

# George Bubb Dodington

*Ha Eun Lee, Simon Fraser University*

Born either in 1690 or 1691, George Bubb Dodington was a politician in Prime Minister Robert Walpole's government. He was the son of Jeremiah Bubb and Alicia Dodington (Hanham) and studied first at Winchester and then at Exeter College in Oxford before starting his political career in 1715. He inherited an estate from his maternal uncle in 1720, but there were some issues with the process, which led to a legal case regarding his inheritance rights. There was another scandal when Dodington revealed that he had been married for fourteen years and introduced his wife Katherine Beaghan to the public (Sanders 166). Dodington was known for his political writings, especially his diary, which was published posthumously, and his financial support of several writers including James Thomson and Henry Fielding, who each dedicated a poem to him. Although the available biographical information focuses on his political career, Dodington was also a poet himself. When Dodington was still a supporter of Walpole, he anonymously published a verse epistle to him titled "To the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole" in 1726. However, their friendship ended in 1740 after Walpole refused to bestow a noble title and Dodington began supporting another politician within Walpole's government. The poet then switched sides and managed to hold onto his influence until he eventually received the title of Baron Melcombe in 1761. Unfortunately, he died a year later after having written one of his last poems, "Verses Sent by Lord Melcombe to Dr. Young, Not Long Before His Lordship's Death."

This poem is a verse epistle, which is a letter written in the form of poetry, sent to his friend Edward Young, another poet who received Dodington's patronage. Dodington also sent a companion poem and written permission for Young to keep both poems with his own works for posthumous publication as a public acknowledgement of their friendship (Sanders 278). The companion poem, "Shorten Sail," is an ode that contains the poet's advice and blessings for his friend who kept the poems as requested. In 1854, they were published as one poem with Young's works in the second volume of *The Complete Works, Poetry and Prose, of the Rev. Edward Young*.

The eighteen-line verse epistle has a meter that could be either trochaic tetrameter or iambic tetrameter. As each line has seven syllables instead of the usual eight for a tetrameter, the base foot is ambiguous. The poem is a single verse paragraph that consists of rhyming couplets, with two pairs sharing the same rhyme, which creates the rhyme scheme aabbccddeeffggee hh.

Although the verse epistle begins with the friendship between Dodington and Young, the overall theme is religious advice on life. The poet was not known as a devout Christian, but the poem shares general Christian views on facing death.

### Further Reading

Bogart, Dan. "Political Party Representation and Electoral Politics in England and Wales, 1690-1747." *Social Science History*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2016, pp. 297–98.

Jones, Emrys D. "Houghton Hospitality: Representing Sociability and Corruption in Sir Robert Walpole's Britain." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2018, pp. 235–49.

### References

Hanham, A. A. "Dodington, George Bubb, Baron Melcombe (1690/91-1762), Politician and Diarist." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2009. DOI: 10.1093/ref:odnb/7752.

Sanders, Lloyd. *Patron and Place-Hunter: A Study of George Bubb Dodington, Lord Melcombe*, John Lane Company, 1919 pp. 166, 277–79.

## Verses Sent by Lord Melcombe to Dr. Young, Not Long before His Lordship's Death<sup>308</sup>

KIND companion of my youth,  
 Lov'd for genius, worth, and truth!  
 Take what friendship can impart,  
 Tribute of a feeling heart;  
 Take the muse's latest spark, 5  
 Ere<sup>309</sup> we drop into the dark.  
 He, who parts<sup>310</sup> and Virtue<sup>311</sup> gave,  
 Bade<sup>312</sup> thee look beyond the grave:  
 Genius<sup>313</sup> soars, and Virtue guides,  
 Where the love of God presides. 10  
 There's a gulph<sup>314</sup> 'twixt<sup>315</sup> us and God;  
 Let the gloomy path be trod:<sup>316</sup>  
 Why stand shivering on the shore;  
 Why not boldly venture o'er;  
 Where unerring<sup>317</sup> Virtue guides 15  
 Let us brave the winds and tides:  
 Safe, thro' seas of doubts and fears,  
 Rides the bark<sup>318</sup> which Virtue steers.

---

<sup>308</sup> *A Collection of Poems in Four Volumes. By Several Hands*, edited by George Pearch, ed. II, vol. I, 1770, p. 311. *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive*.

<sup>309</sup> *Ere*: before the indicated point in time.

<sup>310</sup> *Parts*: a person's character, intellectual traits, or ability.

<sup>311</sup> *Virtue*: a reference to the seven virtues, which contrast with the seven deadly sins. The biography *Patron and Place-Hunter: A Study of George Bubb Dodington, Lord Melcombe* capitalizes the last three occurrences of this word. I have capitalized all four occurrences for consistency.

<sup>312</sup> *Bade*: past tense of bid, to give an order to someone.

<sup>313</sup> *Genius*: in a pagan belief, a spirit who guides people during life and after death.

<sup>314</sup> *Gulph*: a variant spelling of gulf, an abyss.

<sup>315</sup> *'Twixt*: between.

<sup>316</sup> *Trod*: past tense of tread, to follow a path.

<sup>317</sup> *Unerring*: without error, leading to correct judgement.

<sup>318</sup> *Bark*: a boat.



[This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

© Ha Eun Lee, 2024