

Accession number: 1992-24/28

Description: Single sheet of paper, written on both sides. Rough copy of a verse addressed to the Duchess of Devonshire in Garrick's hand.

Transcript: What make your looks so sweetly bright
Divine Aurora, say?
Because from Slumbers short & light
I rise to wake the day —

O hide for shame your blushing face,
'Tis all poetic fiction;
To Tales like these, see Devon's Grace
A blooming contradiction:

Would you fair Maid more bright appear?
Old fashion'd customs scorning?
Rise not till Noon throughout the Year,
Nor go to bed till morning.

Verso: Upon the duchess of Devonshire rough copy 1776 at Chatsworth.

Notes:

Aileen Osborn, 'The Literary Material in the Hereford Garrick Papers', M. Phil thesis, University of Birmingham, 1999, 239-41.

Other versions: Folger, transcript y.d.120; Devonshire collections, transcript with autograph additions: Kearsley, II, 539.

The Duchess of Devonshire, Georgiana (Spencer) Cavendish, was the daughter of Garrick's dear friend Lady Georgiana Spencer. She married William Cavendish, the fifth Duke of Devonshire in 1774. The Duke's father, who married Charlotte, daughter of the Burlingtons, had also been Garrick's close friend. His son succeeded to the title at his death in 1764. Garrick met the fifth duchess of Devonshire often at her parents' country house, Althorp in Northamptonshire, and was very fond of her. The Duchess was regarded as the "reigning queen of Society. She set the fashion in dress, and introduced a simple and graceful style to supersede the ridiculous hoop.' (DNB) On the occasion of the poem, Garrick had tried to visit her at Devonshire House in London. He mentions the incident in a letter to Lady Spencer dated 30 November 1776,

If the Duchess of all duchesses is at Althorp pray throw me at her feet, & beg for pity's Sake that I may be allow'd to see her once in ten times when I call about two at Devonshire house. Not a single ray has shone upon me, tho I attended the Gate so long, that the porter (tho' an old friend of mine) rather thought me more bold than welcome.

Lady Spencer replied on 10 December,

The duchess begs you will believe that she never knew of your being at D. House, or she would not have refused herself the pleasure of seeing you: she acknowledges that she got up unreasonably late the whole time she was in town, and was probably in bed when you called upon her.