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A Study of John Pomfret's "The Choice": The Sources, the Appreciation, the Art, and the Influence of the Most Popular Poems During the Eighteenth Century

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by

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by Bernard V. Bernatovich

It has never been explained why Dr. Samuel Johnson said that "The Choice" (1700) by John Pomfret (1667-1702) was perhaps the most popular poem during the eighteenth century. This dissertation examines the sources, the subject matter, the art, and the influences of the poem to demonstrate that its wide reception was owing to its topical appeal and excellent expression.

The primary sources for "The Choice" are Horace's retirement works, especially Epode 2. A comparison of Pomfret's poem with other English verses reveals that Abraham Cowley's "The Wish" (1661) is perhaps the only native source, but no other retirement poem is so long or so comprehensive as Pomfret's.

The general description of the estate allowed Pomfret's audience to fancy a wild or a formal garden and a picturesque scene. The works of the Roman poets in his study were some of the most popular ancient writings during the century, and the general reference to unspecified excellent modern writers detracted neither from his own tastes nor from those of his readers. His care for the needy characterizes him as one of the benevolent men publicly honored and often portrayed in the literature of the time. Pomfret's admonition about the prudent use of wine reminded readers of the immoderate use of alcohol which caused so many problems in society.

Pomfret's two male friends are characterized by the Aristotelian intellectual and moral virtues and by an aversion to the Seven Deadly Sins. The description of his ladyfriend, who would afford him occasional companionship, but not
love, offers a charming model of virtue, envied by other women. His patriotism and loyalty to the king are probably designed to discourage civil and religious conflicts similar to those of the seventeenth century. His aversion to revenge is motivated by a desire to maintain a life of ease as he looks forward to a peaceable death and salvation.

Pomfret's verses are invariably decasyllabic, and he often substitutes other feet for iambics. Alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia add pleasant sounds, and the figurative language fittingly communicates his sentiments. He achieves emphasis through balanced expressions, skillfully structured sentences, and controlled tempo. A collation of the 1702 text with two earlier editions reveals that Pomfret revised his poem to improve the unity and to polish his verses.

John Bancks' "The Wish" (1730) parodies retirement poems, but not especially Pomfret's work. Sir Richard Blackmore's "The Retirement" (1718), an anonymous "The Wish" (1736), and the American William Livingston's "Philosophic Solitude" (1747) imitate the structure and some verses of Pomfret's poem. Benjamin Church's "The Choice" (1757) refines many of Pomfret's wishes and adapts more lines from the original than any other poet. However, this American poet displays much originality as he inverts his wish for retirement and seeks to live virtuously according to his present lot in life. Leigh Hunt's "'The Choice'" (1823), with some overt references to Pomfret, describes his own retirement in a manner more detailed than in his source.
VITA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Scholars generally agree that the works of the Reverend John Pomfret (1667-1702) were some of the most popular in eighteenth-century England and that "The Choice" (1700) was his most widely read poem. The most famous critical comment on this work is Dr. Samuel Johnson's statement: "Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's Choice."\(^1\) Prefacing "The Choice" in an anthology edited by Robert Southey is the brief comment: "Why is Pomfret the most popular of the English poets? The fact is certain, and the solution would be useful."\(^2\) But Southey does not speculate on the solution, nor has anyone within the eighteenth century or since then established the reasons for Pomfret's popularity and its extent. The following study of "The Choice" examines documented evidence from within the eighteenth century to determine the place of the poem in


English literary history, its sources, its influence, and the causes for its wide reception.

In 1727, Jonathan Swift denied any knowledge of Pomfret and his works. Among a collection of Swift's miscellaneous notes, he once wrote:

At a Bookseller's Shop, some Time ago, I saw a Book with this Title: Poems by the *Author of the Choice. Not enduring to read a dozen Lines, I asked the Company with me, whether they had ever seen the Book, or heard of the Poem from whence the Author denominated himself? They were all as ignorant as I. But I find it common with these small Dealers in Wit and Learning to give themselves a Title from their first Adventure, as Don Quixot usually did from his last. This ariseth from that great Importance which every Man supposeth himself to be of.

*The Reverend Mr. Pomfret, a Dissenting Minister.*

Swift was indeed ignorant of Pomfret and any renown which the poet might have had, for Swift erroneously footnoted "the Author" as a "Dissenting Minister." Swift no doubt had heard the name Pomfret and confused John with Samuel Pomfret (1650–1722), who, according to "Philalethes," John's earliest biographer, was of "[John's] Surname, though not in any way related to him, a Dissenting Teacher, who died not long ago."
The fact that Swift was unfamiliar with Pomfret and that Philalethes did not comment on the poet's fame suggests that "The Choice" was not widely acclaimed in the first part of the eighteenth century. One might also question the extent of Pomfret's audience and reputation in light of Dr. Johnson's interest in him. Prefacing the life of Isaac Watts, Johnson remarks that he himself is responsible for the "pleasure or weariness" which his readers "may find in the perusal of Blackmore, Watts, Pomfret, and Yalden," for the works of these poets "were by my recommendation inserted in this collection" of the Works of the English Poets. It would appear, then, that by 1779, the year in which the Works, with the Lives, was first published, the several booksellers employing Johnson did not think enough of Pomfret to include him, except after the counsel of the famous biographer and critic.

On the other hand, the Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature lists fourteen editions of Pomfret's collected works between 1699 and 1790, and the title page of a 1795 edition of his poems reads "The Sixteenth Edition, Corrected." Also concerning his popularity, three statements


7John Pomfret, Poems upon Several Occasions (16th ed.; Benwick: W. Phorson, 1795).
written after 1750 and a comment related to Sir William Temple suggest that Pomfret was well known by the mid-eighteenth century. An article written in 1757 by an anonymous author says that Sir William was perhaps the model for Pomfret's retired gentleman. This article describes certain relationships between Jonathan Swift and Mrs. Hester Johnson. A description of Mrs. Johnson, who was Swift's Stella, brings together Temple and Pomfret:

Were I to attempt to describe her [Mrs. Johnson] at full length, I might be thought guilty of the highest adulation, so extraordinary was the woman that was destined to please Sir Wm Temple. Pomfret, in his little poem called the choice [sic] is said to have given an exact description of Moor Park; to have delineated Sir Wm in the account of his own fancy and taste; and to have taken his picture of the female friend and companion from Mrs. Johnson; to that piece therefore do I recommend my reader.8

The cogency of these comments receives careful consideration following a topical analysis of Pomfret's poem, in Chapter VII, after the reader has become more familiar with all of the implications of the similarities between Temple's life and the plan of retirement in "The Choice." An important point here, in this survey of Pomfret's reputation, however, is that the author of the foregoing comments parenthetically but pointedly refers to Pomfret only by his last name, as if he and his poem were well known.

Another statement on Pomfret's reputation is more

decisive than the preceding one. Theophilus Cibber, in a brief biography of Pomfret, dated 1753, states:

This Gentleman's works are held in very great esteem by the common readers of poetry; it is thought as unashionable amongst people of inferior life, not to be possessed of the poems of Pomfret, as amongst persons of taste not to have the works of Pope in their libraries. The subjects upon which Pomfret wrote were popular, his versification is far from being unmusical, and as there is little force of thinking in his writings, they are level to the capacities of those who admire them.9

Dr. Johnson also comments on the topics of Pomfret's poems:

He published his poems in 1699; and has been always the favourite of that class of readers, who without vanity or criticism seek only their own amusement.

His Choice exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions and equal to common expectations; such a state as affords plenty and tranquility, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's Choice.

In his other poems there is an easy volubility; the pleasure of smooth metre is afforded to the ear, and the mind is not oppressed with ponderous or entangled with intricate sentiment. He pleases many, and he who pleases many must have some species of merit.10

Near the end of the century, Robert Anderson, the editor of an anthology, notes:

The poems of Pomfret have always been held in very great esteem by the common readers of poetry; by whom the merit of every poetical production must ultimately be decided. When tried by a standard that reconciles criticism with common sense, Pomfret has something to fear; but the decision, however unfavourable it may be, will not diminish his reputation; for, though he has little vigour of

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thought or energy of expression, the subjects he writes upon are eminently popular, and his versification sufficiently smooth and musical for that numerous class of readers, who, without vanity or criticism, seek their own amusement.11

In this last passage, Anderson considers Pomfret's thought and expression to be lacking in power, a point on which Anderson differs from Johnson and Cibber. But Anderson agrees with the other two critics concerning the poet's versification, to the extent of even borrowing some exact phrases from Johnson. The important consensus, however, is that all three remark Pomfret's wide acceptance among general readers.

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) in his poem entitled "The 'Choice'" (1823) opens his imitation of Pomfret's work with a direct allusion and compliment to his own source:

I have been reading Pomfret's Choice this spring,
A pretty kind of—sort of—kind of thing,
Not much a verse, and poem none at all,
Yet, as they say, extremely natural.
And yet I know not. There's a skill in pies,
In raising crusts as well as galleries;
And he's the poet, more or less, who knows
The charm that hallows the least thing from prose,
And dresses it in its mild singing clothes.

... Our trivial poet hit upon a theme
Which all men love, an old, sweet household dream:
Pray, reader, what is yours?—I know full well
What sort of home should grace my garden-bell.12


The extent of Pomfret's influence on Hunt will be considered later in this study, but, for now, the foregoing verses by the imitator serve to illustrate that he and certain readers were charmed by Pomfret's expression and subject matter. Hunt's comments, as well as those of critics previously cited, therefore, imply that Pomfret's poem was one of the most popular works of the eighteenth century.

After Hunt's time, Pomfret attracted little commentary from the only other three critics during the nineteenth century to have arisen in this study of "The Choice." An anonymous writer in the Quarterly Review, in 1823, attests to Pomfret's reputation by comparing the wide reception of his works to those of authors whose popularity in the eighteenth century has never been doubted:

Defoe wrote his Religious Courtship to exhibit in a familiar manner the unhappy consequences of marriage between persons of opposite persuasions in religion. It is composed with his characteristic talent, and continued till within these few years to be one of those books which were printed on coarse paper for popular sale, and to be found at fairs and country shops with Pomfret's Poems, Harvey's Meditations, and the Death of Abel.13

These statements sound very much like those which make cursory reference to Pomfret's reputation; perhaps they are by the same anonymous reviewer:

Pomfret's poems are not to be found, as they were five-

13 "Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time: With Suppressed Passages of the First Volume," Quarterly Review, XXIX:57 (1823), 180. There are no italics for titles in this source.
and-twenty years ago, always on sale at the stalls of itinerant vendors and at country booksellers, printed upon coarse paper and in sheepskin binding, in company with Robinson Crusoe, the Pilgrim's Progress, Young's Night Thoughts and Harvey's Meditations; but during the whole of the eighteenth century no other volume of poems was so often reprinted, or held in such popular estimation.\textsuperscript{14}

This reviewer's mention of the often-printed works of the previous century, as well as the places where everyone had access to books, suggests certainly that Pomfret was among the most popular writers. The tone of "five-and-twenty years ago" also implies that the waning of Pomfret's popularity is within the reviewer's own lifetime. He concludes his judgments on the poet, noting: "This is, indeed, a rare, perhaps, a singular case, of longlived reputation, founded neither upon desert, nor mis-desert, but preserved by prescription among low printers and provincial booksellers, who kept the book continually on the market."\textsuperscript{15} The reviewer, by attributing Pomfret's large audience to men in the booktrade, detracts somewhat from the poet's merits. Yet the reviewer's remarks do not allow one to infer why the booksellers decided to continue to include Pomfret's works with those of other popular writers, even though his esteem was "founded neither upon desert, nor mis-desert." These statements, nevertheless, are valuable for having established that Pomfret's poems were frequently printed.

\textsuperscript{14}"Collective Works of the Late Dr. Sayers," Quarterly Review, XXXV:69 (1827), 189-190. This source has no italics.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., XXXV, 190.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), while explaining why she has been unable to include all the English poets in her brief history of English verse, says: "What, place for Pomfret's platitudes, and no place for Shakespeare's divine sonnets?" Later in this work, as she lists as "elegant writers" Thomas Parnell, John Gay, and John Philips who tried to please everyone, Mrs. Browning says of Pomfret: "There was Pomfret, not our 'choice,' the concentrate essence of namby-pambyism." Nowhere does she cite any of Pomfret's platitudes or explain his namby-pambyism, but perhaps she is expressing a nineteenth-century attitude towards him which might have held him in low esteem. Even if she were doing so, or even if it were her personal taste which has led her to this judgment, research has been unable to discover any criticism on Pomfret's reputation in the nineteenth century.

16Elizabeth Barrett Browning, The Book of Poets, in The Complete Works of Mrs. E. B. Browning, ed. Charlotte Porter and Helen A Clarke (New York: George D. Sproul, 1901), VI, 241 and 295. "Namby Pamby" in the eighteenth century was an expression which was supposed to represent a child's efforts to say the name of Ambrose Philips (1674-1749), the metrics and sentiments of some of whose poems Swift and others mocked. Philips addressed these works, not to children, as their lightness might suggest, but to adolescents. For example:

Dimply damsel, sweetly smiling,
All caressing, none beguiling,
Bud of beauty, fairly blowing,
Every charm to nature owing.

From other vague references to Pomfret in the last century, one must infer that his reputation must have been low, if not non-existent, for, first of all, as noted earlier, Southey says that he knows no explanation for the poet's popularity, so that by 1892, George Birkbeck Hill can only say: "Let me suggest to you that if any one in your hearing foretells immortality for some writer for whom you have no relish, you should ask him at once whether he has read Pomfret's 'Choice.'"17 Hill then cites the first eighteen lines of the poem, confessing ignorance of why it had been so popular. Hill, perhaps more than anyone, would have commented further on the poem had he found any criticism on Pomfret, for Hill's is the best and the standard edition of Dr. Johnson's Lives, which includes the statement that the poem was the most widely received verse of its own century. Hill's annotations to Johnson's "Pomfret" reflect only further bewilderment, citing Swift and Southey, both of whom could not explain the popularity of the poem.

The only evaluation of "The Choice" in the twentieth century is E. E. Kellett's brief essay, which attempts to abstract a formula from Pomfret's verses which would enable one to write a popular work. Kellett attributes the fame of the poem to form, tone, and subject matter. The critic says

the poem was popular because, first of all, it imitates the sentiments of Horace's Epode 2, Martial's Epigram 10. 47, and Abraham Cowley's "The Wish" and because the reappearance of thoughts on rural retirement assured Pomfret a wide audience. Kellett also notes that "The Choice" is in "smooth monotonous couplets . . . a tepidly epigrammatic form," the approved measure of the time. The critic adds that an eighteenth-century reader "was neither startled nor distracted but quietly beguiled into imagining that he was thinking." A third reason to which Kellett attributes the popularity of Pomfret's poem is its "sound, but not too ostentatious piety," as he alludes, no doubt, to the poet's recognition of Providence as the source of all blessings and to his occasional paraphrase of Scripture. The final cause which Kellett says made "The Choice" popular is the "long and elaborate compliment to women," which charmed Pomfret's female readers, "who saw their own image" in the description of the ideal ladyfriend. These comments and their illustrations, from the only extensive criticism ever written on the poem, receive consideration throughout this study of Pomfret.

Since Kellett's essay on "The Choice," the only instances in which Pomfret's name arises are in relation to verses on nature and the countryside by other poets. For example, C. E. de Haas briefly refers to "The Choice" to

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illustrate how a few of its early lines describe a rural setting in a general manner, as he extensively examines some works by John Philips to exemplify a detailed treatment of nature.19 Bonamy Dobrée, Donald F. Bond, and George Sherburn have briefly noted that "The Choice" has elements which place it, along with the works of Anne Finch, Charles Cotton, and other poets of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, in the Horatian tradition of rural retirement, an idea which is investigated in the next chapter of this study of Pomfret's poem.20 Other literary historians merely repeat the same idea, giving more attention to the major writers of Pomfret's time.

A synthesis of the preceding critical statements on Pomfret's reputation indicates that he was one of the most popular poets of the eighteenth century owing to the various topics and the versification of his works. "The Choice," however, was his most famous poem. To make clear to the modern reader the nature of the poet's other works, a description of them is in order.

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Of Pomfret's twenty-one poems, four are love pastorals, and five lyrics have love for their theme. Among his other poems, two are occasional verses: one is a pastoral elegy on Queen Mary's death, and the other, composed in Latin and translated into English, is an elegy on a noble woman. Five of Pomfret's works have purely religious themes, such as "Upon the Divine Attributes" and "Dies Novissima." Two poems are on contemporary events: "Reason," on the conflicts within the Church generated by the dogma of the Trinity, and "Cruelty and Lust," a poignant narrative on the ruin of a young wife trying to save her husband's life, by a commander in the Western Rebellion of 1685. "The Choice," a poem on rural retirement, finally rounds out the list of Pomfret's collected works. These twenty-one poems on various topics and in various measures probably afforded booksellers an attractive collection of verses to please the learned and the general readers throughout the eighteenth century.

Two problems have arisen from a few bibliographical notes to Pomfret's works. In The Oxford History of English Literature, Bonamy Dobrée credits the poet with the authorship of An Epistle to Charles, Earl of Dorset (1690) and The Sceptical Muse (1699). An Epistle to Charles, however, is probably the poem composed by Charles Montagu, Earl of Halifax (1661-1715), published twice in 1690 and then in 1702 and 1716; An Epistle to the Right Honourable Charles, Earl of

21Dobrée, p. 663.  22Bateson, OHEL, II, 282.

The other problem concerns a volume of poems which Pomfret is said to have published in 1699, a year before "The Choice" first appeared. In his sketch of Pomfret's life, Theophilus Cibber says: "Mr. Pomfret published his poems in the year 1699, to which he has prefixed a very modest and sensible preface."23 In his Biographical Dictionary, Alexander Chalmers seems to have relied on Cibber, for he too says: "A volume of [Pomfret's] poems was published by himself in 1699, with a very modest and sensible preface."24 These brief biographical citations notwithstanding, extensive searches for a clearer and more certain description of this volume of poems have not discovered any collected works before 1702 and no single work before "The Choice."

On the other hand, it seems certain that Pomfret at least intended to publish some works in 1699, for every edition of his collected poems includes the same preface with

23Cibber, III, 220-221.

the date 1699 at the end. The two poems attributed to Pomfret and the early collections have no bearing on "The Choice." They are only mentioned here, first of all, to round out the sketch of Pomfret's literary activity and, more importantly, to provide some background for the preface, which will soon be considered in relation to the poet's attitude towards his works and audience.

So little is known about Pomfret's life that the few events of which his biographers are certain cast little light on "The Choice" and his other works. The earliest biography of Pomfret is a four-page commentary, mentioned above, dated 1724, by Philalethes, who also introduced two previously unpublished poems found "among some other of [Pomfret's] Papers of a private Nature, in the Custody of an intimate Friend." Dr. Johnson's "Pomfret" is based on Philalethes' account, but is more accurate in citing dates and has more critical commentary than any other account of Pomfret's life. A short entry in Notes and Queries, in 1892, lists certain dates in the poet's life, citing official records. Other biographical


26Philalethes' statements are inaccurate in some cases. For one, he says that Pomfret died at twenty-six, whereas official records show that he was thirty-five. Nevertheless, Philalethes is the first to relate the anecdote on Pomfret and his bishop, accounted in the text below.

27Daniel Hipwell, "Rev. John Pomfret (1667-1702), Poet," Notes and Queries, 8th series, II (July 9, 1892), 27.
sketches are based on previous ones or on other records.

John Pomfret was born in 1667 at Luton, Bedford County. His father, Thomas, Vicar of Luton School (1666-1679), had married Catherin Dobson in 1661. After attending Bedford grammar school, John entered Queen's College, Cambridge, in 1680 and graduated B.A. in 1684 and M.A. in 1698. He took holy orders in 1687 and became curate of Maulden in the same year, under his father, who had been rector from 1683 to 1694. John himself then became rector in 1695 and remained so until his death in 1702. He married Elizabeth Wingate at Luton in 1692.

Pomfret wrote poetry at least as early as 1694, when he composed and dated a pastoral elegy upon the death of Queen Mary, although Philalethes asserts that Pomfret wrote most of his poems at Cambridge. This statement implies that he could have composed something before 1684, since he was at Cambridge from 1680 to 1684, although he returned for his


30Venn and Venn, "Thomas Pomfrett[sic]," ibid.

31Venn and Venn, "John Pomfret." 32Hipwell, II, 27.

master's degree in 1698. In June, 1702, after his appointment as rector at Milbrook, Bedford, he went to London to seek a third and a more comfortable living from Bishop Henry Compton. Philalethes reports, however, that out of malice some men misrepresented Pomfret's personal character to the bishop concerning lines 156-159 of "The Choice":

And as I near approach'd the Verge of Life,
Some kind Relation, (for I'd have no Wife)
Shou'd take upon him all my Worldly Care,
While I did for a better State prepare.

Pomfret's enemies led the bishop to infer from these lines that the poet preferred a mistress to a wife, but soon realizing that Pomfret had been married for ten years, the bishop discovered the slanderous scheme. Pomfret, however, caught small pox and died in November of the same year, at the age of thirty-five. He was buried at Maulden a few weeks later, on December 1.

Pomfret's only surviving son, also named John, born in August, 1702, was Rouge Pursuivant of Arms from 1725 until his death in 1751.

Pomfret's attitudes towards his readers can be related as briefly as his biography. His only prose work appears to be the preface which is printed before each edition of his collected works, in which he good-naturedly asks for justice.

34Philalethes, p. v. 35Hipwell, II, 27.
from those who would judge his poems. This preface invites special criticism of "The Choice," for this poem is his most popular work and always immediately follows the preface, even in anthologies which have reprinted his verses.

In the first paragraph of the preface, Pomfret says he will not lead prospective readers to believe that the urging of friends led to the publication of his poems. He states that he will leave to the readers' own opinions why these works have appeared. In the second paragraph, the poet says that poems should not need an expressed reason for being printed, as he hopes that readers with good judgment will excuse minor faults and that those with "ill-nature" will not be too harsh in calling attention to these same faults. In the third paragraph, Pomfret states that the only benefit arising from a collection of verses being dedicated to a patron is that a patron pays money, whereas the same collection not dedicated attracts praise if it has merit. He adds that any poem must stand on its own merits, for no matter who might praise it, the prestige of a patron cannot cover up its faults or add to its excellences.37

The final paragraph of Pomfret's preface is significant enough to cite in its entirety, for in it the poet expresses his intention that his verses should appeal not merely to many readers, but that his lines should please mainly those with 

good judgment:

To please ev'ry one wou'd be a New Thing, and to write so as to please no body wou'd be as New; For even Quarles and Withers have their Admirers. The Author is not so fond of Fame as to desire it from the Injudicious Many, nor of so mortify'd a Temper not to Wish it from the Discerning Few. 'Tis not the Multitude of Applauses, but the Good Sense of the Applauders, which establishes a valuable Reputation: And if a Rymer, or a Congreve say, 'tis Well; he will not be at all Solicitous how great the Majority may be to the contrary.38

Pomfret assures himself that his verses will please at least some readers, since even Francis Quarles (1592-1644) and George Wither (1588-1667) are still being read.39 Pomfret seeks a reputation, though not very ambitiously, which will arise from the judgments of those with taste, not from popular acclaim, being satisfied if critics as eminent as Thomas Rymer and William Congreve approve of his efforts. Contrary to the poet's expectations, however, the paucity of critical commentary which appears to have been made on his performance

38Ibid., p. iv.

39According to his most recent editor, George Wither (often spelled "Withers") was known throughout the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries mainly for his didactic verse. "His name was a synonym for a prosing preacher, imperturbably persistent, notoriously ineffectual," says Frank Sidgwick, ed., "Preface" to George Wither, The Poetry of George Wither (London: A. H. Bullen, 1902; New York: AMS Press, 1968), I, xlv-xlvi. Francis Quarles, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had the reputation of being a religious enthusiast, although he had always been a Royalist and an Anglican. He was so inept at explaining religious and political ideas in satires and pamphlets which attacked other sects that orthodox readers and churchmen accused him of being anti-Royalist and an enthusiast himself. See Masoodul Hasan, Francis Quarles: A Study of His Life and Poetry (Aligarh, India: Aligarh Muslim University Press, 1966), pp. 17-18.
implies that his appeal to a mass of readers led to his renown. Moreover, neither Rymer, Congreve, nor any other major critic of the eighteenth century, except Dr. Johnson, seems to have commented on "The Choice" or Pomfret's other poems. On the other hand, the poet's mention of Rymer and Congreve is considered a clue, in Chapter IV below, to determining which modern writers he might include in his library in the poem.

While Pomfret leaves the judgment of his verses to his readers, certain events in his life suggest that he himself had a reliable basis for criticizing and creating poetry. First of all, he studied Latin and Greek writers even before he went to Cambridge, where his ecclesiastical studies acquainted him with religious and philosophical themes for some of his works. Students at Cambridge copied a few lines of Latin poetry and translated them into English, adding commentaries on the grammar, the rhetoric, and the sentiments. In "The Choice," Pomfret includes Horace, Virgil, Ovid, and Juvenal among his favorite authors, and many thoughts in the entire work manifest that his model was Horace's Second Epode and at least four other works by this Roman. Pomfret might have acquired this preference for Horace at Cambridge, where many instructors suggested that a student become familiar with a favorite poet by carefully studying his sentiments
rather than his exact words. Pomfret's education and some of his works, therefore, indicate that he undoubtedly knew the classics well, a fact which will prove significant in this study of the popularity and the art of "The Choice."

Besides Pomfret's classical background, his works also manifest his acquaintance with the tradition of English poetry. First of all, his pastoral poems reveal his knowledge of a literary form of classical origins, still imitated and refined from the Renaissance until his own day. Moreover, four works, three of which he calls Pindaric essays and one a Pindaric ode, suggest his familiarity with the works of Abraham Cowley (1618-1667), who attempted Pindaric forms in some of his verses. It is also indicated later in this study that Pomfret knew Cowley's retirement poem entitled "The Wish."

In summary, sparse but weighty evidence implies that John Pomfret was among the most popular poets of eighteenth-century England. At least one explanation for his wide reception is the variety of themes, both sacred and profane, and the variety of forms popular during the century in which his works first appeared. Moreover, although little is known of Pomfret's private and literary activities, the classical content of his higher education and his awareness of the tradition of the poetry of retirement prepared him for his unique treatment of "The Choice."

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The continuation of this study of "The Choice" conveniently structures itself on three successive levels. The first, covered in the next chapter, establishes, through a comparison of some of Horace's works with "The Choice," that Pomfret has borrowed extensively from the Roman's poems. The next level, covered in the third chapter, examines the tradition of retirement poetry in England up to 1700 to provide a basis from which to judge the relation of "The Choice" to this tradition. The remaining chapters analyze the text of the poem, its influences, and its art to speculate on why it was said to be the most popular poem of the eighteenth century.
CHAPTER II

THE HORATIAN BACKGROUND OF "THE CHOICE"

The text of "The Choice" used throughout this study is the one published in 1702: [John Pomfret], "The Choice," Miscellany Poems on Several Occasions. By the Author of "The Choice" (London: John Place, 1702). This edition has been collated with two earlier ones in order to establish as closely as possible the poet's final approved version. According to the catalogues of the British Museum and the Library of Congress, "The Choice" went through three editions by the same printer the year in which it first appeared. The second and the third editions have not been available for this study, but the first edition has: [John Pomfret], The Choice. A Poem. By a Person of Quality (London: J. Nutt, 1700). This text is referred to hereafter as the 1700A edition. The other edition used in the collation below was issued in Scotland in 1701: [John Pomfret], The Choice, or Wish; A Poem. Written by a Person of Quality (Edinburgh: n.p., 1701). It would appear that all of Pomfret's works which were published during his lifetime appeared anonymously, although at least his detractors and Bishop Compton knew before the poet's death that he had written "The Choice."

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The 1702 edition should be considered the standard text because it is probably the last version Pomfret prepared for publication. Since he was in London for many months before he died there in November, 1702, he probably arranged personally to have his collected works published, and he might have even seen them through the presses. The other reasons for using this edition arise from the supposition that he amended the poem before his death, for the changes are improvements on passages in the 1700A and the 1701 texts. In establishing the 1702 version as the best text, the insignificant variants between it and the other two editions as to capitalization of nouns and some adjectives, as well as comma usage, have been ignored, as have the spelling of "I'de," "could," and "should" in the 1701 edition for "I'd," "cou'd," and "shou'd" in the 1700A and the 1702 versions. The fact that the emendations incorporated in the 1702 text make the poem more even in versification and more unified in sense than these other two editions is readily apparent.

If Heav'n the Grateful Liberty wou'd give,
That I might Chuse my Method how to Live:
And all those Hours, propitious Fate should¹ lend,
In blissful Ease, and Satisfaction spend.

Near some fair Town, I'd have a private Seat, 5
Built Uniform, not Little, nor too Great:
Better, if on a Rising Ground it stood;

¹Line 3: "should": spelled "should" also in line 16 below, but "shou'd" in all other instances in this 1702 edition.
Fields on this side, on that a Neighbouring\(^2\) Wood.  
It shou'd within no other Things contain,  
But what were\(^3\) Useful, Necessary, Plain:  
Methinks 'tis Nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure  
The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture.  
A little Garden, Grateful to the Eye,  
And a Cool Rivulet run murm'ring by:  
On whose delicious Banks a stately Row  
Of Shady Limes, or Sycamores should grow.  
At th' End of which a silent Study plac'd,  
Shou'd be with all the Noblest Authors Grac'd.\(^4\)  
Horace, and Virgil, in whose Mighty Lines  
Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning shines.  
Sharp Juvenal, and Am'rous Ovid too,  
Who all the Turns of Loves\(^5\) soft Passion knew;  
He that with Judgment reads his charming Lines,  
In which strong Art, with stronger Nature joyns,  
Must grant his Fancy does the best Excel:  
His Thoughts so tender, and Exprest so well.  
With all those Moderns, Men of steady Sense,  
Esteem'd for Learning, and for Eloquence.  
In some of these, as Fancy shou'd Advise,  
I'd always take my Morning Exercise:  
For sure no Minutes bring us more Content,  
Than those in Pleasing, Useful Studies spent.

I'd have a Clear, and Competent Estate,  
That I might Live Gentilely, but not Great.  
As much as I cou'd moderately spend,  
A little more, sometimes t'oblige a Friend.  
Nor shou'd the Sons of Poverty Repine  
Too much at Fortune, they shou'd Taste of mine;

\(^2\) Line 8: "Neighbouring": 1700A has "Neighb'ring," with syncope to attain ten syllables for a pentameter line. But see infra, line 46.

\(^3\) Line 10: 1700A: "was" for "were." The copula "were" now agrees with plural "Things;" line 9.

\(^4\) Line 18: 1700A: "Shou'd with the Noblest Authors there be grac'd," 1700; "Should be with the most noble Authors Grac'd." But "all" in the 1702 edition attains an emphasis lacking in these other two versions.

And all, that Objects of true Pity were,
Shou'd be Reliev'd with what my Wants cou'd spare: 40
For that, our Maker has too largely giv'n,
Shou'd be return'd, in Gratitude, to Heav'n.
A frugal Plenty shou'd my Table spread;
With Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes Fed:
Enough to Satisfy, and something more
To Feed the Stranger, and the Neighb'ring Poor.
Strong Meat Indulges Vice, and Pomp'ring Food
Creates Diseases, and Inflames the Blood.
But what's sufficient to make Nature strong,
And the bright Lamp of Life continue long,
I'd freely take, and as I did Possess,
The Bounteous Author of my Plenty Bless.

I'd have a little Vault, but always stor'd
With the Best Wines, each Vintage cou'd afford. 9
Wine whets the Wit, improves its Native force,
And gives a pleasant Flavour to Discourse:
By making all our Spirits Debonair,
Throws off the Lees, the Sediment of Care.
But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends,
May be Debauch'd, and serve Ignoble Ends:
So, but too oft, the Grapes' refreshing Juice
Does many Mischievous Effects produce.

6Line 39: "Pitty" is spelled "Pity" in 1700A and 1701.

7Line 44: 1700A: "healthful." In Pomfret's time, the distinction between "healthful" and "healthy" was not rigidly prescribed.

8Line 47: "Pomp'ring": a misspelling of "Pamp'ring," which in 1700A and 1701 is "pampering," making eleven syllables in the line.

9Lines 53-54: 1700A and 1701:
I'd have a little Cellar, Cool, and Neat,
With Humming Ale, and Virgin Wine Repleat.
The exclusion of ale in the 1702 edition promotes unity in the poem, for the succeeding lines mention only wine.

10Line 59: "Heaven": pronounced as two syllables here for a ten-syllable line, but in all other instances in this 1702 edition "Heav'n," pronounced as one syllable.

11Line 61: "Grapes": this word has no apostrophe also in 1700A and 1701.
My House shou'd no such rude Disorders know,
As from high Drinking consequently flow.
Nor wou'd I use, what was so kindly giv'n,
To the Dishonour of Indulgent Heav'n.
If any Neighbour came, he shou'd be Free,
Us'd with Respect, and not uneasy be,
In my Retreat, or to himself, or me.
What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give,
All Men may with Impunity receive;
But the least swerving from their Rule's too much:
For, what's forbidden us, 'tis Death to touch.

That Life might be more Comfortable yet,
And all my Joys Refin'd, Sincere, and Great;
I'd Chuse two Friends, whose Company wou'd be
A great Advance to my Felicity.
Well Born, of Humours suited to my own;
Discreet, and Men, as well as Books, have known.
Brave, Gen'rous, Witty, and exactly Free
From loose Behaviour, or Formality.
Airy, and Prudent, Merry, but not Light;
Quick in Discerning, and in Judging right.
Secret they shou'd be, Faithful to their Trust;
In heas'ning Cool, Strong, Temperate, and Just.
Obliging, Open, without Huffing Brave,
Brisk in Gay Talking, and in Sober, Grave.
Close in Dispute, but not Tenacious, try'd
By Solid Reason, and let that Decide.
Not prone to Lust, Revenge, or Envious Hate:
Nor busy Medlers with Intreagues of State.
Strangers to Slander, and sworn Foes to Spight:
Not Quarrelsome, but Stout enough to Fight.
Loyal, and Pious, Friends to Caesar, true,
As Dying Martyrs, to their Maker too.
In their Society, I cou'd not miss
A Permanent, Sincere, Substantial Bliss.

Wou'd Bounteous Heav'n once more Indulge, I'd choose,
(For who wou'd so much Satisfaction loose,
As Witty Nymphs, in Conversation, give,)
Near some Obliging, Modest Fair to live;
For there's that Sweetness in a Female Mind,
Which in a Man's we cannot hope to find:12
That by a Secret, but a Pow'rful, Art
Winds up the Springs of Life, and does impart
Fresh Vital Heat to the Transported Heart.

12Line 103: 1700A: "Which in a Man's we cannot find," an iambic tetrameter line, whereas all other verses are pentameter. The addition of "hope to" makes this verse pentameter.
I'd have her Reason all her Passions sway;  
Easy in Company, in Private Gay;  
Goy to a Fop, to the Deserving Free;  
Still Constant to her self, and Just to me.  
A Soul she should have, for Great Actions fit;  
Prudence, and Wisdom to direct her Wit;  
Courage to look bold Danger in the Face,  
No Fear, but only to be Proud, or Base;  
Quick to Advise, by an Emergence prest,  
To give good Counsel, or to take the best.  
I'd have th' Expression of her Thoughts be such,  
She might not seem Reserve'd, nor talk too much;  
That shews a want of Judgment and of Sense:  
More than Enough is but Impertinence.  
Her Conduct Regular, her Mirth Refin'd,  
Civil to Strangers, to her Neighbours kind.  
Averse to Vanity, Revenge, and Pride,  
In all the Methods of Deceit untry'd.  
So Faithful to her Friend, and good to all,  
No Censure might upon her Actions fall:  
Then wou'd e'en Envy be compell'd to say,  
She goes the least of Woman-kind Astray.  

To this Fair Creature I'd sometimes Retire;  
Her Conversation wou'd new Joys inspire;  
Give Life an Edge so keen, no surly Care  
Would venture to Assault my Soul, or dare  
Near my Retreat to hide one secret Snare.  
But so Divine, so Noble a Repast  
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste.  
For Highest Cordials all their Virtue loose,  
By a too frequent and to bold an Use:

13Line 107: "all": 1700A has "and." The addition of "all" is important, for in the succeeding verses, the lady does not sway between reason and the passions, since reason controls them, as in "In Reas'ning Cool" (line 85) and "try'd / By Solid Reason" in disputes (lines 88-89).  
1701: "Passion: sway" for "Passions sway" above, perhaps to avoid the juncture of s's, but the sense demands the plural, "Passions," since various passions are described in the succeeding lines.  
14Line 132: "Would": spelled thus here, but in all other instances in this 1702 edition "wou'd."  
15Line 137: "to": a misspelling for "too." The spelling is correct in 1700A and 1701.
And what wou'd Cheer the Spirits in Distress;
Ruines our Health, when taken to Excess.

I'd be concerned in no Litigious Jar,
Belov'd by all, not vainly Popular.
What e'er Assistance I had Pow'r to bring
T'Oblige my Country, or to Serve my King,
When e're they Call'd, I'd readily afford
My Tongue, my Pen, my Counsel, or my Sword.
Law Suits I'd shun, with as much studious Care,
As I wou'd Dens where hungry Lyons are:
And rather put up Injuries; than be
A Plague to him who'd be a Plague to me.
I value Quiet at a Price too great,
To give for my Revenge so dear a Rate:
For what do we, by all our Bustle, gain,
But Counterfeit Delight, for real Pain?

If Heav'n a Date of many Years wou'd give,
Thus I'd in Pleasure, Ease, and Plenty live.
And as I near approach'd the Verge of Life,
Some kind Relation, (for I'd have no Wife)
Shou'd take upon him all my Worldly Care,
While I did for a better State prepare.
Then I'd not be with any Trouble vex'd;
Nor have the Ev'ning of my days perplex'd.
But by a silent, and a peaceful Death,
Without a Sigh, resign my Aged Breath:
And when committed to the Dust, I'd have
Few Tears, but Friendly, dropt into my Grave.
Then wou'd my Exit so propitious be;
All Men wou'd wish to Live, and Dye like me.

Horace's Epode 2 is usually considered the source for
"The Choice," but Miss Maren-Sofie Røstvig in The Happy Man
says that in Martial's Epigram 10. 47, "one readily recog-
nizes the origin, and inspiration of Pomfret's 'The Choice.'" Since Miss Røstvig has written the only extensive study of

16For example, Dobrée, p. 145; Kellett, p. 173.

17Maren-Sofie Røstvig, The Happy Man: Studies in the
Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal, Vol. I: 1600-1700 (2d
English retirement poetry, her remark should be carefully considered. Martial's poem follows:

Vitam quae faciunt beatiorem, iucundissime Martialis, haec sunt: res non parta labore sed relictæ; non ingratus ager, focus perennis; lis numquam, toga rara, mens quieta; vires ingenuæ, salubre corpus; prudens simplicitas, pares amici, convictus facilis, sine arte mensa; nox non ebria sed soluta curis, non tristis torus et tamen pudicus; somnus qui faciat breves tenebras; quod sis esse velis nihilque malis; summum nec metuas diem nec optes.  

The translation reads:

The things that make life happier, most genial Martial, are these: possessions not acquired by labor, but bequeathed; fields not unpleasant, an ever-blazing hearth; no lawsuit, the toga seldom worn, a quiet mind; a free-man's strength, a healthy body; prudence with candor, friends like oneself, good-natured guests, a plain table; nights not spent in wine, but free from cares; a wife not prudish and yet chaste; sleep such as makes the darkness brief. Be content with what you are, and desire no change; neither fear your last day, nor wish for it.

Pomfret and Martial enumerate basically the same elements for a life of contentment. Both poets would choose a rural setting, health, simple food, and no overindulgence in wine. They would also shun lawsuits, have only a few close friends, and not be closely involved with many people. Such a method of living would afford these poets freedom from cares and

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insure a peaceful death. Their plans for happy living differ only slightly. Martial would support himself on an inheritance, whereas Pomfret does not mention any source of income, saying only that his means would be moderate. Martial would have a wife, but Pomfret would only enjoy the company of a lady who lived near his estate.

The brevity of Martial's work and the length of Pomfret's, at first glance, might imply that Pomfret has expanded Martial's thoughts to particularize his own specific tastes for a retired life. But no further implication, beyond these remarkable similarities, suggests that Pomfret has used Martial as a source. Martial is not among the Roman writers mentioned in "The Choice" (lines 19-26), although Pomfret probably knew Martial's works from Latin studies and might not at all exclude the Roman from the library, especially in view of their common outline for a tranquil life. Martial's epigram on retirement, however, is the source of some retirement poems written before Pomfret's. For example, the eight-line "The Wish" (1662) by Rowland Watkyns and the twelve-line "The Choice" (1684) by Nahum Tate are little more than paraphrases of Martial's brief poem.19

On the other hand, Horace is the first of the poets to be listed in Pomfret's poem, and similarities between it and

Epode 2, and other works by Horace suggest that this Roman's works were the inspirations for the sentiments in the English poem. Horace's seventy-line second epode includes the same general plan for a quiet life as Martial's brief poem, but the epode has more details. This lengthy development is the first intimation that Horace's works have influenced "The Choice." Horace's epode follows:

Beatus ille qui procul negotiis,
ut prisca gens mortalium,
patera rura bobus exercet suis
solutus omni faenore,
neque excitatur classico miles truci,
neque horret iratum mare,
Foraque vitat et superba civium
potentiorum limina.
Ergo aut adulta vitium propagine
altas maritat populos,
aut in reducta valle mugientium
prospectat errantes greges,
inutilesque falce ramos amputans
feliciore inserit,
aut pressa puris mella condit amphoris,
aut tondet infirmas oves;
vel cum decorum mitibus pomis caput
Autumnus agris extulit,
ut gaudet insitiva decerpens piras
certantem et uvam purpurae,
quae muneretur te, Priape, et te, pater
Silvane, tutor finium.
Libet iacere modo sub antiqua ilice,
modo in tenaci gramine.
Labuntur altis interim ripis aquae,
queruntur in silvis aves,
fontesque lymphis obstrepunt manatibus,
somnus quod invitet leves,
at cum tonantis annus hibernus Iovis
imbres nivesque comparat,
aut trudit acris hinc et hinc multa cane
apros in obstantes plagas,
aut amite levi rara tendit retia,
turdis edacibus dolos.
Pavidumque leporem et advenam laqueo gruem
iucunda captat praemia.
quis non malarum, quas amor curas habet,
haec inter obliviscitur?
quod si pudica mulier in partem iuvet
domum atque dulces liberos,
Sabina qualis aut perusta solibus
pericis uxor Apuli,
sacrum vetustis extruat lignis focum
lassi sub adventum viri,
caudensque textis cratibus laetum pecus
distenta siccet ubera,
et horna dulci vina promens dolio
dapes inemptas adaparet;
non me Lucrina iuverint conchylia
magisve rhombus aut scari,
si quos Eois intonata fluctibus
hiems ad hoc vertat mare;
non Afras avis descendat in ventrem meum,
non attagen Ionicus
iucundior quam lecta de pinguissimis
oliva ramis arborum
aut herba lapath prata amantis et gravi
malvae salubres corpori
vel agna festis caesa Terminalibus
vel haedus ereptus lupo.
hac inter epulas ut iuvat pastas oves
videre proternates domum,
videre fessos vomerem inversum boves
collo trahentes languido
postosque vernas, ditis examen domus,
circum renidentes Lares.
haec ubi locutus faenerator Alfus,
iam iam futurus rusticus,
omnem rededit Idibus pecuniam,
quaerit Kalendis ponere.20

A literal translation of Horace's poem follows:

Happy is he who, far from business, like the ancient
race of mortals, cultivates his paternal fields with his
own oxen, being free from all money-lending; neither as a
soldier is he roused by the harsh trumpet blast, nor does
he dread the angry sea; he also avoids the Forum and the
proud thresholds of the more powerful citizens. There­
fore he either weds the lofty poplars with the mature

20Horace Epode 2, Horace: The Odes and Epodes; ed. and
trans. C. E. Bennett, Loeb Classical Library (rev. ed.; Cam­
bridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann
Ltd., 1964), pp. 364, 366, and 368. All translations of
Horace into English in this study are by the Author.
tendril of the vines, or in a remote valley beholds his wandering flocks of lowing cattle, or cutting off the useless branches with his pruning knife, engraves more fruitful ones, or stores up his pressed honey in clean jars, or shears his tender sheep. Or when Autumn in the fields has reared up his head adorned with ripened apples, how he rejoices while gathering the grafted pears, and the grape vying with purple, with which he may reward thee, Priapus, and thee, Father Sylvanus, guardian of boundaries.

He delights to lie sometimes under an old ilex tree, sometimes on the matted grass. Meanwhile the waters glide along in their deep channels; the birds warble in the woods; and the fountains murmur with their flowing streams, a sound which invites gentle slumbers. But when the wintry season of thundering Jove collects rains and snows, he either drives the boars from here and there with many a hound into the opposing toils; or spreads his fine nets on a smooth pole, a trap for the greedy thrushes; or catches in the noose the timid hare and the foreign crane—pleasing rewards. Who, amidst these, is not forgetful of those anxious cares which love brings?

