

Henry Harington

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Rev. Henry Harington the Younger was born in Wells, Somerset on 8 February 1755. His mother, Martha Musgrove (1730-1806), and his father, also named Henry Harington (1727-1816), had four sons and presumably one daughter. Henry Harington was the second oldest of the sons. His father was a composer and physician, descended from Henry VIII's treasurer of the army, Sir John Harington.

At fourteen, Henry Harington began to use family papers belonging to his father to compile an assemblage of literary pieces and historical notes known as *Nugae Antiquae*. The volume's content is primarily the life and writings of his ancestor Sir John Harington (1560–1612) and Harington's father, a miscellaneous collection of papers in prose and verse. At age fifteen, on 2 July 1770, he enrolled at Queen's College in Oxford, receiving his BA in 1774. In 1777, he obtained his MA, and, in 1788, he acquired his BD and DD. He allegedly married the daughter of the second Baron Fortescue in 1788; however, she died shortly after the wedding. He then married Esther Lens at Norwich on 3 April 1782, with whom he had two sons. Following ordination, he became a rector (a member of the clergy who has charge of a parish) of two churches and prebendary of Bath and Wells, which was an honorary canon title. He eventually became a minor canon of Norwich Cathedral and assistant minister of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich. On 25 December 1791, Harington died at St Giles, Norwich.

Written in 1768, "The Hermite's Adresse to Youthe" is the earliest text record of this author, preceding the publication of the *Nugae Antiquae* collection by one year. Interestingly, Harington would have been around the age of thirteen when this poem was written, yet the style and language he uses gives the impression that the author is much older and more experienced. There was another author around the same time as Harington, named Thomas Chatterton, who was exceptionally studious and wrote mature poems, despite being eleven years old. Because few people were familiar with medieval style poetry, Chatterton was able to publish his work under the pseudonym Thomas Rowley; an imaginary monk of the fifteenth century. Similarly, Harington signs his poem as "The Olde Hermite," although he had not even matriculated college at the time it was written. The poem's genre is an address, and it is also an imitation of antique poetic style, reflecting the themes of age and a rejection of the *carpe diem* lifestyles of youth. Its meter is iambic pentameter, a standard formal meter for poetry in the eighteenth century. Harington's other works include "The Hospitable Oake" and "To a Lover," also in the genre of imitation.

Further Reading

- Borsay, Peter. "New Approaches to Social History. Myth, Memory, and Place: Monmouth and Bath 1750–1900." *Journal of Social History*, vol. 39, no.3, 2006, pp. 867–889.
- Groom, Nick. "Chatterton, Thomas (1752–1770), poet." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford UP, 2004.
- Harwood, Edward S. "Luxurious Hermits: Asceticism, Luxury and Retirement in the Eighteenth-Century English Garden." *Journal of Garden History*, vol. 20, no.4, 2012, pp. 265-296.

The Hermite's Addresse to Youthe: Written in the Spring-Garden at Bath⁷⁹

SAY, gentle youthe, that tread'st untouch'd with care,
 Where Nature hath so guerdon'd⁸⁰ Bathe's gay⁸¹ scene;
 Fedde⁸² with the songe that daunceth⁸³ in the aire;
 'Midst fairest wealthe of Flora's⁸⁴ magazine;⁸⁵
 Hath eye or eare yet founde, thine steppes to blesse, 5
 That gem of life y-clep'd⁸⁶ true happinesse.

With Beautie restes she not; nor wooes⁸⁷ to lighte
 Her hallow'd⁸⁸ taper⁸⁹ at proud Honour's flame;
 Nor Circe's⁹⁰ cuppe doth crown; nor comes in flighte
 Upon th' Icarian⁹¹ winge of bablinge⁹² Fame: 10
 Not shrine of golde dothe this fair sainte embower,
 She glides from Heaven, but not in Danae's⁹³ shower.

⁷⁹ *A Collection of Poems in Four Volumes: By Several Hands*. Edited by G. Pearch, Vol. IV. 1770, pp. 185–186, *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive*.

⁸⁰ *Guerdon'd*: rewarded, recompensed.

⁸¹ *Gay*: "Originally of persons and later also more widely: dedicated to social pleasures; dissolute, promiscuous; frivolous, hedonistic" (*OED*).

⁸² *Fedde*: fed, nourished by.

⁸³ *Daunceth*: dances.

⁸⁴ *Flora*: "in Latin mythology, the goddess of flowers; hence, in modern poetical language, the personification of nature's power in producing flowers" (*OED*).

⁸⁵ *Magazine*: "denoting a storehouse or repository" (*OED*).

⁸⁶ *Y-clep'd*: called.

⁸⁷ *Wooes*: desires.

⁸⁸ *Hallow'd*: holy.

⁸⁹ *Taper*: a wax candle used for devotional purposes.

⁹⁰ *Circe*: "in Greek and Latin mythology, the name of an enchantress who dwelt in the island of Aea, and transformed all who drank of her cup into swine; often used allusively" (*OED*).

⁹¹ *Icarian*: "of, pertaining to, or characteristic of Icarus, fabled, in escaping from Crete, to have flown so high that the sun melted the wax with which his artificial wings were fastened on, so that he fell into the sea, hence, applied to ambitious or presumptuous acts which end in failure or ruin" (*OED*).

⁹² *Bablinge*: babbling.

⁹³ *Danae*: the mother of Perseus in Greek mythology, Zeus transformed himself into a golden shower to seduce her.

Go, Blossome, wanton⁹⁴ in suche joyous aire,
 But ah! — oft⁹⁵ soone thy buxome⁹⁶ blast is oer!
 When the sleek pate⁹⁷ shall grow far 'bove its haire,
 And creeping Age shall reap this piteous lore!⁹⁸ 15
 To broode⁹⁹ o'er Follie,¹⁰⁰ and with me confesse,
 “Earth’s flattering dainties prove but sweete distresse.”

THE OLDE HERMITE.



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⁹⁴ *Wanton*: “to pass one’s time carelessly; to go idly or heedlessly” (*OED*).

⁹⁵ *Oft*: often, but here meaning “very soon.”

⁹⁶ *Buxome*: “full of health, vigour, and good temper” (*OED*).

⁹⁷ *Pate*: the forehead (which seems to grow as the hairline recedes with age).

⁹⁸ *Lore*: a body of knowledge.

⁹⁹ *Broode*: to meditate obsessively.

¹⁰⁰ *Follie*: foolishness or deficiency in understanding; lack of good sense.