

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### *Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson's "The Deserted Wife"*

ELIZABETH GRAEME FERGUSSON (1737–1801) was one of the most prolific and notable poets in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. From her youthful romance with William Franklin; to her account of her trip to Great Britain, which was circulated among elite Philadelphians; to her friendships with John Dickinson, Jacob Duché, Francis Hopkinson, Milcah Martha Moore, Benjamin Rush, William Smith, and Annis Boudinot Stockton, Fergusson's life was filled with wit, sociability, serious reflection, and nearly constant literary production. Most of her poetry remains in manuscript, although many letters to and from Fergusson were edited by Simon Gratz and published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* in 1915 and 1917. The Library Company of Philadelphia, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the William Smith Papers at the University of Pennsylvania Archives and Record Center contain the bulk of her writings. Among this work are letters, petitions, psalm paraphrases, an epic versification of the story of Telemachus, odes to the seasons, devotional poems, a versification of John Dickinson's *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, comments on Benjamin Rush's medical inquiries, and neoclassical poetry on all manner of topics.<sup>1</sup>

"The Deserted Wife" is unusual among Fergusson's oeuvre; indeed, it

<sup>1</sup> Most recent historiography and criticism on eighteenth-century Anglo-American literary cultures see Fergusson as central. See especially David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues & Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997); Anne M. Ousterhout, *The Most Learned Woman in America: A Life of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson* (University Park, PA, 2003); Susan M. Stabile, *Memory's Daughters: The Material Culture of Remembrance in Eighteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY, 2004); Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2008); *Only for the Eye of a Friend: The Poems of Annis Boudinot Stockton*, ed. Carla Mulford (Charlottesville, VA, 1995); and *Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America*, ed. Catherine La Courreya Blecki and Karin A. Wulf (University Park, PA, 1997).

is unusual among eighteenth-century women's poetry in general.<sup>2</sup> The content of the 788-line poem refers to the problems that arose in Fergusson's marriage as a result of the American Revolution and her husband Henry's actions during and after the war. Henry was a Scot eleven years younger than Elizabeth. They were introduced by Benjamin Rush at one of Elizabeth's weekly salons and were married in 1772 after a short courtship. Although Elizabeth had lived much of her life in the city, her father's death shortly after her marriage meant that she and Henry could live on the family estate in Horsham, Graeme Park.<sup>3</sup>

Henry turned out to be a somewhat erratic domestic partner for Elizabeth, however, sometimes disappearing into the city for a week and, during the crucial years 1774–1777, traveling to Britain to tend to family business. When the war impeded his attempts to return to Pennsylvania, Henry took the opportunity to travel with General Howe's army through Maryland, into the Brandywine Valley, and eventually into Philadelphia as an occupation army in September 1777. He was appointed commissary of prisoners and met with some criticism, not the least from his U.S. counterpart, Elias Boudinot, the brother of Elizabeth's longtime friend Annis Boudinot Stockton. During the occupation, Henry lodged with Loyalist friends of Elizabeth's, Charles and Ann Stedman. Although he and Elizabeth saw one another a few times, they did not live together; she stayed at Graeme Park.

When the British left the city in 1778, Henry left, too, travelling to New York. After Henry's departure, one of the Stedman's servants, Jane (also called Jenny), was discovered to be pregnant, and she named Henry Hugh Fergusson as the father. The Stedmans believed her. Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson found herself married to a Loyalist, her family estate attainted as his property, and her husband's fidelity to their marriage in question. Over the next few years, she wrote letter after letter to England, often carried by her Loyalist friends who expatriated to London. Henry's initial assertions of innocence were not convincing to Elizabeth; she persisted in asking for more and more details, more and more proof, more and more declarations of fidelity. Eventually he, and many of her friends, simply refused to discuss the matter or to correspond with her any more.

<sup>2</sup> Fergusson's poem can be found in the Rush Manuscripts, vol. 40, owned by the Library Company of Philadelphia, but in the care of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>3</sup> The facts here and in the next few paragraphs can be found in Ousterhout's biography of Fergusson, *Most Learned Woman in America*, especially chapters 5–7.

In 1780, Elizabeth began working on the following poem, "The Deserted Wife," and continued to work on it through 1783. Although it seems that she may have begun to work on it with the idea of sending it to Henry, perhaps as an argument or a way of stating her case, the extant copy in the Historical Society's care was made for Annis Boudinot Stockton in 1793. Fergusson and Stockton had been friends since childhood, and the advocacy of Stockton's brother, Elias, and her husband, Richard, had been key to Fergusson maintaining ownership of Graeme Park until a few years before her death.<sup>4</sup> The manuscript indicates that Stockton requested that Fergusson transcribe this poem for her, and thus it seems that Stockton solicited Fergusson's rehearsal of the story (at least in verse) at a time when many of her other friends refused to hear anything more about it.<sup>5</sup> It is clear from the marginal notes that Fergusson's wounds, then fifteen years old, were still fresh; indeed, her biographer, the late Anne Ousterhout, asserts that Fergusson suffered from Henry's actions for the rest of her life.

Fergusson's subtitle for "The Deserted Wife," "Il Penseroso," forms another link to Stockton as well as to a larger circle of Delaware Valley poets. The most obvious literary precursor for the subtitle is John Milton's "Il Penseroso" (published with its companion piece, "L'Allegro," in his 1645 *Poems*), which is an ode to the melancholy life of the scholar. But many more local poems stand between Milton and Fergusson. William Smith, professor of rhetoric and belles lettres and provost of the College of Philadelphia, seems to have suggested or insisted that many of his students (the "Schuylkill Swains") compose imitations of, or variations on, Milton's theme. Smith, who married Fergusson's childhood friend, Rebecca Moore, would remain one of Fergusson's confidantes until her death. Smith's student Francis Hopkinson also became a lifelong friend of Fergusson's. In 1757, Hopkinson published a pair of Miltonic poems—titled "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso"—in the periodical that Smith edited, the *American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle of the British Colonies*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Mulford, *Only for the Eye of a Friend*, 7; Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 173–74, 281–83, 290, 304–5, 309.

<sup>5</sup> For example, another childhood friend, Rebecca Moore Smith, stopped communicating with Fergusson on the topic in the 1790s. Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 273–74.

<sup>6</sup> [Francis Hopkinson], "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," *American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle for the British Colonies* 1 (1757): 84–88. On the *American Magazine* as an extracurricular project that Smith and his students worked on, see Rodney Mader, "Politics and Pedagogy in the *American Magazine*, 1757–58," *American Periodicals* 16 (2006): 3–22.

Hopkinson's "Il Penseroso" is dedicated to Smith and alludes to the first installment of Smith's own prose series for the *American Magazine*, "The Hermit," which thematizes the ideas of pensiveness, solitude, and melancholy found in Milton's poem; indeed Milton's scholar retires to a hermitage at the end of his poem. Finally, Fergusson may have known Annis Stockton's own "Ill Penserosa," which Carla Mulford suggests was written during or shortly after the Revolution.<sup>7</sup> These poems on melancholia and pensiveness should be seen in the light of the British canonical tradition, of course, alluding not only to Milton but to the many eighteenth-century poems about hermits, the night, and solitude that we find in the works of well-known poets like Edward Young, James Thomson, Thomas Parnell, and Oliver Goldsmith. But the provincial context is important, too. By connecting "The Deserted Wife" to the tradition of the melancholy scholar as well as to these local literary circles, Fergusson is reminding her reader of both macro and micro contexts for the seriousness of her work.<sup>8</sup>

Most of Fergusson's friends' penserosos were shorter poems, like Milton's, which is under two hundred lines. This difference of quantity matches a difference of quality in the case of "The Deserted Wife," which is rambling, recursive, and difficult to follow. I have said it may have been an argument, but as such it would have certainly failed. During the course of the poem, the reader is treated to an alternative vision of the story of Abraham and Isaac; personifications of Hope, Doubt, Solitude, and Adversity; extended versifications of Henry Fergusson's epistolary denials of infidelity; and descriptions of the seasons whose cyclical pattern mirrors the ever-recurring throes of jealousy and distrust in the poet's mind. In the notes appended between sections of the poem, Fergusson includes excerpts from Henry's letters (the passages she versifies in the poem proper) as well as comments on such things as a novel by Henry Mackenzie and the assassination of King Louis XVI.

"The Deserted Wife" is extraordinary in many ways. Any poem by this gifted and learned poet would be notable. But this is also a document that spans the period of the Revolution up to the first notes of the Terror arriv-

<sup>7</sup> Mulford, *Only for the Eye of a Friend*, 262n12.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Slauter has explored the currency of hermits and solitude in the early republic in "Being Alone in the Age of the Social Contract," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 62 (2005): 31–66. See also David S. Shields, "Mental Nocturnes: Night Thoughts on Man and Nature in the Poetry of Eighteenth-Century America," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 110 (1986): 237–58.

ing from France. Perhaps most importantly, it is a rare instance of strong personal emotions being versified at length. The form chosen for the work—nearly eight hundred lines of heroic couplets—betrays the content, for the depth of feeling here is almost antithetical to the reserved Augustanism of the verse. Certainly, Fergusson and other poets created other poems that explored the heart, romance, and melancholy; however, these are almost always removed from becoming personalized statements. Through abstraction or fictionalization, via such conventions as the use of pastoral settings and characters, these poems are meant to speak to universals, not particulars. Literary critics have apologetically noted this aspect of eighteenth-century women's poetry: Susan Stabile, in the "Introduction" to Ousterhout's biography of Fergusson, notes how the poet's habitual neoclassicism does not correspond to "our contemporary relish for confessional lyrics."<sup>9</sup> Carla Mulford, introducing Stockton's work, asserts: "What emerged in the eighteenth century, then, was a highly public and social poetry, a poetry that appealed to and personified abstract qualities and expressed the general, the typical, the ideal."<sup>10</sup> What we find in "The Deserted Wife," then, is an anomaly in the tradition of eighteenth-century poetry, and one penned by one of the foremost Philadelphia writers of the time. "The Deserted Wife" is a rare instance of Augustan erudition enveloping a most painful and *particular* true story; one of damaged reputations, confiscated homes, broken hearts, and adultery, all amid the chaos of revolution.

