

Royal Milton

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a publicly argued thesis which were printed as a handout circulated before the thesis was delivered. We learn that the poems were recited not by Milton himself but by John Forster, a Fellow of Christ’s, though the fact that Forster appears to have asked Milton to be a kind of ghost-writer suggests that Milton’s literary reputation was growing within his college, at least, if not within the university more widely. The favourable reports of spectators would have enhanced this reputation: Joseph Mede wrote a second letter to the same friend a week later, praising “an Act at the Schooles well performed”.

The compiler of the “Notitia” was working after the Restoration, which might explain both the royalist slant of many of his notes and his unusual argument that Milton’s early work was among his best:

He was an exact Latinist, great Critick, & commander of an exellent English style. But being made Latin Secretary to the pretended Commonwealth, he abus’d both languages against his King & Church Never was better pen worse imploy’d; he chose ye most unhappy & offensive subjects to write on, that ever was known. His first & last pieces are



John Milton at the age of twenty-one

most innocent & useful.

The compiler suggests that Milton’s pen was best employed when writing apolitically, preferring to see the polemical works of the 1640s and 50s as an “unhappy & offensive” aberration bookended by the pre-Interregnum and post-Restoration writing. Perhaps the compiler’s eagerness to stress Milton’s involvement in the 1629 visit, and the “innocent & useful” Latin poems he wrote for it, arises from this same perspective on the author’s career. In the manuscript, the author goes on to explain that the poems were published in *Poems, &c. upon several occasions both English and Latin* and that “thirteen extra lines were added” to “Natura non pati senium” between the circulation of the printed act verses in 1629 and the publication of Milton’s poems in 1673: these lines were presumably added at some point before *Poems of Mr. John Milton, both English and Latin* was first published in 1645 (here the text of the two poems is the same as that of 1673). That Milton hoarded and probably

ing male figures of the urban landscape culminates in a seedy hotel room. Ramage lures her to this “cabinet particulier” on the pretext of repairing their friendship after his impromptu declaration of love during a performance of *Tristan and Isolde*. He shocks her by once again declaring his feelings, pressing his lips to hers, and grabbing her by the waist. She in turn surprises him with her knowledge of jujitsu; shouting “How dare you!”, she fights him off, “vigorously” and “effectively” punching him under the jawbone. She then threatens to smash all the glasses in the room in order to alert the hotel staff.

Ann Veronica’s Victorian ancestors would have been shocked at her assertiveness. Surprisingly, however, contemporary reviews of the novel accepted this incident at face value. *The Times Literary Supplement* probably represents general opinion: “We cannot like her for her stupidity over the Ramage affair; but we cannot dislike her for using her knowledge of the arts of self-defence when Mr. Ramage was impervious to all other argument”. Ann Veronica’s knowledge of jujitsu is not as outlandish as it may appear. Few methods of self-defence were available to middle-class women in the nineteenth century, but by 1909, the public was aware of martial arts and defensive techniques. Jujitsu had been brought to Britain from Japan in 1899 by an Anglo-Scottish engineer, Edward William Barton-Wright; based on the principle of using the strength and weight of the enemy against him, it was considered ideal for women. By the time *Ann Veronica* was published, there were a number of articles and manuals available, including *Jiu-Jitsu and Other Methods of Self-Defence* (1906) by the featherweight wrestling champion and *jujitsuka* Percy Longhurst; W. H. Collingridge’s *Tricks of Self-Defence* (1914); and *Ju-Jitsu: What It Really Is* (1904) by the magazine editor and music hall wrestler William Bankier. *The Text-Book of Ju-Jutsu As Practised in Japan* (1906), written by Barton-Wright’s Japanese assistant, Sadakazu Uyenishi, remained in print throughout most of the twentieth century. Emily Diana Watts, the first female jujitsu teacher to write a book in English on the subject, entitled *The Fine Art of Jujutsu* (1906), aimed to appeal to the wealthy connoisseur, yet she daringly depicted women wrestling with men at close quarters on damp lawns.

Elsewhere, jujitsu was considered suitable for ladies because it was graceful, with some of the starting manoeuvres resembling the waltz. Soon, martial arts training for women was offered in a network of London *dojos*, or schools. Edith Garrud, who became involved in the suffrage campaign, was known in the British press as “The Suffragette Who Knew Jujitsu”. She trained Emmeline Pankhurst’s bodyguard corps, whose task was to prevent Pankhurst’s re-arrest under the Cat and Mouse Act, and provided shelter for militant campaigners at her London *dojo*.

For all his shortcomings, Wells nevertheless did address the problem of women’s safety. He voiced a common observation at the time, which was that no matter how accomplished a woman may be, she was still at a disadvantage. In *Ann Veronica*, he created a strong female character who not only chose her own man, but could escape from the clutches of Mr Wrong without having to wait for a hero to come to her rescue.

In the autumn of 1629, John Milton returned to Christ’s College, Cambridge, to start his postgraduate studies. Milton began his MA as the university was planning an important event, which the biblical scholar and Christ’s tutor Joseph Mede described in a letter of September 19: “The French Ambassador comes hither on Wednesday next, & they say our Chancellour with him. On Thursday we haue an Act for him at the Schooles. Whether the Comedy at Trinitie will be ready I know not. Some say they cannot gett their lessons”.

