

O C E A N.

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O D E.

O C C A S I O N ' D
By His MAJESTY's late Royal ENCOUR-
RAGEMENT of the SEA-SERVICE.

To which is prefix'd,
An ODE to the KING: And a DISCOURSE
ON ODE.

By the AUTHOR of the UNIVERSAL
PASSION.



L O N D O N :
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O N

Lyrick P O E T R Y.



O W imperfect soever my own Composition may be, yet am I willing to speak a word or two, of the Nature of *Lyrick* Poetry; to shew that I have, at least, some Idea of Perfection in that kind of Poem in which I am engaged; and that I do not think my self *Poet* enough entirely to rely on *Inspiration* for my Success in it.

To our having, or not having this *Idea of Perfection* in the Poem we undertake, is chiefly owing the Merit, or Demerit of our Performances, as also the Modesty, or Vanity of our Opinions concerning them.

• And

And in speaking of it: I shall show how it unavoidably comes to pass, that *bad Poets*; that is *Poets in general*, are esteem'd, and really *are* the most *vain*, the most *writable*, and most *ridiculous* Set of men upon earth. But Poetry in its own nature is certainly

Non hoc quæsitum munus in usus. VIRG.

He that has an *Idea of Perfection* in the Work he undertakes *may* fail in it; he that has not, *must*: And yet he will be *vain*. For every little degree of Beauty, how *short*, or *improper* soever, will be look'd on fondly by him; because it is all pure gains, and more than he promis'd to himself; and because he has no *Test*, or *Standard* in his Judgment, with which to chastise his opinion of it.

Now this *Idea of Perfection* is, in Poetry more refin'd, than in other kinds of writing;

ting ; and because more refin'd, therefore more difficult ; and because more difficult, therefore more rarely attain'd ; and the non-attainment of it, is, (as I have said) the Source of our Vanity. Hence the Poetick Clan are more *obnoxious to vanity* than Others. And from Vanity consequentially flows that great sensibility of disrespect, that *quick resentment*, that tinder of the Mind that kindles at every spark, and justly marks them out for the *Genus Irritabile* among mankind. And from this combustible temper, this serious anger for no very serious Things, Things look'd on by most as foreign to the Important Points of Life, as consequentially flows that Inheritance of *Ridicule*, which devolves on them, from Generation to Generation. As soon as they become Authors, they become like *Ben. Johnson's* angry Boy, and learn the Art of Quarrel.

— *Concordes Animæ, dum nocte premuntur ;
 Heu ! quantum inter se bellum, si lumina vite
 Attigerint, quantas acies, stragemque ciebunt ?
 Qui Furænes ! quantas ostentant, aspice, vires.
 Ne, Pueri ! ne tanta animis assuescite bella.
 Tuque prior, Tu parce, genus qui ducis Olympo,
 Syderio flagrans clypeo, & celestibus armis,
 Projice tela manu, sanguis meus !
 Nec Te ulla facies, non terruit ipse Typhoeus
 Arduus, arma tenens ; non Te Messapus, & Ufens,
 Contemptorque Deum Mezentius.*

VIRG.

But to return. He that *has* this Idea of Perfection in the Work he undertakes, however successful he is, will yet be *modest* ; because to rise up to that Idea, which he proposed for his model, is almost, if not absolutely, impossible.

These two Observations account for what may seem as strange, as it is infallibly

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true ;

true; I mean, they shew us why good writers have the lowest, and bad writers the highest opinion of their own performances. They who have only a *partial* Idea of this perfection, as their portion of Ignorance, or Knowledge of it, is greater or less, have proportionable degrees of Modesty, or Conceit.

Nor, (tho' natural good Understanding makes a tolerably just judgment in things of this nature,) will the *Reader* judge the worse, for forming to himself a notion of what he ought to expect from the Piece he has in hand, before he begins his perusal of it.

The *Ode*, as it is the Eldest kind of Poetry, so is it more Spirituous, and more remote from Prose than any other, in *Sense, Sound, Expression, and Conduct*. Its thoughts should be uncommon, sublime, and moral;
Its

Its numbers full, easy, and most harmonious; Its expression pure, strong, delicate, yet unaffected; and of a *curious felicity* beyond other Poems; Its conduct should be rapturous, somewhat abrupt, and immethodical to a vulgar Eye. That apparent order, and connection, which gives form, and life to *some* compositions, takes away the very Soul of *this*. Fire, elevation, and select thought, are indispensable; an humble, tame, and vulgar Ode is the most pitiful error a pen can commit.

