

II. *Part of a Letter, written to a Most Reverend Prelate, in answer to one written by his Grace, judging of the Age of MSS. the Style of Learned Authors, Painters, Musicians, &c. By Mr Humfrey Wanley.*

London, July 11. 1701.

THe substance of what your Grace is pleas'd to say about *Manuscripts and Copied Writings* (as I apprehend it) is, *That 'tis not only possible, but very easie, upon the perusal of a written Book, to pronounce in what Age or Century it was written, supposing a man to be tolerably well vers'd in Books of that Language or Country. And that this judgment may be made, only by observing the Shape and Figure of the Letters of the Book, which (as all other things) have their fix'd Periods for their Duration : as being form'd this way in such a Century, and such a way in the next ; Time only (which alters the outward state of other things) working this Change in Letters also, of what Age, Language, or Country soever they be. And then as to Original Compositions, your Grace is of Opinion, That the Style and Diction of any noted Author being well obser'd, 'tis very easie to discover such others of his Works as have gone abroad without his Name ; and also the very time when the Author Liv'd.*

'Tis evident, my Lord, that a man may judge of *some* MSS by the Hand ; and of the Genuine and Spurious Works of *some* Authors ; and of the *time* likewise, wherein they liv'd, by the *style* of them ; but whether this be so *easie* a Work, and that the Rules men generally go by in these cases, are *always infallible Guides*, is what (I own) I very much doubt of.

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Suppose, my Lord, for instance, a man should bring to any Antiquary a good MS. Copy of the *Hebrew Bible*, *Pentateuch*, or *Psalter*, written in a small common Letter, without Points, without fine Knots, and Flourishes, without Pictures, and great Letters, or any thing that should look like Pompous: Suppose that the Ink, Parchment, &c. should carry a seeming face of Antiquity with them, and that a man should say his MS. was 1000, 1200, or 1300 years old, when as really, it was written within a very few years: Could he from the Hand alone soon find out the Cheat?

All the *Hebrew* MSS. that I have as yet seen, are written either with *Samaritan* or *Chaldee* Letters. As to the *Samaritan*, I own they bear a good resemblance one to another, and that they differ very much from those *Samaritan* Characters, which we find stamped upon divers truly *Antient* and *Genuine Coins*. But then there seems to be such a Resemblance (as to the Character) between those Coins struck in Ages far distant from one another, that 'tis hard (from the Consideration of the *Metal*, its *Fabrick*, *Weight*, from the Shapes of the *Letters* in the *Inscription*, &c.) to say which Coin was made in the time of *David*, or *Solomon*, and which no older than the time of the *Machabees*; this being rather to be gathered from the *Words* and *Meaning* of their *Inscriptions*, than from the *Figure* of the Characters which Compose them. The same may be said, in a great measure, of the old *Greek*, *Punic*, *Roman*, *Brittish* and other *Coins*.

The *Chaldee* Character has indeed varied in tract of time, according to the different Fancies and Humours of men. The *Even plain* Letter, I think, is the most *Ancient*. This they altered into a more *neat* way of making it, as your Grace finds in *R. Stephens Hebrew Bibles*. There is a third fashion, of *waving* the perpendicular strokes like *Rays*, as your Grace remembers in some of the *Hebrew Coins* exhibited in the *Prolegomena* to the *Polyglott Bibles*.
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Then fourthly, there is a *large fat* Letter in the MS *Rit-als* and *Liturgies*, besides the *Rabbinical Letters* of *Italy* and *Germany*, with their *Offspring*; the *Litteræ Coronatæ*, and perhaps others that I never saw: (Not to mention here the *Jewish Custom* of writing the *Vulgar Language* of the *Country* wherein they live, with *Hebrew Letters*.) It seems a hard matter, my Lord, to trace the *Original* and *Progress* of all these ways of *Writing*, so, as upon the bare sight of a MS. written in the *Hebrew Language* or *Character*, to say, *by the shape of the Letters of this Book it appears to be so old*: and it seems much more difficult to assign the particular *Province* or *Countrey* wherein each *Hebrew Book* was written, as for example, in *Italy*, *France*, *Spain*, *Portugal*, *England*, *Holland*, *Germany*, *Poland*, *Barbary*, *Persia*, *India*, in the several *Provinces* of *Turkey*, &c.

