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# 'A MAN OF GENIUS, AND A WELCH MAN'

*Inaugural Lecture of the  
Professor of English Language and Literature  
delivered at the College  
on 5 February 1963*

by

PROFESSOR CECIL J. L. PRICE

M.A., Ph.D. (Wales)



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SWANSEA

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'A MAN OF GENIUS, AND A  
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'MR. LLOYD is a man of genius, and a Welch man.' The sentence comes from a letter written by David Garrick to Lady Spencer on 28 December 1770.<sup>1</sup> The great actor recommended the Rev. Evan Lloyd to the Spencers because he knew that they had great influence over Dr. Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph, and hoped that they would obtain preferment for Lloyd. The application was not successful. Two years later Garrick's friends, Henry and Sarah Wilmot, tried to get Lloyd a living but were told that 'Mr. Lloyd would have to perform quarantine'.<sup>2</sup> In other words, he had offended the bishop and would have to purge his offence.

When Lloyd heard of this answer, he wrote rather ruefully to Garrick to say, 'Perhaps my pen's to blame but I can hardly think attacks upon vice and folly could give offence to those who militate under the banners of virtue—must I then forego all dalliance with the Muse? You, my dear Roscius, well know that Apollo's lyre is worth the mitre of Lambeth. Is it a sin, is it heresy to prefer Shakespeare to Tillotson?'<sup>3</sup>

Lloyd's attacks upon vice and folly consisted of four long poems published between 1766 and 1768: *The Powers of the Pen*, *The Curate*, *The Methodist*, and *Conversation*. They are listed in the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, and a rather inaccurate account of

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of David Garrick and Georgiana Countess Spencer, 1759–1779* (ed. Earl Spencer and C. Dobson, Roxburghe Club, Cambridge, 1960), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> D. Garrick, *Private Correspondence* (ed. J. Boaden, London, 1831), ii. 357.

<sup>3</sup> Cardiff Public Library MS. 4.107, ff. 57–59. Cf. N.L.W. MS. 10582E, and C. Price, 'The Unpublished Letters of Evan Lloyd', *The National Library of Wales Journal*, viii (1954), 437.



Lloyd's life appears in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Yet Lloyd is hardly remembered today as a poet. This comparative neglect seems strange treatment for a 'man of genius', so in this lecture I propose to reassess his work and to consider how far Garrick's praise was justified.

The second part of Garrick's sentence is not open to question. Lloyd was born at Vron Dderw, Bala, on 15 April 1734, and was the younger son of John Lloyd, an impoverished squire with a pedigree stretching back through the Lloyds of Rhiwgoch to the Welsh prince, Gruffydd ap Maredudd.<sup>1</sup> At Ruthin School, Evan was treated severely by the headmaster because of his laziness; and in later years he remembered it as the place where he had (in his own phrase) 'made havoc among the dump-lings'. He matriculated at Jesus College, Oxford, on 22 March 1751, and seems to have begun writing verse in his student days. This is indicated in a passage in *Conversation*, where he refers to

. . . the rash Moment, when my riper Days  
Urg'd me to stray *Parnassus'* Hill for Bays;  
And, tho' scarce Master of an *Oxford Hack*  
Boldly to vault on Pegasus's Back,  
To offer incense at Apollo's Shrine  
And court poetic glances from the Nine.

When John Lloyd wrote to his son to say that he had heard that undergraduates idled away all the winter, Evan replied, 'it is all owing to ourselves whether we spend it idly or industriously', and he undoubtedly put in enough work himself to satisfy the authorities. Through the efforts of an uncle, he was awarded a Grocers' exhibition; and after he had graduated in 1754, he won a College scholarship.<sup>2</sup> He hoped, then, to take a course of anatomical

<sup>1</sup> Llanylic parish register.

<sup>2</sup> Information from the Clerk of the Grocers' Company.

lectures and to gain a fellowship of sixty pounds a year, which (as he wrote to his father) 'would certainly crown the expense of my education'.<sup>1</sup> He received his Master's degree in 1757, but his expectations of a fellowship were not fulfilled.

What happened to him in the next three years is not known, but by 1761 he had become curate of St. Mary's at Redriff (Rotherhithe), and was soon complaining humorously of the number of funerals he had to attend. Yet he would not have his friends think that he spent all his time at his parish duties, for, in his own words, 'it would be a reflection on one's parts to say that all one's time is taken up in making sermons'.<sup>2</sup> He gave his spare hours to yarning with the sea-captains of Rotherhithe, meeting friends in the Union Coffee house at Temple Bar, or visiting Drury Lane Theatre to watch Garrick.<sup>3</sup> He also kept up a busy correspondence in prose and verse, and contributed to the magazines.

His description of a visit to Stratford on Avon was the subject of eleven quatrains printed in the *British Magazine* in December 1761,<sup>4</sup> and they show his warm admiration for Shakespeare and for everything connected with him. 'The Invitation to Town. To Mira.' was published in the *St. James's Magazine* in June 1762; and 'An Epistle to [Robert] Lloyd, the Editor of the *St. James's Magazine*' appeared in that periodical in May 1763.<sup>5</sup> In 'The Invitation to Town', the poet begs Mira to leave the countryside, although it is the home of honesty, and to join him in the town. 'Vice and falsehood reign' there but she is so charming and so perfect that she will soon make virtue fashionable. She will also be able to attend that other

<sup>1</sup> N.L.W. MS. 9664, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Brogyntyn MS. 1002.

