

bawdy and lascivious, and, like the goat, is mighty ambitious of climbing up the mountains, where he does nothing but browse upon weeds. Such creatures as these are beneath our notice. But whenever some wondrous sublime genius arises, such as Homer or Milton, then it is that different ages and countries all join in an universal admiration. Poetry (I think I have read somewhere or other) is an imitation of nature; the poet considers all her works in a superior light to other mortals; he discerns every secret trait of the great mother, and paints it in its due beauty and proportion. The moral and the physical world all open fairer to his enthusiastic imagination; like some clear-flowing stream, he reflects the beautiful prospect all around, and, like the prism-glass, he separates and disposes nature's colours in their justest and most delightful appearances. This sure is not the talent of every dauber: art, genius, learning, taste, must all conspire to answer the full idea I have of a poet, a character which seldom agrees with any of our modern miscellany-mongers—but

Quid loquor? aut ubi sum? quæ mentem insania mutat?⁶

I am got into enchanted ground, and can hardly get out again time enough to finish my letter in a decent and laudable manner. Dear Sir, excuse and pardon all this rambling criticism—I writ it out of pure idleness, and, I can assure you, I wish you idle enough to read it through. I am, my dear Walpole,

Yours most sincerely,

R. WEST

I wish you a happy New Year.

TO GRAY, January 1737

Missing. Contained 'fragments' of 'the works of Cramputius' (see next letter).

FROM GRAY, Sunday 16 January 1737

Printed from MS in Waller Collection.

Dated by the postmark. The date of the year is conjectural. Gray was charged full commons at Peterhouse during January in both 1737 and 1738, but since he wrote

6. Virgil, *Æneid* iv. 595.