Musa dedit Fidibus Divos, puerosque Deorum.

And as its *subjects* are sublime, its writer's genius should be so too; Otherwise it becomes the meanest thing in writing, (viz.) an *involuntary Burlesque*.

It is the genuine character, and true merit of the *Ode*, a little to startle some

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apprehensions. Men of cold Complexions are very apt to mistake a want of vigour in their Imaginations, for a Delicacy of taste in their Judgements; and, like persons of a tender sight, they look on bright objects in their natural lustre, as too glaring; what is most delightful to a stronger eye, is painful to them. Thus *Pindar*, who has as much Logick at the bottom, as *Aristotle*, or *Euclid*, to some Critics has appear'd as mad; and must appear so to all, who enjoy no portion of his own divine Spirit. Dwarf-understandings, measuring Others by their own standard, are apt to think they see a Monster, when they see a Man.

And indeed it seems to be the Amends which Nature makes to those whom she has not bless'd with an elevation of mind, to indulge them in the comfortable mistake, that all is wrong, which falls not within the

narrow

narrow limits of their own comprehensions, and relish.

Judgment, indeed, that masculine power of the mind, in *Ode*, as in all compositions, should bear the Supream Sway; and a beautiful *Imagination*, as its Mistress, should be subdued to its dominion. Hence, and hence only can proceed the fairest Offspring of the human mind.

But then in *Ode*, there is this difference from other kinds of Poetry; That, *there*, the *Imagination*, like a very beautiful Mistress, is indulged in the appearance of domineering; tho' the *Judgment*, like an Artful Lover, in reality carries its point; and the less it is suspected of it: It shews the more masterly conduct, and deserves the greater commendation.

It holds true in this Province of writing, as in war, "The more danger, the more
"honour."

“honour.” It must be very Enterprizing, it must (in *Shakespear’s* Style) have hair-breadth ’Scapes; and often tread the very brink of Error: Nor can It ever deserve the applause of the *real* Judge, unless It renders itself Obnoxious to the misapprehensions of the *Contrary*.

Such is *Cassimire’s* Strain among the Moderns, whose lively Wit, and happy Fire is an Honour to them. And *Buchanan* might justly be much admir’d, if any thing more than the Sweetness of his Numbers, and the purity of his Diction, was his own: His Original from which I have taken my Motto, thro’ all the Disadvantages of a northern, prose-translation, is still admirable; and *Cowley* says, as preferable in Beauty to *Buchanan*, as *Judea* is to *Scotland*.

Pindar, *Anacreon*, *Sapho*, and *Horace*, are the great Masters of *Lyric* poetry among
Heathen

Heathen writers. *Pindar's* muse, like *Sa-charissa*, is a stately, imperious, and accomplish'd Beauty; equally disdain- ing the use of Art, and the fear of any Rival; so intoxicating that it was the highest commendation that could be given an Antient, that he was not afraid to taste of her charms.

Pindarici fontis qui non expalluit haustus.

A danger which *Horace* declares he durst not run.

Anacreon's Muse is like *Amoret*, most Sweet, Natural, and Delicate; all over Flowers, Graces, and Charms; inspiring Complacency, not Awe; and she seems to have good nature enough to admit a Rival, which she cannot find.

Sapho's Muse like Lady ——— is passionately tender, and glowing; like Oyl set
on

on fire, she is *soft*, and *warm*, in excess. *Sappho* has left us a few fragments only; Time has swallow'd the rest; But that little which remains, like the remaining Jewel of *Cleopatra*, after the other was dissolv'd at her banquet, may be esteem'd (as was that Jewel) a sufficient Ornament for the Goddess of Beauty herself.

Horace's muse, (like One I shall not presume to name,) is Correct, Solid, and Moral; she joins all the Sweetness, and Majesty, all the Sense and the Fire of the *former*, in the justest proportions, and degrees; superadding a felicity of dress entirely her own. She moreover is distinguishable by this particularity, That she abounds in *hidden* graces, and *secret* charms, which none but the Discerning can discover; nor are any capable of doing full justice, in their opinion, to her Excellency's, without giving the World, at the same time,

time, an incontestable proof of refinement in their own understandings.

