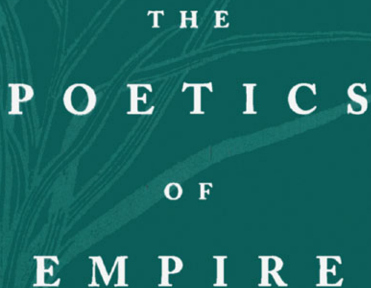

THE POETICS OF EMPIRE

A STUDY OF JAMES GRAINGER'S *THE SUGAR CANE* (1764)

JOHN GILMORE

The Poetics of Empire

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A Study of James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane*

JOHN GILMORE

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Contents

Acknowledgements viii

Abbreviations x

Introduction 1

Notes to Introduction 67

The Sugar-Cane: A Poem 86

Grainger's Preface to the 1764 edition 88

Book I 91

Book II 111

Book III 127

Book IV 145

Grainger's Notes to *The Sugar-Cane* 165

Appendix I: "Great Homer deignd to sing of little Mice" 199

Appendix II: Bryan and Pereene 202

Appendix III: Colonel Martin's directions for planting and sugar-making 205

Appendix IV: Ramsay's account of a plantation day 208

Additional Notes to *The Sugar-Cane* 213

Bibliography 313

Index 333

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John Gilmore

Centre for British and Comparative Cultural Studies
and
Centre for Caribbean Studies
University of Warwick

Abbreviations

1764	The first edition of *The Sugar-Cane* (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley ... 1764).
Bailey	N. Bailey, *Universal Etymological English Dictionary* ... (6th ed., 1733).
Bod.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
DNB	*Dictionary of National Biography*
E	Virgil, *Eclogues*
Errata	Errata list to *1764*.
G	Virgil, *Georgics*
Johnson	Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (1773)
n.	(and) note(s) [referring to Grainger's notes to the poem]
NLS Adv. MS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, Advocates' Manuscript
TCD	Trinity College, Dublin, MS 880, a draft version (1762) of *The Sugar-Cane* in Grainger's hand.

Full details of other works referred to by abbreviated titles are given in the Bibliography.

Introduction

The name of James Grainger is known to most students of eighteenth-century literature in English. He rates a passing mention in most of the appropriate works of reference, and is represented in a number of anthologies. *The Sugar-Cane* enjoyed considerable success on its first publication (1764), and was reprinted with some frequency over the next seventy years. It is both a major work in the English georgic tradition, and a major work in the early history of Caribbean literature. There were many other eighteenth-century Caribbean poems, but *The Sugar-Cane* was the only one which for several decades found a place in the mainstream of 'English literature.' It is a skilled and successful poem of its kind, and as a document in cultural history it offers many points of interest: as an 'imitation' (in the eighteenth-century sense) of its Virgilian model, as an essay in the transculturation of a poetical form, as an important example of the literature of empire, and as a detailed and often illuminating exposition of plantation slavery and the attitudes which supported it.

For many years, however, *The Sugar-Cane* has been little read. Changes in taste (which are discussed below, and make an interesting study in themselves) have meant that the last complete edition was printed in 1836. It is also a poem which is better understood with some knowledge of the author's life, and of both its background in the literature of the period and the Caribbean context in which it was written: information which it has generally been difficult to find in combination. In the hope that current growing interest in a wider view of eighteenth-century literature and in the development of the literature of empire will win Grainger new readers, the present work offers a complete text of the poem for the first time in more than a hundred and fifty years, together with a detailed introduction and notes.

1. Biographical sketch of a 'Twofold disciple of Apollo'

> What is fame? an empty bubble;
> Gold? a transient, shining trouble.
> (Grainger, 'Solitude, an Ode,' ll. 96–7)

Less than 24 years after his death, Grainger's surviving daughter had a legal document registered in Edinburgh in an attempt to recover a small debt claimed to be still 'owing to umql. [i.e. 'umquhill,' a Scots word meaning 'the late'] Dr James Granger [sic] of the Island of St Christophers at the time of his decease who died abroad upon the ... day of ... seventeen hundred and ... years'. As she had been only an infant at the time, Eleanora Grainger can be forgiven for being unable to supply the exact date or even the year of her father's death, but this is symptomatic of the problems facing anyone who seeks to write even the briefest account of Grainger's life.[1] Neither the date nor the place of his birth and death can be stated with certainty. A number of the details in published accounts of his life are mutually contradictory, and some are demonstrably erroneous.

Grainger's last surviving letter, to his friend Thomas Percy, was written on 4 December 1766 from Basseterre, capital of the Caribbean island of St Kitts (then as now officially referred to as St Christopher, but the shorter form was already in current use in Grainger's day).[2] This is the letter to which Percy refers when, writing to Grainger's biographer and editor Robert Anderson in 1805, he says 'Of the time of his death I was informed by the Captain of a Ship, who brought me a very kind Letter from him, and a present of a pig fed with Sugar Canes; But told me the writer had died just as he was leaving St Kitts.'[3] This suggests Grainger died in St. Kitts, as does the statement of a former acquaintance that he 'had been inform'd by those that knew' that Grainger died 'at his own House in the W[est] Indies'.[4] In the mid-nineteenth century the publisher and editor John Bowyer Nichols had a letter (apparently no longer extant) from Grainger's widow to Percy, 14 February 1770, which he quoted as saying 'he died on the 16th of December 1766, in the 39th year of his age.'[5] The nearest to a contemporary reference is in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (XXXVII, 95; February 1767) under 'List of Deaths for the Year 1766–7', which has '*Dec.* 24 Dr Grainger, physician at Antigua.'[6] His medical services were appar-

ently in demand in other islands besides St Kitts[7], and there is nothing implausible in the suggestion that he died while on a visit to the neighbouring island: the distance by sea from Basseterre in St Kitts to St John's in Antigua would have been about 100 kilometres, or roughly 55 nautical miles. However, there appears to be no extant record of Grainger's burial in either St Kitts or Antigua, or any surviving tombstone or monumental inscription[8] – something he unwittingly prophesied in *The Sugar-Cane* (III, 654). Grainger's will[9], made in St Kitts 17 July 1763, was proved in that island 9 June 1767.

If his wife was correct in believing that Grainger was 39 when he died, this would mean he was born about 1727. Robert Anderson doubted this on the grounds that it was inconsistent with known facts about Grainger's life (though the examples he gives seem inconclusive) and he suggested that Grainger had been 'about 44' when he died[10], making him born about 1722. William Wright claimed that when he had seen Grainger in St Kitts in 1762, 'he appeared then, to be about 47 years of age'[11]; oddly specific for a judgement based on appearance, this would make him born about 1715, and mean that his wife's belief about his age was a dozen years out, which seems unlikely.

