

CHATTERTON LECTURE ON AN ENGLISH POET  
CARVING TRIFLES: WILLIAM KING'S  
IMITATION OF HORACE

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I

EATING, like making love, is an intimate sensual act, fundamental to the perpetuation of life, but whereas we do not have to look far to find love-poetry, eating has produced no comparably serious poetry concerned with human emotion. On the other hand, it has produced poetry with a distinctly moral purpose, and in this it is, of course, similar to other apparently prosaic subjects popular with poets in the eighteenth century, such as money or horticulture. Often treated in a detailed and technical way in themselves, these subjects nearly always involve the larger issue of what kind of moral stance is desirable in life, a concern which may redeem whatever may in the first instance have seemed commonplace. Thus Augustan poets may make jokes about banknotes or tell you which kinds of apple make the best cider, but are never far from seeing such concerns as part of a way of life really possible for their contemporaries and worth helping to bring about.

Eating immediately suggests a range of moral attitudes. Unlike making love, it appears not to involve others, but in fact its occurrence is usually more frequent and certainly less private and is the occasion of the exercise of many virtues such as friendship or hospitality. Its effects are both less momentous and less avoidable: the celibate of the dinner-table will not live long. Eating has become more complicated than making love, even though it is more involuntary, and therefore it is able in a sly sort of way to rival the sublimer passion. Seeing it as a passion does, usually, enable the poet to draw comparable lessons: in the eighteenth century the moral consequences of excess in both activities were felt to be similar. The lecher and the glutton offended against a common ideal of temperate living, and themselves acted as paradigms of social corruption. The poet's point of view varied, of course. Food in Pope is frequently a kind of Horatian test of character; Gay (a fat poet) aestheticizes food; Rochester cannot help viewing it in terms of what to him was the primary appetite, as when, for instance, in

*Timon*, a meal is described in terms of the sexual organs. But what is most interesting about Augustan food poems is that they can so happily find themselves concerned primarily with a detailed rationale of the finer points of eating. In many of them the chosen mode is etiological or preceptive, deriving, no doubt, from Virgil's *Georgics*. In the case of William King's *The Art of Cookery* (1708)<sup>1</sup> the instructional element is provided by the mock form of the poem (it is an imitation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*) but one may detect characteristics of the Georgic, such as the readiness to make patriotic gestures or to invoke the Golden Age. Moreover, the connection between husbandry and cooking (both concerned with the preparation of food) is plain. Gastronomic information, like erotic information, cannot fail to interest us in itself.

King, a slightly older contemporary of Swift and Arbuthnot, was something of a pioneer of the kind of Tory satire that we associate with these two.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, for this reason, *A Tale of a Tub* was ascribed to King on its first anonymous appearance. A lawyer who never cared much for the law, King was, however, a compulsive reader, an able translator, and a ready polemicist. He fell in with Atterbury's circle at Christ Church and joined with them in publishing in 1698 the work known as *Boyle on Bentley*. Bentley, it will be remembered, had a few years earlier demonstrated with some brilliance that for dialectal reasons the supposed *Epistles* of Phalaris could not be genuine. King's contribution to *Boyle on Bentley* made use of Bentley's method to prove that he could not have written his own dissertation.<sup>3</sup> In the same year, King published *A Journey to London*, an attack on Martin Lister's topographical and antiquarian inquiries in his *A Journey to Paris*, and two years later he made fun of Hans Sloane in the absurd dialogues of *The Transactioneer*, Sloane having revived the publication of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* in 1693.

<sup>1</sup> My references to the first edition will consist of page numbers for the prose and line numbers for the verse. All other references to King's works are to the three-volume edition of the *Original Works* (1776), edited by John Nichols.

<sup>2</sup> William King (1663–1712) was a Doctor of Civil Law and a Student of Christ Church. He is still occasionally confused with his namesakes and contemporaries, the Archbishop of Dublin and the Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford. For an account of King see Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Nichols's memoir in his edition of the *Works*, or G. A. Aitkin in *DNB*.

<sup>3</sup> According to Atterbury, via Pope and Warburton. See Colin J. Horne, 'The Phalaris Controversy: King *versus* Bentley', *RES* 22, 1946, pp. 289–303.

These works are less the casual *jeux d'esprit* of a busy man of letters than the first sketches of a lifelong satirical obsession. In Bentley, Lister, and Sloane, King had acquired a scholar, a zoologist, and a botanist wholly representative of contemporary scientific inquiry, a triumvirate of Moderns. King disliked what he felt was inaccuracy and lack of elegance in the prose style of these writers, and his satire often depends, sometimes tediously, on exposing their stylistic roughness and inconsequence. He also found their scientific attention to detail a great joke, and here his sense of absurdity is more creative. The misplaced energy of the virtuosi is transformed in King's work into a joyous celebration of the bizarre.

Shadwell's Sir Nicholas had appeared to propound their first article of faith in declaring: 'Tis below a *Virtuoso*, to trouble himself with Men and Manners. I study Insects.'<sup>1</sup> Such anti-humanism, as King saw it, yielded a jumble of trivial commonplaces, superstitions, microscopic irrelevances, and downright untruths solemnly dressed up as a serious investigation of the real world. With the aim of holding up such material to the mockery of common sense, King continued his attack on Bentley, Lister and Sloane in his best-remembered works, *Dialogues of the Dead* (1699), *The Art of Cookery* (1708), and *Useful Transactions in Philosophy* (1709), showing, as did the members of the later Scriblerus Club, an understandable and genuine comic fascination with the material of his satire, such things as 'Cows that sh-t Fire, Verses on an Eel and a Pike, A Lamb suckled by a Wether, Martial Discipline of Grasshoppers, A stout Butcher's Dog that run under a Bed, Mr Hone O Hone's traveling Irish Bog, Mr Greatrax's Excellence in Stroaking' and so on.<sup>2</sup> The effect of such satire is ambivalent: though encouraged to find them contemptible, we feel that these things are strange enough to be really significant. Indeed, his own private memoranda show King himself to have been infected by the wide-ranging curiosity of this period, as when he has the idea of translating English poets into Latin for foreign readers, makes note of a Tudor religious manual discovered in the belly of a cod, or wonders whether rice would grow on boggy ground, vowing to 'try to sow all sorts of things upon Bogs'.<sup>3</sup> This reminds us that King was in Ireland between

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Shadwell, *The Virtuoso*, Act III (*The Complete Works*, ed. Montague Summers, 1927, iii. 142).

<sup>2</sup> Some consecutive items from the 'Contents of the Transactioneer', *Works*, ii. 56.

<sup>3</sup> From 'Adversaria', *Works* i. 232, 237, and 261.

1701 and 1707 as vicar-general of Armagh and Keeper of the Records at Dublin Castle, and that his best poems, such as *Mully of Mountown* and *The Art of Cookery*, were written there. These and many other poems are about food, and reveal a not dissimilar ambivalence of attitude to which I shall return later.