The same almost may be said of the *Greek Manuscripts*, in which *Language* there has been a great diversity of *Writing*, according to the *different humours of the Scribes*, the *Fashion then in use*, or the *Manner of that particular Province*, in which such a *Book* was written. Nor is it easie (tho one would be apt to take such *Differences* for so many *Land-marks*,) to tell the *Age* of a *Greek MS.* without the *Date*; and I never yet saw such a *Date* so high as the year 6400, according to the *Greek Computation*. And it is still much harder, from any *Remarks* about the *Character*, *Illumination*, *Ink*, *Parchment*, *Paper*, *Binding*, &c. to find out what ** Country*, *Province*, or *Island*, such a *Greek Book* should be written in, or what *Country-man*

* If a man is born in one *Country* and writes a *Book* in another, keeping still to the *Character* and *manner of Writing* used in his own *Country*, I look upon it as the same thing as if he wrote it at home. And therefore I look upon the *Greek MSS.* which *Angelus Borgecius* wrote at *Paris*, as if they were written in *Candy*, where he was Born. And so (amongst many others) to instance in a *Latin MS.* I look upon a *Copy* of *Pope Gregory's Pastoral Care*, (now remaining in the *Bodleian Library*) as a noble *Monument* of our *Saxon Ancestors*: Tho *St Willibald* wrote it, perhaps, at *Mount Cassinum* in *Italy*, and afterwards (as it is probable) carried it with him into *Germany*, where it remain'd at *Wurtzburg* till that *City* was plunder'd by the *Swedes* about 70 years ago.

† Now this may in some measure be done by *Latin MSS.* because there are greater plenty of them. For even I, by exactly observing the nature of the Characters, &c. of these MSS. whose Country I was sure of, have afterwards been enabled to say, that *this Book looks as if it had been written in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, England, Ireland, &c. and, it may be, about such a time.*

the † Scribe shou'd be. Nay, and what does farther add to the Difficulty, is, that 'tis known that the shapes of the *Majuscule* Letters found in *Greek MSS.* have been retain'd for above 600 years together, with little Variation; and also, that some MSS. written with *Minuscules* and with Accents, are older than some others

which want them. And also, that the present *Greek Copistes* or *Librarij* have three or four different Hands commonly used by them, one being their own *Common Hand*, the others an Imitation of old MSS, which are more beautiful, but troublesome in writing, than their ordinary *Running Hands*: It being customary, as I have been told, when a man wants a Copy of such a Book to be written, for the *Copiste* to ask in what Hand it must be written (for one Hand, it may be, is more Costly than another;) and according as they agree, the Book is written. And thus I have seen some very new Things written in the same Hand with Books which are certainly 400 years old.

What Methods Learned Men have taken, in order to inform themselves of the *different Ages of MSS.* I know not, but my own has been this. I have been careful to get all the *Dates* I could, wherein 'twas said that such an individual MS was written, at *such a time*, or by *such a particular person*; every Book with a *Date*, being as a *Standard* whereby to know the Age of those Books of the same or a like Hand, and of those that are not very much *older* or *newer*. Where Dates have been wanting in some Books, perhaps they have had some Succession of *Emperors, Kings, Popes, Bishops,* or other *Officers*; and setting down the continuance of their Predecessors for so many *years, months, and days*, if there be only the naked Name of him who is the *last* in order, (all other Circumstances concurring,) I then judge the Book to have been written during

during *the Life or Reign* of such a person. Especially if that Succession be afterwards continu'd by a more recent Hand, or that there be two such Successions, as of *Kings* and *Bishops*, and the *last* of each happen to be Cotemporaries. Other Observations I have made from *Historical Notes* and *Ecclesiastical Tables*, in some Books. At other times I light upon some *Authentic Charter* or *Original Writing*, in the same Hand with such a Book as I have remembred to have formerly seen, but without any guess at the Age of it. The Age of the *Charter* being known, that of the *Book* is then known also : for I never entertain'd any Notion, or relied upon any Observation, but as I found it confirm'd by the Suffrage of concurring Circumstances, and sufficient Authority.

