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JOHN T. GILMORE

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Irus and his Jovial Crew: Representations of Beggars in Vincent Bourne and other Eighteenth-Century Writers of Latin Verse

J O H N T. G I L M O R E

Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies, University of Warwick,
Coventry CV4 7AL, UK
J.T.Gilmore@warwick.ac.uk

Abstract   Alastair Fowler has written, with reference to the time of Milton, of 'Latin's special role in a bilingual culture', and this was still true in the early eighteenth century. The education of the elite placed great emphasis on the art of writing Latin verse and modern, as well as ancient, writers of Latin continued to be widely read. Collections of Latin verse, by individual writers such as Vincent Bourne (c. 1694–1747) or by groups such as Westminster schoolboys or bachelors of Christ Church, Oxford, could run into multiple editions, and included poems on a wide range of contemporary topics, as well as reworkings of classical themes. This paper examines a number of eighteenth-century Latin poems dealing with beggars, several of which are here translated for the first time. Particular attention is paid to the way in which the Latin poems recycled well-worn tropes about beggary which were often at variance with the experience of real-life beggars, and to how the specificities of Latin verse might heighten negative representations of beggars in a genre which, as a manifestation of elite culture, appealed to the very class which was politically and legally responsible for controlling them.

As Tim Hitchcock has pointed out, there were major differences between the real-life beggars of the early eighteenth century whose traces we can find in court and administrative records and the literary representations of them in the same period. Beggars in literature were predominantly male, were generally fit and healthy, if sometimes exhibiting real or feigned wounds and deformities to elicit charity, and showed considerable zest for life. Documentary evidence suggests that, in London at least, 'poverty was dominated by women, and characterized by illness, old age, and pregnancy'. Nevertheless, and apart from their interest as revealing what other classes thought about beggars, the literary representations were important because they helped to shape public policy. As Hitchcock puts it, 'the pauper that glistened in the minds' eye of every workhouse projector and administrator was a literary beggar rather than a real one.'[1]

In the early eighteenth century, beggars appeared in a range of literary genres, which included the essays of *The Spectator*, stage plays, ballads and more self-consciously

literary verse such as John Gay's *Trivia*. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theatre drew its audiences from high and low alike, and the fact that cheap ballads were collected by someone like Samuel Pepys shows that we should be wary of jumping to the conclusion that any given genre was consumed only by a particular social class. When Gay frames the story of *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) by introducing a beggar as its putative author, he is doing so for satirical purposes, but a poem discussed below shows us a beggar as a consumer of the ballad literature which often featured beggars among its subject-matter, and Gay's *Trivia* (II, 563) has seamstresses reading Pope. Literacy in the period reached far down the social scale, and in London was enjoyed by perhaps half the total population.[2] Nevertheless, there was a genre which sometimes offered representations of beggars, the production and consumption of which can be said with some degree of certainty to be confined to a particular group. This was eighteenth-century verse by British writers in Latin, which the work of Leicester Bradner, David Money, Estelle Haan and others has shown was of enormous cultural importance in its own time, even if it is not much studied today.[3]

Alastair Fowler has written, with reference to the time of Milton, of 'Latin's special role in a bilingual culture', and this was still true in the early eighteenth century.[4] The education of middle- and upper-class boys, and indeed of boys of humbler origins who found themselves in elite schools as a result of scholarships or patronage, placed great emphasis on the art of writing Latin verse, and modern, as well as ancient, writers of Latin continued to be widely read. Collections of Latin verse could run into multiple editions, and even when allowance is made for the gendered nature of education in the period, which made Latin and Greek very largely, although not exclusively, a male preserve, it is clear that a high proportion of the readership for verse in English was also interested in verse in Latin. This was sustained and reinforced by the fact that many potential readers were interested in Latin verse because they had practised its composition themselves to the point where the results had appeared in print. As David Money has shown, if we confine ourselves to British writers from the middle of the seventeenth century to the early 1760s, 'well over four thousand Latin poets (at a conservative estimate)' had at least one poem published, and there were 'far larger numbers of occasional (and more serious) poets whose manuscript works either still survive or may be presumed to have once existed, whether in the form of school or college exercises, or as the adult amusement of leisure hours'.[5]

Nevertheless, Latin verse, by its very nature, excluded those who had not been educated to read Latin, or, in other words, the majority of the population. Latin verse in the period could include grand subjects like British victories or the accession of a new sovereign, and poems of trivial amusement. But it also includes a considerable number of poems expressing the educated gentleman's view of those outside his own charmed circle: beggars, women of all social classes, prostitutes, castrato singers, colonial subjects, slaves, and members of other races.[6] This is significant given that the legislators, parish clergymen, local officials and founders and administrators of workhouses and hospitals who endeavoured to control and regulate the lives of beggars were to a very large extent drawn from the same people who read and wrote Latin verses. The present article examines a number of Latin poems about beggars, some of which are here translated

for the first time, sets them in the context of material written about beggars in English, and seeks to evaluate the effect of the 'barrier of words' created between the writers and the poor who were their subject matter by the choice of Latin verse as a vehicle of expression.[7]

A portrayal of beggars on stage which was long popular, and which illustrates several themes found in other genres, including Latin verse, was Richard Brome's comedy, *A Joviall Crew: Or, The Merry Beggars*, which was playing at the Cockpit in Drury Lane when the Parliament made the order to close London's theatres on 2nd September 1642.[8] Although Brome himself came from very humble origins and had spent his early career as a servant to Ben Jonson, the play offers contradictory images of beggary.[9] One character forcefully indicates that begging was not necessarily a matter of choice, and that sometimes those who affected to be their superiors were responsible for their condition, when he tells Squire Oldrents that:

> I am Grandson to that unhappy *Wrought-on*,
> Whome your Grandfather, craftily, wrought out
> Of his Estate. By which, all his Posterity
> Were, since, expos'd to *Beggary*.

