

**HAMLET TRAVESTIE: IN THREE ACTS;  
WITH BURLESQUE ANNOTATIONS,  
AFTER THE MANNER OF DR.  
JOHNSON AND GEO. STEEVENS,  
AND THE VARIOUS COMMENTATORS**

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**JOHN POOLE**

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# HAMLET TRAVESTIE :

IN THREE ACTS.

WITH

## Burlesque Annotations,

AFTER THE MANNER OF

DR. JOHNSON AND GEO. STEEVENS, Esq.

AND THE

*VARIOUS COMMENTATORS.*

BY JOHN POOLE.

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Quantum mutatus ab illo.

VIRGIL.

— Commentators each dark passage shun,  
And hold their farthing candle to the sun.

YOUNG.

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SIXTH EDITION.

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1817.

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## DEDICATION.

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to

**KA-HING,**  
EMPEROR OF CHINA.

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SIRE,

*WHEN, in addition to your exalted rank, I consider that it is by YOUR MAJESTY'S especial permission that NANKEENS and TEAS are exported from YOUR MAJESTY'S dominions into these, I cannot, for a moment, hesitate in dedicating the following pages to YOUR MAJESTY.*

*The ears of Princes are too much accustomed to the voice of flattery, to leave me any hope that YOUR MAJESTY would be gratified by fulsome praises—praises which YOUR MAJESTY, no doubt, well knows how to appreciate; especially when conveyed to your IMPERIAL EAR through the medium of a language with which YOUR MAJESTY is, most likely, unacquainted. I shall, therefore, forbear to insinuate YOUR*

MAJESTY into the possession of any of those virtues with which it is usual for authors so unmercifully to encumber those to whom they dedicate their works; but content myself with giving YOUR MAJESTY full credit for the exercise of the ordinary Princely quota.

Thus to intrude upon the notice of YOUR MAJESTY, may, by the world at large, be considered presumptuous; but let it be remembered, that "a Cat may look at a King;" and I trust that I shall not be charged with any sinister motive in soliciting YOUR MAJESTY's protection for the following Work, when I openly declare that I cannot boast of the felicity of caring five farthings for YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY, and that, to the best of my belief, YOUR MAJESTY does not care half so much for me.

*I have the Honor to be,*

*With the most profound Respect,*

SIRE,

YOUR MAJESTY's most devoted Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

*London,*

*September, 1812.*

## PREFACE.

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CONSCIOUS that any attempt to treat with levity the works of our IMMORTAL POET is in some danger of being received with displeasure, the following production is submitted to the public with considerable diffidence. With a view, however, to remove such objections to it as may arise solely out of partiality or of prejudice, a few observations, it is presumed, will not be considered altogether impertinent.

The objection most commonly urged against Burlesques and Parodies in general, is, that they tend to bring into ridicule and contempt those authors against whose works they are directed.



That this objection will hold when applied to works of an inferior order, or to such as ostentatiously pretend to be *fine*, and yet are deficient in all the requisites of good writing, is freely admitted ; but, when used with reference to productions which, from their intrinsic merit, have long been established in the public estimation, its futility is evident. HOMER and VIRGIL have both been the subjects of strong burlesques, but they are still read with unabated admiration ; the bay that adorns *them* still flourishes, and its verdure remains undiminished : and it would be an insult to the high character of OUR POET, were it supposed that the wreath is so loosely twined around *his* brows, as to be endangered by so mere a trifle as that which gives rise to these remarks. Whilst the beauties of poetry shall continue to delight, the works of SHAKSPEARE will be read with enthusiasm ; and any *serious* attempt to tarnish his fame, or to degrade him from his exalted station, must ever be considered as weak and as ridiculous in the design,

as it would certainly be found unavailing, and impossible in the execution.

But whatever apology or extenuation may be deemed necessary for the liberty that is taken with the Poet, it is presumed that neither will be required for the freedom that is used in the treatment of his Annotators: for there is no real admirer of SHAKSPEARE who does not feel indignant at finding his sense perverted, and his meaning obscured\*, by the false lights, and the fanciful and arbitrary illustrations, of Black-letter Critics and Copy-catching Commentators. And it had been well if some able satirist had exposed and punished their folly, their affectation, and their arrogance, at the time when

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\* The poets of the present day have wisely provided against injuries of this nature; for, with the assistance of an abundance of notes, they have so clearly explained *their own* meanings (which, it must be confessed, would, otherwise, be frequently unintelligible), as to supersede the labours of future critics.

the rage for editing, and commenting on SHAKESPEARE was at its height, and every pedant in Black-letter ~~loze~~ assumed the prerogative of an *authorised* pollutor of his text\*.

From the force of its sentiments, the beauty of its imagery, and, above all, the solemnity of its conduct, there is, perhaps, no tragedy in the English language better adapted to the purposes of a travesty† than “HAMLET;” and from its being so

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\* From this general reproach must the great Dr. Johnson be excepted, who, even as a *Shaksperian Commentator*, is entitled to our respect; and of whom it may truly be said, that he never wrote without the intention, and scarcely ever without the effect, of rendering mankind wiser, or more virtuous.

† It may not be amiss to remark that, although oftentimes used indifferently, the terms *burlesque* and *travesty* are properly distinct: *burlesque* being more *general* in its application; *travesty* more *particular*: the former is levelled against blemishes and defects, which its object is to expose and ridicule, and pleases by