But even in *Dates*, I have found that a man ought to be very Cautious ; for some have been *altered* by later Hands, for corrupt and base Ends. Some are so worded, as when one thinks that the time they mention, is the time when the MS. was finish'd by the *Copiste*, or *Book-writer* ; it is meant only as to the time when the *Author* finish'd his Composition. Other Books are *Post-dated* that they might be accounted New. Of this last kind, is a *Greek MS.* I saw in the University Library at *Cambridge*; which, as appears by a written Annotation therein, was *bought* such a year at *Rome*, for so much ; and yet the Date pretends that the Book was *written* at *Rome* in such a year, which happens to be two years after it was bought and paid for. The Reason of these *Post-Dates* was, because, before Printing came up, a Book was by how much the *Newer*, by so much the more *Valuable*. An *old Book* might be bought for an *old Song*, (as we say) but he that transcribed a fresh Copy must be paid for his pains. And therefore, I have found in some Catalogues of the MSS. formerly extant in our *Abbey-Libraries*, that when they said such a Book was *Liber Vetus*, they would often add, & *inutilis* ; but *Liber Novus* was *Nitidus, eleganter scriptus*.

ius, lectu facilis, &c. which mean Opinion of the Ancient Copies, by the way, may have been the Occasion of the Loss of many a good Author.

The *Librarii* or *Book-writers* were from the time of the *Romans* a particular company of men, and their Business a Trade: But tho' *Book-writing* was their profession, yet they afterwards had but a third part of the business.

Learning (after the Erection of Monasteries,) was chiefly in the hands of the *Clergy*; and they were for the most part *Regulars*, and liv'd in Monasteries: Amongst these were always many industrious men, who wrote continually new Copies of old Books, for their own use, or for the Monastery, or for both; which seems to have swallowed up above half the business. Then, if an extraordinary Book was to be written, for the *standing, and more particular Use* of the Church or Monastery, the *Antiquarius* must be sent for, to write it in *large Characters, after the old manner*, and such a Copy they knew would last for many Ages, without Renovation. Between these two sorts of People, the *Writing-Monks* and *Antiquarii*; the poor *Librarij* or common *Scriptores* (who had Families to maintain) could hardly earn their Bread. This put them upon a quicker way of dispatch, that so they might undersell one another: And in order to this Dispatch, they would employ several persons, at one time, in writing the same Book, (each person, except him who wrote the first Skin, beginning where his Fellow was to leave off:) Or else, they would form the Letters *smaller and leaner*, and make use of more *Jugations* and *Abbreviations* than usually others did. And this, my Lord, is the only account that I can give, for that *Variety* of Hands which in former Ages, being learn'd of, or borrow'd from the *Romans*, was commonly us'd, and in fashion at the same time, and in the same Country, (throughout these Western Parts of *Europe*,) and for their growing less and less for one Age after another. An Instance of this may be given from the
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Hands of England, which about the year of our Lord 730 was of three sorts.

I. The *Roman Capitals*, still retain'd, and kept up by the *Antiquarij*, in some Books and Charters.

II. The more *Sett Saxon Letters* (which have a near affinity with the *more Antient Irish Characters*, as being with them derived from the *Roman*,) which were used as the Common Hand of the Age, by the Monks in their *Books* and some *Charters* of their Dictating and Writing.

III. The *Running Saxon Letters*, fuller of Abbreviations, and something of kin to the *Longbardic* and *Franco-Gallic*, (both which, with this third sort, were also of *Roman Original*,) and was used by these *Librarij* in their Books and in the Charters; as also by some Authors who wrote much, as *Bede*, &c.