But if a chaste wife on her part tending the house and sweet children, as a Sabine or the well-tanned mate of a sturdy Apulian, piles up the sacred hearth with old faggots against the coming of her weary husband, and shutting up the contented flock in wattled folds, drains their swollen udders, and, drawing this year's sweet wine from the cask, prepares unbought repasts, no Lucrine oysters would please me more, nor turbot, nor scar, if a tempest thundering upon Eastern waves, turns them towards this sea; no African bird, no Ionian pheasant can go down more delicious into my stomach than the olives gathered from the most fruitful branches of the trees, or the plant of the meadow-loving sorrel and mallows healthful to a sickly body, or than a lamb slain for the feast of Terminus, or a kid rescued from the wolf. Amidst these repasts, how it delights one to see the sheep hurrying home from pasture, to see the weary oxen dragging the inverted ploughshares on their drooping necks, and the home-born slaves seated around the shining domestic gods.

When the usurer Alphius had spoken these words, already to become a farmer, he called in all his money on the Ides, but seeks to put it out again on the Calends.

A reading of both Pomfret's and Horace's poems reveals the delight with which the two poets enjoy rural retirement. The speakers in the poems prefer life away from the city and
commerce. Both display enjoyment of the beauties of nature. Horace's speaker sometimes idles under the shady trees, and the English poet would pass time in his library. Both men prefer simple food.

The differences between these two poems, however, outnumber the similarities. The most obvious difference is that Horace describes the life of a farmer as if some person were already enjoying it, whereas Pomfret, speaking in the first person and almost always using the subjunctive mood, narrates a scheme of life which he himself would elect were heaven to offer him a choice. The details of the retired lives which the two poets describe also differ. Horace's work praises the life of a farmer, whereas Pomfret's describes the life of a retired English gentleman. The farmer delights in caring for livestock and harvesting produce, whereas the gentleman does not mention an occupation or his source of income. One man has a wife who shares some of his chores, and the other man would prefer only the feminine companionship of a neighbor. The farmer owns an estate large enough to support slaves, whereas the gentleman would apparently have only a small household and does not even mention servants. Pomfret also dwells at length on specific topics such as authors. He is somewhat of a wine connoisseur, and he makes overt references to avoiding involvements with the world, except the poor, his neighbors, his companions, and his ladyfriend.

The poems differ in another sense. Although both are
proposals for a quiet life in the country, their tones are not the same. Horace employs a touch of irony in the last sentence: for after praising the life of a farmer, and after planning to live that life, the speaker returns to his profession of usury, a reversal which indicates that a retired life is not compatible with his disposition towards commerce. This sudden reversal implies that for some people such a life is only ideal, owing to their temperaments not being compatible with rural life. But, however ironic the tone of this epode, fleeing rural life is not Horace's inclination, as is illustrated below in his many descriptions of his own retirement from the city.

Pomfret is not at all ironic. He is self-assured in commenting on his scheme for retirement. Since he apparently has not settled himself in this scheme, the plan still is ideal, as manifested by his frequent use of the subjunctive mood. Whenever he describes a characteristic of the life to which he would aspire, he employs the subjunctive and the terms "I'd," "shou'd," and "wou'd." He reserves the indicative mood, first of all, only for those elements of life which he can presently enjoy and would not abandon, such as when he praises Ovid, wine, and freedom from revenge. He also employs the indicative to relate that his choices would be founded on wholesome and rational principles which would promote his content, even outside the ideal. For example, while explaining his relationship with his ladyfriend, he says in
the subjunctive mood:

But so Divine, so Noble a Repast
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste.
(lines 134-135)

Then, in the lines which immediately follow, he explains, in the indicative mood, the principle which would guide his conduct with her:

For Highest Cordials all their Virtue loose,
By a too frequent, and to [sic] bold an Use.
And what would Cheer the Spirits in Distress;
Ruines our Health, when taken to Excess.
(lines 136-139)

However, the differences in tone and a few aspects of retired life in these two poems are not very significant when one considers that they are quite similar. It is clear that the structure of Pomfret's poem follows that of Horace's. That is, "The Choice" outlines the elements of retired life and then describes how Pomfret would enjoy each of them. The basic difference between these works is that Horace's poem outlines the life of a farmer and Pomfret's sketches the life of an English gentleman at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Pomfret, with his background in the classics, realized that all of the Roman poet's ideas on rural living were not in the Second Epode alone. Retiring to the country for Horace was not just an escape from the busy city. He actually spent most of his mature life in the country and had a plan for living simply, or at least more simply than his talents and finances would have allowed him to live, as
evidenced by allusions in many of his works to his preference for frugal living. These many practical ideas, however scattered they may be throughout Horace's works, provided Pomfret with a number of suggestions which for him would make life in the country enjoyable.

The following summaries of those Horatian works which are probably sources for "The Choice" illustrate the extent to which this poem echoes the Roman's subject matter and attitudes. These summaries demonstrate clearly that "The Choice" restates ideas not only from Epode 2, but also from Epistle 1. 2, Satire 1. 1, Satire 2. 2, and Satire 2. 6.

Beginning Satire 2. 6, Horace thanks the god Mercury for a modest estate with a garden, a nearby spring, and a small forest, and further prays that his herd and possessions prosper. Horace wants to celebrate his retirement from Rome to the country, where he is free from social climbers, the dust, the winds, and the plagues which pervade the city. He is happy not to have to vouch for acquaintances in a legal court, an entanglement which might somehow incriminate him later. He is also removed from business concerns and from strangers who might ask him to intercede in favors from his patron, Maecenas. In the country, Horace likes to read his favorite authors, to sleep often, and to enjoy a meal of simple food, with a few cups of wine, after which he and friends talk, not of mundane things such as business and popular dancers, but of more lofty concerns, such as virtue and
the good life. A friend often tells a tale to illustrate a point well made, such as the familiar story about the country mouse who shared a plain but adequate meal with his city cousin. The town mouse, dissatisfied with such common fare, invited his host to the city, where they dined off the leftovers of a great banquet. When they were surprised by the noise of barking dogs and slamming doors, the country mouse ran back to his home, exclaiming that there he would be safer and more content with his plain diet and modest comfort.

Thus far, a comparison of the ideas in the foregoing summary and those in "The Choice" indicates that both authors prefer a rural setting, a leisurely pace of living, and delight in the wholesome pleasures of dining and conversing with friends.

In Satire 1. 1, Horace gives advice to Maecenas, his patron, concerning the Golden Mean as a guide to one's being content with his lot in life. The poet observes that men generally envy the condition of someone totally different from themselves. Horace also notes that men are so settled in their dispositions that they would not change even if the gods granted them wishes to alter their stations. Men would only continue to envy others. Horace adds that men in every condition of life start out to work hard so as to store up

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sufficient provisions for security in old age and retirement, but as long as some men are wealthier than others, those who consider themselves less fortunate continue to hoard in a miserly way. Horace further observes that only a certain amount of wealth is necessary to sustain anyone, and that therefore taking a required amount for sustenance and comfort is really no more satisfying when it is taken from a great amount than from a lesser store. Money is only a means, not an end, to living. A hoard is also open to the danger of thieves, fires, and greedy slaves. Even an illness is a danger to a miser, for close friends and relatives covet his wealth, just as he himself coveted it. One should therefore be less fearful of poverty as his wealth increases and as he acquires what he has longed for. Horace concludes that there is a mean to all things, and either extreme hinders prudent living. He adds the consolation that if a person who is eager to be rich were to take into account that he has surpassed many people in fortune, security, and comfort, he would not consider his lot to be at all meager.  

When one compares this summary with "The Choice," it is evident that many ideas are common to both works. Both poets encourage others to live according to the Golden Mean. They see that some providential power has granted them enough wealth for comfort and retirement. Abundance, according to Horace and Pomfret, should not be hoarded, but enjoyed.

22Horace Satires 1. 1, ibid., pp. 4-15.
moderately. It becomes clearer after each comparison of Horace's works with Pomfret's poem that the English poet has used the Roman as a source. Further comparisons along these lines reinforce this observation.

Horace addresses *Epistle 1.* 2 to Lollius Maximus, a young man studying rhetoric in Rome. The poet expounds upon the utility of reading Homer. For Horace, *The Iliad* abounds with examples of the disastrous consequences resulting from the passions of kings, leaders, and their peoples. Homer also presents a useful example of virtue and wisdom through the hero of *The Odyssey,* who avoids dangers, such as Circe and the Sirens, thereby retaining his humanity and achieving his goal. Horace admonishes his young friend to avoid trivial activities and to be vigilant so as not to invite the erosion of his soul, a danger against which he can strengthen himself by reading useful and pleasurable books like Homer's in the morning. Restating ideas from a work summarized above, Horace advises that once one has a modest amount of property and other wealth, he should not seek more, but rather enjoy what he has. Otherwise, the good things a man has amassed will not give him any pleasure at all, just as ordinary pleasures do not always attract a sick man. One should control his desires, for envy, like rage, leads a person to regret his impulses when he sees the effects that his imprudence has brought about. Horace concludes his counsel to his young friend by stating that the youth should trust
himself to his betters, who advise him to form good habits for lasting effects. 23

This summary again illustrates the extent to which Pomfret restates many of Horace's ideas. Both poets encourage the perusing of books early in the day for profit and pleasure. The poets also suggest that a man can enjoy his plenty in a moderate way while controlling his desires for more wealth. All of their advice is clearly directed towards a concern for a stable spirit in a healthy body.

A fourth and final summary of a Horatian work must be included here since it has influenced Pomfret no less than the abovementioned writings. In Satire 2. 2, Horace speaks again of the simple life regarding common food. He says that hunger is satisfied even by common food, as evidenced by those who never reject it after vigorous exercise. Exotic, rare, and expensive dishes really appeal to sight or to some whim rather than to the craving which food satisfies. The tastes of people with prestige often set the norm for many foolish imitators, and princes still eat ordinary olives and eggs with their meals. But a host must also beware of using cheap and inferior food, especially for his guests, as he earnestly tries to be simple in his own diet. In matters of eating, the modest person should avoid extremes as he seeks the mean. The body is uneasy after taking in a variety of dishes, and the mind is more alert and fit for work.

after a simple meal. A host who serves moderate portions, moreover, enjoys a good reputation and avoids a great expense and even debt. Money wasted on food could be spent more wisely on worthy people, public works, and the national welfare. Should hard times come, a man used to little wealth will endure life more easily than a person weakened mentally and physically by wealth. On a final note, Horace says that very few changes in fortune can alter the expectations of even a common farmer, no matter who owns the land, for he will always be able to enjoy simple food and whatever else he requires, which is little. One with a moderated spirit can live life courageously and meet adversity untroubled, owing to his meager wants.\textsuperscript{24}

As in earlier instances of Horace's works, Pomfret in "The Choice" clearly restates the Horatian counsel of moderation and the mean in concrete terms. Both poets concern themselves with the health of the body and the mind, even when talking about food and drink. Nor are both poets vain: they desire a good reputation, and they display a readiness to help others less fortunate than themselves. In both Horace's satire and Pomfret's poem, moreover, the writers prefer the simple country life and do not seem apprehensive about any reversal of fortune, since their disappointments would be few, owing to their modest expectations.

It is clear that Pomfret uses many of Horace's ideas to

\textsuperscript{24}Horace Satire 2. 2, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 136-147.
express his own sentiments on retirement. Horace himself
repeats many of these ideas in some of his other works, but
the ones borrowed by Pomfret are more thoroughly developed
here than in any other of those classical writings. Although
Pomfret's extensive borrowing from Horace establishes him
more deeply in the retirement tradition than merely borrow­
ing from Epode 2, the Roman's influence by itself does not
explain the popularity of "The Choice." The wide reception
of the poem undoubtedly depended not only on Horace's ideas,
but also on his reputation in eighteenth-century England.

Well-known to students of English literary history is
that the writers of the Roman Augustan Age had a great influ­
ence on English writers of the Restoration and eighteenth
century. The works of the ancients provided subject matter,
themes, and forms for the English Augustans. Critics who
examine these influences concur that Horace was the most pop­
ular and the best-received of all the ancients. He appealed
to the tastes of the English because his wisdom and technical
excellence permeate his works. He wrote charmingly on urban
themes as well as rural ones, two general areas of
eighteenth-century verse. Norman Callan sums up Horace's
wide reception:

Horace is pre-eminently the poet of general themes. His
odes, apart from those political subjects, treat of the
pleasures of friendship, of rural solitude, the tran­
sience of human happiness, the folly of ambition, and so
on—themes which have formed the common stock of reflec­
tion for the ordinary man in every age. These themes he
touches with a remarkable delicacy of language and clarity of definition, giving to casual rumination the stamp of prominence.25

Other scholars broaden this praise of Horace. W. Y. Sellar, an eminent classicist of a few generations ago, says that Horace was the most popular Roman poet in England because he best represents his own age for three reasons. First of all, during his twenty-year literary career, he gave "the completest picture and the justest criticism of his times," in comments on politics, social life, friendships, and country life, all of which reflect the follies, the indulgences, the meanness, the beauties, the fortunes, and the greatness of his day. Secondly, says Sellar, Horace always has been one of the first among poets to delight those readers with classical educations, and he still pleases non-literary men late in their lives, when he is most fully appreciated. Finally, and most important of all, Horace speaks in a conversational manner to his readers, even in his polished artistry and urbanity, so that the readers trust him and become genuinely interested, because he speaks very frankly about himself while praising, criticizing, or merely commenting on his wide range of topics.26


In a study of Horace in the literature of eighteenth-century England, Miss Caroline Goad examines the poet's influence on the major writers, catalogues adaptations of the Roman's works, and lists borrowed lines in the writings of authors such as John Dryden, Joseph Addison, and Alexander Pope. Of course, since John Pomfret is not among the major poets, Miss Goad's work does not include him. But her thesis, substantiated throughout her study, is that Horace "may be said to pervade the literature of the eighteenth century in three ways: as a teacher of political and social morality; as a master of the art of poetry; and as a sort of elegantiae arbiter."27

Miss Goad says that as a teacher of political and social morality, Horace's epistles and satires attempt to teach Augustan Romans civic virtue after the civil wars. English writers of the eighteenth century follow his methods in periodicals like The Spectator, Dr. Johnson's Rambler, and Henry Fielding's True Patriot. Just as Horace in the court of Augustus calls attention to the benefits of the new empire, so Addison, Swift, Fielding, and others point out the advantages of English rule since the accession of King William III. These writers find persuasive political advice in Horace's epistles, satires, and odes.28


28 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
As a teacher of the art of writing, says Miss Goad, Horace perhaps shows his greatest influence on the eighteenth century. In his *Art of Poetry*, the most remarkable idea is that a poet needs art to complement and to refine genius. The English have also abstracted rules from Horace's different writings, such as Epistle 2. 1 and Satire 2. 1. His odes are not highly lyrical, owing to his control of diction and precision of form, two merits which set an example for some writers who would set all rules aside. Later in the eighteenth century, with romantic elements appearing, classical authority is little heeded.\(^{29}\)

As Miss Goad begins to conclude her evaluation of Horace, she notes that he is often accepted as an *elegantiae arbiter* by many people in England. For example, Lords Chesterfield and Bolingbroke admire him for his life of ease, taste, and simplicity. In letters to one another and to other people, both men "estimated their physical well-being by the standards set by Horace, translating his requirements into equivalents of eighteenth-century England."\(^{30}\) To add to Miss Goad's references, one can single out Alexander Pope and William Shenstone as just a few more examples of Horace's imitators, for these men not only wrote on retirement themes, but also lived in the country and cultivated acquaintances in the manner of Horace.

All the foregoing commentaries based on conclusions of

\(^{29}\)Ibid., pp. 9-11. \(^{30}\)Ibid., p. 11.
scholars might imply that Horace's English audience was made up of educated people. In order to acclaim him as the most excellent of the ancients, readers would have to have been familiar with other classical writers so that judgments would be just. To enjoy him thoroughly, moreover, readers would have usually needed a university education, for although the grammar schools gave students training in the classical languages, a more thorough appreciation of a poet would come with maturity and a wide range of reading in order to savor the elegance of language, the perfection in form, and the astute observations on human nature. These tastes and backgrounds seem to imply, therefore, that Horace had mainly a well-educated audience. This assumption, however, is only apparently true, for Horace's writings were available to people who did not have much formal education.

Translations of Horace's works were widely available to English readers before and after the appearance of Pomfret's "The Choice." Between 1565 and 1653, at least eleven writers had translated different parts of the Roman's poems, so that by the mid-seventeenth century, all of his works were in English. Then, between 1666 and 1709, five more men produced direct translations, with Thomas Creech's Odes, Satyrs, and Epistles perhaps the most famous, having gone through seven different editions between 1684 and 1730. Finally, between 1709 and the end of the century, twenty-nine different translators put Horace's verses in English, as all the while many
editions were being reprinted.  

Some acquaintance with Horace was also available to Pomfret's readers in the more original works of English writers. Addison and Steele often headed their essays in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* with brief excerpts from the Roman poet. Although these writers quoted from other classical sources, Donald F. Bond, who recently edited and annotated *The Spectator*, indicates that more than two hundred, or more than one-third, of all motto headings are from Horace.  

Caroline Goad, in her broader study of Horace, concludes that he was actually better-known for his striking lines and brilliant apothegms than for any single work. In that century which produced so much imitative verse, readers also saw many adaptations of Horace in poetry sent to many periodicals of general interest, especially those including miscellaneous essays and commentary on world and domestic events, publications which almost always had poems by poor anonymous poets. These rimeres imitated Horace's odes more than any other form. For example, *The Museum*, a series which lasted for only a few years, has eight overt imitations of the Roman in Volume I (1744).

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33 Goad, p. 12.
The conclusions of scholars and the specific illustrations cited above indicate that Horace pervaded the literature of the eighteenth century. The major poets, as well as lesser writers and dilettantes, used his works for forms and ideas. The readers knew the Roman in translations, imitations, and frequent citations of his verses. Times were right for the publication of "The Choice" because of the wide acclaim of Horace. Pomfret uses more Horatian sources and tones than any other poet of his age. A reader can go to translations of Horace and find more of him by way of volume, but a reader cannot find more of Horace in any single poem than in "The Choice." Pomfret uses five Horatian works extensively and makes brief allusions to others. To find more of the spirit of Horace in any single poem, one would probably have to peruse Alexander Pope's close imitations.
CHAPTER III

THE THEME OF RETIREMENT IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH POETRY

Although the popularity of many of Horace's works in Restoration and eighteenth-century England helped to prepare for the reception of "The Choice," Pomfret was not the first English poet to write on the theme of rural retirement. He did not suddenly revive a theme that was over seventeen hundred years old. This theme is present in the works of many major and minor poets, such as John Milton, Abraham Cowley, Katherine Philips, and Charles Cotton. A study of the tradition of retirement poetry in England up to Pomfret's time is therefore necessary for two reasons. First of all, the study will determine to what extent Pomfret's poem is similar to the works of other writers, and, second, it will ascertain which works may have influenced "The Choice."

By far the most thorough study of retirement poetry in English is Miss Maren-Sofie Røstvig's two-volume The Happy Man.¹ Her study illustrates the theme in the works of many


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poets of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth. This work, however, is not very useful in approaching Pomfret's poem, for all her citations of verses of each writer and the discussion of the ideas focus on how the sentiments of each writer are expressed from the philosophical viewpoint of either Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, Hermeticism, or Epicureanism. If one attempts to find the place of "The Choice," or, for that matter, any of Pomfret's works, in these philosophies, it soon becomes evident that he owes no debt to them. On the other hand, Miss Røstvig's study illustrates that most of the retirement poetry of the seventeenth century is to be found in the works of those who are considered minor poets. This critical work has been very useful in the study of "The Choice" for suggestions concerning certain poets who have written on retirement, as well as for texts and collections which are not commonly listed in bibliographies.

In his brief chapter on "The Choice," E. E. Kellett calls attention to some of the similarities between Pomfret's verses and Martial's Epigram 10. 47, which have already been discussed in Chapter II above. The critic then adds:

But [Pomfret's] chief storehouse is [Abraham] Cowley, that abundant poet from whom so many, from Pope to Patmore, have borrowed so freely. "The Choice," in fact, is but Cowley's "The Wish" over again, with certain omissions here and expansions there. 2

One version of "The Wish" (1647) by Cowley is a five-stanza, 2

forty-line poem which emphasizes rural solitude and a retreat from crowds and riches, whereas "The Choice," a much longer work, stresses comfort and moderation. Only two stanzas of "The Wish" resemble "The Choice":

2.

Ah, yet, e're I descend to th'Grave
May I a small House, and large Garden have!
And a few Friends, and many Books, both true,
Both wise, and both delightful too!
And since Love ne're [sic] will from me flee,
A Mistress moderately fair,
And good as Guardian-Angels are,
Only belov'd, and loving me!

5.

How happy here should I
And one dear She live, and embracing dy [sic]?
She who is all the world, and can exclude
In deserts [sic] Solitude.
I should have then this only fear,
Lest men, when they my pleasures see,
Should hither throng to live like me,
And so make a City here.

Both Pomfret and Cowley ask for a small house, books, and a few friends. However, some of their attitudes differ. Cowley wants a large garden, and Pomfret a small one. Cowley desires a loving mistress who would live with him lifelong, whereas Pomfret would visit his ladyfriend occasionally and does not even mention love. In his final verses, Cowley wants to remain secretive in his retreat, whereas Pomfret hopes that others would imitate his life, as he wants to be "Belov'd by

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all" (line 141). He would welcome the poor, strangers, and neighbors. "The Wish" does not seem to be a great influence on "The Choice" because, first of all, the other three stanzas not cited discuss only solitude and the vanities of city life. Secondly, Pomfret's poem is much longer than Cowley's, and the sentiments are different. Pomfret's inclusion of a house, books, and a garden might have just as well been suggested by many other English poets cited below who briefly mention these topics.

When Kellett says that Cowley's poem has influenced "The Choice," however, he undoubtedly has another version in mind. Cowley published it in 1661:

9.

This only grant me, that my means may lye
Too low for Envy, for Contempt too high.
Some Honor I would have
Not from great deeds, but good alone.
The unknown are better than ill known.
Rumour can ope' [sic] the Grave,
Acquaintance I would have, but when 't depends
Not on the number, but the choice of Friends.

10.

Books should, not business entertain the Light,
And sleep, as undisturb'd as Death, the Night.
My House, a Cottage more
Then [sic] Palace, and should fitting be
For all my Use, no Luxury.
My Garden painted o're [sic];
With Natures [sic] hand, not Arts [sic]; and pleasures yield,
Horace might envy in his Sabine field.

11.

Thus would I double my Lifes [sic] fading space,
For he that runs it well, twice runs his race.
And in this true delight,
These unbought sports, this happy State,
I would not fear nor wish my fate,
But boldly say each night,
To morrow let my Sun his beams display,
Or in clouds hide them; I have liv'd to Day.4

In proceeding to explain Pomfret's debt to this version of "The Wish," Kellett notes: "Books should, not business entertain the light," says Cowley. Pomfret gives us twenty lines, ending sententiously enough:

In some of these, as Fancy should advise,
I'd always take my morning exercise;
For sure no minutes bring us more content
Than those in pleasing useful studies spent."5

In the absence of any further comment on this matter by Kellett, there is little reason to believe that Pomfret has been inspired by Cowley's verse on books. These two poets have two different attitudes towards reading. Pomfret details a list of authors, preferring Horace and Virgil for their wit and learning, Juvenal for his sharpness, and Ovid for his sentiments on love. Pomfret would also include modern writers in his library, since some of them, as well as the Romans,

4Cowley has inserted these three stanzas in his essay "Of My Self," ibid., pp. 101-106. He says that he composed "The Wish," cited in part, supra, p. 53, when he was only thirteen years old, but that he later considered it "Boyish" and revised it. There is no apparent answer as to why the earlier version has its stanzas numbered 1-5 and this later version numbered 9-11, for none of the poet's editors has commented on the relationship between the two groups of verses, which are clearly two different poems.

5Kellett, p. 174. Cowley's verse is from "The Wish," x.1, cited above. Pomfret's verses are from "The Choice," lines 29-32, but Kellett is citing an edition of Pomfret's poem published later than the early ones collated in Chapter II of this study.
are learned and eloquent. In other words, his passage on literature is sixteen lines long (Kellett says twenty) because he is exemplifying why he would read books: they are "pleasing, Useful Studies." His reason for enjoying books, therefore, is not only "sententiously expressed," as Kellett has noted, but also exemplified in his verses preceding his aphoristic statement. For Cowley, books offer pleasure and instruction. There is little reason to believe that Cowley's brief comment inspired Pomfret's verses on books, for, as will be made clear later, many retirement poets have verses on books which are as casual and brief as Cowley's.

Kellett also attributes Pomfret's twenty-four lines on his friends in "The Choice," lines 74-97, to Cowley's poem. The critic notes that "Cowley says;"

Acquaintance I would have, but when 't depends Not on the number, but the choice of Friends.

Pomfret expands these two lines into two pages."6 Except for the topic of friends itself, Pomfret's verses seem to have arisen from his own genius, for Cowley says his election of close companions would depend "Not on the Number," whereas Pomfret says, "I'd Chuse two Friends" (line 76).

Although Kellett has not made a persuasive argument for the literary relationship between Cowley and Pomfret, the critic has, indeed, found an English source for "The Choice." He has not cited verses other than those on books and friends

6 Ibid. The verses are from "The Wish," ix.7-8, supra, p. 54.
to substantiate Cowley's influence and does not fully quote Cowley's brief poem. Yet "The Wish" is decisively more similar to "The Choice" than any other English poem. "The Wish" has:

This only grant me, that my means may lye  
Too low for Envy, for Contempt too high.  
Some Honor I would have  
Not from great deeds, but good alone.  
(ix.1-4)

Echoes of these verses are in "The Choice" in Pomfret's desire to be "Belov'd by all, not vainly Popular" (line 141), a reputation he would probably earn by being hospitable to the poor, strangers, and neighbors. He also believes that he would be held in such esteem so that "All Men wou'd wish to Live, and Dye like me" (line 167). In "The Wish" Cowley has:

My House, a Cottage more  
Then [sic] Palace, and should fitting be  
For all my Use, no Luxury.  
(x.3-5)

Pomfret clearly echoes these verses in his desire for simplicity and utility, as he says of his own home:

It shou'd within no other Things contain,  
But what were Useful, Necessary, Plain:  
Methinks 'tis Nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure  
The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture.  
(lines 9-12)

Cowley would have a garden:

My Garden painted o're [sic]  
With Natures [sic] hand, not Arts [sic]; and  
pleasures yield,  
Horace might envy in his Sabine field.  
(x.6-8)

Pomfret would have:
A little Garden, Grateful to the Eye,  
And a Cool Rivulet run murmur'ring by.  
(lines 13-14)

Besides the differences in length and arrangement of topics in "The Wish" and "The Choice," Cowley's final stanza signals only one significant variation from Pomfret's ending. "The Wish" outlines Cowley's typical day in retirement, at the end of which he says:

To morrow let my Sun his beams display,  
Or in clouds hide them; I have liv'd to Day.  
(xi.7-8)

In Pomfret's last verse-paragraph, however, he refers to the last days of his life and his peaceful death. In his scheme for retirement, his old age would be eased by a relative, his death would cause little stir, and his whole life would be worthy of imitation by others.

There is much more to "The Choice," however, than merely a few close resemblances to "The Wish" and a few differences. For one, the fact that "The Choice" is 143 lines longer than "The Wish" can be attributed to Pomfret's more detailed development and his inclusion of some topics, such as the ladyfriend, food, the poor, which are absent from Cowley's verses. To determine if Pomfret has perhaps been influenced by some other English poet, one must investigate the tradition of seventeenth-century retirement verse.

Of the many retirement poems before Pomfret's, none of them is a work on so many different phases of life. His poem develops at length ideas on an estate, charity, books,
food, wine, friends, a lady, and civic life. In fact, no one poet's retirement works, even when taken collectively, comment on as many phases of life as "The Choice." Each work always emphasizes only one or two aspects of retirement. The most obvious similarities which these works share, however, concern the poets' motivations for withdrawing from the city to the country. They have been urged to retire by their dissatisfaction with the vanities of city life, as they express their desires to escape the pomp of government and court life, to avoid civil strife, and to elude the preoccupation with wealth.

Once retired, certain writers celebrate their retreat from the world and their contemplation of nature. William Habington (1605-1654), an English poet at the court of Henrietta Maria, queen consort of Charles I, often asks why men distress themselves with ambition, which brings them unavoidable cares. In "To MyHonoured Friend Sir Ed. P. Knight," Habington advises:

Go travaile where
Another Sun and Starres appeare,
And land not touched by any covetous fleet,
And yet even there your selfe youle meete.
Stay here then and while curious exiles find
New toyes for a fantastique mind;
Enjoy at home what's reall: here the Spring
By her aeriall quires doth sing
As sweetly to you as if you were laid
Vunder the learn'd Thessalian shade,
Direct your eye-sight inward, and you'le find
A thousand regions in your mind
Yet undiscover'd. Travell them, and be
Expert in hom Cosmographie.
This you may doe safe both from rocke and shelfe: 
Man's whole world within himselfe.7

In "To My Noblest Friend I. C. Esquire," Habington questions:

Why not repaire
To the pure innocence oth' Country ayre:
... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 
(Thy head upon some flowry pillow laide,
Kind Natures huswifery) Contemplate all
His strategems who labor to inthrall
The world to his great Master; and youle finde
Ambition mocks it selfe, and grasps the wind.
No conquest makes us great. Blood is to deare
A price for glory.8

According to Habington, to avoid the follies of men and even
of entire nations, one should contemplate the maker of the
world, not study the mysteries of other men, who only con-
found each other. An introverted mind finds peace in freeing
itself from passion, leading to philosophical insights, in
the open countryside.

In many of his works, Henry Vaughan (1621-1695) contem-
plates nature and finds his way back to God as he communes
with the universe and considers his rural life a kind of Eden.
In "Retirement," he contrasts rural and town life:

All various Lusts in Cities still
Are found; they are the Thrones of Ill.
The dismal Sinks, where Blood is spill'd,
Cages with much uncleanness fill'd.
But rural shades are the sweet fanse
Of piety and innocence.

7William Habington, "To My Honoured Friend Sir. Ed. P. 
Knight," lines 27-42, Poems of William Habington, ed. Kenneth

8Habington, "To My Noblest Friend I. C. Esquire," lines 
2-22, ibid., p. 95.
They are the Meek's calm region, where
Angels descend, and rule the sphere;
Where heav'n lyes Leiguer, and the Dove
duely as Dew, comes from above.
If Eden be on earth at all,
'Tis that, which we the Country call.9

"And Do They So?" presents the poet contemplating in his
garden as he addresses God:

Sometimes I sit with thee, and tarry
An hour, or so, then vary.
Thy other Creatures in this Scene
Thee only aym, and mean;
Some rise to seek thee, and with heads
Erect peep from their beds.10

Vaughan considers his retirement to be a method of living
harmoniously with natural beings, all of which yearn for
their Creator. The poet develops the same theme in many
other works, such as "Corruption" and "The Importunate
Fortune." Other poets who celebrate rural retirement as an
occasion for elevating the mind to God through nature are
Andrew Marvell in "The Garden" and John Milton in "Il Pensero-
oso," especially lines 85-96.

Although the English retirement poets always explain
that they have gone to the country out of a common aversion
to the activities of town life, all of them do not account
their occupations in retirement as do those who commune with
God and nature. Some of these poets merely emphasize their
safety and peace of mind in solitude. They rejoice in being

9Henry Vaughan, "Retirement," lines 17-28, The Works of

10Vaughan, "And Do They So?" lines 21-26, ibid., p. 432.
alone, away from people. In his "Song in Praise of Solitude," William Wycherley (1640-1716) enjoys his detachment from the world, explaining that his independence from society leads him away from cares:

Who but much more the wiser grows,
   As of the World more ignorant;
More Self-sufficiency he shows,
   Shows less his Pride, his Fear, or Want,
Is to himself a God on Earth alone,
   In Want of no Good, since in Care for None;

So Solitude, just Selfishness,
   Does the World's Selfishness prevent;
Makes Man's Peace more, as his Fear less,
   Him more safe, as more innocent;
To gain more Honour, Ease, for want of Pelf,
   By Content, all-sufficient to himself.

Wycherley praises solitude because he believes that if a man looks after himself, he does not need others; living alone, he avoids injury from others, even as he cannot injure them, an idea the poet also expresses in "For Solitude and Retirement against the Public, Active Life."

Wentworth Dillon, Fourth Earl of Roscommon (1633-1685) rejoices in being alone in his "Ode upon Solitude":

Hail Sacred Solitude, Soul of My Soul,
   It is by thee I truly live,
Thou dost a better Life and Nobler Vigour give;
Dost each unruly Appetite controul:
Thy constant Quiet fills my peaceful Breast,
   With unmix'd Joy, uninterrupted Rest.
Presuming Love does ne'er invade
   This private Solitary Shade;

And, with fantastic Wounds of Beauty made
The Joy has no Allay of Jealousy, Hope, and Fear, 10
The Solid Comforts of this happy Sphere;
Yet I exalted Love admire,
Friendship abhorring sordid Gain,
And purify'd from Lust's dishonest Stain:
Nor is it for my Solitude unfit,
For I am with my Friend alone,
As if we were but one;
'Tis the polluted Love that multiplies,
But Friendship does two Souls in one comprise.12

Solitude affords Dillon freedom from passions which would disturb his peace and joy. Another poet who celebrates self-sufficiency as the major theme of his retirement verse is John Norris, as in "The Retirement" and "The Refusal."13

Pomfret's poem has not at all been influenced by the motivations and the preoccupations developed in the poems cited above or other works like them. First of all, he would not seek his ideal retired life out of an aversion to the rest of the world. His primary motivation for withdrawing to the country is to live in comfort, which he would spend "In blissful Ease, and Satisfaction" (line 4). "Content" would arise from perusing "Pleasing, Useful Studies" (line 32), and he says that his friends would be "A great Advance to my Felicity" (line 77), promoting a "Permanent, Sincere, Substantial


Bliss" (line 97). Pomfret has outlined his ideal retirement so that he might "in Pleasure, Ease, and Plenty live" (line 155).

In fact, dissatisfaction with other men would have no role in urging Pomfret to retire, nor does he seem to have any dislike for people. He would prefer to live "Near some fair Town" (line 5), and the only instance in which he mentions conflicts with others is the one which explains his relationships to people outside his neighborhood and circle of friends:

I'd be concern'd in no Litigious Jar,  
Belov'd by all, not vainly Popular.  
What e're Assistance I had Pow'r to bring  
T'Oblige my Country, or to Serve my King,  
When e're they Call'd, I'd readily afford  
My Tongue, my Pen, my Counsel, or my Sword.  
Law Suits I'd shun, with as much studious Care,  
As I wou'd Dens where hungry Lyons are;  
And rather put up Injuries; than be  
A Plague to him who'd be a Plague to me. 
I value Quiet at a Price too great,  
To give for my Revenge so dear a Rate:  
For what do we, by all our Bustle, gain,  
But Counterfeit Delight, for real Pain?  
(lines 140-153)

The only situations in which to avoid people would be legal entanglements, which might give rise to vengeance towards him. He would not be indifferent to civil strife, for he would offer to speak, to write, and even to bear arms.

Nor would Pomfret in his ideal life mingle with nature or lead himself to God by examining nature. His way to God would be to die a peaceful death after a life free from vice. Moreover, although he would enjoy good literature and
and wine, he would not live in solitude, for he would welcome at his home strangers, neighbors, and the poor, as he sought to be "Belov'd by all, not vainly Popular" (line 140). Solitude does not enter into "The Choice," especially in consideration of the sixty-six lines, or more than one-third of the poem, that develop ideas on Pomfret's close friendship with two men and a neighboring lady.

In respect to the verses on his male friends, Pomfret does not appear to have been influenced by any particular poem or by any ideas of friendship common to English retirement poetry. It is proposed later, in the analysis of "The Choice," that these verses have probably arisen from his own genius and familiarity with Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. Few retirement poems mention male friends, and none seems to have been written which enumerates the qualities of companions as developed in "The Choice." The lack of emphasis on friendship between men in retirement poetry is understandable, for, as indicated above, the theme of most of these poems is either the joy of living away from the city, the closeness to nature and God, or the peace of mind in solitude, the last of which implies a lack of close association with people. One of a few exceptions is Dillon's "Ode upon Solitude," part of which is cited above. His concern for friendship is so generally developed that one cannot determine if it is

between men or between a man and a woman, and it is certainly unlike that in "The Choice." Another poem briefly commenting on friendship is the "Epistle to R. D. from T. O.," in which Thomas Otway (1652-1685), writing to Richard Duke, says he would like to be visited in retirement by Richard Bentley, Thomas Short, and a few other men, referred to only by surnames, whom editors have not been able to identify. Otway says this circle of friends would dine, drink, talk, and make love to women, but he does not describe the characters of his companions as Pomfret does. In general, the mention of male friends in retirement poems is infrequent and brief, serving only as an incidental element contrasting to crowded cities and busy life. Pomfret does not seem to have used any poems on this theme as sources, as evidenced by the differences between their brevity and his own twenty-four-line passage on friends.

Nor would Pomfret intend that he and his friends be involved in a Platonic relationship like that celebrated by Mrs. Katherine Philips (1631-1664), whose poems were widely circulated in manuscript during her lifetime, but were published only posthumously. Many of her works celebrate living away from the world in the close companionship of another, as in the following passage from "Invitation to the Country," a

poem which catalogues the distasteful activities of cities, courts, and ambitious people:

A Country-life assists this study best,  
Where no distractions do the Soul arrest;  
There Heav'n and Earth lie open to our view,  
There we search Nature and its Author too;  
Possest with Freedom and a real State  
Look down on Vice, and Vanity, and Fate.  
There (my Rosania) will we, mingling Souls,  
Pity the folly which the World controls;  
And all those Grandeurs which the World do prize  
We either can enjoy, or will despise.16

In her poems there is no suggestion of sensuous joys between men and women, an idea illustrated by these lines:

Although we know we love, yet while our Soul  
Is thus imprison'd by the Flesh we wear,  
There's no way left that bondage to controul,  
But to convey transactions through the Ear.17

The emphasis is on friendship and conversation, with no mention of the pleasures of the flesh as avenues to spiritual union. Mrs. Philips expresses these sentiments in other poems, such as "A Retir'd Friendship," as well as in works only on friendship itself, such as "Content, to my Dearest Lucasia" and "Friendship in Emblem, or the Seal."

No hint of the gentle preoccupations of Mrs. Philips' works appears in Pomfret's verses on his friends. The following lines portray the robust masculine qualities he would find in his companions. They would be:


17Philips, "To My Lucasia, in Defence of Declar'd Friendship," lines 29-32, ibid., p. 82.
Obliging, Open, without Huffing Brave,
Brisk in Gay Talking, and in Sober, Grave.
Close in Dispute, but not Tenacious, try'd
By Solid Reason, and let that Decide,
Not prone to Lust, Revenge, or Envious Hate;
Nor busy Medlers with Intreagues of State.
Strangers to Slander, and sworn Foes to Spight:
Not Quarrelsome, but Stout enough to Fight.
(lines 86-93)

On the other hand, Pomfret reserves a gentler tone when he describes the ladyfriend near whom he would live:

Would Bounteous Heav'n once more Indulge, I'd choose,
(For who would so much Satisfaction loose,
As Witty Nymphs, in Conversation, give,)
Near some Obliging, Modest Fair to live;
For there's that Sweetness in a Female Mind,
Which in a Man's we cannot hope to find:
That by a Secret, but a Pow'rful, Art
Winds up the Springs of Life, and does impart
Fresh Vital Heat to the Transported Heart.
(lines 98-106)

Then, after listing her admirable qualities which make all women envy her, he adds:

To this Fair Creature I'd sometimes Retire;
Her Conversation would new Joys inspire;
Give Life an Edge so keen, no surly Care
Would venture to Assault my Soul, or dare
Near my Retreat to hide one secret Snare.
But so Divine, so Noble a Repast
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste.
For Highest Cordials all their Virtue loose,
By a too frequent, and to [sic] bold an Use:
And what would Cheer the Spirits in Distress;
Ruines our Health, when taken to Excess.
(lines 129-139)

However, Pomfret does not say that the conversation between him and the lady would involve love, and, of course, lust does not even begin to be implied as an alternative explanation for their close association.

Pomfret apparently has not used any of Mrs. Philips'
works or those other retirement poets on women. Unless
other poets include wives in their way of life away from the
city, any mention of women seems always to stress sensual
pleasures between men and women. Thomas Stanley (1625-1678)
in "The Enjoyment" spends ninety lines loving Sylvia:

Now with delight transported I
My wreathed Arms about her tie;
The flatt'ring Ivy never holds
Her Husband Elme in stricter Folds:
To cool my fervent Thirst, I sip
Delicious Nectar from her lip.
She pledges, and so often past
This amorous health, till Love at last,
Our souls did with these pleasures sate,
And equally inebriate.\(^\text{18}\)

Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640-1689) has many erotic poems with the
background of retirement, such as "On a Juniper Tree Cut Down
to Make Busks."\(^\text{19}\) Poems of this type lead Thomas Shadwell
(1642-1692) to open "The Tory Poets" with these lines:

Happy are they in Amourous Fields, that Rove
And Sing no other Songs then [sic] those of love;
Whose Verses treat of nought but careless ease,
And in their Sonnets only strive to please.\(^\text{20}\)

Shadwell rails against "the lewd lascivious Verses, bawdy

\(^{18}\)Thomas Stanley, "The Enjoyment," lines 71-80, The
Poems of Thomas Stanley, ed. Galbraith Miller Crump (Oxford:

\(^{19}\)Works of Aphra Behn, ed. Montague Summers, IV (Lon-
don: William Heinemann, 1915; New York: Benjamin Blom,

\(^{20}\)Thomas Shadwell, "The Tory Poets: A Satyr," lines
1-4, The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell, ed. Montague
Summers, V (London: Fortune Press, 1927; New York: Ben-
Rhymes"²¹ in the plays, the prologues, and the poems of John Dryden, Thomas Otway, Mrs. Behn, and Thomas Durfey. A perusal of representative retirement poems on friendship and love indicates that John Pomfret's "The Choice" has not been influenced by any of these works. An analysis of his verses on his ladyfriend, in the chapter after the next, demonstrates that he assigns to her many of the virtues which his ideal male companions would have and that he also draws a similar ideal of a lady in another of his poems.

Pomfret does not seem to have borrowed any ideas from poems which mention the simplicity of food in retirement. He would use food to promote health and to feed the needy:

A frugal Plenty shou'd my Table spread;  
With Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes Fed;  
Enough to Satisfy, and something more  
To Feed the Stranger, and the Neighb'ring Poor.  
Strong Meat Indulges Vice, and Pomp'ring[sic] Food  
Creates Diseases, and Inflames the Blood.  
(lines 43-48)

For Pomfret, dining would be an occasion to share his plenty in charity. A few other retirement poets very briefly mention food, in just enough verses to imply that care for their diets would not be festive occasions. In the part of Theophilus, or Love's Sacrifice on retirement, Edward Benlowes (1602-1676), without even mentioning food, suggests the simplicity of a meal:

The mount's our Table, grass our carpet, well  
Our cellar, trees our banquet, cell  

²¹Ibid., line 46, p. 279.
Our palace, birds our music, and our plate a shell.

Nature pays all the score. Next fountain has
Bath, drink, and glass; but our soul's glass
presents Religion's face. Our meal's as short as grace.22

Philip Ayres (1638-1712) in his "In Praise of Country Life"
is as brief as Benlowes, but he also mentions fruit:

Fruit-trees their loaded boughs extend,
For him to take his choice;
His wholesome drink the fountains lend,
With pleasant purling noise;
In notes untaught, birds that like him are free,
Strive which shall most delight him with their harmony.23

However, Pomfret's emphasis on sharing food and on avoiding
illness and overindulgence suggests that he has not used poems
like these as sources for his sentiments.

In a similar manner, Pomfret's poem differs from other
retirement works on the theme of wine. The last two passages
above mention only water, but Pomfret includes good wines:

I'd have a little Vault, but always stor'd
With the Best Wines, each Vintage cou'd afford.
Wine whets the Wit, improves its Native force,
And gives a pleasant Flavour to Discourse;
By making all our Spirits Debonair,
Throws off the Lees, the Sediment of Care.
But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends,
May be Debauch'd, and serve Ignoble Ends:

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22Edward Benlowes, "The Sweetness of Retirement, or The
Happiness of a Private Life," Theopilia, or Love's Sacrifice,
xii,337-342 (London: Henry Seile and Humphrey Mosely, 1652),
in George Saintsbury, ed., Minor Poets of the Caroline Period,

23Philip Ayres, "In Praise of Country Life," lines 25-30,
Lyric Poems, Made in Imitation of the Italians (London:
Jos. Knight and F. Saunders, 1687), in Saintsbury, Caroline
Poets, II (1906), p. 333.
Pomfret's emphasis on a full store of good wines contrasts to the plainness of his food. He would enjoy wine to promote conversation and to evade cares, being careful to avoid excessive indulgence. His own use of this drink would be unlike that of Otway's, whose drinking would be encouraged by some of Horace's verses on wine and love, such as those in Ode 2. 11, Ode 4. 11, and Ode 1. 9. Otway says:

Horace, best known and lov'd by thee, we read,
Who can our Transports, or our longings tell,
To taste of Pleasures, prais'd by him so well?
With thoughts of Love, and wine, by him we're fir'd
Two things in sweet retirement much desir'd:
A generous Bottle, and a Lovesome She,
Are th' onely Joys in nature, next to Thee. 24

In "The Choice," Pomfret does not at all suggest that wine and his ladyfriend would be associated in his plan for an ideal life.