Food was a habitual subject with King. The keynote is struck by his imaginary Parisian goggling at the size of British joints of meat in *A Journey to London*, and his attacks on the virtuosi return again and again to the theme. Sloane is shown to be interested in making bread out of turnips, the food of philosophers.<sup>1</sup> Bentley is presented as a monstrous cook, offering Greek dishes with such impossibly long names that they make you forget the essential ingredients.<sup>2</sup> King's contributions to the *Tatler* also make use of the subject,<sup>3</sup> and it is not surprising that he translated the opening chapters of Hall's *Mundus*,<sup>4</sup> taking evident delight in its Rabelaisian version of Cockaigne and possibly some inspiration from its explicit connection between drinking and poetry (in i. 2. iii Hall's note quotes Horace's 'Aut insanit homo, aut versus facit'). King himself was a notoriously bibulous writer, his publisher Lintott remembering that 'Dr King would write verses in a tavern three hours after he couldn't speak'.<sup>5</sup>

The subjects of many of these verses characteristically concern the stomach: the mock-heroic defence of a furnety shop by the porters and drivers who frequent it; tributes to a variety of puddings, some in the form of recipes; compliments to the steward of an estate on his skill in the most important of his duties, brewing; a tale about the efforts of a parish schoolmaster

<sup>1</sup> In *The Transactioneer*, *Works*, ii. 37. D'Urfey's philosopher Gonzales eats turnips and other root vegetables in *Wonders in the Sun*, Act I, Scene 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Dialogue VI of *Dialogues of the Dead*, *Works*, i. 160.

<sup>3</sup> According to Nichols, 'when the *fifth* volume of *Tatlers* was begun by Mr. Harrison, Dr. King was a regular associate in that work'. Nichols only prints no. 22, 8–10 March 1711, 'The Analogy between Physicians, Cooks, and Playwrights' (*Works*, ii. 304). I would guess no. 32, on the appropriateness of certain kinds of poetry to different times of the year, also to be by King. He had contributed to the *Examiner* in the previous year. The Bodleian copy (Hope, fol. 17) ascribes nos. 5 and 11 to King, while nos. 8 and 9 on political terminology are also in King's manner.

<sup>4</sup> 'Crapulia; or, the Region of the Cropsicks: A Fragment, in the Manner of Rabelais', *Works*, iii. 278. The title was no doubt bestowed by the editor of the *Remains of the late learned and ingenious Dr William King* (1732), Joseph Browne, who did not recognize it as a translation of Hall.

<sup>5</sup> Reported by Pope to Burlington in 1716 (*The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. Sherburn, i. 373).

to get asked out to dinner every night of the week; a passionate invocation of the gastronomic resources of the idyllic country house of a hospitable Dublin friend; and so on.<sup>1</sup> A few lines from the beginning of this last poem will show something of King's ability to use words with exactness and knowing tact in order to convey a delicate ambiguity between tender feelings and hearty appetite:

Mountown! thou sweet retreat from Dublin cares,  
 Be famous for thy apples and thy pears,  
 For turnips, carrots, lettuce, beans and pease,  
 For Peggy's butter, and for Peggy's cheese.  
 May clouds of pigeons round about thee fly,  
 But condescend sometimes to make a pie!  
 May fat geese gaggle with melodious voice,  
 And ne'er want gooseberries or apple-sauce! (Part i, 1-8)

King appears to suggest, reasonably, that the geese will have no *desire* to find themselves served up with gooseberries or apple-sauce, but we know he is really saying that he hopes there will never be a *lack* of these traditional accompaniments. Similarly, if the pictorially grand and elevated 'clouds of pigeons' *con-descend* like goddesses to make a pie, it would appear that they really wish to do so, acquiescing voluntarily and with dignity, as though the secret of making pies were something they are willing to impart to the eager household. In fact they will have to *con-descend*, that is to say, be brought down *en masse* with quantities of lead shot in order to fill the capacious Mountown pie-dishes, a very different sort of incarnation. The whole description is a fine exercise in gourmet restraint.

## 2

*The Art of Cookery*, which is King's most sustained poetic achievement in the field of gastronomy, relies for much of its

<sup>1</sup> 'The Furmetary'; 'The Art of Making Puddings'; 'To Mr. Carter'; 'The Vestry'; 'Mully of Mountown' (*Works*, iii. 195, 262, 265, 254, 203). The poem 'Apple-pye', really by Leonard Welsted, is printed in *Works*, iii. 259, and was once thought to be King's (see C. J. Horne, 'Welsted's Apple-pye', *N & Q* 17 November 1945). It is worth noting not only the similarity of this poem to 'The Art of Making Puddings', *The Art of Cookery* (47 ff.) or Part ii of 'Mully of Mountown', but also its reference to King Cole (cf. King, *Works*, ii. 87) and the parody of *Absalom and Achitophel* at l. 59. King liked to parody Dryden (e.g. 'Orpheus and Eurydice', ll. 269 ff. and *The Art of Cookery*, 134). A possibility not so far canvassed is that the young Welsted sent the poem to King, who tinkered with it, in particular adding the last four lines which Welsted did not reprint.

initial impact upon the pleasant humour of the parallels with the *Ars Poetica*. This is not the place to discuss the vexed question of the structure of Horace's poem. It is enough to say that King's imitation is of necessity even more gnomic, more miscellaneous. Its subject is the concern of cooks ('Buy it and then give it to your Servants', says King) but much of it is the concern of hosts, too, just as Pope's *An Essay on Criticism*, suggesting that criticism is too important to be left to professionals, becomes an essay on how to read. Other preceptive poems of the period, such as Gay's *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London* or Breval's *The Art of Dress*, are more obviously the province of the knowledgeable amateur.

The parallels are cool and ingenious. Horace's advice that murders and metamorphoses are better narrated than presented on stage (*Ars*, 179-88) is turned into the necessary distinction between parlour and kitchen when it comes to the unpleasantness of preparing some kinds of food, slimy eels, for instance (244-9); the point about having only three speaking characters on stage at one time (*Ars*, 192) becomes an injunction to limit the number of guests at table (259); the nine-year rule (*Ars*, 388) is represented by the information that a roasting pig is done when its eyes pop out (484) and the *deus ex machina* (*Ars*, 191) by a surprise in a pie. Horace forbids a god to intervene in a play 'nisi dignus vindice nodus / inciderit' ('unless a tangle should arise worthy of such a deliverer'). For the Tory King an occasion of this importance would be a City banquet, where the feasted dignitaries (Whig businessmen one and all, no doubt) are merely children beneath their robes:

Let never fresh Machines your Pastry try,  
 Unless Grandees or Magistrates are by,  
 Then you may put a Dwarf into a Pye. }  
 Or if you'd fright an Alderman and Mayor,  
 Within a Pasty lodge a living Hare;  
 Then midst their gravest Furs shall Mirth arise,  
 And all the Guild pursue with joyful Cries. (252-8)