#### *A Note on the Text*

Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson's handwriting was difficult for her contemporaries to read. Her recent biographer tells us that Fergusson's last great work, her versification of François Fénelon's *Telemachus*, never saw the press because the printer would not work with the manuscript Fergusson submitted, requesting that she provide a fair copy.<sup>11</sup> The challenges presented by the poet's hand may be even worse at the distance of two centuries. In cases where I simply cannot decipher a word but have a strong hunch, I have included my guess in brackets. Also, I have not cor-

<sup>9</sup> Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 23–25.

<sup>10</sup> Mulford, *Only for the Eye of a Friend*, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 327, 329.

rected spelling “errors,” some of which may merely be sloppy handwriting. If Fergusson’s spelling of a word threatens to impede sense (which most do not), I have included a note.

The manuscript is written on laid paper that is roughly nine inches long and seven and a half inches wide, made from a fifteen-inch sheet folded in half. It is unclear whether these pages were bound together originally. The copy of this poem in the Rush papers has been bound into a much larger book. During this process, the compiler entered four pages out of order, probably through turning one of the larger sheets “inside out.” The content of the poem makes the original order fairly clear, however, and I have reordered them silently.

The bound copy of “The Deserted Wife” is accompanied by a copy of the *General Advertiser* for Wednesday, March 27, 1793, in which the manuscript seems to have been wrapped. In the middle of the newspaper, written upside down, is the following:

Il Penserosa  
a Poem  
written at different times  
in 1781, 82, 83  
to Mrs Stocton

At the bottom of the same page is the following:

Mrs Stocton is desir’d to show this only to such of her  
Friends as have heard  
the Cause of my Separation with Mr Fn and have  
Delicacy, Sensibility and Candor to make allowances  
April 21, 1793

While one might be tempted to think that Fergusson chose this newspaper at random, the opposite side of the sheet bears a very particular reference to one paratext of the work. In a note at the end of part 2, Fergusson displays her interest in the French Revolution, especially her horror at the assassination of the king. The *General Advertiser* in which Fergusson enclosed the manuscript includes a number of features covering the last days of Louis XVI, including “The Last Requests of Louis!” “Execution of Louis XVI. Paris, Jan. 22,” and “Further Particulars of the King’s Condemnation. Saturday, Jan. 19—at Night.”

Additional notes on the transcription:

- Fergusson included line numbers at various places in the text. I say "various" places because, according to my count, her numbers do not correspond to the actual number of lines of text. The numbering error that is easiest to see is in the beginning of part 2: Fergusson marks the ninth line "10." I have numbered every fifth line, restarting at each of the new "parts" or sections, for ease of reference.
- Fergusson includes a few footnotes to "The Deserted Wife." I have marked these with "EGF's note." All other footnotes are mine.
- Fergusson frequently made use of a ligature to indicate "-ed," for instance, "desired" would be written "desird" but with an elongation of the stem of the "d" to indicate an apostrophe. I have rendered all of these with the apostrophe, e.g., "desir'd."
- In a number of places, Fergusson writes one of the key words of that section of the poem larger, so that "Hope" is larger in the first and thirtieth lines of part 1, and "Lone Solitude" is larger in line 1 of part 3. She does not do this consistently, however, so I have chosen not to highlight each instance in the text.
- Fergusson includes a "leader" word at the bottom of a page, which I have not included. Superscripted or subscripted text is usually accompanied by a caret; I have silently corrected these. Fergusson also periodically writes a word twice, which I have silently corrected.

*The Deserted-Wife*

Il Penseroso: or the Deserted-Wife.<sup>12</sup>

A Poem in Four Parts.

Hope. Doubt. Solitude. Adversity.

Written at different periods of Time

In the years 1780, 1781, 1782.

Hope. Part the First.

Hope soft aswager<sup>13</sup> of all Ills below!  
 Thou gentle Soother of each poignant Woe!  
 Attend, and mitigate this keen Distress,  
 Which this dark season doth my soul oppress:  
 Glance o'er my Spirits like a Winter Sun, 5  
 Which Hints a Spring in Nature is begun:  
 That Sure, tho Silent, works behind the Scene  
 Soon to be mantled with reviving Green:  
 Disspell my Horrors with a Ray Divine!  
 A Ray Refulgent from th'Eternal Shrine! 10  
 Where thou [Burning] dost ever ready wait!  
 To smooth, and soften the harsh dreary Fate  
 Of Mortals struggling through Life's pensive Vale,  
 Where Foes on Foes our short repose assail!  
 Thou soft Conveyor of ethereal good! 15  
 Thou kind Dispenser of celestial Food!  
 Raise, raise my views beyond this Clay Bound Spot,  
 Where Sin and Sorrow all our Comforts Blot!  
 Chequer each Pleasure, mar each young Delight,  
 As nipping Frosts Springs early Blossoms blight. 20  
 And sap the Foliage of the blooming Tree,  
 Where blushing Beauties we were wont to see

<sup>12</sup> The title is written in the manuscript. with a double hyphen or equal sign (=) rather than a single hyphen. I have changed every instance of this in the poem in the interest of clarity. Also, note the ambiguity in the status of the title and subtitle. In colonial and revolutionary Pennsylvania, "deserted wife" was a semilegal category: deserted wives could apply for aid from the Overseers of the Poor. See Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730–1830* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), 19.

<sup>13</sup> "assuager"

as fragrant Pledges that the fruit begun;  
 Would glow concocted in the Summers Sun.  
 The little Embrios would expand and grow! 25  
 And lively Juices in their Channels flow:  
 Where Sight, Taste, Smell, should all regaled Be  
 In the Rich product of the loaden'd Tree.  
 Hope deign to enter my benighted Breast!  
 Dispel Despair that sullen gloomy Guest! 30  
 Drive her to Darkness plung'd in Ebon Night  
 Far from the Regions of Pelucid Light.  
 Where deep envelop'd in Egyptian Folds  
 In gloomy State her solemn Court she holds.  
 Her blue sulphureous gloom she does display 35  
 Where dusky shadows Dubious Forms convey!  
 O rest sweet Phantom in my humble bell<sup>14</sup>  
 With me Inhabit while below I dwell  
 So shalt thy Presence tinge each object here  
 Brighten Misfortune and e'en Pain endear! 40  
 Strew Roses where the prickly Bramble grew  
 And breath like Incense thy refreshing Dew!  
 Thy Vistas transient gleam like Dying Fires  
 Which Start and tremble eer<sup>15</sup> the Light expires  
 When the Spent oyl a vacant Lamp betrays 45  
 A weak, unstable, momentary, Blaze.  
 Thus when the Patriarch by divine Command  
 His child to slay rear'd his trembling Hand!<sup>16</sup>  
 With Grief appal'd in act to Strike the Blow,  
 His Hearts strings rending with paternal Woe 50  
 No Stay on Earth, no Prop beneath the Skies;  
 With one fond look he cast to heaven his Eyes!  
 When Lo! a voice pervades his listening Ear  
 A voice which scathes every recent Fear!

<sup>14</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*), "A bubble formed in a liquid. (The ordinary word for 'bubble' in modern Scotch, whence occasional in English literature.)," at "bell, n.3," *OED*, <http://www.oed.com/>.

<sup>15</sup> "ere"

<sup>16</sup> The patriarch and his child are Abraham and Isaac.



Note by E Fn [March<sup>20</sup>] 1793

My Dear Mrs Stocton.

This little narrative of Domestic Distress was written at the Interval of near two years: and as some parts of it appear Contradictory to others, This seeming contradiction arises from Circumstances arising in the Course of my Investigation of painful Facts; for and against the Character who is the subject of my affection.

When it falls in your hand (as you desir'd a Copy of it And I then resum'd it) I would wish the perusal of it could be limited to Such few of your Friends; as have feeling delicate Hearts and consider it as a proof of a warm Heart, than the production of a Cool Head. When I had my Pen in my Hand to finish Hope I was summoned to town 1780 to close the Eyes of Anna Smith my Dear Neice who I brought up.<sup>21</sup>

Part the Second II Penseroso

Doubt written 1782.

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O Gracious God supream Grand Source of all!  
 Thou Cause of Causes 'tis to Thee I call!  
 Tis Thou alone their Energy bestow  
 Bright Hope pale Fear Warm Faith from Thee all Flow  
 Tis Thou alone points all their piercing Darts 5  
 When aim'd unerring at their Votarys Hearts!  
 Else all were Chaos like unfashion'd Earth  
 Before thy Word spake Beauty into Birth!  
 If Thou withdrawst thy Face Lifeless they Burn!  
 Thou art the Flame and they the tallow [warm]! 10  
 By Thee [Commissioned] with mans Race to Dwell  
 Strong to attract or vigirously repell!

<sup>20</sup> In all honesty, this looks more like "April" than "March" to my eye, but given that part 2 is dated March 29, 1793, I have chosen to interpret the more logical date. It is a mark of Fergusson's inscrutable hand that the choice between the words "March" and "April" could feel like a toss-up.

<sup>21</sup> Anna Young Smith was raised largely by Fergusson and began to establish a reputation as a poet herself before her death at twenty-four on April 3, 1780. See Pattie Cowell, *Women Poets in Pre-Revolutionary America, 1650-1775: An Anthology* (Troy, NY, 1981), 169-78; and Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 264.