<sup>3</sup> Peniarth MS. 418D, f. 71b.

<sup>4</sup> See *The National Library of Wales Journal*, viii (1954), 281, n. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Both appear in manuscript in Cardiff Public Library MS. 2.76.

home of virtue, the theatre, and will have the pleasure of observing Garrick's magic eye:

Let mad fanatics foam and rage,  
And spit their venom at the stage.  
*There* virtue's slighted cause succeeds,  
*Example* stirs to generous deeds.

'An Epistle to Lloyd' is also written in rhyming couplets of iambic tetrameter. The poet amusingly apologizes for troubling the editor<sup>1</sup> with the piece, for he knows that verse epistles are much more frequently written than 'those pert, conceited things', odes. He defends his choice by claiming that satire is very necessary to the times:

The age is far worse taught than fed,  
They stuff the gut and starve the head.

But the task of poet and editor is to reveal lack of taste wherever it is to be found, and particularly in such people as Sir Epicure the Cit whose only interests in life are gluttony and money. The way to sell a literary magazine to a man of this character is to pander to his vices:

You'll have subscriptions, thick as hail,  
If in proposals it be said  
'Printed on finest Gingerbread.'  
Or call your works *Poetic Pie*  
And ev'ry Alderman will buy.

Evan Lloyd's description of Sir Epicure owes something to lines 239-55 of *Night* by Charles Churchill, the most successful of contemporary satirists; but where Churchill aims at ferocious condemnation, Lloyd is content with humorous irony. Churchill was the Juvenal of his day.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Lloyd (1733-64), author of *The Actor*, is not to be confused with Evan Lloyd's elder brother, Robert, in spite of the line in 'An Epistle to Lloyd' where Evan refers to him as 'brother Robert'.

Lloyd's ambitions are to be found in a jingling couplet that still remains in manuscript:

I rather wou'd a Horace be  
Than first lord of the Treasury.

Another connexion with Churchill is to be found in three quatrains printed by Lloyd in the *St. James's Chronicle* of 18 August 1763, as a contribution to the quarrel between Hogarth and the supporters of John Wilkes. The painter had been employed by the government to ridicule the opposition in a drawing called 'The Times'. Wilkes devoted a whole number of *The North Briton* to reprimanding Hogarth for his change of allegiance, and Charles Churchill wrote *An Epistle to Hogarth* that cruelly satirized the painter's envious nature and inferred that he was in his dotage. Evan Lloyd's sympathies were strongly on the side of Wilkes and Churchill, and his twelve lines wittily derided Hogarth's craven defection.

These occasional poems to the journals of the day were a necessary preliminary to the publication of more ambitious works. *The Powers of the Pen* was first printed in 1766, and achieved a second edition in 1768. The first version ran to forty-three pages of verse; the second, to sixty. The form, octosyllabic couplet, had been brilliantly handled by Samuel Butler (in *Hudibras*), by Swift, and by Churchill. The subject, critics and criticism, had given Pope his greatest opportunity. In the second version of *The Dunciad*, he had printed memorable verse portraits of Cibber, Busby, and Bentley. Evan Lloyd copied him by presenting descriptions of even more famous men: Rousseau, Voltaire, and Samuel Johnson.

Churchill had already jeered at Johnson as 'Pomposo' in *The Ghost*, and had laughed at his love of long words, his pride in his own learning, and his rude assertiveness.



Lloyd remarks on these faults of character, deplores Johnson's pedantry and testiness, and ridicules his magazine, *The Rambler*. Johnson's worst fault, however, was that he had dared to criticize Shakespeare:

Others, of *stiff and formal Cut*,  
*Scholastic Pedantry* hath put  
 In *Johnson's* hand, prepar'd to write  
*Ramblers*, which Phoebus wou'd affright;  
 For though they speak true Sterling Sense,  
 BROBDINGNAG words must give Offence;  
 Or *testy Prefaces* to draw,  
*Nature* to try by *Critic-law*;  
 And to decree, the Trial done,  
 'Gainst *Nature*, and her *fav'rite Son*,  
 That *Shakespear* all at random wrote,  
 Witty by Chance, but dull in Thought;  
 Dupe to a *Quibble*, or a Jest,  
 The worst of Poets and the best;  
 A very *Stoic* to express  
 The Woes of *Greatness in Distress*,  
 At *Lear's* Fall who will may weep,  
*Johnson* will laugh, or fall asleep,  
 To shew his *Sense profound*—but shews  
 Tho' his *Head's full*, his *Heart is froze*,  
 That *Learning* cannot teach to *feel*,  
 Nor *Shakespear* move a Man of Steel.