King is always alert to passages which contrast style and substance. Just as a play with ideas in it, however crude, is more popular than fine-sounding vacuities (*Ars*, 319-22), so you can better win round the 'huzzaing Mob' with beef and beer than with ragouts of peacocks' brains (396-9). Typically, King seems here to flatter the taste of the dreaded *mobile* more than he intends to. The spirit of the observation may be close to Bunderby's scorn of a hypothetical proletarian taste for turtle soup

eaten with a golden spoon, but it is in fact conditioned both by Horace's tribute to the unerring though unprofessional judgement of Roman audiences and by the powerful symbolism of beef, about which I shall have more to say later. 'Non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunt', says Horace (*Ars*, 99: 'It isn't enough for poems to be beautiful; they must have charm'). This line introduces an important paragraph in the *Ars Poetica* about the emotional power of poetry, but the word *dulcia*, translated by Fairclough in the Loeb edition as 'charm', happens also to be the word used by Apicius for a sweet, or pudding. This is a useful hint to King, who imitates the line as: 'Unless some Sweetness at the Botton lye, / Who cares for all the crinkling of the Pye?' (137-8). The appropriateness of diction to the various kinds of (and occasions for) emotion in poetry then prompts King into some remarks on the social decorum of eating habits, but he rounds off the paragraph by returning to Horace's statement that it makes a great difference to the poet's style whether the character speaking is a god or a hero, an old man or a young one, a woman of rank or a bustling nurse and so on (*Ars*, 114 ff.) with a deft parallel to such distinctions, moving from the general to the typical and introducing a final tribute to the purely topographical element in these gastronomic distinctions:

Old Age is frugal, gay Youth will abound  
 With Heat, and see the flowing Cup go round.  
 A Widow has cold Pye, Nurse gives you Cake,  
 From gen'rous Merchants Ham or Sturgeon take.  
 The Farmer has brown Bread as fresh as Day,  
 And Butter fragrant as the Dew of May.  
 Cornwall Squab-Pye, and Devon White-Pot brings,  
 And Lei'ster Beans and Bacon, Food of Kings! (159-66)

I have said enough of *The Art of Cookery* as a formal imitation. The element of parody is unignorable despite King's claim that Horace is simply 'an Author to be imitated in the Delivery of *Precepts*, for any Art or Science' (p. 18). The illumination of similarity and contrast goes far beyond borrowed method into burlesque, although, as I now hope to show, Horace was chosen for another and more important reason. Clues to this further relevance of Horace may be found on almost every page of *The Art of Cookery*. For instance, the culminating dish in my last quotation, the 'Lei'ster Beans and Bacon', is typical of Horace's own unpretentious preferences in food, and we may suspect that if the phrase 'Food of Kings' has nothing to do

with royalty, then King is equating himself with Horace here. Compare the Latin poet's longing for his farm in the sixth satire of the second book: 'O quando faba Pythagorae cognata simulque / uncta satis pingui ponentur holusula lardo!' (ll. 63-4: 'O when shall beans, brethren of Pythagoras, be served me, and with them greens well larded with fat bacon!').<sup>1</sup> Such plain diet is, in the context, a necessary adjunct to a serious discussion with friends of the fundamental questions of ethical philosophy. Elsewhere in Horace we find a dish of leeks, peas, and fritters as the preliminary to sound sleep untroubled by the ambitious man's insomnia (*Serm.* i. vi. 115 ff.); an unpretentious *vin ordinaire* that nonetheless has had its owner's care bestowed upon it, and is associated in date with the recovery from illness of his friend and patron (*Carm.* i. xx); and a prayer at a new shrine to Apollo not for great riches but for olives, endives, and mallows as aids to a good digestion (*Carm.* i. xxi. 15 ff.: olives, sorrel, and mallows turn up in *Epod.* ii. 56 ff.). In this way, simple tastes are associated with virtue, and with just that interest in human nature and moral philosophy which the virtuosi appeared to neglect.

We are reminded that the full title of King's poem is *The Art of Cookery, in imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry. With some Letters to Dr. Lister, and others: occasion'd principally by the Title of a Book publish'd by the Doctor, being the Works of Apicius Coelius, concerning the Soups and Sauces of the Ancients*. The whole work, consisting of the poem itself and its nine accompanying prose letters (one of which contains another Horatian imitation, of the fifth epistle of the first book) is a good-natured assault upon Lister's latest and rather uncharacteristic venture, his edition of Apicius.<sup>2</sup> It is important to stress the essential unity of the whole. Like Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* or Pope's *Dunciad*, *The Art of Cookery* is a Menippean satire, mixing verse and prose, and containing a great deal of miscellaneous illustrative material. Taken in this way, the satirical focus shifts from the *Ars Poetica* to Martin Lister's curious resurrection of the forgotten

<sup>1</sup> This was to be translated by Pope as 'Beans and Bacon' (*An Imitation of the Sixth Satire of the Second Book of Horace*, l. 137).

<sup>2</sup> *Apicii Coelii de Opsoniis et Condimentis, sive Arte Coquinaria, Libri Decem, Cum Annotationibus Martini Lister* (1705). My references (to 'Lister') will be to the second edition (Amsterdam, 1709). There is a modern edition with an English translation by Barbara Flower and Elizabeth Rosenbaum, *The Roman Cookery Book* (1958). 'Apicius Coelius' is M. Gavius Apicius, who lived in the first century A.D., although about two-fifths of the work consists of middle-class additions by a fourth- or early fifth-century editor.



Apicius, who is seen to be suspect on several grounds which the letters teasingly unravel. When modern scholarship pays attention to an ancient cookery book, much of which seems at least quaint if not downright sybaritic to the ordinary reader, satire such as King's, relying heavily on a mistrust of learning and extolling traditional virtues of common sense and temperate living, is in its element. Apicius annotated by Lister looms large in the work, therefore, in a way not apparent from the poem taken on its own. We find, too, a shift of emphasis in King's use of Horace, from the *Ars Poetica* to the attitudes revealed in such satires as the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth of the second book, where the simple life is praised and fun made of extravagant or pretentious dining.

Typical of Horace's delicate treatment of this common classical theme is the way in which in the fourth satire of the second book he gently encourages Catus to recount what he can remember of a gastronomic lecture he has attended. Catus is just dashing off when we meet him, in order to jot down the precepts he has heard, precepts which he describes as 'qualia vincent / Pythagoran Anytique reum doctumque Platona' (ll. 2-3: 'such as will surpass Pythagoras, and the sage [Socrates] whom Anytus accused, and the learned Plato'). Horace's remarks in the dialogue convey a secret smile to the reader as he elicits the precious and recondite information that makes up the bulk of the satire: this is raillery at its finest. King cannot match it, but his stance is remarkably similar.