Mede’s letter accurately depicts the frantic activity that usually accompanied the visit of monarch or court dignitary to early modern Oxford or Cambridge; he vividly evokes the panicky last rehearsals of a student comedy and the potential embarrassment of an academic orator fluffing his lines in the staged debates at the Public Schools. This 1629 visit would prove typically expensive for the university and the colleges: trumpeters and crowd-controlling bedells had to be paid, stages had to be constructed, and the expenses “for beare spent at ye comedies” were not inconsiderable. Organizers and participants always feared that the comedy would fail to amuse and the debates fail to enthrall their powerful visitors: only three years later, after Charles I’s visit to Cambridge, the Vice-Chancellor hanged himself, allegedly because the comedy had not been a hit with the King and Queen. The pressure of such visits was not just financial and artistic. The visit in 1629 of the French Ambassador, Charles de l’Aubespine, Marquis de Châteauneuf, and the Cambridge Chancellor, Henry Rich, Earl of Holland, occurred at an extremely sensitive moment in Charles I’s reign, a few months after the King had dissolved Parliament and begun his eleven-year “Personal Rule” that would help move the country towards civil war. Sending Holland, one of his favourites, to Cambridge was a gambit to monitor the extent of Cambridge’s conformity. What might be surprising to those who think of Milton primarily as a supporter of the Parliamentary faction and defender of regicide is the student Milton’s involvement in this royalist showcase.

Milton composed two Latin poems specifically for the visit. This significant event in Milton’s student career has not previously been documented, but substantiates the claim of his recent biographers, Gordon Campbell and Thomas Corns, that he was a “conservative” while at Cambridge, and that he was even “deferential to the aristocracy” at this stage of his life. We can find details of Milton’s authorial involvement in an anonymous Latin manuscript miscellany held at Lambeth Palace Library, titled “Notitia Academiae Cantabrigiensis”, probably compiled during the early 1680s. This manuscript states that Milton’s two poems, “Naturam non pati senium” and “De Idea Platonica” – written while he was still a Bachelor of Arts – were “distributed among the assembly” and recited at the staged Philosophy debate on September 24, 1629 (their titles are those of two of the debate topics). The two poems can therefore be classified as “act verses”, synopses of

tinkered with his student works later in life is already known: his own student orations, the Latin Prolusions, were delivered in the late 1620s and early 1630s, but not published until 1674. It is likely, too, that he polished the act verses, or at least “Natura non pati senium”, and embellished it for the 1645 publication.

We have seen that 1629 was a pivotal year in Stuart politics, marking the start of Charles I’s Personal Rule. Just as he sought to control national government, the King also tried to micro-manage the universities, through the direct censorship of controversial sermons and examination questions, the granting of many degrees by royal mandate (to the irritation of the scholars), and the appointment of court favourites like the Duke of Buckingham, then the Earl of Holland (after Buckingham’s assassination) as Chancellors. Although he viewed the universities as “renowned Nurseries of religion and learning”, Charles kept them under close scrutiny, aiming to “reduce all extremities to their proper course”. We see evidence of this forceful royal control in the “Orders & monitions” for the Cambridge visit, on a smaller yet no less significant scale: preserved in the Cambridge University Archives, these Orders suggest a widespread institutional fear about student unruliness, expressly forbidding

rude, and immodest exclamations . . . , nor anye humminge, hakeinge [going about idly], whistlinge, hisseinge, or laughinge . . . , nor any stampinge, or knockinge, nor any other uncivill, or unschollerlike, and boyish demeanor uppon any occasion.

The Orders create a picture of sedate, even uncannily immobile, students, holding their breath and restricting their movement until Chancellor and Ambassador have departed and they can hum, laugh and stamp again. Tacked onto public buildings, these Orders regulated conduct and restricted attendance at the debates in particular: “uppon the penal-tie of ye law”, it was stipulated

That noe Scholler Under ye degree of a M: of Arts doe presume to enter into ye Philosophy Schools, at ye disputation, or to be within ye schoolyard, or to climb up into any window there within ye schooles, or without.

We do not know whether Milton, who had only just started on his MA, would have been permitted to attend the disputation at which his poems were read out, but this order makes his attendance unlikely. Unfortunately, that official effort to control potential student unruliness – an effort related to the stringency of the Caroline regime of the late 1620s and early 1630s towards the universities – may also have also blocked Milton from an early moment of public praise.

In his prose polemic *An Apology* (1642), Milton criticizes student actors for a lack of dignity “upon the Stage writhing and unboning their Clergie limmes”, and “prostituting the shame of that ministry which either they had, or were nigh having, to the eyes of Courtiers and Court-Ladies”. He distances himself from such indecorous behaviour: “There while they acted, and overacted, among other young scholars, I was a spectator; they thought themselves gallant men, and I thought them fools”. Perhaps Milton’s memory of the 1629 visit, and the recitation of his poems “to the eyes of Courtiers”, helped animate his retrospective scorn.