Lloyd complains (in a way that is reminiscent of Pope about Bentley) that

A *Dictionary's* small Pretence  
 To warrant such high Insolence—  
 A *learned Mummy* might explain  
 (If you but well embalm the Brain)  
*Words and their various Sense*—might shew  
 A modern *Critic* means—a Foe.

Yet Johnson is not wholly bad. Lloyd commends the way in which he

With skilful Hand expung'd the Blot  
 Rais'd from the *Unities forgot*,  
 Obscurity of sense he clears  
 But does not understand *his Tears*.

In other words, Johnson had shown some good sense in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare, but he had not understood fully the emotions aroused by the plays and was, as a critic, altogether too sure of himself. Lloyd's judgement is neatly expressed and is quite just. It is the more estimable because it appeared so soon after the first publication of the preface.

The reference to the 'unities forgot' leads us naturally to the portrait of Voltaire:

This Pen on *every Theme* can write,  
 None is too heavy, none too light;  
 And what it writes cannot miscarry,  
 For it is *a la mode de Paris*.  
 'Tis fraught with Learning's various Store,  
 Such *Wit!*—*Apollo* scarce has more—

Lloyd admires Voltaire's virtuosity as a writer and his varied learning, but strongly criticizes his lack of faith. The forty lines given to the great French author are of unequal merit as verse, but they present us with an interesting contemporary assessment of his genius.

This is also true of the description of Rousseau:

We cannot praise this Quill too much,  
 Quick, as *Ithuriel's Spear*, its Touch,  
 Can trip the thick Disguise of Art

Can trace the hidden Source, whence springs  
*Subjects Allegiance unto Kings*;  
 Can from the *Code of Nature* draw  
 An *Institute of moral Law*.

Yet will no *Heresies* admit,  
 To gratify the *Pride of Wit*,

But *Truth's* straight path intent to keep,  
Earnest is each Research, and deep;  
And where it is its Fate to err,  
*Honest* its *Error*, and sincere.

Lloyd himself preferred the natural man to the creature of artifice and, like most of his literary contemporaries, extolled the plain dealer. He found Rousseau's hatred of dissimulation wholly admirable.

Lloyd turns from the consideration of these great men to 'the sweepings of the shop'. For commentators, paraphrasers, reviewers, and critics, 'each chapter is a loaf of bread'. The reviewers, who should do all in their power to help genius to blossom, really wither it in the bud:

It is not that *they hate a Rose*,  
—*But the poor Souls have lost their Nose*—  
And *Envy* never yet could bear  
Those Blessings which she cannot share.

Lloyd describes the gloomy cave where the reviewers gather to consider the verse offered to them. There they sit with scalping knives near at hand and printers' devils guarding the entrance to the den.

Perch'd on a Column of *Reviews*,  
Sits a grave *Owl*, and seems to muse;  
And when they bring home Works of *Wit*,  
She's taken with a *hooting-fit*.  
An idiot *Ass* gives evidence  
By *braying*, of the approach of *Sense*.

The most mordant note in the poem is found in the description of the worst of all critics, William Kenrick, 'the Lord Paramount of Dirt'. Kenrick did not forget this and he attacked Lloyd viciously as soon as chance gave him the occasion.

When *The Powers of the Pen* was actually reviewed in the magazines, it was praised by some and damned in

others. The *Gentleman's Magazine* declared 'this poem is full of imagination and wit; the versification is excellent of its kind; not elaborate, but spirited and free'.<sup>1</sup> The *Monthly Review* took the opposite position: 'the Author of this Poem is one of those numerous maggots that have bred in the remains of Churchill; who, from a vain hope of acquiring some consequence by it, have entered into his quarrels without his provocations, and inherited his spirit of abuse without his capacity. The versification of this poem is in some places tolerable, and in others utterly despicable.'<sup>2</sup> The truth appears to lie somewhere between these extremes. The versification is occasionally careless, but it is more often neatly ordered to give epigrammatic force to the couplet. For instance, Lloyd's definition of verse is wittily pointed:

For Poems are (as all can tell)  
Ideas scallop'd in their shell.

Sometimes he also sounds a lyric note. The lines I am about to read contain something of the thought of Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* but in a very different form and diction:

Drawn by old Homer's hand, the Rose  
Still on the Cheek of Helen blows.  
Her Beauty suffers no Decay,  
Nor moulders for the worm a Prey;  
Time's chissel cuts no wrinkles in  
The velvet smoothness of her skin:  
Nor can the Thirst of old Age sip  
The dewy Moisture of her lip;  
And now her Eyes as brilliant shew,  
As Paris saw them long ago.  
For tho' her beauteous body must  
Have crumbled into native dust,  
Yet still her Features live in Song,  
Like Hebe, ever fair and young.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. xxxvi (1766), 37.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. xxxiv (1766), 405.



The music of the lines is obvious. Lloyd's mastery of the couplet as an integral part of the verse paragraph is equally plain. The sense runs on with ease, and though the epithets are conventional, the theme is feelingly conveyed to the reader.