There was another sort of *Bookwriters* still in use, namely, the *Notarij*, whose business it was to take *Tryals and Pleadings* at Courts of Judicature; to write as *Amanuenses* from the mouth of an Author; and to take *Homilies and Sermons* at Church, from the Mouth of the Preacher. These *Notarij* made use of *Notæ* or *Marks* instead of Letters: But when, in Process of Time, Letters were usually written small and quick, and Abbreviations grew Common, the *Notarij* were turn'd off, unless they would write Books in *Long Hand*, as other *Librarij* did, and their *Notæ* grew out of use; and most of their Performances in *Notes* or *Marks* have been since destroy'd.

Suppose then, my Lord, that a man had one *Latin Book* of each of the four sorts above-mentioned laid before him, written all at a time, and without any *Date* or Note of the Age: Would not he be ready to say that the three first were older than one another? As that that in *Capitals* was older than that in the *Midling Hand*; and this again older than that in the *Running* and *smaller Hand*? and that such a Book written in the *Notæ* being all full of marks, was not *Latin*, but of some other un-

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known Language? But to come down later; Suppose that a person should have some recenter *Books* or *Charters* laid before him in the *Pipe*, *Text*, *Exchequer*, *Chancery*, *Court*, and *Common Hands*, all written at the same time, would not he be apt to say, that one seem'd to him to be older than another, and that they were the Hands of several Nations?

If it be difficult for an Inquisitive Person to be a perfect Master in all the Successions of Hands, that have been us'd in his own Country, so far as he may be guided by the Monuments therein extant, (and I never heard of any Man that was such a Master) surely, it must be more difficult to pronounce the Age of those Books, *from the Hand*, which were written in other Countries, in an unknown Language. And what may make a Man yet more liable to mistakes (besides the want of Dates in the most Antient *Greek*, *Latin* and other MSS) was the Practice of many Writers, still to Use the very same Hand when in Years, as they learnt when they were Young; like as many Antient People, who do yet continue to write the *Roman* and *Secretary Hands*, which were more fashionable 50 or 60 years ago, than now. I forbear to trouble your Grace with any more Words upon this head, or to make mention of the different ways of Writing in any other Language: because I find this Letter will prove larger than I intended. I will therefore (with your Grace's leave) touch upon the next Head in your Graces Learn'd Essay, shewing the great *Easiness* of finding out an Author, and the Time he liv'd in, by his *Style* and *Phrase*.

I wish, my Lord, that it was as easie to discover the *Villanous Authors* of some Treasonable and Scandalous Libels, by their *Style*, as it has been to find out the *Printers*, by the *Paper* and *Letter*. Could this be done, it might not be unuseful to the Government. But People have learnt the knack of changing their *Style*, upon Occasion, so Artificially, as not to be discovered, but when they
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themselves are willing to be known. Who would have thought that *Erasmus* wrote the *Epistolæ obscurorum Virorum*? Or that some of the Nicer, nay, the most Eminent Modern Criticks could have been impos'd upon by their familiar and near Acquaintance, who trump'd upon them their own recent Performances for invaluable fragments of the Antients, whose other works these very Critics had lying before them? It has been a frequent Practice in all Ages for poor Scribblers to father their wretched Offspring upon Illustrious Persons: and the disparity between the Genuine works of the one, and the Spurious pieces of the other being evident enough, it has been easie to distinguish between the Gold and the Brass. But, my Lord, I would humbly ask this Question, Is all that is even now by learned men ascribed to some Antient Voluminous *Greek* and *Latin* Authors, undoubtedly theirs? May not there still some supposititious pieces lurk among them, which have the luck to be receiv'd, only because they have been more ingeniously counterfeited? Nay, may not the same person in the course of his Life, even alter and vary his Style and Phrase unwittingly, and without any design to do so? I think *Mr Richardson* somewhere in his Answer to *Amyntor*, upon occasion of the difference in point of Style between the *Revelation* of *St John* and his *other Works*, between the *Prophecy of Jeremiah* and his *Lamentations*, does tell us from *Dr Cave*, that the consideration of the *Times when* a man writes, or of the *Persons to whom*, or the *Subjects about which*, or the *Temper of Body*, or the *Humour* he is in when he writes, or the *Care and Pains* that he takes in Writing, may Occasion such Alterations in his Style, as that no certain Rule can be inferr'd from thence.