When Oldrents' daughters take it into their heads to go off begging, and persuade their gentleman suitors to join them, because they are weary of their father's melancholy disposition, they soon find 'the difference between a hard floor with a little straw, and a down Bed with a Quilt upon't'. Oliver, Justice Clack's son, offers cynical justification for the sexual exploitation of beggar women: they are cheaper than London whores, less likely to give 'a young Country Gentleman' the pox, and, since their having children will 'move compassion' in those they beg from, 'He feeds a Beggar-wench well that fils [sic] her belly with young bones'. This is echoed by the contrived happy ending, which turns upon the revelation that Springlove, Oldrents' steward, who was raised by him from beggary and who has, like Oldrents himself, been a consistent patron of beggars, is actually the squire's son, whom he got, 'in heat of Youth', upon a beggar-girl, the granddaughter of 'that unhappy *Wrought-on*.'

Eventually the daughters and their suitors decide to give up the fake beggary, to 'play this lowsie Game no further', and return to home comforts. Nevertheless, the fact that Justice Clack is persuaded to join in with the merriment at the end, and does not visit upon any of the beggars the whipping or other punishments which were required by what Gāmini Salgādo has called 'penal laws of imaginative savagery', might leave the impression that beggars do not have such a bad time of it.[10] They do not have the cares of the rich. The play shows plenty of singing, dancing, and ribald mirth among the 'Joviall Crew'. If the squire's daughters and their young gentlemen are only playing at being beggars, the play's suggestions that, at least some of the time, the real beggars are also acting a part appear to go unchallenged. Together with references to 'counterfeit Rogues' and to how, when the beggars were pursued by Clack's emissaries, 'the Creeples [sic] leap'd over Pales and Hedges' and 'the Blinde found their way thorow Lakes and Ditches', these form part of an enduring group of literary commonplaces which go back at least to the 'rogue literature' of the Elizabethan period,[11] and which appear to encourage indifference

to the plight of the neediest members of society on the part of the more fortunate, whose occasional twinges of conscience might be quieted by moderate almsgiving.

The longevity of these ideas is shown by the successful revival of *The Joviall Crew* after the Restoration. As Martin Butler points out, 'Pepys saw it four times and in the eighteenth century it was scarcely off the boards, especially after being remade in 1731 into a light-hearted ballad opera, with upwards of sixty musical numbers.'[12] This adaptation may have been intended to cash in on the success of Gay's *Beggar's Opera*. Similar images appear in other genres, including ballads such as *The Merry Beggars of Lincolns-Inn-Fields*, an anonymous work dating from the 1680s, in which three beggars amuse each other with descriptions of 'all the Pranks and Tricks they use, to make people believe they are Poor', while spending the 'good store of Silver' they have got by these methods on 'good Liquor.'[13] Several other printed ballads allude to Brome's play.[14]

An early eighteenth-century poem by Vincent Bourne (1694–1747), which was first published in 1734, helps to raise the question of to whom this sort of material was addressed. It describes two female ballad-singers, who hold printed copies of the ballads which they offer for sale. The ballad of a 'Maiden true' deceived by a 'faithless Sailor' attracts a very miscellaneous crowd of listeners and potential buyers: a shoemaker, a servant maid, a blacksmith and a porter are named. Even a beggar is to be found among the purchasers:

> Irus' self,
> The staff-propt Beggar, his thin-gotten pelf
> Brings out from pouch, where squalid farthings rest,
> And boldly claims his ballad with the best.

There is another presence of course, even though it is not explicitly described in the poem and may be positioned at the edge of the crowd, that of the poet himself. Here the relationship between the poet and his subject matter begins to be complicated by the poet's choice of language and style. The poem was originally written in Latin and the quotation just given is actually from a translation published in 1830, by the essayist Charles Lamb (1775–1834).[15] Bourne may be little known today, but he was the most successful eighteenth-century British writer of verse in Latin, and the last British poet to acquire a significant reputation solely on the strength of material written in that language. While Haan may perhaps overstate the case in referring to Bourne's 'immense popularity', something like a dozen editions of Bourne's Latin poems appeared between 1734 and 1840. In addition to Lamb, writers of the stature of William Cowper and Percy Bysshe Shelley thought it worth their while to translate some of Bourne's poems.[16]

Where the poem about the ballad singers is concerned, it is possible to see a number of differences between Bourne's Latin and Lamb's translation. Lamb was the author of 'A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis', which treated the beggars of a previous era, who were being swept off the streets by upper-class efforts at social reform, as picturesque, rather than nuisances, and his version of Bourne's poem appears to offer a relatively neutral image of a beggar as one of a crowd, behaving much like the rest of

those listening to the singers.[17] While Lamb's translation is fairly close to the original, an examination of Bourne's Latin suggests a different interpretation. In the description of the crowd around the ballad singers, the beggar gets three lines in Bourne:

> Stat medios inter baculoque innititur Irus;
> Nec tamen hic loculo parcit, sed prodigus æris
> Emptor adest, solvit pretium, carmenque requirit.[18]

But how do we know he is a beggar? The Latin does not use an obvious word like *mendicus* or *mendicans*. One of the features of eighteenth-century Latin verse composition was that it both allowed and expected the suggestive possibilities of classical allusion. This was, of course, also true of much that was written in English in the period. When the character is given the name Irus, Bourne's readers would immediately identify him as a beggar, and have recognised that the name had negative connotations. Irus is the Latinised form of the Greek ᾽Ιρος, who appears at the beginning of Book XVIII of Homer's *Odyssey* as 'a public beggar, who used to go begging / Through the town of Ithaka, known to fame for his ravenous belly'. When he encounters Odysseus, who has entered his own house disguised as a beggar so as to remain unknown to the suitors, Irus is annoyed that Odysseus is encroaching on his territory and insults him. The suitors encourage them to fight, and Odysseus beats Irus severely, breaking his jaw and driving him away, with the result that the suitors praise Odysseus 'for having stopped the wandering of this greedy creature in our neighbourhood'.[19]