*The Curate* The *Monthly Review* was kinder to Lloyd's next poem, *The Curate*. It quoted a dozen lines with approval, and concluded, 'the language is too humble and the images too low, but in the detail of the curate's sufferings, there is neither wanting a keenness of satire on the principal causes of them, nor humour in the description of them. The author concludes his poem with some advice to his brethren, which is expressed in superior language and a better strain of poetry.'<sup>1</sup> The *Critical Review* agreed: 'his strokes are sometimes indelicate, and his language prosaic, but many of his animadversions are unquestionably just.'<sup>2</sup>

*The Curate* appeared in 1766 and, following the fashion set by Sterne, had its author's name in manuscript on the title-page. The poem is in heroic couplet, and opens very happily:

Is there a Muse among the tuneful *Nine*,  
 Will give her hand, and let me call her mine?  
 Will deign a little homely cot approach,  
 And walk with him who cannot keep a coach?  
 Will take a bard for better or for worse,  
 And plight her troth before she weighs his purse?  
 Who knows that *Chance* is queen of earthly things,  
 Nor gives her precious self to kneeling kings.

Who holds good sense, a far more precious dow'r,  
 Than riches, honours, equipage, or pow'r.

Following Rousseau, Lloyd suggests that man in primitive times was happy, but that equality ended when

<sup>1</sup> Vol. xxxiv (1766), 405.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. xxi (1766), 316.

ambition and lust for power made men desire to tyrannize over others. Still, in the course of time, even tyrants grew lazy and began to delegate their authority, and this process went on throughout society. Lloyd amusingly reduces the idea to absurdity:

Kings *hireling Secretaries* keep, and *these*  
 Must have *their Secretaries* too, for ease—  
 Bishops place *Rectors* thro' their holy sees,  
 And *Rectors* mince them into *Curacies*;  
 Each petty *Principal* a *Clerk* must keep,  
 And *Chimney-Sweepers* by their *Proxies* sweep.  
 A *Beggar* purchases two *wooden legs*,  
 Gives them his *Deputy*, and thro' him begs.

The curate's position is a difficult one. In his study he is at home with the greatest figures of the past, Homer and Horace, Julius Caesar and Augustus, but when he goes out into the world, he has to reconcile himself to the company of the most uninteresting of creatures, churchwardens and undertakers.

The *Clerk* himself is saucy now and then  
 But who would quarrel with a *mere Amen*?

As for the purse-proud and their slights, there is no bearing them. Even illiterate fops take pleasure in 'smoaking the parson'. They say,

A *Parson* (*sure's*) a strange, queer awkward thing,  
 A clumsy, rusty *Cretur*—Well, I vow  
 I've seen a *Plough-boy* make a *better Bow*—  
 Good Doctor! burn your books, and learn to dance,  
 Shake off *old Greece*, and study *modern France*—  
 Can *Harry Stotle* teach the *Art to kiss*?  
 Can *Pleto* give a *Lady real Bliss*?

The lines are cleverly contrived to capture the fop's tone as well as his silly ideas.

A more serious subject, the venality of bishops, occupies nearly a quarter of this poem's 800 lines. Lloyd



scathingly attacks the party man who has forgotten his vocation:

He in Christ's doctrine deals, by way of trade.  
Money by *preaching Poverty* is made.

Preferment goes to men who support their opinions:

And he who dares assert his will is free,  
Is doom'd to starve upon a Curacy.—

When we read the lines on the bishops, we are hardly surprised that Lloyd was expected, four years later, 'to perform quarantine'.

His complaints of the treatment which rectors mete out to their subordinates are far more moderate, and though he writes that some of them expect their curates to clean knives and forks, black shoes, and run errands, he has to admit that he had never suffered these indignities himself:

I am not to my private wrongs confin'd  
But feel as *Man* shou'd feel for all Mankind.

In point of fact he did not now suffer very much as a curate. In 1763 he had been appointed Vicar of Llanfair Duffryn Clwyd (through the influence of Henry Bilston Legge, former Chancellor of the Exchequer), and choosing to be non-resident, kept up his curacy at Rotherhithe for a time because it gave him a foothold in London.

*The Curate* provides further proof of the fact that Lloyd was at his best in the lighter passages of wit and whimsical humour. His mockery of the beaux and rueful description of the town curate's lot are much more effective than his vehement denunciations of 'consecrated dirt'. Whenever he imitated Churchill's manner and descended to mere abuse, he seems to us less convincing, though he was applauded by a contemporary for his 'bold,

disinterested pen'<sup>1</sup> that showed 'a Churchill's honest might'.

A spleenish and even morose tone is evident in his next poem. *The Methodist* is made up of nearly a thousand lines of ridicule of the reformers. Lloyd wished to see certain changes in the Church of England but, like many people of his day, feared the return of a puritanical outlook. It had once brought civil war to the country, and the reign of the Saints. Samuel Butler had shown how hypocritical those rascals were, and Jonathan Swift had revealed their self-opinionated ways in *A Tale of a Tub*. They were not plain-dealers but prim, designing people.

This very unfair attitude towards the early Methodists was common enough; and is to be found in the satirical verse of the period. Pope had made a scoffing reference to Whitefield in *The Dunciad*; Churchill contemptuously dismissed both Whitefield and Madan in *The Ghost*. In Wales, too, Welsh-speaking literary men like Lewis Morris and Rhys Jones of Blaenau had savagely satirized the reformers.