As Catus reports the unknown gastronomic lecturer to Horace, so Lister, through his edition, brings Apicius to the notice of King, whose fascinated incredulity is paraded throughout the prose letters in *The Art of Cookery*. His ruse (like Horace's) is to counterfeit a desire to partake of such learning, and also to boast of his own achievements in that line. In the fifth letter he actually quotes Catus' first precept, prefacing it with a remark which signals the assumed allegiance with beautiful guile:

He [Horace] is indeed severe upon our sort of Learning in some of his *Satyrs*; but even there he instructs, as in the fourth Satyr of the second Book;

*Longa quibus facies ovis erit, illa memento,  
Ut succi melioris, & ut magis alba rotundis,  
Ponere; namque Marem cohibent callosa vitellum.*  
'Choose Eggs oblong, remember they'll be found  
'Of sweeter tast, and whiter than the Round;  
'The Firmness of that Shell includes the Male.

I am much of his Opinion, and could only wish that the World was thoroughly inform'd of two other Truths concerning *Eggs*: One is, how incomparably better *Roasted Eggs* are than boil'd; the other, never to eat any Butter with *Eggs* in the *Shell*: You cannot imagine how much more you will have of their Flavour, and how much easier they will sit upon your Stomach. The worthy Person who recommended it to me made many Proselytes; and I have the Vanity to think that I have not been altogether unsuccessful. (pp. 18–19)<sup>1</sup>

It is true, I suppose, that the best learning in this field is traditional household wisdom, but King's Listerian language turns it almost into a matter of sectarian belief. It is the language of Big-endians and Little-endians.

King's desire to learn is principally conveyed by the device of suspense. *The Art of Cookery* proclaimed itself 'Occasion'd principally by the Title of a Book publish'd by the Doctor'. In the first letter King professes himself tantalized to hear of such a work, and begs his friend to send it with all speed. By the third letter he is so suffused with the spirit of antiquarian research that he is writing to Lister a long rambling account of toothpicks, cutlery, and chopsticks. In the fourth letter he tells his friend that he is writing his poem on the art of cookery. In the fifth he says that he encloses it, and he gives instructions as to how it shall be read. In ensuing letters he talks about the importance of food in poetry, elaborately showing how a play written by Lord Grimstone when he was thirteen conforms to rules laid down in the poem: the level of excitement is high, and yet by the eighth letter he has still not read Lister's Apicius. He mentions a 'surprising Happiness', which is simply to have met someone who *has* seen it, and who has 'a Promise of Leave to read it'. The tension is unbearable. At this point, King's poem itself is printed, and we have to wait for the long ninth and final letter before we have his description of the book and his comments upon it, based on this friend's report. The first edition of Lister's Apicius was indeed a rarity, but there is no reason to suppose that King did not actually have a copy. His device gives a dramatic shape to his work, and conforms to the spirit of restless inquiry of much contemporary scientific correspondence. Later editions of *The Art of Cookery* that print the letters together and the poem at the end are missing King's point, which is to allow the native English good sense of the poem to

<sup>1</sup> For other classical views on the subject see Aristotle, *Hist. Anim.* 6. 2. 2 and Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 10. 145. King's own advice here contrasts notably with Apicius (see Lister, p. 214: '*Ova elixa*: Liguamine, oleo, mero', etc.).

steal the thunder of the indulgences of classical cuisine as pondered by Lister, Humelberg, and other scholarly authorities on Apicius.

## 3

Lister had been guilty of treating French food and drink with respect in his *A Journey to Paris*.<sup>1</sup> King cannot resist elaborating upon Horace's tribute to Homer in the *Ars Poetica* (140 ff.) in order to reintroduce this topic:

*Homer* more modest, if we search his Books,  
Will shew us that his Heroes all were Cooks:  
How lov'd *Patroclus* with *Achilles* joins,  
To quarter out the Ox, and spit the Loins.  
Oh cou'd that Poet Live! cou'd he rehearse  
Thy Journey *L*— in immortal Verse!

*Muse* sing the Man that did to Paris go,  
That he might taste their Soups and Mushrooms know.

Oh how would *Homer* praise their Dancing Dogs,  
Their stinking Cheese, and Fricasy of Frogs! (200-9)<sup>2</sup>

This contrast between beef, the food of heroes, and the particularly nasty forms of food attributed to the taste of England's enemy is central to an understanding of what King is up to. The growing ascendancy of the French in cooking was something to feel sensitive about, no doubt, and nervous laughter about frogs, snails, and high meat is an attitude we can still recognize. King was quick to perceive that Lister as a zoologist had a scientific interest in snails and maggots. In the ninth of the *Dialogues of the Dead*, for example, the virtuosi's obsession with maggots is contrasted with the fact that the Ancients ate their meat as soon as they had killed it.<sup>3</sup> The Homeric attitude to food was entirely without fastidiousness or foppishness, as King ironically observes in *The Art of Cookery*:

*Homer* makes his Heroes feed so grossly, that they seem to have had more occasion for *Scewers* than *Goosequills*. He is very tedious in describing a Smith's Forge, and an Anvil; whereas he might have been more polite in setting out the *Tooth-pick-case* or painted *Snuff-Box* of *Achilles*, if that Age had not been so barbarous as to want them. (p. 9)

<sup>1</sup> *A Journey to Paris in the Year 1698* (1699), pp. 146-70.

<sup>2</sup> *Patroclus* and *Achilles* are later associated with Guy of Warwick in the same context in King's Dedication of his *Miscellanies* (1709), *Works*, iii. 291.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, I. 169. Lister's delineation of the sexual organs of snails in his *De Buccinis Fluvialitibus & Marinis Exercitatio* is mentioned with delight at the end of the eighth letter of *The Art of Cookery*, and his studies of cockles, beetles, snails, and spiders at the beginning of the ninth.

The sheer bulk of beef, therefore, and the essential simplicity of its preparation, becomes a triumphant national symbol to oppose to the poverty, triviality, and unnecessary complexity of French cuisine. In war, for instance, soldiers at one time expected only simple food, stewing their beef in their helmets (of course they had to have beef) and putting anything else they could find into the common pot (281 ff.). Paralleling Horace's ironical account of supposed cultural progress in the gradually elaborated role of the flute in leading the chorus of post-classical tragedy (*Ars*, 202 ff.), King suggests that the military style of great leaders like Marlborough is now, in contrast, effete and frenchified:

But when our Conquests were extensive grown,  
 And thro' the World our *British* Worth was known,  
 Wealth on Commanders then flow'd in apace,  
 Their Champaign sparkl'd equal with their Lace:  
 Quails, Beccofico's, Ortelans were sent  
 To grace the Levee of a General's Tent.  
 In their gilt Plate all Delicates were seen,  
 And what was Earth before became a rich Terrene. (290-7)

Champagne, ortolans, gilt plate? Could infant imperialism suffer such ostentation? 'Sic priscae motumque et luxuriam addidit arti / tibicen traxitque vagus per pulpita vestem' (*Ars*, 214-15: 'Thus to the basic art the flute-player added movement and display, and strutting across the stage trailed his robe'). King's simple 'Earth' is at once the common camp cooking-pot and the world that remains to be conquered by the British. A 'Terrene' is a novelty, and King feels obliged to explain it in the fifth letter as 'a Silver Vessel fill'd with the most costly Dainties' (p. 22). The pun in effect hands over our conquests to the enemy. What is the point of fighting the French if we become French ourselves?