Robert Anderson never knew Grainger personally, but he does appear to have known the widow of Grainger's older half-brother William Grainger, or at least to have been provided with information by her. Some credence is therefore due to Anderson's suggestions that James Grainger was born at Dunse in Berwickshire, Scotland (now Duns in the Scottish Borders), and that 'He was the son of John Grainger, Esq. of Houghton-Hall, in the county of Cumberland; who, in consequence of some unsuccessful speculations in mining, was obliged to sell his estate; and having obtained an appointment in the Excise, settled at Dunse.'[12] The former English county of Cumberland (now part of Cumbria) was just the other side of the border between England and Scotland and on the other (western) side of the country. Grainger himself said 'I am the son of a gentleman of Cumberland' and that his father 'was ruined by his own extravagance, and that of his wives.'[13] Writing 35 years after Grainger's death, his friend Percy said he had 'understood his Father had a post in the Customs or Excise somewhere on the western English Border which he left thro' his attachment to the Stuart family in their unfortunate Year 1715' (or in other words, that in

the Jacobite Rebellion of that year he had been among those who unsuccessfully supported the exiled claimant to the throne, 'James III', son of James II, rather than the new Hanoverian dynasty). A few years later, Percy specifically claimed to have had this information from Grainger himself. Percy also suggested that Grainger's father might at some point have settled in Annandale (just north of Cumberland, on the other side of the Anglo-Scottish border) but this seems to be no more than speculation based on a passage in *The Sugar-Cane.*[14] Anderson had the parish register of Dunse searched from 1719 to 1731, but 'no vestige of the name or family of Grainger' was found. In fact, there is now a computerised index to the records of the Church of Scotland (the Kirk, or the established church in Scotland, which was Presbyterian) which makes it a comparatively simple task to discover that there is no baptism of a James Grainger in the surviving records of the Kirk for the appropriate period anywhere in Scotland. Anderson suggested that Grainger might have been a member of the Scottish Episcopal Church, as his half-brother was, and Percy – himself a Church of England (Episcopalian) clergyman – agreed that this seemed to be the case: 'when he was my Guest which he was for several weeks in the Country, he always went to Church with me, nor did I ever discover that he differ'd from our established Episcopal Church in any point of Doctrine or Discipline.' This would explain his absence from the Kirk records, but the Episcopalian records for Duns only go back to 1853.[15] Whatever the exact circumstances of Grainger's birth, there can be no doubt that he thought of himself as a Scot, and that he was accepted by other Scots as such.[16] Grainger calls himself 'Scoto-Britannus' on the title-page of his *Dissertatio Medica Inauguralis* (1753), refers to Scots as 'my Countrymen' in a letter to Percy, and makes nostalgic references to Scotland in *The Sugar-Cane.* William Cuming, a Scottish physician living in England who met Grainger in 1754, believed that they were both 'born in Edinburgh' and said that he himself had been a pupil of Grainger's uncle, 'a genteel worthy Man, & an eminent Writing Master in that City'. William Wright, another Scottish physician who knew Grainger in the Caribbean, thought 'Dr Grainger was the son of Mr Grainger one of the ministers of Edinburgh,' while the Scottish General Melville, who never actually met Grainger, but who had corresponded with him while they were both in the Caribbean, believed him to be 'a native of Edinburgh'.[17]

According to Anderson, 'His father dying while he was young, the care of his education was kindly undertaken by his elder brother, by a former marriage, Mr William Grainger of Wariston, a writing-master in Edinburgh, and afterwards a clerk in the office of the Comptroller of Excise, who placed him at the school of North Berwick, under the tuition of Mr James Rae, formerly one of the masters of the High-School in Edinburgh, a teacher of eminent learning and abilities [...] After the ordinary course of education, he was put apprentice to Mr. George Lauder, surgeon in Edinburgh, and afterwards attended the medical classes in the University.' This last statement is apparently contradicted by Grainger himself, who said 'After being three years at the University, I was bound to an eminent surgeon-apothecary.' The earliest documented evidence about Grainger's career appears to be that in 1739 he matriculated at the University of Edinburgh in the class of John Kerr, Professor of Humanity. In the eighteenth century, students often started at a university at a much younger age than is normally the case now. Boswell went to the University of Edinburgh around the time of his thirteenth birthday, and many students matriculated there when they were about fourteen. Grainger is unlikely to have been much younger than this (which would suggest a date of birth around 1725). While Edinburgh has no medical matriculations extant before 1762, a James Granger was listed as attending the Anatomy classes of Alexander Monro, Primus, in 1741, 1742 and 1743 (the difference in spelling can be explained by the fact that Grainger himself signed the Arts matriculation, but the Anatomy lists were made by Monro or his clerk).[18] Grainger's own statement suggests that his attendance at the university's medical classes preceded, or possibly overlapped with, his apprenticeship to a surgeon.

The 1740s were a period of considerable upheaval in Scottish history. Britain as a whole was at war from 1739 to 1748; this was at first a conflict between Britain and Spain, popularly known as the 'War of Jenkins' Ear', but Britain was soon also fighting against France in the wider conflict of the War of the Austrian Succession, which involved most of the European powers. On 25 July 1745, Prince Charles Edward Stuart landed on the Scottish mainland, hoping to make good the claim of his father James Francis Edward Stuart (known to his supporters as 'James III' and to his opponents as the 'Old Pretender') that he, rather than George II (the representative of

the Hanoverian dynasty), was the rightful king of Great Britain and Ireland. This was the beginning of what came to be known as the second Jacobite Rebellion, or 'the Forty-Five.' The prince had brought some arms and ammunition with him, and managed to raise enough men among Scottish supporters of his cause to create a viable military force. He reached Edinburgh on 17 September and defeated a Hanoverian army at Prestonpans on 21 September. At the end of October, the prince marched south into England, reaching as far as Derby (5 December) before retreating to Scotland, reaching Glasgow on 26 December.

