

[double rule]

A  
SMALL POET

I<sup>2</sup>S one, that would fain make himself that,  
which Nature never meant him ; like a Fa-  
natic, that inspires himself with his own  
Whimfies. He fets up Haberdasher of fmall  
Poetry, with a very fmall Stock, and no Credit.  
He believes it is Invention enough to find out  
other Men's Wit ; and whatfoever he lights upon  
either in Books, or Company, he makes bold  
with as his own. This he puts together fo un-  
towardly, that you may perceive his own Wit  
has the Rickets, by the fwelling Difproportion  
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 underftand what  
is beft, he naturally takes the worft, as being  
moft agreeable to his own Talent. You may

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know his Wit not to be natural, 'tis fo un-  
quiet and troublefome in him : For as thofe,  
that have Money but feldom, are always fhak-  
ing their Pockets, when they have it ; fo does  
he, when he thinks he has got fomethings, that  
will make him appear. He is a perpetual Tal-  
ker ; and you may know by the Freedom of his  
Difcourfe, that he came light by it, as Thieves  
fpend freely what they get. He meafures other  
Men's Wits by their Modefty, and his own by  
his Confidence. He makes nothing of writing  
Plays, becaufe he has not Wit enough to un-  
derftand the Difficulty. This makes him ven-  
ture to talk and fcribble, as Chowfes 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 fingering out of Tune ; and those, that cannot play, delight to fumble on Instruments. He grows the unwifer by other Men's Harms ; for the worse others write, he finds the more Encouragement 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

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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 perpetual Apologies, Excuses, and Defences, but still by Way of Defiance, in a Kind of whiffling 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 Insinuations give Men Occasion to suppose so.

If he understands Latin or Greek he ranks himself among the Learned, despises the Ignorant, talks Criticisms out of Scaliger, and repeats Martial's bawdy Epigrams, and sets up his Reft wholly upon Pedantry. But if he be not so well qualified, he cries down all Learning as pedantic, disclaims Study, and professes to write with as great Facility, as if his Muse was

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fliding down Parnaffus. Whatsoever he hears  
 well faid<sup>1</sup> he feizes 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 Cufhion, of mofaic Work,  
 made up of feveral Scraps fewed together.  
 He calls a flovenly nafty Defcription great Na-  
 ture, and dull Flatnefs strange Eafinefs. He  
 writes down all that comes in his Head, and  
 makes no Choice, becaufe 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-Houfes, and come to Nothing.  
 He is like an Italian Thief, that never robs,  
 but he murders, to prevent Difcovery ; fo fure  
 is he to cry down the Man from whom he pur-  
 loins, that his petty Larceny of Wit may pafs  
 unfufpected. He is but a Copier at beft, and  
 will never arrive to practice by the Life : For  
 bar him the Imitation of fomethings he has  
 read, and he has no Image in his Thoughts.

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Obfervation and Fancy, the Matter and Form  
 of juft Wit, are above his Philofophy. He  
 appears fo over concerned in all Men's Wits,  
 as if they were but Difparagements of his  
 own ; and crys down all they do, as if they  
 were Encroachments upon him. He takes  
 Jefts from the Owners and breaks them, as  
 Justices do falfe Weights, and Pots that want  
 Meafure. When he meets with any Thing,  
 that is very good, he changes it into fmall

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<sup>1</sup> Whatsoever he hears well faid, &c. ] In this Butler alludes to  
 Martial's Epigram to Fidentinus. [footnote cont. next page][^2]

Money, like three Groats for a Shilling, to serve several Occasions. He disclaims Study, pretends to take Things in Motion, and to flout 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 himself a dainty spruce Shepherd, with a Flock and a fine filken 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 Sense. 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 rhyme 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 obscure 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 Contraries.

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 increase the Trade of Wit, and maintain a Mul-

titude of fmall Poets in conftant Employment.  
 He has found out a new Sort of poetical Geor-  
 gics, a Trick of fowing Wit like clover-grafs  
 on barren Subjects, which would yield nothing  
 before. This is very ufeul for the Times,  
 wherein, fome Men fay, 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 Buſinefs of Mankind has prefently  
 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-Porridge.