Though the French were actually supreme in the art of making sauces, King casts aspersions on such superfluous and luxurious inventions of the Ancients: '. . . the *Goths* and *Vandals* over ran the *Western* Empire, and . . . they by Use, Exercise, and Necessity of Abstinence, introduc'd the eating of Cheese and Venison without those additional Sauces, which the Physitians of old found out to restore the deprav'd Appetites of such great Men as had lost their Stomachs by an Excess of Luxury' (pp. 140-1). Indeed, King declares: 'As for my self I take him to abstain, / Who has good Meat, with Decency, tho' plain' (373-4). Beef unadorned, therefore, becomes a moral,

even a patriotic, virtue. The French are thought not only to like bad meat, but actually to have very little meat at all, as King's French traveller to London observes:

. . . whereas we have a great deal of cabbage and but a little bit of meat, they will have monstrous pieces of beef (I think they call them *rumps* and *buttocks*) with a few carrots, that stand at a distance, as if they were frightened; nay, I have seen a thing they call a *sir-loin*, without any herbs at all, so immense, that a French footman could scarce set it upon the table. (*Works*, i. 204-5)

Joints of this kind, that need an Achilles to carve them, prove the heroic superiority of the British. Fifty years later, such a joint was to put in a central appearance in Hogarth's popular engraving *The Gate of Calais*, sometimes known as *O the Roast-Beef of Old England*, where it is presented as an object of amazement to the soup-eating and priest-ridden French.<sup>1</sup> Hogarth himself assisted in the founding of the Sublime Society of Beef-steaks, in which beef-eating was intended to encourage and celebrate strength, independence, and the love of freedom. But a similar society, Richard Estcourt's Beef-steak Club, was in existence in King's day, and *The Art of Cookery* is dedicated to it:

He that of Honour, Wit and Mirth partakes,  
 May be a fit Companion o'er Beef steaks,  
 His Name may be to future Times enroll'd  
 In *Estcourt's* Book, whose Gridir'ns fram'd of Gold. (515-18)

Ned Ward dwells on the presumption that the eating of beef increases sexual appetite,<sup>2</sup> but although King recognizes that certain foods influence our passions, he does not claim that beef is an aphrodisiac; indeed, by a specific juxtaposition, he refutes it:

The things we eat by various Juice controul,  
 The Narrowness or Largeness of our Soul.  
 Onions will make ev'n Heirs or Widows weep,  
 The tender Lettuce brings on softer Sleep,  
 Eat Beef or Pye-crust if you'd serious be:  
 Your Shell-fish raises *Venus* from the Sea. (141-6)

<sup>1</sup> Plate 192 in Ronald Paulson's *Hogarth's Graphic Works* (1965). The alternative title derives from Air xlv in Fielding's *Welsh (or Grub-Street) Opera* (1731). See also Derek Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth* (1974), chap. i. When King reprinted *A Journey to London* in his *Miscellanies* (1709), he particularly represented it as 'a vindication of [his] own country' against France.

<sup>2</sup> *The Secret History of Clubs* (1709), pp. 378 ff.

One may be serious about love, no doubt, but true seriousness belongs to honour and virtue, the moral qualities of the hero. King's allegiance to Estcourt's Tory Beef-steak Club may thus be explained on grounds of virtue and patriotism. The members of Jacob Tonson's Whig Kit-Cat Club only ate mutton pies and custard, after all. King does pay a tribute to Christopher Catt's mutton pies in the poem (424), but elsewhere he shares the delight which Tory writers had in poking fun at Tonson's profitable relations with the Kit-Cat Club.<sup>1</sup> I would guess that King originated the reversed name 'Nosnotbocai' (later to be taken up by Ward and Shippen) in his poem *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1704), where the ugly publisher is associated with a Papist Purgatory and with a Fairy Land where Orpheus is fed, in Herrick's manner, with a very insubstantial dinner:

'Sir, a roasted ant, that's nicely done  
By one small atom of the sun.  
These are flies' eggs in moonshine poach'd;  
This a flea's thigh in collops Scotch'd;  
'Twas hunted yesterday i' th' Park,  
And like t'have 'scap'd us in the dark.  
This is a dish entirely new,  
Butterflies' brains dissolv'd in dew;  
These, lovers' vows, these courtiers' hopes,  
Things to be eat by microscopes;  
These, sucking mites, a glow-worm's heart,  
This is a delicious rainbow tart!' (*Works*, iii. 212)

This kind of food is very far from serious beef, and links the microscopic concerns of the virtuoso with the empty world of political ambition and frivolous amours—a collocation to be exploited by Pope.<sup>2</sup>

What King objects to in the various kinds of food he contrasts with beef is that they give one nothing to carve. French

<sup>1</sup> See Kathleen M. Lynch, *Jacob Tonson, Kit-Cat Publisher* (Knoxville, 1971), chap. iii. Ward contrasts beef and pies in *The Secret History of Clubs*, p. 391: 'Who then can blame such Worthies, who despise | For noble Beef, that Childish Diet Pies.'

<sup>2</sup> For example, at the conclusion of *The Rape of the Lock*, when the lock is thought by some to have mounted 'to the Lunar Sphere':

There broken Vows, and Death-bed Alms are found,  
And Lovers' Hearts with Ends of Riband bound;  
The Courtier's Promises, and Sick Man's Pray'rs,  
The Smiles of Harlots, and the Tears of Heirs,  
Cages for Gnats, and Chains to Yoak a Flea;  
Dry'd Butterflies, and Tomes of Casuistry. (v. 117-22)

food is mostly soups and ragouts, and Chinese food 'is all boil'd to Rags'. You certainly could not carve a Turkey-cock or a Chine of Beef with chopsticks, as King explicitly remarks (p. 11). In discussing Roman food, he surprisingly links comfortable chairs and bibliographical studies as modern phenomena likely to reintroduce idleness and luxury:

There is a curious Observation concerning the diversity of *Roman* and *British* Dishes, the first delighting in Hodge-podge, Gallimaufreys, Forc'd Meats, Jussels, and Salmagundies; the latter in Spear-ribs, Surloins, Chines and Barons; and thence our Terms of Art, both as to Dressing and Carving become very different; for they lying upon a sort of Couch cou'd not have carv'd those Dishes which our Ancestors, when they set upon Formes us'd to do. But since the Use of Cushions and Elbow Chairs, and the Editions of good Books and Authors, it may be hop'd in time we may come up to them. (p. 148)