To lure to Virtue, and from vice to draw  
 To mark thy Precepts And observe thy Law  
 Mans walk to gild and radiate in Gloom 15  
 From the soft Cradle to the Silent Tomb!  
 Then if the Sparrows fall to Thee be known  
 And things most trivial can ascend thy Throne;  
 Oh deign to cast one pitying Look toward me  
 The Suffering of an Injur'd woman see! 20  
 Restore my Henry to a spotless name,  
 And teach me how to clear his slander'd Fame.  
 If he is guiltless may he guiltless shine  
 Or if prov'd faulty teach me to resign  
 This nearest Tye and take my Cross below; 25  
 That I here after future Joys may know  
 Where no frail passion no entangled Knot  
 Can find admission in that holy spot<sup>22</sup>  
 Bless'd as the Seraphs in the Courts above;  
 All love Concenter'd into heavenly Love 30  
 In this grand Fount all lesser Streams are lost  
 Tho' while below with dreadful Conflicts tost  
 For while we travel in this Earth Bound Sphere  
 We lean and fasten on some Dear;  
 Which rends the Heart Strings when it Flies or Fades 35  
 Its Loss the Comfort of our Life o'ershades!  
 This is the Foot, the Dear Eye, the Dear Right Hand!  
 Which must be yielded in this Pilgrim Land.  
 The tender Ewe Lamb which we nightly fed  
 That laid her Fleece within our Downy Bed! 40  
 Drank of our Cup and as a Child was near  
 And by its fondness did each act endear  
 Must be resign'd tho' it shall pierce the Heart,  
 Life's Lesson is from all we love to part.  
 These we must yield at Heavens triumphant [Gate] 45

<sup>22</sup> "these as they change almighty Father these/Are but the vary'd God"—(Tomson Hymn to the Seasons) (EGF's note). In James Thomson's "A Hymn on the Seasons" (1730), the initial word "these" refers to the seasons. It is unclear in the manuscript what Fergusson refers to in the absence of any direct or indirect reference to the seasons. I have keyed it to this line, the last line on the manuscript page, because the note appears at the bottom of the page. James Thomson, *The Seasons and the Castle of Indolence*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford, 1972), 159.

Ere we are Crown'd with Joys that Martyrs wait  
 Heaven makes its Terms Obedience is its Due!  
 We must the Thorny path as pleas'd pursue  
 As tho the [Balmy] Rose along was Strew'd;  
 And the smooth Road with fragrant Showers bedew'd 50  
 Squint Eyed Suspence be gone, with Janus look  
 Thou double monster by [white] Peace forsook:  
 Thou bitter Dasher of serene Repose;  
 From thy dark veins a venom'd passion flows:  
 Then Proteus<sup>23</sup> like assumst swift varying Forms 55  
 Alternate Freezing and Altirnate warms;  
 Thou worrying, trying, dark tormenting Guest,  
 Thou foe to Comfort and a tranquil Rest  
 Fly I conjure thee with thy Partner Fear!  
 And Join thy Offspring Palid sad Despair 60  
 In one dark Groupe Collect in [Joyous] night;  
 And guilty Consciencences with [Terror] fright  
 But let the virtous from thy Pangs be free  
 Nor harmless Bosoms thy dark visage see.  
 And O forgive me where so e'er thou art, 65  
 Thou once fond partner of my guiltless Heart!  
 Forgive Suspicion and a mean Distrust,  
 Forgive, forgive if I have been unjust!  
 Forgive the Conflicts of a Suffering Wife  
 Whose minds too feeble to Support the Strife 70  
 Of vile attack some dark mysterious Plan  
 By Woman plotted and in Hell began,  
 Low at thy [ ]<sup>24</sup> I will a Suppliant Bend,  
 And pray in Pity thou wilt Condescend  
 To Speak my Pardon and to Seal my Doom 75  
 Before I enter the dark Dreary Tomb  
 For Heaven wont pardon while you distant fly  
 And wrath hangs vengful in your louting Eye.  
 My Shatter'd fortunes I with calmness Bore

<sup>23</sup> Janus is the two-faced god of the Romans; Proteus a god who could change shape. *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Myth* (London, 1996), s.vv. "Janus," "Proteus," <http://www.credoreference.com/entry/bloommyth/proteus> (accessed July 30, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> This is simply a missing word.

A Loss in Common but with thousands more 80  
 A Public Evil dire Effects of War  
 Yet on my Mind left an Indented Scar  
 No Sting was hurt by Hands that should have sooth'd  
 No path was brambled where I thought it smooth'd!  
 No tear for this fell down my faded Cheek 85  
 Patient I bore it with demeanor meek  
 Theives might break through or [Cankering Pest] Destroy  
 Or Flames consume the transitory toy  
 But here my Henry charg'd with Crimes so Base  
 It wounds me deep to hint this dire disgrace. 90  
 a year [revolv'd] since one kind Letter came!  
 Silent from anger or ignoble Shame!  
 A wretched woman Crys aloud her wrongs  
 And swears her Ruine to your act belongs.  
 A Feeble Infant is produced to view; 95  
 And Ills on Ills my tangled Steps pursue,  
 My Freind afronted, and your honour Soil'd  
 Beneath this Roof This Servant mean beguil'd  
 A favor'd Hand maid to her Mistress Dear  
 A Shameful narrative obtrudes my ear 100  
 Twas I oh Henry brought you to these Walls!<sup>25</sup>  
 Couldst thou then [ ]<sup>26</sup> Deaf to Hospitable Calls!  
 Oer look each tye both Decent and Divine;  
 Couldst thou thine Honour so complete Resign  
 Thus to forget thy Friend, thy Self, thy Wife! 105  
 And mark with anguish my remaining Life:  
 An Honest man with unsuspecting heart;  
 Did all the Comforts of his House impart  
 Nor Chirlish gave but [unreserv'd] and Free;  
 And kindly treated cause allied to me 110  
 Though thy own Manners might demand Esteem  
 Thy various merits once my darling Theme!

<sup>25</sup> During the occupation of Philadelphia, Henry Hugh Fergusson stayed in the home of Charles Stedman, the uncle of Elizabeth's friend and housemate for most of her life, Betsy Stedman. It was through his connection to Elizabeth that Henry found lodging under Stedman's roof and, consequently, met Jenny, one of the Stedman's servants. Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 259–60.

<sup>26</sup> Another missing word.

Couldst thou for this return a Deed so mean,  
 Here draw a veil draw an [impervious] Screen  
 This Stamps with Shame (if true) thy Blasted Fame 115  
 And raises Blushes when I hear thy Name  
 Brings the Salt tears on each sad annual Day,  
 I gave my Heart and plighted vows away,  
 Thou art traduc'd, thou sure art Slander'd Still;  
 And I impos'd on by superior Skill: 120  
 This Scheme of Cunning has been Deeply laid  
 And dark Deception does my peace invade.  
 She Syren like has sung her Specious tale;  
 And shall her Fictions oer thy Word prevail  
 Tis forg'd tis fabricated tis all art; 125  
 Tis hatch'd to torture my afflicted Heart  
 To gain provision for her spurious Brood!  
 Which claims no Drop of Henrys honest Blood!  
 When Men of Fashion Here will sneering smile  
 That I once thought thee so devoid of guile 130  
 That thou holdst Truth as sacred on thy Part,  
 From the same moment that thou pledgst thy heart  
 As thou expected Faithfulness from me  
 One Omnipresent did each promise See!  
 In Heavens pure Eye no vain Distinctions made 135  
 Of Man or Woman if his Faith betray'd  
 Had all Circassia's Beauties stood reveal'd!  
 And no thin Robes their polish'd Limbs conceal'd,  
 Such as in Montagues smooth lines we read<sup>27</sup>  
 When Turkish Bangnios Sensual Gazes feed; 140  
 I could in Confidence have heard you tell  
 In what the fairest did the fair Excell:  
 But neer have fear'd they would your [Souls] inspire  
 With warm emotions of impure Desire!  
 Thy glowing Subjects of a painters art, 145  
 Who to the Canvass might their Charms impart

<sup>27</sup> This alludes to Lady Montagues account of the Turkish women, and their Baths where their [ ] (EGF's note). Elizabeth and Henry were both familiar with Mary Wortley Montagu's Persian Letters, as is clear from Henry Fergusson's appended letter, below. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London, 1994).

Models for Venus or the Parian Stone<sup>28</sup>  
 Their living Beauties to the marble flown  
 The art admir'd abstracted from the Wish  
 of Fancied Pleasure or luxurious Bliss 150  
 When first my Pen reluctant did relate,  
 To you this story of thy ruin'd state!  
 Such were the Lines you in the Page returnd  
 While at the Charge you all Indignant Burn'd:  
 The verse dont Highten what the prose Exprest, 155  
 It rather weakens what was written Best.<sup>29</sup>  
 "By every Tye that Binds the Human Race,  
 My Conscience Clears me of this foul Disgrace  
 By all the Powers where Influences unite  
 To grace Society with pure Delight; 160  
 By pure Conubial Love I Solemn swear,  
 And void of guile I can with truth Declare  
 By me that woman never was betray'd;  
 Nor through my means a blushing mother made.  
 By me that Woman never was beguil'd, 165  
 I never yet have Virgin honour Soil'd.  
 Tho from my tongue no rigid morals flow  
 Nor Saint like piety my Manners show  
 Yet I can say with genuine Honour Here,  
 For me no Woman ever Shed a tear, 170  
 a guilty mother I no female made  
 No Simple Girl with specious arts betray'd;  
 And since I took the sacred marriage vow  
 I no loose Pleasures to my self allow!  
 Shorn to the quick your Sorrows touch my heart 175  
 I feel them all with agonizing smart,  
 But Chief superior o'er the sable train

<sup>28</sup> Parian Marble the finest for Statues in Greece and whitest (EGF's note). In this note, the word "Italy" is obliterated where "Greece" appears.

<sup>29</sup> The lines that follow are a versification of the letter appended to the end of this part. Fergusson includes a set of quotation marks beside each line on the left side of the page, as was sometimes done in printed works. The end quotation, after "roll," is also included, as given here. However, it seems that Fergusson drew the quotation marks first, without counting the number of lines needed, because there are a few too many; that is, a few lines still contain left-hand quotation marks after the right-hand end quotation mark after "roll" and the break in the verse paragraph.

