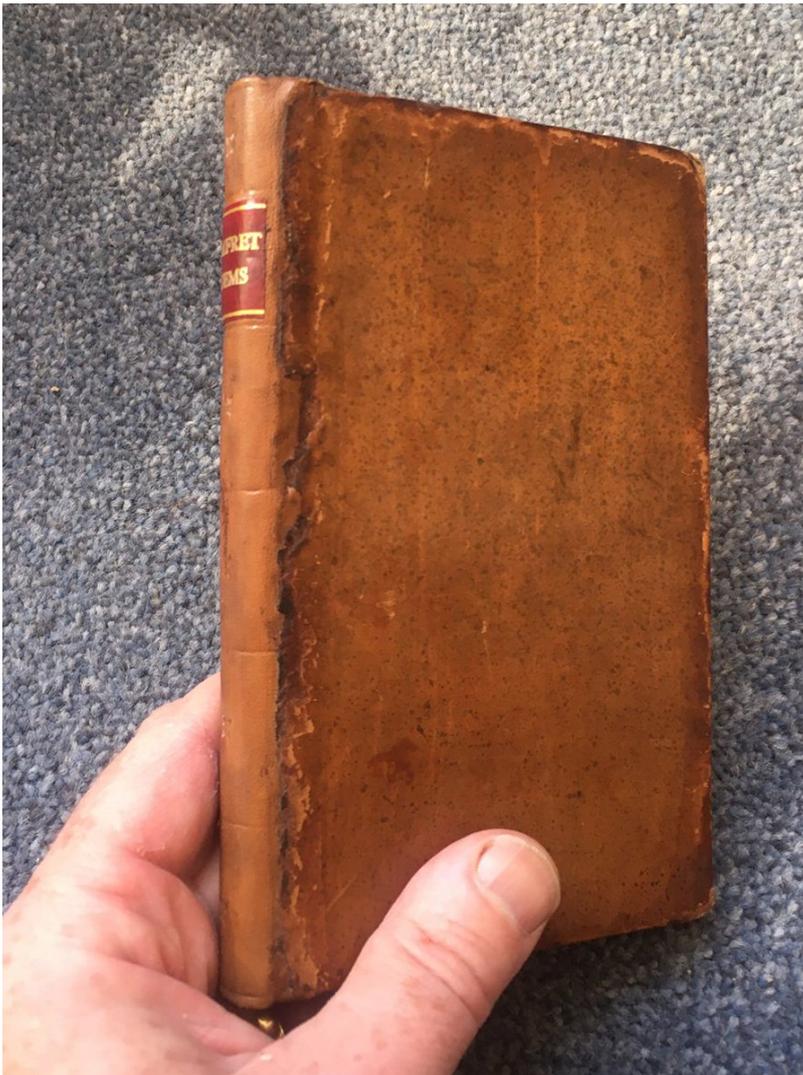


Matthew Steggle @MatthewSteggle Mon Jun 20 10:38:38 +0000 2022

An eighteenth-century mystery – longish thread. While I was feverish with covid, I bought a random book. (1/16)