We are told that Bourne's beggar *Stat medios inter*, 'he stands among them', that is, the other members of the crowd around the ballad singers previously mentioned in the poem, *baculoque innititur*, 'and he leans upon his staff,' another recurring image. The somewhat obscure phrasing of Lamb's 'his thin-gotten pelf' is much clearer in the Latin, where we are told *Nec tamen hic loculo parcit*, 'Nor however does he spare his purse'. On the contrary, *sed prodigus æris*, 'but prodigal of his money', with the Latin word *æs* suggesting low-denomination brass or copper coin, not silver (hence Lamb's 'squalid farthings'), *Emptor adest*, 'he is present as a buyer'. Its position at the beginning of the line gives added emphasis to the word *Emptor*, 'buyer', and this is reinforced by the concluding words of the extract, *solvit pretium, carmenque requirit* – 'he pays the price, and demands his song'. It would seem to be a case of where there is muck, there's brass. The beggar has money to spare for the luxury of a ballad, and, of course, there is the obvious implication that at least some beggars are literate. This is not necessarily a positive thing, as manifested in the trope about beggars using forged documents in support of their begging, which goes back to Elizabethan times.[20] While the rest of Bourne's poem suggests, not unsympathetically, that ballads are among the little luxuries of the poor, the other purchasers are people like shoe-makers, serving maids and porters, who work for their money, and there seems to be a hint that there is something not quite right about a beggar being able to be a patron of literature, albeit on the most humble scale.

Bourne's ballad singers are specifically located at Seven Dials in London, but the next poem has a vague, and possibly more rural, location. It presents a picture of not one, but two, unfortunates:

An Movens semper sit conjunctum Mobili? **Affr.**

Forte duo in triviis miseri coiere sodales,
    Ille oculis, alter mancus utroque pede.
Hic gemit amissæ prædulcia munera lucis,
    Ille artus laceros, cruraque rapta dolet.
Mox sociis animis sibi mutua fœdera jungunt,
    Fert claudum hic humeris, monstrat & ille viam.
Jam non ulterius plorant immitia fata;
    Nempe comes comiti rite ministrat opem.
Disjungat tamen hos socios sors aspera, prosunt
    Nec tibi, Claude, oculi, nec tibi, Cæce, pedes.[21]

Co-operation

Two like in grief by chance at cross-ways meet,
One maim'd in's eyes, and t'other maim'd in's feet.
This mourns the pleasing gifts of now lost light,
And that bewails his crippled members' plight.
In friendship join'd they soon their mutual pow'rs assay:-
The halt upon the blind man's shoulders shows the way.
What help they can, doth friend to friend present,
And they no more their cruel fates lament.
Should some harsh lot one from the other take,
And fast friends solitary once more make,
To have eyes, Lame Man, boots not thee, alone;
Nor thee, o Blind Man, feet to call thine own.[22]

The poem is from the 1723 edition of the *Carmina Quadragesimalia*, a collection of exercises by students of Christ Church, Oxford, which took assigned themes of a scientific or philosophical nature and generally treated them in a light-hearted or even flippant manner. The Latin theme used as the title for this poem means 'Is that which causes the motion always joined to that which is moved, or not? It is so affirmed.' An entirely different collection of *Carmina Quadragesimalia* appeared in 1748; the two were reprinted several times and seem to have been used by schoolboys as models of Latin verse composition well into the nineteenth century.

Like the rest of the contributions in the *Carmina Quadragesimalia*, this particular poem is anonymous. Manuscript attributions in some copies of various editions of the anthology suggest 'Booth 1717', and the fact that the poem is in the *Carmina Quadragesimalia* indicates that the author was a Christ Church man, but unfortunately it would appear that two brothers, George Booth and Robert Booth, were at the college at the same time. Dates suggest that the elder brother, Robert Booth, was marginally more likely to be the poem's author. Some indication of their social position is given by the fact that there was another brother, Nathaniel, who became Baron Delamere.[23] While there is nothing which says explicitly that the two men in the poem are beggars, it seems a reasonable assumption in view of the frequent correlation between physical handicaps and destitution. It is suggested that they suffer from *immitia fata*, cruel, or unkind fates, but the fact that they are left to struggle along together in this manner suggests a degree of indifference on the part of the world at large. The ending of the poem seems to imply that this was the attitude of the poet as well. We might be led to a similar conclusion from the nature of the

Carmina Quadragesimalia, where what seems to have been looked for was technical skill in treating the assigned theme in Latin verse, not originality of content. Indeed, the lame guiding the blind was a well-worn subject. It appears in *The Merry Beggars of Lincolns-Inn-Fields*, where both handicaps are merely assumed: 'Sometimes our eyes are blinded, / and cover'd so by Art, / The lame men they do guide us, / We all do act our part'.

While Booth's poem does not suggest that its subjects were 'counterfeit Rogues', this is explicitly the theme of a poem published in the *Lusus Westmonasterienses*, a collection of anonymous short poems by boys, or, in some cases, it appears, masters, of Westminster School, which went through five editions in the course of the eighteenth century. Like the other poems in the anthology, it is anonymous:

Laudo dapes mensæ brevis

Noctes atque dies venientibus ostia pandit
    Pimlico, mendicis semper amica domus.
Hic Irus comitésque Iri, post lucra diei,
    Conveniunt, hilaris sed neque parva cohors.
Lignea ponuntur crura et velamen ocelli,
    Diluitur fictus qui notat ora cruor.
Irus ad hos; salvete, omnes, expromite peras:
    Quisque sibi dapifer sit, sibi quisque coquus.
Sumite vos calices manibus, genibúsque puellas,
    Hinc canite, et festos hinc celebrate choros.
Sors nostra, o fratres, quicquid sit in orbe negotî
    Præstat, nam fessis advenit alma quies.
Nolumus hìc, nobis modo Justiciarius absit,
    Aut vitæ aut mensæ de brevitate queri.[24]