This last<sup>30</sup> attacks me with acutest pain  
 Because I know supreme o'er all the Rest  
 This deepest wrankles in your wounded Breast 180  
 What wounds my Fame I know too wounds your soul  
 And makes keen anguish in your Bosom roll."  
     I read exulting in an Honest Pride!  
 And the low malice of her art Defy'd  
 My tottering Fortune was at once forgot 185  
 And Hope Illumin'd all my future Lot  
 A virtous man tho' poor and lost to show,  
 To me was treasure in my Walk below;  
 My spirits Cheer'd I thus delighted Cryd,  
 My God I know will Food and Cloths provide 190  
 Who feeds the Ravens and the Sparrow feeds,  
 With Eye Paternal all Creation Heeds:  
 From Natures Lap he will a little pour;  
 That I may gather from the Reservoir!  
 I have no Infants to Incite to hoard; 195  
 And mourn them craving round my scanty Board  
 In brighter Days I did my morsel Share,  
 And of my little did that little Spare.  
     I lov'd the Circle of the Social Hour;  
 My Soul expanded to soft Friendships power, 200  
 Yet the small circle I can make still less  
 And hope Content the tender Groupe may Bless  
     First to my Stella<sup>31</sup> who my sorrows knew  
 With ardent Haste and fluttering Heart I flew  
 Warm'd with Emotion trembling then I Cry'd 205  
 (With heaving Bosom and with virtous Pride)  
 "My Henrys Clear His Honour shines to view,<sup>32</sup>  
 In this one act all generous fair and true:

<sup>30</sup> Here the manuscript contains a palimpsestic "Chief," an indication that Fergusson was copying from a manuscript and lost her place.

<sup>31</sup> "Stella" is Betsy Stedman's cognomen, or the name by which she would have been known to Fergusson's literary circle. See David S. Shields, "British-American Belles Lettres," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, vol. 1, 1590–1820, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch and Cyrus R. K. Patell (Cambridge, 1994), 314.

<sup>32</sup> As with the earlier "quotation," Fergusson includes quotation marks down the left side of the column to the end of the verse paragraph, but she does not include an end quotation mark.

Your Uncles House he never made the Scene  
 of Brutal vices scandalous and mean; 210  
 With me Rejoice with me too long you mourn'd  
 Too long with Sympathetic Sorrow turn'd  
 Your friendly heart will now be pleas'd that Shame  
 Is metamorphos'd to a Spotless name!  
 That all the Story was a specious tale 215  
 To blast my Henry and my Peace assail,  
 But Heaven be prais'd such arts can ne'r prevail!  
     Next to my servants eagerly I flew,  
 For all My Household the mean story knew!  
 Eager and earnest I delighted went; 220  
 My Soul with anguish and with trouble pent  
 Eager expanded to give joy full vent<sup>33</sup>  
 I hail'd all objects in this Circle near,  
 For recent Sorrow did Each Face endear,  
 Each Rank seem'd level'd which in prosperous Days 225  
 From Prides false glass the Eye too vain surveys!  
 With Sorrow humbled and with Grief opprest,  
 I Sought the Sympathy of every Breast.  
 Ardent I long'd my Henry to meet;  
 And with sweet peace his wounded Spirit greet, 230  
 My calmer Friends Still urg'd a cool Delay;<sup>34</sup>  
 For Doubts and Dangers Strew'd the Briary way!  
 Love like a pioneer yet clear'd the road;  
 And nought of Danger in the passage show'd  
 All Doubts and Dangers, I bid far be gone 235  
 Chac'd by th' Influence of affections Sun!  
 Deaf to cold Prudence, and to Interest voice,  
 I in this proof of Fondness did rejoice  
 a train of Ills I combated to prove:  
 How High I held his unabated Love 240  
 A Heart warm glowing in my Countrys side,  
 And Clashing views did Various Cares divide:

<sup>33</sup> Fergusson draws a bracket in the left-hand margin of the preceding three lines, a conventional indication that the triplet (three rhymed lines as opposed to two) is intentional.

<sup>34</sup> Fergusson may be thinking of the Stedmans here, who believed Jenny from the beginning. See Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 259–60.

Yet all was yielded to a Husbands call:  
 He Seem'd the Poll Star that attracted all.  
 I went, I saw, I [all] the weakness Show'd 245  
 Which is in Womans poor frail Sex bestow'd!  
 In that Sad hour as from my arms he flew,  
 Just as he gave a fond and Soft adieu;  
 Such were his Words with genuine air convey'd,  
 Which no Confession at the Time betray'd. 250  
 "See this vile woman my dear Betsy see  
 And hear These words perhaps the last from me,  
 Demand from me How she as parent name  
 To this poor Infant which proclaims her Shame!  
 As much the mother of that Child thou art 255  
 As I with Truth can claim a Fathers part  
 Believe your Husband in this point believe!  
 Who scorns His Betsy meanly to Decive  
 Your Friends Domestic I with Distance view'd:  
 Nor did in Decency's nice Line intrude! 260  
 Sure some Infernal Plot is deep design'd,  
 Our fatal union fatal to unbind:  
 To paint me odious, mean, and all unjust!  
 Stranger to Honour and a Slave to Lust."  
 Peace breath'd meliflous in each Balmy Sound 265  
 And drew the poison from the festering wound,  
 Shed a soft requiem o'er my bleeding Heart,  
 Which long had struggled with Suspicious Dart;  
 My Sole Resentment to my self was turn'd  
 To think my Bosom had Indignant Burnd 270  
 With Jealousys Ignoble yellow Flame;  
 Which Made me thus My honest Henry Blame;  
 Then why this change? Then why this mean Distrust?  
 Beware! Beware! be not again unjust!  
 Least you as Suppliant plead and Plead in vain, 275  
 And never more Conubial Peace regain  
 Love and Resentment each is feeling Strong,  
 The Passions diferent from one Source belong,  
 Loves Flame inverted glows with anger keen,  
 No Soft Emotions in its Fires are seen; 280

Then dread the moment which your Henry Lost,  
 And your Peace Shipwreck'd on Suspicious Coast,  
 If Guilty worthless, Innocent so pain'd  
 No future Confidence can be maintain'd!  
 Loves Lamp Extinguish'd never can revive 285  
 Reasons too cold to keep the Flame alive  
Prudence may preach, and Interest may plead,  
 But Love such Monitors disdains to Heed.  
 They from the Head; the Heart [he] still directs,  
 And Calmer Councils vigorously Rejects. 290  
 Love acts from Feelings Passions guide the Helm  
 O'er all the Vessels in this Boisterous Realm,<sup>35</sup>  
 Lifeless and Dull Philosophy appears,  
 The Slow associate of declining years!  
 I drop the Curtain here I draw the veil! 295  
 Nor further enter on the Dubious Tale  
 Time Soon must deepen, or Expell the gloom  
 And Change Suspence to a determin'd Doom!  
 Yet some what whispers we're ordain'd to part  
 Tho' the last pang should penetrate my Heart. 300  
 [Less] every Ill than daily for to prove,  
 The varied agonies of Slighted Love!  
 Oh Shield me, keep me from this Tale protect,  
 From Careless apathy and Cold neglect!  
 Can I love Honour, and that man obey 305  
 Who could premeditate my Peace betray?  
 Who nine long months<sup>36</sup> appear'd with Brow Serene  
 With Smiles of Innocence and artless Mien  
 Saw all my anguish all my Troubles knew,  
 Heard Sighs unfeign'd, and tears from sorrow true; 310

<sup>35</sup> On love and passion, see Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*. In her construction of the place of passion in the companionate marriage, Fergusson fits squarely into Eustace's overall narrative, in which her writings figure prominently, albeit before her marriage and the Revolution.

<sup>36</sup> Nine months seems to indicate the period during which Henry was in Philadelphia: coming and going with the British, he stayed from September 1777 to June 1778. During this time, Henry wanted Fergusson to stay with him in the city, but she was reluctant, only visiting periodically. She evidently thought it was too dangerous for him to stay at Graeme Park. As she explains in a note to Stockton in 1787, during this time she only spent "about a fortnight with him." See Martha C. Slotten, "Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson: A Poet in 'The Athens of North America,'" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 108 (1984): 259–88, quotation at 281n52.

Tears for my Country Sighs for my own Fate  
 And Ills unnumber'd in this Bleeding State  
 The Sword and Fire was Ravaging around,  
 And dearest Friends felt then the general wound!  
 Yet low Intrigue 'tis Sd your thoughts engage 315  
 Patience her Self kindles into Rage!  
 No, let me lead a dull inglorious Life,  
 But free from Conflicts of internal Strife  
 Let Stupid Apathy to grief Succeed  
 And lonely Sorrow Contemplation Feed! 320  
 My Breast can only its own Sadness tell  
 And what Sensations in my Bosom dwell  
 If to my Self I then am only known  
 All Recollection must be ever flown  
 Ere I my Henry could as Father see! 325  
 To any Babe that was not Sprung from me!  
 Then no reproaches from my tongue shall hear  
 No harsh recitings shall invade your Ear  
 No louting Brow shalt thou resentful Spy  
 No tear Indignant starting from my Eye 330  
 Too deep my Sorrow too acute my Grief,  
 From Common Sources to extract relief!  
 Sad Silence only shall my sufferings veil  
 As I glide cheerless through Lifes gloomy Dale  
 Least of the least an unconnected Thing! 335  
 Who droop'd deep wounded by afflictions Sting  
 The Reed she lean'd on provd a pointed Spear<sup>37</sup>  
 To peirce her Soul with agency severe  
 The Elm shrunk back to which adhered the Vine  
 No Prop it met, its Foliage to entwine, 340  
 No fostering shelter for its Branches found

<sup>37</sup> The primary source for the image of the broken reed is Isaiah 36:6, where it warns of the perils of trusting the Pharoah. Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, one of Fergusson's favorite texts, also features the following lines:

"Lorenzo? At thy Friends' Expeuce be wise;  
 Lean not on Earth; 'twill pierce thee to the Heart;  
 A broken Reed, at best; but, oft a Spear;  
 On its sharp Point Peace bleeds, and Hope expires."