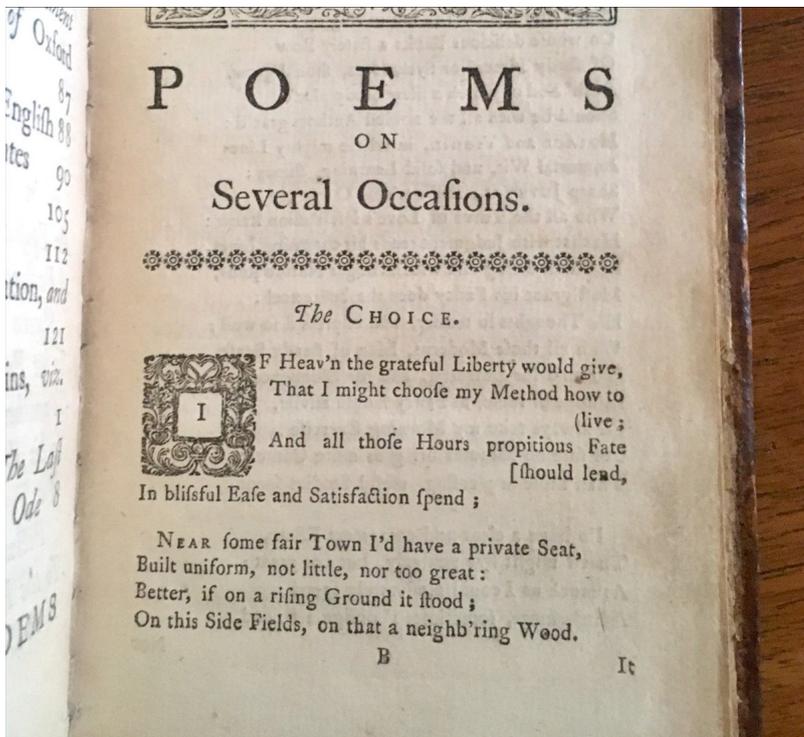
<https://t.co/O8b7tWFEvL>



This is it – £15 through [@abebooks](#) - ESTC says it dates to 1759. John Pomfret is something of a one-hit wonder, with one v influential lyric, “The Choice”, about how nice it would be to retreat to one’s country seat and do manly things, unencumbered by wife or children. (2/16)

But then, as the story goes. Pomfret’s poem annoyed his boss, who kept him waiting in London until he died of smallpox there. So no more poems. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Pomfret_\(poet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Pomfret_(poet))

“The Choice” starts this volume off. Opening lines are below. To be honest, the rest of his works don’t seem very exciting. (4/16) <https://t.co/KLJ0yblrsh>



But - the volume has a bookplate. Googling the name and place suggests that this could be one John Yorke (1733-1813) of Richmond, North Yorkshire, who owned large chunks of the beautiful valley of Nidderdale. (5/16) <https://t.co/bWWalBthKH>



This Yorke seems quite interesting. He laid out gardens at his estates; he built some follies, which still stand on the moors there, as a job creation scheme for poor locals. He leaves all sorts of traces. Pic from [@follyflaneuse's](https://thefollyflaneuse.com/yorkes-folly-or-the-stoops-pateley-bridge-north-yorkshire/) page <https://thefollyflaneuse.com/yorkes-folly-or-the-stoops-pateley-bridge-north-yorkshire/> : (6/16) <https://t.co/ke5tKD3Ayg>



Yorke's first wife died in 1766, and for three years he lived as "The Choice" would recommend, remaining single until his second marriage in 1769 to Elizabeth Campbell, whose money came from Jamaican slave plantations. (7/16)

Look again at the bookplate. That feature is the Campbell coat of arms, so we've definitely got the right John Yorke here. Also, that means the book was at least ten years old when the bookplate was put in it. (8/16) <https://t.co/JPYagS94d>



Anyway, our John Yorke lived long and got a good write-up at his death. (9/16)

https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Nidderdale_Or_An_Historical_Topographica/DTwuAAAAMAAJ

<https://t.co/zgluoMMUDG>

in the parish of Hanover, Jamaica, by whom he had no issue.

His highly cultivated mind, well stored with ancient and modern learning, expanded by a long residence in foreign countries, was open to every liberal and humane idea, and the tale of distress, or any public improvement, ever met his attentive ear. The poor lost in him a most bountiful benefactor; nor will his name ever be thought of without uniting to it every virtue which can adorn human nature. Few have left behind them a character more distinguished for active benevolence and extensive charity, and long will his memory be cherished by a numerous and respectable acquaintance, who will never forget the facetious companion at his hospitable board. His humility of mind extended even to the grave, and his last request was, to be interred not among his own relations in the family vault, at Richmond, but in the most private manner,

And it seems quite vivid, to be holding an object that was previously in this named C18 person's house. (10/16)

And then, the funny thing... it turns out that there's a portrait! This is the face of the man who owned this book! (11/16)

<https://t.co/1j5WisfOml>



And this is the whole portrait. It's thought to be from the later 1760s, between his marriages. The chap on the left is Colonel Coore, a friend, and they are in Nidderdale doing simple country things – Yorke has his dog, and Coore's got a fish in his net. (12/16) <https://t.co/mrnx2eBVyE>