Just as no source has arisen in the research for this study concerning Pomfret's ideas on wine and other topics in "The Choice," his comments on books seem to be his own peculiar sentiments. He would read Ovid and Juvenal, as well as Horace and Virgil for their "Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning" (line 20), whereas Otway more pointedly admires Virgil's Aeneid for its thoughts on Dido, the friendship of Nisus and

24 Otway, "Epistle to R. D.," lines 58-64, p. 444.
Euryalus, and the quest of Aeneas. 25

Other references to reading in retirement poetry are brief and undeveloped. Representative of these cursory references are the following lines from "The Retirement" of Charles Cotton (1630-1687):

How calm and quiet a delight
It is, alone
To read, and meditate, and write,
By none offended, nor offending none. 26

In "Contentation," Cotton considers one happy:

Who, with his Angle, and his Books,
Can think the longest day well spent. 27

John Norris in "The Retirement" says:

Let plots and news embroil the State,
Pray what's that to my books and me?
Whatever be the kingdom's fate,
Here I am sure t' enjoy a monarchy. 28

To the inclusion of books as part of his life in "The Choice," Pomfret adds comments on enjoying both the ancients and the moderns, who are "Esteem'd for Learning, and for Eloquence" (line 28), as he would read them each morning for delight and instruction.

There seems to be no source for the final verse paragraph of "The Choice," the one which describes the old age and

25 Ibid., lines 45-54, p. 444.
the end of Pomfret's ideal life. The emphasis in the other retirement poems, as in Pomfret's work, is always on the quality and the activities of life, not on its final days and end. The poets who do mention death, however, hope for a quiet departure without any regrets. Some references are as brief as the one in "The Wish," a poem which almost paraphrases Martial's Epigram 10. 47, in which Rowland Watkyns concludes:

This is the summe of my desire,
Until I come unto heavens [sic] quire.29

In "The Retirement" Cotton even numbers his years before death. He would:

Try to live out to sixty full years old,
   And all the while
   Without an envious eye
On any thriving under Fortune's smile,
Content live, and then contented die.30

In a brief poem also entitled "The Choice," John Norris would look forward to a quiet death ending his life of solitude:

Thus when my days are all in silence past
A good plain country-man I'll die at last.
   Death cannot chuse but be
To him a mighty misery,
Who to the world was popularly known,
   And dies a stranger to himself alone.31

Pomfret dwells at greater length on old age and death than any other retirement poet:

If Heav'n a Date of many Years would give,
Thus I'd in Pleasure, Ease, and Plenty live.
And as I neer approach'd the Verge of Life,
Some kind Relation, (for I'd have no Wife)

Should take upon him all my Worldly Care,
While I did for a better State prepare.
Then I'd not be with any Trouble vex'd;
Nor have the Ev'ning of my days perplex'd.
But by a silent, and a peaceful Death,
Without a Sigh, resign my Aged Breath:
And when committed to the Dust, I'd have
Few Tears, but Friendly, dropt into my Grave.
Then would my Exit so propitious be;
All Men would wish to Live, and Dye like me.
(lines 154-167)

Unlike the other writers on this general theme, Pomfret makes clear three ideas on the end of his ideal life. First, he would not live in solitude, for "Some kind Relation" should be with him, so that, secondly, he could prepare for heaven. The final point he makes is that he would hope that his ideal life, even in death, were an example to all men to the extent that only those close to him would mourn. As such, the nature and the length of his comments appear not to be derived from another retirement poem.

There are other poets who have written on retirement who are not cited above, but the preceding examples, nevertheless, represent the themes and points of emphasis which appear in Pomfret's poem, but which he does not develop in their manner. Besides some of the various writers cited above, Miss Røstvig's The Happy Man surveys other retirement poets, such as Thomas Traherne, Henry More, and Mildmay Fane, but her citations, of course, do not serve the same purpose as this study of Pomfret's poem does. Beyond her study, which is valuable for having established the extent of retirement poetry, as well as the noting of various poets who have written on this
famous theme, one can examine miscellanies of poetry, which, in turn, lead one to more recent editions and notes. Shelf-lists of libraries with large holdings of poetry from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been especially useful in discovering retirement verse. Works of this type are perhaps most readily available in multivolume anthologies. But an examination of many poems written before 1700, the year in which "The Choice" first appeared, will lead one to conclude that Pomfret does not detail any of the activities of his ideal life after any other English poem.

Were it known if Pomfret had read any of the retirement poets, one could perhaps determine from which writers he has adapted ideas or from which ideas he intentionally differs. However, no biographical commentary on the nature of any of his readings exists, and none of his other poems mentions other poets. "The Choice" itself does not list any of "those Moderns, Men of Steady Sense" (line 27), whose works would be in his library. Therefore, only certain Horatian works and Cowley's "The Wish" can be considered sources for Pomfret's poem. The greater extent to which Pomfret echoes Horace's ideas is frequently illustrated in the next three chapters, which attempt to determine why Pomfret's sentiments on retirement made his poem as popular as many critics have said it was.

CHAPTER IV

THE ESTATE AND THE LIBRARY IN "THE CHOICE"

Leigh Hunt in his poem also entitled "The 'Choice'" mentions at least part of the answer to why Pomfret's work was so widely received:

Our trivial poet hit upon a theme
Which all men love, an old, sweet household dream:
Pray, reader, what is yours--I know full well
What sort of home should grace my garden-bell.1

Hunt then outlines his mode of living according to his own tastes. The "sweet household dream" to which he alludes is the plan that Pomfret proposes for his own ideal retirement. A similar judgment of the poem, Dr. Johnson's comment, is repeated here:

His Choice exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions and equal to the common expectations; such a state as affords plenty and tranquility, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's Choice.2

These statements by Johnson and Hunt attribute the popularity of the poem to Pomfret's method of retirement. The title page of the third edition of the poem, published in 1700, outlines this system for prospective buyers as well as for readers:


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These topics provide an approach for the following examination of their appeals to the eighteenth-century audience. First of all, the analysis of each topic cites Pomfret's Horatian sources, because the poem includes ideas from Epode 2 and some other works. The discussion then considers the cultural backgrounds of the century relevant to each topic in order to determine why the poem appealed to its readers.

The first four lines of "The Choice" are:

If Heav'n the Grateful Liberty wou'd give,
That I might Chuse my Method how to Live:
And all those Hours, propitious Fate should lend,
In blissful Ease, and Satisfaction spend.

These lines are similar to some by Horace, who says after he has his estate:

bene est. nil amplius oro,
Maia nate, nisi ut propria haec mihi munera faxis.

A translation is: "It is well. O son of Maia, I ask nothing more but that you make these blessings lasting to me." The difference between Horace's and Pomfret's concerns with

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heaven and fate is that Horace has his estate while Pomfret still wishes for one. It is not necessary to discuss Horace's pagan philosophy concerning the existence of gods, since it is so far distant in time from Pomfret's Christian beliefs. On the other hand, hints of optimism connoted in these opening lines of "The Choice" deserve comment, for they are the beginning of the poet's topical appeal.

Pomfret's outlook is cheerful. He acknowledges that some providence grants wishes. It is true that in these opening verses he says "Heav'n" and "Fate," as well as "Heav'n" five more times in the poem. These words could be uttered even by a Deist, not just a Christian. The speaker, however, also mentions helping the poor by returning what "our Maker" (line 42) has given. The poet states "The Bounteous Author" (line 52), as well as "dying Martyrs" and "their Maker" (line 95). The God in "The Choice" is therefore a benevolent one in that He provides man with his needs. He is both "Indulgent" (lines 66, 98) and, again, "Bounteous" (line 98).

Especially for eighteenth-century Christians, these references were attributes of a benevolent God who not only made the world, but also still maintains it for the benefit of His creatures. This non-sectarian God could have appealed to those of the High and the Low Churches, conservatives and dissenters, Catholics and Protestants. Pomfret probably did not calculate that his own ideas on the Creator's
bounty would please everyone. It is, nevertheless, part of his fortune that this topic could please so many and offend none. This theme is also closely related to humanitarianism in lines 37-46.

The verses describing the setting of the estate in "The Choice" are:

Near some fair Town, I'd have a private Seat,  
Built Uniform, not Little, nor too Great;  
Better, if on a Rising Ground it stood;  
Fields on this side, on that a Neighbouring Wood.  
It shou'd within no other Things contain,  
But what were Useful, Necessary, Plain:  
Methinks 'tis Nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure  
The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture.  
A little Garden, Grateful to the Eye,  
And a Cool Rivulet run murm'ring by:  
On whose delicious Banks a stately Row  
Of Shady Limes, or Sycamores should grow.  
(lines 5-16)

These lines from "The Choice" echo a Horatian source:

Hoc erat in votis: modus agri non ita magnus,  
hortus ubi et tecto vicinus iugis aquae fons  
et paulum silvae super his foret.5

The translation is: "This is what I prayed for: a piece of land not very large, where there would be a garden, and near the house a spring of ever-flowing water, and up above these a bit of woodland." Horace loved his estate, for it is often described in his works, as in Epistle 1. 10 and Ode 3. 16. His Sabine farm was seven or eight miles east of Tivoli, a town near Rome. Although he did not describe his estate in a detailed manner, excavations begun in the eighteenth century and completed in 1931 indicate that his house had twelve rooms

and that a formal garden of nearly 3,000 square yards lay to the south. To the north the land fell to a river and looked across a valley towards two small towns.6

In these early lines of "The Choice," Pomfret introduces moderation, a theme which pervades the poem. He is Horatian not only in preferring a setting similar to the Roman's estate, but also in adhering to the Golden Mean, a theme developed in Horace's Satire 1. 1.7 Pomfret's property would not be entirely secluded, for although it would be "private," it would also be near a town. The estate being "not Little, nor too Great" explicitly describes its moderate size, and the garden would be little, but large enough to delight a viewer. Pomfret's content in limiting the physical size of his property foreshadows the moderation of his everyday life, which he explains in the rest of the poem.

The fact that his possessions would be "Useful, Necessary, Plain" is understood when one realizes that the poet's home and its environment would obviously have many advantages. The elevation of the house would keep all parts of it from flooding, while the "Fields on this side" would provide drainage and be nourished. Winds would ventilate the home in warm weather, when he welcomed the slightest breeze. Trees from the wood would provide Pomfret with fuel, building


7For a summary of this work, see supra, pp. 39-40.
materials, and even a buffer from noise and wind. If he had no well or should he ever want to farm his land, the rivulet would provide water. These advantages of the estate which he desires would be practical and convenient, and they imply what Pomfret admires in material objects: things that are "Useful, Necessary, Plain," with nothing like "The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture."

Pomfret's readers must have delighted in these early lines of "The Choice," for they would have admired not only the practical qualities of his estate, but also the esthetic features which strike the imagination. Most of the descriptions in these verses are visual: the house on the hill, the garden, the woods, the fields, and the rivulet lined with trees. Although the descriptions are general, it was the habit of eighteenth-century readers to fancy particular qualities from general sketches. According to Bonamy Dobrée:

In this part of the century a clear reference to nature was enough. The setting was given, and the reader was expected to fill in the details with whatever attendant delights he might associate with them. It is, after all, courteous; the reader is supposed to have some experience of his own, and to be at least the ordinary sentient being.8

Three influences which probably helped to make the general descriptions of the estate in "The Choice" pleasurable were the readers' familiarity with English Horatian tastes, their appreciation of gardens, and their delight in prospects.

In eighteenth-century England, even people who lived in

8Dobrée, p. 146.
cities were acquainted with the kind of estate which Pomfret describes. They knew the large estates from visiting them in the country and from hearsay. Residences such as Sir William Temple's at Moor Park, the Duke of Marlborough's at Blenheim, and Alexander Pope's at Twickenham were designed as showplaces as well as private seats, and admiring tourists and artists publicized them. If people did not see or hear of grand estates, they were still able to read of them. A convention in much of the fiction of the century is to describe the estate of a virtuous gentleman. Almost always it is the Horatian estate. In Tom Jones Henry Fielding draws Squire Allworthy's property. The house is in the "Gothic Style":

as commodious within as venerable without. It stood on the south-east side of a hill, but nearer the bottom than the top of it, so as to be sheltered from the north-east by a grove of old oaks which rose above it in a gradual ascent of near half a mile, and yet high enough to enjoy a most charming prospect of the valley beneath.

Distant groves, hills, lakes, valleys, rivers, and other details are mentioned, all "laid out with admirable taste, but owing less to art than to what Nature could give."

Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, in a study of landscape arts and the picturesque, cites other novels of the century, such as Samuel Richardson's Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison,


11Ibid., p. 9.
in which Horatian estates are drawn. The house on a hill became such a convention in fiction that, even a century later, William Makepeace Thackeray, in a work set in the early eighteenth century, sketched such an estate where young Henry Esmond spends his adolescence.

The brief mention of "A little Garden, Grateful to the Eye" (line 13) offered Pomfret's readers occasion to fancy the kind of garden he would have, for Pomfret says little about the garden. He does not say whether it would be wild or formal, or if it would have shrubs and trees as well as flowers. Without the mention of a specific type of garden, readers could have specified in their imaginations the gardens they preferred.

The French formal garden was the most popular garden in England during Pomfret's time. On his return from exile, King Charles II ordered one developed at Hampton Court and another at St. James's Park in London, where many people admired it. Hedges or brick wall defined the perimeter of French gardens, but their distinguishing characteristics were geometric patterns, mainly composed of grassy plots, parterres, floral designs, and pathways. Even the well-trimmed shrubs, bushes, and small trees were cut in block, round, and pyramid

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shapes, with all the vegetation and ornamental objects equi-
distantly spaced. The French fashion in gardening began to
decline sharply after 1700,\textsuperscript{14} around the time "The Choice"
first appeared.

Dutch formal gardens enjoyed a longer popularity than
did French ones. When William and Mary came to the throne,
in 1689, their preference for Dutch gardens influenced others
to plan them on their estates. Water-filled ditches or canals
outlined the extent of these gardens. One of their main
features was the rectangular compartments defined by care-
fully cropped hedges. The vegetation and furnishings were
not so symmetrically laid out as in French gardens, but
the Dutch style included large plants cut not only in geo-
metric shapes, but also in figures of animals.\textsuperscript{15}

Pomfret's brief mention of "A little Garden, Grateful
to the Eye," while it might mean little to the modern readers
of "The Choice," would not have escaped his contemporaries.
This apparently insignificant detail allowed his readers to
model their preferences in gardens after either the French
or the Dutch styles. Nor when the English people began to
favor what came to be called English gardens did the "little
Garden" lose its imaginative appeal, for the English gardens,
which were smaller than either the French or the Dutch,

\textsuperscript{14}Edward Malins, English Landscape and Literature,
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., pp. 14-15.
actually integrated houses on hills into their planning.

English gardens were wilder than other types. That is, the emphasis was on nature rather than art. The planners stressed not geometric patterns, but how the cultivated area blended in naturally with the rolling land and the distant hills. The garden for the English became not the center of visual interest, but only a part of the view towards the distance called a prospect. "The Choice" affords a prospect view. Pomfret's house would be on a hill, overlooking a garden, with a stream which had trees along its banks. Although this scene would not have excluded the readers from fancying a French or a Dutch garden, the poem includes an esthetic element that became popular as the century matured. In other words, earlier in the eighteenth century the imagination would have tended to emphasize the garden, and later the imagination would have abstracted a prospect view from Pomfret's description of the setting of his home.

About the time that "The Choice" was going through its early editions, Joseph Addison explained the appreciation of prospects more thoroughly and perhaps more extensively than anyone else has ever done. Addison's essays on the pleasures of the imagination in The Spectator, Nos. 411-421 (1712), arose from the recent discoveries, speculations, and interest in psychology, especially from the studies of René Descartes and John Locke. Addison says that more than any other sense, sight is the source of the delights of the imagination.
Throughout these essays, he returns again and again to a prospect view as the most pleasurable stimulus of this faculty, such as when he says, "A beautiful Prospect delights the Soul, as much as Demonstrations; and a Description in Homer has charmed more Readers than a Chapter in Aristotle." The imagination wants to fill itself to capacity with spacious sight: "Such are the Prospects of an open Champian [sic] country, a vast uncultivated Desert, of huge Heaps of mountains, high Rocks, and Precipices, or a wide Expanse of Waters." Rivers, jetteaus, and waterfalls enliven a prospect because the scene always moves, and therefore something quite new occurs each moment. Addison adds that man also delights in nature as it is sometimes ordered by art, as "in a Prospect which is well laid out, and diversified with Fields and Meadows, Woods and Rivers." The clause cited from Addison in the preceding sentence corresponds to Pomfret's mention in "The Choice" of "Fields on this side, on that a Neighbouring Wood" (line 8) and the "Cool Rivulet" (line 14). If Addison is correct in saying pleasurable sights which have "traced" themselves in the mind return to the imagination aided by memory, then Pomfret's

readers probably associated their past experiences with the prospect offered in "The Choice."

Addison's view of the imagination is somewhat narrow in light of modern psychology and even in terms of the science in the later eighteenth century. His essays on the imagination and esthetics are, nevertheless, the most representative of his age. They are perhaps the most typical of his time because the wide audience which he reached, both in the first printings of the essays and then later in various editions, considered them some of his most important and delightful efforts.

Not only Addison's ideas, but also other writings on prospects indicate that visual delights of nature were common topics of interest in the eighteenth century. Mark Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination" familiarized readers with the contemplation of prospect views. His poem, first published in 1744 and followed by a revision in 1756, was one of the most popular works of the century. Akenside repeats many of Addison's ideas on the sources of visual delights and considers him the man who more than any other writer popularized the pleasures of the imagination.

One new idea which Akenside has added is that the imagination can expand man's

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soul by his contemplation of grand and sublime objects of nature as he turns his eyes towards heaven after he has tired of earthly concerns. These thoughts are not very different from Pomfret's in that in his concern for the afterlife in "The Choice," lines 154-167, the view from his study, near the garden, might inspire his imagination.

Addison and Akenside had the general class of readers for an audience, but learned discourses were available to sophisticated readers in two other prominent studies on psychology and esthetics: Francis Hutcheson's Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (1725) and Edmund Burke's Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757). These writers, as do many others on matters of esthetics, emphasize the pleasures of sight as the most satisfying sense experiences.

It is clear that with Addison's essays, Akenside's poem, and the writings of others making prospects popular, many readers of Pomfret's poem would have been sensitive enough to consider the poet's little house on a hill, overlooking a garden and the town nearby, to be a prospect view. His general description of the setting is adaptable to this kind of view.

Other eighteenth-century poems besides "The Choice" describe beautiful views. Topographical poems, as they are called, became increasingly popular as the century wore on.

But they do not describe settings in the general manner of pomfret's work. They describe specific sites which their writers praise. R. A. Aubin, who has done the most extensive study of topographical poetry, lists in an appendix the titles and the dates of these works, from the year that each type began to the last occurrence in the nineteenth century. The poems are on mines, caves, seacoasts, and other aspects of the surface of the earth. For example, Aubin cites 134 region-poems between 1641 and 1800. Of special note relating to Pomfret's verses is that from 1660 to 1800, Aubin has discovered 179 hill-poems and 247 estate-poems. The significance of these verses as to Pomfret's work is that if it remained one of the most popular poems in the eighteenth century, it must have special qualities which the others do not. Aubin summarizes the attitudes of readers towards topographical verse, noting that although there were many poems of this nature, the audience did not favor them. The readers found these works inferior because they were purely descriptive. Aubin notes that eminent critics say that a poet should learn first to describe in detail before he turns to more general topics, such as human nature. As Sir Joshua Reynolds observes, the works of any artist last long if they are "built upon general nature," not upon "a

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partial view of nature." Reynolds also remarks that any good artist knows not only what to include, but also what to omit by avoiding the particular and creating a general impression."24 Needless to say, the topographical poems, by their very nature, offer little opportunity for general reflection, whereas the general sketch in the opening lines of "The Choice" saves it from the specific details and setting which makes each local poem ephemeral.

Thus far in this analysis of "The Choice," it is evident that the absence of details as to the pleasures of gardens and prospects allowed the poem to appeal to readers of the eighteenth century. Besides this fact, however, another aspect of taste in the English Augustan Age added to the delights in Pomfret's verses. This influence concerns the relation between the setting of the estate in the poem and the appreciation of landscape painting. Landscape painting has its origins in the works of Italian artists, especially the Venetian School. The scenery, at first, was merely incidental, functioning to set off human forms.25 The Italians enjoyed landscapes out of a liking for confined space.26


Landscapes became popular in England late in the seventeenth century, during Pomfret's lifetime, when English artists who had studied in Italy brought home this influence and when English travelers brought home pictures from the Grand Tour. Later in the eighteenth century, the founding of the Royal Academy, in 1768, allowed English artists to display their landscape works and permitted the public to see original masterpieces from other countries.

After Pomfret's death, the popularity of landscape painting in England afforded readers still another frame of reference to enjoy "The Choice." The picturesque quality of the setting in the poem puts emphasis on not only the prospect seen from the house, but also the view of the estate itself. In other words, a reader perusing the description in the poem could have imagined either or both of two views: the prospect seen from the house or the word-picture of the house on the hill and its environs.

Besides landscape painting, there were in Pomfret's times many picturesque qualities in the works of other poets. Many poets, before as well as after Pomfret's day, adapted certain descriptions and planning from landscape painting. Many of John Milton's verses demonstrate his powers of describing the picturesque, as exemplified in this passage

27Manwaring, pp. 7-8.
28Humphreys, p. 238.
from "L'Allegro":

Streit mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the Lantskip round it measures,
Russett Lawn, and Fallow Gray,
Where the nibling flocks do stray,
Mountains on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with Daisies pide,
Shallow Brooks, and Rivers wide.29

In these lines Milton overtly refers to a "Lantskip" and then particularizes it. The blind poet's frequent preoccupation with pictures stands out in his other works, such as "Il Penseroso," in which he creates cloudier and even darker scenes than the one above, and the famous description of Eden in Paradise Lost, iv.209-287. Jean Hagstrum's The Sister Arts extensively considers the picturesque elements in the works of James Thomson, Alexander Pope, William Collins, and Thomas Gray.30

It is certain that Pomfret was aware of the relation between painting and poetry. Two of his poems, "To a Painter, Drawing Dorinda's Picture," and "To the Painter, after He Had Finished Dorinda's Picture," are iconic poems. Iconic poetry, says Jean Hagstrum, generally describes an object after a work of art. The prime model of this kind of verse is the shield of Achilles, made by Hephaestus, in The


Iliad, xviii. In Homer's description, the reader is concerned with the object rather than its creation. Anacreon's lyrics, written in Greece in the sixth century B.C., also set a convention for brief verses now known as iconic poetry. This convention involves a poet's addressing an artist, asking him to make a thing according to the advice in the poem.\textsuperscript{31}

In one poem by Pomfret, before the painter does his work, Pomfret says:

\begin{quote}
Painter, the utmost of thy Judgment shew; 
Exceed ev'n Titian, and great Angelo: 
With all the Liveliness of Thought express 
The moving Features of Dorinda's Face. 
\end{quote} 
(lines 1-4)

The speaker then offers neither particular details nor specific traits of his love's features. beauty is so sublime that he cannot describe her:

\begin{quote}
No Human Skill can e're express them all, 
But must do Wrong to th' Fair Original. 
An Angel's Hand alone the Pencil fits; 
To mix the Colours, when an Angel sits. 
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Great Lely's noble Hand, excell'd by few 
The Picture fairer than Persons drew: 
He took the best that Nature cou'd impart, 
And made it better by his pow'rful Art. 
But had he seen that bright, surprising Grace, 
Which spreads itself o'er all Dorinda's Face, 
Vain had been all the Essays of his Skill; 
She must have been confess the fairest still. 
\end{quote} 
(lines 13-16, 23-30)\textsuperscript{32}

The other poem by Pomfret, commenting on the artist's effort,

\textsuperscript{31}Hagstrum, pp. 19 and 25.

\textsuperscript{32}[Pomfret], "To a Painter, Drawing Dorinda's Picture," Miscellany Poems, pp. 116-117.
Both of these poems, stating Dorinda’s beauty in hyperboles, are in the tradition of general descriptive poetry, for the speaker’s admiration for the object he praises, not any specific quality of beauty, is the real subject of the works. One can say that in these poems, typical of iconic poetry, Pomfret does what Jean Hagstrum says all iconic poets do: they are "providing for an aural form like the song a means of ordering visual detail." Although the details are not very concrete in Pomfret’s verses.

In summary, before eighteenth-century readers of "The Choice" were very far into the poem, their minds had been delighted by many visual appeals: a garden, a prospect, and a picturesque view of the poet’s estate. Pomfret had the fortune of making his descriptions general, not particular, so that his audience could enjoy many visual delights, each of which, at one time or another, was very popular in the

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33[Pomfret], "To the Painter, after He Had Finished Dorinda’s Picture," ibid., p. 118.

34 Hagstrum, p. 25.
eighteenth century.

Pomfret is a classicist not only in preferring a Horatian estate; he also reveals his classical taste in books. After describing his estate, he says:

At th' End of which a silent Study plac'd,
Shou'd be with all the Noblest Authors Grac'd.
Horace, and Virgil, in whose Mighty Lines
Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning shines.
Sharp Juvenal, and Am'rous Ovid too,
Who all the Turns of Loves [sic] soft Passion knew;
He that with Judgment reads his charming Lines,
In which strong Art, with stronger Nature joyns,
Must grant his Fancy does the best Excel:
His Thoughts so Tender, and Exprest so well.
With all those Moderns, Men of Steady Sense,
Esteem'd for Learning, and for Eloquence.
In some of these, as Fancy shou'd Advise,
I'd always take my Morning Exercise:
For sure no Minutes bring us more Content,
Than those in Pleasing, Useful Studies spent.
(lines 17-32)

As he composed these lines, Pomfret must have had some of these verses from Horace in mind:

{o rus, quando ego te aspiciam! quandoque licebit nunc veterum libris, nunc somno et inertibus horis, ducere sollicitae iucunda oblivia vitae!}

A translation is: "Oh rural home, when shall I behold you? When shall I be allowed to quaff the sweet forgetfulness of the cares of life, sometimes in the books of the ancients, sometimes in sleep and idle hours?"

si noles sanus, curres hydropicus; et ni posseas ante diem librum cum lumine, si non intendes animum studiis et rebus honestis, invidia vel amore vigil torquebere.36

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36 Horace Epist. 1. 2. 34-37, ibid., p. 264.
The translation is: "If you will not when well, you shall run when dropsical; and unless you call for a book with a light before daybreak, if you do not direct your mind to studies and honest occupations, you will be tormented when awake with envy or love."

aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae
aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae.

omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,
lectorem delectando pariterque monendo.37

The translation is: "Poets wish either to profit or to please, or at once to say things both agreeable and useful to life. He has gained every vote who has combined the useful with pleasure, at the same time delighting and instructing the reader." Pomfret mentions briefly and generally the modern authors, but he lists and comments on the ancients, for they are, from the viewpoint of eighteenth-century readers, the best and the most popular of the Roman poets.

Horace was very popular in the eighteenth century for reasons already discussed in Chapter II of this study. Virgil was also widely read for his epic and didactic works. His Aeneid provided English Augustans with precepts and examples of heroism and patriotism. In the Restoration and the following age, many writers attempted epics. Abraham Cowley wrote his Davideis (1657), and the greatness of Milton's Paradise Lost (1667) was recognized immediately, while its renown continued to grow throughout the eighteenth century.

37 Horace Ars Poetica 333-334, 343-344, ibid., p. 478.
century. Sir Richard Blackmore wrote the epic *Prince Arthur* (1695), and John Dryden, Joseph Addison, and other dramatists sought to continue the portrayal of heroic actions in literature. James Grainger's "Sugar Cane" (1764) and Sir John Dyer's "The Fleece" (1757) are written after Virgil's *Georgics*.

Concerning Pomfret's judgments of Horace and Virgil, he praises justly their works, for their "Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning" (line 20). The survival of their verses has made them undoubtedly immortal, and their genius, evident in their powers of expression and invention, manifests their wit. Their sophistication and variety of subjects display their solid learning.

Juvenal, whom Pomfret mentions among his classical readings, was not so popular as Horace and Virgil in the eighteenth century. But the satirist was widely perused by readers and imitated by writers. Between 1673 and 1789, his complete works, consisting of sixteen satires, went through seventeen printings in six different editions. In tracing the influence of classical satire on English writing, Raymond MacDonald Alden says that even before the late seventeenth century, English satirists held Horace in esteem for the reflective nature of his works, while Juvenal's pessimistic tone and direct rebuke "were the elements which chiefly

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caught the eye of his English imitators.\(^{39}\) James Sutherland attributes Juvenal's continuing appeal to "the far from common combinations of strong feeling with the highest qualities of style."\(^{40}\)

Perhaps it was Dryden in his famous discourse on satire who first praised Juvenal for his ability to "declaim wittily and sharply."\(^{41}\) Throughout the eighteenth century, however, writers involved in political and public issues used Juvenalian satire to call attention to their opponents and detestations. Shaftesbury is sharply denounced by Dryden in "Absalom and Achitophel" and "The Medal," published four months apart in 1682. The Juvenalian tone of John Oldham's "A Satire upon the Jesuits" (1681) denounces meddlers in politics. Daniel Defoe's "The True-Born Englishman" (1701) and Dr. Johnson's "London" (1738) prove the universality of Juvenal's Satire \(^3\) by expounding on the English equivalents. Dryden in "Mac Flecknoe" (1682) and Pope in The Dunciad (1728-1742) mercilessly expose hack writers and poor critics. Probably the last eminent English satirist in the Juvenalian stream before Lord Byron is Charles Churchill, who rails at contemporary theatrical people in The Rosciad (1761) and,


with John Wilkes, is responsible for the political editorials in *The North-Briton* in the early 1760's against such prominent foes as Tobias Smollett and King George III. Pomfret's phrase "Sharp Juvenal" (line 21) is a just comment on the Roman's tone.

Neither "The Choice," the love-pastorals, nor the religious poems of John Pomfret seem to have been influenced by Juvenal. Nevertheless, Pomfret would have Juvenal in his study. One of Pomfret's favorite works of the Roman is perhaps *Satire 3*, in which he prefers retirement to life in Rome for reasons similar to those expressed by some seventeenth-century English poets:

Ego vel Prochytam praepono Saburae;
nam quid tam miserum, tam solum vidimus, ut non
deteris credas horrere incendia, lapsus
tectorem adsiduos ac mille pericula saevae
urbis et Augusto recitantes mense poetas?42

A translation is:

I myself would prefer even Prochyta to the Sabura! For where has one ever seen a place so dismal and so lonely that one would not deem it worse to live in perpetual dread of fires and falling houses, and the thousand perils of this terrible city, and poets spouting in the month of August.43

Pomfret probably agrees also with the objections of Umbri-cius, a speaker in Juvenal's poem, who has left Rome to


avoid flatterers, high rents, smoke, and crowds. Pomfret no doubt finds some reinforcement for his own attitudes towards Horatian retirement in these lines by Juvenal:

Si potes avelli circensibus, optima Sorae aut Fabrateriae domus aut Frusinone paratur quanti nunc tenebras unum conducis in annum. hortulus hic puteuesque brevis nec reste movendus in tenuis plantas facili diffunditur haustu. vive bidentis amans et culti vilicus horti, unde epulum possis centum dare Pythagoreis. est aliquid, quocumque loco, quocumque recessu unius sese dominum fecisse lacertae.44

A translation reads:

If you can tear yourself away from the games of the Circus, you can buy an excellent house at Sora, at Fabrateria or Frusino, for what you now pay in Rome to rent a dark garret for one year. And you will there have a little garden, with a shallow well from which you can easily draw water, without need of a rope, to bedew your weakly plants. There make your abode, a friend of the mattock, tending a trim garden fit to feast a hundred Pythagoreans. It is something, in whatever spot, however remote, to have become the possessor of a single lizard!45

Needless to say, this rural seat must appeal to Pomfret, for it is similar to a Horatian estate and Pomfret's house on a hill. The reference to Pythagoreans also reminds one of Horace's and Pomfret's concern for plain food.

Pomfret shows a partiality for Ovid by praising him in five and a half lines. "Am'rous Ovid" (line 21) has been a favorite for his extensive writings on love. Dryden has a comment saying that during the Restoration "besides many of

45Ramsay, trans., in Juvenal Satire 3, ibid., p. 49
the Learn'd, Ovid has almost all the Beaux, and the whole Fair Sex his declar'd Patrons." Sir Samuel Garth, who supervised the translation and who himself translated many of Ovid's works, states that in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, many readers praised this Roman poet for his excellences: "heroic battle, the tender emotion of love, his searches into nature, versification, the power to make figures, and morals both serious and witty." In a similar judgment, Pomfret says that Ovid's "Fancy does the best Excel"; he possesses "strong Art, with stronger Nature" (lines 24-25). Classical scholar W. Y. Sellar, in summing up the attitudes of critics and readers of Ovid from the Middle Ages to modern times, says that Ovid has always been popular owing mainly to his creation of feminine sentiments on love. His works imitate love as it is, not in any highly ideal or tragic manner. His women tell of their loves in vehement and anguished passions, in conversational rather than declamatory styles.

As to the modern writers whom Pomfret would include in the library of his retired life, very little can be determined. He says only that they would be "Men of Steady


48Sellar, pp. 330-331.
sense, / Esteem'd for Learning, and for Eloquence" (lines 27-28). Biographical accounts of Pomfret do not mention that he had a library which survived him. None of his other works mentions a single modern poet, any mention of which might suggest his preferences in literature beyond the Roman poets included in "The Choice." The only references to modern writers in Pomfret's works are in the preface which begins all editions of his collected works, in which he says that he hopes his works might appeal to men of taste and sense, not merely to popular tastes: "And if a Rymer, or a Congreve say, 'tis Well; he will not be at all Solicitous how great the Majority may be to the contrary." To speculate on the moderns who would grace Pomfret's library, one might therefore examine the critical opinions of both Rymer and Congreve.

Beyond Thomas Rymer's writings as historiographer royal (1693-1713) are five critical works, all of which Pomfret could have known since they were published during his lifetime. One is a four-paragraph advertisement in which Rymer explains why he uses rime in the verses of his only play, Edgar, or The English Monarch; An Heroick Tragedy (1678). This note on rime fails to imply which authors


Pomfret would have in his library. On the other hand, it is certain that Pomfret, if he had at least average tastes, would not include Rymer's play, for it was apparently a complete failure. It was never performed, and all copies of the only printing of it were never sold, even after publishers changed the title in 1693, calling it a second edition, and after issuing it again in the same year, calling it a reprint. Pomfret was probably not familiar with Rymer's preface to the collected works of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester, for the preface remained anonymous until Rymer's name was appended to it in 1714, twelve years after Pomfret's death. It would also be impossible to determine if Pomfret himself esteemed Rochester's works, unless it were for a close translation of Ovid's Amores 2.9, Ovid being one of Pomfret's favorites, although he might have preferred Ovid in Latin.

Since there exists no basis on which to determine Pomfret's tastes in drama, it cannot be ascertained to what extent he might have approved of Rymer's judgments in The Tragedies of the Last Age (1677) and A Short View of Tragedy (1692). In these works, Rymer, after applying Aristotelian

52 Zimansky, ibid., pp. 224-225.
rules to English tragedy, concludes that the English playwrights, such as Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher, are without merit as to serious plays, but that the English comedies are the best in the world. Pomfret might have admired Rymer's generous citations from Horace's dramatic criticism, since Rymer in these two works quotes from the Roman's Epistle 2. 1 four times and Ars Poetica nine times. In terms of recommending any specific authors and works, however, Rymer's comments in the preface to a translation of René Rapin's Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise on Poesie (1674) are indeed useful. Centering his discussion on critical principles, Rymer again notes how the ancients have surpassed the moderns in poetry, but he also briefly yet explicitly recommends two modern English poets. He says that although Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene is too "fanciful and chimerical, without any uniformity, without any formulation in truth," this writer, nevertheless, "may be reckon'd the first of our Heroick Poets; he had a large spirit, a sharp judgment." Rymer also praises Abraham Cowley's unfinished Davideis, noting that although the action lacks unity and that the dependence upon divine machinery offers an action which is difficult even for great persons

54Rymer, The Tragedies of the Last Age and A Short View of Tragedy, in Critical Works, pp. 17-76 and 82-175.
to emulate, Cowley still "understood the purity, the perspicuity, the majesty of stile, and the vertue of numbers" and could "express his Thoughts without the least difficulty or constraint." 56

From the viewpoint of Pomfret's enjoyment of modern writers, these remarks are fortunate. First of all, Rymer's reference to Spenser's spirits and judgment manifested in *The Faerie Queene* suggests that Pomfret would agree with the critic, for Spenser's work, however fanciful, is clearly didactic concerning virtues, subject matter which fulfills Pomfret's desire to read "Useful Studies" (line 32). Pomfret's description of his virtuous friends in "The Choice," lines 74-97, the analysis of which is considered below, also implies that he might include Spenser's work in his own study. Moreover, Rymer's recommending Cowley's work for its style and theme suggests another work which Pomfret would consider one of those "Pleasing, Useful Studies." He might also include Cowley among the worthy moderns because he has twelve Pindaric odes, a difficult form in which to write and one in which not too many English poems have been composed.57 Pomfret himself has three Pindarics, although they do not display any of Cowley's influence.58

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56 Ibid., p. 8. The italics are Rymer's.


It cannot be determined for which reasons and through which works Pomfret came to admire William Congreve's critical judgments. Congreve's longest critical work is Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations, &c. (1698), a defense of his plays which were considered immoral in Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, published two and a half months before Congreve's response. One cannot conclude what Pomfret thought of Congreve's skillful and logical rebuttal of Collier's absurd accusations of obscenity and blasphemy. If Pomfret read the defense, however, he might have admitted that Congreve knew more than Collier about criticism and playwriting.

Pomfret might have admired Congreve's "Concerning Humour in Comedy," composed as an epistle to critic and dramatist John Dennis in 1695 and published six months later in a periodical. In this work, Congreve distinguishes between humor as the natural disposition of a character and wit as the expression of one's peculiar humor, a distinction which Congreve believes "intirely[sic] new, and was never touched upon before." Pomfret might have admired Congreve's The Last Epiphany. A Pindaric Ode," Remains, pp. 8-17.


60 Congreve, "Concerning Humour in Comedy," ibid., III, 167.
clear explanation from a fresh viewpoint of the various characterizations available to a dramatist, as well as an insight into the playwright's own works.

Beyond this essay, Congreve has no critical works, except certain fine explanatory notes to some of his own translations of Ovid, but Pomfret could not have seen these, at least not in published form, because they were printed in 1707, after Pomfret's death. It is also impossible to ascertain if Pomfret might have enjoyed and included in his study Congreve's plays, for there are no comments in Pomfret's poems or biographies of him to indicate his tastes in drama.

On the other hand, Pomfret might have enjoyed some of Congreve's poems, for these two men shared an appreciation of certain Roman poets. During Pomfret's lifetime, Congreve published translations of Juvenal's Satire 11 and three Horatian odes. Although none of the translations treats themes which "The Choice" does, Pomfret might have Congreve's poems in his study out of interest in ancient poets and admiration for Congreve's three Pindaric odes. 61

A few of Congreve's comments with which Pomfret might concur are in the preface to the first collection of Dryden's plays (1700), which Congreve dedicates to the Duke of Newcastle. This preface is a typical Restoration dedication, praising in general terms both his patron, who underwrote the

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61 Congreve, Congreve's Poems in Complete Works, IV, 1-178.
publication of the plays, and the deceased playwright. Besides calling attention to Dryden's excellence as a dramatist, Congreve singles out Dryden's learning, versification, and diction, qualities which fulfill Pomfret's standard for authors to be "Esteem'd for Learning, and for Eloquence" (line 28). If Pomfret did not enjoy Dryden's plays, he quite understandably could have admired Dryden's translations of the same poets mentioned in "The Choice." Dryden turned to English four works by Horace, five satires of Juvenal, and all of Virgil. Of Ovid's works he translated two elegies, three epistles, two elegies from Amores, Book I of The Art of Love, and all of Book I and parts of seven other books of Metamorphoses. 62

Beyond these speculations on Rymer, Congreve, and writers whom they praise, no further evidence exists to determine which modern authors would grace Pomfret's library in his ideal retired life. These speculations have been pursued only to determine as far as possible the implications of Pomfret's own comments, which are extra-textual to "The Choice," on the critical judgments of two writers. After all, Pomfret might have even met these men at bookstores, coffee-houses, or theaters during his six-month stay in London in 1702, and learned to admire their ideas during those experiences. On the other hand, Pomfret has mentioned

62 Dryden, Poems, ed. Kinsley, 4 vols. Dryden worked so extensively with these Roman poets that out of the 1806 pages in this edition, 903 pages contain translations from their works. The 432 pages of Vol. III include all of Virgil.
these men in the preface to his own works only in the context of how those works might be received. His phrase "a Rymer, or a Congreve," in which their names are preceded by indefinite articles, might merely imply a generic use of their names. That is, Rymer and Congreve could represent, in a general manner, prominent men of letters whose tastes have been founded on critical principles and broad experiences in reading. As such, they are readers with tastes which are beyond the masses of popular applauders, or, as Pomfret calls them, "the Injudicious Many."63

Pomfret's not mentioning specific modern writers and his inclusion of specific ancients are perhaps reconciled in terms of his tone and intention in "The Choice." Throughout the poem he says that in his retired life he would avoid extremes which might lead him into uneasiness, whether it be away from personal satisfaction, health, or friends. In terms of literature, the ancients are one extreme and the moderns another. However, Pomfret is secure in preferring particular ancients, especially in light of their popularity in his own day. On the other hand, he probably refrains from enumerating modern authors because he would necessarily have to omit some which might later become suddenly popular. Moreover, such a listing would also imply to some readers his sanction of partisan ideas, such as if he included Dryden, who sometimes writes from the viewpoint of a Catholic, as in

"The Hind and the Panther," and sometimes on political disputes, as in "Absalom and Achitophel." A similar pitfall for Pomfret would await him had he included Milton's name, for besides writing *Paradise Lost*, he espouses in many writings the Puritan cause, a sentiment not popular with many eighteenth-century Englishmen.

There is much emphasis in "The Choice" on the mean in each of Pomfret's topics which outline his ideal life, and his hope to enjoy some of the ancients and some moderns is certainly enough to imply that he would be moderate in his literary tastes. Just as he has not too carefully delineated his estate, neither has he labeled and catalogued each book in his library. He would direct his readings towards pleasure and instruction, as evidenced by his selection of authors for their powers of eloquence, wit, and learning. He also includes delight and utility among the effects of reading in one of his pastorals, a work which illuminates these qualities of literature, especially concerning language. In "Strephon's Love for Delia Justified in an Epistle to Celadon," Strephon explains how he spends the evenings with his beloved:

And while our Flocks in fruitful Pastures feed,  
Some well-design'd, Instructive Poem Read;  
Where useful Morals, with soft Numbers join'd,  
At once delight and cultivate the Mind:  
Which are by her to more Perfection brought,  
By wise Remarks upon the Poet's Thought;  
So well she knows the Stamp of Eloquence,  
The empty Sound of Words from Solid Sense.  
The Florid Fustian of Rhyming Spark,  
Whose random Arrow ne'er comes near the Mark,
Can't on her Judgment be impos'd, and pass
For Sterling Gold, when 'tis but Gilded Brass. 64

This poem and "The Choice" both mention "Eloquence," and here
the phrase "Solid Sense" echoos "Steady Sense" (line 27) of
the better-known work. "Strephon's Love for Delia" also
describes the pleasures of language which Pomfret derives
from perusing the ancients and the moderns, for he makes
reference to "Numbers," or meter, and to rime and sound, all
of which are technical considerations not mentioned in "The
Choice." Works with these qualities, as he remarks in "The
Choice," are indeed "Pleasing, Useful Studies" (line 32).