See Edward Young, *Night Thoughts*, ed. Stephen Cornford (Cambridge, 1989).

[It] Died it wither'd trampled to the ground!  
 Fair might it flourish'd by a Gentle Hand  
 Had fondly rear'd it with a soft command!  
 And would a tribute gratefully have paid 345  
 To the asylum that had lent it aid  
 But Fate ordain'd it soon to fade below  
 Perhaps in Paradise more fair to Blow  
 Then all the sorrows it felt here on Earth!  
 Are preparations of a Second Birth. 350  
 The Soil manur'd for ever lasting Grain,  
 To Live and flourish on a Deathless Plain  
 This Renovation shall forever last  
 Nor feel the Chills of Sorrows lowring Blast!  
 All There tranquil, Delightful, and serene, 355  
 No Cold night to damp the Placid Scene,  
 No Sensual Mixture of an earthly Love  
 Shall dare to Sully the pure flame above  
 Love, pride, and Virtue, Him shall know no Strife  
 [Each] Tye Disolv'd of the Deserted-Wife. 360

The End of the Second part Doubt.

The line all Doubts and Dangers I bid far be gone”

Refers to my going in the middle of January 1778 to Elizabethton by desire of Mr Ferguson to take leave of Him he going to England. He was allow'd to come over from New York to Mr Boudinots House.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Elias Boudinot was the brother of Annis Boudinot Stockton, of course. George Washington gave Elizabeth permission to meet Henry at Elizabethtown, New Jersey, close to British-occupied New York. Henry had removed from Philadelphia with the British when the occupation ended, traveling with them to New York (Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 121–22, 229, 364n14). As with some of the versified excerpts from Henry's letters, Elizabeth indicates quotation by including quotation marks to the left of each line.

Extract of Mr F letter to Mrs Fn on his first Being told in a Letter by his  
Wife of the acusation

Long Island November 12 1778

— — To put your mind out of Suspence, I can with [the] clearest  
Conscience assure you, in the most Solemn appeal to every power that has  
Influence on Society and by the Strongest Ties that Contribute to the  
happness of the Human Race that I never [had] Conexion with that  
woman of a nature to render her pregnant And that she must be the most  
abominable of her Sex to make and persevere in Such assertions. If you  
will give yourself time to reflect, that if debauch'd enough to act so very  
unworthy, I must be very regardless of your peace of mind and my own  
Character that to make some arrangement to conceal so disgracefull a  
Circumstance and this consideration ought in a great measure to  
Invalidate her scandalous tale.----<sup>39</sup>

I never treated her with more familiarity than I would the favorite  
Domestic in a Friends House (for such I always look'd on her rather than  
as a Servant of my own.

I recollect perfectly her once telling me that She was going to leave Mr  
Stedman and I asked her for what reason? And she sd she was going to  
be married but beg'd me not to mention it to her Mistress I asked her to  
whom or whether it was to a tradesman after some Hesitation sd no, that  
it was to the servant of a General Officer, who had been five years in the  
army and had made money in his Masters Service, And that they meant  
to keep a Shop I then diswaded her from it and told her that he would  
probably leave her, and that such people in the army Seldom made steady  
good Husbands and I heard no more of the affair.

I cannot keep again expressing my astonishment at the extream  
Impudence of this Woman where She must be conscious in her Soul that  
I am not the Father of Her child, But this again I must Solemly declare  
is not the Case. If it was I believe I should not deny it!<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> It would undoubtedly be an error to view these transcriptions as absolutely faithful to Henry's original letters, which are probably no longer extant. The dashes at the beginning and end of this paragraph, which are longer than Elizabeth's usual dashes, may indicate that she has omitted part of the letter.

<sup>40</sup> Whether or not Henry would not have denied fathering a bastard, Clare Lyons has established that many other men in Philadelphia in the revolutionary period and early republic freely admitted their paternity of such children. While the interpersonal relation between Fergusson and Henry may have dictated a denial in this case, the social context did not. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble*, 68, 189–90.

A report so injurious to my Reputation, and so mortifying to you, added to your other accumulated Distresses is too much, and when I think of your Sensibility and Situation all together I am astonish'd that you are not quite [eveset]<sup>41</sup> you seem really shorn to the quick my poor Betsy!

I feel most acutely this unmerited Slander But it is a Species of Detraction peculiar to your Sex, and against which there is no precaution if they will be so infamous to use it, she will not certainly have the assurance to swear her cant Bantling<sup>42</sup> to me and add Perjury to her other Crimes When she has no prospect of reaping any advantage from it, I do not Set up for any particular Rigidity or austerity of morals, But I can safely say that I have ever behaved with proper fidelity in the Conjugal State and that no woman has ever had reason to Shed a tear on my account for any Injury Done to her Virtue or Honor

H Fn

Note to Mrs S by E Fn

Note to Mrs Stogton in the Farm [at ]

I think my dear madam the Life I have led Since This was originally written, has fully verify'd what I there have expected a dull Inglorious Life; But I Solemly declare that narrow as my Fortune is Since I have Settld my affairs, and paid my Debts, I feel a peace and tranquility I have long been a Stranger to: I owe not any one:<sup>43</sup> I live like a Hermit with no maid in this great House, I have not Seen my Dear Miss Stedman for three months as She Spent the depth of the Winter in Chester County, She did not go to Stay so long But tho the weather was mild, she found the Roads unpassable, and hoping to come every Day she did not write and I was some time in a Sad State of Suspence, But I find I am only easy now in proportion as I hear nothing of Mr Fn She is return'd well thank God

<sup>41</sup> *OED*'s last instance of the verb "evese" is 1394, and yet the meaning is "To cut, clip (a person's hair, the coat of an animal, a tree, etc.); to cut short the hair of (a person)," which certainly works in this context. Perhaps it was retained in rural Scottish usage.

<sup>42</sup> *OED* gives "Bold, brisk, courageous, hearty, lusty, lively, hale" for "cant" as an adjective, especially in the Scottish dialect. For "bantling": "A young or small child, a brat. (Often used depreciatively, and formerly as a synonym of *bastard*)."

<sup>43</sup> Indeed, reports of Fergusson during the 1790s indicate that she lived very modestly but was able to extend charity to her neighbors when necessary (Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 334).

Note on French affairs<sup>44</sup>

The Tragedy of France has deeply occupy'd my Mind, I know not the  
taste of the times on this point, But I have a decided Idea that poor Lewis  
XVIth did nothing that merited such a fate And I believe that was King  
Alfred to rise from the Dead with a Crown among the people! They to  
pull it off would take the Head along with it; These may be unfashion-  
able Sentiments for the times But they are the Dictates of my Mind  
If Lewis last will was His own, he is a truly pious man and in a State to  
be envied now rather than pitied He prefers his own Religion [illeg] with  
"A Death Beds a Detector of the Heart!  
"Here tir'd Disimulation drops her Mask  
"Here real and apparent are the Same!

Young<sup>45</sup>

at the Hour the Kings Sentence of Death was read to him the Lesson  
in our Episcopal Church for the Sunday was the 53d of Isaiah and the  
Psalm for the Day the Psalm CII  
this wrote March 29th 1793 E Fn

Il Penseroso

Part the third of the Deserted Wife

Solitude Il Penseroso. written 1782

"Lone Solitude<sup>46</sup> Calm silent pensive maid!  
I woo thy Haunts! I woo thy solemn Shade  
Time hath inur'd me to thy Solemn Scenes  
Thy nodding Umbrage and thy darkened Greens!

<sup>44</sup> This "note" appears on one page of the manuscript and may have been opportunistically filled in as an effort to use paper efficiently. This may also indicate that Fergusson preferred to begin a new section of the poem on the recto or right-hand page.

<sup>45</sup> Young, *Night Thoughts*. Night Two includes the following lines: "A Death-bed's a detector of the Heart./Here tir'd Dissimulation drops her Masque,/Thro' Life's Grimace, that Mistress of the Scene!/Here real, and Apparent, are the Same." It is unclear whether Fergusson forgot the third line, or merely edited it out as unimportant to her point. She includes the words "P.M. Lesson" in the left margin.

<sup>46</sup> (Dr Zimmerman on Solitude is a very elegant Book (EGF's note). As with note 22 above, this note is not keyed to any particular line but appears at the bottom of the page. In this case, however, it is fairly clear that she is annotating her apostrophe to Solitude. The book she refers to was published in London in 1791, a testament to the currency of Fergusson's reading (Johann Georg Zimmermann, *Solitude Considered with Respect to Its Influence upon the Mind and the Heart* [London: 1791].) Fergusson includes quotation marks down the left side of the column through line 14, but she does not include an end quotation mark.