Enough is as good as a feast

Both night and day stand open wide the doors
Of Pimlico, whose welcome beggars draws,
And nightly come, their profits made, the jovial crew
Of Irus and his friends, in number not a few.
Eye-patch and wooden leg they wear no more,
And from their faces wash fictitious gore.
To whom their chief: Your purses let us see,
Let each his cook, and his own butler be;
Let each with girl on knee and glass in hand
Sing loud, and join here with our merry band.
However Chance our business may have bless'd
Time to the weary brings now gentle rest.
Let but the Justice come to us not nigh,
Short life or commons cannot make us sigh.[25]

As with Booth's poem, the Latin title suggests the piece's origins as an exercise. It literally means 'I praise the feast of a short table', or 'I praise short commons'. Many items in the *Lusus Westmonasterienses* come in pairs, showing how boys were asked to write on opposite sides of the question. The next poem in the anthology has the title 'Odi dapes mensæ brevis' or 'I hate short commons'. However, these beggars are so jolly that the title certainly appears to be being treated with a degree of irony. The picture given

of them is not flattering, however. They make profits, *lucra*, 'gains', from the public, and the poem is quite explicit that this is achieved by defrauding the public. Their income comes from attracting sympathy for their infirmities, but at the end of the day *Lignea ponuntur crura et velamen ocelli*, their wooden legs and eye-patches are laid aside as if they do not really need them, and they wash off *fictus ... cruor*, fake blood, fictitious gore. In the eighteenth century, as in other periods, the pretence of illness could be found among people who were certainly not beggars. Among the rich, however, it was simply matter for satire, as in William Hay's translation of Martial's epigram about the man who, by pretending to have the gout in order to avoid unwanted social obligations, acquired the disease for real. In the classical poet, the subject is simply named as 'Cælius', but Hay turns this into 'His lordship' and says:

> His foot, not founder'd, he in flannels bound;
> Limp'd on a crutch; nor touch'd with toe the ground.
> What may not man with care and art obtain!
> By feigning, long his lordship did not feign.[26]

Such behaviour might expose 'His lordship' to ridicule, but the Pimlico beggars braved more serious penalties. The Westminster poem shows its beggars as being aware of the illegal nature of their frauds by having their leader suggest that everything will be fine as long as the Justice keeps out of their way.

A number of elements in the poem echo older ballads. In *The Beggers* [sic] *Chorus, In the Jovial Crew* we can find these lines:

> To Pimblico [sic] we'l go,
>   where we shall merry be;
> With every man a Can in's hand
>   and a Wench upon his knee.

Fake injuries can be found in ballads such as *The Merry Beggars of Lincolns-Inn-Fields* or *The cunning Northerne Begger* [sic] which not only offers detailed descriptions of exploiting the charity of the gullible by faking sores, epilepsy, lameness and blindness, but has a chorus which makes it clear that the beggar will spend his gains on drinking and smoking:

> Bestow one poore denier sir,
>   Which when Ive got
>   At the Pipe and Pot,
> I soone will it casheere sir.

The theme of the fake cripple is taken a bit further in another Christ Church poem:

An Motus naturalis sit in Initio tardior, in Fine velocior? Aff^r.
> Irus iners baculis, & cruri innixus acerno
>   Personat assidua compita nota prece.
> Me miserum! exclamat, chari miserescite cives,
>   Hæc ego pro vobis vulnera honesta tuli.
> Militis infandum vestri lenite dolorem,
>   Sic vobis maneant integra membra, precor.
> Interea repit gressu titubante per urbem,
>   Et sibi nunc furto, nunc prece quærit opes.

Mox horrendus adest baculoque, & mole *Bedellus*;
    Et procul atroces projicit ore minas.
Mugitum horrendum perterritus excipit Irus,
    Incipit & pigros accelerare gradus.
Necquicquam insequeris, Lictor, jam crura revincta
    Explicat, & ventis ocyor Irus abit.[27]

All that glisters is not gold

Propp'd on his staff and legs of maple wood,
Beseeching Irus at his crossways stood.
'O woe!' he cries, 'good people pity me!'
'These honest wounds I bear, I got for ye.'
'Your soldier old can scarce speak forth his grief —
'As ye your limbs enjoy, pray give relief!'
From street to street he stumbles on his way,
And now makes theft, and now entreaties, pay.
Lo! the Beadle, fearsome of staff and size,
With horrid oaths seeks Irus as his prize.
And Irus, frighten'd by the dreadful din,
His tardy steps to quicken doth begin,
Faster than the wind, his own legs shows again —
Untied — let down — and all pursuit is vain.[28]

The Latin title again suggests a pseudo-scientific theme: 'Whether natural motion is slower in the beginning, and faster at the end? It is so affirmed.' Manuscript ascriptions in some copies of editions of this collection attribute this poem to 'J. Fanshawe 1717'. This would appear to be John Fanshawe (c. 1698–1768), who matriculated at Christ Church in 1716, B.A. 1720, later proceeding to higher degrees and eventually Regius Professor of Greek (1735–47) and of Divinity (1741–63), and a canon of Christ Church from 1741.[29]

We have a number of features here which we have seen before: the use of the name Irus, the fact that he is propped on his staff; the word *innixus* is used, from the same Latin verb *innitor*, 'I lean on,' which gives the phrase *baculoque innititur Irus* in Vincent Bourne's poem about the ballad singers; the association of begging with physical handicap, and the suggestion that this is fraudulent. This beggar is *iners*, helpless. He claims to be an old soldier. His very language is enough to make us suspicious, however. The reference to *infandum ... dolorem* would have reminded the poem's original readers of the line at the beginning of Book II of Virgil's *Æneid*: 'Infandum, regina, jubes renovare dolorem', translated by Christopher Pitt as 'Ah mighty queen! You urge me to disclose, / And feel, once more, unutterable woes'.[30]