Lloyd dislikes their sanctimoniousness, and considers that their lies and hypocritical behaviour prove them to be the agents of the Devil. Whitefield, for example,

. . . urges fifty false Pretences,  
Preaching his Hearers from their Senses.  
He knows his *Master's* realm so well,  
His Sermons are a *Map of Hell*,  
An Ollio made of *Conflagration*  
Of *Gulphs of Brimstone* and *Damnation*.

A thousand scorching words beside,  
Over his tongue as glibly slide,  
Familiar as a glass of Wine,  
Or a Tobacco-pipe on mine.

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson [of Shrewsbury], *Poems on Several Occasions* (Shrewsbury, 1768), p. 20.

The implication here is that Lloyd is a reasonable man, and Whitefield is a false ranter. He breaks up homes and takes money from the poor. He even incites blockheads of tradesmen to take up preaching:

The *Bricklay'r* Throws his *Trowel* by,  
And now *builds Mansions in the Sky*.

As Lloyd works out this idea with several illustrations, there becomes evident under the jocular tone a fear of social change and of the break-up of an ordered society. Lloyd also condemns other Methodist leaders like Madan, Romaine, and Wesley, but his most hostile criticism is directed against the unidentified 'Libidinoso', who is described as one of Satan's agents in the north. This lecher has a bloated eye and a drooping lip. He is only too willing to use a churchyard as the scene of his lustful behaviour. Satan found him

When, in a dark, romantic Wood,  
In which an antique Mansion stood,  
He spied, close to a Hovel-door,  
A *Saint* conversing with his Whore.  
Double he seem'd, and worn with Age,  
Little adapted to engage,  
In *Love's* hot War. . . .

Satan claims him for his own, and bids him go on with his evil ways while still pretending religious zeal and piety.

The poem ends with an invocation:

Quench the hot Flame, O God, that burns,  
And *Piety* to *Phrenzy* turns!  
Let not thy *holy Name* be made  
A Cloak to hide a *pil'fring Trade!*  
Nor suffer that thy *sacred Word*,  
Be turn'd to *Rhapsody absurd!*

18 All the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' fear of 'enthusiasm' is to be found in this cry. The Methodists

are obviously hypocrites, fanatics, and fools. Yet the denunciation is too exaggerated and too personal to win the reader's consent. The *Critical Review* justly remarked of it: 'the author out-methodizes even Methodism itself'.

Lloyd's hudibrastic purpose was well suited to the octosyllabic couplet, but in his next poem, *Conversation*, he returns to the heroic couplet and a gentler vein of satire. He deals mock-heroically with the way in which conversational opportunities are abused, and with the trivialities that pass for 'true wit'. As usual, Lloyd begins with a general statement:

Nature *Capacity* alone bestows,  
*Perfection* from our own Endeavour grows.  
A Hottentot might wear a classic air,  
If you but plant another *Oxford* there.

In an excellent passage, where antithesis and justness of phrase give point to his argument, he considers this theme when applied to language:

Our Words, altho' they're but Idea's Dress,  
May oft, like other Cloathes, procure success.  
Though this be Form—yet bend to Form we must.  
Fools with it please, without it Wits disgust.

Even 'Butler's wit or Prior's graceful sense' will sound unpleasant if stuttered:

So handsome Blockheads please a Lady's eye,  
And well-shap'd legs the place of Wit supply;  
And hence from *Pope* each belle, disgusted, fled;  
His Shoulder marr'd the merit of his Head.

The aim of society should be 'to soften manners but not lose the man', so the poet goes on to consider at what gatherings conversation and true politeness might be found. The theatre is no place for these arts, simply because too many people who attend wish to draw attention to themselves. The city is merely the home of



political argument on the lowest level. Clubs and coffee houses are the resort of the superficial. The company of gamblers, gossips, and 'sapling lords' is unworthy of consideration because these persons maim language with their narrow vocabularies. The punster and the 'bawdy brute' are also condemned, but with some reservations:

Yet *Puns* there are, to give to *Puns* their due,  
Wit's genuine Offspring and *good Humour*'s too  
Which to our graver Thinking give Relief,  
As Syllibubs regale us after Beef.

Lloyd (like those two other eighteenth-century clergymen Swift and Sterne) loved 'a Shandean jest' and he goes on to defend his own taste:

Or if, regardless whether Prudes will sneer,  
All Gauze and Fig-leaf, Nivea should appear;  
What if some Rake, with Wit and Passion big,  
Should praise the *Fig-Leaf*, and request the *Fig*?  
What mighty harm is in the roguish Jest,  
If by the hand of *Decency* 'tis drest?

The question suggests that Lloyd was very much on the defensive: the broad jokes of the Restoration period and after were no longer common form, but were now more confined to the bucks, squires, and men about town.