Since the focus in the first thirty-two lines of "The
Choice" is clearly on some of the pleasurable and the prac-
tical elements of Pomfret's ideal life, this merging of
delight and utility perhaps explains some of the attraction
which the poem held for its eighteenth-century readers.
These early verses allude to well-known referents which
pleased the tastes of Pomfret's audience. Pleasures of the
imagination are apparent in the description of the house on
the hill and its environs, as well as in the comments on the
appeal of the authors. From Pomfret's argument, a reader
in any age could infer the practical value of the site of the
estate and the moral content of the selected authors. The
phrases "Useful, Necessary, Plain" (line 10) and "Pleasing,
Useful Studies" (line 32), furthermore, summarily provide the

64[Pomfret], "Strephon's Love for Delia Justified in an
poet's overt, emphatic preferences with which he would furnish his ideal life. The general descriptions allowed the minds of his readers to call up various associative qualities of books, gardens, prospects, and the picturesque. The effect of these general descriptions was that the early part of "The Choice" offered much to any reader's imagination.
CHAPTER V

POMFRET'S ENJOYMENT AND SHARING OF HIS BOUNTY

In contrast to the earlier parts of "The Choice," in which Pomfret comments on a rural home and a library, the rest of the poem describes his enjoyment of life with people. The notation on the title page of the third edition, "II. His Fortune and Charity," succinctly states the topical concern of the second section of the poem, lines 33-52, for in this passage Pomfret details his financial situation and his benevolence in his ideal retired life:

I'd have a Clear, and Competent Estate,
That I might Live Gentiley, but not Great.
As much as I cou'd moderately spend,
A little more, sometimes t'Oblige a Friend.
Nor shou'd the Sons of Poverty Repine
Too much at Fortune, they shou'd Taste of mine;
And all, that Objects of true Pitty [sic] were,
Shou'd be Reliev'd with what my Wants cou'd spare:
For that, our Maker has too largely giv'n,
Shou'd be return'd, in Gratitude, to Heav'n.
A frugal Plenty shou'd my Table spread;
With Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes Fed;
Enough to Satisfy, and something more
To Feed the Stranger, and the Neighb'ring Poor.
Strong Meat Indulges Vice, and Pomp'ring [sic] Food
Creates Diseases, and Inflames the Blood.
But what's sufficient to make Nature strong,
And the bright Lamp of Life continue long,
I'd freely take, and as I did Possess,
The Bounteous Author of my Plenty Bless.
(lines 33-52)

The themes of moderation in wealth and eating echo some of
Horace's verses. About too much concern over wealth, Horace says:

diffidit urbium
portas vir Macedo et subruit semulos
reges muneribus; munera navium
saevos inlaqueant duces.
crescentem sequitur cura pecuniam
maiorumque fames.¹

The translation is: "The Macedonian hero burst through the gates of cities and overthrew rival monarch by bribes. Bribes ensnare fierce captains of vessels. Anxiety and a thirst for more follows increasing wealth." Commenting on moderate table fare, Horace notes:

{o quando faba Pythagorae cognata simülque
uncta satis pingui ponentur holuscula lardo!
o noctes cenaeque deum! quibus ipse meique
ante Larem proprium vescor vernasque procaces
pasco libatis dapibus.²

In English this passage means:

When shall the kindred bean of Pythagoras and at the same time herbs well seasoned with fat bacon be set before me? 0 nights and repasts of the gods! at which I am regaled, and also my friends, before my own Lar. I also feed my saucy slaves with the hallowed dainties.

Horace also comments extensively on the healthful benefits of a simple diet and the ill effects of an immoderate one throughout Satire 2. 2.³ Part of Pomfret's concern for the poor is also an echo from Horace. Although the Roman mentions

¹Horace Ode 3. 16. 13-18, Odes and Epodes, ed. C. E. Bennett, p. 232.


³See supra, pp. 42-43, for a summary of this work.
the poor in only a few of his works, he is aware of their presence and needs. While exhorting his patron, Maecenas, on the dangers of avarice, Horace says that an affluent man does not know how well off he is until he compares his lot with that of the numerous needy people.\(^4\) In another instance while commenting on frugality, Horace says one of the duties of a citizen is aiding the poor.\(^5\)

As Pomfret moves to a public enjoyment of his ideal life, he continues to develop the theme of moderation. He would live "Gentilely, but not Great" (line 34), and he refers overtly to the Golden Mean in saying he would have "As much as I cou'd moderately spend" (line 35), with enough to help a friend and the poor. His table would promote the continuance of ease and comfort, as he ate "Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes" (line 44) to effect a long life and as he avoided rich foods, which can only bring on diseases and discomfort. Besides expounding on the practicality of being moderate in dietary matters, this section of the poem is permeated by Pomfret's attitudes towards using material goods for spiritual benefits. In his essay on "The Choice," E. E. Kellett considers the tone and the subject matter of these verses as useful to one who wants to compose a popular poem. He says that they are pious:


\(^5\)Horace Sat. 2. 2. 103, ibid., p. 144.
A sound, but not too ostentatious piety, is also to be recommended. Despite of gods, men, and columns, the mediocre poet is sure of a certain circulation provided he puts in here and there a safe and orthodox paraphrase of Scripture, or an exhortation to a devout and decorous life.

Kellett then mentions four of Pomfret's religious pindaric poems and continues:

All these were highly esteemed. In those days, at any rate, whatever the apparent greatness of a wanton bard, no one seems to have doubted that the moral bards were ipso facto of a higher class. Here the authority of Lord Halifax, the universal patron of the Muses, is without appeal. Writing to Hughes and congratulating him on the purity of his verses Halifax adds,

In all times, and in all ages of the world, the moral poets have been ever the greatest, and as much superior to others in wit as in virtue; nor does this seem difficult to be accounted for, since the dignity of their subjects raised their ideas, and gave a grandeur to their sentiments.

He seems to have thought that the superiority of Virgil to Ovid, and of Milton to Dryden, consisted solely in a loftier morality. But Halifax, who probably paid more for poetry than any other man that ever lived, knew what he was talking about. We therefore fearlessly recommend those who are now beginning the ascent of Parnassus, to discard the clogs of irreligion and immorality, and devote their attention to sacred themes.

Kellett does not indicate why Pomfret's religious poems "were highly esteemed," although one might agree with the critic's

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6Halifax is Charles Montagu, Earl of Halifax, who composed An Epistle to Charles, Earl of Dorset. See supra, pp. 13-14. Halifax patronized many writers early in their careers, among them Addison, Steele, Congreve, Nicholas Rowe, Thomas Tickell, and John Hughes. See Samuel Johnson, "Halifax," Lives, II, 46, and G. B. Hill's notes. John Hughes (1677-1720) was a poet and a dramatist. His poems are in Anderson, VII, and Chalmers, X. Kellett has not documented Halifax's comments, and research for this study has not discovered their source.

7Kellett, pp. 178-179.
doubt that all moral and religious verse has always been esteemed by all ages. After all, good poetry is a matter of artistic use of language as well as significant ideas, a happy combination which accounts for the continuing appeal of many Greek dramas, David's psalms, and Paradise Lost. One doubts, along with Kellett, in his ironic tone, that a poet whose only wares are "sacred themes" will earn renown.

"The Choice," however, is not on a sacred theme. The critic has shifted from his introductory implication that the verses on Pomfret's benevolence have a "sound, but not too ostentatious piety." The poet's sentiments are, nevertheless, quite sound, for they have a firm basis in his beliefs as a Christian clergyman. The fact that most of his readers were Christians suggests that they recognized the Scriptural overtones which Kelletts mentions. Since the Bible abounds with references to charity, hospitality, and God's bounty, perhaps the following sources are only similar to the ones which the critic recognizes and Pomfret has in mind:

I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.\(^8\)

Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.\(^9\)

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.\(^10\)

Be kindly affectioned to one another with brotherly love; in humour preferring one another. . . . Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality.\textsuperscript{11}

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for "God loveth a cheerful giver." And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiently in all things, may abound in every good work.\textsuperscript{12}

Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.\textsuperscript{13}

Hospitality again appears in "The Choice" in relation to Pomfret's welcoming his neighbors (line 67), and God as the source of plenty appears in relation to wine (line 66), to the poet's ladyfriend (line 98), and to his long life of ease and plenty (lines 154-155), although none of these passages appears to be based so apparently on Scripture as those on hospitality and the poor.

Pomfret's piety characterizes him as an unselfish man, for he says he would hope for a little more money than is needed to maintain only a modest estate. Spiritual values dominate this passage on his fortune and charity, as he would act according to the belief that God provides a system in which His bounty can be shared. A man blessed with financial and material comfort has the opportunity to help distribute God's gifts by sharing with friends and the needy. He

\textsuperscript{11}Rom. 12:10 and 13. \textsuperscript{12}Corinth. 9:6-8. \textsuperscript{13}Heb. 13:1-2.
thereby becomes charitable and shows gratitude to God.

Pomfret's references to needy people—"Sons of poverty" (line 37), "Objects of true Pity [sic]" (line 39), and "the Stranger, and the Neighb'ring Poor" (line 46)—suggest that his eighteenth-century readers admired this part of the poem in relation to certain sentiments which were common in the everyday life and the literature of the time. People of those days were aware of the plight of the poor. In an age when the population increased greatly and rural people moved to cities and large towns to avoid a low standard of living, the condition of the impoverished was obvious to all men. No matter what one's philosophy was, says A. R. Humphreys, the English "were founding morality, as Christians, on love of God, and Christian charity towards men; as 'intellectualists,' on universal moral law to which man conforms through reason; as believers in 'moral sentiment,' on the affections and passions of the heart." Humphreys also lists indicators of the spread of social sympathy and conscience: the contribution of 1,000 pounds to victims of the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, as well as the establishment of charity schools, the Royal Humane Society, dispensaries for the poor, and various philanthropic institutions.14

Pomfret's verses on charity most likely suggested to

his readers that he is a "Good Man," a prominent figure in the literature of the century, for the poetry and the fiction written in those times abounds with examples of people caring for the poor. Charles Whittuck, in his brief work on the Good Man, says that the English are ethical as regards charity in their literature, while the Continentals are philosophical. The English "bias is towards edification rather than towards the pursuit either of abstract truth or of aesthetic charm." The English writers of the eighteenth century are "popular educators" in adapting philosophical wisdom to popular and practical uses.15

A few examples from the well-known writers of the century confirm Whittuck's judgments and also illustrate that Pomfret's readers probably recognized him as a Good Man. In his Third Moral Essay, Alexander Pope says that it is not only titled gentlemen acting out of noblesse oblige who can aid the poor. Pope offers an example from the life of John Kyrle, the celebrated Man of Ross:

[Pope.] The Man of Ross, each lisping babe replies,
Behold the Market place with poor o'erspread!
The Man of Ross divides the weekly bread:
He feeds yon Alms-house, neat, but void of state,
Where Age and Want sit smiling at the gate:
Him portion'd maids, apprentic'd orphans blest.
The young who labour, and the old who rest.
Is any sick? the Man of Ross relieves,
Prescribes, attends, the med'cine makes, and gives.

"Thrice happy man! enabled to pursue
"What all so wish, but want the pow'r to do!
"Oh say, what sums that gen'rous hand supply?
"What mines, to swell that boundless charity?"

[Poep.] Of Debts, and Taxes, Wife and Children
clear,
This Man possest five hundred pounds a year.
Blush, Grandeur, blush! proud Courts, withdraw your
blaze!
Ye little Stars! hide your diminish'd Rays.16

The Man of Ross, although he has no monument, is enshrined
forever for the edification of readers in the verses of the
greatest poet of the eighteenth century.

Henry Fielding also suggests the importance of being
charitable when he explains the renown which accrues to bene-
vvolent men. Parson Adams, a comic but a good man, tells
Joseph Andrews that men of high station not only invest
money in property, but also use it often to aid the poor:

Some gentlemen of our cloth report charitable actions
done by their lords and masters; and I have heard Squire
Pope, the great poet, at my lady's table tell stories
of a man that lived at a place called Ross, and another
at the Bath, one Al-- Al-- I forget his name, but it is
in the book of verses. This gentleman hath built up a
stately house too, which the squire likes very well; but
his charity is seen farther than his house, though it
stands on a hill,--ay, and brings him more honour too.17

Squire Pope is obviously Alexander Pope, famous for his

16Alexander Pope, "Epistle III: To Allen, Lord
Bathurst," lines 262-270, 275-282, Epistles to Several Per-
sons, ed. F. W. Bateson, Vol. III:2 of The Poems of Alexander
Pope, ed. Norman Ault and John Butt, The Twickenham Edition
(London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.; New Haven: Yale University

17Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, ed. Martin C.
Battestin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press,
charitable deeds, as well as his benevolent attitudes. The reference to "Al-- Al--" over which Adams stumbles is to Ralph Allen (1694-1764), a generous man to whom Pope dedicated his Third Moral Essay, cited a few paragraphs previously, and on whom Fielding modeled Squire Allworthy of Tom Jones. The man's living in a house on a hill reminds one of the estate in "The Choice," although Pomfret in his retired life would not be so wealthy as Allen.

Other figures in literature of the eighteenth century illustrate how prevalent is the idea that man ought to relieve the poor with his fortune. Tobias Smollett says of Matt Bramble that "He affects misanthropy, in order to conceal the sensibility of a heart, which is tender, even to a degree of weakness" and shows his benevolence by making his neighbors whom he could sue in court give money to the poor of the parish.18 The parson in Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" (1770), reminiscent of Chaucer's Parson, aids the poor on a salary of only forty pounds a year, at the expense of his own comfort.19 In Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling (1771), Harley goes through many episodes in which he gives money to the poor and relieves the pitiful in


Towards the end of the eighteenth century, social novels emphasized benevolence in the average man. Elizabeth Simpson Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796), Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality* (1765-1770), and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) expose the selfishness and failure of the upper classes in society, so that the emphasis is taken from them and transferred to everyone in society. Novels like these also give a much more detailed example of social responsibilities than afforded by "The Choice." Pomfret's poem, nevertheless, offers at least the general sentiments of a conscience towards the needy.

In the third group of lines in "The Choice," entitled "III. His Hospitality and Temperance," Pomfret opens with twelve verses on the uses of wine:

> I'd have a little Vault, but always stor'd,  
> With the Best Wines, each Vintage cou'd afford.  
> Wine whets the Wit, improves its Native force,  
> And gives a pleasant Flavour to Discourse;  
> By making all our Spirits Debonair,  
> Throws off the Lees, the Sediment of Care.  
> But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends,  
> May be Debauch'd, and serve Ignoble Ends;  
> So, but too oft, the Grapes [sic] refreshing Juice  
> Does many Mischievous Effects produce.  
> My House shou'd no such rude Disorders know,  
> As from high Drinking consequently flow.  

(lines 53-64)

In the first edition of "The Choice," the first two verses of the preceding passage read:

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I'd have a little Cellar, Cool, and Neat,
With Humming Ale, and Virgin Wine Repleat.

The Oxford English Dictionary observes that "humming" in the context of alcoholic drink is a colloquial term meaning "strong," and questions if it might also mean "causing a humming in the head; effervescing, frothing." The absence of "humming" in works on the history and the process of brewing indicates that the word is not part of the vocabulary of the science. In any event, Pomfret's changing of these two verses promotes unity in his passage on wine, for the lines which succeed these two comment only on wine, not on any other beverage.

Many of Pomfret's sentiments on wine are echoes from Horace. Throughout his writings, the Roman comments on the pleasures of life enjoyed when accompanied by wine. He hardly ever discusses dining without discussing wine. Falernian, from its frequent mention, seems to be his favorite kind of wine. Typical of his cataloguing of the praises of wine are these verses:

quid non ebrietas dossignat? operta recludit,
spes iubet esse ratas, ad proelia trudit inertem,
solicitcis animis onus existit, addocet artes.
fecundi calices quem non fecere disertum?
contracta quem non in paupertate solutum? 21

The English of this passage is:

What wonders does not warmth of wine work? It discloses secrets, bids our hopes to be fulfilled, pushes on the coward to battle, takes the load from anxious minds,

21Horace Epist. 1. 5. 16-20, Satires, Epistles, ed. H. Ruston Fairclough, pp. 280 and 282.
teaches arts. Whom have not plentiful glasses made eloquent, whom not free from pinching poverty?

In one of his odes, Horace says:

Nullam, Vare, sacra vite prius severis arborem
circa mite solum Tiburis et moenia Catili;
siccis omnia nam dura deus proposuit neque
mordaces aliter diffugiunt sollicitudines. 22

A translation is: "Varus, plant no tree in preference to the sacred vine in the mild soil of Tibur and by the walls of Catilus. For the abstemious god [Bacchus] has ordained that everything be hard, nor are gnawing cares by any other means dispelled." With drinking wine being a pleasant pastime for Pomfret as well as Horace, it is fitting that the English poet expound on the use of this drink.

In the twelve lines on wine, Pomfret displays more of his sanguine temperament than he does on food. His use of wine would not involve a "frugal Plenty" (line 43) as in dining. He wants a vault that is always full of "the Best Wines, each Vintage 23 cou'd afford" (line 54). He would use

22Horace Ode 1. 18. 1-4, Odes and Epodes, ed. C. E. Bennett, p. 56.

23The word Vintage in Pomfret's day, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, did not denote "fine wine from a good year," as the modern term does. Vintage in this poem means only "wine from a given year." According to André L. Simon, Bottlescrew Days: Wine Drinking in England during the Eighteenth Century (London: Duckworth, 1926), p. xi, wine was not aged in Pomfret's time. It was perhaps only three months old, or six at the most, even when brought from France. Cork was first used as a stopper only in the late seventeenth century. Until that time, wine had been stored in large containers which were air-tight. With the invention of cork stoppers, people began to store bottles of wine on end to mature them, a practice which led to many changes in the habits of English wine drinkers.
this "refreshing Juice" (line 61) among friends to enjoy its usual benefits in cordial company: it loosens the tongue in conversation and rids men of cares.

Just as the first six lines of this passage reveal pomfret's enjoyment of wine, the last six verses explain his prudent use of it. He says that although wine is a blessing from heaven, it should not be misused in drunkenness or disorder. He again warns that a mean exists to limit pleasure. His admonition on the dangers of wine most likely helped to make "The Choice" popular among readers who detested drinking. Most historians trace English drinking problems to 1689, when William and Mary needed money to finance political intrigues at home and abroad. They encouraged trade in spirits at home by highly taxing imported liquors and wines.24 At the same time, farmers produced more grain than the English and the foreign markets could consume as food, and so they sold grain cheap to distillers. The new tax became so unpopular with buyers of drinks when it raised prices that vendors set up illicit stills to keep costs down by avoiding the tax.25

This illegal trade, however, soon became apparent to the government, which failed to collect the revenue it had


anticipated, and the consumption of alcohol was known to have increased greatly. People could obtain drinks at almost every place where they bought goods or hired services, including grocery shops, fruit stalls, tabacconists, hostelries, and playhouses. People frequented numerous gin shops, for gin had become popular among the lower classes, owing to its cheapness, which arose from being produced from impure ingredients. Tobias Smollett records that one gin-shop owner put up a sign promising that anyone could become drunk for a penny and dead-drunk for two, with straw to sleep on. The drunks, overwhelmed by gin, slept until sober on the premises and began anew the next day at a cheap rate to destroy their health and lives. By 1721, over 6,000 liquor dealers served a little over 700,000 persons in the London area, a ratio of one dealer to a little over 100 buyers. The consumption of alcohol had increased sevenfold since 1689.

By mid-century the government eventually enforced its tax laws on beer, wine, and distilled spirits. However, it first had to pass many laws, which customers and dealers met with riots and further evasion of taxes, until the government established a system of effective surveillance and intelligence that made illicit distilling impossible and continued

26Ibid., pp. 30-32.
28McKenzie, p. 139.
heavy drinking, expensive. The decline in sales of grain to brewers and distillers led farmers to increase their prices, so that they made profits even when they had large surpluses, and the government was still able to collect taxes.29

Pomfret's verses on moderate drinking drew their topical appeal from his readers owing to the problems of government, farmers, and drinkers concerning alcohol itself. However, it was not the frustration of tax collectors or those involved in commerce which brought about the readers' greatest interest in this part of "The Choice." Throughout the struggles of the nation to settle the problem of raising revenue, there arose many physical and spiritual sufferings caused by alcoholism. Employers complained of the frequent absenteeism and the poor performances of their hired help, and drinks were available in workhouses and prisons to people who had little to salvage from their lives. Gin, the most popular drink, especially among the poor, was given to children to keep them quiet, while their mothers drank to excess and turned to prostitution for money for more gin. The infant mortality rate was very high between 1720 and 1750, the years of the greatest consumption of alcohol, for the children were sickly, undernourished, and often killed by their mothers, who considered them burdens. Heavy drinking also left many open to diseases. In the years of famine:

29 George, p. 39.
many farmers preferred to sell their produce to distillers, so that the populace paid a dear price for bread, which the poorer and the less industrious people could not afford. Crime spread widely owing to jobless persons seeking money for drink and to assaults and deaths arising from drunken disputes and enforced prostitution. Besides all the misery brought on individuals by drunken excesses, the nation also suffered from a disrespect for law and order, stemming from violence and riots against the local and the national governments, which tried to enforce tax laws and to promote public security.

It would be difficult to imagine that Pomfret's readers, as they perused his verses on moderate drinking, were not reminded of the widespread alcoholism which the English nation was undergoing. Many of the poet's readers observed first-hand what he meant by saying that immoderate drinking "Does many Mischievous Effects produce" (line 62), and they also knew of "such rude Disorders . . . / As from high Drinking consequently flow" (lines 63-64). His brief, general description of these excesses was obviously true, although he could not have foreseen the national illness, because he composed his poem in 1700 or before, when the problem had not become acute. The universal truth behind his statements was unfortunate for the English who suffered, but the truth was fortunate for his poem, for the truth added

30 Ibid., pp. 34-47.
another topical appeal.

In the last group of verses concerning his hospitality and temperance, Pomfret sums up his exposition on moderate means, benevolence, dining, and wine:

Nor wou'd I use, what was so kindly giv'n,
To the Dishonour of Indulgent Heav'n.
If any Neighbour came, he shou'd be Free,
Us'd with Respect, and not uneasy be,
In my Retreat, or to himself, or me.
What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give,
All Men may with Impunity receive.
But the least swerving from their Rule's too much;
For, what's forbidden us, 'tis Death to touch.

(lines 65-73)

Pomfret echoes a similar tone from Horace:

multa petentibus
desunt multa; bene est, cui deus obtulit
parca quod satis est manu.31

The translation is: "To those who seek much, much is wanting. It is well with him on whom the god with a sparing hand has bestowed what is sufficient." Rather than mentioning his specific pleasures, Pomfret emphasizes the source of all blessings and the importance of prudence and right reason. He recognizes God, or "Indulgent Heav'n," as the Christian Deity. He also recognizes the God of the Judaic tradition. No "Impunity" accompanies the proper use and the sharing of goods. But "swerving from their Rule"—that is, moving away from moderation, towards excess—is "Death to touch." The poet acknowledges that physical and spiritual death accompanies misuse of goods and an unbenevolent disposition, for misuse

of food and wine can kill the body and the spirit, and lack of charity towards others leads to an estrangement from "Indulgent Heav'n."

In the last four lines of this section of the poem, Pomfret begins to emphasize reason:

What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give,
All Men may with Impunity receive:
But the least swerving from their Rule's too much:
For, what's forbidden us, 'tis Death to touch.
(lines 70-73)

The importance of reason is obvious: without its guide, moderation of the passions is impossible. Up to this part of the poem, however, Pomfret has used guides other than reason to determine moderation. The mean of his not living in a town or far from one is determined by personal tastes, as is later confirmed in the next-to-last section of the poem, in verses 140-153, in which he expresses an aversion to a busy life. His content in having moderate wealth is motivated by a wish to "Live Gentilely, but not Great" (line 34), while his intention to share his bounty arises from charity and piety, and his "frugal" table fare (line 43) from a desire to remain healthy. His preference in books, ranging from the ancients to the moderns, is also a matter of taste, probably based on education and reading experiences. However, the importance of reason comes forth after he notes the danger of misusing wine, which obviously can distort rational powers. In the next four verse-paragraphs, reason is important in Pomfret's listing of the virtues of his friends
and his lady.

Pomfret's attitudes towards the role of reason and the passions can be determined to some extent from two of his other poems: "Reason" and "Love Triumphant over Reason." "Reason" is a lyric poem which mourns man's inability to use reason to find certitude in pursuit of truth. Pomfret says that in matters of religious faith, medicine, learning in general, and customs, man's rational powers are clouded either by ill-natured efforts to retain what he has learned or by conflicts with his emotions. While the poet often mentions specific theologians, philosophers, and medics, and while he generally comments on the prejudiced instructions of the young by nurses and parents, only the verses relevant to this study of "The Choice" need be cited:

Reason, 'tis true, should over sense preside,
Correct our notions, and our judgment guide;
But false opinions, rooted in the mind,
Hoodwink the soul, and keep our Reason blind.
But quickly dying, it forsakes us soon,
Like morning stars that never stay till noon.

The passions still predominant will rule,
Ungovern'd, rude, not bred in Reason's school;
Our understanding they with darkness fill,
Cause strong corruptions, and pervert the will;
On these the soul, as on some flowing tide,
Must sit, and on the raging billows ride,
Hurried away; for how can be withstood
The impetuous torrent of the boiling blood?
Begone, false hopes, for all our learning's vain;
Can we be free, where these the rule maintain?
These are the tools of knowledge which we use;
The spirits, heated, will strange things produce;
Tell me, who'er the passions could control,
Or from the body disengage the soul;
Till this is done, our best pursuits are vain
To conquer truth, and unmix'd knowledge gain.\textsuperscript{32}

In this passage the poet pessimistically broods, as he does in the rest of the poem, over the inability of reason to master the passions, but it is noteworthy that his mood arises from the proposition that "Reason, 'tis true, should over sense preside" and that the passions are not inimical to reason. It is only that they impede man's ability "To conquer truth, and unmix'd knowledge gain." The important point of agreement between "The Choice" and this poem is that reason must struggle to subdue sense. Perhaps it is only in a poem about ideal situations, such as "The Choice," that the poet with the same temperament as the one who wrote "Reason" can assert both the active and the authoritative power of reason over the emotions.

The points of contact between "Love Triumphant over Reason" and "The Choice" concerning reason and love will be more appropriately considered during the analysis of Pomfret's verses on his ideal ladyfriend.

\textsuperscript{32}Pomfret, "Reason: A Satire," lines 7-16 and 35-50, Remains, pp. 1-3.
CHAPTER VI

POMFRET'S IDEAL FRIENDS, LADY, CIVIC LIFE, AND DEATH

From line 74 to the end of "The Choice," Pomfret develops his thoughts on his two male friends, a neighboring lady, civic life, old age, and death. The verses on his male friends are:

That Life might be more Comfortable yet,
And all my Joys Refin'd, Sincere, and Great;
I'd Chuse two Friends, whose Company wou'd be
A great Advance to my Felicity.
Well Born, of Humours suited to my own;
Discreet, and Men, as well as Books, have known.
Brave, Gen'rous, Witty, and exactly Free
From loose Behaviour, or Formality.
Airy, and Prudent, Merry but not Light;
Quick in Discerning, and in Judging right.
Secret they shou'd be, Faithful to their Trust;
In Reas'ning Cool, Strong, Temperate, and Just.
Obliging, Open, without Huffing Brave,
Brisk in Gay Talking, and in Sober, Grave.
Close in Dispute, but not Tenacious, try'd
By Solid Reason, and let that Decide.
Not prone to Lust, Revenge, or Envious Hate:
Nor busy Medlers with Intreagues of State.
Strangers to Slander, and sworn Foes to Spight:
Not Quarrelsome, but Stout enough to Fight.
Loyal, and Pious, Friends to Caesar, true,
As Dying Martyrs, to their Maker too.
In their Society, I cou'd not miss
A Permanent, Sincere, Substantial Bliss.
(lines 74-97)

In the early lines of this passage, Pomfret says the company of his friends would promote "A great Advance to my
Felicity" and in the final line "A Permanent, Sincere, Substantial Bliss." Between these two verses, he lists the various virtues of his two friends as well as the vices they would not have. Since the men would be "of Humours suited to my own," the poet also implies the character to which he himself would aspire. These verses appear to have no specific sources in Horace's works. None of the Roman's poems extensively develops ideas on the theme of friendship, although many of his verses cited earlier in this study mention his dining and drinking with them, as well as his advice to them. On the other hand, his various comments on the Golden Mean, also cited earlier, ought to be considered influences on Pomfret's choosing friends, for the English poet's close companions would be moderate in thought and deed.

To define the moral character of his friends, Pomfret appears to rely on the virtuous man as described by Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics. Pomfret's training at Cambridge acquainted him with Greek readings in the New Testament, Demosthenes, and Homer's epics, although most of the English poet's Greek studies were in Aristotle, in the later decades of the seventeenth century, when Greek scholarship flourished at Cambridge under such master as Richard Bentley, Joseph Wass, and Joshua Barnes. Pomfret mentions thirty qualities

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1Costello, p. 63.
which his friends would have and not have, although he lists them not in any schematic way, but in his peculiar musing manner, so that he even mentions some of them more than once.

Pomfret would probably choose only two friends because, according to Aristotle, it is difficult for one to be a real friend to many people, since, first of all, he cannot divide himself between many and since, also, he can share the joys and the woes, as true friends do, with only a few.2 Reason, according to the Greek philosopher, is natural to man, and it becomes "right reason" when it is perfected by training.

The role of man's rational power is to effect virtues, which are moral excellences that become habitual by his choice of the middle ground between extremes.3

Pomfret lists seven rational qualities which his companions would have. They would be "Quick in Discerning, and in Judging right" (line 83), a statement which says they would be keen in both perception and intuition, meaning they could grasp conclusions quickly in comparison to those who slowly consider premises.4 Aristotle says these powers indicate a man's familiarity with what is good for man in general so that he need not ponder scrupulously in all instances.5


3 Ibid., 2. 6. 1107a5. 4 Ibid., 6. 11. 1143a35.

5 Ibid., 6. 5. 1140a25-35.
In the poet's statements on the reasoning of his friends, "Cool" implies deliberation, and "Strong" suggests training and habit (line 85). "Temperate" implies unimpressed, and "Just" indicates fair and equitable (also line 85). All their disputes, Pomfret says, would be "try'd / By Solid Reason" (lines 88-89).

Without any apparently studied method, the poet mentions the virtues which lie between extremes of vices. Courage, the lack of both cowardice and rashness,\(^6\) appears in "Brave" (line 80) and "without Huffing Brave" (line 86). Temperance, which lies between painful denial and painful indulgence concerning taste and touch, but not the other senses,\(^7\) is mentioned in the friends' being "Not prone to Lust" (line 90). One might also infer that these close acquaintances would be as temperate as Pomfret as to food and wine. Liberality, the virtue between prodigality and stinginess,\(^8\) appears in "Gen'rous" (line 80), and if their humors would be like Pomfret's, they might also be as liberal as he is to the poor. "Well Born" (line 78) states that the poet's friends would have pride, or high-mindedness, which is related to the acceptance of honor due oneself, a virtue between vanity and undue humility, for, according to Aristotle,

\(^{6}\text{Ibid.}, 3. 7. 1115b^{25-35}.\)

\(^{7}\text{Ibid.}, 3. 10. 1117b^{25-3}. 11. 1119b^{20}.\)

\(^{8}\text{Ibid.}, 4. 1. 1119b^{20-30}.\)
those of superior birth should be held in esteem because anything superior has much that is good.\(^9\)

Pomfret would also seek companions who possessed mildness, or good temper, between the weaknesses of passivity and wrathfulness, as he says "Close in Dispute, but not Tenacious" (line 88); "Not prone to ... Revenge, or Envious Hate" (line 90); "sworn Foes to Spight" (line 92); and "Not Quarrelsome, but Stout enough to Fight" (line 93). Concerning anger, Aristotle says that everyone should be irate at the right time, but that a choleric or a surly person is troublesome to his friends. By not being vengeful, one allows for some slight offenses which occur in life, but he should not be slavish, for at times he must defend himself.\(^{10}\) The poet's close acquaintances would also possess friendliness, which lies between obsequiousness and surliness. They would neither flatter nor quarrel. This virtue, according to Aristotle, does not involve the usual relationship of a friendship, but is called such because by it one acts as a friend according to how familiar he is with someone with whom he is not close in affections.\(^{11}\) Pomfret says that his companions would be "Obliging, Open" (line 86) and, again, "Not Quarrelsome" (line 93).

\(^9\)Ibid., 4. 3. 1123a5-1124a30.
\(^{10}\)Ibid., 4. 5. 1125b25-1126b10.
\(^{11}\)Ibid., 4. 6. 1126b15-25.
Pomfret's friends would also have the virtue of truthfulness, the mean between boastfulness and mock-modesty, so that they would not tell falsehoods about themselves, for, as the Greek philosopher remarks, no one likes a liar or a braggart, and disclaimers of their own obviously admirable qualities are contemptible.\textsuperscript{12} The poet does not say directly that his relationships with his friends would be truthful, but it is doubtful that his associations with them could be "Sincere" (lines 75 and 97) unless the men themselves were. They would also have urbanity, or ready wit, the virtue between buffoonery and boorishness, which would allow them to joke without either being silly in search of laughter or being averse to humor. They would be tactful in avoiding anything vulgar and indecent.\textsuperscript{13} Pomfret alludes to urbanity when he says they would be "Witty, and exactly Free / From loose Behaviour, or Formality" (lines 80-81); "Airy, and Prudent, Merry, but not Light" (line 82); and "Brisk in Gay Talking, and in Sober Grave" (line 87).

Finally, Pomfret would choose friends who were also just. They would neither do anything unlawful nor be grasping and unfair, as they gave what is due to individuals, society, superiors, and God.\textsuperscript{14} The poet says they would be:

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 4. 7. 1127\textsuperscript{a}20 and 1127\textsuperscript{b}25.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 4. 8. 1128\textsuperscript{a}5-30.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 5. 1. 1129\textsuperscript{a}25-30.
Loyal, and Pious, Friends to Caesar, true,
As Dying Martyrs, to their Maker too.
(lines 94-95)

They would also be "Strangers to Slander" (line 92).

After listing nine virtues, Pomfret fails to mention
the other two Aristotelian habits. He says nothing about
ambition, unless he means by saying his friends would not be
"busy Medlers with Intreagues of State" (line 91) that they
would avoid seeking power in a dishonorable way.\(^\text{15}\) The poet
understandably omits magnificence, for this virtue concerns
only rich men. When one's reputation is involved in finan-
cing public events and enterprises, he should be neither
vulgar nor tasteless and miserly.\(^\text{16}\) Pomfret and his friends,
who would not be wealthy, could only restrict their spending
to liberality, between prodigality and stinginess.

From another point of view, it is evident that Pomfret's
men would be virtuous in being free from the Seven Deadly
Sins. He clearly states their opposition to pride, lust,
glutony, anger, and envy. Although he does not mention
avarice, a reader infers that these friends would hardly be
both "Gen'rous" (line 80) and overdesirous of wealth, or that
a man of Pomfret's attitudes towards a moderate estate would
be close to avaricious men. Moreover, although the poet does
mention sloth, one cannot believe that in Pomfret's careful

\(^{15}\text{Ibid., 4. 4. 1125b10.}\)

\(^{16}\text{Ibid., 4. 2. 1122a20-1122b30.}\)
search for virtuous friends he would tolerate idleness.

The appeal of these friends to eighteenth-century readers of "The Choice" probably arose from the strong characters Pomfret portrays. Readers with classical backgrounds would have perceived the Aristotelian overtones in this sketch. Nothing detracts from anyone's having seen these men as good Christians, and their rational, moral, and social powers would be attractive to a reader in any age. Pomfret's companions might have been admired in light of the national events of the times, a suggestion implied in these lines:

Loyal, and Pious, Friends to Caesar, true,
As Dying Martyrs, to their Maker too.
(lines 94-95)

These verses allude to Christ's admonition: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."17 But Pomfret's verses are not merely pious mouthings of Christ's command to be both patriotic and religiously just. For Englishmen in 1700, loyalty and piety were compatible and desirable. The past century had seen national crises which closely involved religion and politics. The Puritans and the Established Church had exchanged power during the Commonwealth and the Restoration. Religious test acts, the Popish Plot, and Catholic James II later made disasters more imminent. Only after the most acceptable compromise, the accession of William and Mary,

in 1689, did the kingdom settle itself to normalcy. It seems likely that the section on Pomfret's friends held an appeal for eighteenth-century readers arising from the ethical, political, religious, and social implications of the verses.

The next three verse-paragraphs in "The Choice," extending over lines 98-138, are more closely related to each other than are any other parts of the poem, because these verses are on one topic: the special ladyfriend whom Pomfret would choose in his ideal retirement. Pomfret is not indebted in any way to Horace for these passages. The only time which Horace mentions women in his retirement poetry is in Epode 2, when he praises the farmer's wife for helping her mate with the chores and keeping a comfortable home. Whenever Horace favorably mentions women in his non-retirement verses, he praises the beauties of certain ladies, as in Ode 1. 13, in which he expresses his jealousy over a girl who favors another man; Ode 1. 37, in which the Roman describes a lady who maddens both young and old men who love her; and Ode 3. 10, in which the poet complains over unrequited love from a wife faithful to her husband. Like the verses on the friends in "The Choice," Pomfret seems to have developed the lines on his lady from his own genius. Since these three passages extend over forty-two lines, or one-fourth of the poem, they merit extensive analysis concerning why they might have contributed to the popularity of the poem.

The first section on the lady does not emphasize her so
After discussing other elements which he believes made "The Choice" popular, E. E. Kellett says of these verses:

But lastly, there is one feature in which Pomfret does reveal a certain originality; and to this, we doubt not, he owed a vast increase in circulation. The Choice contains a long and elaborate compliment to women, which, when compared with the scarcely veiled contempt of Pope, and with the general opinion of the time, will be found truly remarkable, and is in many respects the most pleasing portion of the poem.

Kellett then cites lines 101-103, on the "Sweetness" in a woman's mind which is lacking in a man's, although the critic offers no analysis. Since he does not explain why this is probably "the most pleasing portion of the poem," perhaps he is attracted by the lyricism of these verses. Up to this point in "The Choice," Pomfret is mainly concerned with a man's world. Settling and managing an estate and discoursing on wine are masculine activities, and the description of the manly character of his friends only adds to this atmosphere. Beginning with the verses cited above, however, Pomfret interrupts the pattern of musing over moderating his own life and estate. In these nine lines, the poet uses one long

18 Kellett, p. 179.
compound sentence to express lyrically his desire for feminine companionship. The final three verses, a triplet, have thus far in the poem the most sustained figurative language, as they praise the charms peculiar to women which can excite new energy into a man's life. The figurative language here receives more extensive comment in the chapter on Pomfret's art.

On the other hand, readers of "The Choice" could not have merely looked upon all three passages on the ladyfriend as "a long and elaborate compliment to women," as Kellett suggests. The careful description which follows is clearly of the one ideal lady whom Pomfret would choose:

I'd have her Reason all her Passions sway;  
Easy in Company, in Private Gay;  
Coy to a Fop, to the Deserving Free,  
Still Constant to her self, and Just to me.  
A Soul she shou'd have, for Great Actions fit;  
Prudence, and Wisdom to direct her Wit:  
Courage to look bold Danger in the Face,  
No Fear, but only to be Proud, or Base;  
Quick to Advise, by an Emergence prest,  
To give good Counsel, or to take the best.  
I'd have th' Expression of her Thoughts be such,  
She might not seem Reserv'd, nor talk too much;  
That shews a want of Judgment and of Sense:  
More than Enough is but Impertinence.  
Her Conduct Regular, her Mirth Refin'd,  
Civil to Strangers, to her Neighbours kind.  
Averse to Vanity, Revenge, and Pride,  
In all the Methods of Deceit untry'd.  
So Faithful to her Friend, and Good to all,  
No Censure might upon her Actions fall:  
Then wou'd e'en Envy be compell'd to say,  
She goes the least of Woman-kind Astray.  
(lines 107-128)

Similar to his male friends, Pomfret's lady would have her rational powers guide her actions, as indicated by the first
She would have prudence, wisdom, wit, judgment, and sense. Her virtues would also mirror those of the men, for the poet would have her be courageous, even-tempered, truthful, temperate, just, urbane, and high-minded. He does not even imply her liberality, which involves money, for he does not mention her financial situation, although she would be generous to all in her kindness and friendliness. Municipence certainly has no place here, for Pomfret is not listing the traits of a rich lady, nor does he cite her lack of ambitiousness, since that virtue is peculiar to men in the busy world.

It is certain that Pomfret is not complimenting all women, for in the last two verses of the passage on her virtues, he says his lady would be envied in her uniqueness by other women:

Then wou'd e'en Envy be compell'd to say,
She goes the least of Woman-kind Astray.
(lines 127-128)

This sketch of the lady, moreover, is Pomfret's constant ideal of a woman, for in "Strephon's Love for Delia Justified," he has Strephon describe his beloved:

In all Discourse she's Apposite and Gay,
And ne'er wants something Pertinent to say;
For, if the Subject's of a Serious kind,
Her Thoughts are Manly, and her Sense Refin'd;
But if Divertive, her Expression's Fit,
Good Language, join'd with Inoffensive Wit;
So Cautious always, that she ne'er affords
An idle Thought the Charity of Words.
The Vices common to her Sex can find
No Room, even in the Suburbs of her Mind;
Concluding wisely she's in Danger still,
From the mere Neighbourhood of Industrious Ill.
Therefore at Distance keeps the Subtle Foe,
Whose near Approach would Formidable grow;
While the Unwary Virgin is undone,
And meets the Misery which she ought to shun.
Her Wit is Penetrating, Clear, and Gay;
But lets True Judgment and Right Reason sway;
Modestly Bold, and Quick to apprehend;
Prompt in Replies, but Cautious to offend.
Her Darts are keen, level'd with such Care,
They ne'er fall short, and seldom fly too far:
For when she rallies, 'tis with so much Art,
We blush with Pleasure, and with Rapture smart.19

Pomfret's ideal of a lady, therefore, is one who is charming
in conversation and who, under the guidance of reason, is
virtuous, as summed up in these verses from above:

Her Wit is Penetrating, Clear, and Gay;
But lets True Judgment and Right Reason sway.
(lines 78-79)

They also appear in "The Choice" in this phrasing:

I'd have her Reason all her Passions sway;
Easy in Company, in Private Gay.
(lines 107-108)

Pomfret's verses on his lady sharply contrast to some
of those by Alexander Pope, such as in "Moral Essay II: Of
the Characters of Women," which Kellett perhaps has in mind.
Verses on women by Pope and many other works, such as Swift's
Gulliver's Travels, ii.5; Dr. Johnson's "Vanity of Human
Wishes," lines 319-342; Defoe's Moll Flanders; and some
Restoration plays performed throughout the eighteenth century,
such as Congreve's The Way of the World, portray women as
vain, witless creatures looking for wealthy husbands, so

19[Pomfret], "Strephon's Love for Delia Justified,"
lines 62-85, Miscellany Poems, pp. 54-55.
they can have maids, elaborate clothing, amorous adventures, and grand parties. The women in Pomfret's audience who read the verses on his lady were pleased no doubt that a man believed that at least one woman possessed some "Sweetness" and that one might be enviable.

The next section on Pomfret's lady presents the most difficult problem in "The Choice" regarding the poet's sentiments:

To this Fair Creature I'd sometimes Retire;
Her Conversation wou'd new Joys inspire;
Give Life an Edge so keen, no surly Care
Wou'd venture to Assault my Soul, or dare
Near my Retreat to hide one secret Snare.
But so Divine, so Noble a Repast
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste.

For Highest Cordials all their Virtue loose,
By a too frequent, and to [sic] bold an Use:
And what wou'd Cheer the Spirits in Distress;
Ruines our Health, when taken to Excess.

(lines 129-139)

Of these verses, Kellett says that Pomfret would find a new release from cares. The critic adds:

Yet here, too, Pomfret shows his dread of "fanaticism."
Even this pleasure must be taken in moderation:
[Kellett here cites the last four verses of the passage above.] Still, though women may have perhaps thought that Pomfret showed an exaggerated caution, and that he seemed to regard women as one of those good things of which it is perilously easy to have too much, there can, I think, be little doubt that a large proportion of Pomfret's wide audience was to be found among those who saw their own image in the portrait or the witty nymph.20

Although Kellett does not explain why there is "little doubt that [women]" read these lines with pleasure, he apparently believes that the poet would not be very intimate with the

20Kellett, p. 181.
lady.

But the opposite inference might be drawn from these lines, owing to their sensuous language. Whereas in all the preceding and succeeding verse-paragraphs Pomfret is always literally clear as to wherein lie: moderation, vice, and dangers, in this passage the concentrated figurative language contrasts to literal statement, and his exuberant mood contrasts to his mildness elsewhere in the poem. He does not state the nature of the "Conversation," which can denote intimate association or behavior, which "wou'd new Joys inspire." The image of his conversation being a weapon against cares and threats to his retired life suggests that his relationship with the lady would be a very special, an almost necessary part of his scheme for living. Moreover, although the last six lines are clear about moderation, they could also imply that he would be very intimate with her.

The terms "Repast" and "taste" suggest sensuous involvements, and the phrase "a too frequent, and to [sic] bold an Use" leading to a loss of "Virtue" reinforces this inference. Moreover, virtue in general lies in the mean, and in the specific case of sensuous pleasures, it lies between painful indulgence, which he would expressly avoid, and painful denial, of which he says only that sharing these "new Joys" with his lady would make him content and free from cares. An argument for this viewpoint also arises from the fact that the preceding section of the poem, on her character, lists
only her social conduct, but nothing on her behavior with close friends. It might appear, therefore, that Pomfret's retirement would provide for occasional intimacies with a devoted mistress.