It is so obviously over the top that we are alerted to the possibility that the beggar is not all he pretends to be. First of all, we learn that he is not just a beggar, he is also a thief: he seeks wealth *nunc furto, nunc prece*, 'now by theft, now by entreaties'. Again, this is a common trope in the ballads: beggars steal 'Shirts from the Hedges' in *The Joviall Crew, Or, The Beggers-Bush*, and in *The Beggars Song, Both in City and Country*, they steal 'dainty Fruit' from orchards or 'little fat Piggs' and other farmyard animals.[31] It is this sort of activity, presumably, which in Fanshawe's poem attracts the attention of the beadle, *horrendus ... baculoque, & mole*, 'fearsome of staff and size'. This is a reference to the Oxford beadle of the day, named as Vesey in another poem in the

Carmina Quadragesimalia, which refers to him as *Terribilis ventre, & baculo*, 'with a frightening stomach and staff', describes his obesity at some length, and claims that this is the result of his abuse of his powers. He receives *tributa*, 'tribute', from the *mendicorum turba*, the 'crowd of beggars,' who presumably pay in order to be left alone, and he is also brought *vectigalia*, 'tolls' or 'imposts', by the *castæ … nymphæ*, 'chaste nymphs', that is, the town prostitutes, who again, it seems, bribe him to be allowed to carry on their business unmolested. Nevertheless, the next poem in the anthology describes him whipping one of the nymphs, with gruesome details, before she is dumped in the river to the jeers of a crowd.[32]

Fanshawe's poem concludes with what is literally a ludicrous denouement, where the beggar abandons his fake legs in order to untie his real ones, which have been folded up to accommodate the maple-wood tools of imposture, and outruns the beadle. The fake cripple is a common trope in English writing about beggars, but here the use of Latin verse adds an additional element of incongruous humour. It was a common practice in Latin verse composition to use singulars and plurals indifferently, according to the demands of metre. As a result of this, the wooden leg in the opening line of Fanshawe's poem is singular, but the legs which are let down at the end of the poem are referred to in the plural. This may have had its origin in the practicalities of composition, but the discrepancy is noticeable in a short poem, and it appears to heighten the mocking satisfaction readers are invited to share at the discomfiture of the beggar.

Fake cripples were probably quite rare in real life, and early eighteenth-century England would have seen many entirely genuine veterans disabled as a result of the prolonged wars with the France of Louis XIV. Many poets, in both Latin and English, celebrated the Duke of Marlborough or even Queen Anne as successful military leaders, but few seemed to spare much thought for those reduced to beggary by injuries received in their country's cause.[33] In 1716, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, usually remembered for her cultural relativism and sympathetic portrayal of life in the Ottoman Empire, noted with approval the absence of beggars in Rotterdam: 'One is not shocked with those loathsome cripples so common in London, nor teased with the importunities of idle fellows and wenches that choose to be nasty and lazy.'[34] However, the image of the beggar who combined fake wounds with the claim that they had been received as a result of military service goes back at least to Shakespeare's *Henry V*, described by Linda Bradley Salamon as 'despite its claims to historicity, an imagined text in which the trope of vagabond veterans fully enters literary culture'.[35] We may find a more sympathetic treatment of the common soldier at the end of the century in 'The Battle of Blenheim' (1798) by Robert Southey (1774–1843), with Kaspar's puzzled attempt to explain history to his grandchildren:

> For many thousand men, said he,
> Were slain in the great Victory.
> […]
> But what they kill'd each other for
>   I could not well make out;
> But ev'ry body said, quoth he,
> That 'twas a famous Victory.[36]

On the other hand, the work of Southey's contemporary Thomas Hood (1799–1845) shows that the more traditional willingness to make fun of the real or imaginary sufferings of others persisted:

> Ben Battle was a soldier bold,
> And used to war's alarms:
> But a cannon-ball took off his legs,
> So he laid down his arms![37]

Recent studies by Simon Dickie and Roger Lund have shown just how widespread in eighteenth-century culture, or, at least, in those aspects of it which survive in print, was a complete lack of sympathy for genuine human suffering.[38] Even an upper-class individual like William Hay, who was unusually short and humpbacked ('I am scarce five Feet high [. . .] my Back was bent in my Mother's Womb'), was frequently subjected to public ridicule.[39] Beggars, too often suspected of faking their injuries, could hardly expect better treatment.

Nevertheless, a once well known poem by Vincent Bourne, first published in 1721, shows how the period's portraits of beggars could achieve some degree of sympathy:

Epitaphium in Canem

Pauperis hic Iri requiesco Lyciscus, herilis,
Dum vixi, tutela vigil columenque senectæ,
Dux cæco fidus: nec, me ducente, solebat,
Prætenso hinc atque hinc baculo, per iniqua locorum
Incertam explorare viam; sed fila secutus,
Quæ dubios regerent passus, vestigia tuta
Fixit inoffenso gressu; gelidumque sedile
In nudo nactus saxo, quà prætereuntium
Unda frequens confluxit, ibi miserisque tenebras
Lamentis, noctemque oculis ploravit obortam.
Ploravit nec frustra; obolum dedit alter et alter,
Queis corda et mentem indiderat natura benignam.
Ad latus interea jacui sopitus herile,
Vel mediis vigil in somnis; ad herilia jussa
Auresque atque animum arrectus, seu frustula amicè
Porrexit sociasque dapes, seu longa diei
Tædia perpessus, reditum sub nocte parabat.
     Hi mores, hæc vita fuit, dum fata sinebant,
Dum neque languebam morbis, nec inerte senectâ,
Quæ tandem obrepsit, veterique satellite cæcum
Orbavit dominum: prisci sed gratia facti
Ne tota intereat, longos deleta per annos,
Exiguum hunc Irus tumulum de cespite fecit,
Etsi inopis, non ingratæ, munuscula dextræ;
Carmine signavitque brevi, dominumque canemque
Quod memoret, fidumque canem dominumque benignum.[40]