By this time Edinburgh had been reoccupied by troops loyal to the Hanoverian government. While support for the Stuart family was certainly greater in Scotland than in England, it should not be exaggerated; a large proportion of Scots were either indifferent or active supporters of the Hanoverian side. Nevertheless, we should not assume that the defeat of the Rebellion was inevitable – it did not seem so at the time. On 17 January 1746, some 8,000 men under Prince Charles Edward routed a slightly larger Hanoverian force at Falkirk Muir, about halfway between Glasgow and Edinburgh. However, the prince was unable to make good his victory or keep his almost entirely irregular troops together (the British navy had ensured that most of the reinforcements of regulars he had hoped for from France had never reached Scotland), and he began to retreat northwards. While he had some further successes, particularly the capture of Inverness on 17 February, after Falkirk Muir a reorganised Hanoverian army under the command of the Duke of Cumberland (a younger son of George II) began to take the initiative. On 16 April 1746, Cumberland won a decisive victory over Prince Charles Edward's army at the Battle of Culloden, and put an effective end to the rebellion.[19]

According to Anderson, Grainger 'was surgeon in Pulteney's Regiment, at the battle of Falkirk.' This is certainly incorrect (apart from the fact that Anderson assigns the battle to the year 1745) though it is possible that Grainger was at the battle as a surgeon's mate with Pulteney's. Also known as the 13th Foot, this was a regiment of regular troops in the British army.[20] Grainger was a surgeon's mate with Pulteney's at Culloden, and wrote a letter to his brother William about the battle and its aftermath which shows that (whatever his father's sentiments about the Jacobite cause might have been) he himself was strongly pro-Hanoverian: 'You

may be sure it gave me infinite joy to see those who threatened ruin to our glorious Constitution of Church and State dead on the field'.[21]

The anti-Jacobite campaign no doubt gave Grainger opportunity to demonstrate whatever medical skills he had acquired as a result of attending the university's classes and from his apprenticeship – though the 13th Foot had only 14 casualties at Falkirk Muir and none at Culloden. The regimental surgeon, John Hadzor (or Hadzer) may have been old enough to find active service a bit much for him, as he had been with the regiment since at least 1715. Presumably Grainger continued with the 13th Foot when it and other regiments were sent after Culloden to Perth, where they arrived about 14 May. From 28 June 1746, Grainger officially ranked as Surgeon in the 13th Foot, and would have been with the regiment when it and others were marched to Burntisland at the beginning of August to embark for Flanders. They took part in various campaigns in the Low Countries in 1746 and 1747, including the Battle of Val (or Lauffeld), 2 July 1747. Grainger's commission as Surgeon in the 13th Foot (replacing Hadzor) was dated 19 September 1746. This represented more than a simple promotion, for a regimental surgeon was a commissioned officer (which a surgeon's mate was not) and was therefore entitled to wear a sword and be considered as a gentleman – though Grainger may have felt he enjoyed this status anyway, as (at least in later life) he claimed the right to a coat of arms.[22]

In November 1747 the 13th Foot returned to England, where the regiment was employed on anti-smuggling duties on the south coast, although Grainger himself seems to have remained with the army in Flanders. The war ended the following year with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (18 October 1748). Anderson says Grainger left the army after the peace in 1748, and this statement is repeated by later writers, such as Gordon Goodwin in his *Dictionary of National Biography* article on Grainger. While it can be shown that Grainger remained in the army for several more years, it seems probable that he obtained an extended period of leave after the peace and that he devoted this to travel. He later said he had 'made the tour of Europe' and it is difficult to see when else during his life this could have been done. His minor poems include 'Three Elegies written from Italy,' there are references to Italy in *The Sugar-Cane* which suggest personal experience, and one of his book-reviews suggests

that he either had or claimed to have a good knowledge of Italian, and that he had seen Goldoni's *Padre di Famiglia* acted at the Venetian carnival of 1750.[23] Later that year he probably rejoined the 13th Foot, as he made notes on the illness of a soldier's wife at Aberdeen in 1750, though 'Little is known of the movements of the Regiment about this period except that from 1751 to 1753 they were in Scotland.'[24] He subsequently published a paper on 'An obstinate Dysentery cured by Lime-Water'[25] describing the case of a soldier he had treated over a continuous period of 14 months in Scotland and northern England, from November 1751 to January 1753. On 14 March 1753 he presented his dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh; published the same year with a dedication to John Craufurd, the Lieutenant-Colonel of the 13th Foot, this was in Latin (as was usual for the period) and discussed the use of mercury in the treatment of syphilis. By now at least in his late twenties, Grainger could at last consider himself fully qualified: the Edinburgh MD remained a first degree until after the Medical Act of 1858. Also in 1753, he published another Latin work giving his observations of the fevers he had observed among his army patients in the Low Countries from 1746 to 1748, but the former physician-general to the British forces in Flanders, John Pringle, had published his *Observations on the Diseases of the Army* the previous year, and Grainger's offering was unable to compete with this: a contemporary review noted 'indeed it is possible, this performance may appear to a somewhat greater disadvantage by succeeding one that has been so deservedly well received', but said that while Grainger had 'displayed a profusion of reading, very little is offered that can be esteemed new, or capable of contributing very greatly to the improvement of medicine'.[26] In October 1753 the 13th Foot left Scotland for the south of England, where they were at first engaged on more anti-smuggling duties along the Sussex coast, before proceeding to Salisbury. At some point in late 1753 or early 1754, Grainger, as he himself put it, 'sold out of the army', i.e., sold his commission (according to the frequent practice of the period), presumably to George St Clair, his successor as surgeon of the 13th Foot, whose commission was dated 19 February 1754.[27]

Grainger, who 'had but a few hundreds' of pounds to his name, settled in London about this time and practised medicine there, becoming a Licentiate of the College of Physicians on 20 March

1758. However, this was not his only resource. By 1754 (and probably during that year) he had become acquainted with a young man of about 16 called John Bourryau, who was admitted a fellow-commoner of Trinity College, Cambridge, on 21 August 1754 and matriculated at Michaelmas 1755, though it is not clear how long he remained at the university and he never took a degree. Bourryau's father, Zachariah Bourryau (who had died in 1752) was a London merchant who owned an estate in Lincolnshire and property in St Kitts, where he may have been born. John Bourryau was described as Grainger's 'pupill', and Grainger referred to him as 'my patron' and said that he 'had in a great measure, the superintendance of his Studies' – presumably some payment was involved. From May 1756 until May 1758, Grainger was also a regular contributor to the *Monthly Review*, one of the most successful and best regarded periodicals of the day. It also had a reputation for comparatively generous payment – at a slightly later date (1771) it paid contributors four guineas for each printed sheet, against the two guineas a sheet paid by its rival the *Critical Review*. Grainger reviewed a military treatise, medical works, books of travel, translations, contemporary poetry and miscellaneous works in a manner which suggested extensive reading not only of English literature from the seventeenth century onwards (especially poetry), but also of European medical and general literature from classical antiquity and the Renaissance, as well as a fairly good knowledge of contemporary French literature and at least some acquaintance with Italian and Spanish. He may also have found other ways to employ his pen: one example we know of is that in 1757 the publisher Andrew Millar (a fellow Scot) got him to write the second volume of a bulky folio work on *The History and Antiquities of Scotland* which had been left unfinished by the death of William Maitland, the original author.[28]