With thou and Stella I will calmly go 5  
 Through Lifes Deep vale, with Steady Step and Slow  
 Strive to forget the visionary Plan!  
 Which Fancy gilded for this little Span  
 I Schem'd to tread on while below I rang'd  
 And all the maze of giddy folly chang'd 10  
     Thou airy Phantom of Shakesperian Mold  
 Brighter than Sun Beams or pure Ophir's<sup>47</sup> Gold!  
 Youths bland Dilusions form'd of Health and Spring  
 Gay as the Sky-lark on her mounting Wing  
 Tinges of Blossoms Down of fragrant Flowers! 15  
 The gentle Violet and the Woodbine Bowers

Stella the mild companion of my Days!  
 Who glides unotic'd as in Desart Ways;  
 The Rose Blows lonely in its Silent glooms  
 No sense delighted by its Rich perfumes.<sup>48</sup> 20  
 Returns to Nature all the Gifts they bear  
 A grateful tribute to the Sun, and air,  
 But I from Her receive no pleasure give  
 In the sequestered lonely state we Live  
 Serenely cheerful Innocently gay; 25  
 She helps to pass the lingering hours away  
 We read, we moralize, we chat, we walk,  
 And on a thousand various subjects talk.  
 My Country Neighbors for my troubles feel,  
 And wonder at me as I turn my Wheel<sup>49</sup> 30

<sup>47</sup> "Ophir" is a biblical town renowned for wealth. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Ophir," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*: <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9057198> (accessed Aug. 3, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> "Full many a Gem of purest ray serene  
 "The Deep unfathom'd Caves of ocean Bear  
 "Full many a flower is Blown to blush unseen  
 "And waste its Sweetness in the Desart air  
 Gray

(EGF's note). Fergusson changes some words in this quotation from Thomas Gray's 1751 "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard": in the second line, his "dark" becomes her "deep"; in the third line, his "born" becomes her "blown"; in the last line, she puts "on" where he has "in." In this appropriation, Betsy Stedman takes the place of Gray's rose, although Fergusson points out that Stedman does give her pleasure (which is not reciprocated).

<sup>49</sup> Susan Stabile, in her "Introduction" to Ousterhout's *Most Learned Woman in America*, notes the prominence of spinning as a theme in Fergusson's later commonplace books (p. 23).

This Rustic Exercise produces Health  
 A greater Blessing than [ ]<sup>50</sup> Wealth;  
 Sweet Letters too from kindest Friends impart  
 A transient Blessing to my aking Heart!  
 Fain like the Bee I would the Sweets exhale 35  
 Nor let lone Sorrow oer each Sense prevail:  
 Yet like the Spider more I drink the Juice  
 Which does a Canker'd [delicacy] produce;  
 Through Diferent Mediums diferent People view  
 As seen thro' glasses tinged with green or Blue 40  
 When Sad the soul no object rises gay  
 And Bleak December seems to [lour] Thro' May!  
 Day Steals on Day and year Succeeds to year  
 While each Fresh Seasons mark'd with Grief severe  
 The Spring Soft [daring] from her Southern Halls 45  
 Summons the Zephirs with refreshing Calls  
 The melting months breath[e] young delight around,  
 But no fine feelings in my Breast are found;  
 The glowing Summer pants in every Tree  
 Their Fruits mature but brings no Joy to me! 50  
 The waving Harvest swells with yellow grain  
 And Fresh Pomona strews the Perfect Plain  
 With ruddy apples Streak'd with Burnish'd Gold  
 Whose Shining Coats a luscious Juice unfold<sup>51</sup>  
 Tho Fairy Tribes Send oer this field of Snow 55  
 And Frost like green land Icy mountains show  
 Yet still one Theme pursues my leaden Hours;  
 As Aarons Rod all lesser Rods Devours!<sup>52</sup>  
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, all unite,  
 To Robb my Bosom of serene Delight! 60  
 And shade the Sombre Pencil strong with Night<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> This is most probably a proper noun, but is impossible to decipher.

<sup>51</sup> James Thomson's *The Seasons* is alluded to many times throughout "The Deserted Wife," nowhere more strongly than in this passage. Fergusson's depiction of the seasons differs from Thomson's in that his poem is generally laudatory of seasonality. Even winter has its merits: "The frost-concocted glebe/Draws in abundant vegetable soul,/And gathers vigor for the coming year." For Fergusson, the cycle of seasons only heightens her melancholia. Fergusson follows Thomson's use of "Pomona" as a god of fruit trees. See Thomson, *Seasons*, 55n663.

<sup>52</sup> Exodus 7:12.

<sup>53</sup> The preceding three lines are marked by a bracket in indication of an intentional triplet.

Revolving round with lengthen'd Chain and Slow  
 And as a wounded Snake they long and lingering go<sup>54</sup>  
 O ye white moments of a Virgin life!  
 Late I resign'd you for the name of Wife! 65  
 Of Halcyon Days and tranquil Hours profest,  
 Blest in my Kindred in my Friendship Blest:  
 But Death quick tore those kindred ties away  
 And mixd my Parents with their native Clay  
 Loos'd every tie, Relax'd each tender Cord! 70  
 Which swelld the Circle of my social Board!  
 Alone of ten and last my mother Bore  
 I Brethren, Sisters, and her loss deplore;  
 Full four Score years my honor'd Father knew  
 On Life's last verge with weary Steps he drew:<sup>55</sup> 75  
 My youthful pleasures by their Deaths Destroy'd,  
 I look'd around; all seem'd a dreary void;  
 Self Love then whisper'd on some Prop to lean  
 To Seek some partner in Lifes Shifting Scene,  
 No Shining Baits of glittering gaudy Gold 80  
 Did varnish'd pleasure to my <sup>56</sup> Eyes unfold  
 Nor sought I love on a romantic Plan;  
 Yet hop'd I merited an honest man;  
 Such if I Boast I yet may Comfort find,  
 And taste the Balsam of a placid mind. 85  
 Who tho' no Saint is no adept in Vice,  
 Steady in Temper and in morals nice.  
 Who nobly scorns to tell a mean untruth  
 Tho warm not artful, in the path of youth  
 Transient might Err But Steady not Deceive 90  
 Then Try oh try your Henry to believe!  
 With genuine passion I that Henry Lov'd  
 Yet from that Source what anguish have I prov'd

<sup>54</sup> This part was writ in a [the] Cold Winter 1781, 82— (EGF's note).

<sup>55</sup> Dr. Thomas Graeme died on September 4, 1772; Ann Diggs Graeme (Fergusson's mother) on May 29, 1765; sisters Ann Graeme Stedman and Jane Graeme Young in 1759 and 1766, respectively; numerous other brothers and sisters had died at various points in Fergusson's younger years as well. She was the Graemes' last child, which must have exacerbated her sense of loneliness. See Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 35, 97, 143–44, and 351.

<sup>56</sup> There is a word obliterated here.

What Sad anxiety corroding pain!  
 What Sighs unnumber'd What a direful Train 95  
 Of mixd emmotions blended in the Soul  
 What Strange Sensations in my Bosom Roll.  
     Sure different Sexes can to each impart  
 The Strongest movements of the human heart  
 By Heaven intended in Lifes System Sure 100  
 To love the warmest where we most endure.  
 And has my Henry too from Grief been Spar'd  
 No Henry no, thou has my Evils shar'd  
 A wandering Exile the repose thou Seekst  
 Banish'd from Home and all Domestic Sweets 105  
 Perhaps traduc'd, vile Slander'd, with disgrace,  
 By arts ignoble Scandalous and Base!  
     Love like a Lamb first frolicks, frisks, and plays,  
 Then Lion like a savage mien betrays!  
 Oft proud and angry fiery, fierce, and Bold, 110  
 It makes us tremble ere it quits its hold.  
 Sullen Capricious Sensible alive!  
 It seems to Die and oft from Death revive.  
     Through out the lone and melancholy night  
 I mark the Tapers solitary Light. 115  
 Pour on my Page my strangely chequer'd Fate  
 And paint the Sadness of my widow'd<sup>57</sup> State  
 Or read the conflicts of some hapless maid;  
 Whose Soul Loves Fervor did too deep pervade,  
 Soft Eloise laments in plaintive Strains 120  
 And Sweet Clarissa every sense Retains  
 Great Clementina with majestic Grief  
 And pious wandrings prays for Heavens relief  
 Immortal Richardson in every Page;  
 Draws forth our Pity or provokes our Rage; 125  
 Pity for Woman Rage for those vile arts  
 That man Relentless plans for guileless Hearts.  
 Some Hallow'd Tomb I would to thee erect  
 While the Soft Sex thy ashes should protect

<sup>57</sup> Fergusson here uses "widow'd" in its extended sense, meaning that she has been deserted, rather than in the more literal sense that would indicate her husband's death. See *OED*, s.v. "widow, n."

By Female Hearts thy Eulogy compos'd<sup>58</sup> 130  
 By Female Hands thy Spotless marble closd  
 By Female Brows the Cypress Garland worn  
 By Matrons Honour'd, and by Virgins mourn'd!  
 The lost Calista mourns her blasted youth<sup>59</sup>  
 A Shakespears Juliet weeps with artless Truth! 135  
 All these from Love and thousands more undone  
 All from Loves Influence brought their Ruine on:  
 This Subtle passion worse to Souls refin'd  
 This Scorching Æther to the feeling mind  
 Its suffering Subjects form'd of Spirits pure 140  
 Ordain'd its tortures keenest to endure!  
 It Saps all Fortitude, it steals the Rest  
 And where it enters leaves the Frame oprest!  
 Reason, Religion, every Virtue Fades,  
 Weak in the Balance when the mind it Shades: 145  
 Seen through false mediums every Object Shines  
 As partial Fancy to the youth inclines;  
 As the Chamelion takes its tint from where  
 The Colourd ground is to the Creature near  
 Remove it distant From the favor'd hue 150  
 And soon it changes to Black, grey or Blue  
 These tales of sorrow but unhinge The Frame;  
 And serve to cherish a destructive Flame;  
 Tis flinging oyl on a lambent Fire  
 Which kindles up each latent fond Desire 155  
 The warnings given in a tale so sweet  
 The soul is vancquish'd eer it can retreat.  
 Next Stern Philosophy I call to mind,  
 And puff These Love tales to the Sporting Wind.  
 In pious authors I attempt to pour; 160

<sup>58</sup> These four Lines are with a small alteration taken from Mr Popes Elegy on an unfortunate Lady (EGF's note). Fergusson refers to Alexander Pope's "Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady."

<sup>59</sup> These Characters are too well known to need explaining (EGF's note). The list of tragic heroines in this verse paragraph would be a good basis for a course on melancholic women in early English literature. Clarissa and Clementina come from Samuel Richardson's novels, *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*, respectively. Eloise is one of the title characters of Pope's poem, "Eloise to Abelard"; Juliet comes from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Calista from Nicholas Rowe's 1703 drama *The Fair Penitent*.