And if, my Lord, it was really possible to find out the Time when an Author liv'd, only by diligent Reading his Works, surely the World wou'd have been long since Agreed as to the Time when *Homer* lived, though they

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could not tell where he was born. And I believe even in the List of *Ecclesiastical Writers* there are some, and those not of the least consideration, who (notwithstanding their Works have been read over and over) are still reckon'd to be of *incertain Age*.

As for *Pictures*, though I have much less Experience in them, than I had once in MSS. yet I will not deny but that the Works of an hundred Masters (besides those your Grace has been pleas'd to mention) may be known by the *Hands*, tho they may be almost as *different* as their several Hands in Writing: But that one Painter can't Copy from another, so exactly, as that in tract of time it shall not be known which Picture is the Original, is what I dare not assert.

It has been frequently practis'd by Painters to borrow Pictures of those who are Lovers and Judges of such things, to Copy them, and to return their Copies for the Originals, without any discovery made by the discerning Owners. And I believe it possible (tho exceeding difficult) for a great Master to Copy a Picture so, that when they both stand together, a good Judge shall not dare positively to say which is the Copy and which not: Nor he that drew the Original, dare to own, that he could imitate his own Handywork better than a Stranger has done. There are a great many stories common among Painters, to this purpose. And one wou'd not think it much more difficult, for a Man to imitate a Drawing or Picture, than to counterfeit another Mans Hand-writing, which some People can do most exactly. And others with Pen and Ink will Copy after any thing that is Printed so nicely, as that one would affirm their *Writing* to be *printed off* at the Press.

Your Grace's Notions of discerning the *Age* as well as the *Hand* of the Painter, by his Picture, is very curious, and altogether new to me: And I doubt not but there is a great deal in it. I only want the whole Works of some
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great Painter, with an Account of the time when he wrought each Piece, to fit me for the making the Experiment. And why might not this Notion be advanc'd a little farther, and the Painter's *Complexion* be known by his Pictures, as well as his Age? As supposing that the *Sanguine* do naturally run upon *Pourtraits, Poetical Histories, Nudities, &c.* The *Cholerick* upon *Battel-pieces, Sea-fights, Fire-pieces by Land or Sea, Tempests, &c.* The *Plegmatick* upon the *Still-life, Flower-pieces, Birds, Beasts, Fishes, &c.* and the *Melancholic* upon *Landskips, Architecture, Pieces of Perspective, &c.* Not but that the different Genius of a Country, or the Desires of a good Customer, may oblige a Painter to work upon a subject, which he had no great Fancy for.

As to the difference in the works of Painters grown old, in respect of what they did when young, I doubt no certain Rules can be Establish'd as to their Performances in that kind. I know, my Lord, that Painters do generally live faster than other men, which may at length occasion a failure in their Sight and Memory, a trepidation in their Hands, &c. And yet I never heard that *Michael Angelo, Alb. Durer, Titian,* and others, painted worse at the latter end of their long lives, than they did before. Nay, I hear that *Signior Verrio*, tho' grown old, Paints now far better than ever, and is grown almost ashamed of some of his own Works which he Painted at *Windsor-Castle* in the time of *K. Charles II.* There may be this in it, that Aged Persons having attain'd, thro' long Practice, to a greater Experience, to a more Solid and Mature Judgment than they had when younger, are more Cautious of that which they let go out of their Hands; and correct those flashy touches of their Pencil, and other superfluous Irregularities, which they and others were formerly very fond of.

As for the *Flame and Motion of the Eyes* in a Picture, or the *Breath in its Mouth*, I can say but little, having as yet

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never had the happiness to see such Rarities, tho I have been admitted to the sight of some of the best Pieces of the most Celebrated Masters.