Whatever Millar paid him, there was little prestige to be had from this sort of anonymous hack-work and the contributions to the *Monthly Review* (like nearly all reviews of the period) were also anonymous. However, in 1755 the well-known London publisher Robert Dodsley brought out a fourth volume of his *Collection of Poems ... By several hands* (which first appeared in three volumes in 1748) and the new volume included (pp. 233–43) a poem called 'Solitude. An Ode.' Like many of the pieces in Dodsley's *Collection*, it was at first unattributed, but it came to be known that it was the

work of Grainger, and it won him some degree of recognition – doubtless helped by the fact that Dodsley's *Collection* went on to become one of the most popular anthologies of the century and that his name was printed with the poem in later editions. More than twenty years after its original publication, Samuel Johnson could repeat the opening of 'Solitude' from memory to Boswell, and describe it as 'very noble.'[29] Some later critics have found it interesting as a 'pre-Romantic' poem, or dismissed it as 'simply one more pseudo-Miltonic poem of sensibility,' but as Phillip B. Anderson points out, there is rather more to it than that. The opening address to Solitude as 'romantic maid' may indeed seem like 'a poem solidly in the tradition of Collins or the Wartons', and the poet-speaker goes on to imagine 'a series of quiet landscapes which palpably breathe an air of pseudo-Miltonic melancholy' (the Milton of *Il Penseroso*, whose tetrameter couplets are imitated here, as they had earlier been imitated by Joseph Warton) and 'a gothic desert which is full of knells, gloom, and charnals and which is worthy of Young.' Then there is a change 'unique in the poetry of the mid-eighteenth century' for Solitude 'not only speaks, but speaks in heroic couplets.' By contrast, 'None of the personified figures of Collins or the Wartons speaks, for their poetry is not a poetry of statement.' And 'The message of Solitude is consistent with her medium' for she points out sternly that however pleasing the thought of retirement from the world may be, this is form of self-indulgence which is incompatible with the duties which divine command has given man to fulfil – only at the end of life, when duty has been done, may Solitude 'Allay the pangs of age.'[30] Grainger's emphasis in 'Solitude' on the importance of society and the reciprocal nature of human obligations ('God never made an independent man/ 'Twould jar the concord of his general plan') perhaps prefigures his emphasis on the rôle of commerce in *The Sugar-Cane*, just as the idea that 'The height of virtue is to serve mankind' not only reminds us of Grainger's medical background, but also to some extent looks forward to his discussions of the care and treatment of slaves, both in *The Sugar-Cane* and his prose *Essay on the more common West-India Diseases*.

During the summer of 1756, Grainger was introduced to the Rev. Thomas Percy, a young clergyman (born 1729) of literary tastes who in a distinguished old age did his best to preserve and foster Grainger's reputation: nearly all of Grainger's surviving letters

are to Percy, and much of what we know about Grainger's life and works ultimately depends on Percy himself or on the encouragement he gave to Robert Anderson. By this time Grainger was well connected in literary London, and it was he who introduced Percy to Samuel Johnson (who had published his *Dictionary* in 1755) and later to Oliver Goldsmith (still a virtually unknown hack).[31] Grainger himself was ambitious of literary fame: one of his earliest letters to Percy has a seal showing a hand holding a quill and the Latin motto 'Penna perennis erit' ('The pen shall be eternal').[32] Eighteenth-century medical men often were, or at least aspired to be, gentlemen of wide general culture as well as practitioners of a specific scientific discipline: Sir Richard Blackmore (c. 1655–1729), Sir Samuel Garth (1661–1719), John Armstrong (c. 1709–79), Mark Akenside (1721–70) and Grainger's friend Goldsmith were only some of the medical practitioners who acquired a reputation as poets. The double rôle of Apollo as god of medicine and poetry was something of a cliché: an anonymous contemporary versifier, for example, hailed Akenside as 'Twofold Disciple of APOLLO!'[33] Grainger was preparing for the press a translation of the poems of Tibullus, a Roman poet of the first century BC, which he had begun while still in the army, and he discussed this in detail in his correspondence with Percy, who made many suggestions and supplied parts of the translation as it finally appeared. The two of them also began work on a collaborative translation of the *Epistolae Heroidum* ('Letters of Heroines') of Ovid, a classical poet more popular in the eighteenth century than Tibullus; this was never finished, possibly because of the appearance of another translation of the same work.[34]

Although dated 1759 on the title-pages, the Tibullus translation appeared towards the end of 1758 and soon involved Grainger in a heated controversy with the novelist and critic Tobias Smollett (1721–71, another Scottish medical man), who was the editor of the *Critical Review*. The controversy is extremely revealing about attitudes to translation in the period, and some of the arguments about Grainger's choice of words, particularly the assumption (taken for granted by both Grainger and Smollett) that the correct language for poetry is the language of a London literary public are of interest in view of Grainger's somewhat ambivalent championship of the use of both 'terms of art' and Caribbean vocabulary in *The Sugar-Cane*. Similarly, Tibullus is not simply a love-poet; he –

and Grainger as his translator – is very concerned about the significance and importance of money in his society and about its effect on human relations. This concern is developed in the theme of the importance of commerce in *The Sugar-Cane.* Tibullus's rôle as a poet of husbandry and of cultivated landscape is also one which is central to Grainger's concerns in *The Sugar-Cane.* Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the translation is dedicated to John Bourryau, who may have paid for its publication; while in the notes and translation Grainger emphasises the importance of slavery in ancient Rome (rather more than is apparent in the original), the general effect is to suggest that contemporary slavery in the Caribbean is much less harsh than ancient Roman slavery. In spite of Smollett, Grainger's translation enjoyed some success, and continued to be reprinted into the twentieth century.[35]

Tutor and pupil were associated in another literary venture, for Grainger contributed 'The Cyclops of Euripides' to a collaborative translation from the French of *The Greek Theatre of Father Brumoy* edited (and mainly written by) his friend the novelist Charlotte Lennox, while Bourryau contributed the 'Discourse on the Cyclops of Euripides, and Theatrical Representations of the Satyric Kind.'[36] By the time this appeared in 1759, Grainger had decided on a major change in his life. Bourryau had reached the age of 21 in August 1758, and thus had control of his fortune. He now proposed to Grainger that 'as a strict Intimacy had long subsisted between us', he should accompany Bourryau on his travels for a period of four years, promising to settle on him in return an income of £200 a year for life. Although Grainger claimed 'my Business was exceeded by that of no young Physician in Town,' his income from his medical practice and his literary efforts was clearly not enough to enable him to resist the prospect of this annuity and 'the patronage of Noblem[en] of Interest, whose Good-will I may haply acquire abroad.'[37] Presumably what was intended was the conventional 'Grand Tour' of Europe, for which Grainger would have been excellently qualified as a travelling companion, but it was decided that first they should spend some time visiting Bourryau's Caribbean property, and by early April 1759 Grainger was on his way to St Kitts.[38] He 'arrived there 6 weeks from England, after a tolerable good passage'[39], probably about the end of May or early June. While there were other persons of the name of Grainger or Granger in St Kitts in the eighteenth century, there is nothing to

indicate that there was any family connection or that Grainger himself was even aware of this, far less that it in any way influenced his decision to accompany Bourryau.[40]