And turn the leaves of holy Fathers oer  
 Then fly oer woods, and Fields, and tufted meads  
 And natures Beautys in the Wilds I read  
 This ample Page becalms each Sceptic Doubt  
 And puts the Torch of glimmering Folly out. 165  
 Plain hints the Spring that after palid Death  
 Has Seal'd [its] office with my last last Breath!  
 I Shall awake to everlasting Bliss;  
 in full fruition of each boundless wish  
 The glowing Summer rich in gorgeous pride, 170  
 And autumn Stores which Fruit and grain provide  
 Point out some parent, some kind hand unseen  
 Who Shifts harmonious the grand changing Screen,  
 Who Sure tho Silent all around pervades,  
 Basks in the Sun and Shelters in the Shade. 175  
 This from Analogy we clear may trace  
 From the wrapt Seraph to the meaner Race  
 of Plants and animals who Join the Chain  
 On Earth, in Air, and in the liquid main:  
 Tho mortal ken cannot the Scale ascend 180  
 To Mark their Rise their Progress and their End.  
 Like Israels Ladder with its Foot below!  
 Its top ascending where the angels go.<sup>60</sup>  
 Each Object here my melancholy aids  
 And Sprightly Pleasure as a Phantom fades 185  
 Here tottering walls a ruin'd air convey,  
 And point some vestige mouldring to Decay  
 Green mossy Turf upon the Roofs is seen;  
 And the dark Ivy peeping out between!  
 Rank Weeds and Sedges fill the gardens ground 190  
 And Rampant Brambles in each Terrass found  
 While Desolation stalks all gloomy round<sup>61</sup>  
 The Dodder'd oaks<sup>62</sup> with solemn ruin Stand

<sup>60</sup> Genesis 28:10.

<sup>61</sup> The preceding three lines are marked by a bracket in indication of an intentional triplet.

<sup>62</sup> The *OED* offers the following explanation of "doddered": "A word conventionally used (? after Dryden) as an attribute of old oaks (rarely other trees); app. originally meaning: Having lost the top or branches, esp. through age and decay; hence, remaining as a decayed stump."

Patrician Trees first natives to this Land!<sup>63</sup>  
 Long e'er the Indians to the British Sold 195  
 Their untrod Forests for bewitching gold  
 For Shining Baubles that beguil'd their Hearts,  
 For Shells for Wampums, Arrows, Bows, and Darts.  
 Yet Still I love this Lone Sequester'd Spot  
 Endear'd by scenes that ne'er can be forgot. 200  
 I Cling around it as to some old Tomb  
 Within whose bounded melancholy Room  
 Are laid the ashes and the dear remains  
 of sweet associates on these earthly plains  
 A kind of Relic which the Heart retains<sup>64</sup> 205  
 A pensive languor all my Senses Seals;  
 And latent Springs of former Woe reveals;  
 This local weakness chains me to these Bowers  
 I live in Fancy oer the long lost Hours:  
 Recall each Stage retread each vernal Scene 210  
 Chequer'd with Storms and placid Skies serene;  
 Think on the precepts which my Parents gave,  
 And each fond Sister in the mouldring Grave  
 A fonder mother and a Father kind,  
 While I alone am mournful left behind. 215  
 Mark each ascent that fills the Scale of Life,  
 From the weak Babe to the Deserted Wife.

The End of the Third Part  
 Solitude wrote 1781 and 82

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I think an old Family seat going to Decay is really a pensive Sight I think the Second Letter in a Sentimental Novel call'd Julia Roubigne has a most Excelent Discription of that kind in it The aranger of that sweet pensive novel says in His Preface what I feel almost every Day I take a Pen in Hand, and of late years that is every Day of my Life. EF March 30 1793

"Unknown and unpatronized, I had little pretention to favor; writing and arranging the writings of others was to me a favorite amusement for

<sup>63</sup> I suppose now in France if one called a fine tree a Patrician Tree it would be fell'd down in an instant (EGF's note).

<sup>64</sup> The preceding three lines are marked by a bracket in indication of an intentional triplet.

which one easily finds both time and apology

"One advantage I drew from it which the Humane may hear with satisfaction, I often wander'd from my own woe, in tracing the tale of another's affliction, and at this moment every sentence that I writ I am but Escaping a little farther from the pressure of Sorrow"

Preface to *Julia Roubigne* by the Author of the man of feeling and the man of the World. He was a young Scotch Lawyer all his works are strongly mark'd with extreme Sensibility<sup>65</sup>

E Fn

Extracts from Mr Fn Letters to Mrs Fn

Extract of a Letter from Mr F to Mrs Fn

London Nov 3d 1780

The Slander propagated by that Creature Jenny, Still continues to give me the utmost uneasiness, who Instigated first by Interest and next by malice is lead so Scandalously to traduce my Character

London February 27 1781 (Mr F to Mrs F)

In answer to yours by Mr Duchee (that Letter I never saw) I mentioned the Serious Sorrow it gave me<sup>66</sup>

I Shall now forbear saying anything more on the abhorr'd Subject until a better opportunity offers by the ReEstablishment of Peace and my Return to refute the Base accusation which I shall ever reprobate as repugnant to Truth and possibility, However, our Circumstances might be confin'd yet any State would be more agreeable than living in Sufering and separation.

Man Wants But little here Below

Nor wants that Little Long<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Henry Mackenzie's epistolary novel *Julia de Roubigné* was published in 1773, following the success of his *The Man of Feeling* in 1771. Fergusson's transcription of the passage is fairly faithful, although she probably did it from memory. She did change Mackenzie's "amusement for which a man easily finds" (p. xi) into "amusement for which one easily finds" (my emphasis). Henry Mackenzie, *Julia De Roubigné*, ed. Susan Manning (East Linton, UK, 1999).

<sup>66</sup> Fergusson enlisted the aid of a whole circle of London-based expatriates in her quest to communicate with Henry. The "Mr Duchee" referred to here is Jacob Duché, the Anglican minister who became infamous for sending George Washington a letter asking him to surrender the Revolutionary War effort. Elizabeth carried this letter to Washington, although it is not known whether she was aware of, or agreed with, the contents. Duché left Philadelphia for London after the letter became public knowledge. Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 268–69.

<sup>67</sup> These lines appear in Young's *Night Thoughts*.

Your sequester'd way of Life and the delicacy of your Frame, and the Sensibility of your Mind, will I much dread make you fall a Victim to your Misfortunes.

With a mind unspotted you profess a Cultivated understanding. Employ it therefore to overcome the nicety of your feelings, you are not to be told that the observation of Religious Duties And the Study of Philosophy avail nothing when they do not learn us to bear with patience and an Equal mind the Ills to which we are Subjected. Ovid tells us that the Nightingale and the Swallow having sufer'd great Injuries, the first gave way to melancholy and Died pensive and lonely in the Wood But the other mix'd in the world Chatter'd and forgot her troubles. But you will like the Nightingale Die in the Wood.<sup>68</sup>

H Fn.

Il Penseroso or the Deserted-Wife

a Poem in Four parts.

Part The Fourth and Last.

Adversity.

Hail Stern adversity Thy Steps I Greet!  
 Thy Bitters Obvious deep conceal'd thy Sweet!  
 Keen probes thy Lance tho in the End most Sure  
 To those who can thy painful touch endure!  
 Thy Face is rugged, awful is thy Brow! 5  
 No soft indulgence do thy Rules allow  
 Rank is thy aspect, Surly is thy Mien.  
 No loves, no Graces, in thy train are seen.  
 From thee estrang'd I neer myself had known  
 But been like thousands by vain joys undone 10  
 Folly for me a tinsel Net had wove,  
 If Blest with Fortune and propitious Love!  
 Which thou hast tore, and only thou couldst't tear,  
 Disolv'd each vision with thy wand Severe  
 Else had I been by flimsy Bait betray'd 15

<sup>68</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*. The translation best known in the eighteenth century would have been that compiled by Sir Samuel Garth. The tale of Philomela in book 6 was translated by Samuel Croxall. Samuel Garth, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Translated into English Verse* (London, 1717).

And deem'd my merits had been only paid  
 Sail'd in False triumph down soft Pleasures Stream  
 And danc'd and flutter'd in fair Follys Beam:  
 Like the [Suns] Insects which just rise and Die  
 The transient produce of a Summers Sky; 20  
 One turgid Blast of Boreas bears them Far  
 And Scatters armies in the frigid air:  
 Weak and unable to resist small Storms  
 One moment freezes and one moment warms  
 Scatter'd in Myriad all their feeble Swarms<sup>69</sup> 25  
     Hail thy true Friend I cry all Hail once more  
 Thou safe Conductor to that peaceful Shore  
 Where Sin and Sorrow Sink, and lasting rest  
 Compose the Sabbath of the Eternal Blest  
 Ardent Ill Strive to thee to bend my mind, 30  
 And bear thy arrows with a Soul resign'd,  
 Thy Sober Sadness and thy decent Pride,  
 Shall all my little Levities Deride!  
 Then guard the Narrow Path where all must go  
 Ere they can holy heavenly mansions know<sup>70</sup> 35  
 In thy Right Hand a Cross is full display'd  
 A Crown of Triumph does thy Temples Shade!  
 Harsh Links and Ladders do unite the train  
 Compos'd of Poverty, of Grief, and Pain!  
 These Steep ascents by which we sharp ascend 40  
 And toil through Life till Death the Conflict End  
 Nature turns from Thee with an Eye askance!  
 While Grave Religion throws a cheering glance  
 And woos her Votarys to the paths you tread  
 Draws them Reluctant from th' Enamel'd Meade 45  
 Where Honour, Pleasure, and Ambition Smile  
 And Catch their Millions in their Specious Toile  
 A Constant Warfare dost thou hold below,  
 To all the Baits these trifling Females know

<sup>69</sup> These three lines are bracketed to indicate an intentional triplet. "Boreas" is the Greek name for the north wind (*OED*, s.v. "Boreas").