*Conversation* contains many good couplets and much sprightly comment. With the second edition of *The Powers of the Pen* it is the best of his poems, and it was well received. The *Critical Review* gave it four pages, and quoted and commended some 120 lines. Towards the end of the article, the reviewer paid Lloyd the compliment of comparing him with Swift: 'though this writer has not treated the subject with that elegance of style, and poignancy of wit, with which, we may suppose, it would have been treated by Dean Swift, yet he is no contemptible

satirist. He possesses a warm imagination and draws his characters with spirit.'<sup>1</sup>

These four poems brought Evan Lloyd some reputation, and he made up his mind to publish others by subscription. 'What has been said to me', he wrote home to his father, 'gives me reasonable grounds to expect tolerable encouragement.'<sup>2</sup> He even thought the project would bring him in a considerable amount of money. But before he could go on with this plan, events took a new turn. William Price of Rhiwlas, a great landowner who lived in an 'antique house' close to a wood just outside Bala, was sure that 'Libidinoso' was a portrait of himself, and common opinion agreed with him. Evan Lloyd took legal advice and offered an apology, but it was thought 'too stiff' by Price's advisers. The poet did not attempt to deny that he had intended to ridicule Price. Instead, he took refuge in a legal quibble: he had not at any time specifically mentioned that 'Libidinoso' was Price. The law of libel was in rather a confused state at this time, but it so happens that Blackstone gave an opinion on 2 February 1768<sup>3</sup> that makes obvious Evan Lloyd's predicament. A plaintiff only needed to prove the fact of publication, give reasons for supposing the defendant the author, and sign an affidavit that it was generally understood that the libel was intended to point to him, to win his case. Lloyd was tried in the Court of King's Bench on 2 May 1768, and was convicted of printing and publishing a scandalous libel.<sup>4</sup> He was committed to prison and, fourteen days later, appeared for sentence before Lord Mansfield. Apparently the judge

<sup>1</sup> Vol. xxiv (1767), 341-4.

<sup>2</sup> N.L.W. MS. 12294, letter 17. Cf. C. Price, 'The Unpublished Letters of Evan Lloyd', *The National Library of Wales Journal*, viii (1954), 300.

<sup>3</sup> Add. MS. 33230, ff. 34-36.

<sup>4</sup> *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 18 May 1768.

referred to him rather slightly as 'the Welsh parson', and fined him fifty pounds, a considerable sum.

Lloyd's reputation hardly suffered at all, for the simple reason that a number of writers had been punished in the same way for libels of a literary or political nature. For example, when Smollett had spent three months in the King's Bench in 1759, he had certainly not been shunned but had been visited there by Oliver Goldsmith, David Garrick, and John Wilkes. Lloyd had the compensation of being imprisoned at a time when the eyes of Britain were on his jail, for John Wilkes himself was imprisoned there, too.

Lloyd and Wilkes had much in common: ready wit, love of the classics, the table, and the bottle. They had both been devoted supporters of Pitt and Legge, and had suffered as libellers. They became lifelong friends, and in due course Wilkes wrote the epitaph for Lloyd that is to be found in Llanycil church. They now proceeded to enjoy themselves in characteristic fashion. Lloyd wrote home to say that in jail he had 'good eating, good drinking, good company, a very comfortable garden'.<sup>1</sup> It was clearly one of the most delightful experiences of his life. We hardly wonder at this when we read of an earlier period of Wilkes's imprisonment that he was visited by some forty noblemen and that the company ate swan.

Lloyd's trial and imprisonment left him with an even greater admiration for Wilkes than he had had before, and with a great loathing for Lord Mansfield. His feelings are clearly expressed in a previously uncollected letter to Wilkes that I have recently found in the columns of the *European Magazine*. It describes a journey home to Bala:

... Wilkes and Liberty could keep me warm in Iceland, though Bute and Prerogative would chill me under the Line. A traveller's

<sup>1</sup> Cardiff Public Library MS. 3.18, ff. 33-35.

letter is worth nothing without some account of his journey; but that I may not be as tedious to you as some jaded horses were to me, I shall only say on the whole, that I had a true December journey of it—the roads deep and heavy—weather fit for suicide—too many twelpenny turnpikes, and pock-fretted chambermaids: however, the disposition of the people made amends for all; for I hardly passed a town or village where Wilkes and Liberty did not carry magic with it. . . . If Milton was right when he called Liberty a mountain nymph, I am now writing to you from her residence; and the peaks of our Welch Alps heighten the idea, by wearing the clouds of Heaven like a cap of Liberty. Yon old goat which browses among the cliffs looks more venerable than Lord Mansfield in his King's Bench wig—he seems to be the judge of the bearded race, and too candid to alter a record.<sup>1</sup>

Lloyd's detestation of Mansfield and the government, together with his admiration for Wilkes, made me wonder at one time whether Lloyd could have been Junius. Woodfall was said to have stated that the great prose satirist was a middle-aged clergyman, and Shelburne declared that 'none of the parties guessed at was the true Junius'.<sup>2</sup> There are certain other details that support the case for identifying Lloyd with Junius. Lloyd's imprisonment for libel would compel him to cloak his identity just as Junius did. He questioned the wisdom of the split with Horne. Further, he wrote to Wilkes on 11 February 1769 in these terms: 'I have a projection on my hands more difficult than his [Shakespeare's], though he should attempt to distill Virtue from the Devil's horns—for I am endeavouring to draw *Good* out of our M[inistr]y and *Good* they certainly have done, or will do—the good I mean is the firm establishment of our Liberty and Constitution.'<sup>3</sup> I have found nothing by Lloyd at this time

<sup>1</sup> Vol. xviii (1790), 168.