We read that Virgil uſed to make<sup>2</sup> fifty or  
 fixty 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 ;<sup>3</sup> for in plain Engliſh

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it was no better than bringing a Noble to Nine-  
 pence. And as fuch Courſes brought the  
 prodigal Son to eat with Hogs : So they did him

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<sup>2</sup> [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 meditato mane plurimos verſus dictare fo-  
 “ litus, ac per totum diem retracando ad pauciſſimos redigere :  
 “ non abfurde carmen ſe uſæ more parere dicens, et lambendo  
 “ demum effingere.

<sup>3</sup> As Seneca ſays he was in that of a farm.] Seneca in his 86th  
 Epiftle 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.”

to feed with Horfes,<sup>4</sup> 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 Senfe, and, like a Gold-Beater, hammer them into fo many Leaves as will fill a whole Book ; than to write nothing but Epitomes, which many wife Men believe will be the Bane and Calamity of Learning.

When he writes, he commonly fteers the Senfe 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 eafy enough ; and has found out fome fturdy hard Word, that will but rhime, he will hammer the Senfe upon it, like a Piece of hot Iron upon an Anvil, into what Form he pleafes.

There is no Art in the World fo rich in Terms as Poetry ; a whole Dictionary is fcarce

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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 fmall Poets have fuch a Stock of able hard Words lying by them, as Dryades, Hamadryades, Aonides, Fauni, Nymphae, Sylvani, &c. that fignify nothing at all ; and fuch a World of pedantic Terms of the fame Kind, as may ferve to furnifh all the new Inventions and thorough-Reformations, that can happen between this and Plato's great Year.

When he writes he never propofes any Scope or Purpofe to himfelf, but gives his Genius all Freedom : For as he, that rides abroad for his

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<sup>4</sup> So they did him to feed with Horfes] This muft be explained by the fame Writer of Virgil's Life, who informs us, that Virgil in his Youth ftudied Phyfic, in which having made great Proficiency, he repaired to Rome, and applying himfelf to that Branch of it [footnote cont. next page][^6]

Pleasure, can hardly be out of his Way ; fo he  
 that writes for his Pleasure, can feldom be be-  
 fide his Subject. It is an ungrateful Thing to  
 a noble Wit to be confined to any Thing---  
 To what Purpose did the Antients feign Pegafus  
 to have Wings, if he muft be confined to the  
 Road and Stages like a Pack-Horfe, or be forced  
 to be obedient to Hedges and Ditches? There-

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fore he has no Refpect to Decorum and Pro-  
 priety of Circumftance ; for the Regard of  
 Perfons, Times, and Places is a Reftraint too  
 fervile to be impofed upon poetical Licence ;  
 like him that made Plato<sup>5</sup> confefs Juvenal to be  
 a Philofopher, or Perfius, that calls the Athe-  
 nians Quirites.

For Metaphors, he ufes to chufe the hardeft,  
 and moft far-fet that he can light upon---Thefe  
 are the Jewels of Eloquence, and therefore the  
 harder they are, the more precious they muft  
 be.

He'll take fcant Piece of coarfe Senfe, and  
 ftretch it on the Tenterhooks of half a fcore  
 Rhimes, until it crack that you may fee through  
 it, and it rattle like a Drum-Head. When  
 you fee his Verfes hanged up in Tobacco-Shops,  
 you may fay, in defiance of the Proverb, that  
 the weakeft does not always go to the Wall ; for 'tis

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<sup>5</sup> Like him that made Plato, &c.] Who this Blunder is to be fa-  
 thered upon I cannot difcover ; but that which he imputes to Per-  
 fius, and another of Juvenal's, a Paffage of his own in a Part of his  
 Profe Collections called Criticifms upon Books and Authrs, will ex-  
 plain --- Persius, fays he, commits a very great Abfurdity, when  
 laying the Scene of his fourth Satyr in Greece, and bringing in So-  
 crates reproving a young Statefmen, he makes him call the Græ-  
 cians Quirites. [footnote cont. next page][<sup>8</sup>]

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  
 rhyme 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<sup>6</sup> bragged, that their Verses  
 were tougher than Brags, and harder than  
 Marble ; what would they have done, if they  
 had seen these ? Verily they would have had  
 more reason to with 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 fitu Pyramidum altius

Hor. L. 3. O. 30

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

When he writes [i] Anagrams, [i] he uses to lay the Outsides of his Vers\*es even  
 (like a Brick-

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<sup>6</sup> Some of the old Latin Poets, &c.] Thus Horace



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A SMALL POET. 119

layer) by a Line of Rhime and Acrostic, and fill the Middle with Rubbish--In this he imitates [i] Ben Johnson, [i] but in nothing else.

