

«Review of Boyd, A Translation of the *Inferno* of Dante»
JOHN GILLIES, 1785.

The Monthly Review, 73, 425–27.

We cannot say much in praise of this work, but that the translation of Dante is in general faithful, and renders pretty correctly the sense of a very difficult writer. A too rigorous attention to this object, has, perhaps, prevented Mr. Boyd from smoothing his verses, and giving to his poetry that easy flow, of which some passages, written con amore, prove that he is not altogether incapable. As a specimen, we shall select the story of Paulo and Fancesca, which closes the fifth Canto:

This mangled form was fated to inspire
The gentle PAULO'S breast with am'rous fire.
From his to mine the soft infection spread.
Too soon with his my guilty wish combin'd,
Wretch that I was! who shar'd his brother's bed! [...]

The translator's language is often obscure, sometimes ungrammatical. His poetry wants animation; and, instead of shading or mending the faults of Dante (which were those of his age), he renders them more conspicuous, and more displeasing. But he has attempted a task, in which it was difficult to escape censure, and scarcely possible to merit commendation.

Mr. Boyd's life of Dante, and his historical Essay on the state of Florence in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, contain many interesting particulars, which may be read with pleasure.