This was translated by Lamb, originally as part of his 'Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis':

Epitaph on a Dog

Poor Irus' faithful wolf-dog here I lie,
That wont to tend my old blind master's steps,
His guide and guard; nor while my service lasted,
Had he occasion for that staff, with which
He now goes picking out his path in fear
Over the highways and crossings, but would plant
Safe in the conduct of my friendly string,
A firm foot forward still, till he had reach'd
His poor seat on some stone, nigh where the tide
Of passers-by in thickest confluence flow'd:
To whom with loud and passionate laments
From morn to eve his dark estate he wail'd.
Nor wail'd to all in vain: some here and there,
The well disposed and good, their pennies gave.
I meantime at his feet obsequious slept;
Not all-asleep in sleep, but heart and ear
Prick'd up at his least motion, to receive
At his kind hand my customary crumbs
And common portion in his feast of scraps;
Or when night warn'd us homeward, tired and spent
With our long day, and tedious beggary.
These were my manners, this my way of life,
Till age and slow disease me overtook,
And sever'd from my sightless master's side.
But lest the grace of so good deeds should die,
Through tract of years in mute oblivion lost,
This slender tomb of turf hath Irus rear'd,
Cheap monument of no ungrudging hand,
And with short verse inscribed it, to attest,
In long and lasting union to attest,
The virtues of the Beggar and his Dog.[41]

Lamb's translation follows Bourne's Latin quite closely, though 'till he had reach'd / His poor seat on some stone' rather softens *gelidumque sedile / In nudo nactus saxo*, which is more literally rendered 'found an icy seat upon a bare rock'. Lamb's 'their pennies gave' also loses some of the resonances of *obolum dedit alter et alter*. An *obolus* (English form 'obol') was a coin of small value, and the use of the word here may, as Haan suggests, refer to the payment the dead had to make to be carried across the River Styx into the underworld in classical mythology, thus likening the impoverished beggar to Charon the ferryman, positioned between life and death. Bourne uses *obolus* in such a context in another poem.[42] However, particularly in this context, it may also suggest the well-known story of Belisarius, once the leading general of the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, who allegedly ended his days as a blind beggar, entreating passers-by with the words *Date obolum Belisario*, 'Give an obol to Belisarius'. This was a popular story in the eighteenth century and Lamb specifically mentions 'Belisarius begging for an *obolum*' in the essay in which his translation appears.[43] Lamb uses this as part of his argument about the essential nobility of the traditional beggar, claiming 'There was a dignity springing from the very depth of their desolation; as to be naked is to be so much nearer to the being a man, than to go in livery'.

He concludes his essay by suggesting that his readers should

not be frightened at the hard words, imposition, imposture – give, and ask no questions [. . .] When a poor creature (outwardly and visibly such) comes before thee, do not stay to inquire whether the 'seven small children,' in whose name he implores thy assistance, have a veritable existence. Rake not into the bowels of unwelcome truth, to save a halfpenny. It is good to believe him [. . .][44]

We have moved to the sort of approach to vagrancy we can find in Wordsworth's 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', published in the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, where it is urged that the beggar be tolerated because giving him charity makes the givers feel good:

> Where'er the aged Beggar takes his rounds,
> The mild necessity of use compels
> To acts of love; and habit does the work
> Of reason, yet prepares that after joy
> Which reason cherishes.[45]

While it is tempting to see Bourne as a predecessor of Wordsworth, as Haan suggests, there is still something about the nature of his poem which may make us hesitate. What is the poem actually meant to be? It purports to be in the voice of the dog: *hic . . . requiesco*, 'here I lie'. One could cite both classical parallels, such as Martial, XI, lix, where the dead hunting dog Lydia speaks, and Neo-Latin ones, such as the poem by Ferdinand von Fürstenberg (1626–1683) in which the dog Mopsus speaks of being entombed through the kind affection of a grateful master.[46] Both of these, as well as other examples, are at least imagined as being inscribed on the tomb of the dog in question, *dominumque canemque/Quod memoret*, 'that it may keep in remembrance both master and dog'. In Bourne's poem, however, is the poem itself the same as the epitaph which it mentions at the end? That the beggar is represented as the author of a *carmen breve*, a 'short verse', consisting of twenty-six Latin hexameters, seems a little implausible, but the fact that we have to consider the question emphasises the distinction between the poet and the beggar he writes about, and usefully brings us back to the relationship between the medium and the message, and to the nature of the genre.

Eighteenth-century Latin verse was the amusement of the educated gentleman. As such, it served to create a bond between those who had had the same sort of education which could transcend wide differences in social status. Vincent Bourne spent almost his entire career as an usher, or assistant master, at Westminster School, where he was sometimes bullied by aristocratic pupils. William Cowper tells a story of 'seeing the Duke of Richmond set fire to his greasy Locks, and box his Ears to put it out again'.[47] Nevertheless, Bourne could dedicate the 1734 edition of his poems to the Duke of Newcastle (the later Prime Minister), on the grounds that the Duke was his *condiscipulus* or former classmate.[48] The feeling of a shared culture inevitably excluded those who did not share that culture. Like most of the ballad literature, some of these poems appeared in print anonymously, but the effects of this are rather different. The anonymous publication of the poems in the *Carmina Quadragesimalia* and the *Lusus Westmonasterienses* perhaps owed its origin to the fact that it was recognised that some contributors would have been helped by more accomplished versifiers among their contemporaries, or by tutors or masters. It also has the effect of suggesting that the anthologies had a collective author, the

predominantly male and predominantly propertied class of the Latin-educated as whole. Far from detracting from this, the presence of manuscript attributions in some published copies of the anthologies only heightens the impression of Latin verse as a coterie genre, although it was a coterie which included a large proportion of those with some degree of power and influence in eighteenth-century British society.