<sup>2</sup> O. W. Serres, *Life of . . . Rev. James Wilmot* (1813), p. xxvi; *The Letters of Junius* (ed. C. W. Everett, 1927), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> E. A. Jones, 'Two Welsh Correspondents of John Wilkes', *Y Cymmrodor*, xxix (1919), 122.



that justifies the description, and it is therefore interesting to note that Junius's first letter on the maladministration of the government appeared on 21 January 1769, and his second on 11 February.

At the same time the hypothesis is open to grave objections. Lloyd was at Vron Dderw when the first letters by Junius appeared, and continued to spend the winter months at home, far enough away from London. He cannot be imagined making the bitter personal attack on Garrick that Junius printed on 10 November 1771. He does not appear to have had either the familiarity with legal and military matters or the intimate personal knowledge of the court and ministry that are such obvious characteristics of Junius's letters.

If Lloyd were Junius it would be easy to explain what he did with his time between 1769 and 1773. In the years between 1766 and 1768, he had turned out four long poems totalling 4,000 lines, and an even greater productivity might have been expected of him at the later period. No such spate of verse came from his pen. In fact it is rather difficult to explain away his silence.

His health grew progressively worse. In the autumn of 1769 (when he was thirty-five) he was disabled by gout; and in later years suffered from rheumatism and tuberculosis. He tried to forget his troubles by visiting the 'Half Moon' tavern at Drwsynant, with his boon companions. His visits were still recalled at the turn of the century when Richard Fenton went there and wrote: 'Here the celebrated Evan Lloyd, author of *The Powers of the Pen*, the Friend and favourite of the first literary characters of his time, buried his talents in Ale, and at last, in consequence of sottishness, brought on consumption, and died in the prime of life. He had a club here which he called Lunaticks.'<sup>1</sup> Little is known about this

<sup>1</sup> Richard Fenton, *Tours in Wales* (ed. Fisher, London, 1917), p. 92.

club, but it probably derived its name (like the one at Birmingham in the seventeen-nineties) from the fact that it met at the time of the full moon, when travelling was easier. Some references to it are also to be found in four poems in the Welsh language written by Lloyd's friend, Rhys Jones of Blaenau. In the chorus of one of the poems, the jovial brethren are called on to praise Bacchus, to gulp like fish, howl like wolves, and give a toast to Hymen and Sir John Barleycorn.<sup>1</sup>

This delight in the convivial also characterized his London friendships. Lloyd grew very intimate with the witty, dissipated painter John Hamilton Mortimer; and also spent happy hours in the company of Wilkes and Garrick. It is noteworthy that his few later poems either eulogized or served the needs of these friends. In a poem of some ninety-two lines (still in manuscript in the British Museum), Lloyd compares Wilkes with Caractacus as a leader in the struggle for civil liberty.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps they were intended to be part of the 'excellent satirical poem' by Lloyd that Wilkes mentioned to his daughter in a letter of 12 June 1770, but which has not since been identified.<sup>3</sup> In the same way Lloyd's *Epistle to David Garrick* is fulsome in its flattery. The best lines mock Samuel Johnson once again; the rest of the poem lauds Garrick and defends him from an attack made on him by William Kenrick. In due course, one 'Scriblerius Flagellarius' (who is almost certainly Kenrick) reprinted the *Epistle to David Garrick* with sardonic and abusive footnotes.<sup>4</sup>

Other friends for whom Lloyd wrote a long poem were

<sup>1</sup> N.L.W. MS. 163, ff. 177-80. Cf. *Gwaith Prydyddawl y Diweddar Rice Jones o'r Blaenau* (ed. R. O. Jones, Dolgelleu, 1818), pp. 308-11.

<sup>2</sup> Add. MS. 30879, f. 146. Previously not identified as Lloyd's.

<sup>3</sup> Add. MS. 30882, ff. 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> See C. Price, 'David Garrick and Evan Lloyd', *Review of English Studies*, N.S., ii (1952), 36-37.

members of the Incorporated Society of Artists, headed by the Vice-President John Hamilton Mortimer. The Society opened its new building in the Strand with a concert at which an ode by Lloyd, to music by James Hook, was declaimed. The poem was printed in the *Annual Register* of 1772 (pp. 206–8) and runs to just over a hundred lines. It is mainly in octosyllabic couplets, and is inflated in style. Several references to freedom, a Patriot King, and to Brutus saving Rome by stabbing Caesar, suggest that Lloyd could not omit a Wilkite moral even on such an occasion. The verse adds nothing to Lloyd's reputation.