<sup>70</sup> Rev Through much tribulation thou shalt enter into the Kingdom of heaven (EGF's note). The chapter and verse are Acts 14:22. As with note 46 above, this note is not keyed to any particular line and appears at the bottom of the page, but it seems to refer to this idea.

Your theme is Life eternal Life above! 50  
Faith, Hope and Charity and boundless Love.  
 You term this World an Evanescent Spot  
 Where all thats present shall be soon forgot  
 A transient Sorrow and a Short liv'd tear  
 Which shall the future but the more endear. 55  
 Grief right applied is Heaven on Earth begun  
 An April Cloud disperst by Virtues Sun!  
 A Stage a Pilgrims path a troubled Main!  
 A Shifting Scene serene delight to gain  
 you take each Metaphor and tale to prove 60  
 Here dwells short anguish, and long peace above  
 This Saints declare, Poets and Prophets preach!  
 And tortur'd Martyrs by their Sufferings teach.  
 Not so ambition Honour Pleasure tell  
 No Self Denials in their precepts Dwell 65  
 Their Themes are Rapture to each present Sense  
 To snatch each moment e'er they go from hence;  
 Such is their Language such their fair Deceits  
 They varnish poison with Dilusive Sweets.  
 Thus they entice and Syren like they Sing! 70  
 While Time is ever fluttering on the wing.  
 So Sang the Preacher when he paints their Scheme  
 The Atheists vain Creed: and the Sensuals Dream  
 Such are the Chords which short liv'd Folly Strung  
 From the Wise Solomon to pious Young!<sup>71</sup> 75  
 "Crown us with Rose Buds, Let us bath in Wine!  
 Let Clustering Grapes around our temples twine  
 Let Joy prevent the dawning Sanguine Wish  
 While frigid Hermits fancy future Bliss:  
 Short is our Day then let us keen pursue 80  
 These Raptures bounded by Earths narrow view

<sup>71</sup> The Second Chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon is particularly aim'd to introduce in the following From line 70–120. In this I have no particular Character in my Eye: tho' alas among the Men devoted to unbounded Libertinism that possess Wealth and power too many may Sit for this Picture But I do not mean Mr Fn He is compassionate tho' not to me E Fn (EGF's note). An anonymous devotional work called *The Wisdom of Solomon* was published in Edinburgh in 1755. In the line that follow, through line 101, Fergusson includes quotation marks down the left side of the column.

In the Cold Grave no Pleasures can we know  
 All transports vanish'd when from hence we go  
 Let Hoards of Gold Delight our Mammons here,  
 Tho every Ingotts Sullied by a tear 85  
 of Some lone Widow or defrauded Child;  
 Let Wealth surround as tho the World be spoil'd  
 Their Ravish'd Fortunes shall our Brows adorn  
 Oppress'd by Plenty from our Neighbors Shorn!  
 Let Slaughter'd thousands our vast power Display 90  
 And Strew with Crimson the deep sanguine way  
 Let us the blooming helpless Virgin Seize  
 And when full Sated like a loath'd disease  
 Cast her swift from us Till another Fair!  
 Rise to delight us and like Fortune share 95  
 Let her Grey Parents totter to the Grave,  
 To See their Darling Lusts rejected Slave!  
 All this and further from our Deed be found  
 So we with Rapture some gay Nights are Crown'd  
 Our Hearts superior to such Scenes of Woe 100  
 Shall no abatements of our transports know!"<sup>72</sup>  
 Let Vulgar Minds this Hackney'd Doctrines teach  
 And evermore this Christian maxim preach  
 To do to others what we wish that They  
 Should do to us through Lifes embarass'd way 105  
 This their first precept, this their golden Rule  
 The Grand Criterion of a Christians School  
 Simple alike it binds in every Case  
 To Such as do this fettering Law Embrace!  
 This would each dawning of enjoyment Blast 110  
 A damp to Spirits of a lighter Cast  
 Your Chesterfieldians your Lorenzos prove<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Fergusson ventriloquizes libertine Philadelphians here in what is a conventional carpe diem song, the most famous example of which is Robert Herrick's "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time." More closely, it echoes lines from *The Wisdom of Solomon*: "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine, and ointments: and let no flower of the spring pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered" (pp. 6-7).

<sup>73</sup> Chesterfield was the author of a famous series of letters on manners to his son. Additional documents by Fergusson in the Rush Manuscripts, volume 40, are critical of Chesterfield, accusing him of libertinism. "Lorenzo" is a character from Young's *Night Thoughts*: as the addressee of some of the poem's passages, he is little more than a generic sinner who allows the speaker of *Night Thoughts* to

They by superior Wiser Maxims move  
 Your Chesterfieldians your Lorenzos gay!  
 Jocund and Sportive in soft pleasures day, 115  
 Spurn at this narrow, rigid Clogging Law,  
 Which saints and sages for their pupils draw  
 Let "Saints and Sages whine in Sorrow here"<sup>74</sup>  
 They taste no Joys in the Celestial Sphere  
 While Chesterfieldians and Lorenzos Smile 120  
 To See Religion Man of Joys beguile!  
 Laugh at the Bugbear of a local Hell  
 And sneer at tales that Priests and Prophets tell  
 Deem Woman made alone for mans Control,  
 Like Mahomets fair ones void of noble Soul. 125  
 As Birds or Insects for a Boy to please  
 They tortur'd Subjects made their Lords to teize  
 'Tis such as Callous to the Ills of Life!  
 Sneer at the woes of a Deserted-Wife.<sup>75</sup>

The End.

Copy of Mr Fn Letter to Mrs Fn

Mr Fergussons Last Letter to Mrs F where he mentions the Cause of their Separation Copy'd for Mrs Sn

Dear Betsy                      London July 1783

My last letter was adress'd to Dr R h<sup>76</sup> and sent under cover to you tho no letter was wrote with it to you a method you forc'd me to adopt and upon which I Shall make no Comment. This Sd Letter was forwardd By

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address a second person, thus implicating the reader in a catalogue of sins. See Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, *Letters Written by the Late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to His Son . . .* (London, 1774); Young, *Night Thoughts*.

<sup>74</sup> Fergusson does not include an end quotation mark for this quote, though the obvious place would be after "Sphere" in the following line.

<sup>75</sup> It is my strong suspicion that Fergusson has in mind as her "Chesterfieldians and Lorenzos" the men who sought to take away Graeme Park from her. Chief among these would be Joseph Reed, president of Pennsylvania at the time Fergusson initially composed the poem. See Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 235–36.

<sup>76</sup> Presumably, Benjamin Rush.

Dr Denormandie<sup>77</sup> who promis'd to give it in person: Therefore without retrospect the Subject that it treated of, And the injustice I have suffer'd on that account, I write the present to inform you what my situation and prospects are to this and that I may know fully and finally whether or not you propose to continue in a Seperate State from me, for the remainder of your Days, or in conformality to the affection and Cordiality which ought Subsist between man and wife you mean to Join me in Europe. The Subject of returning to America I have often coolly and seriously revolv'd in my mind, and every time I think of it, I feel growing antipathies and fresh reasons for never returning, and I can from the Bottom of my soul affirm that were all Legal restraints at this moment remov'd, yet I Should never go back to Pennsylvania. If you think the Story of that infamous woman is the cause of such a resolution, you are mistaken. For was the Fact alledg'd against me true, and I again most Solemly declare that it is equally true (that you are the mother of the Child as I am her Father) you must be very ignorant of the ways of mankind to imagine that it should deter me from going to any place where my Interest or Inclinations call me.

So much being Sd it is necessary to know what you intend to do, as to me my wish and desire are explicitly that you come to England you have my whole and entire affection, and I declare from the Bottom of my soul, that I prefer living with you to any woman upon Earth. I insist therefor on your Compliance with my Request. I would say command if not an expression I never thought I should have reason to use towards you and which is also to my self disagreeable— — — If you should refuse coming to England, I shall look upon it as a total Renunciation of your husband and upon every other proposal you may make but as a mockery and Insult to one against whom you have no just cause of complaint but that of having follow'd the line of His Duty And the Dictates of His Conscience— I have only to observe that should you refuse to Join me it, it will be acting in positive Contradiction to every Law human and Divine,<sup>78</sup> And

<sup>77</sup> Dr. John DeNormandie. Gratz includes a letter to Fergusson from Sally DeNormandie Barton, and Ousterhout mentions Sally DeNormandie as a friend and correspondent of Fergusson. Simon Gratz, "Some Material for a Biography of Mrs. Elizabeth Fergusson, née Græme," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 39 (1915): 257–321; Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America*, 54–55.

<sup>78</sup> This may be an index of Henry's anglicization. Scottish law allowed divorce in the eighteenth century, while English law did not. Henry's "every law human" refers to an *English* legality. See Leah Leneman, *Alienated Affections: The Scottish Experience of Divorce and Separation, 1684–1830* (Edinburgh, 1998), 2.

what ever Pretext you may chuse to make use of, there Exists none to  
 Exculpate such a Breach of Duty I Shall expect to hear from you as soon  
 as possible after the present and remain your  
 much injur'd tho' affectionate Husband  
~~E-Fn~~ H Fergusson

I have now my dear Mrs Stogton to oblige you gone through a most  
 painful Task, and rous'd all my feelings afresh: I have not a doubt but  
 every Husband that should read this in the 13 States will hold me a  
condem'd as well as a Deserted-Wife[.] My Character is gone in that  
 Line: But I wish not to retrieve it at the Expençe of my Conscience while  
 I retain my Senses my meeting with Mr Fn Shall not Be in Britain Here  
 and here only can it be productive of Truth and Peace. E Fn.

G Park April 21 The Day 21 Years I was married E Fn<sup>79</sup>

*West Chester University*

RODNEY MADER

<sup>79</sup> This line is written vertically in the left margin.