

About this Edition

The text presented here fundamentally consists of a diplomatic transcription of the 1790 edition of *LOTP*. Passages added in later editions are integrated into this text and signalled by braces (curly brackets) and a sans-serif font. Other substantive variants among the authoritative lifetime editions (1789, 1790, 1791, 1794, and 1799) are listed in textual notes presented in the form of endnotes to each section.

The digitally photographed page images are of the copy of 1790 (call number D775) held in The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University.

1790 was chosen as the base text for two main reasons. First, suitably for the aim of this edition to present *LOTP* as a separate text, 1790 is among the versions of *LOTP* published before the companion volume, *The Botanic Garden, Part I: The Economy of Vegetation*, appeared in 1792 (dated 1791; see King-Hele, *Life* pp. 252–53). Secondly, the majority of the revisions ED made to *LOTP* occur between 1789 and 1790, and these revisions involve some rearrangement. The fact that ED sold the copyright of *LOTP* in February 1790, after initially telling Johnson that he wished to keep the copyright so that he could alter the text in future editions (King-Hele, *Letters* 84–10, p. 235, 236n.), suggests that ED expected the 1790 edition to be substantively final. From 1790 on, apart from some occasional, slight changes in diction, revisions are cumulative: in each of those editions, ED made a small number of additions to the verse and the notes.¹ Thus, 1790 allows readers to see *LOTP* as it was published on its own, in a more or less fully realized shape, with the later additions easily inserted.

All transcriptions, of main text, variants, and supplementary materials, have been done by human eye and hand. The diplomatic transcription of *LOTP* attempts to approximate layout and type sizes as much as practically possible. It retains page breaks; prose is presented as continuous text instead of retaining line breaks; layout in columns is not retained. Repeated quotation marks at the beginning of each line of a quotation are retained for verse but not for prose. The long “s” is modernized, spaces before punctuation are omitted, and catchwords at the bottom of pages are also omitted. The only corrections made are of small and obvious typographical errors, indicated by square brackets. Where a variant furnishes the correction, this is indicated in a textual note.

The editor’s endnotes to each section of *LOTP* consist of textual notes in serif font and explanatory notes in sans-serif font. Textual notes give variants in quotation marks. In the explanatory notes, botanical terms are only addressed if they are not covered in Appendix 2: Aids to Botanical Understanding. Explanatory notes are repeated for each occurrence of the item to be explained, unless it recurs on the same page of the original text. Occasionally the content of a repeated note is altered according to context. Most definitions in the explanatory notes are adapted from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and biographies are adapted from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Biblical quotations are taken from the King James Version.

The transcriptions and notes in the Appendices follow the same principles and methods, except that the transcriptions do not aim to reflect the layout and type of the originals to the same extent.

The first critical edition of *The Botanic Garden*, edited by Adam Komisaruk and Allison Dushane (The Pickering Masters Series, Routledge, 2017), came out several years into the work on this edition, which has received inspiration and benefit from that previous edition, especially from the scholarly rigor of its explanatory and textual notes. This *Romantic Circles* edition tries to live up to their impressive example while offering an alternative approach. Komisaruk and Dushane follow the principles of a traditional eclectic copy-text edition, giving priority to the author's intentions for the first edition. Thus, they choose *LOTP* 1789 and *The Economy of Vegetation* 1791 as copy texts and present later variants in separate textual notes. This *Romantic Circles* edition gives a different version on different principles, being based on *LOTP* 1790 and integrating later variants into the reading text. It also places *LOTP* in a different light by presenting it independently. Komisaruk and Dushane's edition, and indeed all of the reprintings save the one published by Woodstock Books in 1991, present *LOTP* as part of *The Botanic Garden*. Considering *LOTP* separately reflects the initial period of reception when *LOTP* was the only published volume of what became known as Darwinian poetry. It also allows for a focus on botany, sexuality, and aesthetics, particular concerns of *LOTP* which are often overshadowed by the broader scope and assumedly greater seriousness of science, industry and politics in *The Economy of Vegetation*. Being an electronic edition, freedom from the constraints of print as to layout and space affords advantages in representing the text itself and including additional materials to illuminate the work and its contexts. The digital medium makes it possible not only to reflect original layout, including page breaks, in the transcription, but also to provide a full facsimile of *LOTP* 1790, plus variant illustrations, all in high-resolution, enlargeable digital images. The inclusion of facsimiles is motivated by the aesthetic value and interpretive significance of the illustrations, and even of the typesetting, which beautifully and skilfully balances ED's verse and notes, visualizing the formal hybridity of the text and its essential interplay of imagination and science. Finally, this electronic edition attempts to make *LOTP* freely accessible, through its contextualizing introduction, explanatory notes, and supplementary materials, aimed to assist students, curious readers, and academic specialists alike in fully appreciating this challenging but once widely popular text.

¹ For an overview of ED's revision process, see Introduction: Composition.