

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 Iâ'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 5
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*; 10
Yet Iâ'm so scurvily inclinâ'd to Rhiming,
That undesignâ'd my thoughts *burst out a chiming*;
My *active Genius* will by no means sleep,
And let it then its proper channel keep.
Iâ've told you, and you may believe me too, 15
That I must this, or greater mischief do;
And let the world think me *inspirâ'd, or mad*,
Iâ'll surely write whilst paperâ's to be had;
Since Heaven to me has a *Retreat assignâ'd*,
That would inspire a less *harmonious* mind. 20
All that a Poet loves I have in view,
Delight some Hills, refreshing Shades, and pleasant Valleys too,
Fair spreading Valleys cloathâ'd with lasting green,
And Sunny Banks with gilded *streams between*,
Gay as Elisium, in a Lovers Dream, 25
Or *Floraâ'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 toâ't?
Besides, Iâ'm *vehâ'mently in love to boot*,
And that thereâ'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 Iâ??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*â??s Plays, and never look â??em oâ??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 Studyâ??s sake out of the Window flew.

But Iâ??to Church, shall fill her Train no more,

And walk as if I sojournâ??d by the hour.

To *Stepwel* and his Kit I bid adieu,

50

Fall off, and on, be hangâ??d and *Coopee* too

Thy self for me, my *dancing days* are oâ??re;

Iâ??le act thâ?? 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,

Unburdenâ??d yet with all but lovers cares.

NOTES:

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

4 *Hundreds* Corrected from â??Hunderds;â?? a printerâ??s error.

9 *Lady Punk* â??Prostituteâ?? (OED); *Fop* â??One who is foolishly attentive to and vain of his appearance, dress, or manners; a dandy, an exquisiteâ?? (OED).

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

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

32 *to boot* â??In additionâ?? (OED).

33 *Sprig* â??A small branch of a treeâ?? (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 plays was *Bellamira* (1687) (*Britannica*).

44 *Force Drydens 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