The poems discussed in this article are technically competent, and recycle tropes with considerable ingenuity and a degree of humour. It is difficult, however, to see in them any sign of the 'sense of a common bond between writer and rogue' which Salgādo found in some of the Elizabethan rogue literature in English.[49] By writing in Latin, the poets set themselves apart from their subjects, and the humour is certainly at the expense of the beggars who are being described. Recasting tropes about beggarly cunning and dishonesty in classical metres with the aid of classical allusions might appear to give the sanction of antiquity to the attitudes they enshrined, a variation on the biblical 'pauperes enim semper habetis vobiscum' (John xii, 8: 'For the poor always ye have with you'), but it might also, paradoxically, have given them a renewed freshness. The period saw plenty of satirical verse in English which effectively reinforced the existing prejudices of its readers, but I feel that the fact that Irus and his jovial crew were even less likely to read what was written about them when it was couched in Latin verse gave the whole exercise an additional malicious charm in the minds of at least some of those who wrote it.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Tim Hitchcock, '"All beside the Rail, rang'd Beggars lie": *Trivia* and the Public Poverty of Early Eighteenth-Century London', in Clare Brant and Susan E. Whyman, ed., *Walking the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London: John Gay's* Trivia *(1716)* (Oxford, 2007, 2009), pp. 74–89, quotations from pp. 80, 83.
2. In their Introduction, Brant and Whyman use David Cressy's figures to state that 'By 1700, the national literacy rate was at least 45 per cent for men and 25 per cent for women, though for London women it was nearer 48 per cent' (p.5), but they also suggest (p. 22, n. 15) that 'These statistics are low'.
3. Leicester Bradner, *Musae Anglicanae: A History of Anglo-Latin Poetry 1500–1925* (New York, 1940); D. K. Money, *The English Horace: Anthony Alsop and the Tradition of British Latin Verse* (Oxford, 1998). As well as her work on Bourne, cited below, Estelle Haan has published studies of the Latin poetry of John Milton, Joseph Addison and Thomas Gray.
4. Alastair Fowler, ed., *John Milton: Paradise Lost*, 2nd ed. rev. (Harlow, 2007), p. 17.
5. Money, *English Horace*, pp. 247–9.
6. See, for example, John T. Gilmore, '*Aethiopissae*: The Classical Tradition, Neo-Latin Verse and Images of Race in George Herbert and Vincent Bourne', *Classical Receptions Journal*, **1**

(2009), 73–86. For a selection which includes examples of such themes, with verse translations, see John Gilmore, ed. and trs., *Musæ Anglicanæ Anglicè Redditæ: A Selection of Verse Written in Latin by British Poets of the Eighteenth Century* (Coventry, 2007).

7. I owe the phrase about the 'barrier of words' to David Hitchcock. The Latin poems discussed in this article are all from collections which were once well known, and my selection makes no claims to comprehensiveness. It is, indeed, very likely that other Latin poems on the same subject could be found elsewhere.

8. The first published version is Richard Brome, *A Joviall Crew: Or, The Merry Beggars* (London, 1652). All quotations are from this edition, which is available on EEBO (Early English Books Online). It is unpaginated.

9. Martin Butler, 'Brome, Richard (c. 1590–1652), playwright', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, consulted 11th February 2012.

10. Gāmini Salgādo, ed., *Cony-Catchers and Bawdy Baskets: An Anthology of Elizabethan Low Life* (Harmondsworth, 1972), 'Introduction', p. 12. For an overview of the legal position, see A. L. Beier, '"A New Serfdom": Labor Laws, Vagrancy Statues, and Labor Discipline in England, 1350–1800', in A. L. Beier and Paul Ocobock, ed., *Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective* (Athens, Ohio, 2008), pp. 35–63.

11. See examples in Salgādo, ed., *Cony-Catchers*.

12. Butler, 'Brome.'

13. Anon., *The Merry Beggars of Lincolns-Inn-Fields* (London, n.d.). Copy in the library of Magdalene College, Cambridge (Pepys 4.252); facsimile and transcription available online at the English Broadside Ballad Archive site at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I am grateful to David Hitchcock for drawing my attention to the ballad literature generally and to this ballad in particular.

14. Anon, *The Beggers* [sic] *Chorus, In the Jovial Crew* (Pepys 4.251); Anon., *The Beggars Chorus; or, The Jovial Crew* (British Library, Roxburghe 3. 676–7; almost identical to the preceding item); Anon., *The Jovial Crew, Or, Beggers-Bush* [sic] (Glasgow University Library, Euing Ballads 150); Anon., *The Jovial Beggars Merry Crew* (British Library, Roxburghe, 4.51), all available on the English Broadside Ballad Archive site. Although the website ascribes authorship of the first of these to Brome himself, it is not in the text of the 1652 edition of his play.

15. Charles Lamb, 'The Ballad Singers,' in E. V. Lucas, ed., *Poems and Plays by Charles and Mary Lamb* (London, 1912), pp. 67–9. Lamb's translations from Bourne were first published in his *Album Verses, with a few others* (London, 1830).

16. For a modern study of Bourne, see Estelle Haan, *Classical Romantic: Identity in the Latin Poetry of Vincent Bourne* (Philadelphia, 2007). For the publishing history of Bourne, see Haan, *Classical Romantic*, pp. 7–9, and for the translations by Cowper, Lamb and Shelley, see Haan, *Classical Romantic*, pp. 14–18. The reference to 'immense popularity' is on p. 4. The best edition is John Mitford, ed., *Poematia Latine partim reddita partim scripta a Vincentio Bourne* . . . (London, 1840), and all quotations are taken from this. While this and other old editions of Bourne's poems are now easily obtainable as print-on-demand reprints, there is no modern scholarly edition.

