

From GRAY, Sunday 3 March 1751

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Cambridge, March 3, 1751.

ELFRIDA (for that is the fair one's name) and her author are now in town together. He has promised me that he will send a part of it to you some morning while he is there, and (if you shall think it worth while to descend to particulars) I should be glad you would tell me very freely your opinion about it, for he shall know nothing of the matter that is not fit for the ears of a *tender* parent—though, by the way, he has ingenuity and merit enough (whatever his drama may have) to bear hearing his faults very patiently. I must only beg you not to show it, much less let it be copied;¹ for it will be published, though not as yet.²

I do not expect any more editions,³ as I have appeared in more magazines than one.⁴ The chief errata⁵ were *sacred* bower for *secret*;⁶ *hidden* for *kindred*⁷ (in spite of dukes and classics);⁸ and *frowning* as in scorn for *smiling*.⁹ I humbly propose, for the benefit of Mr Dodsley and his matrons,¹⁰ that take *awake* for a verb,¹¹ that they should read *asleep*, and all will be right. *Gil Blas*¹² is *The Lying Valet*¹³ in five acts. *The*

1. An allusion to HW's handling of the *Elegy*.

2. It was published 21 March 1752 by J. and P. Knapton, Ludgate Street (*Daily Adv.* 21 March 1752).

3. The second quarto had appeared 25 Feb.; and see below, n. 11.

4. As Whibley believed, Gray may be playing on the title, *Magazine of Magazines*, or he may even have thought that the *Elegy* had been printed in other magazines, though no other appearances of the poem at this time have been discovered. See F. G. Stokes, *An Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*, Oxford, 1929, pp. 38–42. The 'Epitaph' only was printed in the *True Briton* for 6 Mar. 1751 (p. 234).

5. In the first quarto edition.

6. Line 11.

7. Line 96.

8. Since the original MS is missing, Miss Berry's reading cannot be verified.

9. Line 105.

10. See *ante* 20 Feb. 1751, where Gray refers to Dodsley as 'Nurse.'

11. In the first quarto edition, line 92

reads: 'Awake, and faithful to her wonted fires.' But Gray is unjust in blaming Dodsley for the comma which makes 'Awake' look like an imperative, for Gray himself inserted it in the line he sent to HW (*ante* 11 Feb. 1751). The comma was deleted in the third quarto (14 March) and the whole line changed in the eighth quarto (1753). See Stokes, *op. cit.* 29, 33, 76.

12. A five-act comedy by Edward Moore (1712–57), based on Smollett's translation of Le Sage's *Gil Blas*. It opened 2 Feb. 1751 at Drury Lane, where it had a run of nine nights (J. H. Caskey, *Life and Works of Edward Moore*, New Haven, 1927, pp. 73–85); and it was published 15 Feb. (*Daily Adv.* 15 Feb. 1751).

13. In the GM for Feb. 1751 the failure of *Gil Blas* is attributed to the fact that Moore had 'widely mistaken the character of Gil Blas, whom he has degraded from a man of sense, discernment, true humour, and great knowledge of mankind . . . to an impertinent, silly, conceited coxcomb, a mere *Lying Valet*, with all the affectation of a fop, and all the insolence of a coward'