Percy heard nothing directly from him for over a year, but eventually received a letter Grainger had written from St Kitts, 1 June 1760, informing him that he was now 'a settled physician in St Christopher w[i]t[h] a family.' On the voyage out, he was asked to go to another ship in the fleet to attend a widow who was suffering from smallpox, and found himself attracted to one of her daughters. Shipboard romance led to an engagement, and they got married sometime after they arrived in St Kitts. Grainger's wife was Daniel Mathew Burt, whose masculine-sounding Christian names were those of prominent Caribbean families to whom she was related. She was almost certainly the 'Mathew dau. of [...] Pym and Louisa Burt' whose baptism was recorded at St Anne's, Sandy Point, St Kitts, sometime in August 1738, which would make her about ten years or more younger than her husband (though baptisms in the Caribbean at this period did not always take place soon after birth, and could occur up to several years later). Her father William Pym Burt (died 1750) had been Chief Justice of St Kitts, and her paternal grandfather William Burt (died 1707) had been President of Nevis. Her mother's father Sir William Mathew (died 1704) had briefly been Governor of the Leeward Islands, while her mother's brother, another William Mathew, had held the same office for more than 20 years at his death in 1752. Her brother, William Mathew Burt, had been a member of the St Kitts Council and later became a member of the British Parliament (for Great Marlow, 1761) and Governor of the Leewards (1776–81). Her older sister Penelope was married to James Verchild, President of St Kitts (1759–69) and later Governor of the Leewards (1766–8). Not surprisingly, as she 'was of the first family in these Islands', Grainger assumed that 'She must be provided for as a Gentlewoman; I was accordingly Easy on that Head.'[41] However, it is possible that Grainger at first hoped she was wealthier than she turned out to be: when her brother later suggested that Grainger was an unsuitable match, apparently implying that he had been a fortune-hunter, he retorted (perhaps protesting a little too much) that 'Her fortune could be no temptation. A Doctor of Physic who had 200*l.* a-year, independent of practice, could never be tempted by the paltry consideration of 1000*l.* currency, and three or four negroes.'[42]

Nevertheless, although Grainger had been, as he himself admitted to Percy, 'a medical Traveller w[i]t[h] a Mistress in every place,' he does seem to have become not just 'a settled Physician' but also a family man who was genuinely devoted to his wife, and later to his daughters.[43]

Grainger began to look for medical work in St Kitts, having dissolved his arrangement with Bourryau. The parting was apparently amicable, although Johnson and others were to suggest there was a quarrel – Grainger and his family certainly remained on good terms with Charles Spooner, who was John Bourryau's uncle as well as being married to Grainger's wife's sister Mary, and when Bourryau died in 1769 he left £1,000 to Grainger's daughter Louisa.[44] Soon after his arrival Grainger wrote to Bourryau's brother-in-law, who reported to Percy that 'I find the D^r^. picks up the pistoles very fast'[45] and about a year later he claimed that he could make £1,000 a year 'by Business', i.e. from his professional services and the fact that, 'as I must keep Drugs for my own practice,' he could also expect to make a profit from the sale of medicines. He expressed the hope of many British adventurers who went out to the Caribbean in the period: 'I therefore may reasonably expect to be able to return in a few Years w[i]t[h] an easy fortune to London.'[46] He had married into the group his contemporaries referred to as the Creoles, and modern historians call the plantocracy, that is, the local elite of European descent whose wealth and position was dependent on the ownership of plantations and of the slaves of African origin or descent who cultivated the land in sugar-cane and processed the cane into sugar for export to Britain. With an area of 68 square miles, St Kitts was one of the smaller British colonies in the Caribbean. In 1756 it was reported to have 21,891 slaves and 2,713 white inhabitants. On the other hand, its cane-lands had a reputation for exceptional fertility; the later eighteenth-century Caribbean historian Bryan Edwards described the dark grey loam found in much of the island as a soil 'more especially suited to the production of sugar than any other in the West Indies' and claimed that average production there was 'nearly two hogsheads of sixteen cwt. *per* acre for the whole of the land in ripe canes [...] a prodigious return, not equalled I imagine by any other sugar country in any part of the globe.' The years of Grainger's residence in the island were not only years of comparatively high production, but also of good prices for sugar on the London market, which could be

twice as much as they had been in the 1720s and 1730s (though not as high as they reached later in the century).[47] Grainger was not only connected by family ties to the slave-based economy of St Kitts, but directly dependent on it for his income. His wife's cousin, Daniel Mathew, and some of his other relatives by marriage employed him to look after the slaves on their estates. The Rev. James Ramsay, who lived in St Kitts from 1762 to 1781, noted that 'A surgeon is generally employed by the year to attend the sick slaves. His allowance per head varies from fourteen pence to three shillings; in a few instances it rises to three shillings and sixpence sterling, besides being paid for amputations.' Grainger could also have expected to earn fees from attendance on white patients. However, these too, and things like the payment of £189–16–6 Grainger received in 1765 'for his attendance on the sick and wounded prisoners in the gaol' were indirectly dependent on the slave economy.[48] Some Caribbean doctors of the period were wealthy: the will of Dr George Crump, who died in Antigua in 1761, disposed of two plantations and legacies of several thousand pounds in money (though he was well connected and some of this may have been inherited). By contrast, Dr Thomas Fraser, who died in Antigua the same year, appears to have enjoyed a rather more modest prosperity.[49] However, Grainger gave great care to the exercise of his profession. The *Essay on the more common West-India Diseases* which he published in 1764 was the first work from the English-speaking Caribbean specifically devoted to the diseases and treatment of slaves. Dr William Wright, who had known Grainger personally in the Caribbean and who was himself an eminent physician, praised the *Essay*, saying that not only owners and managers of slaves, but also 'the Physicians and Surgeons profited much by it; both in the knowlege [sic] of diseases, and the virtues of many native plants in the Westindies [sic].' Wright also claimed that Grainger 'was in great repute' as a physician in St Kitts, and that 'He was often called, to Patients in the neighbouring Islands, and consulted by letter, for other Patients in distant West India Islands.'[50] Grainger's hopes of making a fortune were therefore not unrealistic.