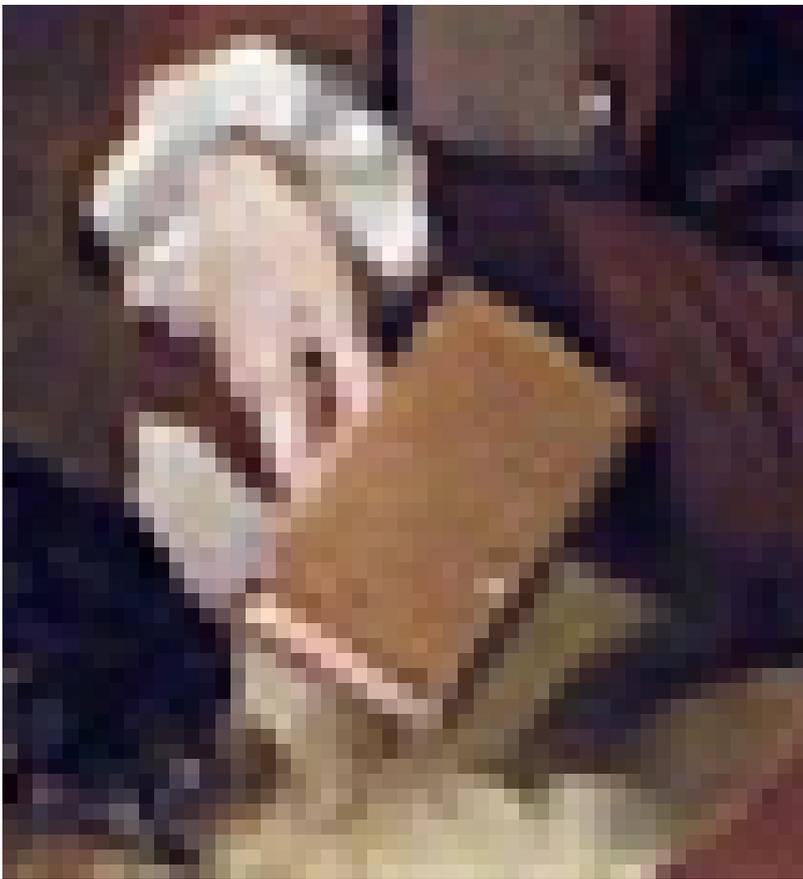
Hang on, what's that? <https://t.co/E5jPVOyiGQ>



<https://t.co/FYc1z146a3>



<https://t.co/evOOiHio3g>



Now, I'm not saying that it *is* the 11th edition of Pomfret's Poems in his hands... but the size is about right... and the dates would work... and "The Choice" would be an entirely appropriate poem to be referencing in such a setting. (13/16)

Here is more info on the painting:
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2004/important-british-pictures-l04121/lot.12.html>

The portrait was last seen in 2004, when it was offered for auction @ [Sothebys](#), expecting to go for £600,000+, but it didn't sell. Not sure where it is now. (15/16)

Anyway, I like to think I've got the book from it. (16/16)

Notes: For the poem see <https://www.eighteenthcenturypoetry.org/works/ppo24-w0010.shtml> . For more on its huge success, see https://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2162&context=luc_diss (1/3)

Notes: There's another John Yorke in Richmond, an enslaved black person in C18 N Yorkshire, brought there by Campbell from her slave estates in Jamaica. He took Yorke's name, but seems to have worked for others. Slowly and painfully, he inched his way towards freedom... (2/3)

... obtaining a small cottage in the area and starting a family. One wonders if he and his owner/namesake ever talked.
<https://www.mylearning.org/stories/1776-african-youth-of-the-dales/528> (3/3)

Title-page of the volume, by the way: <https://t.co/3c6LkYwgWe>

P O E M S

UPON

Several Occasions.

By the Reverend Mr. JOHN POMFRET.

V I Z.

- I. The CHOICE.
- II. LOVE Triumphant over REASON.
- III. CRUELTY and LUST.
- IV. On the DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.
- V. A Prospect of DEATH.
- VI. On the CONFLAGRATION, and Last
JUDGMENT.

The ELEVENTH EDITION, Corrected.
With some ACCOUNT of

His LIFE and WRITINGS.

To which are added,

His R E M A I N S.

L O N D O N :

Printed for D. Brown, C. Hitch and L. Hawes, J. Buck-
land, J. Rivington and J. Fletcher, R. Baldwin, G.
Keith, S. Crowder, P. Davey and B. Law, H. Wood-
gate and S. Brooks, C. Corbett, and R. Ware.