Carving was a serious business, and King shows that he has read Wynkyn de Worde.<sup>1</sup> If a joint is stuffed with too many other ingredients it turns into something else impossible to get one's knife into:

Meat forc'd too much, untouch'd at Table lies,  
 Few care for carving Trifles in Disguise,  
 Or that fantastick Dish, some call *Surprise*. (418-20) }

These lines are King's version of Horace's advice that stories should be 'proxima veris' (i.e. close to reality) in order to please, and that 'neu pransae Lamiae vivum puerum extrahat alvo' (*Ars*, 340: 'one shouldn't pull the boy out alive from the lamia's stomach after her meal'), a literary denouement familiar to us from fairy-tales like *Little Red Riding Hood*. If meat is so stuffed that it is like a trifle, however, it is getting perilously close to being simply stuffing without meat at all, even if it takes the shape of meat. Apicius has several recipes of this kind, such as 'Patina de *Apua sine Apua*' (Patina of anchovy without anchovy) of which he remarks 'Nemo agnoscet, quid manducet' ('No one will know what he is eating'). In a later recipe, ground liver is moulded into the shape of a fish.<sup>2</sup> As Lister points out in his notes to the first of these, this is the kind of thing meant by *coena dubia* alluded to by Horace in the second satire of the second book and embodied in the pretentious feast of Nasidienus in the eighth of the second book. It is puzzling, even dishonest, food, trifle in disguise, ancestor of the nut cutlet

<sup>1</sup> The 'termes of a Kerver', from Worde's *Book of Kerving* (1508), are mentioned in the sixth letter, pp. 33-4.

<sup>2</sup> Lister, pp. 110-11 and 260.

and soya steak. Together with the Roman habit of eating comic and unheroic animals such as dormice, it casts doubt upon the valour and virtue of the later Roman Empire, the text of Apicius dating, as Lister claimed, from the time of the Emperor Heliogabalus.<sup>1</sup> In his final letter, King is particularly taken with the dormice and by the fact that Lister in his notes mentions his patient observation of their habits.<sup>2</sup> Much fun is made of the reader's likely weariness at this stage of the long précis. Such a 'soporiferous Dainty' as dormouse served with poppies and honey, as recommended by Petronius ('as good as Owl Pye to such as want a Nap after Dinner') is seen as particularly appropriate (pp. 152-5).

Foreign meat, absurd meat, fairy meat, insect meat, pretend meat: there remains one further and possibly more serious threat to beef running through King's work, and that is vegetarianism. Horace's offer in the fifth epistle of the first book of a dinner of vegetables only, eaten out of an unpretentious dish (l. 2: 'nec modica cenare times holus omne patella') is translated by King as 'few dishes': it obviously didn't seem like anything very much to him. In general, vegetarianism is associated with poverty, miserliness, and nonconformism, and King has predictable jokes about turnips or about tailors and cucumbers (p. 24, and ll. 127-8). However, vegetarianism was not to be lightly dismissed. There were dietary reasons for stressing 'white, young, tender animal Food, Bread, Milk and Vegetables' as opposed to 'high animal Food and rich Wine',<sup>3</sup> which we would recognize today and which were not unknown to the ancients, as for instance when Juvenal in his simple dinner for Persicus offers a kid because it is desirably fuller of milk than blood.<sup>4</sup> Milk itself can be a direct alternative to beef, as King's poem *Mully of Mountown* pathetically demonstrates:

<sup>1</sup> Lister, sig. \*7v.

<sup>2</sup> Lister, p. 244. King resumes his fun at the expense of dormice in *A Voyage to the Island of Cajamai*: 'Were the Northern Nations as exquisite in their tastes as the Romans, they would in their country seats have their separate Parks for their Snails, and another for their Rats; for so I interpret the Latin word *glires*, though I know the generality of persons take them for Dormice. . . . But I think a Friend of mine has surpassed them all, by a Park which he made for his Spiders; the largest of which was a very sensible creature, knew his master's Voice, and answered to the name of Robin.' (*Works*, ii. 176-7)

<sup>3</sup> George Cheyne, *The Natural Method of Cureing the Diseases of the Body* (1742), pp. 56 and 69.

<sup>4</sup> 'Qui plus lactis habet quam sanguinis', *Sat.* xi. 68.



Mully, a cow sprung from a beauteous race,  
 With spreading front did Mountown's pastures grace:  
 Gentle she was, and, with a gentle stream,  
 Each morn and night, gave milk that equall'd cream.  
 (Part iii, 18-21)

This is not enough for the churlish cowherd Robin, who is an eater of beef:

'Tis a brave cow! O, Sirs! when Christmas comes,  
 These shins shall make the porridge grac'd with plums;  
 Then, midst our cups, whilst we profusely *dine*,  
 This blade shall enter deep in Mully's chine.  
 What ribs, what rumps, what bak'd, boil'd, stew'd, and roast!  
 There sha'n't one single tripe of her be lost!' (36-41)

Peggy speaks up for the innocent creature, and various other servants join in the debate. King's own ambivalent view is, I think, expressed by Terence, whose deliberate equivocation is emphasized by the rather good triplet:

Then Terence spoke, oraculous and sly;	}
He'd neither grant the question, nor deny;	
Pleading for milk, his thoughts were on mince pie.	
	(52-4)

King breaks off the poem in an elaborate profession of grief, but the mock-Virgilian terms of the whole poem should not distract us from its basic point, which is that behind a country idyll lie the hard facts of farming, killing for food.

## 4

More truly Horatian are the many places in *The Art of Cookery* where King celebrates the content which simple tastes are bound to bring:

Happy the Man that has each Fortune try'd,  
 To whom she much has giv'n, and much deny'd:  
 With Abstinence all Delicates he sees,  
 And can regale himself with Toast and Cheese. (149-52)

The *beatus ille* formula comes, of course, not from the *Ars Poetica* but from the second epode, where a man may feel blessed on his small plot of inherited land, his *rura paterna* which even the great may envy. The theme is also King's:

A Prince who in a forest rides astray,  
 And weary to some Cottage finds the way,  
 Talks of no Pyramids of Fowl or Bisks of Fish,  
 But hungry sups his Cream serv'd up in Earthen Dish:

Quenches his Thirst with Ale in nut-brown Bowls,  
 And takes the hasty Rasher from the Coals:  
 Pleas'd as King *Henry* with the Miller free,  
 Who thought himself as good a Man as He. (129-36)

Such hospitality is real because it lacks ostentation. Pyramids of fowl are not appropriate here, and nor would they be so among friends:

When among Friends good Humour takes its Birth,  
 'Tis not a tedious Feast prolongs the Mirth. (118-19)

This is exactly the sentiment of Horace (*Serm.* II. vi. 65 ff.).