However, his ambitions were not only financial. Little over a year after his arrival in St Kitts, he was writing to Percy that 'This Island affords a great fund of new poetical Images, which I am storing up in my mind to produce on a proper Occasion'.[51] The reference in

The Sugar-Cane (II, 174–7) to General James Wolfe appears to have been written before news of his death at the capture of Quebec (13 September 1759) reached St Kitts[52], and suggests that Grainger must have begun work on the poem very soon after he settled in the island. In June 1762, Grainger wrote to Percy that he had 'completed it, at least for the present, though no less than a Georgic, and in four books too [...] I now send you the whole; only as I have seen no hurricane, and have not yet had time to arrange my remarks on a fire by night in a cane field, those parts in the second book are incomplete.' He talked of publishing it by subscription 'on the finest paper,' with engravings.[53] The next month he sent Percy 'some Additions', mentioning that he had 'made many verbal Corrections of the whole' which he was not sending until he had received Percy's opinion of the earlier version, and that 'The preface, Arguments to each Book, & Dedication are also finished'.[54] In September 1762 Grainger was ill, and wrote a note in a copy of the poem requesting that, if he died, his nephews should transcribe it and send the fair copy to Percy. Grainger lived, and presumably the transcript was never made, but the copy itself eventually ended up in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. The only surviving manuscript of the poem, this is, as a cataloguer describes it, a 'foul copy, much corrected' but it clearly represents an intermediate stage between the version Grainger sent Percy in June 1762 and that finally published. It includes a version of the hurricane passage in Book II, and one of the cane-fire, not in Book II, where Grainger had originally thought of placing it, but in Book III, as in the published version. Long sections are substantially the same as the version eventually published, though there are numerous minor variations, and some significant differences in structure. For example, the Montano episode was in Book II rather than Book I, and the Junio and Theana episode is at the end of the volume, though there is a note (f. 42^{v}) suggesting it should be placed in Book I (rather than at the end of Book II). There is a dedication to the Earl of Bute, a fellow-Scot who was then prime minister; by the time the poem was published Bute had been out of office for a year, and it appeared without a dedication. There is comparatively little in the way of the annotation which is so prominent a feature of the published poem.[55]

In April 1763 Grainger wrote to Percy that 'I have now completed the Cane Piece, such as I could wish it to appear; but I shall

not transcribe either my corrections or additions for England without first hearing from you.' He complained that he had heard nothing from Percy for more than fourteen months and was particularly disappointed to have had no response to the poem. On the other hand, he must have had some favourable comments from his friend the poet and landscape gardener William Shenstone (1714–63), for the 'Advertisement' to Book II of *The Sugar-Cane* says that Book was 'originally addressed to' Shenstone, 'and by him approved of'. Shenstone had died 11 February 1763, a fact of which Grainger was still unaware in April. On the other hand, the Seven Years' War was now over, and the terms of the peace (concluded by the Treaty of Paris, 10 February 1763) were known in the Caribbean. Grainger mentioned that 'Mr. Bourryau has bought a vast estate in Grenada' and that 'many of my friends have purchased large plantations' there. He himself hoped to be able to buy land either in Grenada or in one of the other Caribbean islands, such as St Vincent, which had been ceded to Britain by the Peace, but was handicapped by a shortage of ready cash, having 'converted all my money into negroes.'[56] The purchase of slaves who were then hired out for the benefit of the owner was popular with small investors. It is possible that they were domestics or artisans, but Grainger's ambition to be a planter makes it likely that they were agricultural labourers whom he would have hoped to use on a plantation of his own eventually, and that he had bought or built up what was known as a 'jobbing gang' of slaves who would be hired out to plantations which needed additional labour on an occasional basis, particularly in crop-time. As it was in the interest of the hirer to get as much work out of hired slaves as possible, while reducing the burden on the slaves he owned himself, the members of jobbing gangs had a notoriously hard life.

Around September or October 1763, Grainger left St Kitts for the British Isles. At the end of November, he wrote to Percy from London to say that he had just arrived from Scotland, where he 'had been on family business for some weeks.' He mentioned he had brought 'a corrected copy' of *The Sugar-Cane* 'which received the approbation of Lord Kames', the well-known Scottish judge and philosophical author who had a special interest in agricultural matters and whose *Elements of Criticism* had been published in 1762. Grainger told Percy, 'My time is short, and yet I must see you.'[57] He went to Easton Mauduit in Northamptonshire, where

Percy was vicar, travelling in some style: Percy noted on 16 December 1763, 'D^{r}. Grainger came this ev[enin]g in a Post Chaise, w[i]th his Mulatto servant'. The next day Percy recorded that 'The D^{r}. & I began to read over & correct the D^{r}.'s Poem the Sugar-Cane. Lib. 1' (i.e. the first Book). The following day was Sunday, and Percy was busy with his clerical duties, but they read Book II on the Monday. They spent Tuesday with friends, but on the Wednesday and Thursday they read the third and fourth Books of the poem. After that, the rest of the visit seems to have been given to relaxation and seeing friends. Percy went fox-hunting on 23 December, and the next day Grainger read to him William Somervile's *The Chace*, a popular poem on hunting first published in 1735. Grainger was 'not well' on Christmas Day, but seems to have recovered quickly, and he returned to London on 30 December.[58]

He wrote to Percy three weeks later from Sonning in Berkshire (not far from London), where he was staying with Charles Spooner. He said 'I am come to no absolute determination with regard to "The Sugar Cane." I will not, however, risque its publication at my own expense.' He suggested Percy might mention it to Jacob Tonson (d. 1767) a well-known publisher of the day, and also said 'Sam Johnson has got the second book, but whether he has yet perused it I know not; perhaps it may lie in his desk untouched till I call for it.' He was missing his family, and said that at Spooner's 'we talk of scarce any thing else but dear St Christopher.'[59] While his 'family business' in Scotland seems to have been a major reason for Grainger's visit to Europe, it is unclear what was now keeping him in England past his originally intended departure, unless it was that he was anxious to see *The Sugar-Cane* in print.[60] He visited Percy again in Northamptonshire on 21 February and stayed until 17 March. He inoculated Percy's two daughters against smallpox, and Percy later recalled that 'During this or his former Visit he wrote his Ballad of Bryan and Pereene' – apparently at Percy's request – to be inserted in what became the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, the collection which made Percy famous as a student of traditional ballad literature.[61]

A week after his return to London, he wrote to Percy, indicating that *The Sugar-Cane* was then in the process of being printed. It was described on the title-page as 'Printed for R. and J. Dodsley' and Grainger must by now have come to an agreement with James

Dodsley, who had taken over the publishing business from his brother Robert in 1759. The details are unknown, though Grainger's letter to Percy suggests that he had agreed to pay for 300 copies for his own use.[62] It was presumably sometime in this period between about November and March that there occurred the well-known incident recorded by Boswell, when *The Sugar-Cane* was 'read in manuscript at Sir Joshua Reynolds's' (see Appendix I). While Grainger had a substantial library in St Kitts[63], he may also have used this time and the libraries of friends and acquaintances to work up some of the more obscure information included in the footnotes to the poem.