A glance at some of Pomfret's pastoral poems, however, indicates that at least he has an aversion to lust. In each of his love poems, he portrays either a lover complaining over unrequited love or else a lover rejoicing over a maid's recognition that his love is sincere. Many of these poems are long precisely because the lovers discourse at length on their faithfulness and not being as wanton as other suitors. In "Love Triumphant over Reason," Strephon narrates the events of a dream in which the character Reason extracts Strephon's vow to give up thoughts of love, after having shown him men who waste away because they eventually found love untrue. But a messenger from Love tells Strephon that his deep love for Delia is worthy of uniting him with her, for Reason has shown Strephon suitors whose desire was only lust. The messenger distinguishes between love and lust, as well as their relation to the dictates of Reason:

For Love and Lust, Essentially divide,
Like Day and Night; Humility and Pride;
One Darkness hides, the other does always shine;
This of Infernal make, and that Divine.
Reason no Gen'rous Passion does oppose:
'Tis Lust (not Love) and Reason that are Foes.
She bids you scorn Base Inglorious Flame,
Black as the Gloomy Shade from whence it came:
In this her Precepts shou'd Obedience find,
But your's [sic] is not of that Ignoble Kind.

...
You urge your Vow; but can those Vows prevail
Whose first Foundations and whose Reason fail?
You vow'd to leave Fair Delia; but you thought
Your Passion was a Crime, your Flame a Fault.
But since your Judgment err'd, it has no Force
To bind at all, but is dissolv'd of course;
And therefore Hesitate no longer here,
But Banish all the dull Remains of Fear. 21

In these lines, true love is a passion which can be pursued,
for it does not contradict reason. The poem concludes with
Strephon's awaking from his dream, after Delia's striking
beauty rouses him, but only after Love has made him vow that
he be true, lest the goddess' revenge punish him with a
wretched life and a pitiless death.

In two other poems, Pomfret portrays an almost irreconcilable tension between true love and reason. In "Strephon's
Love for Delia Justified," Strephon's complaints eventually
convince Delia that his love for her is true, and she admits
her love for him, but first he grapples with the problem of
the dominance of passion:

If, as the Wisest of the Wise have err'd,
I go astray, and am condemn'd unheard;
My Faults you too severely reprehend,
More like a Rigid Censor than a Friend.
Love is the Monarch Passion of the Mind,
Knows no Superior, by no Laws confin'd;
But triumphs still, impatient of Control,
O'er all the Proud Endowments of the Soul. 22

In "The Fortunate Complaint," Strephon wonders if Delia demurs

21 [Pomfret], "Love Triumphant over Reason," lines 462-471 and 494-501, Miscellany Poems, pp. 32 and 34.

because her mind also struggles between rational dictates and passion:

If she has Scruples that oppose her Will, I must, Alas! be Miserable still.
Though, if she loves, those Scruples soon will fly
Before the Reas'ning of the Deity:
For, when Love enters, he will rule alone,
And suffer no Copartner to his Throne;
And those false Arguments that would repel
His high Injunctions, teach us to Rebel.23

In both passages, Pomfret acknowledges the tension between reason admonishing lovers to rule over passion, on the one hand, and love urging their union, on the other. He always concludes that human nature follows love.

The consequence of the enamored persons' acknowledging their mutual affection and seeking to be alone together is that they consummate their love. In "Love Triumphant over Reason," Strephon narrates:

Then we, descending to a spacious Plain,
Were soon saluted by a Numerous Train
Of Happy Lovers, who consum'd their Hours,
With constant Jollity in shady Bow'rs.
There I beheld the bless'd Variety
Of Joy, from all corroding Troubles free:
Each follow'd his own Fancy to Delight;
Tho' all went Different Ways, yet all
went right.24

In "An Epistle to Delia," Strephon says:

Retir'd sometimes into a Lonely Grove,
I think o'er all the Stories of our Love.

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23[Pomfret], "The Fortunate Complaint," lines 62-69, Miscellany Poems, p. 44.

24[Pomfret], "Love Triumphant over Reason," lines 513-520, ibid., p. 35.
What mighty Pleasures have I oft possess'd, 
When in a masculine Embrace I press'd 
The Lovely Delia to my heaving Breast: 
Then I remember, and with vast Delight, 
The kind Expressions of the parting Night: 
Methought, the Sun too quick return'd again, 
And Day seem'd ne'er impertinent till then. 
Strong and contracted was our Eager Bliss, 
An Age of Pleasure in each Gen'rous Kiss; 
Years of Delight, in moments we compris'd, 
And Heav'n itself was there Epitomiz'd. 25

Although Pomfret develops most of his verses in his love poems by portraying the lovers' vows to each other and their delight in always being together, the two preceding passages indicate that he believes true love eventually leads to intimate union.

These lengthy illustrations on reason, lust, and love are extra-textual to "The Choice," but they, nevertheless, illuminate Pomfret's relationship with his ideal lady. First, of all, they reinforce the reader's awareness that the poet does not countenance lust, as he has already expressed in the verses on his friends, who would be "Not prone to Lust" (line 90). These citations from other works recall also that Pomfret in "The Choice" stresses not only that reason is a guide to one's conduct, but also that a person should avoid occasions which might lead to excess. It is then remembered that the poet says, "To this Fair Creature I'd sometimes Retire" (line 129), the word "sometimes" indicating that he would see her only occasionally. Most importantly of all, the

passages from some of the poet's other works suggest that he would not be sexually intimate with the lady, because he would not love her, and love, of course, is a prerequisite to this intimacy. He does not at all mention love in context of his concern for her or for anyone else in the poem. The term love appears in "The Choice" when Pomfret says he himself would be "Belov'd by all, not vainly Popular" (line 141) and when he writes of Ovid, "Who all the Turns of Loves [sic] soft Passion knew" (line 22).

As to Pomfret's "Conversation" with his lady, one should, first of all, look back to the first verse-paragraph on her, where he seeks feminine company, as he says he would live near a fair lady:

(For who wou'd so much Satisfaction loose,
As Witty Nymphs, in Conversation, give,)
(lines 99-100)

It would be difficult to make more than "discussion" out of "Conversation" in this context. Pomfret also indirectly refers to this meaning of the term when, in the verse-paragraph on the lady's virtues, he says she would attract admiration and envy from her social discussions. He uses the term converse in "An Epistle to Delia" to denote "to exchange ideas."

If I converse with those, whom most admit
To have a Ready, Gay, Vivacious Wit,
They want some Amiable, Moving Grace,
Some Turn of Fancy that my Delia has.26

26Ibid., lines 137-140, p. 68.
"Conversation" with Pomfret's ladyfriend in the entire section of "The Choice" means that their private discourse would be happy and virtuous, owing to their rational habits and moderation.

Concerning the sensuous imagery of the rimed words in this passage:

But so Divine, so Noble a Repast
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste.
For Highest Cordials all their Virtue loose,
By a too frequent, and to [sic] bold an Use:
(lines 134-137)

one should consider them as part of the pattern of controlled appetites which Pomfret employs in "The Choice." Earlier he uses "Taste" metaphorically as well as literally when he describes his sharing of his modest fortune and food with the needy:

Nor shou'd the Sons of Poverty Repine
Too much at Fortune, they shou'd Taste of mine.
(lines 37-38)

Also merging literally and figuratively are the meanings of "Flavour," which is related to taste:

Wine whets the Wit, improves its Native force,
And gives a pleasant Flavour to Discourse.
(lines 55-56)

The pattern of food-imagery, in fact, terminates in the section on the lady, when he speaks of "Cordials" to mean healthful potions or liquors, generalizing literally about moderation, as well as heart-warming conversations as cordials, figuratively referring to his visits.

In conclusion, this section on Pomfret's neighboring
nymph does not betray his "dread 'fanaticism' in not becoming too involved with women," as E. E. Kellett believes. The fact that the last eleven verses on the poet's lady appear to be perplexing as to his relations with her might have been a fortunate ambiguity which his eighteenth-century readers enjoyed. Some of Pomfret's audience might have admired his moderation and believed him innocent of any immoral designs to have a mistress, while other readers might have relished these verses, believing that the poet prudently favors social decorum, in the main, but is not prudish in his attitudes towards intimacies with such an admirable lady.

In the next-to-last verse-paragraph of "The Choice," Pomfret reveals his relationships to people outside his circle of friends and acquaintances:

I'd be concern'd in no Litigious Jar, 
Belov'd by all, not vainly Popular.
What e're Assistance I had Pow'r to bring
T'Oblige my Country, or to Serve my King,
When e're they Call'd, I'd readily afford
My Tongue, my Pen, my Counsel, or my Sword.
Law Suits I'd shun, with as much studious Care,
As I wou'd Dens where hungry Lyons are:
And rather put up Injuries; than be
A Plague to him who'd be a Plague to me.
I value Quiet at a Price too great,
To give for my Revenge so dear a Rate:
For what do we, by all our Bustle, gain,
But Counterfeit Delight, for real Pain?
(lines 140-153)

27Kellett, p. 181.
Pomfret's aversion to litigation echoes Horace's:

Romae sponsorem me rapis: "heia, ne prior officio quisquam respondeat, urge." sive Aquilo radit terras seu bruma nivalem interiore diem gyro trahit, ire necesse est. postmodo, quod mi obsit, clare certumque locuto luctandum in turba et facienda iniuria tardis. 28

The English is:

At Rome you hurry me off as a security: "Quick, hurry, lest someone answer before you to the office." Whether the North Wind sweeps the earth or winter leads on the snowy day into a narrower circle, it is necessary to go. Later, having said clearly and certainly what may be harmful to me, I must jostle through the crowd and do injury to the stragglers.

Both Pomfret and Horace seek to avoid legal entanglements which might endanger their peaceful retirement. The appeal of this section of the poem to eighteenth century readers perhaps lay in both the expression of patriotism and the practical evasion of litigation and revenge.

First of all, Pomfret offers his voice, his writing, his advice, and his own person in armed service to England and the king. He would be as patriotic as his friends: those "Friends to Caesar" (line 94) who are not "busy Medlers with Intreagues of State" (line 91) and yet are "Stout enough to Fight" (line 93) for loyal causes. Pomfret is as moderate as he is in the other parts of the poem. He does not specifically indicate any political issue with which he would be involved, and so he cannot be considered partisan. As mentioned in

context of his friends, the recent upheavals during the civil wars, the Commonwealth, and the Glorious Revolution were still in the minds of Pomfret's readers, so that these verses could have been considered an agreeable admonition towards national unity, as well as moderation in partisan matters.

The other appeal in this passage concerns the prudence with which Pomfret would retain his quiet in retirement. He would tolerate injuries so as to avoid occasions which might lead him into litigation or revenge and to avoid upsetting himself and others. The concentrated figurative language in the second part of the passage suggests that this attitude would be important to his enjoying peace. He likens lawsuits to lion's dens and the exchange of injuries to a spreading plague. His description of the consequences of revenge indicates that more than quiet might be threatened. "Revenge" is "a Price," a "dear Rate," which produces a satisfaction that is only "Counterfeit." This money-imagery implies that the pursuit of revenge and legal machinery can detract from one's financial estate, as well as disturb his quiet. Anyone would agree that this attitude towards conflicts is prudent, especially in light of Pomfret's plan to possess only a moderate estate, sufficient for comfort and to be shared with others.

The concluding section of "The Choice" is on Pomfret's later years of retirement and his death:
If Heav’n a Date of many Years wou’d give,
Thus I’d in Pleasure, Ease, and Plenty live.
And as I near approach’d the Verge of Life,
Some kind Relation, (for I’d have no Wife)
Shou’d take upon him all my Worldly Care,
While I did for a better State prepare.
Then I’d not be with any Troubles vex’d;
Nor have the Ev’ning of my days perplex’d.
But by a silent, and a peaceful Death,
Without a Sigh, resign my Aged Breath:
And when committed to the Dust, I’d have
Few Tears, but Friendly, dropt into my Grave.
Then wou’d my Exit so propitious be;
All Men wou’d wish to Live, and Dye like me.

(lines 154-167)

It is not difficult to understand why Pomfret would look
back on his ideal life as one of "Pleasure" and "Ease," but
the term "Plenty," in the second verse above, perhaps needs
some explanation. Although his manner of living would be
quite modest, his acquisitions and enjoyment would be plenty
because plenty is relative to his desires and not necessarily
dependent upon how much wealth is amassed or whatever tan­
gible measure, such as an estate, were held up as a sign of
achievement. Assuming that all men seek happiness, one can
perceive that Pomfret would be content at the end of such a
life, because his prudent use of all he desired and attained
gave him peace of mind.

In the last years of his ideal life, Pomfret would have
very few cares. A kind relative would oversee what little
business might be involved in maintaining the poet’s estate.
For the first time in the poem he says that he would have no
spouse. One can understand why Pomfret has made no earlier
comment on marriage, for the efficacy of his chosen mode of
life is possible without a wife. His desires depend on fortune and heaven, not on marriage. His closeness to the neighboring nymph is another factor precluding his being married. While it would not be impossible for a man to have both a wife and a close ladyfriend—even a mistress—Pomfret's earlier pious Christian attitudes would conflict with any such involvements. To simplify the life to which he aspires, he would remain unwed, for a wife and children who might follow could bring cares which were unresolved at the time of his death.

Pomfret does not say to whom his estate would descend, but it would probably be left to his relative, with something going to his close friends and the poor. His not having stated the physical and the financial quantities of his estate manifests again that he would not be concerned with wealth. The only characteristic of his life which anyone would envy, says the poet, should be his prudent, moderate manner of retirement. Not being social among many people, but "Belov'd by all, not vainly Popular" (line 141), he would be mourned in death only by his few close friends, and perhaps his neighbours and those to whom he had extended charity. The final couplet of the poem further indicates that he would seek to live an exemplary life:

Then wou'd my Exit so propitious be;  
All Men wou'd wish to Live, and Dye like me.  
(lines 166-167)

He means to stress that upon his death he will have been
prudent. Careful planning to set off cares during most of his life would be followed by a commendable preparation for death, in both worldly and spiritual matters. All men, therefore, might wish for an end, as well as a life, like his.

Just as Pomfret seeks to hold up his ideal life as an example by commenting at the end of passages on books, food, wine, his friends, and his lady as worthy of attention, so too in these final verses he presents his ideal life as worthy of emulation. The effect he is seeking in the final couplet, however, is that the readers' minds should suddenly call together all the elements of his comfortable life so that the audience perceives that prudent and moderate living earn earthly happiness, with no doubt about a happy afterlife. Readers, not only his neighbors, friends, and acquaintances, would then be among "All Men" who might envy him.
CHAPTER VII

SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE AS THE RETIRED MAN IN "THE CHOICE"

The possibility exists that since Pomfret as the speaker in "The Choice" does not yet possess the mode of life which he describes, some real contemporary person is his model of the retired man. Any allusions to a real person who was familiar and dear to Englishmen would have reinforced whatever appeals the readers of the eighteenth century already had found in the verses. On one hand, it would be difficult to speculate on who this model might be, because none of the biographical sketches on Pomfret mentions a contemporary person. On the other hand, an anonymous writer in 1757 suggested that Sir William Temple is Pomfret's model. A parenthetical comment on a lady who is supposed to be Swift's Stella brings together ideas on Temple and Pomfret:

Were I to attempt to describe her [Mrs. Hester Johnson] at full length, I might be thought guilty of the highest adulation, so extraordinary was the woman who was destined to please Sir Wm Temple. Pomfret, in his little poem called the choice [sic] is said to have given an exact description of Moor Park; to have delineated Sir Wm in the account of his own fancy and taste; and to have
taken his picture of the female friend and companion from Mrs. Johnson; to that piece therefore do I recommend my reader.  

Careful consideration of these statements, however, indicates that they do no afford enough evidence to conclude that the retired gentleman in "The Choice" is Sir William.

First of all, Pomfret in his poem does not give "an exact description of Moor Park," the estate to which Temple retired in 1681 and where he died in 1699. Pomfret's description of the estate is very general and could fit any estate on which the house is on a hill, partially surrounded by woods, having a garden, and a brook running though it. The kinds of trees growing along the banks of the rivulet in "The Choice" are the only detailed objects in the landscape: "Shady Limes, or Sycamores" (line 16). Temple, however, had many fruit trees and shade trees on his estate, as evidenced by his own concern for them in a third of his essay on gardening. The possibility exists, of course, that Temple had limes and sycamores, which he does not mention in his essay, but people sought these kinds of trees for shade, even as Pomfret would. The estate in "The Choice," therefore, is too generalized to suggest Temple's... Except for the trees,

1C.M.P.G.N.S.T.N.S., "New and Interesting Anecdotes of the Late Dean Swift and His Favourite Stella," Gentleman's Magazine, XXVII (November, 1757), 489.

pomfret's estate might even be modeled after Horace's, the exemplar for the estate in many poems and novels.

The anonymous writer no doubt knew something about Stella besides what Swift had written in his *Journal to Stella*, for that work was first published in 1766-1768, nine years after these observations appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Moreover, Pomfret himself could not have known Swift's *Journal*, for it was not written until 1710-1713, eight years after the poet's death. Even if the anonymous commentator had known something of Stella, he failed to provide details to illustrate how Pomfret has "taken his picture of the female friend and companion from Mrs. Johnson." In fact, this commentator's statements are prefaced by an evasion of details: "Were I to attempt to describe her at full length, I might be thought guilty of the highest adulation, so extraordinary was the woman who was destined to please Sir Wm Temple." Even throughout his article, the commentator's remarks display an uninformed acquaintance with Stella's parentage, age, and her relationship to Sir William, the facts of which are documented by Homer E. Woodbridge, Temple's most recent and most capable biographer.3

The commentator's remark that Pomfret "delineated Sir Wm in the account of his own fancy and taste," however,

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deserves more attention than do his statements on Moor Park and Stella. Sir William, indeed, is an image somewhat adaptable to Pomefret's retired gentleman. If readers had Sir William in mind as they perused "The Choice," coincidences between his life and those in the poem might have reinforced the popularity of the work.

Temple was best known as a diplomat who avoided party politics. He served for many years as ambassador to The Hague, and his charming personality and honesty enabled the English to win the confidence of the Dutch, a confidence which King Charles II often broke, causing Temple to resign rather than betray his friends in the Lowlands. The credit goes to him and his wife for insuring the Protestant Succession in England through their bringing together William of Orange and Princess Mary, in 1677. After Temple had briefly been a member of the king's council, he left government service forever rather than scheme against his monarch with Shaftesbury and other councilors. Temple as a patriot, serving his country and avoiding cabals, reminds one of Pomefret's friends, who, in "The Choice," would not be "busy Medlers with Intreagues of State" (line 91).

Other events in Temple's life coincide with some of those in "The Choice." He was a man of letters, one of

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4Ibid., pp. 109-111. 5Ibid., pp. 154 and 179. 6Ibid., p. 204.
"those Moderns, Men of steady Sense" (line 27), whom Pomfret might read. Temple wrote essays on government, such as "On the Original and Nature of Government" (1672), and on economics, such as "Of the Advancement of Trade in Ireland" (1673). His "Of Poetry" and "Upon Ancient and Modern Learning" (both 1690) reveal that he favored the ancients, respected the moderns, and detested the makers of rules for literature.7 As a man of letters, Temple, thus far at least, stands as a good image for Pomfret's retired man.

Besides his diplomatic and literary activities, even certain events in Temple's private life round him out as a good image. He became a retired gentleman, settling at Moor Park, a mile and a half from Farnham, a little town in Surrey, from 1681 to 1699, the year of his death. There he spent most of his time entertaining and visiting friends with his wife Dorothy Osborne, who died in 1695, and his widowed sister, Martha, Lady Giffard. He also wrote much and worked in his garden. Unlike his early works, on government and economics, his writings in retirement are on health, morality, and gardening,8 topics upon which Pomfret comments in his poem. Temple's biographies and a few other sources which describe his estate declare the difficulty of establishing the extent of his garden, but in his essay "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus," he says that four to eight acres is big enough

8Woodbridge, p. 214.
even for a nobleman's garden.9 This limitation in size reminds one of the moderation of the "Little Garden, Grateful to the Eye" (line 13) in "The Choice." Temple describes in the following passage why he likes his garden:

The Sweetness of Air, the Pleasantness of Smells, the Verdure of Plants, the Cleanliness and Lightness of Food, the Exercise of Working or Walking, but above all, the Exemptions from Cares and Solicitude, seem equally to favour and improve Contemplation and Health, the Enjoyment of Sense and Imagination, and thereby the Quiet and Ease of both the Body and Mind.10

This physical and mental health, arising from Temple's delight in his garden and simple food, is the same effect which Pomfret's ideal life is intended to promote. Moreover, according to Pomfret's attitude towards wine in "The Choice," he would have admired Sir William's efforts towards temperance. One of the concomitants of his diplomatic missions was the danger of heavy drinking, a habit and a danger he had to struggle to avoid.11

Temple's life, therefore, seems to be an agreeable image on which Pomfret might have modeled his own life in "The Choice." The retired gentleman's estate, patriotism, and tastes coincide with those of the man in Pomfret's poem. Even after Temple died, the citizens of England, whether they knew it or not, were indebted to him for the effects which he helped bring about regarding many treaties, the Protestant

10Ibid., I, 175.  
11Woodbridge, pp. 68-71.
Succession, and the unity of the country. On the other hand, some facts detract from the speculation that Temple is Pomfret's model. First of all, Temple was married, and, according to his biographers, he remained faithful to his wife. No gossip, even malicious, concerning his having a mistress has ever been suggested or documented by his biographers. Pomfret, therefore, deletes marriage from his model's life, if Temple is the exemplar, just as the poet does with his own marriage of real life, if his own life and wishes are the true matter of "The Choice." The fact also remains that the anonymous commentator who suggested that Sir William is the image for the poem overgeneralized about Pomfret's description of Moor Park, and he failed to describe Stella or even to be accurate in giving other data about her. Neither should one overlook the fact that even if Pomfret knew Temple's works or even knew him personally, the poet still might have known other men who more closely resemble the retired gentleman in his poem than Sir William, who practiced moderation, but also lived on a grander scale.

The security, the delights, and the comforts in "The Choice," needless to say, are ideal, fanciful. If Pomfret can imagine that these delights are within the concern of his readers, he can also imagine that these delights are within the reach of those readers. One should perhaps look upon "The Choice" not as a poem vaguely alluding to Temple or any other real person, but as a poem generally describing
that to which every man can aspire and also design according to his resources. The life of Sir William Temple, nevertheless, affords, at least for modern readers, an outline of activities which Pomfret would admire.
CHAPTER VIII

THE ART OF "THE CHOICE"

The four preceding chapters have illustrated that "The Choice," indeed, touches upon subjects which were of special interest to eighteenth-century readers. The setting of Pomfret's estate, his readings, his benevolence, his temperance, his virtuous friends, his enviable lady, and his search for content are undoubtedly the topical appeals to which Dr. Johnson, Robert Anderson, and Theophilus Gibber refer in their comments that the poet's subject matter pleased his audience. His treatment of these topics, however, is only half the explanation for the wide acceptance of the poem. The three critics, it will be recalled, also clearly praise Pomfret's art. On the other hand, E. E. Kellett in his chapter on "The Choice" sees no merit in Pomfret's artistry. After discussing his idea that "The Choice" is not original, the critic notes:

We notice, secondly, that the poem is written in the manner and the metre most approved by the time. The age was the age of Dryden. The last fifty years had seen the victory of the style introduced by Waller and Denham, the smooth monotonous couplet, into which, it is true, the

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1Anderson, VI, 469; Gibber, III, 218; Johnson, "Pomfret," I, 302. See supra, pp. 5-6.
the Laureate had infused energy and virility, but which lent itself naturally to the presentation of mild ideas in a pleasing fashion. This verse is of exactly the kind to make prose seem like poetry, and to give an appearance of originality to what, if unrhymed, would attract no attention. The ordinary reader, seeing his own ideas rendered in a tepidly epigrammatic form, fancies them fine: precisely as the hearer of a Tillotson,\(^2\) listening to everyday thoughts neatly and charmingly linked in well-sounding sentences, fancied he was being stirred and informed when he was only being soothed. The reader of Pomfret, similarly, familiar with the rhythm and the diction, receives exactly the impression he expects; he is neither startled nor distracted, but quietly beguiled into imagining that he is thinking. The following passage, for example, might--apart from the preaching tone which made it yet more welcome--have come straight out of Denham or from one of Dryden's weaker and more perfunctory pieces.\(^3\)

Kellett then cites eighteen verses on Pomfret's two male friends to exemplify the poet's versification, but adds no analysis. However, the critic's judgment is not just, and his citation from the poem is inaccurate.

First of all, the passage which develops the characters of Pomfret's friends extends over twenty-four verses (lines 74-97), but Kellett cites only eighteen verses, omitting lines 78-81 and 88-89. These missing lines are not very important to the sense of the entire passage, but the critic

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\(^2\)John Tillotson (1630-1694), Archbishop of Canterbury (1691-1694), was famous for his influence on the theology of his day and for the prose style of his sermons. He was so popular that upon his death the copyright to his works was immediately bought for "the unheard-of sum of 2500 guineas." See Alexandre Beljame, Men of Letters and the English Public in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Bonamy Dobrée, trans. from French by E. O. Lorimer (London: Kegan Paul, French, and Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 364.

\(^3\)Kellett, pp. 175-176.
does not indicate why he has deleted them. He might have happened upon a version of "The Choice" which lacks these six verses, but none of the many printings of the poem examined in the preparation of this study excludes the lines. It is also unfortunate that Kellett has selected the passage on Pomfret's friends to illustrate the poet's artistic performance. While it is true that this passage is somewhat monotonous in its many parallel phrases and punctuated caesuras, the lines are only monotonous in comparison to other parts of the poem. The verses on Pomfret's friends are not at all typical of the smooth verses and the figurative language which pervade the work, a matter which is considered a few pages hence.

As to Kellett's remarks on the monotony of the heroic couplet, the prosaic expression of Pomfret's thoughts, and the lack of cerebrally engaging his readers, one can only conclude that the critic has not closely examined the poet's artistry. This suggestion is borne out by the fact that Kellett's judgments on Pomfret's technique are the briefest in the critical article, the ones on his sources and sentiments being somewhat longer.

Owing to the brevity of comments on the poet's art by Johnson, Anderson, and Cibber, it is apparent that the technical considerations of "The Choice" deserve careful examination. It has already been occasionally noted in earlier chapters that the poet revised certain passages, such as
those on wine, and the edition of the poem, in Chapter II, cites other emendations. A close analysis of the composition, the rhetoric, the figurative language, and the versification of "The Choice" reveals that Pomfret is no mediocre poet and that his artistry could hardly have detracted from the enjoyment of the topical appeals.

Pomfret uses mainly the subjunctive mood in his statements. Of the fifty-six independent clauses, forty-one of the verbs are subjunctive. The most common are those which begin verb phrases: "wou'd," which occurs sixteen times; "shou'd," fifteen times; and the contraction "I'd," also fifteen times. "Might" appears in lines 2, 34, and 74. Line 7 has "Better" for "It would be better." The verbs of many dependent clauses are also subjunctive, as in "And all, that Objects of true Pitty [sic] were" (line 37); "and as I did Possess" (line 51); and "When e're they Call'd, I'd readily afford" (line 144). Pomfret uses the subjunctive as often as he does because most of the poem expresses his plan for an ideal life. This usage indicates that, as the speaker in the poem, he does not now have the manner of living to which he would aspire if Heaven allowed him the option to realize his wishes.

Pomfret's fifteen other independent clauses and their modifying clauses are in the indicative mood. He uses this mood sometimes to appeal to the moral sense of his readers and sometimes to express his present tastes. Concerning these
tastes, he says, in describing the impractical and ostenta-
tious furniture: "Methinks 'tis Nauseous" (line 11). He
briefly praises two Roman poets in the indicative mood:

Horace, and Vergil, in whose Mighty Lines
Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning shines.
(lines 19-20)

His more lengthy praises of Ovid (lines 21-26), of wine
(lines 55-58), and of the companionship of women (lines 102-
106) imply that he has already experienced these pleasures
to some extent, as evidenced by his shifting to the indica-
tive mood to praise them after having introduced them in the
subjunctive.

In his other uses of the indicative mood, Pomfret hopes
to impress upon his audience the importance of good sense and
moderation. After explaining that he would have plain fare
at his table, he states it would be to encourage moderation:

Strong Meat Indulges Vice, and Pomp'ring [sic] Food
Creates Diseases, and Inflames the Blood.
(lines 47-48)

After praising wine, he acknowledges the dangers which could
arise from abusing it:

But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends,
May be Debauch'd, and serve Ignoble Ends:
So, but too oft, the Grapes [sic] refreshing Juice
Does many Mischievous Effects produce.
(lines 59-62)

The theme of moderation continues to evolve from the occa-
sional occurrence of the indicative mood as the poet com-
mments on his lady's not being talkative (lines 119-120), the
dangers of his seeing her too often (lines 136-139), and the
pitfalls of revenge (lines 150-153). The following lines, in the indicative mood, capture better than any other verses the spirit of Pomfret's basis for enjoying life:

What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give,  
All Men may with Impunity receive;  
But the least swerving from their Rule's too much:  
For, what's forbidden us, 'tis Death to touch.  
(lines 70-73)

This passage, in the middle of the poem, expresses a major theme: the failure to use reason causes a kind of spiritual death—unhappiness—which arises from the abuse of material goods.

The indicative mood has more force of truth than the subjunctive, which appears much more often in the poem. Pomfret justifies the manner of life to which he would aspire not merely by the modesty of his wishes, but also by his concern for moderation, which he emphasizes by concluding six of his ten verse-paragraphs in the indicative. His statements at the end of the section on books, on his estate and food, on "Nymphs," on visits to his lady, and on civil disputes are in this mood. The sections on his friends and one of the three on his lady do not conclude in the indicative, but emphasis is not needed there, for those sections develop moderation through descriptions of the virtues of the people. The first section is in the subjunctive because it merely introduces his wishes, and the final section terminates in the subjunctive because the poet can only hope that his final ideal life would be an example to everyone.
These observations on Pomfret's use of the contrasting moods of his verbs lead one to conclude that he intends that "The Choice" have the effect of one of those "Pleasing, Useful Studies" (lines 32). That is, he employs the subjunctive mood to offer his readers his pleasant ideal life, and the indicative to instruct them in moderation.

Pomfret's composition and use of figurative language deserve careful consideration. A few phrases in the poem indicate that it is structured according to the activities of a lifetime. The poet says (with editorial italics added) that he wishes Heaven would allow his choice of a "Method how to Live" (line 2); "If Heav'n a Date of many Years would give" (line 154); and "All Men would wish to Live, and Dye like me" (line 167). A closer glance at the poem, however, indicates that he also describes daily activities, for a few of his phrases mention the division of a day. He speaks of "all those Hours" (line 3); reading as "my Morning Exercise" (line 30), which would happily fill the "Minutes" (line 31); and the end of his life as "the Ev'n ing of my days" (line 161). Besides these phrases, Pomfret's sections on dining, visits from others, and his own visits to his lady indicate that the poem outlines his life according to activities which might occur on any day in his ideal life.

A reader is also aware of the benevolent God who would oversee the poet's life and to whom the poet frequently alludes in figurative language. Pomfret uses the metonymy
"Heav'n" for God in lines 1, 42, and 154. He employs periphrasis in "The Bounteous Author of my Plenty" (line 52), "Indulgent Heav'n" (line 66), and "Bounteous Heav'n" (line 98). Although the outline of a day and a lifetime, as well as figurative references to God, pervade the poem, it is worthwhile to examine how Pomfret structures each verse-paragraph according to the peculiar figurative language in it.

After his four line introductory wish to "Heav'n," the language of physical balance reveals the poet's awareness of the need to be moderate:

Near some fair Town, I'd have a private Seat,
Built Uniform, not Little, nor too Great:
Better, if on a Rising Ground it stood;
Fields on this side, on that a Neighbouring Wood.
It shou'd within no other Things contain,
But what were Useful, Necessary, Plain:
Methinks 'tis Nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure
The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture.
A little Garden, Grateful to the Eye,
And a Cool Rivulet run murm'ring by:
On whose delicious Banks a stately Row
Of Shady Limes, or Sycamores should grow.
(lines 5-16)

The setting of his house would be rural, near a town. He would not be alone; he would be near people, but not many of them. The antithetical phrasing of "not Little, nor too Great" adds to the mean, as does the chiasmic expression "Fields on this side, on that a Neighbouring Wood." The onomatopoetic verse "And a Cool Rivulet run murm'ring by" and the row of trees reflect a simple but not sparse orderliness in this picturesque scene. The house on a hill, then,
is clearly a symbol of Pomfret's ideal life. The home is elevated, between heaven and earth, reaching, as it were, not for possessions, which are only "Useful, Necessary, plain," but for something spiritual behind these possessions. The symbol of the house at this point in the poem is not very obvious, for only later does the reader perceive how Pomfret arranges and uses the physical to suggest moderation, a spiritual quality.

The second part of the verse-paragraph reads:

At th' End of which a silent Study plac'd,
Shou'd be with all the Noblest Authors Grac'd.
Horace, and Virgil, in whose Mighty Lines
Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning shines.
Sharp Juvenal, and Am'rous Ovid too,
Who all the Turns of Loves [sic] soft Passion knew;
He that with Judgment reads his charming Lines,
In which strong Art, with stronger Nature joyns,
Must grant his Fancy does the best Excel:
His Thoughts so tender, and Exprest so well.
With all those Moderns, Men of steady Sense,
Esteem'd for Learning, and for Eloquence.
In some of these, as Fancy shou'd Advise,
I'd always take my Morning Exercise:
For sure no Minutes bring us more Content,
Than those in Pleasing, Useful Studies spent.

(lines 17-32)

Pomfret structures this passage with a symmetry which is not based on the number of lines, but on a balance which strikes the mind. That is, he both classifies and divides the poets in terms of their qualities. The ancients are grouped together and separated from the moderns. Wit and learning divide the first two Roman poets from the other two. The epithets "Sharp" and "Am'rous" respectively characterize Juvenal's direct style and Ovid's grace and tenderness.
Pomfret then brings together Ovid's various qualities in the phrases "strong Art, with stronger Nature" and in "so tender, and Exprest so well." Later in the passage, Pomfret gives prominence to some moderns in the epithet "Men of Steady Sense," and the balanced expression that they are "Esteem'd for Learning, and for Eloquence" echoes the wit, the learning, and the art of the Romans. He brings all these writers together in calling their works "Pleasing, Useful Studies," also employing the synecdoche "Minutes" to call attention to the time of pleasurable instruction.

Pomfret crystallizes the thought of his third verse-paragraph in the oxymoron "frugal Plenty" (line 43). This figure occurs exactly in the middle of the twenty-line section, the first ten lines of which are on his financial estate and the second ten on food:

I'd have a Clear, and Competent Estate,  
That I might Live Gentilely, but not Great.  
As much as I cou'd moderately spend,  
A little more, sometimes t'Oblige a Friend.  
Nor shou'd the Sons of Poverty Repine  
Too much at Fortune, they shou'd Taste of mine;  
And all; that Objects of true Pitty [sic] were,  
Shou'd be Reliev'd with what my Wants cou'd spare:  
A frugal Plenty shou'd my Table spread;  
With Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes Fed:  
Enough to Satisfy, and something more  
To Feed the Stranger, and the Neighb'ring Poor.  
Strong Meat Indulges Vice, and Pomp'ring [sic] Food  
Creates Diseases, and Inflames the Blood.  
But what's sufficient to make Nature strong,  
And the bright Lamp of Life continue long,  
I'd freely take, and as I did Possess,  
The Bounteous Author of my Plenty Bless.  
(lines 33-52)
The sense of these verses is that Pomfret would use the excess of material goods for charity, a spiritual good. The meaning arises, as it does so often in the poem, from the poet's separating in contrasted phrases the useful and the necessary from the excessive, such as "Gentilely, but not Great" and "Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes," as well as in contrasted main clauses, as in the last six verses above. As indicated earlier, the oxymoron "frugal Plenty" captures the spirit of this entire passage. "Frugal" is echoed in such terms as "Poor" and "Pitty [sic]," and in the presence of the needy stranger and the friend who might need aid. "Plenty" in this figure echoes "Clear, and Competent Estate," "Too largely giv'n," and "Bounteous Author of my Plenty." The spirit of moderation, then, arises from the terms "moderately," "Healthy," "Satisfy," and "sufficient."

The other figures in this passage are appropriate to the sense of the verses. The epithet "Sons of Poverty" ennobles the poor, for whom Pomfret would be so concerned, and "the Stranger," meaning all strangers, emphasizes charity to the individual. That the needy "shou'd Taste of mine" literally says that Pomfret would feed them and metaphorically states that he would give them a share of his blessings.

In the next verse-paragraph, Pomfret develops thoughts on wine. The first six lines explain the pleasures of wine, and the following six discourse on the dangers and the misuse
of it. The remaining verses expound on the poet's hospitality and concern for a good reputation, with a closing admonition to be moderate according to reason:

I'd have a little Vault, but always stor'd
With the Best Wines, each Vintage cou'd afford.
Wine whets the Wit, improves its Native force,
And gives a pleasant Flavour to Discourse:
By making all our Spirits Debonair,
Throws off the Lees, the Sediment of Care.
But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends,
May be Debauch'd, and serve Ignoble Ends:
So, but too oft, the Grapes [sic] refreshing Juice
Does many Mischievous Effects produce.
My House shou'd no such rude Disorders know,
As from high Drinking consequently flow.
Nor wou'd I use, what was so kindly giv'n,
To the Dishonour of Indulgent Heav'n.
If any Neighbour came, he shou'd be Free,
Us'd with Respect, and not uneasy be,
In my Retreat, or to himself, or me.
What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give,
All Men may with Impunity receive:
But the least swerving from their Rule's too much:
For, what's forbidden us, 'tis Death to touch.
(lines 53-73)

Pomfret considers wine, as well as food, to be a gift from Heaven. The metaphoric language praising wine, which "whets the Wit," expresses that the drink sharpens the mind, makes it alert, keen. It affords a "Flavour" which is more figurative than literal, adding a pleasant character to conversation, which, like drinking, is an oral activity. Wine erases any "Lees, the Sediment of Care," by ridding discourse of heavy or dull traits, thereby making it sprightly and light.

Pomfret then balances these six verses with six more, on the abuses of wine. It is a divine gift, but from the Christian God, not from Bacchus, and it should, therefore,
be used to promote content, not excess. "The Grapes [sic] refreshing Juice" periphrastically emphasizes again the restorative powers of wine, while the descriptions of misuse suggest its harmful qualities. "Debauch'd" refers generally to all excesses, but it connotes drunkenness, which the poet euphemizes in "Mischievous Effects" and "rude Disorders," unpleasantries he would avoid. "My House" personifies his moderate life and echoes the symbol of the estate on a hill of lines 5-8.

The final four lines of this section comprise an antithesis of two couplets. "Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason" are personified in that they are active guides to a moderate life. Pomfret mentions them in the indicative mood to express that they are within the reach of all men and are not merely part of an ideal. Not exercising these guides, says the poet, leads to the "forbidden," which results in "Death," not only literally through ill-health ruining the body, but also metaphorically insofar as excess detracts from a good reputation and virtue.

In the next verse-paragraph, Pomfret explains how his choice of two friends would further promote a "Felicity" which is "Refin'd, Sincere, and Great." He develops their character by listing their virtues and negating any weaknesses and vices:

That Life might be more Comfortable yet,
And all my Joys Refin'd, Sincere, and Great;
I'd Chuse two Friends, whose Company wou'd be
A great Advance to my Felicity.
Well Born, of Humours suited to my own;
Discreet, and Men, as well as Books, have known.
Brave, Gen'rous, Witty, and exactly Free
From loose Behaviour, or Formality.
Airy, and Prudent, Merry, but not light;
Quick in Discerning, and in Judging right.
Secret they shou'd be, Faithful to their Trust;
In Reas'ning Cool, Strong, Temperate, and Just.
Obliging, Open, without Huffing Brave,
Brisk in Gay Talking, and in Sober, Grave.
Close in Dispute, but not Tenacious, try'd
By Solid Reason, and let that Decide.
Not prone to Lust, Revenge, or Envious Hate;
Nor Busy Medlers with Intreagues of State.
Strangers to Slander, and sworn Foes to Spight;
Not Quarrelsome, but Stout enough to Fight.
Loyal, and Pious, Friends to Caesar, true,
As Dying Martyrs, to their Maker too.
In their Society, I cou'd not miss
A Permanent, Sincere, Substantial Bliss.

(lines 74-97)

As he has done earlier in the poem on other topics, Pomfret here enumerates what is acceptable and virtuous, frequently contrasting good traits and undesirable ones. Of his friends he says they would be "exactly Free / From loose Behaviour, or Formality"; "Merry, but not Light"; "without Huffing Brave"; and "Close in Dispute, but not Tenacious." Besides contrasting positives and negatives, the poet also lists what his friends would not be, such as "Not prone to Lust, Revenge, or Envious Hate" and the negative concepts in the succeeding three verses.

This entire passage is the least poetic in "The Choice" in terms of figurative language. The epithet "Friends to Caesar" emphasizes that the friends would be loyal to the king, and thus the idea of patriotism is connoted. On the
other hand, this passage can be considered one long allusion to the ideal Aristotelian man of reason and virtue and to the Christian man free from the Seven Deadly Sins, the virtues of whom have been discussed earlier, in Chapter VI. Pomfret's method of developing his friends is pleasant and artful, because, first of all, his cataloguing of their virtues does not seem as studied as if he had at hand Aristotle's Ethics or some similar methodical moral discourse. The cataloguing charmingly suggests the rumination of the poet reflecting on a wish. This passage also appears artful because of the occasional repetition of certain virtues and of the necessity of rational control, a repetition which effects an emphasis on these important ideas.

At the end of this passage, Pomfret summarizes the characters of his two friends; the last two lines look back to the first four: "Permanent, Sincere, Substantial" echoes "Refined, Sincere, and Great," while "Bliss" recalls "Felicity."

The next three verse-paragraphs, which are on Pomfret's ladyfriend, are gayer and lighter in mood than the section on his male friends. A serious tone describing the men arises from the literal statements developing them as sophisticated and strong fellows. A gayer tone on women evolves from, first of all, the poet's desire to withdraw occasionally from a man's world, and, secondly, the figurative language. The first of these three sections is:
Wou'd Bounteous Heav'n once more Indulge,
I'd choose,
(For who wou'd so much Satisfaction loose,
As Witty Nymphs, in Conversation, give,)
Near some Obliging, Modest Fair to live;
For there's that Sweetness in a Female Mind,
Which in a Man's we cannot hope to find:
That by a Secret, but a Pow'rful, Art
Winds up the Springs of Life, and does impart
Fresh Vital Heat to the Transported Heart.
(lines 98-106)

Pomfret speaks gently of ladies as "Witty Nymphs" and of a neighbor as "some Obliging, Modest Fair." The image of the charms of women which he creates emphasizes their ability to give pleasure to a man's soul. Their "Sweetness," like nourishing, energy-giving sugar, is apparently latent ("Secret"), but, nevertheless, effective ("Pow'rful"). Pomfret also describes this figurative energy as tensing the "Springs of Life" and offering "Fresh Vital Heat" which moves the "Transported Heart."

In the next section on his lady, Pomfret defines her character by enumerating various virtues and denying weaknesses, similar to the manner in which he defines the men. The result is the sketch of a lady with a good reputation earned by her friendliness, concern for decorum, and lack of vanity:

I'd have her Reason all her Passions sway;
Easy in Company, in Private Gay:
Coy to a Fop, to the Deserving Free,
Still Constant to her self, and Just to me.
A Soul she shou'd have, for Great Actions fit;
Prudence, and Wisdom to direct her Wit:
Courage to look bold Danger in the Face,
No Fear, but only to be Proud, or Base:
Quick to Advise, by an Emergence prest,
To give good Counsel, or to take the best.
I'd have th' Expression of her Thoughts be such,
She might not seem Reserv'd, nor talk too much;
That shews a want of Judgment and of Sense:
More than Enough is but Impertinence.
Her Conduct Regular, her Mirth Refin'd,
Civil to Strangers, to her Neighbours kind.
Averse to Vanity, Revenge, and Pride,
In all the Methods of Deceit untry'd.
So Faithful to her Friend, and Good to all,
No Censure might upon her Actions fall:
Then wou'd e'en Envy be compell'd to say,
She goes the least of Woman-kind Astray.
(lines 107-128)

Although she possessed the same virtues as the men, she
would be quite feminine because of her lack of the masculine
traits of Pomfret's male friends: "Close in Dispute" (line
88), "Stout enough to Fight" (line 93), and "In Reas'ning
Cool, Strong" (line 85). The first line of this passage
says her reason would control her emotions, just as the men
would control their own. But whereas Pomfret partly develops
the men in antithetical phrases which list their strong
moral traits and then negates any moral weaknesses, he
develops the lady in part by antithetical phrases which state
the extremes between which she would move with ease.

For example, she would have "No Fear, but only to be
Proud, or Base," and "She might not seem Reserv'd, nor talk
too much." This method is best exemplified in the three
instances of chiasm:

   Easy in Company, in Private Gay:
Coy to a Fop, to the Deserving Free,
Civil to Strangers, to her Neighbours kind.
As a result of the poet's portraying this lady in the extremes of situations, and, of course, implying that she would be equally charming between them, he has created a character who is more attractive and lifelike than the men. The men appear equally constant and virtuous, but the lady is also more dramatically alive. The figurative language in this passage is as sparse as the one on men. There are two personifications: "Bold Danger" has a "Face," and "Envy" would say that the lady is an ideal woman. These personifications enliven the abstractions danger and envy because, ultimately, they involve persons.