There was one, that lined a Hat-Case with a Paper of [i] Benlowse's Poetry--[i] Prynne [i] 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 recovered; but before he went abroad he wrote a Poem of Rocks and Seas, in a Style so proper and natural, that it was hard to determine, which was rugged.

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

son means was .....

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120 A SMALL POET./ has all Sorts of [i] Echoes, Rebus's, Chronograms,/ &c.[i] besides [i] Carwickets, Clenches, [i] and [i] Quibbles--[i]/ As for [i] Altars [i] and [i] Pyramids [i] in Poetry, he has/ out-done all Men that Way; for he has/ made a [i] Gridiron, [i] and a [i] Frying-Pan [i] in Verse,/ that, beside the Likeness in Shape, the very/ Tone and Sound of the Words did perfectly/ represent the Noise, that is made by those/ Utensils, such as the old Poet called [i] sartago lo-/ quendi. [i] 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 [i] Bridle of Moderation, the Saddle/ of Content, [i] and [i] the Crupper of Constancy;[i] so that/ the same Thing was both Epigram and Emblem,/ even as Mule is both Horse and Ass./ / / {New Paragraph} Some Critics are of Opinion, that Poets/ ought to apply themselves to the Imitation of/ [i] Nature, [i] 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/

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## A SMALL POET. 121/

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/ [i] Chess[i] out of it, make  
 [i] Nature [i] 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 cons\*ider what is fit for them to give,/ than others to receive; that they are  
 fain to/ have regard to the Exchange of Language, and/ /

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122 A SMALL POET. / 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. / / /  
 ##There was a [i] Tobacco-Man, [i] that wrapped / [i]Spanish [i] Tobacco in a  
 Paper of Verses, which/ [i]Benlows[i] had written against the [i] Pope, [i] 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 [i]  
 English [i] Word, and, like the/ [i] Frenchman, [i] that swallowed Water and spit  
 it/ out Wine, with a little Heaving and Straining/ would turn it immediately into  
 [i] Latin,[i] as [i] plun-/ derat ille Domos[i]--Mille [i] Hocopokiana, [i] 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/ / #[i]More the most] There is an  
 appearance Defect or Error in these/ Words; but I leave it to the Reader to supply  
 or correct./

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## A SMALL POET. 123/

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/

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124 A SMALL POET./ 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 [i] Spanish/ paper and Ceruse Lillies and Roses, [i] or [i] claps In-/ fluences--[i] To say, [i] the Graces are her waiting Wo-/ men, [i] when they are known to be no better/ than her Bawdes--that [i] Day breaks from her/ Eyes, [i] when she looks asquint--Or that [i] her/ Breath perfumes the Arabian Winds, [i] 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 rais\*e a/ / ---

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#### A SMALL POEt. 125/

sft and feeble Language like ours to the Pitch/ of [i] High-Dutch,[i] as he did, that writ/ / ## [i] Arts rattling Foreskins shrilling Bagpipes quell.[i]/ / #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 [i] Muse;

[i] 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/ / [i] S\*ome have  
 lately. [i]] This alludes to [i] Davenant--See [i] G---

126 A SMALL POET./ 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/ [i] Philosophers [i] 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/ [i] Plato, [i] 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/ / / 4

A SMALL POET. 127/ in the whole World have been glad to derive/ their Pedi  
 grees, and their Power too, from/ Poets. [i] Alexander [i] the great had no wiser  
 a Way/ so secure the Empire to himself by [i] Right, [i]/ which he had gotten  
 by [i] Force, [i] then by de-/ claring himself the Son of [i] Jupiter; [i] and who/  
 was [i] Jupiter [i] but the Son of a Poet? So [i] Caes\*ar [i]/ and all [i] Rome [i]  
 was transported with Joy, when a/ Poet made [i] Jupiter [i] his Colleague in the  
 Empire;/ and when [i] Jupiter [i] governed, what did the/ Poets, that governed  
 Jupiter?/