The printing was going 'slowly' when Grainger wrote to Percy again at the beginning of April, though 'Sam Johnson says he will review it in the Critical.' At the end of the month Grainger was busy getting ready to return to the Caribbean, but on 14 May he was still at Southampton, detained by unfavourable winds and miserable at still being away from his family. He told Percy 'The Sugar Cane is printed, but when it will be published, I know not.' In May 1764, the leading London printer, William Strahan (1715–85 – another Scot) charged James Dodsley £20 18s. for printing 750 copies of *The Sugar-Cane*, and another £2 14s for 'Extra Corrections in D[itt]o throughout', which suggests that one reason for the slowness of the printing had been that Grainger kept making last-minute alterations. The *Gentleman's Magazine* for June 1764 included it in the 'List of Books lately published' and in its next issue printed the whole of the Junio and Theana episode.[64]

By this point, Grainger would have been well on his way back to the Caribbean. He found his family well but 'the person to whom I had intrusted the management of my little Concerns had wholy [sic] neglected them so that instead of having Money to receive, I found myself greatly behind hand.' His wife became seriously ill, and soon after she began to recover, he heard that his brother had died in Scotland.[65] He wrote to Percy over the next several months, asking how *The Sugar-Cane* had been received in England, and full of enthusiasm for the idea of buying a plantation in St Vincent or one of the other 'neutral islands' (St Vincent, Dominica, St Lucia and Tobago) which had been ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Paris, and where land could now be bought from the British government on easy terms. He thought of selling the property his brother had left him in Scotland in order to buy land in St Vincent,

convinced it would be a lucrative venture: 'I have got a good number of fine young negroes, and, as I am well acquainted with West India agriculture, I cannot help thinking it will be worth my while to sacrifice a few more years in this climate, to the leaving behind me of a little fortune of four or five hundred a-year to my family.'[66] By the end of the year or early in 1766, he had changed his mind and was now 'perswaded the *first* Adventurers there, will *all* be ruined.' He was worrying about money, and uncertain whether to stay in St Kitts or return to England: 'What my Brother left me is not sufficient to maintain my Family w[i]t[h]out Business; & I do not know, how far I should be able to get into any, should I again make London the place of my Aboad. It is certain I can not only live here but also save some small matter yearly by my profession. But then I am lost, murdered for want of Company, & w[i]t[h] all my Sweat, I never can expect to make an independent fortune by physic.'[67]

Almost a year after that, he wrote to Percy again, apparently much happier and more settled. He grumbled that the *Annual Register* had not mentioned *The Sugar-Cane*, but he was pleased to have heard from a friend in Edinburgh that it had 'been greatly applauded at Paris by the authors of the *Gazette Litteraire de l'Europe*.' He reported 'I have at last got into a house of my own, and I now write to you in a library thirty-six feet long and twenty wide. It is at the end of a very pretty garden, and commands a complete prospect of the bay and beautiful vale of Basseterre, which is, at this moment, more verdant than any English meadow in the month of May. From this you will easily conclude that I mean to remain some years longer in the torrid zone.'[68] Whatever Grainger might have hoped to accomplish in that library – the composition of a West Indian epic would have been a logical progression from *The Sugar-Cane* – was never to be, as he died before the month was out.

Grainger's widow mentioned a portrait of him in a letter to Percy in 1771, though it was not in her possession. Percy did not remember this in 1800 when Robert Anderson was trying to trace a portrait in order to have it engraved for his proposed edition of Grainger's works, and the portrait would appear to be now lost, or at least no longer identifiable. An anonymous attack on Mrs Grainger in 1773 described her late husband as 'a man of modesty and reserve', suggesting that he was shy in company until drink

loosened his tongue: 'his friends were indebted to the inspiring juice of the grape to make him throw off the *mauvais* [sic] *honte* so prejudicial to his own merit; for, when warmed with the enlivening juice of the true Falernian, in spite of a broad provincial dialect, he was extremely pleasing in his conversation.' It went on to say, 'He was tall, and of a lathy make; plain featured, and deeply marked with the small pox; his eyes were quiet and keen; his temper generous and good-natured; and he was an able man in the knowledge of his profession.' From personal acquaintance, however, William Cuming insisted that this could not have been written by any one who actually knew Grainger, as 'Dr Grainger was not deeply markt with the small pox, Dr G. had none of that *mauvaise honte*, that required a degree of Intoxication to call forth his powers; he had no broad provincial Dialect when I knew him [...]'[69] Of his general character, 'Johnson said, that Dr. Grainger was an agreeable man; a man who would do any good that was in his power.'[70]

2. *'West-India georgic' – imitation and innovation in* The Sugar-Cane.

> A perfect Judge will *read* each Work of Wit
> With the same Spirit that its Author *writ*,
> [...]
> In ev'ry Work regard the *Writer's End*,
> Since none can compass more than they *Intend*;
> And if the *Means* be just, the *Conduct* true,
> Applause, in spite of trivial Faults, is due.
> (Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, ll. 233–4, 255–8)

Grainger began the Preface to the published version of his poem with the statement that 'Soon after my arrival in the West-Indies, I conceived the design of writing a poem on the cultivation of the Sugar-Cane.' This may have been prompted to a greater or lesser extent by his desire for literary fame, or hints from previous writers. On the title-page of his MD dissertation he had quoted from the *Syphilis* of Girolamo Fracastoro (?1478–1553), one of the most famous Latin poems of the Renaissance, which includes myths set in the Caribbean and an idealised account of Columbus's first voyage.[71] In *The Seasons* (final version published 1746), one of the

most popular poems of the eighteenth century, James Thomson (another Scot) had described the natural riches of the tropics and hymned the praises of British commerce.[72] Grainger had reviewed John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757), whose similar encomiums on trade include passing references to 'the Caribee isles, whose dulcet canes/Equal the honey-comb' and 'Those sea-wrapt gardens of the dulcet reed,/Bahama and Caribee'.[73] There was a significant quantity of earlier poetry written in the Anglophone Caribbean or by writers of Caribbean origin, but while Grainger seems unaware of this, there is in fact no earlier poem comparable to his own in scale or aspirations. The most substantial earlier effort is that of Nathaniel Weekes, a Barbadian by birth, but in the 1006 lines of his *Barbados: A Poem* (1754), Weekes devotes only a little over a hundred lines to the sugar industry.

Grainger told Percy that what was to become *The Sugar-Cane* 'was composed mostly in my rides to the different parts of the island to visit my patients'. Some aspects of the poem are simply the result of observing what was around him with a keen eye. In these we may include the descriptions of the St Kitts landscape and its flora and fauna. He mentions a wide range of plants, nearly all of them recognisable and identifiable in terms of modern scientific nomenclature, while a twentieth-century entomologist who made a special study of Grainger's references to insects and helminth parasites of man was led to describe him as 'a sane, careful observer.'[74] However, personal observation was certainly followed (or perhaps preceded) by library research. He refers in his Preface and notes to a number of well-known writers on the Caribbean and the wider Americas, and he almost certainly examined others he neglected to name. For example, he probably consulted not only Hans Sloane's *A Voyage to the Islands [...]* with its bulky and heavily illustrated account of the natural history of Jamaica in English, but also the same author's much shorter preliminary *Catalogus Plantarum* in Latin, which gives much more in the way of both Latin synonyms and common names, and more extensive references to other authors, although the actual descriptions of the plants are considerably briefer. He never mentions Griffith Hughes's *Natural History of Barbados*, but a few of the details in his notes may have been lifted from this source (see notes in this work, e.g. on I, 132–3, n.).