But after all, to the Honour of our own Country I must add, that I think Mr. Dryden's Ode on St. Cecilia's day inferior to no composition of this kind. Its chief beauty consists in adapting the numbers most happily to the variety of the Occasion; Those by which He has chosen to express Majesty, (Viz.)

Assumes the God,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the Spheres.

are chosen in the following Ode, because the Subject of it is Great.

For the more Harmony likewise, I chose the frequent return of Rhyme; which laid me under great Difficulties. But Difficulties

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overcome

overcome give Grace, and Pleasure. Nor can I account for the Pleasure of Rhyme in general, (of which the Moderns are too fond) but from this Truth.

But then the Writer must take care that the Difficulty is overcome. That is, He must make Rhyme consistent with a perfect *Sense*, and *Expression*, as could be expected, if He was free from that Shackle. Otherwise, it gives neither Grace to the Work, nor Pleasure to the Reader, nor, consequently, reputation to the Poet.

To sum the Whole. Ode should be *peculiar*, but not *strain'd*; *moral*, but not *flat*; *natural*, but not *obvious*; *delicate*, but not *affected*; *noble*, but not *ambitious*; *full*, but not *obscure*; *fiery*, but not *mad*; *thick*, but not *loaded* in its Numbers, which should be most *Harmonious*, without the least sacrifice of *expression*, or of *sense*. Above all, in
this,

this, as in every work of Genius, somewhat of an *Original Spirit* should be, at least, attempted; otherwise the *Poet*, whose Character disclaims *Mediocrity*, makes a *secondary* praise his ultimate ambition; which has something of a contradiction in it. *Originals* only have true Life, and differ as much from the best *Imitations*, as *Men* from the most animated *Pictures* of them. Nor is what I say at all inconsistent with a due deference for the great Standards of Antiquity; nay, that very deference is an argument for it, for doubtless their *Example* is on my side in this matter. And we should rather imitate their example in the general *motives*, and fundamental *methods* of their working, than in their *works* themselves. This is a distinction, I think, not hitherto made, and a distinction of consequence. For the *first*, may make us their Equals; the *second* must pronounce us their Inferiors even in our utmost Success.

But the *first* of these Prizes is not so readily taken by the *Moderns*; as Valuables too massy for easy carriage are not so liable to the *Theifs*.

The *Antients* had a particular regard to the choice of their *Subjects*; which were generally National, and Great. My Subject is, in its own nature, Noble; most proper for an *Englishman*; never more proper than on this Occasion; and (what is strange) hitherto unsung.

If I stand not absolutely condemn'd by my own *Rates*; If I have hit the Spirit of *Ode* in general; If I cannot think with Mr. *Cowley*, that *Musick alone, sometimes, makes an excellent Ode*,

Versus inopes rerum, nugaeque canore;

If there is any thought, enthusiasm, and picture, which are as the body, soul, and robe

robe of poetry ; in a word, If in any degree, I have provided rather *food* for *men*, than *air* for *Wits* ; I hope smaller faults will meet indulgence for the sake of the Design, which is the glory of my Country, and my King.

And indeed, this may be said, in general, That great Subjects are above being *nice* ; That Dignity, and Spirit ever suffer from scrupulous Exactness ; and That the *minuter* cares effeminate a Composition. Great masters of Poetry, Painting, and Statuary, in their nobler works, have even *affected* the contrary. And justly ; for a truly-masculine Air partakes more of the *negligent*, than of the *neat*, both in Writings, and in Life.

Grandis oratio haberet Majestatis suae pondus.

PETRON.

A poem, like a *criminal*, under too severe Correction, may lose all its spirit, and expire. We know it was *Faber imus*, that
was

was such an artist at a Hair, or a Nail. And we know the cause was

Quia potere totum

Nescius. ———

HOR.

to close, If a Piece of *this* nature wants an Apology, I must own, that those who have strength of mind sufficient profitably to devote the whole of their time to the *severer* Studies, I despair of imitating, I can only envy, and admire, The mind is reliev'd, and strengthen'd by Variety; and he that *sometimes* is sporting with his pen, is only taking the most effectual means of giving a *general* Importance to it. This truth is clear from the Knowledge of *human Nature*, and of *History*; from which I could cite very celebrated Instances, did I not fear, *That* by citing them, I should condemn my self, who am so little qualify'd to follow their example in its full extent.

O C E A N.