As to the Painters Painting a Living or Moving thing, so that one shall almost *discern* the Motion, and *see* the *Bird Flying, the Horse or Hound Running, &c.* that is more easie, especially when assisted with the friendly and pregnant fancy of the Charm'd Spectator. In the *Still life* indeed, the Eye is quickly deceiv'd, and tho there are, I believe, several Masters now living more Excellent at it than ever *Zeuxis* and *Parrhasius* were; yet still, with all their Art, 'tis very difficult to impose upon a man so, as to make him believe 'tis not a *Picture*, but the very *Life* that he sees before him.

Musicians seem to be under the same Predicament with *Painters*, since they are observ'd to live *Fast*, as also the *Poets*. 'Tis by the Practice of many years that they attain to a just Knowledge and Mastery in their respective Arts; and as their first Compositions are little and light, suitable to the Mercurial temper of heedless and inconstant Youth; So, in time, this wears off, and as their Experience and Judgment encreases, their Compositions grow more solid and sound. A Young Man may make a better *Minuet* or *Jigg*, but the Elder a more sound *Service* or *Anthem*. The Music of the former (with other Accomplishments) may go a great way towards the enticing a foolish Girl to Love; but that of the latter Excites the Devotion, moves the Affections, and raises the Passions of those truly Religious Souls, who take pleasure in singing praises to the Honour and Glory of his name, who lives for ever and ever.

If your Grace shall say, *that the very best Painters, Musicians and Poets dyed young, or at least before they attain'd to an advanc'd Age, when they would have fail'd or grown dull, as others did*: I must beg leave to say that Old Men are of two sorts, either those who are *much affected* with their Age and weakned, or those who are *not*,

If a Man be born of unsound Parents, or hath liv'd all along in an Air disagreeable to his Constitution, or has his Constitution always unhealthful, or has liv'd an intemperate or debauch'd Life, or has been crush'd by any heavy Misfortunes, or always liv'd in Poverty or Discontent; 'tis no wonder, if in spite of all this, he attains to old Age: but then he will probably lose the Clearness of his Head, the fix'd Attention of his Mind, the Brightness of his Parts, which he might be formerly noted for. If a Man has never had any of these disadvantages to wrestle with, but has all along been bless'd with the Contrary: then, he being bred up to a profession, and always following it, his judgment therein still encreases, and his Hand (one would think) should be more nimble and ready, and the Man a better *Painter*, *Musician* or *Orator* than ever: And why not a better *Poet* too? I say, with submission, my Lord, if Mr *Dryden* (tho he was said to be unhealthy at last) wou'd have taken as much pains, or had been Allowed time to his Mind for revising his later Poems, as in some of his former, they might have been as well, if not better accepted. I don't see that 'tis *old Age* that does a Man this diskindness, but rather, that 'tis the *Accidents* that do too often attend it, which yet many are freed from to the very last.

Suppose then, my Lord, if *Raphael* or *Vandike*, or the late Mr *H. Purcell*, or *Alessandro Stradella*, should have continued their Practice of Painting and Music till they grew old, from the Accidents attending which, suppose them (as a great many other People) to be very free; might we not then have justly expected from them, even greater Wonders than they had ever before perform'd? I won't say that an *old General* is fitter to be trusted than a *young* one; or that the late *Mareschal Schomberg* at his death, was a better Souldier (notwithstanding his Age) than the Present Kings of *Sweden* and *Poland*: But rather, that the Study of *Divinity*, or of the *Laws*, do seem as nice

nice and large as those of *Painting* and *Musfc.* Now the *old and sage* Men of those Professions are every where most regarded, *they* are found to have the ripest Judgments, and they are deservedly employed in the most weighty Affairs appertaining to their Professions. And it has been seen (as was partly said before) that some *Painters* and *Musicians* have not at all fail'd as they grew old, but kept that great Reputation to the last, which they had before acquir'd.

My Lord, upon the whole, it seems to me (tho' I know my Opinion is of no weight) that there is a gradual and sensible alteration in the appearance of things, and especially in the Scripture or Hand-writing of MSS. Now these ought to be consider'd with respect to the particular *places* wherein they were written.