In his Preface, Grainger went on to say that his 'inducements' to the 'arduous undertaking' of composing such a poem 'were, not

only the importance and novelty of the subject, but more especially this consideration; that, as the face of this country was wholly different from that of Europe, so whatever hand copied its appearances, however rude, could not fail to enrich poetry with many new and picturesque images.' Immediately afterwards, he emphasised that 'the precepts contained in this Poem' were 'the result of Experience, not the productions of Fancy.' Accordingly, 'though I may not be able to please, I shall stand some chance of instructing the Reader; which, as it is the nobler end of all poetry, so should it be the principal aim of every writer who wishes to be thought a good man.' He later refers to both 'pleasure and profit', though there seems to be more emphasis on the practical, such as the way he concludes the Preface by referring to his 'mention of many indigenous remedies'. Indeed, in a draft of the Preface he described the poem as 'principally intended for Instruction' (*TCD*, f. 103^{v}). However, we should also look at other indications of what Grainger thought he was doing.

His claims for his work begin on the title-page, with the Latin epigraph:

> Agredior primusque novis Helicona movere
> Cantibus, et viridi nutantes vertice sylvas;
> Hospita sacra ferens, nulli memorata priorum.

Chosen from the *Astronomica*, a lengthy poem on astrology and the appearance of the heavens composed early in the 1st century AD by the Roman poet Marcus Manilius, this may be translated: '... and I am the first to attempt to stir with new songs Helicon and its green-topped, nodding woods, bringing strange mysteries, proclaimed by none before me.' Taken at face value, this assertion of what he goes on to refer to in his Preface as the 'novelty of the subject' is bold enough, but it will repay closer attention. The word *sylva* normally means a wood or forest, and is unquestionably used here in this sense by Manilius, but it can also mean vegetation in general (compare for example Virgil, *G*, I, 152–3, where it is used with reference to burs and thistles). It is at least possible that Grainger, and some of his readers, saw in the *viridi nutantes vertice sylvas* not just the woods of Manilius, but a field of canes waving in the breeze, an interpretation reinforced by the picture of a cane-plant on the frontispiece opposite the title-page. Grainger is not

only going to 'stir' Helicon (the mountain in Bœotia sacred to Apollo and the Muses in classical mythology) with his 'new songs,' his poem on a new subject, he is going to clothe it in cane-fields instead of pine-woods: the choice of quotation stresses Grainger's claim in the Preface for the 'importance' as well as the 'novelty' of his subject, and the belief on which the whole poem is based, that the cultivation of the sugar cane is a dignified and suitable subject for poetry.

In the Latin, the word *et* ('and') both connects and separates Helicon and its woods. Grainger's use of the quotation may have the further implication, which is also present in his Preface, that he hoped to appeal not only to a British literary public, but also to readers in the West Indies.

Both the novelty and the importance of his subject are given further emphasis by the final line, where Grainger applies to himself Manilius' claim that he is 'bringing strange mysteries, proclaimed by none before me.' The 'strange mysteries' are 'strange' in the sense of 'foreign, exotic' to a British literary public because they have never had a poem written about them before – indeed, as Grainger points out, little of any kind had been written on the subject. They might even be 'strange' in the sense of the term which Grainger applies in his Preface to the 'appearances' of 'this country' (by which he means the West Indies in general and St. Kitts in particular); the 'strange mysteries' are perhaps 'rude,' that is, 'rough, coarse, unpolished' (in Bailey's definition), perhaps even barbarous. But what are they? Grainger can only be applying the phrase to what his entire poem is describing, the different processes involved in the cultivation of the cane-plant and the production of sugar. These processes would indeed have been 'strange' in many senses of the word to most of the readership Grainger is addressing, but he calls them *sacra* – not mysteries in the sense of the secrets of a craft, though something of this is involved, but 'sacred things' – using a word which has the connotation of religious rites.

The choice of Manilius for the epigraph itself has programmatic implications. In the first place, it is an ostentatious indication of Grainger's view of himself as a learned poet. Although Manilius had been given a comparatively recent edition (1739) by the illustrious English classical scholar Richard Bentley, he was never as widely read as more famous Latin authors such as Virgil, Horace or Ovid. Nor, in fact, is there any need to suppose that even Grainger had

read all of the *Astronomica* – the quotation comes from the very beginning of the poem.[75]

We may contrast the ending of Book I of Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination* (ed. Dix, pp. 108–9):

> Genius of ancient Greece! whose faithful steps
> Well-pleas'd I follow thro' the sacred paths
> Of nature and of science; nurse divine
> Of all heroic deeds and fair desires!

Akenside claims to be content to follow, but while Grainger has his *Vos sequor* ... in the Preface, and talks about following Virgil at a distance (II, 132–3), he also expresses the hope that he may transcend his classical models (I, 77–83). Akenside intends to 'tune to Attic themes the British lyre' but Grainger hopes that the 'new songs' he refers to in his quotation from Manilius will achieve rather more than that. Grainger does sometimes go in for conventional modesty – e.g. 'My imperfect strain' (II, 451); 'my weak song' (III, 591) – and he may wonder if he has achieved what he set out to do and seem anxious in his letters for the approbation of his friends, but there is no doubt that he is aiming high.[76]

The other important indicator of what Grainger thinks he is doing is his reference in the Preface to his poem as a 'West-India georgic.' In other words, he is attempting a work within a tradition of didactic poetry on agricultural and rural subjects which goes back to the classical period of European civilisation – he explicitly cites Hesiod and Virgil among his models – and which had achieved a renewed popularity in eighteenth-century Britain with works such as John Philips's *Cyder* (1708), William Somervile's *The Chace* (1735), Christopher Smart's *The Hop-Garden* (1752) John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757) and, of course, James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730), all of which Grainger refers to.[77] As with the other modern writers of this type of poetry, Grainger's main model is Virgil, and he says in a draft of his Preface (*TCD*, f. 104^{r}) that 'If the good naturd Reader shall discover any thing praiseworthy in this poem, it must be ascribed to my having studied Virgil with some Attention.'

The literary culture of eighteenth-century Britain (and Europe in general) set a very high value on Virgil. Akenside, whose *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744) was a didactic poem of a very