In the final verse-paragraph on the lady, Pomfret draws an antithesis between joy in the first five lines and moderation in the last six:

To this Fair Creature I'd sometimes Retire;
Her Conversation would new Joys inspire;
Give Life an Edge so keen, no surly Care
Would venture to Assault my Soul, or dare
Near my Retreat to hide one secret Snare.
But so Divine, so Noble a Repast
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste,
For Highest Cordials all their Virtue loose,
By a too frequent, and to [sic] bold an Use;
And what wou'd Cheer the Spirits in Distress;
Ruines our Health, when taken to Excess.
(lines 129-139)

In this entire passage, Pomfret uses language of physical safety and health to suggest the well-being of his soul. The company of the lady would afford his "Life an Edge so keen"; that is, his mind would be alert and prepared against worry, which he personifies in "surly Care" that would not be able to "Assault" him or "dare" to lay a trap for him. The phrase
"Near my Retreat" is quite important here, for the poet implies that even though he had good reading, an adequate estate, and occasion to be virtuous to both the poor and his friends, he would need more than content. The mirth and joy of the lady's company would add some emotional happiness to his ideal life.

In the last six lines of this passage, four of which are in the indicative mood, the poet both realizes for himself and directs to the reader a warning against excess. Here, still concerned about his spiritual health, the figurative language says that excess in one's taking any kind of nourishment causes ill-health. The poet speaks of his visits to her as a "Repast" amid "Cordials" which would "Cheer the Spirits" and which he would, "with Moderation, taste." This language is consistent with that describing wine and food earlier, where these material gifts from heaven, just as the lady is "so Divine, so Noble a Repast," would be occasions for spiritual benefits if used prudently.

In the second-to-last group of verses in "The Choice," Pomfret recognizes that even in his ideal life he might be involved in civil disputes. Since he has already described what his temperament would be among friends, neighbors, and his lady, it is fitting that he also seek moderation in his more public life. In the first two lines, he states in what matters he would have no personal interest; in the next four lines, wherein his interest would lie; and in the remaining
verses, in what he would have no excessive interest:

I'd be concern'd in no Litigious Jar, 
Belov'd by all, not vainly Popular. 
What e're Assistance I had Pow'r to bring 
T'Oblige my Country, or to Serve my King, 
When e're they Call'd, I'd readily afford 
My Tongue, my Pen, my Counsel, or my Sword. 
Law Suits I'd shun, with as much studious Care, 
As I wou'd Dens where hungry Lyons are: 
And rather put up Injuries; than be 
A Plague to him who'd be a Plague to me. 
I value Quiet at a Price too great, 
To give for my Revenge so dear a Rate: 
For what do we, by all our Bustle, gain, 
But Counterfeit Delight, for real Pain? 
(lines 140-153)

In the first two verses, the poet would be "Belov'd" for the sake of friendship, not for vanity. This statement is literal, for he would have neither emotional nor personal involvements in the suits of others. He reserves figurative language in this passage for describing his emotional concerns in disputes. He climaxes the four-line statement on patriotism with a series of phrases stating his resources—"My Tongue, my Pen, my Counsel, or my Sword"—all of which, except the third, are metonymies. This expression recalls to the reader that the poet's friends would be "Loyal, and Pious, Friends to Caesar" (line 94). In a little more than the second half of this section, Pomfret expresses his awareness of both the need for moderation and the dangers of revenge. His avoidance of the harmful and the painful in vengeance reminds the reader again of the friends of the poet; they would be "Strangers to Slander, and sworn Foes to Spight" (line 92) and "Not prone to . . . Revenge" (line 90). These dangers
pomfret expresses figuratively, seeking to avoid lawsuits in the simile "As I wou'd Dens where hungry Lyons are" and metaphorically, twice in the same verse, speaking of legal entanglements as a "Plague." In the final four verses of this passage, Pomfret uses imagery of money. He speaks of lawsuits as dangerously involving "value," "Price," "rate," "gain," and "Counterfeit," implying that financial settlements could harm his estate, as well as his peace of mind. His evasion of "real Pain," which seems to be paronomasia for "harm to property," best sums up his concern for prudently controlling his relationships with people and material resources for an ideal life.

Pomfret's purpose in the final group of lines in "The Choice" is to describe how he would hope to look back without regret and to hold up his scheme of retirement as an example to all:

If Heav'n a Date of many Years wou'd give,  
Thus I'd in Pleasure, Ease, and Plenty live.  
And as I near approach'd the Verge of Life,  
Some kind Relation, (for I'd have no Wife)  
Shou'd take upon him all my Worldly Care,  
While I did for a better State prepare.  
Then I'd not be with any Trouble vex'd;  
Nor have the Ev'ning of my days perplex'd.  
But by a silent, and a peaceful Death,  
Without a Sigh, resign my Aged Breath:  
And when committed to the Dust, I'd have  
Few Tears, but Friendly, dropt into my Grave.  
Then wou'd my Exit so propitious be;  
All Men wou'd wish to Live, and Dye like me.  
(lines 154-167)

The poet's satisfied tone in this conclusion arises from the verse "Thus I'd in Pleasure, Ease, and Plenty live," and it
neatly sums up and unifies the work, for it echoes line 4 of the poem, in the introduction, which says he would live his retirement, should he get his choice, "In blissful Ease, and Satisfaction." The term "Plenty" is somewhat ironic, for although he sought a modest estate and only a few friends, his life, nevertheless, would be filled with plenty, because it had everything he had asked of heaven. Pomfret emphasizes his satisfaction with the ideal life in the four line antithesis in the middle of the passage:

Then I'd not be with any Trouble vex'\d;
Nor have the Ev'ning of my days perplex'\d.
But by a silent, and a peaceful Death,
Without a Sigh, resign my Aged Breath.
(lines 160-163)

His diction indicates he would expect to be happy until death, hoping for no sorrows for others since he would have no wife and family, and only a few grieving friends and a relative. The poet promotes a peaceful mood in speaking euphemistically about his last days and death. He says metaphorically "the Verge of Life" and "the Ev'ning of my days." The metonymy "Aged Breath" unites breath with life even as he would leave it. One synecdoche, "Without a Sigh," expresses the lack of regrets, and another, "Few Tears, but Friendly," implies the lack of others' grieving. The periphrastic expressions "a better State," "Committed to the Dust," and "my Exit" continue the tone of happiness. Even the literal phrases on death are pleasant, as he says "a peaceful Death" and that men would wish not only "to Live,"
but also to "Dye like me."

As to the sentences in "The Choice," Pomfret skillfully controls their length, their work order, their arrangement for emphasis, and the number of clauses they contain. All of his sentences are declarative, except the one in lines 152-153, the first verse of which is a rhetorical question, while the second verse provides the obvious answer:

For what do we, by all our Bustle, gain,
But Counterfeit Delight, for real Pain?

The question in the second and the third lines below, which in itself is a main clause, is parenthetical, as it interrupts a sentence:

Wou'd Bounteous Heav'n once more Indulge,
I'd choose,
(For who wou'd so much Satisfaction loose,
As Witty Nymphs, in Conversation, give,) Near some Obliging, Modest Fair to live. (lines 98-101)

This question expresses the poet's exuberance as he comments on the joyful occasions of talking to ladies. The only other parenthesis, "(for I'd have no Wife)" (line 157), helps to explain why Pomfret would enjoy the company of a special lady, as well as that he would not be married, even later in life.

As to the word order of his sentences, Pomfret inverts fifteen of fifty-four main clauses. Fourteen of these inversions involve the words "shou'd," "wou'd," and "I'd." He employs the word order Subject-"wou'd" (or "shou'd")-Object (or Complement)-Verb in four sentences, the last example
below being a question:

It shou'd within no other Things contain,
But what were Useful, Necessary, Plain.
(lines 9-10)

A frugal Plenty shou'd my Table spread;
With Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes Fed.
(lines 43-44)

My House shou'd no such rude Disorders know,
As from high Drinking consequently:flow.
(lines 63-64)

Her Conversation wou'd new Joys inspire.
(line 130)

(For who wou'd so much Satisfaction loose,
As Witty Nymphs, in Conversation, give,)
(lines 99-100)

Six inversions begin with objects:

But what's sufficient to make Nature strong,
And the bright Lamp of Life continue long,
I'd freely take, and as I did Possess,
The Bounteous Author of my Plenty Bless.
(lines 49-52)

What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give,
All Men may, with Impunity receive.
(lines 70-71)

For, what's forbidden us, 'tis Death to touch.
(line 73)

A Soul she shou'd have, for Great Actions fit.
(line 111)

But so Divine, so Noble a Repast
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste.
(lines 134-135)

Law Suits I'd shun, with as much studious Care,
As I wou'd Dens where hungry Lyons are.
(lines 146-147)

Two sentences begin with "Nor," so that the verb, rather than
the subject, must follow immediately:
Nor shou'd the Sons of Poverty Repine
Too much at Fortune, they shou'd Taste of mine.
(lines 37-38)

Nor wou'd I use, what was so kindly giv'n,
To the Dishonour of Indulgent Heav'n.
(lines 65-66)

Two other sentences begin with a verb:

Then wou'd e'en Envy be compell'd to say,
She goes the least of Woman-kind Astray.
(lines 127-128)

Then wou'd my Exit so propitious be;
All Men wou'd wish to Live, and Dye like me.
(lines 166-167)

An adjective complement begins this statement:

Secret they shou'd be, Faithful to their Trust.
(line 84)

Pomfret's use of inverted word order adds variety to his sentences. They are pleasant touches, since the couplet verse form itself can become monotonous. It seems, however, that the inversions are also designed to locate verbs at the end of verses, because ten of the verses in the inversions just cited conclude with verbs, and two other verses end in infinitives. In the entire poem, sixty-three, or one-third, of the lines end in verbs. Placing verbs in terminal position promotes the poet's composition of periodic sentences, and, as will be discussed below, he often emphasizes the main themes of "The Choice" in periodic sentences.

Whether one observes the rhetoric of Pomfret's sentences from the viewpoint of the number of clauses in each, their word order, or the position of important ideas, a close analysis reveals that he favors three types of sentences to
express the sense of "The Choice." The three types are the periodic sentence; the loose sentence, often ending in cumulative detail; and the compound or the compound-complex sentence. To compose periodic sentences, Pomfret sometimes delays the completion of the meaning until the end in order to emphasize ideas through antithesis, series, or parallel structure, as in these examples:

Near some fair Town, I'd have a private Seat, Built Uniform, not Little, nor too Great.  
(lines 5-6)

In their Society, I cou'd not miss  
A Permanent, Sincere, Substantial Bliss.  
(lines 96-97)

Sometimes he composes periodic sentences by delaying the verb until the very end, as in these examples:

So, but too oft, the Grapes [sic] refreshing Juice  
Does many Mischievous Effects produce.  
(lines 61-62)

What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give,  
All Men may with Impunity receive.  
(lines 70-71)

The simplest way to understand Pomfret's arrangement of periodic sentences, however, is to observe that he concludes them with terms which are key words in his plan for ideal retirement. For example, the importance of heaven and its bounty appears at the end of these sentences:

For that, our Maker has too largely giv'n,  
Shou'd be return'ed, in Gratitude, to Heav'n.  
(lines 41-42)

But what's sufficient to make Nature strong,  
And the bright Lamp of Life continue long,
I'd freely take, and as I did Possess,  
The Bounteous Author of my Plenty Bless.  
(lines 49-52)

Nor wou'd I use, what was so kindly giv'n,  
To the Dishonour of Indulgent Heav'n.  
(lines 65-66)

The idea of content terminates these sentences:  

For sure no Minutes bring us more Content,  
Than those in Pleasing, Useful Studies spent.  
(lines 31-32)

I'd have a little Vault, but always stor'd  
With the Best Wines, each Vintage cou'd afford.  
(lines 53-54)

That Life might be more Comfortable yet,  
And all my Joys Refin'ld, Sincere, and Great;  
I'd Chuse two Friends, whose Company wou'd be  
A great Advance to my Felicity.  
(lines 74-77)

In their Society, I cou'd not miss  
A Permanent, Sincere, Substantial Bliss.  
(lines 96-97)

If Heav'n a Date of many Years wou'd give,  
Thus I'd in Pleasure, Ease, and Plenty live.  
(lines 154-155)

The following main clauses lead to the desire for moderation:  

Near some fair Town, I'd have a private Seat,  
Built Uniform, not Little, nor too Great.  
(lines 5-6)

It shou'd within no other Things contain,  
But what were Useful, Necessary, Plain;  
Methinks 'tis Nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure  
The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture.  
(lines 9-12)

But so Divine, so Noble a Repast  
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste.  
(lines 134-135)

Pomfret expresses the need to be wary of the dangers of excess  
at the end of the following sentences:
But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends,
May be Debauch'd, and serve Ignoble Ends:
So, but too oft, the Grapes [sic] refreshing Juice
Does many Mischievous Effects produce.
(lines 59-62)

My House shou'd no such rude Disorders know,
As from high Drinking consequently flow.
(lines 63-64)

For Highest Cordials all their Virtue loose,
By a too frequent, and to [sic] bold an Use:
And what wou'd Cheer the Spirits in Distress;
Ruines our Health, when taken to Excess.
(lines 136-139)

Law Suits I'd shun, with as much studious Care,
As I wou'd Dens where hungry Lyons are:
And rather put up Injuries; than be
A Plague to him who'd be a Plague to me.
(lines 146-149)

I value Quiet at a Price too great,
To give for my Revenge so dear a Rate:
For what do we, by all our Bustle, gain,
But Counterfeit Delight, for real Pain?
(lines 150-153)

Ideas on virtuous conduct at the end of these sentences make them periodic:

Then wou'd e'en Envy be compell'd to say,
She goes the least of Woman-kind Astray.
(lines 127-128)

What e're Assistance I had Pow'r to bring
T'Oblige my Country, or to Serve my King,
When e're they Call' d, I'd readily afford
My Tongue, my Pen, my Counsel, or my Sword.
(lines 142-145)

It is evident that the prominence which Pomfret gives to periodic sentences arises from both their frequency and the important ideas he places at their ends.

Nine of Pomfret's sentences in "The Choice" are loose. What distinguishes these loose sentences from the periodic
ones is that either the main clauses stress important ideas about half way through the sentences or else series of objects or verb phrases, apparently not in climactic order, conclude the statements. The four succeeding constructions are Pomfret's briefer loose sentences:

I'd have a Clear, and Competent Estate,
That I might Live Gently, but not Great.
As much as I cou'd moderately spend,
A little more, sometimes t'Oblige a Friend.
(lines 33-36)

A frugal Plenty shou'd my Table spread;
With Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes Fed:
Enough to Satisfy, and something more
To Feed the Stranger, and the Neighb'ring Poor.
(lines 43-46)

Wine whets the Wit, improves its Native force,
And gives a pleasant Flavour to Discourse:
By making all our Spirits Debonair,
Throws off the Lees, the Sediment of Care.
(lines 55-58)

I'd be concern'd in no Litigious Jar,
Belov'd by all, not vainly Popular.
(lines 140-141)

However, five loose sentences Pomfret patterns in a special way. They are noteworthy owing to their length and effect. Each of these special loose sentences concludes its main clause long before the sentence itself ends. The briefest of these constructions is the following one, in which the basic sense of the statement is completed by the end of the second line:

I'd have her Reason all her Passions sway;
Easy in Company, in Private Gay:
Coy to a Fop, to the Deserving Free,
Still Constant to her self, and Just to me.
(lines 107-110)
There are four other sentences like this one; only they are much longer. Perhaps one ought to label them in a special way, as does Francis Christensen, a modern grammarian and rhetorician, who calls them "cumulative sentences." In the following statement he both defines and exemplifies the cumulative sentence:

The main clause, which may or may not have a sentence modifier before it, advances the discussion; but the additions move backwards, as in this clause, to modify the statement of the main clause or more often to explain or exemplify it, so that the sentence has a flowing and ebbing movement to consolidate it, leaping and lingering as the popular ballad does. The first part of the preceding compound sentence has one addition, placed within it; the second part has four words in the main clause and forty-nine in the five additions placed after it.  

Three of Pomfret's cumulative sentences are:

At th' End of which a silent Study plac'd,
Shou'd be with all the Noblest Authors Grac'd.
Horace, and Virgil, in whose Mighty Lines
Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning shines.
Sharp Juvenal, and Am'rous Ovid too,
Who all the Turns of Loves [sic] soft Passion knew;
He that with Judgment reads his charming Lines,
In which strong Art, with stronger Nature joyns,
Must grant his Fancy does the best Excel:
His Thoughts so tender, and Exprest so well.
With all those Moderns, Men of steady Sense,
Esteem'd for Learning, and for Eloquence.
(lines 17-28)

That Life might be more Comfortable yet,
And all my Joys Refin'd, Sincere, and Great;
I'd Chuse two Friends, whose Company wou'd be
A great Advance to my Felicity.
Well Born, of Humours suited to my own;
Discreet, and Men, as well as Books, have known.

Brave, Gen'rous, Witty, and exactly Free
From loose Behaviour, or Formality.
Airy, and Prudent, Merry, but not Light;
Quick in Discerning, and in Judging right.
(lines 74-83)

A Soul she shou'd have, for Great Actions fit;
Prudence, and Wisdom to direct her Wit:
Courage to look bold Danger in the Face,
No Fear, but only to be Proud, or Base:
Quick to Advise, by an Emergence prest,
To give good Counsel, or to take the best.
(lines 111-116)

One cumulative sentence which differs from the others is the one in lines 84-95, the difference being that it does not have its main clause detailed by the many phrases which follow it:

Secret they shou'd be, Faithful to their Trust;
In hea's'ning Cool, Strong, Temperate, and Just.
Obliging, Open, without Huffing Brave,
Brisk in Gay Talking, and in Sober, Grave.
Close in Dispute, but not Tenacious, try'd
By Solid Reason, and let that Decide.
Not prone to Lust, Revenge, or Envious Hate:
Nor busy Medlers with Intreagues of State.
Strangers to Slander, and sworn Foes to Spight:
Not Quarrelsome, but Stout enough to Fight.
Loyal, and Pious, Friends to Caesar, true,
As Dying Martyrs, to their Maker too.
(lines 84-95)

Although the many phrases are not expansions of the main clause in the first line, from all other points of view it is modeled on the other cumulative sentences insofar as most of the sentence is taken up by many phrases. There is much balance in these added phrases in cumulative sentences, either in series or in parallel structure. These balanced expressions produce the effect not only of clarifying the brief and general main clauses, but also of allowing the reader to follow the thoughts as they occur to the speaker in his musing.
balanced lines express the speaker's thoughts as they come to his mind in a series of associated ideas.

To prevent confusion and to promote clarity, so that each balanced construction strikes the reader's mind, Pomfret varies their length. He deliberately varies the kinds of parallelisms, as is obvious in this passage:

Her Conduct Regular, her Mirth Refin'd,  
Civil to Strangers, to her Neighbours kind.  
Averse to Vanity, Revenge, and Pride,  
In all the Methods of Deceit untry'd.  
So Faithful to her Friend, and Good to all,  
No Censure might upon her Actions fall.  
(lines 121-126)

The first line has two balanced phrases. In the next line, Pomfret uses chiasm insofar as the position of the phrases is reversed: adjective-adverbial phrase and then adverbial phrase-adjective. The third line has a series of three nouns. The fourth verse has a modifying phrase preceding "untry'd." The next-to-last line has two parallel adjectives, each modified by a phrase and both modified by the dependent clause in the last line. The parallel constructions in all the cumulative sentences in the poem are varied as to length and position of words and phrases. Moreover, Pomfret employs four other instances of chiasm:

Quick in Discerning, and in Judging right.  
(line 83)

Brisk in Gay Talking, and in Sober, Grave.  
(line 87)

Easy in Company, in Private Gay:  
Coy to a Fop, to the Deserving Free.  
(lines 108-109)
In these phrases it is apparent that the poet intends to vary even the shortest grammatical elements.

Besides imitating the musing balanced operations of the mind, Pomfret uses cumulative sentences in most instances for emphasis on the virtues of his close acquaintances. The sentences in lines 74-97, which comprise the section on his male friends, and the sentences in lines 107-128, which comprise most of the section on his lady, cover forty-six lines, or almost one-third of the poem, a statistical fact which further indicates that the poet intends to stress the virtues which these verses catalogue. Moreover, the fact that thirty-two of the forty-six verses are found in only four cumulative sentences indicates that he relies on this type of sentence to define his lady and two other friends. Since their "Humours wou'd be suited to my own" (line 78), the following lines also help to portray the character to which he himself aspires.

In summary, Pomfret employs long cumulative sentences which detail the generalizations of their early main clauses. He achieves emphasis through long lists of qualities which he catalogues. He promotes clarity through parallelisms and offers delight by imitating the reflective operations of his mind.

Pomfret also uses three compound sentences and eight compound-complex. The long sentence in lines 17-28 is compound-complex insofar as a lengthy parenthetical comment on Ovid is a main clause, whereas remarks on the other poets
are in dependent clauses attached to another main clause. Two other compound sentences stress their ideas by their
main clauses being periodic:

Methinks 'tis Nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure
The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture.
(lines 11-12)

Strong Meat Indulges Vice, and Pomp'ring \[sic\] Food
Creates Diseases, and Inflames the Blood.
(lines 47-48)

These main clauses, however, are not balanced against each
other by approximate length.

The special mark of the other compound and compound-
complex sentences is that their main clauses are balanced in
length. Each main clause and its modifiers cover either one
or two full lines. The first of a group of main clauses is
then followed by another construction like itself of equal
length or sometimes by two shorter ones which together equal
its length. The arrangement of thought which Pomfret develops
in this symmetrical pattern is a statement followed by a
qualifying explanation; a statement whose main clause and
modifiers are antithetical to another statement; or else a
combination of statement, antithesis, and explanation. Often
some repetition from one main clause to the next is involved.
Semicolons and colons usually separate one main clause and its
modifiers from another:

Near some fair Town, I'd have a private Seat,
Built Uniform, not Little, nor too Great;
Better, if on a Rising Ground it stood;
Fields on this side, on that a Neighbouring Wood.
(lines 5-8)
In some of these, as Fancy shou'd Advise,
I'd always take my Morning Exercise:
For sure no Minutes bring us more Content,
Than those in Pleasing, Useful Studies spent.
(lines 29-32)

What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give,
All Men may with Impunity receive:
But the least swerving from their Rule's too much:
For, what's forbidden us, 'tis Death to touch.
(lines 70-73)

I'd have th' Expression of her Thoughts be such,
She might not seem Reserv'd, nor talk too much;
That shews a want of Judgment and of Sense:
More than Enough is but Impertinence.
(lines 117-120)

But so Divine, so Noble a Repast
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste,
For Highest Cordials all their Virtue loose,
By a too frequent, and to [sic] bold an Use:
And what wou'd Cheer the Spirits in Distress;
Ruines our Health, when taken to Excess.
(lines 134-139)

I value Quiet at a Price too great,
To give for my Revenge so dear a Rate:
For what do we, by all our Bustle, gain,
But Counterfeit Delight, for real Pain?
(lines 150-153)

One notably long sentence with more than one main clause appears in lines 98-106:

Wou'd Bounteous Heav'n once more Indulge,
I'd choose,
(For who wou'd so much Satisfaction loose,
As Witty Nymphs, in Conversation, give,)
Near some Ogling, Modest Fair to live;
For there's that Sweetness in a Female Mind,
Which in a Man's we cannot hope to find:
That by a Secret, but a Pow'rful, Art
Winds up the Springs of Life, and does impart
Fresh Vital Heat to the Transported Heart.
(lines 98-106)

Although this sentence is nine lines long, it is divided on the basis of the first four verses and the remaining five, a
symmetrical enough division when one considers both the length of the sentence and Pomfret's restraint in making the second group only five verses by the use of a triplet, rather than a couplet, which would have made it six verses long. Its division of thought is a preference for feminine companionship and then an explanation of the singularity of feminine charm.

In summary, Pomfret relies on three types of sentences to emphasize his ideas. He employs periodic sentences to echo the main themes of his ideal life. He uses long cumulative sentences whose parallel elements develop the virtues of his acquaintances. He employs most of his compound and compound-complex sentences to balance statements, explanations, and repetitions. His control over the length of dependent and independent clauses, as well as his paralleling of long and brief constructions, promotes the flow of thought, ease of transition, and facility in reading.

The rhythmical arrangement of Pomfret's statements is as skillfully controlled as their grammar and syntax. To make the verses of "The Choice" iambic pentameter, he first of all limits each line to ten syllables, and forty-three lines would have more than ten syllables had he not elided certain sounds. He uses contractions, such as "what's (lines 49 and 73), "there's" (line 102), "who'd" (line 149), and "Rule's" (line 72), thereby making one syllable from two in each case. The most common contractions is "I'd," used fifteen
times, although Pomfret breaks this pattern once, in line 147, saying "I wou'd," because "I'd" would have left the line only nine syllables long.

The poet's most frequent use of the apostrophe indicates syncope, or the omission of a vowel between consonants, an orthographical figure which makes many of his lines decasyllabic. The word most frequently eliding a sound is "Heav'n," in lines 1, 42, 66, 98, and 154; it is rime twice with "giv'n," in lines 41 and 65. Other instances of syncope are "Am'rous" (line 21), "murm'ring" (line 14), and "Gen'rous" (line 80), among others, which occur in lines 11, 46, 47, 85, 104, 127, 142, 144, and 161. Closely related to syncope is Pomfret's slurring of the last two syllables of words which are trisyllabic, so that only ten syllables appear in their lines: "Neighbouring" (line 8), "Bounteous" (lines 52 and 98), and "studious" (line 146).

Pomfret sometimes omits syllables at the beginning, the ending, and the juncture of words. In lines 11 and 73, he contracts "it is" to "'tis," using aphaeresis, or the dropping of the initial vowel of a word. He employs apocope by shortening "often" to "oft" (line 61). He uses synaeresis, or the running together of two vowels that do not form a diphthong, in "th' End" (line 17), "t'Oblige" (lines 36 and 143), and "th' Expression" (line 117). Synaeresis not only limits a line to ten syllables, but also prevents hiatus.

He employs asyndeton by omitting "and" from a series in line
10 to limit the number of syllables. In line 7, the ellipsis "Better" for "It wou'd be Better" not only considerably shortens the line, but also prevents the omitted "wou'd" from jarring the ear with "stood" at the end of the line and "Wood" at the end of the next. So skillful is Pomfret in omitting syllables to limit each verse to ten sounds that he deletes two syllables in a line in five instances. Line 11 has "'tis" and "ne'er"; line 73 "what's" and "'tis"; line 117 "I'd" and "th' Expression"; line 142 "e're" and "Pow'r"; and line 144 "e're" and "I'd." In pursuing decasyllabic lines he also adds two syllables to line 103, which in the first edition reads:

Which in a Man's we cannot find.

This verse is tetrameter. The 1702 edition reads:

Which in a Man's we cannot hope to find.

Now the line is pentameter.

Of the 158 verses which form couplets in "The Choice," only 65 are purely iambic. In the other verses which form couplets, 32 are almost purely iambic, owing to the suppression of a stress in each, and 60 lines have substitutional feet, although the rhythm is basically iambic. In the lines which are almost perfectly iambic, the suppressed accents always occur on coordinating conjunctions or prepositions, parts of speech which do not take stresses, except in line 49, where "to" is muted. These lines are typical of the preceding observations:
A little Garden, Grateful to the Eye  
(line 13)

From loose Behaviour, or Formality  
(line 81)

Some kind Relation, (for I'd have no Wife)  
(line 157)

This suppression in 23 of 32 instances appears medially, in the third foot. At all other times it occurs either in the second or the fourth foot. The effect of this four-stress line is, first of all, that it varies the pace of the poem by adding a quickened movement to the second half of the verse, where an iamb is expected, and, second, that it contrasts to the slower lines in which spondees and trochees are emphatic.

Most of the sixty lines of the poem which are not perfectly iambic stand out prominently. In some instances, the first foot of a line is a trochee, the first syllable of which is a monosyllabic noun or pronoun, parts of speech which almost always take stresses, or else it is a noun which itself is a trochee, as in "Fields on" (line 8), "He that" (line 23), and "Prudence" (line 112). The poet often emphasizes important words, such as "sometimes," which break the regular iambic rhythm with a trochee in mid-line:

A little more, sometimes t'Oblige a Friend  
(line 36)

He also substitutes trochees for iambs when adverbs, parts of speech which often take stresses, begin lines, such as in this verse:
Then would a 'Envy be compl'd to say
(line 127)

Here, "Then" begins a transitional sentence which states the effect on others of the lady's possessing the many qualities he has just listed. Adverbs in trochees also signal transition at the start of lines 155 and 160.

Pomfret's most common variation from iambic feet, however, occurs where he wants to emphasize adverbs of degree and adjectives. Just as he reserves periodic sentences especially for stressing phrases and large constructions, he almost always reserves variation in meter for emphasizing qualities of his ideal life. These substitutions are either trochees or spondees, with pyrrhic feet occurring. Some substitutions involve the adverbs "too" and "so" to intensify adjectives:

Built Uniform, not Little, nor too Great
(line 6)

A spondee appears above where stressed "too" prepares for "Great," a key word regarding moderation. Here is a similar example:

So Faithful to her Friend, and Good to all
(line 125)

"So" intensifies "Faithful" and forms a spondee with its first syllable. Other instances of "so" and "too" occur in lines 41, 61, 72, 134, and 137.

Pomfret also involves adjectives in substitutional feet in two other patterns. One pattern has a monosyllabic adjective either before a monosyllabic noun or before a noun whose
whose stress is on the first syllable. This substitution always forms a spondee, as in the following verses:

Near some\text{fair} Town, I'd have\text{a private} Seat
\hspace*{\fill} (line 5)

\hspace*{\fill} In which\text{strong} Art, with stronger Nature joyns
\hspace*{\fill} (line 24)

\hspace*{\fill} With the\text{Best Wines}, each Vintage cou'd\text{afford}
\hspace*{\fill} (line 54)

This pattern creating a spondee also occurs in lines 14, 21, and 39, as well as in eight other instances. This variation from iambic rhythm emphasizes both the quality and the thing or person to which it is ascribed.

Other variations from regular rhythm involve adjectives which do not precede nouns. These variations always form trochees and most often occur in the verses comprising long series, parallel listings of adjectives, and phrases. Quite often a trochee begins a line, as in the cases of a few nouns and pronouns cited earlier, but the trochaic adjective should be noted in relation to the spondaic one just mentioned, for Pomfret gives special prominence throughout the poem to adjectives. Following are two cases of this trochaic pattern:

Airy, and Prudent, Merry, but not Light;
Quick in Discerning, and in Judging right.
\hspace*{\fill} (lines 82-83)

Brisk in Gay Talking, and in Sober, Grave.
\hspace*{\fill} (line 87)

This pattern also occurs in lines 94, 108, 109, 115, and 122.

In summary, the analysis of Pomfret's variation from iambic rhythm leads one to two noteworthy conclusions. First
of all, the substitutions come easily to a reader, especially when he reads the lines aloud, because stresses fall naturally where they would in prose cadences. Second, more than any other parts of speech, Pomfret's variations in rhythm involve adjectives. As such, these variations, along with the fact that many adjectives are in series and parallel structure, call attention to the qualities of his ideal life.

Because Pomfret has written verses in heroic couplets, and because he also has three triplets, the rimes are prominent. All of them are masculine. All bisyllabic riming words have their stress on the second syllable. In trisyllabic words, "Debonair" (line 57) takes its strongest stress on the final syllable, and even though "Furniture" (line 12), "Elocution" (line 28), "Exercise" (line 30), and "Felicity" (line 77) have their strongest stress earlier in the words, their final syllables are strong enough to contrast to the weak penults. Most of the rimes are perfect, but ten pairs are not. The pairs "Seat-Great," "Lines-joyns," "were-spare," "giv'n-Heav'n," "more-Poor," "Food-Blood," "give-receive," "yet-great," "Repast-taste," and "have-Grave" all have precedents as rimes in the works of such eminent poets as Shakespeare, Spenser, Herrick, Herbert, and Milton.5

Pomfret's rimes join to help express the sense of the

5Miles Lawrence Hanley, ed., English and American Pronunciation: 16th to 18th Centuries as Indicated by Rimes and Spellings (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1938).
couplets, but it is worth noting that he sets up the final word of the first line of a couplet to anticipate the final word of the next line. First of all, the last two syllables of a line always compose an iamb, so that even in lines which are not purely iambic, the rhythm returns to the basic foot. Moreover, the stressed syllable of each rime is usually drawn out so that the first rimeing word seems to anticipate the second one. Either the the first rimeing word ends in a long vowel or a diphthong; or else a consonant, often s, t, d, or r, lengthens the sound of the word, as in "Excel-well," "Sense-Eloquence," "Content-spent," "vex'd-perplex'd," and "Death-Breath." These drawn-out sounds also add finality to the lines, which are not very often enjambed.

Pomfret regulates the pace of "The Choice" as skillfully as he does the meter. The tempo is predominantly slow and often halting, a pace which is fitting to the sense of the poem, for this pace helps to create the deliberative and contemplative mood, as the poet moves from idea to idea without any predictable length in phrasing within each couplet. Some of the devices which he uses to regulate the tempo have already been indicated in the recent analysis of rhythm. For example, although spondees alter the basic rhythm, they also slow down lines because of the duration of successive stresses. Slowness of some lines also arises from the poet's use of trochees, which causes the reader to utter the first syllable of some words more forcefully than the second one,
whereas on iambic voice conserves breath on the weak first syllables to use it on the more vigorous second ones.

Besides these devices, Pomfret uses enjambed lines and many caesuras to effect a slow pace. The first verses of seventeen couplets are enjambed, but, in all except three instances, a slight pause occurs at the end of the first line of three couplets, owing to a normal juncture between the last word of one line and the first word of the next. A slight natural pause appears in English between a subject and its verb, between a verb and its object or complement, and frequently between all of these elements and their modifying phrases. For example, at the end of the first verse of lines 11-12, the verb has a slight pause anticipating its object:

Methinks 'tis Nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure
The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture.
(lines 11-12)

In the following couplet, a slight rest appears after the subject, "Row," and precedes the modifier, which begins the next line:

On whose delicious Banks a stately Row
Of Shady Limes, or Sycamores should grow.
(lines 15-16)

The detailing of the traits of the poet's friends demands slow reading, so that no economy is achieved in running together lines 80-81, in which "Free" has a very slight pause before its adverbial-phrase modifier:

Brave, Gen'rous, Witty, and exactly Free
From loose Behaviour, or Formality.
(lines 80-81)
similar slight but certain pauses conclude the first verses
of couplets in lines 19, 37, 45, 53, 61, 76, 96, 134, 142,
144, and 148. These pauses arise because, first of all, they
are natural to English; second, each line, of course, ends on
a stressed syllable; and, third, the reader anticipates the
rime at the end of the second line. Most of the time, a long
or a rounded-vowel sound also prolongs the final words, as in
"more" (line 45), "stor'd" (line 53), "Juice" (line 61), and
"be" (lines 76 and 148).

The three exceptions in which there are no noticeable
junctures between the final words of the first lines and the
first words of the second lines of couplets are influenced by
other pauses within the verses. For example, a satisfactory
reading does not arise from a reader's pausing at the end of
the first verse of this couplet:

Strong Meat Indulges Vice, \| and Pomp'ring [sic] Food
Creates Diseases, \| and Inflames the Blood.
(lines 47-48)

After one notes the caesura after the first independent clause,
he anticipates another one and does not pause. Only a
strained reading is effected if one pauses a third time after
two caesuras, especially since the second one occurs only one
foot before "try'd" in this couplet:

Close in Dispute, \| but not Tenacious, \| try'd
By Solid Reason, \| and let that Decide.
(lines 88-89)

Similar to this example is the following pair of lines, in
which there is no pause after the first verse:
And when committed to the Dust, I'd have,
Few Tears, but Friendly, dropt into my Grave.
(lines 164-165)

Noting the caesura in the first verse, a reader need not pause after "have," especially since marked pauses occur early in the next verse.

Ninety-six verses which form couplets have internal commas to mark caesuras, and line 148 has a semicolon which functions as a comma. This semicolon is probably a typographical error, for in the editions of 1700 and 1701, a comma occurs in this place. The most obvious instances of punctuated caesuras are in series of adjectives, although series of nouns occasionally appear:

My Tongue, my Pen, my Counsel, or my Sword
(line 145)

Thus I'd in Pleasure, Ease, and Plenty live.
(line 155)

In Reas'ning Cool, Strong, Temperate, and Just.
Obliging, Open, without Huffing Brave
(lines 85-86)

These frequent pauses, especially where the virtues of Pomeroy's friends are described, promote a musing effect in their halting tempo.

Marked caesuras also appear in mid-line before parenthetical and appositional phrases:

A little Garden, Grateful to the Eye
(line 13)

With all those Moderns, Men of steady Sense
(line 27)

So, but too oft, the Grapes [sic] refreshing Juice
(line 61)
This pattern also occurs in lines 58 and 157. Caesuras sometimes coincide with commas which set off contrasted expressions:

With Healthy, || not Luxurious Dishes Fed
(line 44)

I'd have a little Vault, || but always stor'd
(line 53)

Not Quarrelsome, || but Stout enough to Fight
(line 93)

The first verse above divides a foot, but this separation does not mar the rhythm. The pattern exemplified in the preceding verses also appears in lines 6, 34, and 141.

The six instances of chiasmus are divided in mid-line, as in these verses:

Easy in Company, || in Private Gay:
Coy to a Fop, || to the Deserving Free
(lines 108-109)

Chiasmi also appear in lines 8, 83, 87, and 122.

Employing the close punctuation of his contemporaries, Pomfret also places commas to mark caesuras where commas no longer appear in English usage. They involve three different usages. First of all, punctuation often precedes a coordinating conjunction which separates two words or two phrases. As a reader pauses, he places equal emphasis on each of the two separated elements, delaying the second by the pause after the first:

Of Shady Limes, || or Sycamores should grow
(line 16)
Horace, and Virgil, in whose Mighty Lines
Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning shines
(lines 19@20)

Strangers to Slander, and sworn Foes to Spight
(line 92)

This comma usage also appears in lines 28, 33, 48, and 110, as well as in other verses. The punctuation is clearly rhetorical, as it puts equal emphasis on each construction. This caesura also calls attention to Pomfret's balanced expressions.

Another rhetorical effect of the caesura occurs where a comma indicates a pause when punctuation would not normally appear, as in these instances:

Better, if on a Rising Ground it stood
(line 7)

And all, that Objects of true Pity [sic] were
(line 39)

Nor wou'd I use, what was so kindly giv'n
(line 65)

For, what's forbidden us, 'tis Death to touch
(line 73)

One would not normally find commas in these places, except in the second instance of the last verse above, but as they occur here, they effect an emphasis which the poet achieves by slowing down each line. The pause in the second verse above makes a reader's voice hover on the word "all," because Pomfret is stressing each of the poor and, therefore, all of them. The caesuras in the other passages halt the flow of thought to anticipate the important succeeding lines.

The third and final unusual appearance of commas to
mark caesuras is the transcription to writing of the colloquial omission of "which" or "that." Punctuation replaces these terms in three verses:

For that, our Maker has too largely given.
(line 41)

With the Best Wines, each Vintage cou'd afford.
(line 54)

But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends,
May be Debauch'd, and serve Ignoble Ends;
(lines 59-60)

A couplet is included in the last example above to indicate the sense of the first line. The additional punctuation in all except the last line of these examples allows the poet to include only ten syllables in each verse. This usage is much like that of some modern inexperienced writers who put commas in place of the omitted relative pronouns "which" and "that," as well as in place of the term "that" in "so . . . that" constructions.

Although Pomfret punctuates ninety-seven verses with caesuras, sixty-one other lines which comprise couplets have no marked pauses. Caesuras in some of these verses arise naturally in reading, while in others the pauses seem very slight. Three verses seem not to have vocal rests:

The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture
(line 12)

This line can be read effectively without a caesura, owing to the sense. Pomfret also captures the stateliness of "Pomp" in the regular meter, although a reader might briefly pause after "Pomp" if he wanted to emphasize the term. The sense
of the following verse calls for an uninterrupted reading:

And a Cool Rivulet run murm'ring by
(line 14)

If sound should echo sense, this verse should flow smoothly, without a pause. A third line, one describing Ovid, seems to flow without a caesura:

Who all the Turns of Loves [sic] soft Passion knew (line 22)

The sibilance in this line, a pattern of sound from which it greatly derives its beauty, would be ruined if a pause were read at the juncture of the words "Turns of," just as it would were an unnatural pause read between "Loves [sic] soft."

In all other instances of lines which are not internally punctuated, the caesuras occur medially, usually between a subject and its verb, a verb and its object, a verb phrase and its modifier, and similar grammatical constructions where a rest in voice normally occurs. Pauses quite easily appear in these verses:

On whose delicious Banks || a stately Row (line 15)

At th' End of which || a silent Study plac'd (line 17)

He that with Judgment || reads his charming Lines (line 23)

But what's sufficient || to make Nature strong And the bright Lamp of Life || continue long (lines 49-50)

These caesuras are typical of Pomfret's unpunctuated lines.
Concerning the caesuras in "The Choice," one can observe, in summary, that they produce various effects. The halting but not rugged tempo arising from the many series in the poem suggests the contemplative mood of Pomfret as he enumerates the qualities of the people and the enjoyment of his ideal life. Caesuras, especially between coordinate and parallel expressions, also reflect the poet's moderation, as he either joins or contrasts ideas to find the mean. Still other pauses are rhetorical as they emphatically suspend or anticipate certain expressions. The fact that the caesuras, whether marked or not, create these various effects is the mark of a skilled and a careful craftsman.

Other technical devices which add to an appreciation of "The Choice" involve pleasant sounds. Although, as mentioned earlier, Pomfret uses long vowels in many of his riming words, he also employs vowels to create delightful patterns of sound. Seventy-three lines have assonance involving one vowel sound, and thirty lines have repetition of more than one vowel sound. Since more than half of the verses of the poem are dominated by long vowels, it is not surprising that most of the assonance concerns these sounds. Long vowels are so prevalent in Pomfret's work that short ones are only prominent when more than two appear in a line, as in these examples, where short vowels are marked by breves:

But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends
(line 59)
Then wou'd e'en Envy be compell'd to say
(line 127)

As Witty Nymphs, in Conversation, give
(line 100)

Prudence, and Wisdom to direct her Wit
(line 112)

Assonance occurs in each half-line of forty-two verses, as in the following examples, where macrons mark long vowels:

Secret they shou'd be, Faithful to their Trust (line 84)

For there's that Sweetness in a Female Mind (line 102)

By a too frequent, and too [sic] bold an Use (line 137)

These repeated sounds are not always prominent, because they often occur more than a few feet apart, but they still create euphony which, similar to rime, promotes pleasure by spaced occurrence. Assonance in this half-line pattern also appears in lines 21, 48, 78, 103, 122, 127, 139, 149, 150, and 157.

Besides vowels, consonants create pleasant sounds in "The Choice." Alliteration appears in forty-seven verses which are parts of couplets. This pattern of sound is prevalent insofar as thirty-three of these verses have the same initial consonants in strongly stressed syllable. The prominence of alliteration is also evident in the poet's balancing of one half-line with another in thirty-four instances. That is, the same initial consonant appears both before and after mid-line. This statistical citation of the frequency of alliteration should not suggest that Pomfret employs
this sound device merely as an embellishment. This device often emphasizes his ideas. Sometimes it involves consecutive words or two words in a brief phrase, so that the closeness of repeated consonants calls attention to important terms. Following is an example, with editorial italics, added:

With all those Moderns, Men of steady Sense  
(line 27)

The alliteration, as well as the syntax, links "Moderns" with its appositive. Similar to this verse is the following one:

Does many Mischievous Effects produce  
(line 62)

The m's of these adjectives indicate that Pomfret gives extra attention to modify "Effects." Another example follows:

What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give  
(line 70)

"Right Reason," besides being a spondee, attracts attention through its initial sounds and helps to emphasize rational control, an important theme in the poem. Alliteration of consecutive words also appears in lines 2, 13, 30, 50, 71, 97, 111, 118, 145, and 167.

A subtler use of alliteration in "The Choice" involves the linking of two terms, often from one half-line to another. The following example illustrates a kind of echoing of the first sound, which has established a pattern:

Enough to Satisfy, and something more  
(line 45)
The alliterated words describe the food for Pomfret and the poor. In this line,

Wine whets the Wit, improves its Native force,  
(line 55)

"Wine" and "Wit" express through sound as well as syntax the importance of these two elements in Pomfret's life. The following lines demonstrate a closeness in meaning between words beginning with consonants:

But what's sufficient to make Nature strong  
(line 49)

The Bounteous Author of my Plenty Bless  
(line 52)

As Dying Martyrs, to their Maker too  
(line 95)

So Faithful to her Friend, and Good to all  
(line 125)

Perhaps one of the best example of Pomfret's use of alliteration occurs in the final line of "The Choice":

All Men would wish to Live, and Dye like me  
(line 167)

The first two words of the verb phrase are alliterated, and "Men" and "me," though far apart in the line, are brought together by sound, even as they are close in meaning, as are "Live" and the comparative word "like." Pomfret's employment of alliteration in the final line of the poem is symbolic of his use of it throughout "The Choice." With this observation, it is convenient to summarize here that he adorns his lines with the pleasant repetition of consonants.

