

Landesbibliothek Oldenburg

Digitalisierung von Drucken

Poems

Gray, Thomas

London, 1770

The Progress of Poesy a Pindaric Ode.

urn:nbn:de:gbv:45:1-1552

THE
PROGRESS of POESY.
A PINDARIC ODE.

Φανάσια συνέλοιπον ἔς
Δι τὸ πᾶν ἔγμνέων χαλίζεις.

PINDAR, Olymp. II.

D 2



A D V E R T I S E M E N T .

When the Author first published this and the following Ode, he was advised, even by his Friends, to subjoin some few explanatory Notes ; but had too much respect for the understanding of his Readers to take that liberty.





THE
PROGRESS of POESY.
A PINDARIC ODE

I. 1.

^h **A** WAKE, Æolian lyre, awake,
And give to rapture all thy trembling strings.

From Helicon's harmonious springs

A thousand rills their mazy progress take :

The

^a Awake, my glory: awake, lute and harp.

David's Psalms.

Pindar styles his own poetry with its musical accompaniments,
Αἰολικῆς μουσικῆς, Ἰαόλιδες, χορδαί, Αἰολίδων πνευαὶ αὐλῶν. Æolian song,
Æolian strings, the breath of the Æolian flute.

D 3

The



38 THE PROGRESS OF POESY.

The laughing flowers, that round them blow,
Drink life and fragrance as they flow.
Now the rich stream of music winds along,
Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong,
Thro' verdant vales, and Ceres' golden reign :
Now rowling down the steep amain,
Headlong, impetuous, see it pour :
The rocks, and nodding groves rebellow to the roar.

The subject and simile, as usual with Pindar, are united. The various sources of poetry, which gives life and lustre to all it touches, are here described; its quiet majestic progress enriching every subject (otherwise dry and barren) with a pomp of diction and luxuriant harmony of numbers; and its more rapid and irresistible course, when swoln and hurried away by the conflict of tumultuous passions.



I. 2.

i Oh! Sovereign of the willing soul,
 Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing airs,
 Enchanting shell! the sullen Cares,
 And frantic Passions, hear thy soft controul,
 On Thracia's hills the Lord of War
 Has curb'd the fury of his car,
 And drop'd his thirsty lance at thy command.
 k Perching on the scept'red hand

ⁱ Power of harmony to calm the turbulent fallies of the soul. The thoughts are borrowed from the first Pythian of Pindar.

^k This is a weak imitation of some incomparable lines in the same Ode.



Of Jove, thy magic lulls the feather'd king
 With ruffled plumes, and flagging wing :
 Quench'd in dark clouds of slumber lie
 The terror of his beak, and light'ning of his eye.

I. 3.

¹ Thee the voice, the dance, obey,
 Temper'd to thy warbled lay,
 O'er Idalia's velvet-green
 The rofy-crowned Loves are seen.
 On Cytherea's day
 With antic sports, and blue-eyed Pleasures,
 Frisking light in frolic measures ;

¹ Power of harmony to produce all the graces of motion in the body.

Now



Now pursuing, now retreating,
 Now in circling Troops they meet :
 To brisk notes in cadence beating
^m Glance their many-twinkling feet.
 Slow melting strains their Queen's approach declare :
 Where'er she turns, the Graces homage pay.
 With arms sublime, that float upon the air,
 In gliding state she wins her easy way :
 O'er her warm cheek, and rising bosom, move
^a The bloom of young Desire, and purple light of Love.

^m Μαγμαστυγὰς Ἰναιτο ποσειῶν· Ἰαύμαζ' ἰὲ Τυμῶν. HOMER. Od. G.

^a Αἵματι δ' ἐπὶ πορφυροῖσι
 Παρθένοι φῶς ἔχουσιν. PHERYNICUS, apud Athenæum.



II. I.

° Man's feeble race what Ills await,
 Labour, and Penury, the racks of Pain,
 Disease, and Sorrow's weeping train,
 And Death, sad refuge from the storms of Fate!
 The fond complaint, my Song, disprove,
 And justify the laws of Jove.
 Say, has he giv'n in vain the heav'nly Muse?
 Night, and all her sickly dews,
 Her Spectres wan, and Birds of boding cry.
 He gives to range the dreary sky :

° To compensate the real and imaginary ills of life, the Muse was given to Mankind by the same Providence that sends the Day by its cheerful presence to dispel the gloom and terrors of the Night.

'Till

¶ Till down the eastern cliffs afar
Hyperion's march they spy, and glitt'ring shafts of war.

II. 2.

¶ In climes beyond the solar road,
Where shaggy forms o'er ice-built mountains roam,
The Muse has broke the twilight-gloom
To cheer the shiv'ring Native's dull abode.