The hospitality of cottager to prince, or of friend to friend, is paralleled by that of the lord to his tenants. Hospitality is always accused of being moribund, and English satire from Hall (*Virgideciarum*, v. ii. 55 ff.) to Pope (*Epistle to Bathurst*, 179 ff.) laments the overgrown courtyards and smokeless chimneys of great houses that should be welcoming visitors. King's tribute to Judge Upton's hospitality at Mountown has already been glanced at. The following passage from *The Art of Cookery* links hospitality with the strong sense of tradition that runs through the poem:

At Christmas time be careful of your Fame,  
 See the old Tenant's Table be the same;  
 Then if you wou'd send up the Brawler's Head,  
 Sweet Rosemary and Bays around it spread:  
 His foaming Tusks let some large Pippin grace,  
 Or midst those thund'ring Spears an Orange place,  
 Sauce like himself, offensive to its Foes,  
 The Roguish Mustard, dang'rous to the Nose.  
 Sack and the well-spic'd *Hippocras* the Wine,  
 Wassail the Bowl with ancient Ribbands fine,  
 Porridge with Plumbs, and Turkey with the Chine. (167-77)

Ceremony of this kind may exist largely in the imagination, certainly in that part of the mind furnished with good intentions or nostalgia. The comfortable tone is established at the very outset of the work, by the words of the publisher to the reader. The author shows, it is said,

*his Aversion to the Introduction of Luxury, which may tend to the Corruption of Manners, and declare[s] his Love to the old British Hospitality, Charity and Valour, when the Arms of the Family, the old Pikes, Muskets and Halberds hung up in the Hall over the long Table, and the Marrow Bones lay on the Floor, and Chivey Chase and the Old Courtier of the Queen's were plac'd over the*

*Carv'd Mantle Piece, and the Beef and Brown Bread were carried every Day to the Poor.*

Satirists who praise the simple life, its happiness and its responsibilities, will inevitably attack depravity and excess. In the poem, King is more concerned to stress styles of eating appropriate to the occasion (as in imitation of the *Ars Poetica* he was perhaps bound to do), though the letters make plain the role played by Apicius himself in introducing luxury and corrupting manners. King claims that Seneca and the Stoics abhorred his work, and finds it wholly understandable that the treatise was transcribed in the reign of an emperor like Heliogabalus rather than, say, Antoninus, 'who had gain'd his Reputation by a temperate, austere, and solid Virtue' (p. 139). One of King's earliest works, incidentally, was a translation of a Life of Antoninus. He twice refers to Athanaeus' anecdote about Apicius' impulsive and disappointed journey to Africa in search of enormous lobsters (pp. 155-6, and *Crapulia*, ch. v). In *Crapulia*, the dead gourmet had become something of a national hero. Their schools, for instance, were in fact public-houses where fragments of Apicius were studied (*Works*, iii. 286). Since Apicius, via Lister and Horace, is the ultimate *raison d'être* of *The Art of Cookery*, it should be remembered that King's homely precepts are continually designed to counter the whimsicality of Apicius' salaccabies or dormouse sausages. The work really is, then, as it claims to be, a native art of cookery, and we can read it in the spirit in which we read Mrs. Glasse, whose own *Art of Cookery* was published thirty-nine years later:

Buy it and then give it to your Servants: For I hope to live to see the Day when every Mistress of a Family, and every Steward shall call up their Children and Servants with, Come Miss *Betty*, how much have you got of your Art of Cookery? Where did you leave off, Miss *Isbel*? Miss *Katty*, are you no farther than *King Henry and the Miller*? . . . What a glorious sight it will be, and how becoming a great Family, to see the Butler out-learning the Steward, and the painful Skultery Maid exerting her Memory far beyond the mumping House-keeper. (pp. 39-40)

There is, however, a twist to the story. Despite these sound Horatian attitudes, which constitute, as I have suggested, the concealed layer of imitation in *The Art of Cookery*, there is an obvious weakness in King's position. Whereas Horace's professional success as a civil servant was in some sense necessary before he could have 'the little farm which made him himself again' (*Epist.* i. xiv. 1), King was not a competent administrator,

for example leaving the Irish Record Office in no better condition than he found it.<sup>1</sup> He was a 'poor starving wit', according to Swift.<sup>2</sup> He squandered what wealth he had, and could not hold down a job. The 'hoc erat in votis' mood of *Mulby of Mountown* applies to someone else's farm, and once settled again in London, he became memorable only for drinking and practical jokes. Naturally a writer's personal habits will often defeat the professions of virtue which may be found in his work. Pope, for instance, despite a much higher moral tone than King, can in fact be accused of gormandizing,<sup>3</sup> and Horace himself, of course, is found to be in two minds about country and city, humble life and rich life. His servant Davus' accusations in the seventh satire of the second book locate the ambivalence succinctly: 'Romae rus optas; absentem rusticus urbem / tollis ad astra levis' (ll. 28-9: 'In Rome you long for the country; in the country, changeable as you are, you elevate the absent town to the stars'). There seems to be one rule for the servant and another for the master: 'Obsequium ventris mihi perniciosius est cur?' asks Davus (l. 104: 'Why is it worse for me to follow my stomach?'). The answer lies in the force of circumstance. At the end of his epistle to the wealthy Vala asking for information about seaside resorts, Horace confesses that although he is likely to praise the simple life, given the chance he would naturally seize the opportunity to indulge himself (*Epist.* I. xv. 42 ff.), and in the epistle to Scaeva he reproduces the repartee between Diogenes the Cynic and Aristippus: 'Si pranderet holus patienter, regibus uti / nollet Aristippus.' 'Si sciret regibus uti, / fastidiret holus qui me notat' (*Epist.* I. xvii. 13-15: 'If Aristippus could be content to dine on greens, he would not want to live with princes.' 'If he who censures me knew how to live with princes, he would sniff at greens').

<sup>1</sup> In 1709, Addison found the Irish public records disordered and in poor condition, and proposed a thoroughgoing transcription and cataloguing. See Peter Smithers, *The Life of Joseph Addison* (1968), pp. 168 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal to Stella*, 19 December 1711.

<sup>3</sup> Bathurst to the Countess of Suffolk in 1734: 'You do well to reprove [Pope] about his intemperance; for he makes himself sick every meal at your most moderate and plain table in England. Yesterday I had a little piece of salmon just caught out of the Severn, and a fresh pike that was brought me from the other side of your house out of the Thames. He ate as much as he could of both, and insisted on his moderation, because he made his dinner upon one dish.' (*Letters to and from Henrietta, Countess of Suffolk*, 1824, ii. 81.) Perhaps one should point out that 1734 was the year in which Pope imitated Horace's *Serm.* II. II in *To Bethel* (cf. ll. 137 ff.).