Sibilance, liquids, cacophony, and onomatopoeia also
promote pleasing sounds in the poem. Sometimes sibilance helps to express a pleasant thought:

In blissful Ease, and Satisfaction spend (line 4)

Her Conversation wou'd new Joys inspire (line 130)

Sibilance is used so artfully that it can accommodate different meanings in consecutive lines:

Not prone to Lust, Revenge, or Envious Hate
Nor busy Medlers with Intrigues of State.
Strangers to Slander, and sworn Foes to Spight
Not Quarrelsome, but Stout enough to Fight. (lines 90-93)

Although the first line has only two s-sounds, they contribute to the difficulty of articulation at the juncture of words, so that the cacophony in all but the first foot of the verse suggests the irascible emotions which the poet describes. In the second line, the smoothness created by the s's suggests the undertone of secrecy which the line expresses. In the third line, sibilance in each foot reflects the strength of the "Strangers" and "sworn Foes" who would overcome "Slander" and "Spight." In the final verse, the s with the soft ĭ and m of "Quarrelsome" makes the word weaker, as it is already negated, than the sharp, explosive word "Stout," which rings with strength.

Euphony also arises from patterns of the liquids ĭ, m, ń, and ě. The frequency of these sounds is best noted by the fact that they appear in over forty instances at least three times per line and that in many more cases more than one of
them occurs in a line. The following verses illustrate the delightful sounds which liquids create:

And a Cool Rivulet run murmur'ring by
(line 14)

Immortal Wit, and Solid Learning shines
(line 20)

For sure no Minutes bring us more Content
(line 31)

A little more, sometimes t'Oblige a Friend
(line 36)

Each of the liquids appears at least once in the first example, making it the smoothest and the most onomatopoetic verse in "The Choice." Some other verses which have more than one liquid which repeats itself are lines 27, 28, 46, 50, 92, 97, 156, and 142, although there are many other cases in the poem. The most frequently occurring is n, and although it is one of the most common sounds in English, it is, nevertheless, onomatopoetic in this poem in that it suggests Pomfret's quiet musing, like humming, as he is overheard by the reader.

Onomatopoeia appears in at least four other instances.

The sounds in this couplet are those overheard near the stream which would pass through Pomfret's estate:

On whose delicious Banks a stately Row
Of Shady Limes, or Sycamores should grow.
(Tines 15-16)

Sibilance suggests the rustling of the trees. The following couplet has two distinctive movements:

Wine whets the Wit, improves its Native force,
And gives a pleasant Flavour to Discourse.
(lines 55-56)
In the first two feet of the first verse above; the strong stresses, the alliteration, and the t's echo the act of sharpening. Then, in the rest of the couplet, regular meter, liquids, sibilants, v's, and f's approximate the sense of the lines, just as a sharpened tool works smoothly, or just as the tongue moves to enjoy the literal and figurative "Flavour" afforded by the wine. Contrasting onomatopoetic effects are heard between "Sharp Juvenal" and "Am'rous Ovid" (lines 21-22) and between "Brisk" and "Sober" (line 87).

Little cacophony appears in the poem, because the work is intended to be full of delightful thoughts. Whenever an unpleasant topic does arise, however, it always involves one harsh word contrasting to smoother sounds, as in this passage:

\begin{quote}
But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends,
May be Debauch'd, and serve Ignoble Ends;
So, but too oft, the Grapes \[sic\] refreshing Juice
Does many Mischievous Effects produce.
\end{quote}

(lines 59-62)

The rough-sounding terms "Debauch'd" and "Effects" call attention not only to themselves, but also to the sense of the many smooth sounds in the verses. Also outstanding in this passage is the sibilance, which near the end of the second-to-last verse is euphoniously onomatopoetic, but by the end of the final verse becomes cacophonous and sinister. Similar harshness in sound arises from the rimed words of these verses:

\begin{quote}
Then I'd not be with any Trouble vex'd;
Nor have the Ev'ning of my days perplex'd.
\end{quote}

(lines 160-161)
Pomfret would seek a life uninterrupted by problems which might suddenly arise, just as these final harsh words suddenly appear. Similar cacophony centers around "Huffing" (line 86) and "Tenacious" (line 88).

It is clear that cacophony, just as other patterns of sound, echo the sense of Pomfret's verses. Moreover, while there are two verses with the same sound occurring in three successive syllables, italicized below, they present no problem:

From loose Behaviour, / or Formality
(line 81)

Her Conduct Regular, / her Mirth Refin'd
(line 121)

The repetition of these sounds produces neither pleasant nor unpleasant effects, but the caesura after the first occurrence in each line diverts attention from the repeated sounds. Perhaps only close analysis of this type would discover these curious patterns. They seem to be the only examples of iterated sounds in "The Choice" not intended to be artful, and, as such, they are not at all disruptive or cloying.

Besides the 158 verses which compose couplets in "The Choice," the poet creates three triplets: lines 67-69, 104-106, and 131-133. According to one scholar, triplets enjoyed popularity among poets who usually wrote heroic couplets from about 1600 to about 1750. The period of their greatest frequency was roughly 1670-1700, the period in which John Dryden wrote most of his works. He used the triplet
more than any other poet, a usage which caused widespread imitation. Of the many writers of heroic couplets in this period, Dryden was at one extreme, having composed 664 triplets in 26,000 lines of poetry, for a ratio of 1 triplet every 39 lines. John Gay was at the other extreme, having 1 triplet every 1800 lines of his 9000 verses. Pomfret was nearer Pope (1 every 175 lines) and the Earl of Roscommon (1 every 165). Pomfret composed triplets for 12 of his 14 poems written in couplets, at the rate of 1 every 158 lines out of 1900 verses.

Pomfret's triplets in "The Choice" are used to the same advantage as those of his fellow poets. They vary the couplet form to attain variety, conclusion, intensity, and emphasis. Pomfret's triplets add variety in that the other 158 verses are couplets. The other characteristics of these three-line groups are illustrated as each one is analyzed. The first one is:

If any Neighbour came, he shou'd be Free,
Us'd with Respect, and not uneasy be
In my Retreat, or to himself, or me.
(lines 67-69)

Conclusion is evident here in that Pomfret expresses that any

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6 Conrad A. Balliet, "The History and Rhetoric of the Triplet," PMLA, LXXX (December, 1965), 529-531.

7 Ibid., LXXX, 533-534. Balliet, the researcher, lists Pomfret as having only 11 triplets, whereas an accurate count discovers the 12 mentioned above. Statistics on Pomfret's verses appear in a table, among those on other poets. His works and style, however, are not mentioned in the article.

8 Ibid., LXXX, 528-531.
visitor should be a comfortable guest in a home free from drinking scandals, an idea developed in the preceding lines. Although the four lines after this triplet terminate the verse-paragraph, they comment on reason, not on the comforts described in these three verses. Intensity is obvious in that this triplet is a periodic sentence, which has a compound verb phrase, the last phrase followed by a compound-phrase modifier. Emphasis arises not only from this periodic quality, but also from a progression in the sense of the rimed words: the visitor would be "Free," "not uneasy be," "to himself, or me." As in many couplets, assonance of long e's also appears in each line, with three m's in the final verse.

The second triplet concludes the poet's praise of feminine charm:

\[
\text{That by a Secret, but a Pow'rful, Art} \\
\text{Winds up the Springs of Life, and does impart} \\
\text{Fresh Vital Heat to the Transported Heart.} \\
\text{(lines 104-106)}
\]

The image of the springs of life and heat given to the heart produces an intensity of figurative language not afforded by any couplet or even pair of couplets in "The Choice." Intensity in grammar arises from the compound verb. This three-line passage is emphatic in concluding a periodic sentence and in the progression of the sense in rime: a woman's "Art" "does impart" energy to the "Heart."

The final triplet says the poet's visits to his lady
would:

Give Life an Edge so keen, no surly Care
Would venture to Assault my Soul, or dare
Near my Retreat to hide one secret Snare.

(lines 131-133)

This passage concludes Pomfret's comments on the joy of his visits to his ladyfriend. The other lines in the verse-paragraph develop the moderation of his visits. The image of his joy being a defense against enemy Care promotes an intensity of thought found in no other verses, except the image in the preceding triplet. Grammatical intensity is evident in that this three-line passage is part of a verb phrase whose dependent clause also has a compound verb. The rime emphasizes the meaning of these lines: no "Care" would "dare" set a "Snare" for Pomfret. The nasal ŋ is repeated in each line, and ñ appears in the last two verses. Sibilance, with two instances of alliterated s's, appears in every line to suggest the silent secrecy of the snare.

Pomfret's triplets suddenly vary his usual pattern of rimes, indicating that he uses rhetoric to advantage to express ideas which are important to his ideal life. His employment of triplets suggests that, besides his being a skilled technician, he is also aware of special devices used by poets who were his contemporaries.

Any further comments on Pomfret's artistic performance in "The Choice" would only lead to overrefinement and would detract from the appreciation of the poem. But the extensive
foregoing discussion of the poet's art, first of all, manifests the skill and facility with which he expresses the elements of his ideal retirement. The analysis, moreover, provides a useful list of observations to produce an effective silent or oral reading of the poem. Some of Pomfret's other poems which have been cited in earlier chapters demonstrate the same artistic excellence which is evident in "The Choice," and at least two eminent eighteenth-century poets borrowed a few verses from his other works. E. E. Kellett, while not esteeming Pomfret's performance in the poet's most popular work, cites, without further comment, a couplet which appears in Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village":

The hawthorne bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made.

Kellett says that this passage "is an echo, conscious or unconscious, of 'The Fortunate Complaint' by Pomfret":

As Strephon, in a wither'd Cypress Shade,
For anxious Thoughts, and Sighing Lovers made.9

Goldsmith obviously delighted not only in the setting, but also in the rime and the onomatopoetic sibilance and th's of his source. In what used to be the standard edition of Alexander Pope's works, his editors have footnoted two verses from "Eloisa to Abelard" as coming from Pomfret.

Pope has:

Line after line my gushing eyes o'erflow,
Led thro' a sad variety of woe.

Whitwell Elwin, the editor, says these lines are based on verses from Pomfret's "Vision," the full title of which is "Love Triumphant over Reason: A Vision," a poem cited more than once in Chapter VII above concerning Pomfret's lady. Pope imitates the final line of this couplet:

For sure that Flame is kindl'd from below,
Which breeds such sad variety of Woe.  

There is no further editorial comment on these two poets, but Pope obviously admired the last four words of his source for their plaintive vowels and melodious rime.

The verses which both Goldsmith and Pope imitated are typical of Pomfret's performance in "The Choice," as evidenced by the earlier analysis of the poem. Although it can not be determined to what extent other prominent writers appreciated and borrowed from his works, the next chapter of this study discovers that "The Choice" influenced at least six other poems. Even without comparisons, however, it is clear that the figurative language, the arrangement of sentences, the rhythm, the controlled tempo, and the pleasing sounds of the couplets and the three triplets reinforce the sense of Pomfret's

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poem. All of these considerations promote balance, emphasis, and variety to express the thoughts on his ideal retirement. Thus, his artistic performance could hardly have detracted from whatever enjoyment which eighteenth-century readers had already abstracted from the subject matter of the poem.
CHAPTER IX

THE INFLUENCE OF "THE CHOICE" ON OTHER POEMS

Thus far in this study of "The Choice," it appears that the topical appeals and the art of the poems are the only indicators which explain the extensive popularity that it is said to have enjoyed. Searches for more pointed comments on the poem beyond these few have discovered nothing. An examination of literary journals and criticism since Pomfret's time reveals no mention of Pomfret, "The Choice," or his other poems. Only one area remains unscanned: the influence of "The Choice" on works by other poets. Searches for this influence indicate that while it was not extensive, some writers found the subject matter and the art of the poem useful in expressing their own sentiments on retirement.

Except in the few instances discussed below, "The Choice" does not appear to have been the source of many eighteenth-century poems. Nor did Pomfret's work have anything to do with the new and purely English theme in retirement poetry which Miss Røstvig in The Happy Man calls "physico-theological verse." Poetry of this kind, she cogently demonstrates, was composed under the influence of scientific speculations and discoveries, and emphasized the
pattern of the universe ordained by God. The major works bearing on verses of this kind are Pope's "Windsor Forest" (1713), John Dyer's "Grongar Hill" (1726), and James Thomson's The Seasons (1726-1730). Poets in this tradition, as do some of those in the mid-seventeenth century, go to the open landscape and observe the harmony of the cycles and other functions of nature. They also often contemplate the landscape and find the various ranks and activities of society mirrored in nature. These writers seek solitude only to clear their minds of trifles and problems, so that after they realize the role of the individual in the universe, they return to society intellectually and emotionally disposed to live in harmony with the universal plan.¹

These poems are not works on solitude, but basically scientific and ethical poems. The retired man in these physico-theological poems is not a person seeking solitude according to the classical theme of the seventeenth century, but a person with humanitarian sentiments. He professes public virtues and seeks social involvements, not private, personal interests, as does the man in most retirement verse of the preceding century.² Searches for works which "The Choice" might have influenced indicate that it has nothing in common with the poems which Miss Røstvig discusses.

Besides this new theme in the retirement poetry of the eighteenth century, many works with the sentiments expressed

¹Røstvig, II, 402-417. ²Ibid., II, 392-393.
in the earlier part of the century continued to appear. Hundreds of retirement poems were published in poetical miscellanies, journals, and anthologies. Particularly rich sources for these works are monthly magazines, especially *The London Magazine* and *The Gentleman's Magazine*, both of which began in the early 1730's and, in contrast to many other serial titles, were published into the nineteenth century. Many of the poems are brief imitations of Horace's retirement works, while others request rural solitude or the life of a farmer, with a comfortable home. Although some of these verses have the terms *retirement*, *wish*, *choice*, and *request* in their titles, the poems have little in common with Pomfret's work, because they usually ask for wives, rural cottages, and freedom from work.  

In the absence of any further criticism of "The Choice" which might explain the extent of its popularity, and in the absence of a great number of works which might have clearly imitated Pomfret's poem, Miss Røstvig's evaluation of "The Choice" conveniently affords a starting point from which to examine three poems that his work influenced. When she makes an overall judgment of the poem, she goes afield, in

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The refined Epicureanism of *The Choice* would have been less reprehensible if it had not been covered over with a layer of bourgeois piety; Pomfret's desire to do good and to live genteelly ("but not great") may be a middle-class adaptation of the Horatian ideal, but as such it is infernally smug and not a little snobbish. The fact that the poem proved a best-seller shows how well Pomfret had succeeded in outlining an ideal which appealed to middle-class ambition. That in so doing he had recourse to Horace should not blind us to the fact that Pomfret's wish is ambitious and not resigned.

First of all, there is no "bourgeois piety," or, for that matter, no undue emphasis on God in "The Choice," as has been demonstrated earlier. Pomfret's attitudes towards a benevolent God arise from his concern for religion as a guide to virtue and life. Moreover, nothing in "The Choice" justifies the statement that the poem is "infernally smug and not a little snobbish," for nothing implicit in Pomfret's ideal determines what class may aspire to retirement. As far as retirement might have been from Pomfret's readers, there is nothing smug or snobbish about his wanting to be free from cares, to be charitable, and to occupy his time reading good literature. He would not intend to elevate himself morally or socially above anyone in his pursuit of content.

Concerning Miss Røstvig's remark that Pomfret "succeeded" in composing a "best-seller," it should be recalled, first, of all, that his preface does not seek the popularity of his works, but only to appeal to men of taste and judgment. The success of his intentions for writing "The Choice,"

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4Røstvig, II, 302.
therefore, cannot be measured in terms of its reception by the middle class. In fact, there is no reason to believe that the middle levels of English society found the poem to be ambitious or to be agreeable to their own aspirations, however undefined they may be by Miss Røstvig. Her associating Pomfret's sentiments with bourgeois ambitions, on the one hand, perhaps arises from her efforts to achieve an overall view of retirement poetry by grouping works according to the similar theme's and the topics which they emphasize. Since she has found no specific precursor to "The Choice," except Martial's Epigram 10. 47, she concludes that Pomfret's poem is the first in a series of verses stressing middle-class content and comfort: "Once Pomfret had pointed the way, others were not slow in transferring the classical act of rational abstinence from empty pleasures into pleasing daydreams of rural ease."6

Many eighteenth-century poems ask for a rural estate, a small house, a garden, and a loving wife or a mistress. But the middle-class element which Miss Røstvig perceives enters, perhaps, when the poets specify a guaranteed annual income, such as in this poem, written in 1735 by an anonymous clergyman, of which Miss Røstvig cites the first eight lines:7

5Ibid., I, 41. See supra, p. 29.
6Ibid., II, 302.  
7Ibid., II, 312.
The Wish

Wou'd fortune but on me bestow
('Tis what I've wish'd for long ago)
A living that wou'd make me clear
About two hundred pounds a year;
My parish not to quarrels prone,
Willing to give me what's my own;
A house convenient, but not great;
A garden tho' not grand, yet neat;
A dove-house, fish-pond and a stable
And always plenty at my table;
My cellar always stock'd with liquor,
To treat a neighbouring 'squire or vicar;
These things obtain'd I nought shou'd want
If Molly my request wou'd grant;
These with her charms in my possessing
Wou'd be on earth the greatest blessing.8

Although the author of these verses asks for many of the same things as Pomfret does, the author's real wish is to secure a wife and the means to remain in the favor of the squire and the vicar. Other works which specify an annuity but are less detailed than "The Choice" are numerous. For example, one writer asks for 200 pounds a year and another for 500.9

Most poems like these are anonymous, and those which are signed are by no major or minor poets. The works are only twenty or thirty lines long, and thus they lack length for the development afforded by their longer source. The existence of these poems justifies Miss Røstvig's conclusion that they seek only content and ease, concerns which she attributes to the middle class. She is off the mark, however,


in associating these works with "The Choice" on this account, for their authors, unlike Pomfret, are not concerned with moderation, virtue, and charity, which he seeks as ends in themselves as well as avenues to content.

On the other hand, Miss Røstvig happens upon a few works which have been obviously influenced by "The Choice." John Bancks in "The Wish" (1730) parodies retirement poems. On the title page he describes himself as "a Poor Weaver in Spittle-Fields." Because efforts to obtain a complete copy of his poem have been unsuccessful, Miss Røstvig's incomplete text is offered here:

In dire Machine, of quadrant Figure,
Expos'd: to all the pinching Rigour
Of Hunger, Poverty, and Cold,
I by my Bum, and Belly hold;
Pendant, betwixt the Earth and Skye,
Like a dying Thief--tho' not so high;

So many of the rhimeing Tribe
Their Means and course of Life prescribe;
And tho', because they wish for too much Dame Fortune seldom cares to do much;
Yet Fancy gives them such a Prop,
They still Rhime on, and live by Hope.

Tho' some may blame me to begin
With what is oft' the Root of sin;
Since that must make the Mare to go,
I'll wish, as other People do,
For Money, the Delight of Kings,
The Queen of Men, and Queen of Things.
Of this, I'd have sufficient store,
(For who's respected when he's poor?)

But here I'm whisper'd by the Muse
Who, if he might be bold to chuse,
Could wish 'twould please impartial Fate
To let it be a Free Estate.

Røstvig, II, 308.
The next Thing in my Inventory,
Shall be a Wife--a Husband's Glory--
The greatest Curse, or greatest Blessing,
We're capable of e'er Possessing.

I'd have her Modest, Brisk, and Young,
And Woman all--except her Tongue:
As Pious as the very best;
Yet not a Bigot to her Priest;
Good-natur'd, Gentle, fully of Duty,
And Mistress of a little Beauty.

When Hymen has the Business done,
And she and I are joyn'd in one;
For fear my dearest Bride should mutter,
Because I've got no where to put her;
As well as to divert my Mind,
If e'er my Charmer prove unkind;
I'd have a pleasant Country Seat,
By Nature made, for Love's retreat:
A purling Stream should murmur by,
And Woods, and Meadows should be nigh:

Were I to chuse my Furniture,
I'd have what's Needful, and no more:
But whilst I wanted for Treasure,
My Spouse in this should use her Pleasure.

Of the best Books, I'd have a few,
Whose Wit and Sense, would still be New:

A Friend's a Thing so seldom known,
'Tis very hard to meet with one;
Yet might I chuse, I would have two,
Of my own Sex, Good, Wise, and True:

To welcome these, I'd spread my Board
With what the Country would afford:
A Cheerful, but a mod'rate Glass
Should, as a sign of Friendship, pass.
Thus far my pensive Mind had gone,
And, thinking ev'ry Thing my own,
To rapture I was almost brought.
'Till stopping to correct a Thought,
I found 'twas all a Dream, a Fable,
A false Chimaera, nothing stable;
Still in the Loom I must remain,
All higher Thoughts, I doubt, are vain 11

Miss Røstvig offers a succinct evaluation of Bancks's poem:
Pomfret's Choice forms the pattern for the greater part of the poem; the "needful" furniture, the few choice books, the friends, the moderate cups of wine, all have their prototype in Pomfret's poem. In Bancks's lines, however, the classical wish for a golden mediocrity is strained through a layer not only of middle-class sentimentality, but also of lower-class wistfulness 12

Bancks's borrowing from Pomfret is certainly in evidence, but one wonders if Bancks's distaste for retirement poetry or merely the preference for sentiments more easily realized in actuality, rather than class consciousness, lead him to insist on the pressing needs of everyday living. His poem, nevertheless, indicates that at least one disgruntled reader of "The Choice" and other retirement works did not remain silent. Would that there were similar poems or other commentary on retirement poems, so that a more comprehensive understanding of the reactions and the tastes of eighteenth-century readers could be determined.

A second work which Miss Røstvig considers akin to "The Choice" is Sir Richard Blackmore's "The Retirement" (1718). She notes the similarity between Pomfret's and Blackmore's estates, in the first part of each poem, and also that


12 Røstvig, II, 311.
Blackmore develops "a long digression on his taste in books." Although she cites only the first six lines of "The Retirement," her discovery of this poem is, indeed, fortunate, for the work appears to be the only retirement poem by an English poet which discourses at such length on books.

If I, of so much Happiness possesst,  
Of bounteous Heav'n might greater Bliss re-

(request [sic], 14

At a fit Distance from this noisy Town,  
A small neat Box would all my Wishes crown.
To suit my Fancy let the Building stand  
In dry Air, upon a rising Land,
On whose green Face the Southern Sun displays  
His warmest Glory and his kindest Rays.
A murmuring Brook should at the Foot complain,  
And sweep the Meadows with its Silver Train.
Oft by the Crystal Stream I'd walk and think,  
Oft sit and write upon the flow'ry Brink.
Let on the North a Grove of ancient Oaks,  
Or lofty Elms from all the furious Strokes
Of Snowy Boreas and his stormy Pow'rs  
Protect my Dwelling, Fruits and springing Flow'rs.
I must have Books, Books are my daily Food.  
But I demand but few, for few are good.
I ask the Works of deep and clear Divines,  
First Tillotson's by whose Immortal Lines,
Britannia's happy Isle inlighten'd [sic] shines;
Celestial Genius! whose seraphick Pen  
To Men transforms wild Beasts, to Angels Men.

Then of the Poets, I would Milton chuse,  
Of all, that Albion boasts, the noblest Muse.
His hardy Efforts boldly did explore  
Regions untrodden and unknown before.

13Ibid., II, 303.

14The printer began to divide "request" and then carried the entire word over to the next line.

15Lines 16-18: "I must," "I demand," and "I ask" should be "I would," "I'd demand," and "I'd ask." See the verbs in lines 24, 41, 42, 47, and 49.
None e' er had Courage to attempt his Flight.
None Strength of Wing to soar to such a Height.
Cowley once pleas'd me with his careless Charms,
Whose sprightly Vein the Reader often warms.
Still I delight in Waller's easy Song,
The first great Refiner of the English Tongue.
He first reform'd th' unpolish'd Poets [sic] Faults,
Pure in Expression, and as chast [sic] in Thoughts.
I grieve, I can't in the fam'd Spencer [sic] find
The Charms, that touch and captivate Mankind.
Forgive, great Bard, my undiscerning Taste,
My want of Relish can't thy Beauties blast,
Lines that have liv'd so long, must ever last.

Some good Historians I would likewise chuse,
Fit to instruct me, or at least amuse;
Where I'd the Actions of the Ancients read,
Recal [sic] past Ages, and revive the Dead.
Travels by Men of Sense and Voyages,
Writ with good Judgment, would my Fancy please;
Here I should Nature's various Wonders view,
And to admire should still find something new.
I'd by their Help thro' all the Kingdoms go,
Where fertile Nile, or fam'd Euphrates flow;
I would their Manners, Arts and Customs know.
I would the Rocks and stormy Winds deride,
And fearless cut the Deep's impetuous Tide;
I'd range the World, and in my Closet roul [sic]
From East to West, and visit either Pole;
Would sail to ev'ry Continent and Isle,
And safe at Home enjoy the Traveller's Toil.
I [sic; "I'd"?] ask a Friend, whom I might often meet,
Of pleasant Conversation and Discreet;
Whose Faithfulness is by Experience prov'd,
One pleas'd with me, and fit to be lov'd;
One who do's [sic] ill and mean Designs detest,
Of open Hand, but of a secret Breast.16

Blackmore's "murmuring Brook" (line 9) echoes Pomfret's line 14, but the similar estates in both poems, even by Pomfret's time, had become conventions in retirement poetry and

landscape painting. Although Blackmore's forty-one line passage on books exceeds Pomfret's by twenty-five verses, the imitator's comments on reading complement those of his source. Whereas Pomfret emphasizes four Roman poets and does not specify any of the moderns, Blackmore mentions only moderns, since he is concerned with ancients only as to their histories. Blackmore, unlike Pomfret, would read prose as well as verse and indicates that he would peruse works on religion, history, and travel. Besides sharing Pomfret's delight in instruction and polished language, Blackmore would indulge his imagination as an armchair traveler.

The final six lines of Blackmore's poem also echo some phrases from "The Choice." Although Pomfret seeks two close male friends and Blackmore only one, they would be, like Blackmore's companion, "Discreet" (line 79); "Frisk in Gay Talking, and in Sober Grave" (line 87); "Not prone to Lust, Revenge, or Envious Hate; / Nor busy Medlers with Intreagues of State" (lines 90-91); "Secret" and "Faithful to their Trust" (line 84); and "Obliging, Open" (line 86).

The similar phrases in Blackmore's last six lines, as well as the themes of an estate and books, clearly manifest that he had Pomfret's poem in mind when he composed his own verses.

Miss Røstvig has discovered one more poem which imitates "The Choice." Entitled "A Little Wish: In Imitation of the Great Mr. Philips" (1735), it does not at all resemble any of the works of Ambrose Philips (1674-1749) and imitates only a
few verses from "The Splendid Shilling" (1701) by John
Philips (1631-1706), the proof of which will soon be consid-
ered. Because the anonymous composer of "A Little Wish"
mentions "little" very often in his verses, Miss Røstvig
cites lines 1-4, 9, 11, and 27-28 to exemplify its false
modesty. The term "little" is so important to this poet
that he italicizes it twelve out of the fourteen times it
appears in the poem:

Grant me, gods, a little seat,
Modern-built and furnish'd neat,
Let it stand on rising-ground,
For a prospect all around:
Call the mansion Cowper's-hill,
From the mount a little rill
Let meandering gently flow
Thro' a verdant vale below.
Add a little garden to't,
Planted, wall'd, and well laid out,
And a little bow'r therein,
Little bow'r ever-green,
And a little shady grove,
Or for study, or for love,
And some little trees that bear
Pippin, cherry, plumb [sic], and pear,
And the apricot and peach,
On the wall within my reach,
And each fragrant flower that grows,
Fragrant flower for the nose,
And the rose in all its pride,
Blooming rose for blooming bride,
Tulips too, in richest shew,
Tulips gay as birth-might beau.
Let us now go in a door,
And see what to ask for more,
Grant, ye pow'rs, a little wine
For a guest that comes to dine,
And a stock of mild and stale
Honest neighbours to regale,
And October strong and mellow,
Tubes, and weed for hearty fellow;
These in Cestrian moulds comprest,
That of Brocas very best:

17Røstvig, II, 313.
Cordials too in cupboard be,
Rum, arrack and ratifia,
Now and then a little cup
Serves to keep the spirits up.
   As a sportsman, give me horses,
Some for chace [sic], and some
   for courses,
And a pack of little hounds,
To drive reynard o'ER the downs.
Grant for these a fit estate,
Nor too little, nor too great.
   But if ask again I shall,
I will ask what's all in all;
Give a little pretty spouse,
For to grace my little house,
Let her have complexion fair,
Sparkling eyes, and auburn hair,
Skin, as white as neck of swan,
Smooth as down that grows thereon,
Smiling looks, and ruby lips,
Waist that tapers to her hips,
   And fine arms that easy fall,
And soft hands and fingers small
Skill'd to touch the warbling strings,
When her lays, or mine she sings;
Let her frank and pleasant be,
To my friends, as well as me;
And with wit and beauty's charms,
Glad my heart, and bless my arms.
Be the produce of our joys,
Little girls, and little boys.
   0! the sweets of such a life,
To be bless'd with such a Wife!
Grant but these; may I be poor,
When I ask a little more.18

Except for a few lines, this poem has nothing in common with
"The Splendid Shilling" of John Philips, who subtitles his
poem "An Imitation of Milton." Philips' poem is 144 lines of
blank verse, which, in Miltonic diction, complains of

poverty. The opening verses are:

Happy the Man, who void of Cares and Strife,
In Silken, or in Leathern Purse retains
A Splendid Shilling: He nor hears with Pain
New Oysters cry'd, nor sighs for cheerful Ale;
But with his Friends, when nightly Mists arise,
To Juniper's, Magpye, or Town-Hall repairs:
Where, mindful of the Nymph, whose wanton Eye
Transfix'd his Soul, and kindl'd Amorous Flames,
Chloe, or Phillis; he each Circling Glass
Wisheth her Health, and Joy, and equal Love.19

Philips then describes the poor tobacco he must smoke to stave off hunger in his garret as he waits to be dunned for debts. He has neither wine nor cider to inspire him to write verses, and even when he sleeps and dreams of ale, he awakens thirsty. The author of "A Little Wish" imitates Philips' lines on pipe smoking and Welsh cheeses, which read:

from Tube as black
As Winter Chimney, or well-polish'd Jet,
Exhale Mundungus, ill-perfuming Scent:
Nor blacker Tube, nor of a shorter Size
Smoaks Cambro-Britain (verse'd in Pedigree,
Sprung from Cadwalader and Arthur, Kings
Full famous in Romantic tale) when he
O'er many a craggy Hill, and barren Cliff,
Upon a Cargo of fam'd Cestrian Cheese,
High over-shadowing rides, with a design
To vend his Wares, or at th' Arvonian Mart.20

The composer of "A Little Wish" includes these items:

Tubes, and weed for hearty fellow;
These in Cestrian moulds comprest,
That of Brocas very best.

(lines 32-34)


20 Ibid., lines 19-29, p. 4.
However, no other similarities between the two poems are apparent.

On the other hand, the anonymous retirement poet overtly imitates "The Choice." His "a little garden" (line 9) and "a little wine" (line 27) echo Pomfret's "A little Garden" (line 13) and "a little Vault" for wine (line 53). The imitator says his house would be "on rising-ground" (line 3), a phrase from "The Choice," line 7. The shorter poem has:

\begin{quote}
Grant for these a fit estate,
Nor too little, nor too great.
\end{quote}

(lines 43-44)

Pomfret's earliest verses on sharing with his friends and the needy are:

\begin{quote}
I'd have a Clear, and Competent Estate,
That I might Live Gentilely, but not Great.
\end{quote}

(lines 33-34)

Some of the differences between "The Choice" and "A Little Wish" are owing to a matter of detailed development. For example, the later poem describes more carefully the garden and the wine. The author of this work, however, is concerned mainly with things that can be counted and measured, even if they be "little" in size and quantity, to the extent of "Little girls, and little boys" (line 64). Even his wife's waist would be little, since it "tapers to her hips" (line 54). His listing of many minute measures of what would make him content leaves little room for human relationships and moderation. On the other hand, Pomfret in his poem mentions
"little" only three times (lines 13, 36, and 53), and he develops the modesty of his wishes by avoiding excesses on either side of the means out of concern for moderation and virtue. Pomfret's poem is the more pleasant of the two because his aspirations for retirement are more humanistic, since he makes provision for books, the poor, neighbors, strangers, and friends. Pomfret is also the more skillful of the two poets. The metrical pattern of more than one-half of the verses of "A Little Wish" is trochaic trimeter with an added stressed syllable at the end of the line, a rhythm which approximates the quick recitation of items retained by rote. Pomfret's controlled heroic couplets add a certain charm to the poem because they imitate the musing of the speaker of such thoughts. Needless to say, Pomfret's work, in comparison to its successor, abounds in figures of language and thought, and it has more aphoristic lines, especially at the end of his verse-paragraphs.

Two American poems, although they are quite different from each other, are imitations of "The Choice" by Pomfret. In 1747, William Livingston (1723-1790) published Philosophic Solitude. Livingston attended Yale College and then practiced law. He retired to a country estate in 1772, but did not look for the solitude which he describes in his poem. He soon became the first Governor of New Jersey, holding that office from the birth of his new nation until his own
death in 1790.\textsuperscript{21} There seems to be no scholarship on his poem. Literary histories and bibliographies comment on his political writings and casually mention that he wrote \textit{Philosophic Solitude}, a retirement poem.\textsuperscript{22}

Livingston's poem has 666 lines of heroic couplets and a triplet. The 28 verse-paragraphs group themselves into six sections, somewhat like Pomfret's lines: solitude in rural retirement, three close friends, God and Nature, reading, a wife, and a happy death. Livingston's poem is not so closely imitative, except in organization, as other works derived from "The Choice." In lines 1-88, this American poet would live in solitude far from town to escape the vanities of life. While creating his verses, he had in mind these lines from "The Choice":

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
It shou'd within no other Things contain, \\
But what were Useful, Necessary, Plain: \\
Methinks 'tis Nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure \\
The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture. \\
\textup{(lines 9-12)}
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

Livingston's third and fifth lines below echo the preceding passage:

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
My neat, but simple mansion I would raise,
Unlike the sumptuous domes of modern days;
Devoid of pomp, with rural plainness form'd,
With savage game, and glossy shells adorn'd.

No costly furniture should grace my hall;
But curling vines ascend against the wall,
Whose pliant branches should luxuriant twine,
While purple clusters swell'd with future wine:
To slake my thirst, a liquid lapse distil
From craggy rocks, and spread a limpid rill.

(lines 15-24)

Those two verses are closer in wording to any in Livingston's poem which imitate "The Choice." The American poet would have wine, but he would prefer pure water from nature. This passage also illustrates that Livingston's descriptions are much more sensuous than Pomfret's, but, again, Pomfret's work is characterized by general, not specific descriptions, while much of Livingston's details the beauties of nature, such as birds singing, trees, and flowers, especially in the first eighty-eight lines, in order to emphasize the follies of the city, which he longs to escape.

Livingston's aloofness from society, however, would not be an absolute solitude, for in lines 89-130 he describes three men, who seem already to be close acquaintances, that he would have visit him. He individualizes them in a style after Pomfret's half-lines.

With cheerful W----, serene and wisely gay,
I'd often pass the dancing hours away;
He, skill'd alike to profit and to please,
Politely talks with unaffected ease;
Sage in debate, and faithful to his trust,
Mature in science, and severely just;
Of soul diffusive, vast, and unconfin'd,
Breathing benevolence to all mankind;
Cautious to censure, ready to commend,
A firm, unshaken, uncorrupted friend;  
In early youth, fair Wisdom's paths he trod;  
In early youth, a minister of God.  
Each pupil lov'd him, when at Yale he shone,  
And ev'ry bleeding bosom weeps him gone.  
(lines 93-106)

As Pomfret's friends who would be "Faithful to their Trust"  
(line 84) in "The Choice," so would Livingston's friend be in  
the fifth line above. There is also "dear A----," active in  
politics (lines 107-120, and "candid S----," a gentle person  
not involved in politics or disputes (lines 121-124). These  
friends would talk and sing together in the outdoors. Pom-  
fret's influence is apparent not so much in Livingston's  
narrowing his circle to a few close friends as in cataloguing  
their personal traits in brief phrases. The American poet,  
of course, displays his originality by individualizing these  
men, who obviously are more real than fanciful.

In what forms the third groups of verses, lines 131-380,  
or more than one-third of the poem, Livingston expounds upon  
his piety. In "The Choice," Pomfret develops his reverence  
for God by explaining his charitable sentiments towards  
others and his dread of sinful excess. The poet in Philo-

sophic Solitude, however, approaches God through nature.  
He would enjoy the peaceful groves and meadows, just as many  
mythological gods, even Jove, often delighted in pastoral  
settings. The poet would then admire the beauty, the order,  
and the powers of the universe and thus move closer to God.  
Livingston is quite moralistic in lines like the following:
Say, railing infidel! canst thou survey
Yon globe of fire, that gives the golden day,
The harmonious structure of this vast machine,
And not confess its architect divine?
Then go, vain wretch! tho' deathless by thy soul,
Go, swell the riot, and exhaust the bowl;
Plunge into vice—humanity resign—
Go fill the stie—and bristle into swine!
(lines 201-208)

Livingston then repeats an earlier denunciation of any quest for riches, fame, or power, because he wishes to die peacefully, not scorned in death by people who flattered him. In his retirement he would wear clothes of common wool, which are closer to animal hides which God intended men to wear than are dazzling modern vestments. Close to nature, the poet would contemplate and talk to angels and the dead, who bore his prayers to heaven. All these ideas on living close to nature as a way of finding God are obviously much closer to Henry Vaughan's than to Pomfret's.23

In lines 381-533 of his poem, Livingston catalogues the authors he would read. He would enjoy Virgil, especially The Aeneid; Milton for Paradise Lost; Pope for his technical excellence; Dryden, especially for his translations of Virgil; and Isaac Watts for simple yet sublime hymns, as well as Socrates, Plato, Seneca, Cato, and various other Greeks and Romans. In these lines, Livingston, unlike Pomfret, not only details his reading list, but also allows his fancy to imitate the styles of some of his favorite authors. For example,

23See supra, pp. 60-61.
he says when praising Pope:

Smooth flow his numbers, when he paints the grove,
Th' enraptur'd virgins list'ning into love;
But when the night, and hoarse-resounding storm
Rush on the deep and Neptune's face deform,
Rough runs the verse, the son'rous numbers roar,
Like the hoarse surge that thunders on the shore.
(lines 453-458)

Livingston is imitating Pope's famous passage:

True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
'Tis not enough no Harshness gives Offence,
The Sound must seem an Echo [sic] to the Sense;
Soft is the Strain when Zephyr gently blows,
And the smooth Stream in smoother Numbers flows;
But when loud Surges lash the sounding Shore,
The hoarse, rough Verse shou'd like the Torrent roar:
When Ajax strives some Rock's vast weight to throw,
The Line too labours, and the Words move slow;
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er th'unbending Corn, and skims along the Main.
Hear how Timotheus' varied Lays surprise,
And bid Alternate Passions fall and rise!24

When Livingston describes his enjoyment of Paradise Lost,
his own style, except for the heroic couplets, is derived
from the battle in heaven:

On burning wheels, o'er heav'n's crystalline road,
Thunder'd the chariot of the filial God:
The burning wheels on the golden axles turn'd,
With flaming gems the golden axles turn'd,
Lo! the apostate host, with terror struck,
Roll back by millions! Th' empyrean shook!
Sceptres, and orbed shields, and crowns of gold,
Cherubs, and seraphs in confusion roll'd;
Till from his hand the triple thunder hurl'd,
Compell'd them head-long, to th' infernal world.
(lines 439-448)

These are Milton's lines:

The Chariot of Paternal Deitie,
Flashing thick flames, Wheele within Wheele undrawn,

And Chrystal wall of Heav'n, which op'ning wide,
Rowld inward, and a spacious Gap disclos'd
Into the wastful Deep; the monstrous sight
Strook them with horror backward, but far worse
Urg'd them behind; headlong themselves they threw
Down from the verge of Heav'n, Eternal wrauth
Burnt after them to the bottomless pit.25

In these instances of borrowing from other poets, Livingston is imitative in the strictest sense, but in relation to "The Choice," he has taken nothing from Pomfret, except that "The Choice" is the first retirement poem to spend even sixteen lines on authors. Livingston, publishing his poem in 1747, might have gotten this idea on books from Blackmore's "The Retirement" (1718), over half of which describes his reading.

The second-to-last group of verses in Philosophic Solitude, lines 534-657, are on Livingston's ideal of a wife. After praising Eden for its natural beauty as much as for God's ordination of marriage there, the poet describes in forty-two verses the mindless type of women whom he would not choose to know. He separates his ideal from those who seek only fine clothes, maids, gallants, and other frivolities. Pope's influence is evident in these representative lines by the American:

The ideal goddesses to church repair,
Peep thro' the fan, and mutter o'er a pray'r,
Or listen to the organ's pompous sound,
Or eye the gilded images around;
Or, deeply studied in coquettish rules,
Aim wily glances at unthinking fools;
Or show the lily hand with graceful air,
Or wound the fopling with a lock of hair.
(lines 596-603)

Livingston models this passage and similar lines on Clarissa's speech in "The Rape of the Lock":

Say, why are Beauties prais'd and honour'd most,
The wise Man's Passion, and the vain Man's Toast?
Why deck'd with all that Land and Sea afford,
Why Angels call'd, and Angel-like ador'd?
Why round our Coaches crowd the white-glov'd Beaus,
Why bows the Side-box from its inmost Rows?
How vain are all these Glories, all our Pains,
Unless good Sense preserve what Beauty gains.26

Livingston then defines his ideal spouse in a positive manner.
Her physical appearance, unlike Pomfret's description of his lady, is slightly detailed, but, after the first six lines of the following passage, Livingston's debt to Pomfret's thought and phrasing is evident:

A native bloom, with intermingled white,
Should set her features in a pleasing light;
Like Helen flushing with unrival'd charms,
When raptur'd Paris darted in her arms.
But what, alas! avails a ruby cheek,
A downy bosom, or a snowy neck!
Charms ill supply the want of innocence,
Nor beauty forms intrinsic excellence:
But in her breast let moral beauties shine,
Supernal grace and purity divine:
Sublime her reason, and her native wit
Unstrain'd with pedantry, and low conceit;

Like Pomfret's lady, who is similarly drawn in lines 107-128 of "The Choice," Livingston's spouse would have the powers of reason, judgment, wit, and fancy, as well as social discretion and modesty. The pairs of phrases, joined by coordinating conjunctions, are stylistic borrowings from "The Choice." The American poet concludes this passage by describing his own and his wife's "sacred" and "equal friendship" (lines 634-635) spent in mutual love and in the beautiful natural setting so frequently rendered in the poem.

In the final twelve verses of his poem, Livingston says he would like to live to a "decrepid [sic] age" (line 658). With his sins forgiven, he would commend his soul to God and not fear death, concluding: "for I, / Who knew to live, would never fear to die" (lines 668-669). These sentiments on the end of his life are those of many who hope for a good life before death. As such, the verses are like Pomfret's only in that the English poet has also ended his poem on this note.

Livingston's work is like "The Choice" in the broadest sense of literary imitation. It is obvious that he has
omitted ideas on patriotism, needy people, and neighbors, all of which are topics that Pomfret includes in his briefer poem. On the other hand, Livingston marks his poem with originality by extensively detailing his thoughts on friends, reading, a wife, and especially piety and nature. His verses lack the tensions of "The Choice," which keep Pomfret aware of the dangers of excess as he outlines his pursuit of ease and content. Livingston's poem is perhaps best described as an outpouring of his sentiments, often prolix, on rural scenes, books, and women, which have been motivated by his self-assurance that once he has been struck by God's glory as manifested in the order, beauty, and power of natural forces, a person can live simply.

In 1757, Benjamin Church, another American poet, published what is probably the most overt and, in many respects, the best imitation of Pomfret's poem. Benjamin Church (1734-1776) graduated from Harvard College in 1754, studied in England, and became a physician. After returning to America in 1768, he was a conscientious delegate to various colonial congresses before the War of Independence, but in 1775 he was convicted of treasonable correspondence with the English armies in the colonies. Freed from prison owing to illness, he was allowed to sail from Boston to England or the West Indies. He was never heard from after he left America, but his family, who went to England, was
pensioned by the Crown.27

The first edition of Church's poem, also entitled The Choice, appeared anonymously. His work differs noticeably from Pomfret's in length, structure, and total experience. Church's work is 284 lines long, whereas Pomfret's is 167. The American poet's verses fall into two parts: lines 1-226 detail his ideal retired life, and lines 227-284 express his resignation to live according to his present lot in life.28 Although he would furnish his ideal life with the same elements as Pomfret would his own, Church arranges his ideas differently from those of his source. After a brief introduction denouncing a life of courts, ambition, and fame, Church outlines, in verses 15-138, the kind of life he would lead during the winter months, apparently at Harvard. Like Pomfret, he would live a life of modest comfort, showing hospitality to strangers and the poor (lines 15-34). He would also have a few close friends, but, unlike Pomfret, one very close companion would share Church's griefs and joys. (lines 39-62). This friend's virtues, however, would be much like those of Pomfret's two companions, as the American poet summarizes in the verse "Firm in Religion, in his Morals just" (line 51). Church would find time for wine (lines 35-38),


28[Benjamin Church], The Choice: A Poem, after the Manner of Mr. Pomfret [sic], By a Young Gentleman (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1757). For the text of Church's poem, see "Appendix," infra, pp. 286-294.
often enjoyed in fellowship (lines 20 and 64-68), just as Pomfret would.

