, and never look 'em o're;

Affront my *Novels*, no, nor in a Rage,

Force *Drydens* lofty Products from the Stage,

Whilst all the rest of the *melodious crew*, 45

With the *whole System of Athenians* too,

For Study's sake out of the Window flew.

But I'to Church, shall fill her Train no more,

And walk as if I sojourn'd by the hour.

To *Stepwel* and his Kit I bid adieu, 50

Fall off, and on, be hang'd and *Coopee* too

Thy self for me, my *dancing days* are o're;

I'le act th' inspired *Bachannels* no more.

Eight Notes must for another Treble look,

In *Burlesque* to make Faces by the book. 55

Japan, and my esteemed *Pencil* too,

And pretty *Cupid*, in the Glass adieu,

And since the dearest friends that be must part,

Old Governess farewell with all my heart.

Now welcome all ye *peaceful Shades* and *Springs*, 60

And welcome all the *inspiring* tender things;

That please my *genius*, suit my make and years,

Unburden'd yet with all but lovers cares.

NOTES:

1 *Muses* – The nine goddesses regarded as presiding over and inspiring learning and the arts, esp. poetry and music (OED).

4 *Hundreds* Corrected from *Hunderds*; a printer's error.

9 *Lady Punk* – prostitute (OED); *Fop* – one who is foolishly attentive to and vain of his appearance, dress, or manners; a dandy, an exquisite (OED).

25 *Elisium* Elysium; the paradise where the gods determined a hero's immortality, a land of perfect happiness (Britannica).

26 *Flora's Mansion* The natural world; Flora is the Roman goddess of the flowering plants (Britannica).

32 *to boot* – in addition (OED).

33 *Sprig* – a small branch of a tree (OED).

41 *Old Puss* A contemptuous term for a woman.

42 *Sedley* Sir Charles Sedley, 4th Baronet, (1639-1701), an English Restoration poet, dramatist, wit, and courtier. One of his most notable works was *Bellamira* (1687) (Britannica).

44 *Force Dryden's lofty Products from the Stage* John Dryden (1631-1700), poet, playwright, and influential critic; the suppression of Rowe's work was linked to censorship of Dryden's dramas (John West, *Dryden and Enthusiasm: Literature, Religion, and Politics in Restoration England*, p. 170).

46 *whole system of Athenians* A reference to The Athenian Society, founded by John Dunton (1659-1733), bookseller and author, in 1691. Rowe regularly published poetry in *The Athenian Mercury*, the society's periodical published by Dunton, between 1693 and 1696.

50 *Stepwel* A made up name for a dancing master; *Kit* – a small fiddle, formerly much used by dancing masters (OED).

51 *Coopee* Coupee; a dance step typically included in a minuet (OED).

53 *Bachannels* Bacchanals; a dance or song in honour of Bacchus, Roman god of wine and fertility (OED).

54 *Eight Notes* Eighth notes; the note separated from any given one above or below by an interval of an eighth (OED); *Treble* The G clef, pertaining to, or suited to the highest part in harmonized musical composition (OED).

56 *Japan* A black compound applied to the eye; *Pencil* – a small brush suitable for delicate work (OED).

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1696), pp. 6-9. [Google Books]

Edited by Celina Lopez