¶ Or seen the Morning's well-appointed Star
Come marching up the eastern hills afar. *Cowley.*

¶ Extensive influence of poetic Genius over the remotest and most uncivilized nations: its connection with liberty, and the virtues that naturally attend on it. [See the Erse, Norwegian, and Welsh Fragments, the Lapland and American songs.]

¶ "Extra anni folisque vias—" *Virgil.*
¶ "Tutta lontana dal camin del sole." *Petrarch, Canzon 2.*

And



44 THE PROGRESS OF POESY.

And oft, beneath the od'rous shade
Of Chili's boundless forests laid,
She deigns to hear the savage Youth repeat
In loose numbers wildly sweet
Their feather-cinctur'd Chiefs, and dusky Loves.
Her track, where'er the Goddess roves,
Glory pursue, and generous Shames
Th' unconquerable Mind, and Freedom's holy flame.

II. 3.

* Woods, that wave o'er Delphi's steep,
Isles, that crown th' Ægean deep,
Fields,

* Progress of Poetry from Greece to Italy, and from Italy to England. Chaucer was not unacquainted with the writings of Dante or
of

Fields, that cool Ilissus laves,
 Or where Mæander's amber waves
 In lingering Lab'rinth creep,
 How do your tuneful Echos languish
 Mute, but to the voice of Anguish?
 Where each old poetic Mountain
 Inspiration breath'd around:
 Ev'ry shade and hallow'd Fountain
 Murmur'd deep a solemn sound:

of Petrarch. The Earl of Surrey and Sir Tho. Wyatt had travelled in Italy, and formed their taste there; Spenser imitated the Italian writers; Milton improved on them: but this School expired soon after the Restoration, and a new one arose on the French model, which has subsisted ever since.

Till



Till the sad Nine in Greece's evil hour
 Left their Parnassus for the Latian plains.
 Alike they scorn the pomp of tyrant-Power,
 And coward Vice, that revels in her chains.
 When Latium had her lofty spirit lost,
 They fought, oh Albion! next thy sea-encircled coast.

III. 1.

Far from the sun and summer-gale,
 In thy green lap was Nature's ' Darling laid,
 What time, where lucid Avon stray'd,
 To Him the mighty Mother did unveil
 Her awful face: The dauntless Child
 Stretch'd forth his little arms, and smil'd.

* Shakespear.

The



This pencil take (she said) whose colours clear

Richly paint the vernal year :

Thine too these golden keys, immortal Boy!

This can unlock the gates of Joy ;

Of Horror that, and thrilling Fears,

Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic Tears.

III. 2.

Nor second He^u, that rode sublime

Upon the seraph-wings of Extasy,

The secrets of th' Abyfs to spy.

^w He pass'd the flaming bounds of Place and Time :

^u Milton.

^w “ — flammantia mœnia mundi.”

Lucretius.

The

* The living Throne, the saphire-blaze,
 Where Angels tremble, while they gaze,
 He saw ; but, blasted with excess of light,
 † Clos'd his eyes in endless night.
 Behold, where Dryden's less presumptuous car,
 Wide o'er the fields of Glory bear
 ‡ Two Courfers of ethereal race,
 § With necks in thunder cloath'd, and long-resounding
 pace.

* For the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels—And above the firmament, that was over their heads, was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a saphire-stone.—This was the appearance of the glory of the Lord. *Ezekiel i. 20, 26, 28.*

† Ὁφθαλμοὶ μου καὶ ἄνεμος ἐπέσθη ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ.

HOMER. OD.

‡ Meant to express the stately march and sounding energy of Dryden's rhimes.

§ Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder ?

Job.

III. 3.

III. 3.

Hark, his hands the lyre explore!

Bright-ey'd Fancy hovering o'er

Scatters from her pictur'd urn

^b Thoughts, that breathe, and words, that burn,

^c But ah! 'tis heard no more—

Oh! Lyre divine, what daring Spirit

Wakes thee now? tho' he inherit

^b Words, that weep, and tears, that speak. *Cowley.*

^c We have had in our language no other odes of the sublime kind, than that of Dryden on St. Cecilia's day: for Cowley (who had his merit) yet wanted judgement, style, and harmony, for such a task. That of Pope is not worthy of so great a man. Mr. Maſon indeed of late days has touch'd the true chords, and with a maſterly hand, in ſome of his Chorufes,—above all in the laſt of Caradacus,

Hark! heard ye not yon footſtep dread? &c.

E

Nor

Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,
^d That the Theban Eagle bear
 Sailing with supreme dominion
 Thro' the azure deep of air :
 Yet oft before his infant eyes would run
 Such Forms, as glitter in the Muse's ray
 With orient hues, unborrow'd of the Sun :
 Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way
 Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate,
 Beneath the Good how far—but far above the Great.

^d Διδῶς πρὸς ὄρνιθα Ἰλίου. Olymp. 2. Pindar compares himself to that bird, and his enemies to ravens that croak and clamour in vain below, while it pursues its flight, regardless of their noise.