On the other hand, Church's poem greatly differs from Pomfret's to the extent of seventy lines on reading, in comparison to Pomfret's sixteen. Church praises four Roman poets for the same qualities which Pomfret does, but the American writer adds Homer, Lucan, Martial, Terence, and Plautus, as well as a catalogue of modern English poets; the prose writers Tillotson, Butler, Newton, and Locke; and the Dutch scientist and physician Hermann Boerhaave. It is at this point in the poem that the only apparent scholarship on Church's verses begins to become very useful.

In an article on the place of Church's poem in American literary history, Edwin T. Bowden says that the American colonial poets were still consciously working in the English intellectual and artistic traditions, even though they knew they were in a new land, removed from the parent culture. Bowden cites Church's use of the heroic couplet, smooth meter, and balanced lines to illustrate the poet's closeness to the English versification popular during the eighteenth century. The critic also speculates that Church was probably self-consciously motivated to include many contemporary writers in order, first of all, "to prove that he knew who the

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correct and admired authors were," and, secondly, to offer an "equivalent of the 'general education reading list'" to the growing American leisure class. The writers whom he catalogues are, indeed, modern, for among the poets, only Dryden, Milton, and Waller are of the seventeenth century, the others of the eighteenth and still widely read when Church composed his work.\(^{30}\) The fact that Church has seventy lines--one-fourth of the poem--on the admired ancient and modern writers manifests the degree of emphasis to be abstracted from the detailed list. This lengthy development, praising each author for his peculiar excellence, justifies Bowden's judgment on the passage.

The second part of Church's ideal life (lines 139-226), like the first, differs from Pomfret's in detail. Church would spend the summer months in the country on an estate which is Horatian, although the ideas come from his English source, as witness the many similarities in lines 153-179. Church's estate would be grander than the one in England, or so the absence of details in Pomfret's poem implies. The American poet not only gives the lay of his land according to the compass, but also includes flocks, herds, fruits, and even a bower, or "blooming Canopy of Love" (line 172), all of which are not in his English source. Church's home would be

\(^{30}\)Ibid., XXXII, 176-178.
set in an extensive natural garden, described as:

Confus'dly rude, the Scen'ry should impart
A view of Nature unimprov'd by Art.
(lines 181-182)

All of it would differ in size and character from "A little Garden, Grateful to the Eye" of "The Choice" by Pomfret (line 13).

In Church's natural expanse, a kind of Eden, he would find place for an Eve, who had all the virtues and social graces of Pomfret's ideal ladyfriend. Pomfret would seek one who had the delicate temperament and charms which a man has not. Church, on the other hand, would seek a lady because of the absence of love in his life:

'Tis Love extends my Wishes and my Care,
Eden was tasteless till an Eve was there.
(lines 187-188)

The only physical descriptions of his ideal lady are general; one is figurative:

Fair as the op'ning Rose; her Person small
(line 193)

Her Dress and Language elegantly plain
(line 201)

Her virtues, nevertheless, would lead him to love her, and no lust would motivate his attentions to her: "Unlike the sensual Wish that burns and stains" (line 209). But as the critic Bowden observes, their love "verges on the frankly sensual,"31 for after observing in nature how pairs of

31Ibid., XXXII, 175.
Ye wanton Gales! pant gently on my Fair,  
Thou Love-inspiring Goddess, meet us there!  
While soft invited, and with Joy obey'd,  
We press the Herbage and improve the Shade.  
(lines 223-226)

Church's love for his lady differs from Pomfret's concern for his, for the privacy of the English poet and his nymph would be restricted to his occasional visits for conversation. The pair in Church's lines would pleasantly pass the time, "And Love still be the Business of the Day" (line 214).

Church's verses on his Eve comprise the climactic part of the poem. Immediately following the two couplets cited above, he turns from his wishful world to the real one, in which he believes not his own will, but God's must prevail. It is at this turning point that the differences between his poem and Pomfret's become most apparent. The tension in Church's work is between his ideal world and the real one as he sees it, whereas in Pomfret's poem the little tension which exists is between his quest for a moderate life of ease and the avoidance of excess. Upon introducing each topic in his ideal scheme, Pomfret first asserts its modesty in size or quantity, then describes how he would enjoy it, and finally, if its use might approach vice, relates his intention to avoid excess. The following excerpted passages from his poem illustrate his design in searching for the mean in terms of books, wine, and his lady:
At th' End of which a silent Study plac'd,
Shou'd be with all the Noblest Authors Grac'd.

In some of these, as Fancy shou'd Advise,
I'd always take my Morning Exercise.
(lines 17-18, 29-32)

I'd have a little Vault, but always stor'd
With the Best Wines, each Vintage cou'd afford.

But as the greatest Blessing, Heaven lends,
May be Debauch'd, and serve Ignoble Ends:
So, but too oft, the Grapes refreshing Juice
Does many Mischievous Effects produce.
(lines 53-54, 59-62)

To this Fair Creature I'd sometimes Retire;
Her Conversation wou'd new Joys inspire;

But so Divine, so Noble a Repast
I'd seldom, and with Moderation, taste.
(lines 129-130, 134-135)

The corresponding passages in Church's poem, however, reveal
a sensuous enjoyment of life which never becomes restrained
until later in the work. At times, Church would immerse him-

Then to my Study eager I'd repair,
And feast my Mind with new Refreshment there;
There, plung'd in Thought, my active Mind should

Through all the Labours of the learned Dead.
(lines 71-74)

Of Milton's works, Church says:

These to peruse I'd oft forget to dine,
And suck Reflection from each mighty Line.
(lines 107-108)

Describing his use of wine, the poet says:

Thy mellow Vintage, Lisbon, should abound,
Pouring a mirthful inspiration 'round;
While laughing Bacchus bathes within the Bowl,
Love, Mirth, and Friendship swallow up the Soul.
(lines 35-38)
Of his lady, Church says:

Caution, oppos'd to Charms like these,  
were vain,  
And man would glory in the silken chain;

Then Time on downy Wings would steal away,  
And love still be the Business of the Day.

Ye wanton Gales! pant gently on my Fair,  
Thou Love-inspiring Goddess, meet us there!  
While soft invited, and with Joy obey'd,  
We press the Herbage and improve the Shade.  
(lines 207-208, 213-214, 223-226)

It is also noticeably contradictory, or at least unrealistic,  
that Church would so deeply love his Eve and then leave her  
after summer for the books and the fellowship of the aca-
demic life. This wish for a life divided between his amorous  
and rural pleasures, and his intellectual pursuits is Church's  
ironic touch which manifests what would happen if "human Will  
might govern future Fate." (line 4).

But the real conflict in Church's poem, it should be  
noted again, is not between his rural and academic aspira-
tions, but between the fanciful and the real. Critic Bowden  
sees a strongly Puritanical American current urging Church  
back to an awareness that his own wishes come second to God's  
will, which, according to the beliefs of the Puritans, means  
an aversion to the secular when it does not reflect the  
sacred.32 In comparison to Pomfret's frequent comments on the  
moral implications of his choices, Church's references to God  
and religion are very brief and indirect. He would feed only

32Ibid., XXXII, 182.
those "Who love the Master and approve the Fare" (line 34); read the divines Tillotson and Butler "to inform the Mind and mend the Heart" (line 123); have a close friend "Firm in Religion, in his Morals just" (line 51); and ask "kind Heav'n" for a nymph (line 191). But these cursory references are skillfully hidden amidst the detailed development of his wishes.

Church dramatically emphasizes his lapse, however, as he leaves off dreaming of his love and says:

But is th' Almighty ever bound to please?
Rul'd by my Wish, or Studious of my Ease?
(lines 227-228)

The poet also recognizes that a person cannot be mainly concerned with fulfilling his own desires:

No constant Joys Mortality attend,
But Sorrows violate, and Cares offend;
Heav'n wisely mixt our Pleasures with Alloy,
And gilds our Sorrows with a Ray of Joy;
Life without Storms a stagnant Pool appears,
And grows offensive with unruffled Years;
An active State is Virtues's proper Sphere,
To do and suffer is our Duty here:
Foes to encounter, Vices to disdain,
Pleasures to shun, and Passions to restrain;
To fly Temptation's open, flow'ry Road,
And labour to be obstinately Good.
(lines 233-244)

His decision to let "RESIGNATION fortify my Mind" (line 255) allows him to reconcile the many sorrows of life with its few joys. He resolves to seek patience, peace of mind, piety, and various virtues which he hopes to establish with God's aid (lines 257-264). The poet also prays that he never offend anyone, least of all widows and orphans (lines 265-270). His concluding wish—to die a peaceful death after a life in
which virtue and conscience have helped him to accept whatever heaven should grant him—is, in the words of Bowden, "the assumption of a worldly life of endurance and hope." Church's change of mind has been apparently motivated by the "boiling religious consciousness of the previous century, and the new casual air" of his wish "is at noticeable odds with the strongly religious undercurrent that comes bubbling to the surface at the end of his poem." 33

Church's poem is charmingly the most original of all imitations of Pomfret's poem. The conclusion to Bowden's evaluation of the American poet defies paraphrase in its cogency and expression:

In a sense, then, Church's poem is not an imitation of Pomfret's at all, but rather a reply in the old tradition of the sort illustrated by Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd" and Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd." But rather than a direct reply, Church uses the dramatic method: he lets the original speak for itself, and then destroys it with its own words. [That is, Church offers his own wish and then destroys it.] The result in fact is neither an imitation nor a reply, but a new poem, of full originality, with its own dramatic structure and its own poetic value. The element of imitation of Pomfret (with Horace behind him) gives it a higher ironic impact and a wider frame of reference than it would otherwise have, but the poem is fully capable of standing on its own. 34

Not only is Bowden's evaluation just, but it also provides a fortunate conclusion for this comparative study of the two poems.

Leigh Hunt's "The 'Choice,'" which first appeared in 1823, seems to be the last poem influenced by Pomfret's.

33Ibid., XXXII, 182-183. 34Ibid., XXXII, 183.
Hunt's work consists of 415 verses, mainly in heroic couplets, but also includes 17 triplets, a few Alexandrines, and some heptameter lines. The poem does not imitate Pomfret's to the extent of borrowing verses, phrases, or peculiarities of style, but it develops the same topics as Pomfret's. Moreover, Hunt mentions Pomfret four times, and, according to the imitator's most recent editor, the poem in the editions of 1844, 1857, and 1860 was entitled "A Thought or Two on Reading Pomfret's 'Choice.'"35 Hunt's twenty-one verse-paragraphs fall into three groups: thoughts on his own verses and Pomfret's poem; a description of Hunt's estate and plan for living in the country; and the activities of a typical day on his estate. In lines 1-51, Hunt comments first on the popularity of Pomfret's work,36 and then he presents verses on why he himself believes that thoughts on everyday life are fitting matter for poetry:

Poetry's that which sets a thought apart,
To worship Nature with a choral heart;
And may be seen where rarely she intrudes,
As birds in cages make us think of woods.
Beaux have it in them when they love the faces
Of country damsels, and their worsted graces.
E'en satire, if of laurelled race, retains
A taste of sweetness in its finer veins;
Or like its friend, the common stocks, may be
Touched with a shadow of the living tree.

(lines 10-19)

Hunt then describes the kind of work he is about to write and


36See supra, pp. 6 and 77.
the method he will employ:

So Pomfret's likings make me think of mine.
I'll write a Choice, said I: and it shall be
Something 'twixt labour and extempore;
Not long, yet not too quick on the conclusion,
And for its ease I'll call it an effusion.
All that I vouch for is to shun the crime,
(Death, by all laws) of writing for the rhyme.
I shall not please all tastes, as Pomfret did,
Even though he said he'd "lived a man forbid." 37
Men, in these times, have notions of their own,
And something called a zeal, which makes them known;
Else, I would print my fancy by itself,
And be "a love" on every lady's shelf.
(lines 31-43)

Hunt's references to "extempore," "effusion," and not "writing for the rhyme," it will soon be seen, are borne out to the extent that the casual pace often degenerates into wordiness.

In lines 52-292, Hunt describes his plans for his estate and manner of living in the country. Near some cottages, he would have a house, a brook, and a garden with a few flowers, but mostly turf and trees would surround his home (lines 58-85). His small brick house would have a few spare rooms for guests and statues in the hallways (lines 86-115). In one of his references to Pomfret, Hunt says:

My study should not be, as Pomfret's was,
Down in the garden; 'tis an awkward place
In winter; and in summer I prefer
To write my verses in the open air.
(lines 116-119)

37 See Pomfret, "The Choice," lines 70-73:

What Freedom, Prudence, and right Reason give,
All Men may with Impunity receive:
But the least swerving from their Rule's too much:
For, what's forbidden us, 'tis Death to touch.
In winter, he would read and write in an upstairs room, furnished with busts on bookcases and pictures of his best friends (lines 120-144). He would hunt pesty foxes, but no other animals, for they have a right to live. He does not like fishing, as he considers it a cruel way of granting death (lines 159-192). He would play for exercise at golf, quoits, and cricket, but he considers boxing matches "butchering shows" (line 197). He would live so far from town that he needed no protection, although he might enjoy a friendly bout with quarter staffs for sport and to train for self-defense (lines 193-212). For another pastime, he says:

I'd write, because I could not help it; read
Much more, but nothing to oppress my head.
(lines 219-220)

He would write for pleasure and sometimes:

use my pen,
As fits a man and lettered citizen,
And so discharge my duty to the state;
But as to fame and glory, fame might wait.
(lines 223-226)

These verses remind one of Pomfret's offering his writing ability and other efforts to the king and the country in his own poem (lines 142-145). Hunt, however, would probably not be so reverent to the Establishment, for, it will be recalled, he was imprisoned from 1813 to 1815 for libel against Prince Regent George.

Like Pomfret, Hunt would have a few friends, but he develops them only by casual references to their visiting him often and taking part in his leisure. However, the poet
misses one good friend, who might be Percy Bysshe Shelley:

I'd have two friends live near me, perhaps three:
Time was, when in one happy house—But he
Has gone to his great home, over the dreadful sea.
Oh Nature, we both loved thee! Pardon one
To whom thine ocean, even in the sun,
Has grown a monstrous and a morbid sight:—
See how I try to love thee still, and dream of
thy delight.

(lines 235-241)

Hunt would also enjoy the company of women who were not
"formal or severe, / Much less the sly" (lines 252-253), but
in preferring one special lady, he comes forth with some
verses which are closer to Pomfret's in terms of style than
any in the poem, although the thought is slightly different:

Of these my neighbours should have choice relations;
And I (though under certain alterations)
I too would bring—(though I dislike the name;
The Reverend Mr. Pomfret did the same;
Let its wild flavour pass a line so tame;)—
A wife,—or whatsoever better word
The times, grown wiser, might by law afford
To the chief friend and partner of my board.

(lines 258-265)

The second parenthesis, interrupting a main clause, recalls
these lines from Pomfret's poem:

Wou'd Bounteous Heav'n once more Indulge,
I'd choose,
(For who wou'd so much Satisfaction loose,
As Witty Nymphs, in Conversation, give,)
Near some Obliging, Modest Fair to live.

(lines 98-101)

The difference between the sentiments in the two poems is
that Hunt would have a wife and Pomfret a close friend. In
Hunt's lines "or whatsoever better word / The times, grown
wiser, might by law afford," he evidently believes that Pom-
fret would have a mistress. It will be recalled, however,
that Pomfret would only visit her and become somewhat ecstatic in conversation. On the other hand, Hunt would live with his lady in love. Her affection for him and their friends would pervade the estate:

So that our fair friends, better still than good,
Should crown, like doves, our gentle neighbourhood;
And bring us back the peace the world has lost,
All fav'rites and beloved, though one the most.

(lines 277-280)

The couple would live in love, with no lasting disagreements (lines 280-292).

In lines 293-415, Hunt outlines the activities of a typical day in his ideal retired life. This section, however, begins with "I'd have the mornings to myself" (line 280) and starts a tangent which detracts from the unity of the scheme he has been describing thus far. He says that he would like to wander around with friends as gypsies do:

I'd give up even my house to live like them,
And have a health in every look and limb,
To which our best perceptions must be dim.
A gipsy's body, and a poet's mind,
Clear blood, quick foot, free spirit, and a thought refined,
Perpetual airs to breathe, and loves to bind,—
Such were the last perfection of mankind.

(lines 300-306)

But that is another daydream. Giving up his house, the center of his ease, quiet, and social life, would contradict everything he has already said, not to mention the activities which he develops in the remaining 109 verses. But this is part of the "effusion" (line 35), "Something 'twixt labour and extempore" (line 33), in which labor, or reworking of verses, is
wanting at the expense of unity in the poem.

Beginning anew the detailing of the activities of his day in retirement, Hunt says he would spend the mornings by himself to learn of solitude, so that when his friends died, he might be able to learn loneliness and "stand the driving glooms" (line 315). He would have an early dinner, occasionally with a little wine and always some fine vintage for his guests. A physician-friend would also draw on this store of wine for the poor (lines 318-332). In a sense, he replaces Pomfret's feeding the poor with giving them wine, but it is out of a charitable attitude. The poet praises Sir Samuel Garth and Oliver Goldsmith, both of whom were poets as well as physicians: "Gems deeply cut with Phoebus and the Nine" (line 343). The works of Horace, Plutarch, and Plato in his dining room would lend an air of gravity and philosophy to complement the mirth of his table, and Hunt would even read them when he was alone (lines 345-356). His description of his social life is more lively, almost dramatic, in comparison to Pomfret's. After dinner Hunt and his guests would repair to a walk among lawns and trees or to converse in one of two rooms. When the company was in a contemplative mood, they would go to a room overlooking a peaceful prospect. For mirth, they would withdraw to a room facing a nearby road to the village (lines 357-378).

Hunt would have a chapel, not so much non-sectarian as humanistic. It would have busts of those who:
Lived betwixt heaven and earth, and bore for us
Dire thirsty deaths, or drank the deadly juice.
Greek beauty should be there, and Gothic shade;
And brave as anger, gentle as a maid,
The name on whose dear heart my hope's worn cheek
was laid.

(lines 383-387)

In the early lines of this passage, he refers to Christ and
Socrates, both of whom died for preaching truth. In the
absence of any scholarly or editorial comment, one might spec-
ulate that the last few lines refer again to Shelley, who had
died in the year before Hunt's poem was first published and,
more important to the sentiments of the poem, whom Hunt
admired for his social and political views. In this chapel,
friends would come even closer together in love:

And recognize the eternal Good and Fair,
Atoms of whose vast active spirit we are;
And try by what great yearning we could force
The globe on which we live to take a more
harmonious course.

(lines 392-395)

These lines have the spirit of the love and harmony which Hunt's
wife would inspire as she provided an example "And [brought] us
back the peace the world has lost" (line 279). These verses
exemplify Hunt's interest in world problems, even in the casual
ruminations of this poem, which he had in common with Shelley
and Lord Byron and his own editorship of journals like The
Indicator (1819-1821) and The Liberator (1822).

The final twenty-two verses of Hunt's poem are on his
death, or rather on his burial. He would like to be buried on
his rural estate so that he might somehow still share the
griefs and the joys of the friends who visited his grave. But he says for his own sake, he would prefer two burial sites:

One, in a gentle village, my old home;
The other, by the softened walls of Rome.
(lines 414-415)

This matter of burial seems to be the only occasion for a possible conflict, for he considers not two, but three burial places, just as he has earlier envied gypsy life amidst outlining a more conventional rural retirement. His attraction to Rome might be Shelley, for that poet's ashes were placed in the Protestant cemetery in Rome, just as Keats had been buried there in the preceding year.

Hunt's poem is frequently prosaic and prolix, sometimes owing to extensive development of plain personal tastes and sometimes to his reaching for the rime: For example, of wine he says:

Bottles of something delicate and rare,
Which I should draw, and hold up with an air,
And set them on the table, and say, "There!"
(lines 324-326)

After describing a few friends who would dine with him, and after saying nothing about food, Hunt says:

See--I'm at least a promising beginner,
And, out of pure good will, have left my dinner.
(lines 345-346)

The heroic couplet, which he employs throughout the poem, with a few exceptions is more fitting to terse statements, not the casual musing found in most of his verses. But he varies the monotony of the couplet by enjambing lines, using
triplets, and occasionally adding six- and seven-foot lines, as well as feminine and slant rimes. Some of his passages display a humour not found in Pomfret's poem. For example, Hunt says concerning his statues:

I'd have some casts of statues in the hall, 
Or rather entrance, whose sweet steady eyes 
Should touch the comers with a mild surprise, 
And so conduct them, hushing to my door, 
Where, if a friend, the house should hear a roar. 
The grateful beggar should peep in at these, 
And wonder what I did with Popish images. 
(lines 109-115)

Against fishing, he says:

Suppose a parson at this sort of work, 
Not with his carp or salmon, but his clerk; 
The clerk he snatches at a tempting bit, 
And hah! an ear-ache with a knife in it! 
That there is pain and evil is no rule 
Why I should make it greater, like a fool; 
Or rid me of my rust so vile a way, 
As long as there 's [sic] a single manly play. 
(lines 173-180)

The poet adds that he would not have higher beings distress him as men distress fish, even if Izaak Walton himself were the angler:

And stooping from his heaven with rod and line, 
Made the damned sport, with his old dreams divine, 
As pleasant to his taste as rough to mine. 
Such sophistry, no doubt, saves half the hell, 
And fish would have preferred his reasoning well; 
And if my gills concerned him, so should I. 
The dog, I grant, is in that "equal sky": 
But, Heaven be praised, he 's [sic] not my deity! 
(lines 185-192)

Diverting as passages like these may be, they are humorous at the expense of more careful development of other ideas.

It seems that Hunt was quite serious about this poem, for notes to the work indicate that he reworked it for
publication in 1832, 1844, 1857, and 1860. But he has not achieved the more direct and technically polished excellence of Pomfret's poem. Hunt's work is merely one long catalogue of personal tastes which do not engage the reader's interest. The poet's desires are too neatly circumscribed. They do not offer anything significant about happiness and the human condition. Hunt's lengthy explanations about his estate, fishing, stuffy rooms, and celebrating with his friends do not anticipate the conflicts which would undoubtedly arise during a lifetime. On the other hand, Pomfret's work achieves a total experience which states that the pursuit of ease during an entire lifetime must be eventually reconciled with cares and the dangers of excess. Pomfret's work is more significant because it is universal. It is a point of view holding forth what many people desire and what they must also avoid in their own best interests.

The six poems which decisively imitate Pomfret's work confirm much of what has been said earlier about the poet's topical appeal and artistic performance being the causes of his popularity. All six imitations vary in style and effect from one another as much as they do from their common source. But all of them express wishes for retirement within a structure similar to Pomfret's, and some of them even borrow similar if not exact phrases and stylistic peculiarities from their original. Since no other retirement poem appears to be the model for six poems, the topics and the art are evidently
the elements which made Pomfret's work the favorite among readers and at least a few poets. The foregoing study of "The Choice," therefore, can be considered an explanation and a confirmation of the general judgments of Cibber, Johnson, Anderson, and others who attributed the wide reception of the poem to its subject matter and poetical qualities.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

The foregoing study has been unable to determine the extent of the popularity of "The Choice" in terms of copies sold, number of readers, and other more concrete evidence. This study, however, has speculated from other, though less concrete, evidence that the poem attracted considerable attention during the eighteenth century. First of all, Pomfret's work went through three editions in 1700 alone, and printings of the poem were included in his collected works published regularly throughout the next hundred years, as witness the partial listing of editions in the bibliography a few pages hence. ¹ Moreover, the fact that "The Choice" produced at least six close imitations--apparently more than any other English retirement poem--suggests that it was popular among different kinds of writers, including two in America. Furthermore, the remarks from the second half of the century by Cibber, Johnson, and Anderson, which are statements by men looking back over a great number of writers and poems, attest that the work had been widely read and favored.

By the turn of the next century, Leigh Hunt, who was then sixteen years old, Robert Southey, who was twenty-six, and two anonymous reviews recalled that the poem had been highly esteemed. Later in the nineteenth century, Mrs. Browning and George Birkbeck Hill, although they were unable to offer any explanation, relied on earlier remarks or perhaps even on criticism which is not so readily discovered by modern scholarship to accept the traditional belief that "The Choice" had been very popular. The foregoing study, pursuing an examination of these critical opinions and evaluations, concludes that Pomfret's poem, rising from the tradition of retirement poetry, delighted its readers with discourses on contemporary appeals and issues. The development of Pomfret's ideal life and its artistic expression, especially in comparison to earlier works and imitations, manifests that little was wanting to reinforce the pleasure which his readers found in the subject matter.

Another method of concluding this study of Pomfret's poem, besides the offering of the preceding summary, is to glance at some unscanned considerations which may be of significance in determining the importance of "The Choice." First of all, as to Pomfret's sources, one must acknowledge, in light of Roman writers being some of Pomfret's favorites, that Seneca and some Late Latin poets sometimes wrote on retirement. Pomfret might have known these from his Latin studies and might have even continued to delight in them.
On the other hand, Horace's works seem to be the English writer's sources because Horace is acknowledged as the inspiration for many English retirement verses; because he is mentioned in "The Choice"; and because many of the sentiments from his works permeate Pomfret's lines.

The possibility exists that an English poem may be a source for "The Choice." This suggestion, however, does not arise from any critical commentary, for, as emphasized so often in this study, there is an uncanny paucity of commentary on all of Pomfret's works. Nevertheless, Pomfret might have happened upon some English verses which inspired his famous performance. Even though hundreds of retirement poems composed before "The Choice" were examined for this study, there are undoubtedly many more, one of which might be a key to a better understanding of Pomfret's.

Perhaps the most cogent conclusion of this study is that "The Choice" was popular because the subject matter, especially the didactic concerns, continued to be relevant to readers throughout the eighteenth century. The topical appeal of any work, whether of brief or enduring popularity, is obviously important in explaining its wide acceptance. As a corollary to this rather firmly established explanation for the popularity of "The Choice," one might abstract an explanation for the decline of its popularity. That is, the rise of the novel during the century might have replaced the poem
in terms of popular taste. This prose form allowed less sophisticated readers freedom from the varied syntax and the figurative language so often important to poetry. As mentioned in Chapter V, in relation to Pomfret's virtuous man, the novel also afforded a fuller development of the pursuit of virtue, as in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-1748); Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749); Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766); Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771); Fanny Burney's *Evelina* (1778); William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794); and Mrs. Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796). All of these works, among others like them, were popular. All of these works, moreover, include in a more dramatic manner than available in the verses of "The Choice" admonitions on living in the country, charity, the dangers of drinking, choosing friends, patriotism, and the perils of revenge.

The passing of the heroic couplet as a common form might also have led to the decline of the wide acceptance of "The Choice." Earlier in the eighteenth century, popular poets, such as Pope, Gay, Blackmore, and Philips, wrote mainly in heroic couplets. After Pope's death, in 1744, however, the very popular poems, except Goldsmith's "The Desolated Village" (1770), were written in blank verse or in other measures, such as Edward Young's "Night Thoughts" (1742-1745), Akenside's "The Pleasures of the Imagination" (1744), William Collins' odes (1746-1749), Thomas Gray's
"Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), William Cowper's "The Task" (1785), and Robert Burns's works. In other words, the passing of the form and the ideas which had made "The Choice" popular also made it wane in the estimation of its audience.

As a final extension of this study of Pomfret's poem, the influence of his verses might also be further investigated. Although hundreds of retirement poems, especially in miscellanies and popular periodicals, were perused to find the six works inspired by Pomfret's lines, the perusal of hundreds more might discover at least a few more modeled on that very popular poem. The greatest barrier to finding works of this nature, needless to say, is that texts from the eighteenth century are not readily available in all libraries. Tracing Pomfret's influence through such verses, however, would reinforce the conclusion of this study as to the wide acceptance of "The Choice," namely that the structure, the topics, and the phrasing of the poem were deemed worthy of imitation by different poets. Furthermore, it is curious that for certain the two American writers William Livingston and Benjamin Church closely modeled some of their own lines on Pomfret's. Consequently, an investigation of the retirement tradition in American Colonial literature might not only reveal a wider influence of Pomfret, but also enrich the understanding of early American poetry.
In conclusion, there is a strange lack of clear, specific criticism for "The Choice," a poem which some eminent judges of literature have said was very popular. It is certain that, unless some new discoveries in eighteenth-century literary history are made, the work will remain, to some extent, an anomaly. For the present, it appears that "The Choice" was popular owing to the comprehensive treatment of the theme of retirement, the relevance of its topics to contemporary readers, and the artistic expression of its content.
APPENDIX

BENJAMIN CHURCH'S THE CHOICE

The following text is that of the first edition of The Choice (1757) by Benjamin Church. Footnotes to Church's verses, which are cross-referenced to Pomfret's, have been added to this study in order to provide some comparisons preliminary to the analysis of the American poem.

If youthful Fancy might its CHOICE pursue,
And act as natural Reason prompts it to;
If Inclination could dispose our State,
And human Will might govern future Fate;
Remote from Grandeur, I'd be humbly wise,
And all the Glitter of a Court despise:
Unskill'd the proud or vicious to commend,
To cringe to Insolence or Fools attend;
Within myself contented and secure,
Above what means Ambition can endure;
Nor yet so anxious to obtain a name,
To bleed for Honour in the Fields of Fame;

\[Benjamin Church\], The Choice: A Poem, after the Manner of Mr. Pomfret [sic]. By a Young Gentleman (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1757). The Magazine of History with Notes and Queries, Extra Number, No. 64 (April, 1919), pp. 61-72, has reprinted the 1802 edition of Church's poem. This American journal includes a reproduction of the title page, which reads: "The Choice: A Poem, after the Manner of Pomfret. Written in the Year 1757, By Dr. Benjamin Church, while at College, and at the Age of Eighteen Years. Worcester: Isäiah Thomas, Jun., 1802." This edition differs from the first only in that initial letters of nouns are not always capitalized and that there are not as many caesuras marked by commas or as much syncope. Since Church was born in 1734, he was already eighteen in 1752, two years before he left Harvard, not in 1757 as indicated on the title page of the 1802 edition. This confusion of dates, however, has no bearing on the relations between Church's and Pomfret's poems.
Empty Parade is all that Heroes know,  
Unless fair Virtue hover in the Show.

But in these Walls, where Heav'n has fix'd  
my Stay,
One Half of Life I'd wish to breathe away;  
The Fall and Winter of each future Year,  
I'd humbly hope to spend contented here;
'Mid the fierce Ravage of a wintry Storm,  
Kind Friends to cheer me, mod'rate Wine to warm;
Securely happy we'd delude the Day,  
And smile the Seasons cheerfully away.

No needless Show my modest Dome should claim,  
Neat and genteel without, within the same;
Decently furnish'd to content and please,  
Sufficient for necessity and ease;¹
Vain is the Pomp of prodigal expense,  
Frugality denotes the Man of Sense;
My Doors the needy Stranger should befriended,  
And Hospitality my Board attend;
With frugal Plenty be my Table spread,  
Those, and those only, whom I love be fed;
The Meek and Indigent my Banquet share,²  
Who love the Master and approve the Fare;
Thy mellow Vintage, Lisbon, should abound,  
Pouring a mirthful Inspiration 'round;
While laughing Bacchus bathes within the Bowl,  
Love, Mirth, and Friendship swallow up the Soul.

I'd have a few Friends, and those by Nature true,  
Sacred to Friendship, and to Virtue too;  
Though but to few an Intimate profest,  
I'd be no Foe, nor useless to the Rest;
Each Friend belov'd requires a friendly Care,  
His Griefs, Dejections, and his Fate to share;

²Lines 23-26: Cf. Pomfret's lines 9-12:

It shou'd within no other Things contain,  
But what were Useful, Necessary, Plain:  
Methinks 'tis Nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure  
The needless Pomp of Gaudy Furniture.

³Lines 29-33: Cf. Pomfret's lines 43-46:

A frugal Plenty shou'd my Table spread,  
With Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes Fed:  
Enough to Satisfy, and something more  
To Feed the Stranger, and the Neighb'ring Poor.
For this my CHOICE should be to Bounds confin'd, Nor with a burst of Passion flood Mankind.

Above the Rest, one dear selected Friend, Kind to advise and cautious to offend; To Malice, Envy, and to Pride unknown, Nor apt to censure foibles but his own; Firm in Religion, in his Morals just, Wise in discerning, and advising best; Learn'd without Pedantry, in Temper kind, Soft in his Manners, happy in his Mind. Is there in whom these social Virtues blend, The Muse lisps POLLIO, and she calls him Friend; To him when flush'd: with Transport I'd repair, His faithful Bosom should my Solace share; To him I'd fly when Sorrows prove too great, To him discover all the Stings of Fate: His social Soul should all my Pangs alloy, Tune ev'ry nerve, and charm my griefs away.

O, how I wish to join the friendly Throng, Elude the Hours, and harmonize the Song; Each gen'rous Soul still sedulous to please, With calm good Temper, and with mutual Ease; Glad to receive and give the keen Reply, Nor Approbation to the Jest deny.

But at a decent Hour with social heart, In Love and Humour should my Friends depart: Then to my Study eager I'd repair, And feast my Mind with new Refreshment there; There, plung'd in Thought, my active Mind should tread, Through all the Labours of the learned Dead; HOMER, great Parent of heroic Strains, VIRGIL, whose Genius was improv'd with Pains; HORACE, in whom the Wit and Courtier join'd, OVID, the tender, am'rous and refin'd; Keen JUVENAL, whose all-correcting Page Lash'd daring Vice, and sham'd an impious age; Expressive LUCAN, who politely sung With hum'rous MARTIAL tickling as he stung;

4Lines 76-80: Cf. Pomfret's lines 19-22:

Elab'rate TERENCE, studious where he smil'd,
Familiar PLAUTUS, regularly wild;
With frequent Visits these I would survey,
And read, and meditate the hours away.

Nor these alone should on my Shelves recline,
But awful POPE! majestically shine,
Unequall'd Bard! who durst thy praise engage?
Not yet rev'rend with the rust of Age;
Sure heav'n alone thy Art unrivall'd taught,
To think so well, so well express the Thought;
What villain hears thee, but regrets the Smart?
But tears the lurking Demon from his Heart?
Virtue attends thee, with the best Applause,
Conscious Desert! great Victor in her Cause,
She faithful to thy Worth, thy Name shall grace,
Beyond all Period, and beyond all Space;
Go, shine a Seraph, and thy Notes prolong,
For Angels only Merit such a Song!

Hail Briton's Genius, MILTON! deathless Name!
Blest with a full Satiety of Fame:
Who durst attempt Impertinence of Praise
Exceeds Humanity to make of claim.
Or sap insidious thy eternal Bays?
For greater Song, or more exalted Fame,
These to peruse I'd oft forget to dine,
And suck Refection from each mighty Line.
Next ADDISON'S great Labours should be join'd,
Prais'd by all Tongues, and know to all Mankind:
With LYTTLETON, the tender and correct,
And copious DRYDEN, glorious in Defect;
Nor would I leave the great and pious YOUNG,
Divinely fir'd, and sublime in Song;
Next would I add the unaffected GAY,
And gentle WALLER, with his glowing Lay;
Last Nature-limning THOMSON should appear,
Who link'd Eternity within his Year.
These for diversion, with the comic Throng,
Should raise my Fancy, and improve my Song;
Extend my View, till op'ning Visions roll,
And all Pisâria bursts upon my Soul.

But to inform the Mind and mend the Heart,
Great TILLOTSON and BUTLER Light impart;
Sagacious NEWTON, with all Science blest,
And LOCKE, who always thought and reason'd best.

But lo! for real worth and true Desert,
Exhaustless Science and extensive Art,
superior stands; in whom we find
The other Saviour of diseas'd Mankind;
Whose skilful Hand could almost Life create,
And make us leap the very Bounds of Fate;
Death, tyrant Death, beholding his Decline,
That BOERHAAVE would his Kingdom undermine,
Arm'd with his surest Shafts attack'd his Foé,
Who long eluded the repeated Throw;
At length, fatigu'd with Life, he bravely fell,
And Health with BOERHAAVE bade the World farewell.

Thus till the Year recedes I'd be employ'd,
Ease, Health, and Friendship happily enjoy'd;
But when the vernal Sun revolves its Ray,
Melting hoar Winter with her Rage away,
When vocal Groves a gay Perspective yield,
And new Verdure springs from Field to Field;
With the first Larks I'd to the Plains retire,
For rural Pleasures are my chief Desire.

Ah doubly blest! on Native Verdure laid,
Whose Fields support him, and whose Arbors shade;
In his own Hermitage in Peace resides,
Fann'd by his Breeze, and slumb'ring by his Tides;
Who drinks a Fragrance from paternal Groves,
Nor lives ungrateful for the Life he loves.

I'd have a handsome Seat not far from Town,
The Prospect beauteous, and the Taste my own;
The Fabric Modern, Faultless the Design,
Not large, nor yet immorately fine;
But neat Economy my Mansion boast,
Nor should Convenience be in Beauty lost;

5Hermann Boerhaave (1668-1738), a Dutch physician,
became professor of medicine and botany (1709) and of chemis-
try (1718) at Leyden. His Opera omnia anatomica & chirurgica,
cura Hermanni Boerhaave & Bernhardi Sieffriend Albini (Lug-
duni Batavorum, apud J. du Vivie et J. & H. Verbeek, 1725)
and Aphorismi de cognoscendis et curandis morbis in usum doc-
trinae domesticae digesti (Lugduni Batavorum, apud T. Haak,
S. Luchtmans, [et] J. et H. Verbeek, 1742) are encyclopedic
medical books, which were translated into English and various
European languages.

6Lines 153-156: Cf. Pomfret's lines 5-6:

Near some fair Town, I'd have a private Seat,
Built Uniform, not Little, nor too Great.
Each Part should speak Superior Skill and Care,
And all the Artist be distinguish'd there.

On some small Elevation should it stand,7
And a free Prospect to the South command;
Where safe from Damps I'd snuff the whole Gale,
And Life and Vigour the Lungs inhale;
Eastward my mod're rate Fields should wave with Grain,
Southward the Verdure of a broad Champaign;
Where gamesome Flocks and rampant Herds might play,
To warm the Sunshine of the vernal Day;
Northward, a Garden on a Slope should lie,
Finely adjusted to the nicest Eye;8
In the midst of this should stand a cherry Grove,
A breezy, blooming Canopy of Love!
Whose blossom'd Boughs the tuneful Choir should cheer,
And pour regale on the Eye and Ear;
A gay parterre the vivid Box should bound,
To waft a Fragrance through the Fields around;
Where blushing Fruits might tempt another Eve,
Without another Serpent to deceive.
Westward, I'd have a thickset Forest grow,9
Through which the bounded Sight should scarcely go;
A view of Nature unimprov'd by Art.

Rapt in the soft Retreat, my anxious Breast
Pants eager still for something unpossess'd;
Whence springs this sudden Hope, this warm Desire?
To what Enjoyment would my Soul aspire?
'Tis Love extends my Wishes and my Care,
Eden was tasteless till an Eve was there:
Almighty Love! I own thy pow'rful Sway,
Resign my Soul, and willingly obey.

Grant me, kind Heav'n, the Nymph still form'd to please,
Impassionate as Infants when at ease;
Fair as the op'ning Rose; her Person small,
Artless as Parent Eve before her Fall;

7Line 161: Cf. Pomfret's line 7: "Better, if on a Rising Ground it stood."

8Lines 169-170: Cf. Pomfret's line 13: "A little Garden, Grateful to the Eye."

9Lines 165 and 179: Cf. Pomfret's line 8: "Fields on this side, on that a Neighbouring Wood."
Courteous as Angels, unreservedly kind,
Of modest Carriage, and the chastest Mind;
Her Temper sweet, her Conversation keen,
Not wildly gay, but soberly serene;
Not talkative, nor apt to take Offence,
With Female Softness join'd to Manly Sense. 10
Her Dress and Language elegantly plain,
Not sluttish, forward, prodigal or vain;
Not proud of Beauty, nor elate with Praise,
Not fond to govern, but by CHOICE obeys;
True to my Arms, in Body and in Soul,
As the touch'd Needle to the attractive Pole
Caution, oppos'd to Charms like these, were vain,
And man would glory in the silken chain;
Unlike the sensual Vice that burns and stains,
But where the purest Admiration reigns;
Give me, O give me such superior Love,
Before the Nectar of the Gods above;
Then Time on downy Wings would steal away,
And Love still be the Business of the Day.

While sporting Flocks in fond Rotations court,
And to the Thicket Pair by Pair resort;
While tuneful Birds in tender Murm'ring rings plead,
Chanting their am'rous Carols through the Mead;
Link'd Arm in Arm we'd search the twilight Grove,
Where all inspires with Harmony and Love;
Ye Boughs, your friendly Umbrage wide extend!
Guard from rude Eyes, and from the Sun defend;
Ye wanton Gale's! pant gently on my Fair,
Thou Love-inspiring Goddess, meet us there!
While soft invited, and with Joy obey'd,
We press the Herbage and improve the Shade.

But is th' Almighty ever bound to please?
Rul'd by my Wish, or studious of my Ease?
Shall I determine where his Frowns shall fall,
And fence my Grotto from the Lot of all?
Prostrate, his sov'reign Wisdom I adore,
Intreat his Mercy, but I dare no more;
No constant Joys Mortality attend,
But Sorrows violate, and Cares offend;
Heavin wisely mixt our Pleasures with Alloy,
And gilds our Sorrows with a Ray of Joy;

10Lines 199-200: Cf. Pomfret's lines 118-119:
She might not seem Reserv'd, nor talk too much;
That shews a want of Judgment and of Sense.
Life without Storms a stagnant Pool appears,
And grows offensive with unruffled Years;
An active State is Virtue's proper Sphere,
To do and suffer is our Duty here;
Foes to encounter, Vices to disdain,
Pleasures to shun, and Passions to restrain;
To fly Temptation's open, flow'ry Road,
And labour to be obstinately Good.

Then, blest is he who takes a calm Survey
Of all th' Events that paint the checker'd Day;
Content, that Blessing makes the Balance even,
And poises Fortune by the Scale of Heav'n.

I'll let no future Ill my Peace destroy,
Or cloud the Aspect of a present Joy;
He who directed and dispens'd the Past,
O'errules the Present, and shall guide the Last:
If Providence a present Good has giv'n,
I clasp the Boon in Gratitude to Heav'n;
May RESIGNATION fortify my Mind,
He cannot be unhappy that's resign'd.

Guard my Repose thou Lord of all within!
An equal Temper, and a Soul serene;
0! teach me Patience when oppos'd to Wrong,
Restrain the mad'ning Heart, and curb the Tongue!
May Prudence govern, Piety controul,
All Slander, Rage and Bitterness of Soul;
Peace, Plenty, Health and Innocence be made
The blissful Tenants of my tranquil Shade.

O let me not maliciously comply
To that curst Action that shall raise a Sigh,
Or cause the Wretched Orphan to complain,
Or see the Widow's Tears, and see in Vain;
From a remorseless Soul O set me free,
And prompt a Pang for ev'ry Wretch I see.

Whatever Station be for me design'd,
May Virtue be the Mistress of my Mind;
May I despise th' Abandon'd and the Base
Though opulent, or dignified with Place;
And spurn the Wretch who meanly lost to Shame,
Thinks Wealth or Place a Substitute for Fame:

11Lines 253-254: Cf. Pomfret's lines 41-42:

For that, our Maker has too largely giv'n,
Shou'd be return'd, in Gratitude, to Heav'n.
If Wisdom, Wealth or Honour Heav'n should lend,
Teach me those Talents happily to spend;
Nor make so blest as I would wish to live,
Beyond those Moments Heav'n is pleas'd to give:
Then when Life trembles on the Verge of Rest,\(^\text{12}\)
And brings expended Minutes to the test,
Absolve me Conscience, thou imperial Pow'r,
O bless me with a self-approving Hour.

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\(^\text{12}\)Lines 277-281: Cf. Pomfret's lines 1-4 and 154-156:

If Heav'n the Grateful Liberty wou'd give,
That I might Chuse my Method how to Live:
And all those Hours, propitious Fate should lend,
In blissful Ease, and Satisfaction spend.

If Heav'n a Date of many Years wou'd give,
Thus I'd in Pleasure, Ease, and Plenty live.
And as I near approach'd the Verge of Life.
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¹The editions are arranged here chronologically. This list includes only those copies of "The Choice" examined to arrive at the text used in this study. The poem always appears first in each collection of Pomfret's works.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Bernard V. Bernatovich has been read and approved by members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation, and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

January 7, 1971

Date

Signature of Advisor