Every Country is suppos'd to have remaining in it, the greatest Variety and most considerable Monuments of its own Characters; unless they are known to be carried away to other places. And therefore, if any man be desirous of considering the Letters of any Language that has been confin'd to any one particular Region or Province; 'tis but going thither, and it's ten to one, but (if he be diligent) he may satisfy his Curiosity very well. For Example, Suppose I should be willing to consider the Nature of the *Irish Letters*, their Original, Progress and Variations, with their Relation to the *Roman, Franco & Anglo-Saxon*: this might be done by travelling *Ireland* principally, by taking a trip into the *Scotch Highlands*, and perhaps into the *Isle of Man*, and by consulting some *English* and *other* Libraries, whither some *Irish* MSS have been carried.

If I would consider the *French, Italian, Spanish, or English Hands*, each Country affords sufficient Helps. But if a Man would consider the Letters of a Dead or Living Language, which *spread far, and has been, or is us'd in several Countries*: he can't be suppos'd a perfect Master in all the

the ways of writing that Language, till he has consider'd the whole State and Succession of its Letters in each of those Countries: Amongst those Languages I reckon the *Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, Persian, Greek, Latin, Teutonic, Slavonian, &c.* And tho' *Latin* is common amongst us, and every body is pronouncing the Age of a *Latin* MS, yet I think they would do well to enquire *where* as well as *when* a Book was written. And if they are certain that such a *Latin* Book was written in such a particular Country, or Province, 'tis then more easie, by considering the Succession of Letters us'd in that Province, or by comparing it with other Books written therein, to say *how old* it is. For want of this consideration many Learned Persons have been almost always out in their Calculations, and have pronounc'd at Random. If then, my Lord, this Method appears Rational, and even Necessary, in order to attain a sufficient Measure of this sort of Knowledge; it follows, that 'tis no easie matter to assign the Age even of a *Latin* MS, no, not even in *England*, where yet I suppose there may be as great a Variety of *Latin* Hands, as in most other Countries.

As for *Painting and Music*, they are Arts that I have always had a great Love and Affection for. I know very well that each Painters *Hand* and each Musicians *Manner* differs from another, but whether there is a gradual and remarkable Variation from themselves in the Course of their Lives, is what I never heard asserted. This is certain, that they can *change* their way of Painting and Composing at pleasure; and therefore, *Mr H. Purcel's Dulcibella* is said not to be like his other Music; and *Mr Fuller* the Painter could put one of his Pieces upon *Sir Peter Lely* for a most incomparable Picture of *Mich. Angelo*. But then these Changes and Variations from their usual Manners are *very* seldom made. And a man generally pursues and practices that which is most agreeable to his own Genius. For this Reason, when a Painters *Hand* is fixed,

his *Manner* is then limited, and so when a Curious Person comes into a Gallery, he knows that *this* Picture was done by Ryley, Kneller, Vanáyke, Dobson, Tintoret, &c. and *that* to be a Copy after Rembens, Georgeon, Salv. Rosa, Han. Caraccio, Pietro di Cortona, &c. When he comes to an Opera, to a Consort, or to Church, not knowing before-hand what Music is to be perform'd, yet he may soon discern that it was compos'd by Corelli, Baptist, Bassani, Chariffimi, Blow, Purcell, &c. And so upon Reading an Antient Author, a sagacious and learned Person may find, that he writes according to the manner of such an Age, that the Style imitates such another, or that the Book, tho it bears such a Man's Name, yet might, perhaps, be more truly ascribed to another, with whose Style it more exactly agrees : As for Example, that Piece of S. Cyril's, publish'd from the Escorial MS. by Barthasar Corderius, is thought (by reason of the Analogy in point of Style) to be Origen's : But then, whether *all this* can be *always done, done easily* and *without Errors*, is the doubt. And it seems yet a greater difficulty, certainly to discover *how old* the Painter, Musician, Poet, Orator, or other Author was, when he finish'd any one piece of his Works, unless a man is plainly told so : This being a sort of Knowledge, that those who have been otherwise sufficiently experienc'd in their several Arts and Professions, have not as yet pretended to.