17. Charles Lamb, 'A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis', in Charles Lamb, ed. E. V. Lucas, *Elia and the Last Essays of Elia* (London, 1912), pp. 130–37, with editor's notes at pp. 392–5. Lucas states that 'A Complaint' was first published in the *London Magazine*, June 1822, and that 'The origin of this essay was the activity at that time of the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity, founded in 1818'.

18. John Mitford, ed., *Poematia*, pp. 188–9. For a discussion of the poem as a whole, see Haan, *Classical Romantic*, pp. 90–94.

19. Richmond Lattimore, trs., *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York, 2007 [this translation first published 1967]), pp. 270–73.

20. See Thomas Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors* (1566), in Salgādo, ed., *Cony-Catchers*, pp. 79–153.

21. Charles Este, ed., *Carmina Quadragesimalia ab Ædis Christi, Oxon. alumnis composita et ab ejusdem Ædis baccalaureis determinantibus in Schola Naturalis Philosophiæ publice recitata* (Oxford, 1723), p. 86.

22. Previously unpublished translation by John T. Gilmore, 2011.

23. Such manuscript attributions can be found in copies in the British Library, shelfmarks 11409.ee.12 and 1507.656; and in Cambridge University Library, shelfmark 7706.d.269. I have a copy of Anthony Parsons, ed., *Carmina Quadragesimalia . . .* [full title as 1723 collection] (Oxford, 1748) with similar attributions, and a series of contributions in mid-nineteenth-century issues of *Notes and Queries* testify to continuing interest in these anthologies and supply attributions from copies then in private hands, e.g., W. H. Gunner in *Notes and Queries* (1856) S2-II (42), 312–3; 'Oxoniensis' in *Notes and Queries* (1856) S2-II (44), 355. See also Christopher Wordsworth, *Social Life at the English Universities in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1874), pp. 308–14. The different sets of attributions show a high level of consistency. Information about the Booth brothers from Joseph Foster, ed., *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1715–1886*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1891).

24. R. Prior, ed., *Lusus Westmonasterienses, Sive epigrammatum et Poematum minorum Delectus* (Westminster, 1730), pp. 183–4.

25. Previously unpublished translation by John T. Gilmore, 2011.

26. William Hay, *Select Epigrams of Martial* (London, 1755), p. 87. The source text is Martial, VII, xxxix.

27. Charles Este, ed., *Carmina Quadragesimalia*, pp. 80–81.

28. Previously unpublished translation by John T. Gilmore, 2011.

29. Biographical details from Foster, ed., *Alumni Oxonienses*.

30. Joseph Warton, et al., *The Works of Virgil, In Latin and English*, 3rd ed., 4 volumes (London, 1778), II, 133. Pitt's translation of the *Aeneid* was first published in 1740.

31. Anon., *The Beggars Song, Both in City and Country. Showing the Contentedness of their Lives, the Little Care they take, and how Merrily they Live* (Magdalene College, Cambridge: Pepys 4.252); available online at the English Broadside Ballad Archive site.

32. Charles Este, ed., *Carmina Quadragesimalia*, pp. 89, 90. A footnote on p. 89 specifically identifies Vesey ('Vesæus' in Latin) as 'Lictor olim Academicus'.

33. See James Binns, 'Sir Henry Newton and the War'; John Gilmore, 'Schoolboy Patriotism and Gender Stereotypes in the Reign of Queen Anne'; and David Money, 'The Edge of War: How Some Poets (and Preachers) Reacted to Oudenarde and Lille', in David Money, ed., *1708: Oudenarde and Lille* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 102–5, 106–9, 122–36.

34. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, ed. Malcolm Jack, intro. Anita Desai (London, 1994, 2004), p. 4.

35. Linda Bradley Salamon, 'Vagabond Veterans: The Roguish Company of Martin Guerre and *Henry V*,' in Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz, eds, *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture* (Ann Arbor, 2004), pp. 261–93.

36. Lynda Pratt, ed., *Robert Southey: Poetical Works 1793–1810*, 5 volumes (London, 2004), Vol. 5, *Selected Shorter Poems, c. 1793–1810*, p. 227.

37. 'Faithless Nelly Gray: A Pathetic Ballad,' in Thomas Hood, *Poems of Thomas Hood*, intro. Walter Jerrold (London, 1907), p. 360.

38. Simon Dickie, 'Hilarity and Pitilessness in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: English Jestbook Humour', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37: 1 (Fall 2003), 1–22; Roger Lund, 'Laughing at Cripples: Ridicule, Deformity and the Argument from Design', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, **39**: 1 (Fall 2005), 91–114.

39. William Hay, *Deformity: An Essay* (London, 1754), quotation from p. 4. Translator of the *Select Epigrams of Martial* (above, n. 26), Hay was a Member of Parliament.

40. Mitford, ed., *Poematia*, pp. 135, 137.

41.   E. V. Lucas, ed., *Poems and Plays by Charles and Mary Lamb*, p. 67.
42.   Haan, *Classical Romantic*, p. 55.
43.   Charles Lamb, ed. E. V. Lucas, *Elia and the Last Essays of Elia*, p. 131.
44.   Lamb, *Elia*, pp. 131, 137.
45.   William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, with other Poems*, 2nd ed., 2 volumes (London, 1800), II, 156.
46.   Ferdinand von Fürstenberg, 'De Mopso fidissimo cane mortuo', in *Septem Illustrium Virorum Poemata*, 2nd. ed. (Amsterdam, 1672), pp. 253–4
47.   Quoted in Haan, *Classical Romantic*, p. 8, n. 40.
48.   Haan, *Classical Romantic*, pp. 9–10.
49.   Salgãdo, ed., *Cony-Catchers*, p. 18.