Assessment of Lloyd's work. Lloyd (like many another Welshman) was better at witty criticism than at eulogy. Even in his satirical verse, he sinks too often to mere abuse or bitter mockery, to lame versification and hackneyed rhymes. At their best the poems possess characteristics that are just the ones that made him in real life the delightful companion he was acknowledged to be: a pithiness of phrase, an epigrammatic common sense, and a delight in pure fun that brings him in spirit sometimes near Byron. One of his friends wrote to him in 1771 to say: 'I greatly prefer with you that just and gentle Vein of Satyr which with gentle Humanity and good Humour smiles at the foolish world, which ever must surround Us.'<sup>1</sup> This is an accurate assessment of his best qualities.

Lloyd's last claim to literary renown rests upon his letters. There are one hundred of them extant: they begin in his undergraduate days at Oxford, and end in September 1775, five months before his death. These cheerful and often penetrating letters take us right into the heart of the man and of the period. Garrick remarked very justly that no one could write a more sprightly letter

<sup>1</sup> J. Pugh Pryse to Lloyd, 5 Feb. 1771 (Cardiff Public Library MS. 3.18).

than Lloyd: this was a fine compliment at a time of great letter-writers and from a man who was himself one of the best of them. Every reader of Lloyd's correspondence is bound to be struck by his zest for life. The naïve delight in 'making good acquaintance' when he was a student at Oxford gives way to the energetic, worldly wise comments of his stay at Redriff, but a certain comicality is always evident. In one letter he writes: 'I believe there will not be one piece of Wit in these Letters, for my Landlady is just by me, and I have 5 Buryings to stow away within this hour.' His delight in singing what he called 'Welch penills' made even so awesome a figure as Henry Bilston Legge rejoice in his company, and leads me to suppose that Garrick had him in mind when he wrote the epitaph:

Here Trillo lies, a laughing, merry Priest.  
Who lov'd good ale, a fiddle and a jest;—  
Death took him in the middle of a song  
Ty'd all his fingers, and untun'd his tongue.

'A laughing, merry priest' may not be to everyone's taste, and it is clear that Lloyd completely lacked high seriousness. In fact, when he was appointed chaplain to the Sheriff, Watkin Lewes, he was careful to divest the office of any solemnity: 'my chief business as chaplain is to eat turtle, venison, pine-apples etc.' and when he attended the entertainment given by Lewes on 13 April 1773, he was delighted to report that he was up to his gums in ice-cream and jellies at the Mansion house. Now this suggests that he disliked pompousness above everything. He thought Pope's letters dull, formal, prim, and precise, and wrote 'an easy flowing deshabelle for a Letter I say—a Nightgown and Slippers are the only dress to write one in'. His own letters are full of this informality, and yet they have a nice touch of elegance about them



that gives them distinction. Some, too, have an unexpected warmth of feeling. He shows an obvious fondness for his father, brother, and sister, and some affection for Llanycil. Other letters reveal a man at home in two worlds: he enjoyed the company of the leading Welsh gentlemen of his day—William Vaughan of Corsygedol, Robert Wynne of Garthmeilio, John Pugh Pryse of Rûg and Gogerddan—as well as that of Sir John Fielding (the blind Bow Street magistrate who was half-brother to Henry Fielding), of John Wilkes, J. H. Mortimer, and David Garrick. The letters, too, bring out his character in revealing his reactions to set-backs and successes; he pondered on his imprisonment, then wrote: 'I often laugh to think what whimsical ways Fortune has of showing her kindness—I might have scratch'd my Head till it bled, ere I cou'd have invented a Scheme of being well introduc'd to Mr. Wilkes—but Chance did it for me, and gave me Mr. Wilkes in as lucky and accidental a manner, as she had given Mr. Legge before—besides I might have libell'd half the kingdom ere I cou'd have found one who wou'd be kind enough to draw the attention of the world towards me by a Prosecution.' Clearly Lloyd was of a philosophical temper, but he was also human enough to rejoice over his own successes. This is plain in the letter he sent home to describe a meeting with Garrick, who had discussed Lloyd's verse and had told him 'like a sincere friend that I was frequently very careless, and at times blaz'd with uncommon lustre . . . did me the Honour to conclude by observing that if I took proper care, he knew no one to equal me among the present Set of Writers'.

That brings me back to my original question: was Garrick justified in calling Lloyd 'a man of genius'? If we accept the present meaning of the word, the answer must be 'No!' Our present usage goes back to the end of the

eighteenth century, when there was an increasing interest in 'the Gothic', 'the Romantic', and the irrational. A man of genius became one who found his inspiration almost supernaturally; his work had an exalted or prophetic strain, and was 'untutored'. Genius, in this sense, is opposite to talent. The early eighteenth century made no such distinction, and gave the word 'genius' no overtones of the completely extraordinary or the wildly original. For writers of that period, the word meant 'natural ability' or 'aptitude', and this is the sense in which Garrick used it. He implied that Evan Lloyd was a man with a natural talent for writing, a gift of phrase, and an ability to communicate his opinions, whether they were comic or satiric. We shall have no difficulty in agreeing with him, for Lloyd claims a place in the reader's affection with the pleasant, sunny outlook of the best of his work.

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