Horace, therefore, can be seen as an Epicurean if one wishes, though his philosophy was notoriously eclectic.

King would have well understood this, approving the licence to mock a Catus or a Nasidienus, while reserving the right to believe 'bene qui cenat bene vivit' (*Epist.* I. vi. 56: 'he who dines well lives well'). There is an amusing instance of this in King's *Useful Miscellanies* (1712), where he gives 'Some Account of Horace's Behaviour during his Stay at Trinity College in Cambridge.'<sup>1</sup> Bentley, Master of Trinity College since 1700, had been in trouble with his governing body. The newly decorated Master's Lodge, for instance, had cost five times the expected sum, and he was accused of unfairly obtaining provisions at the College's expense.<sup>2</sup> In 1711, Bentley published his edition of Horace, in which in the dedication to Harley he metaphorically referred to Horace as a guest who 'after having been kindly entertain'd by me for many Years, at last seem'd willing to get Abroad'.<sup>3</sup> It was a typical pleasantry of King's to take up this metaphor and prove that Bentley's high-handedness and financial deviousness as Master was the result of entertaining for so long such a demanding guest. It was not hard for him to construct a comic argument proving that the Epicurean Roman poet could really be responsible for the vast bills run up by the Master. Bentley, King's first and last literary victim, was even hounded from the grave, since it seems clear that the vulgarizing translation of Bentley's notes, and the 'Notes upon Notes', in Oldisworth's edition of Horace of 1712/13 were also by King, though mostly appearing after his death.<sup>4</sup> This final twist, then, is analogous to finding a wine-snob attacked by a connoisseur who preaches abstinence. King's work in fact shows an uncommon interest in the niceties of eating. There is no harm in caring about food, but how then do you show where someone else oversteps the mark? In *The Art of Cookery*, King treads a fine wire, and is perhaps being truly Horatian in having it both ways.

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, iii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See J. H. Monk, *The Life of Richard Bentley, D.D.*, 2nd edn. revised (Cambridge, 1833), chaps. vii and viii.

<sup>3</sup> *Q. Horatius Flaccus, ex recensione et cum notis atque emendationibus Richardi Bentleyi* (Cambridge, 1711), sig. A1r. The translation is from Oldisworth's *Horace (The Odes, Epodes and Carmen Seculare, with a translation of Dr. Bentley's notes; to which are added Notes upon Notes done in the Bentleian stile* (24 parts, 1712/13; 2 vols., 1714).

<sup>4</sup> See Horne, *RES* 22 1946, p. 301. Monk, *op. cit.*, p. 319, writes: 'A copy of the book [Oldisworth's edition], in an old binding, shown to me by Mr Evans the eminent bookseller of Pall-Mall, is lettered *King's Horace*.'

William King devoted his literary talent to the defence of tradition, common sense, and civilized moderation. It is a minor achievement, uneven and, for an undoubted *bon viveur*, perhaps a morally precarious one. Some of his poetry is without interest (the Prior-like tales and bawdy anecdotes in particular) but much is delightfully fresh: his *Art of Love*, in imitation of Ovid, was deservedly popular, and I am sorry to have had no opportunity to deal with it. Johnson's Life of King represents, I am inclined to think, rather too dampening a view of the poet, while nowadays in literary histories and bibliographies he is apt to be mentioned largely as a 'miscellaneous writer' and his poetic achievement to be almost lost from sight. King is an interesting man for his time, and much of this interest could, it is agreed, only be described as miscellaneous, but among much forgotten political and religious controversy a distinct literary independence may be noted: the invention of the satirical index,<sup>1</sup> the pioneering of the genre of dialogues of the dead,<sup>2</sup> translation of Persian tales,<sup>3</sup> the writing of a sonnet in a largely sonnetless age and of a poem composed in a dream,<sup>4</sup> the first quotation in print of such nursery rhymes as 'The Lion and the Unicorn', 'Good King Cole', and 'Boys and Girls come out to Play',<sup>5</sup> and the lucrative publication of a classical dictionary for schools.<sup>6</sup> One could continue such a list, and of course it could be taken to reinforce the dilettantism of which Johnson tacitly disapproved.

But King does claim our attention as a poet of modest but memorable achievement in his imitations, particularly in *The Art of Cookery*. This in turn derives its imaginative energy as much from his pre-Scriblerian scorn of contemporary science and scholarship as from his need to celebrate one particular

<sup>1</sup> According to D'Israeli. See Horne, *RES* 22, 1946, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> Horne, *RES* 22, 1946, p. 295, writes that King goes back directly to Lucian. Contemporary examples of the form may be found in the works of Brown and Prior.

<sup>3</sup> *The Persian and Turkish tales, compleat, translated into French by M. Pétis de la Croix and now into English by Dr King* (1714).

<sup>4</sup> 'To Laura, in imitation of Petrarch' and 'I waked speaking these out of a dream in the morning' in *Works*, iii. 240 and 269.

<sup>5</sup> In *Useful Transactions in Philosophy*, *Works*, ii. 90, 87, and 84. King pretends that the rhymes derive from Arabic, Old English, and Greek versions which he prints and discusses.

<sup>6</sup> *An Historical Account of the Heathen Gods and Heroes Necessary for an Understanding of the Ancient Poets* [1711]. The volume was dedicated to one of King's old schoolmasters, Dr. Knipe of Westminster.

aspect of the Horatian good life. From this point of view, the most celebrated judgement upon King strikes at the heart of the satirical attitudes of the time. He was, Johnson said, 'one of those who tried what wit could perform in opposition to learning, on a question which learning only could decide'. And as a corollary to this, Johnson concluded: 'His purpose is to be merry; but perhaps, to enjoy his mirth, it may be sometimes necessary to think well of his opinions.' Now there is a class of satirist of whom this is not really true: Swift on Wotton, Arbuthnot on Woodward, Gay on Dennis, Pope on Bentley. With one's hand on one's heart one could not honestly agree with their opinions: the reader is too fully aware of the part played by prejudice, misunderstanding, or personal animosity in such satirical victimization. One might perhaps reverse Johnson's conclusion, and say that to enjoy their opinions it may be sometimes necessary to think well of their mirth. In satire of this kind, it is the humour that is of prime importance, not the *parti pris*. If the joke works, we do not care whether the satirist is right or wrong. Much of the time the Tory wits clearly *were* wrong, even though we cannot now quite ignore their comic and damaging qualifications of the over-all intellectual achievements of their age. In his efforts to make dunces of men like Bentley, Sloane, and Lister, I would admit King to this class of satirist. In missing the point, he sets up an illuminating cultural discrepancy. Their kind of learning, parent of our own specialized research programmes and scholarly footnotes upon footnotes, seemed to him in some disturbing sense uncivilized. Their blinkered attention to minutiae was absurd, and the acute intelligence, approaching to dissect, too frequently encountered only a trifle.